

A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH SLAVERY

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649226122

A Comparison of American and British Slavery by Jr. Hagadorn

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JR. HAGADORN

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BY WM. HAGADORN, JR.

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New-York:

PRINTED BY E. B. THOMAS, 13 SPRUCE ST.

1851. ✓

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A CONTRAST
OF
BRITISH AND AMERICAN
SLAVERY.

MANY British subjects, upon reading the title of this Pamphlet, would, we know, hold up their hands in holy horror at the idea of such a thing as Slavery in Britain*—in Britain, where they have so often and so loudly sung—

"Britons never will be Slaves!"

Was it not *all Britain*, as well as England, of which the poet spoke, when he said "Slaves cannot breathe in England!" Ah, so it was; and the poet might have added to the sentiment, so as to make it more complete and more true. He might have said: "As Slavery is defined "involuntary servitude," and as the great body of British laborers do indirectly, but yet "involuntarily" *serve* their masters, the privileged classes, with their hard labor—being allowed less of their labor's product for their own use than American Slaves are allowed—therefore the great body of British laborers are, in fact Slaves." Then the poet might have exclaimed—

"Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery, thou'rt a bitter draught!"

And *after this*, the poet might have added, "'Slaves cannot breathe in England'—*without having to pay their masters roundly for the 'glorious privilege!'*"

We have been told by Mr. Carlyle and other Englishmen, that English freedom was the foundation of whatever is free or admirable

* We use the term "Britain" for convenience; meaning the whole "United Kingdom."

in American Institutions, and that thus to British Liberty we are indebted for whatever of freedom we enjoy. There is some truth in this—a little, perhaps, even in the sense in which it was intended to be understood, but much more in another sense. It was not the American *sort* of freedom, but the *British* sort which drove our fathers from their native shores, to seek, over the then most perilous ocean, and in the more perilous wilderness, for freedom of *another* sort—freedom of self-government—“freedom to worship God!” It was the British sort of *freedom* which drove our fathers to the desperate and bloody chances of the Revolution, and it is “the same sort” which has peopled our shores, and is still peopling them, with those prosperous beneficiaries of “British *freedom*” who love it *as our fathers did*; and who show their love of it in the same way—braving all perils, and sundering all ties to get rid of it!

This “*British freedom*” is called here “Oppression!” Oppression peopled our country—oppression forced her into independence, and oppression is still peopling her with the most daring and liberty-loving of the earth. And for all this is our country mainly indebted to “*British freedom*,” or rather to *those ideas* of freedom which are so peculiarly British!

We have no national antipathies; and are very far from having any toward Englishmen. On the contrary, we have many English friends whom we most warmly esteem. We do, indeed, think that uneducated Englishmen of the middle class are sometimes presuming, and sometimes a little surly when they mean only to be dignified; we do think them a little obsequious to those whom they own as superiors, and a little arrogant to those whom they wish to look down on as inferiors; but even Englishmen of this class have peculiar *virtues* as well as peculiar weaknesses. And as for the other classes; the English working people—those who do *not* try to be aristocratic—are naturally as fine a set of people as there are in the world; while the well-educated classes are perhaps more truly educated and refined than any other people. We *like* the English people, but we do not like British *Slavery*. It seems to us that we hear the question—If it is *slavery* we object to, why do we not first oppose *American* slavery? We reply—1st. Because a necessity continues the system here, which

necessity does not exist in Britain. 2d. Because American Slavery is not quite *so bad* as British.

"Slaves cannot breathe in England,"

but they *can* breathe here; ay, and "eat, drink, and be merry," too; and we know some parts of the British empire where it is hard work often to be merry, for the want of that same eating and drinking.— 3d. We do not oppose American Slavery because, as one of the sovereign people of this country, we are pledged by a holy compact to support the institutions of the sister States of our Union, as *their* citizens are pledged in turn to support *our* State institutions. We (the American people) are pledged to support each other thus, as the one only means of *securing* our own liberties; and much as it might gratify European monarchists to see that pledge broken, and those liberties thus lost, yet we *will* keep that pledge *even unto death!* As we speak, so do four millions of brave men most earnestly and deeply *feel!* And this is both a moral and physical force not to be preached down by a few thousand Abolitionists, nor scared down by as many secessionists, nor *put* down by any other "ists;" nor even scolded down by the Mrs. Grundy of the English press.

