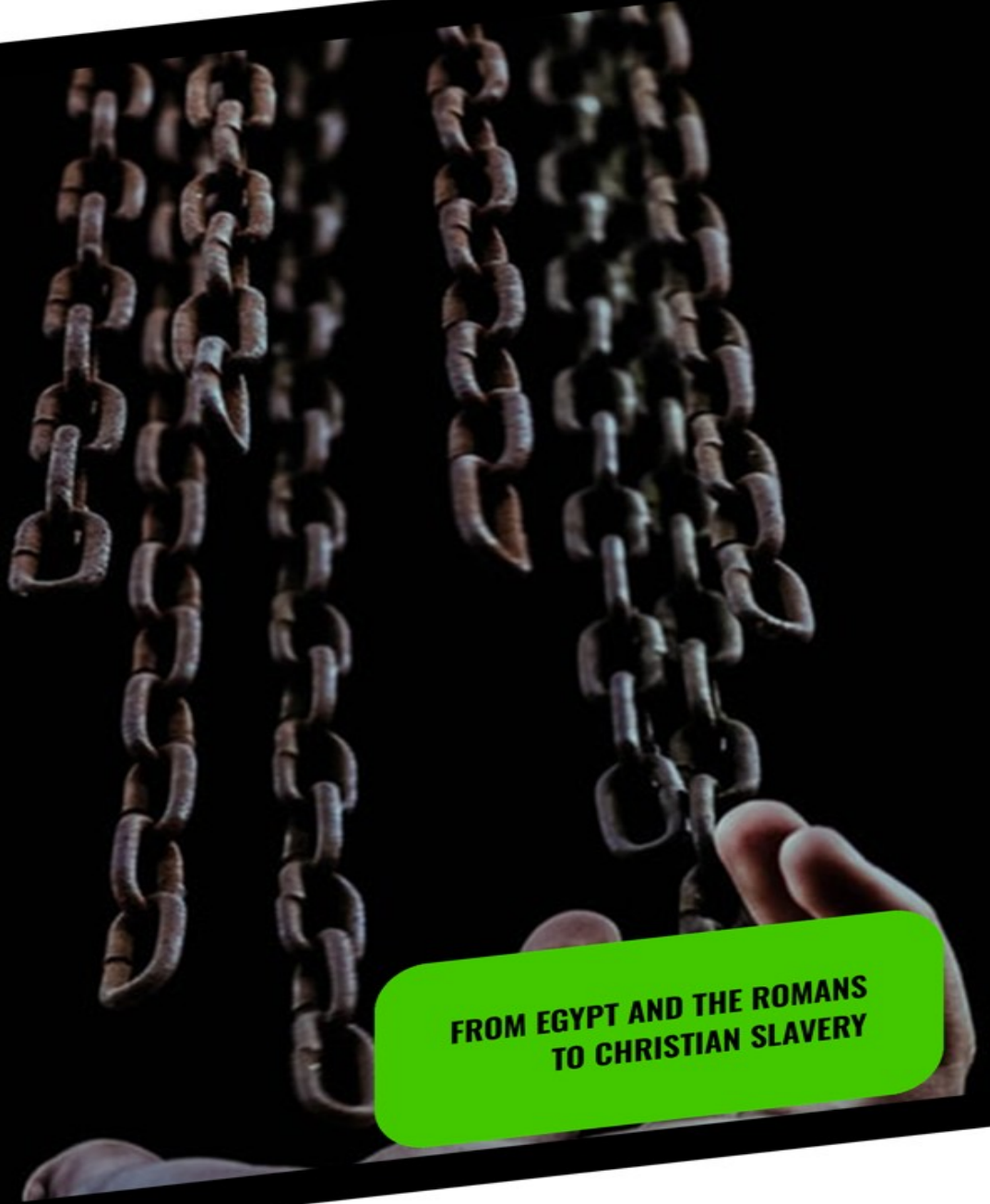




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ADAM GUROWSKI



FROM EGYPT AND THE ROMANS
TO CHRISTIAN SLAVERY

THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY

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The History of Slavery

From Egypt and the Romans to Christian Slavery

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Introduction

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For the first time in the annals of humanity, domestic slavery, or the system of chattelhood and traffic in man, is erected into a religious, social and political creed. This new creed has its thaumaturgus, its temples, its altars, its worship, its divines, its theology, its fanatical devotees; it has its moralists, its savants and sentimentalists, its statesmen and its publicists. The articles of this new faith are preached and confessed by senators and representatives in the highest councils of the American people, as well as in the legislatures of the respective States; they are boldly proclaimed by the press, and by platform orators and public missionaries; in a word, this new faith over-shadows the whole religious, social, intellectual, political and economical existence of a large portion of the Republic.

