

**A TREATISE ON THE INTELLECTUAL
CHARACTER, AND CIVIL AND POLITICAL
CONDITION OF THE COLORED PEOPLE OF
THE U. STATES : AND THE PREJUDICE
EXERCISED TOWARDS THEM: WITH A SERMON
ON THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO THEM**

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A treatise on the intellectual character, and civil and political condition of the colored people of the U. States : and the prejudice exercised towards them: with a sermon on the duty of the church to them by H. Easton

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H. EASTON

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ON THE
INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER,
AND
CIVIL AND POLITICAL CONDITION
OF THE
COLORED PEOPLE OF THE U. STATES;
AND THE
PREJUDICE EXERCISED TOWARDS THEM.

BY REV. H. EASTON,
A COLORED MAN.

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PREFACE.

It is with diffidence that I offer this treatise to the public; but an earnest desire to contribute my mite, for the benefit of my afflicted brethren, is my only apology. The subject is one of peculiar difficulty; especially as it is one in which I am deeply interested.

To speak or write on a subject relating to one's self, is peculiarly embarrassing; and especially so, under a deep sense of injury.

As an apology for the frequent errors that may occur in the following pages, I would remark: It cannot be reasonably expected, that a literary display could adorn the production of one from whom popular sentiment has withheld almost every advantage, even of a common education.

If this work should chance to fall into the hands of any whose minds are so sordid, and whose hearts are so inflexible, as to load it, with its author, with censure on that account merely, I would only say to them, that I shall not be disposed to envy them in the enjoyment of their sentiments, while I endeavor to content myself in the enjoyment of a consciousness of having done what I could to effect the establishment of righteousness and peace in the earth.

Hartford, Ct., March, 1837.

INTRODUCTION.

I conclude that, by this time, one great truth is acknowledged by all Christendom, viz.—God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. Or, in other words, I conclude it is a settled point with the wisest of the age, that no constitutional difference exists in the children of men, which can be said to be established by hereditary laws. If the proposition be granted, it will follow, that whatever differences exist, are casual or accidental. The variety of color, in the human species, is the result of the same laws which variegate the whole creation. The same species of flowers is variegated with innumerable colors; and yet the species is the same, possessing the same general qualities, undergoing no intrinsic change, from these accidental causes. So it is with the human species. These varieties are indispensable, for the distinction of different objects, throughout the whole range of creation.

The hair is subject to the same laws of variety with the skin, though it may be considered in a somewhat different light. Were I asked why my hair is curled, my answer would be, because God gave nature the gift of producing variety, and that gift, like uncontrolled power every where, was desirous to act like itself; and thus being influenced by some cause unknown to man, she turned out her work in the form of my hair; and on being influenced by some other cause, she turned out hair of different texture, and gave it to another man. This would be the best answer I could give; for it is impossible for man to comprehend nature or her works. She has been supplied with

an ability by her author to do wonders, insomuch that some have been foolish enough to think her to be God. All must confess she possesses a mysterious power to produce variety. We need only visit the potato and corn patch, (not a costly school,) and we shall be perfectly satisfied; for there, in the same hill, on one stalk, sprung from one potato, you may find several of different colors; and upon the same corn-stalk you may find two ears, one white or yellow, and the other deep red; and sometimes you may find an astonishing variety of colors displayed on one ear among the kernels; and what makes the observation more delightful, they are never found quarrelling about their color, though some have shades of extreme beauty. If you go to the field of grass, you will find that all grass is the same grass in variety; go to the herds and flocks, and among the feathered tribe, or view nature where you will, she tells us all that we can know, why it is that one man's head bears woolly, and another flaxen hair.

