

**A SOUTH-SIDE VIEW OF
SLAVERY; OR,
THREE MONTHS AT
THE SOUTH, IN 1854**

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A South-Side View of Slavery; Or, Three Months at the South, in 1854 by Nehemiah Adams

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NEHEMIAH ADAMS

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NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

SOME things in the history of this book afford an illustration of the undesirableness of answering a matter before we hear it. A preliminary correspondence of mine with a southern gentleman has brought forth a singular combination of feelings and expressions, all founded on a mistake; which is, that the writer of this book sought to conciliate a slaveholder with the proposition of a compromise between the north and south, by which northern opposition to slavery should be diverted and allayed. A plain statement may remove disagreeable feelings and apprehensions.

Much of this book was written at the south. On completing it at home, the writer wished to fortify himself in certain statements, and therefore wrote letters, with different sets of questions, to different gentlemen at the south, but with no intention to publish their answers. One of these gentlemen was Hon. H. A. Wise, of Virginia. That he, in his way, as the writer well knew, is a representative man on the subject of slavery, none will now dispute. I approached him fairly and honorably. I disclosed my object so far as was necessary to secure his attention, and I gained the purpose for which I wrote; so that on reading his letter in manuscript, and seeing that it confirmed the statements which I had written for my book, I acknowledged the favor in a note of thanks. The letter, read in private, did not offend me, because I saw that the writer was not combating me personally; and I thought of it

only in one light, — viz., as making it unnecessary for me to correct my manuscript, which was nearly ready for the press. When the correspondence afterward came forth from Mr. W., without my consent, in the Washington (D. C.) Union, his letter had a different bearing. I was placed in a new relation toward him, and was sorry that he compelled me to speak to him as I did in my reply.

And now this book is the development of my wishes and purposes so imperfectly expressed in my private letter to Mr. Wise. The book stands just as it did when I wrote that letter. I am not responsible for any expectations or disappointments with regard to this book occasioned by a letter which I did not write for publication, and never intended as a description of this volume. The book has been finished according to its first design.

As some have held forth Mr. Wise's letter as a true exponent of a slaveholder's spirit, it is due from me to say that, with that letter, I received other communications from southern gentlemen on the same subject. Answers to inquiries, so obliging, so regardful of the supposed difficulty which suggested a question, so generous in affording information, so candid, I have seldom known. Any who wish, may argue from them that the effect of slaveholding upon a gentleman's spirit and manner is eminently happy.

A counterpart to Mr. Wise's letter appeared in the New York Independent of October 12, in an article on my correspondence with Mr. W. If the writer had waited for correct knowledge of the facts in the case, he might have written more discreetly. When I first heard of the piece, the whole of this book was in type.

Watching in a sick room far from home, new affections are awakened toward our fellow-men; sectional feelings are diminished; and every subject, public as well as private, is viewed in connection with our higher and enduring interests and relations. Under such influences many of these pages were written, some of them containing stric-

tures which, in a chastened state of mind, one can make with the consciousness of being actuated only by good motives.

The thought of writing a book on this subject never occurred to me till I had experienced much surprise and pleasure at certain new impressions from slavery at the south. They who think that these impressions were owing to partial views of American slavery will see their mistake. Should I relieve the minds of a few friends on this subject, as mine has been relieved, my labor will not be lost. But it is proper to say, that while preparing these pages, from the beginning to the close, things have come to my knowledge with regard to slavery which took away, at the time, the power to think or speak of it except in the tone of reprobation. Feelings more discriminating and no less just have alternated with these, and the result is here given.

No one can expect to find, nor do I think to give, in this book, a full exposition of the subject of slavery. Yet I trust it will be seen that I have gathered premises broad enough for all the conclusions which I have ventured to draw.

Now, if any friend of mine, who, knowing me, knows that I am no partisan, will intrust himself to my guidance, I will take him with me in this book to the south, and we will together look at the things which happen to meet us, receive the impressions which they may naturally make, and if we differ and part company, we will endeavor to do so with mutual respect and affection.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT,	3
CHAPTER	
I. — FEELINGS AND EXPECTATIONS ON GOING TO THE SOUTH,	7—14
II. — ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS,	15—19
III. — NEW VIEWS OF THE RELATIONS OF THE SLAVES,	20—23
IV. — FAVORABLE APPEARANCES IN SOUTHERN SO- CIETY AND IN SLAVERY,	24—43
Good Order. — The Dress of the Slaves. — The Children of the Slaves. — Labor and Privileges. — Personal Protection. — Pre- vention of Crime.	
V. — SUBJECT CONTINUED,	44—46
Absence of Mobs. — Personal Liberty. — Ab- sence of popular Delusions.	
VI. — SUBJECT CONTINUED,	47—63
Absence of Pauperism. — Wages of Labor — Religious Instruction. — Review.	
VII. — REVOLTING FEATURES OF SLAVERY,	64—81
Slave Auctions. — Domestic Slave Trade.	
VIII. — SUBJECT CONTINUED,	82—90
Homes of the Slaves. — Domestic Evils de- plored by the Whites. — Review.	