The less fervent disciples consider domestic slavery as an eminently practical matter, and regard those of an opposite opinion as abstruse theorizers; and history is called in and ransacked for the purpose of justifying the present by the past.

Well: history contains *all* the evidences—multifarious and decisive.

It is asserted that domestic slavery has always been a constructive social element: history shows that it has always been destructive. History authoritatively establishes the fact that slavery is the most corroding social disease, and one, too, which acts most fatally on the slaveholding element in a community.

Not disease, but health, is the normal condition of man's physical organism: not oppression but freedom is the normal condition of human society. The laws of history are as absolute as the laws of nature or the laws of hygiene. As an individual cannot with impunity violate hygienic law—as nature *always* avenges every departure from her eternal order: so nations and communities cannot safely deviate from the laws of history, still less violate them with impunity. History positively demonstrates that slavery is not one of the natural laws of the human race, any more than disorders and monstrosities are normal conditions of the human body.

History demonstrates that slavery is not coeval with, nor inherent in, human society, but is the offspring of social derangement and decay. The healthiest physical organism may, under certain conditions, develop from within, or receive by infection from without, diseases which are coeval, so to speak, with the creation, and which hover perpetually over animal life. The disease, too, may be acute or chronic, according to the conditions or predispositions of the organism. History teaches that domestic slavery may, at times, affect the healthiest social organism, and be developed, like other social disorders and crimes, so to speak, in the very womb of the nation. As the tendency of vigorous health is to prevent physical derangements and diseases, so the tendency of society in its most elevated conception is to prevent, to limit, to neutralize, if not wholly to extirpate, all social disorders. Not depravity and disease, but purity and virtue, are the normal condition of the individual: not oppression but freedom is the normal condition of society.

Some investigators and philosophers discover an identity between the progressive development of the human body

and the various stages of human society—beginning with the embryonic condition of both. More than one striking analogy certainly exists between physiological and pathological laws, and the moral and social principles which ought to be observed by man both as an individual, and in the aggregate called society. Thus some of the pathologic axioms established by Rokitansky¹ (the greatest of living pathologists) are equally sustained by the history of nations.

"No formation is incapable of becoming diseased in one or more ways. Several anomalies coexisting in an organ commonly stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. Thus, deviation in texture determines deviation in size, in form."

The following pages will demonstrate that nations and communities may become diseased in many ways; and that in proportion as their social textures deviate from the normal, do they become more and more deformed and demoralized.

"All anomalies of organization involving any anatomical change manifest themselves as deviations in the quantity or quality of organic creation, or else as a mechanical separation of continuity. They are reducible to irregular number, size, form, continuity, and contents."

Oppressions, tyrannies, domestic slavery, chattelhood, are so many mechanical separations of continuity, which in the social organic creation is liberty.

"General disease engenders the most various organs and textures according to their innate, general or individual tendencies, either spontaneously or by dint of some overpowering outward impulse, a local affection which reflects the general disease in the peculiarity of its products. The general disease becomes localized, and, so to speak, represented in the topical affection."

Violence and oppression generated various and peculiar forms of servitude, until nearly all of them ended in chattelhood, which many are wont to consider as a topical affection of certain races and nations. Declining Greece and Rome in the past, Russia under our own eyes, serve as illustrations.

"A general disease not unfrequently finds in its localization a perpetual focus of derivation, with *seeming* integrity of the organism in other respects."

So nations infected with slavery, nevertheless had brilliant epochs of existence; and this "*seeming* integrity of the organism" misleads many otherwise averse to chattelhood, and makes them indifferent to its existence.

"Where several diseases coexist in an individual, they are in part *primary*, in part *secondary* and subordinate, although homologous to the former."

So many evils are the lot of human society, but almost all of them are secondary and subordinate to oppression, violence, and slavery.

"*The issue of a local disease* in health consists either in the perfect re-establishment of the normal condition, or else in partial recovery; more or fewer important residua and sequellæ of the disease not incomparable with a tolerably fair state of health, remaining entailed."

