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What is Implied in Free Institutions as Opposed to Slave Institutions?

Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.

What essential difference is there between life in the free and the slave States, that the white man should prefer the former to the latter? He is legally free in a slave State. He owns himself. His wife, his children, cannot be taken from him. His earnings and theirs, are his to control and appropriate. Legally, his interests are as fully recognized in the slave as in the free States. Politically, he holds the same position. He may vote, and be elected to any office in the gift of the State, provided, only, that he has the available qualifications, or can make his fellow citizens believe that he is qualified for the same.

What then, to this man personally, is the difference whether legal slavery exists in his neighborhood, or not? What to him are the advantages of a free State, as opposed to a slave State?

This is a question of deep significance to the framers of a new State, and a question which the people of Kansas must be able to answer intelligently, before they are qualified to secure to themselves the advantages of free institutions.

Much more than the absence of legal slavery is implied in the existence of free institutions. Something more than the presence of legal slavery is implied in the existence of southern, or slave institutions.

Not only legal securities, but social and domestic; not only laws, but customs more potent than laws, are involved in each. Legal slavery and its securities may be abolished in Missouri tomorrow, yet with no change in her social and educational policy, the disadvantages of slavery would cling to her still, and effectually {cheat} her white citizens of the best fruits of freedom. We believe that the difference which obtains between the free and slave States, is to be attributed, mainly, to the differences in educational facilities and incentives to industry.

How has New England made her rocky shores and barren hills teem with a well-fed, well-bred and happy population? Simply by adapting her legislative and social policy to the thorough culture of the industrial, mental and moral capabilities of her people, and to the fostering of the highest incentives to useful industry. Vermont, the least productive of these States, stands first in the scale of general education. Of all the States in the Union the proportion of her inhabitants, who cannot read and write, is least. With less wealth and fewer facilities for acquiring it, she has fewest paupers.

By the general diffusion of intelligence, New England has overcome the disadvantages of soil and climate and practically illustrated that "knowledge is power," the power of productive industry, of self-support and an honorable independence. Aye, more, that giving it to the masses clears the pauper list, abolishes the pauper tax and relieves the state of the burden of supporting its otherwise helpless and dependent members -at the same time preventing the crime and degradation that inevitably attach to ignorance. Equal legislation and general education are the two arms of a wise political economy. And to our thinking the most efficient and prosperous people, must be that one which secures to its members the most eminently practical education with the most perfect enjoyment of and right to the avails of their own industry. If we read the history of the past or the present, we will find that just in proportion as the right of the individual to the self-created means of his God-given energies has been respected, industry has been stimulated, the equal claim to the laborer to education responded to, industrial skill developed, the inventive faculties achieved their noblest triumphs, and labor, honored among the most honorable, stands beside capital self-reliant, self-respecting, its brow radiant with the consciousness of a living soul.

The white laborer in a slave State is excluded by the very necessities of slavery, from the means of culture on the one hand, and the highest encouragements to industry on the other. The slave-holding class monopolizes education, not daring to entrust to the slave the knowledge which "is power." It dare not give education to the free blacks, for they are in sympathy with the slave, and policy forbids that they be allowed facilities demonstrating that freedom can elevate their race to a level with the white. It will not do to educate the white laborers, for by the aid of machinery compete with the slave laborer and depreciate his chattel value.

Labor is degraded in the fettered limbs of the slave. The poor white feels it a reproach, consequently only resorts to it that he may exist, and eats his grudgingly earned crust in a bitterness of spirit, that cherishes every base and wicked passion. The slaves are the only real producers of wealth, and they consume what they produce. As John Randolph said, "the negroes raise all the corn, the hogs eat the corn, and the negroes eat the hogs."- Through ignorance they work neither well, nor to advantage; they are incapable of inventing ways or means, and cannot use the machinery invented for them. Having no right to the wealthy they create, they lack the incentive to accomplish what they are able, and consequently accomplish less than half the labor of an intelligent freeman. A slave State lacks the intelligent labor requisite to develop its internal resources on the one hand, and on the other, the wealth and enterprise needed to push forward internal improvements. The white man's legal rights may be as fully recognized under Southern institutions, but the privileges by which he may rise to an honorable position are sadly wanting.

Free institutions are the crowning glory of a State, and the most congenial to individual usefulness, happiness and respectability, for they bring within the reach of all, the means of self-development for the noblest ends and the highest enjoyment.