Well, we have stated some reasons for not opposing the institutions of our sister States, but we know of no such reasons for not opposing British Slavery. We know of no compact by which we are bound to support *British* institutions, nor do the English people, apparently, feel bound to support *ours*. Indeed, just the contrary seems to be the case. We shall go on, therefore, with our remarks, and enquire, in the first place, who are the British Slaves, and then whether British Slavery really is Slavery, according to the universally received definitions of the term. In order to get at a proper reply to the question, "Who are the British Slaves?" it is well, in the first place, to inquire who are the British *freemen*, of whom the world hears so much! We remember seeing an article in Blackwood's Magazine, some time since, which, speaking of public opinion, said, (we quote *the words* :)

"There is no such thing as public opinion in America, for public opinion is the work of reason, operating on the intelligent *portions* of the people."

Now, those who are not of this "portion" are, in Britain, three fourths of the people—we mean of the human flesh; for, according to

Blackwood, their opinions are not part of the opinions of the "public," and consequently we are left to infer that the "lower classes" are not "people." The same article states that this Republic is not a free country; for, says Blackwood,—

"In no country on earth will difference from the opinions of the *populace* so surely exclude a man from public office."

In other words, "the populace" of the United States employs just whom it chooses as public servants, (dreadful despotism!) and therefore this is not a free country! Blackwood means, doubtless, that it is not free exclusively for the "intelligent *portion*," as Britain is. It is not free for the "people," for it is so dreadfully free for the "*populace*!" Now, it is this "populace" whom we speak of as being slaves in Britain—this "populace," whose freedom is so inimical to the freedom of the "portion." It is only those human beings in Britain who are not considered "people," whom we term slaves. We do not mean the British people; oh no, only "the populace." Were we to concede that "the populace" is no part of the British *people*, and that this *people* comprises only the "portions" above named, it would then result undeniably that the British "people" are the freest on the earth—the most free, and almost the most powerful. Did they not *almost* conquer America, out of hatred to the despotism of the "populace?"—Did they not *quite* put down Napoleon, because he was raised by a "populace," and therefore a foe to the British *people*? Did they not "mediate" in India, till they had conquered the vast empire of Tam-erlane and the Moguls, merely to secure monopolies to the mercantile "portion!" The British people did not precisely do all these things themselves, but they employed their "populace" to do it. The *populace* were thus kept out of mischief at home, too, being employed in fighting or in shouting for British "glory." The expense was some eight hundred million pounds. The British *people* loaned the money, but they compel "the populace" to pay *them* the yearly interest!—What a *free* "people," and what a convenient "populace!" What other "people" ever took such *freedom* with their "populace? But this people have taken, and of course *enjoy* other liberties. Five millions of human beings perished in one year in India for want of food, because of certain monopolies held by the mercantile "portion;" and

more recently two millions, it is said, of the Irish "populace" have shared the same fate, for similar reasons. In India, the *free* British "people" only bought up the grain, and the Hindoos, who received their two-pence a day *when employed*, not being able to pay fifty dollars a barrel for flour, *went without it*, that's all. And as for Ireland, the Irish populace had to pay tithes, (often more than the whole of a little farm's *nett* produce) and then to pay rent, and then taxes, direct and indirect, and the rates," &c., and, if anything to live on should not happen to be left over, why the "populace" must do as the Hindoos did—*just go without!*

When we come to speak of British *slaves*, we will speak more of this; but we are now speaking of the *free* "British people." These "people" are composed, first, of the land-owners; next the 300,000 government-stock-holders; next, holders of other stocks; and next, of ship-owners, merchants and manufacturers. These principal holders of British wealth, with their families, number some million and a half of people. After these are their salaried agents and clerks, the learned professions, the well-to-do tradesmen, shop-keepers, hotel-keepers, comfortable farmers, mechanics, &c. All these, with their families, number over four millions more. They comprise the great body of the British Commons, and, with the wealthy classes, compose the governing power, the Lords and Commons—the numerous two-fold aristocracy of Britain. There are some other classes, swelling the whole number to about six millions of people, who, through the votes of their adult males, are represented in Parliament. They, it is most true, are a free and happy people. *They* direct the British government; *they* support and control the British press, and *they* shout for British freedom! And well they may. *They* are truly a great and powerful people, for they are prosperous, brave and free. But, beneath this great and powerful British "people," are three or four times as many British human beings, whom Blackwood smells at as "the populace," but whom we shall prove to be the Slaves!

THE BRITISH SLAVES.

This unfortunate class comprises the "hewers of wood and drawers of water:" the hired laborers on farms, the operatives in factories and