But when we come to talk about intellectual differences, we are brought into a new field of investigation. I call it a new or another field, because I cannot believe that nature has any thing to do in variegating intellect, any more than it has power over the soul. Mind can act on matter, but matter cannot act upon mind; hence it fills an entirely different sphere; therefore, we must look for a cause of difference of intellect elsewhere, for it cannot be found in nature. In looking for a cause, we have no right to go above nor below the sphere which the mind occupies; we cannot rationally conceive the cause to originate with God, nor in matter. Nature never goes out of her own limits to produce her works; all of which are perfect so far as she is concerned, and most assuredly God's works are perfect; hence, whatever imperfections there are in the mind, must have originated within its own sphere. But the question is, what is the cause and the manner it affects? Originally there was no difference of intellect, either constitutional or casual. Man was perfect, and therefore to him there was no exception. After he fell, we immediately find a difference of mind. In Abel we find characteristics of a noble soul, a prolific mind; his under-

standing appears to have been but very little, if any, impaired by the fall. But in Cain we find quite the reverse. His mind appears to have been narrow—his understanding dark—having wrapped himself up in a covetous mantle as contemptible as his conduct was wicked.

Now I see no reason why the causes of difference do not exist in the fall—in the act of transgression ; for certain it is that the mind has since been subject to the influence of every species of evil, which must be a secondary cause to the existing effect. Or the subject may be viewed in the following light, viz. : evil and good exist in the world, and as the mind is influenced by the one or the other, so is the different effect produced thereby.

There is no truth more palpable than this, that the mind is capable of high cultivation ; and that the degree of culture depends entirely on the means or agents employed to that end. In a country, therefore, where public sentiment is formed in favor of improving the mind, whatever the object may be, whether to promote good or evil, the mind is influenced thereby. The practical exercise of the mind is essential also to improvement and growth, and is directed likewise by public sentiment.

Public sentiment is founded on the real or imaginary interests of parties, whose individual interests are identified one with another. Public sentiment itself is directed in the exercise of its influence, by incidental circumstances, either local or foreign. In this current the mind is borne along, and at the instance of every change of event, is called to a new exercise of thought, conclusions, purposes, &c. ; whereas, had it not been for the change, there would have been no action produced in the mind : for it is manifest, that the sphere which mankind are destined to fill, is surrounded with a great variety of acting laws, which, were it not for such causes, would make their minds entirely passive ; but, under the influence of those causes, they are made to act not from constraint, but in accordance with an innate desire to avail themselves of collateral aid to their operations. It is manifest, therefore, that the more varying or complex the state of a people is incidentally rendered, the more power there is extant to call up renewed energies of the mind, the direct

tendency of which is to confirm and strengthen it. Hence I deem it a fair conclusion, that whatever differences there are in the power of the intellect of nations, they are owing to the difference existing in the casual laws by which they are influenced. By consulting the history of nations, it may be seen that their genius perfectly accords with their habits of life, and the general maxims of their country; and that these habits and maxims possess a sameness of character with the incidental circumstances in which they originated.

As the intellect of a particular class will be in part the subject of this treatise, I wish in this place to follow the investigation of national difference of intellect, with its cause, by comparing the history of Europe and Africa.

Ham was the son of Noah, and founder of the African race, and progenitor to Assur, who probably founded the first government after the flood. It is evident from the best authority extant, that the arts and sciences flourished among this branch of the great family of man, long before its benefits were known to any other. History is explicit with regard to their hospitality also. At an early period of the existence of the government of Egypt, and while Chedorlaomer, king of the Elamites, had already commenced the practice of robbery and bloodshed, Abraham was obliged by a famine to leave Canaan, where God had commanded him to settle, and to go into Egypt. 'This journey,' says a historian, 'gives occasion for Moses to mention some particulars with regard to the Egyptians; and every stroke discovers the character of an improved and powerful nation. The Egyptian monarch, and the grandeur of his court, are described in the most glowing colors;—and Ham, who led the colony into Egypt, has become the founder of a mighty empire. We are not, however, to imagine, that all the laws which took place in Egypt, and which have been so justly admired for their wisdom, were the work of this early age. Diodorus Siculus, a Greek writer, mentions many successive princes, who labored for their establishment and perfection. But in the time of Jacob, first principles of civil government seem to have been tolerably understood among the Egyptians. The country was divided into