The history of the slow recovery of post-Roman Europe from domestic bondage justifies the application of this pathologic axiom to the social condition of nations.

"*Issue in death*: 1. Through exhaustion of power and of organic matter."

The history of republican, but above all, of imperial Rome, demonstrates that its decline and death were caused through the extinction of freedom, free labor, and the free yeomanry, which in every state constitutes *the power, the organic matter* of a nation.

"2. Through the suspended function of organs essential to life, through palsy, etc."

When the laboring classes are enslaved, the life of a nation is speedily palsied.

"3. Through vitiation of the blood."

What blood is to the animal organism, sound social and political principles are to society. When such principles become vitiated, the nation is on the path of decline and death.

"The worst malformation is never so anomalous as not to bear the general character of animal life, etc. Even an individual organ never departs from its normal character so completely that amid even the greatest disfigurement, this character should not be cognizable."

So often the enslaver and the slaveholding community may preserve *some* features of the normal human character, notwithstanding the "disfigurement" produced.

"The excessive development of one part determines the imperfect and retarded development of another, and the converse."

So the oligarchic development retards the growth and advancement of the laboring classes, whether the hue be white or black: it prevents or retards the culture and civilization of individuals and communities.

"Various and manifold as are the forms of monstrosity, some of them recur with such uniformity of type as to constitute a regular series."

History shows that various as are the other social monstrosities, domestic slavery always recurred with a filial uniformity of type.

"The genesis of malformation in the human body is still veiled in much obscurity despite some progress made in science."

Social *teratology*, or the science of monstrosities, easily traces the origin and genesis of domestic slavery.

A conscientious study of the records of bygone nations, as well as of the events daily witnessed during a decennium, produced the following pages. They complete what I said about slavery a few years ago.² As then, so now, I am almost wholly unacquainted with anti-slavery literature in any of its manifestations. I diligently sought for information in the literary and political productions of pro-slavery writers. Beside legislative enactments, political discussions, and resolutions by Congress and the legislatures of the various Slave States, and the messages of their respective governors, I read every thing that came within my reach, even sermons, heaps of "De Bow's Review" and "Fletcher's Studies on Slavery."³ Ah!...

For years the rich resources of the Astor Library have facilitated my general studies, and the information there sought and found was enhanced by the kindest liberality experienced from Dr. Cogswell and all his assistants.

And now let History unfold her records.

Footnotes:

1. A Manual of Pathological Anatomy, by Carl Rokitansky, M.D. Translated from the German, by Edward Swaine, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.
2. "America and Europe," chap. X.
3. Among the neutral publications on American slavery, the most remarkable and instructive is the work entitled "The Law of Freedom and Bondage in the United States," by John Codman Hurt.

I. Egyptians

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AUTHORITIES:

Wilkinson, Rosellini, Lepsius, Uhlemann, Rénan, Guttschmidt, Bugsch, Birch, De Rouget, Bunsen, etc.

In the gray twilight of history, the apparition that first distinctly presents itself is *Egypt*—that land of wonders, standing on the shores of the "venerable mother the Nile." The Egyptians already form a fully-elaborated, organic social structure, nay, a powerful nation, with a rich material and intellectual civilization, when as yet the commonly accepted chronology begins to write only rudimental numbers.

It is indifferent (so far as the present investigation is concerned) whether this Egyptian culture ascended or descended the Nile—whether its cradle was Meroe, Elephantis, Syene, or Thebes—or whether it first sprang up and expanded around Memphis. So, the first conquerors of Egypt may have belonged to the Shemitic or to the Aryan stock—they may have entered from Asia by the Isthmus of Suez, or by the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Red Sea, landing first on some spot in Abyssinia or Nubia; or, perhaps, the primitive civilizers of the valley of the Nile were autochthones, who were conquered by foreign invaders. However these things may have been, Egyptian civilization and culture clearly bear the impress of indigenous development.

The founders of the Egyptian civil, social and religious polity considered agriculture as the most sacred occupation of mortals—transforming the roving savage into a civilized

man. It was the divine Osiris who first taught men the art of tilling the earth, if indeed he was not its inventor. But the god forged not a fetter for the farmer, and the Egyptian plough was not desecrated by the hands of a slave.

The first rays of history reveal Egypt densely covered with farms, villages, and cities, and divided into districts (*noma*), townships, and communes—each having its distinct deity, and each most probably self-governing, or at least self-administering: all this in the earliest epoch, previous to the first dynasties of the Pharaohs, and anterior to the division of the population into castes.

The division of a population into *castes*, however destructive it may be to the growth of individuality and the highest freedom in man, is neither domestic slavery nor chattelhood. These divisions and sub-divisions originally consisted simply in training the individuals to special occupations and functions, and so educating them in special ideas; but not in making any one caste the property of any other. The gradations of caste constituted no form of chattelhood whatever.

The principal castes were the princes, or Pharaohs, the priests, the soldiers, and then the merchants, artificers, farmers and shepherds; and each of these, again, had numerous subdivisions. Together they directed and carried out all the functions, pursuits, and industries necessary in a well-organized community.

In the sanctuary of the gods, and before the supreme power of the Pharaohs and the law, the priest, the military officer or nobleman, the merchant, the artisan, the daily laborer, the agriculturist, the shepherd, even the swineherd (considered the lowest and most unclean)—all were equal. They formed, so to say, circles rather independent than encompassed by each other. All castes had equal civil

rights, and the same punishments were administered to the criminal irrespective of the caste to which he might belong. In brief, in the normal social structure of the Egyptians there existed no class deprived of the social and civil rights enjoyed by all others, or looked down upon as necessarily degraded or outlawed. The separation between one caste and another, moreover, was neither absolute nor impassable.

The ownership of the soil was unequally divided; but it was principally distributed between the sovereign, the priests, and the officer-soldiers. The latter were obliged, in consideration of the land held, to perform military services to the prince—a sort of enfeoffment like that which rose out of the chaos that succeeded the destruction of the Roman world.

Peasants, agriculturists, and yeomen, formed the bulk of the indigenous Egyptian population. The husbandmen either owned their homestead or rented the lands from the king, the priesthood, or the military caste; and they cultivated the generous soil either with their own hands or by hired field-laborers; but chattels or domestic slaves were unknown.

The primary cause of social convulsions and disturbances is always to be found in some great public calamity: such was the celebrated seven years' famine during the administration of Joseph, which resulted in concentrating in the hands of the Pharaohs numerous landed estates, and these principally the farms of the poorer yeomanry. But even then, no trace is to be discovered in history that any great proportion of the agricultural population were enslaved. Their condition then became similar, economically and socially, to that of the English peasantry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and even if it finally degenerated into something like the condition of the Fellahs,

still it was simply political oppression, and not chattelhood. The modern Fellahs are serfs, enjoying all natural human rights of worship, family and property; and are separated by a wide gulf from the chattelism of modern slavery. If, like these Fellahs, the ancient Egyptians were forced to bow before the arbitrary power of a sovereign, they at least were not the personal property of an owner who had the power arbitrarily to dispose of them as his interest or caprice might dictate.

The population constituting the Egyptian nation, and included in this graded structure of castes, was of varied origin and descent, or, according to a common form of statement, belonged to various races. But the process of mixing the various ethnic elements with each other, went on uninterruptedly during the almost countless centuries of the historical existence of Egypt, including the epoch of its highest political development and the brightest blossom of its culture and civilization. In the remotest period of Egyptian society, the three superior castes were of a different hue of skin from the others, and some ethnologists and historians assign them a Shemitic or Japhetic (*i.e.*, Aryan) origin. But the optimates were not white but *red*, and so they both considered and called themselves. All the other castes—as artists, architects, merchants, mechanics, operatives, sailors, agriculturists and shepherds—undoubtedly belonged to the African or negro stock.

Egypt teemed with an active industrial population, which furnished countless soldiers to the army during long centuries of victory. Egyptian history embraces a long period of expansion. Many centuries lay between the times of the Rhameses and of Necho, during which the Egyptians conquered Nubia, Libya, and Syria, and reached Kolchis. These armies could not be recruited—and positively *were*

not—from chattel slaves; for succeeding chapters will show that it was domestic slavery far more than political which tore the sinews from the arms of the nations of antiquity, and rendered defenceless their states, empires and republics. If the officers of the Egyptian armies were of a *red* extraction, the rank and file was undoubtedly of the negro family. Herodotus says that "the Egyptians were black and had short, crisped hair," and that "the skulls of the Egyptians were by far thicker than those of the Persians—so that they could scarcely be broken by a big stone, while a Persian skull could be broken by a pebble." Such were the elements, with so many, and such varied hues of skin, or pigments mixed, which constituted the Egyptian people—which formed a society so strong and compact that, for more than forty centuries, its influence and existence constitute one of the most significant phenomena of the antique world. These hybrid elements elaborated a civilization called by modern ethnologists Cushitic or Chamitic, in contradistinction to the Shemitic and to the Japhetic⁴ (or Aryan.) The pre-eminent active elements in this civilization were the artists, merchants, and operatives. It was eminent for mathematical and astronomical science, for architecture, the mechanic arts, and a highly elaborated administration. And this Egyptian or Chamitic civilization, too, preceded by many centuries the Shemitic and Aryan cultures.

The origin of the denomination *Chamites* and *Cushites* has long been the subject of numerous ethnologic researches, while comparative philology, which has proved itself so potent in the solution of innumerable race-problems, has also been interrogated. The question is, by what name did the Egyptians call themselves or their land; and what meaning did they attach to such names? K-M

(whence *Kam, Kem, Kemi, Cham*) signifies "the black land;" though, according to Champollion, it implies "the pure land;" while others give it the meaning of "the sceptre." At any rate, *Cham* signifies "black" in Egyptian and its ancient dialects—those of Thebes and Memphis, for instance, as also in the Coptic. Egypt proper was called by its inhabitants "the black land" on account of the appearance of its soil; it was black in contradistinction to the *red* land (or Descher, *i.e.*, "desert") which surrounded the Nile valley. The Hebrews borrowed the word from the Egyptians, and transferred it from a geographic to an ethnical name—or rather, perhaps, this application was made by subsequent commentators on the Hebrew writings. Neither was the denomination *Cush* (Egyptian *Kus, Kês-i-or, Kās*) used by the Egyptians for their own land or people. They employed it, as would appear, to denominate lands situated south of Egypt proper; for the Egyptian viceroys who administered the government of these lands bore the title of "*Si suten n Kus*," or king-sons of Kush. These lands were thickly inhabited by black and brown populations. In the same way, the Hebrews (or Beni-Israel) used the denominations *Cush* and *Cushites* in a generic sense for lands and tribes situated south of them; and the term expanded with the peregrinations, forced or voluntary, of the Arabs and Jews. First it was applied to lands and tribes south of Mesopotamia (Naharaina), the birthplace of Heber (Taber) and the Beni-Israel; and when they were in Egypt, either as free or captive Hyksos, they applied the term *Cush* to the region of Meroe south of the Nile; and (according to Jewish writers) Sabāa, in southern Arabia, was also inhabited by sons of Cush. It would be difficult to determine to which language the word primarily belongs, but, in all probability, early Shemitic writers transmitted it to the ancient Armenians, just as they in turn

transmitted it to western or Christian writers. Herodotus used it; and his *Kissia* is identical with that of the Hebrews and Armenians. The denomination *Chute, Chuzi, Cossaia, Cussaia*, of various dialects of Fore-Asia has reference to the tribes of *Kuschani, Kusi, Cushites*. Hence Cushites are to be found in Syria, Arabia and Africa.

In the phonetic character is found the expression M-S-R as a designation for that land. It is synonymous with the Arabic *Misr*, the Jewish *Mizraim, Mazor*, and the Syriac *Mezren*. Various explanations are given of this word, according to the significations it has in the various dialects. According to some it means "stronghold," while according to others, it signifies "extension;" by the Hebrews it was applied to Egypt, or, as some commentators assert, to the Egyptians.

Other appellations for the land of Egypt are found in the hieroglyphs and in phonetic groups. This is the case, for instance, with the group *Nehi*, signifying the sycamore, which is believed to be indigenous in Egypt.

None of these names, however, had any historical signification, so that it still remains a mystery what the native name for the primitive civilizers of the Nile valley was. As for the name *Egypt, Egyptians*, this was bestowed on them by the Greeks; and some attempt to deduce it from *Phtha* or *Ptah*, a divinity of the city and township of Memphis; and the denomination, *Land of Ptah*, is supposed to have been used in a generic sense.

The advantage of thus exploring those historical and philological labyrinths will make itself clear in succeeding chapters. Philology has explained the signification of various other ancient ethnic and national names, among others, "Hebrews," "Aryas" or "Aryans," "Pelasgi," "Greeks," "Canaanites," etc., and such explanations have frequently

proved of the highest value in letting us into the secret of their origin, character, and the direction of their activity. But there is no vestige of the antique language of the Egyptians that would lead us to suppose that absolute distinctions of race, or chattelhood based thereon, formed features of the primitive life in the Nile valley.

From various paintings, inscriptions, and philological data, science has endeavored to reconstruct the ethnological conceptions entertained by the Egyptians seventeen centuries B.C. The *red* race occupied Egypt (chiefly lower Egypt), Arabia, and part of Babylonia; the *yellow* race was spread over Palestine and Syria, reaching Africa; the *white* race stretched north and north-west of Egypt, inhabiting a part of Libya and the islands of Rhodes, Cyprus, Crete, etc.; the *black and brown* race occupied Egypt, Abyssinia, Nubia, and Southern Arabia. *Nah es. u* or *Nah si. u* was the name given to all negroes or blacks who were not Egyptians, while to the whole red-colored race they applied the term *ret, ret-u*, signifying "germ."

The Egyptian pantheon was of course the creation of the superior priests. It made each human race the creation of a separate god; and very probably all the numerous elements in the complicated social structure of the Egyptians, that is, every caste or function, even the lowest, which was still an integral part of the whole, had each its separate deity. The creator of the black race was either a god represented symbolically by a blackbird, or the god H'OR (or Horos), son of Osiris, and his avenger, who dwelt in the firmament with all the other deities.

The negro physiognomy appears on the Egyptian monuments; and this not only in the representations of common persons, but even in the case of kings, as, for instance, those of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties,

in the statues of Totmes III. and Amenophis III. The Egyptian king Sabakos was an Ethiopian by birth, and many other Pharaohs married black African princesses—Nah es. u. There can be no doubt of intermarriages having been common, between *red* and *black* Egyptians proper; and through such unions, legal and illegal, it was that the brownish rather than entirely black color of the Egyptian man of the people, as represented on the monuments, was produced. (A similar slow but uninterrupted transition and modification may be verified at the present day and under our own eyes—crisped hair, thick skulls,⁵ still prevailing). Finally, eunuchs are represented of a yellowish hue, perhaps nearer in tint to that of the yellow than the black race.

Some psychologic ethnologists affirm that the African or pure negro is to be considered as constituting a passive race, requiring fecundation by an active one. If this be the case, then the Egyptians solved the question. The red and dominant race drew no impassable lines of demarcation by chattelhood; and the black population formed the most vital element of the social structure.

At the threshold of what our limited knowledge considers as positive history, therefore, we meet a highly developed society and nation, which for long centuries enjoyed a political existence, normal when compared with contemporaneous and surrounding nations, and *domestic slavery neither lay at the basis of the structure, nor formed an integral element of Egyptian life*. In the monuments, paintings, and inscriptions which remain as records and reminiscences of Egypt's palmy ages, no traces are found in the regular national and domestic economy, of agricultural or industrial labor which could have been performed by slaves or chattels. Slaves and slavery existed in Egypt, not as an intrinsic and integral part of society, but as an

unhealthy excrescence—not under the sanction of right or law, but as the result of a violation of both. Egyptian slavery was an atonement for social and personal crime—an abnormal monstrosity, and not the normal and vital force of Egyptian activity. If slavery had been a normal social institution, it would have had its deity and its rites; but, as exclusively the result of a disease, it was regulated and dealt with as such.

Egyptian slaves consisted of prisoners of war made on the field of battle, or captives taken in forays made into neighboring or distant countries. In early times, also, all strangers whom accident or tempest threw on the shores of Egypt, and who had no claims to a legal hospitality, were enslaved; for, for centuries Egypt was closed against the intrusion of foreigners—certain merchants and traffickers only being specially excepted. Furthermore, conquered countries paid their tribute partly in children, who thus became slaves. All these slaves were the property of the Pharaohs, who employed them in various ways, distributed them to their officials, sold them to their subjects of all castes, or to domestic and foreign traffickers. But the exportation of slaves belongs to a later period—the epoch of Egypt's historical decay. Slaves were imported, but not exported, as there was no special economical slave-breeding for this or other purposes.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the generally known fact of the captivity and enslavement of the Jews, or to detail the researches concerning the Hyksos—first slaves, then masters and rulers, and finally again overpowered and reduced to captivity. But beside these Shemites, Hebrews—be they Hyksos or not—all other races and nations were at some time or other captives and slaves in Egypt. The Pharaohs warred with Asiatics, and especially with what is

now called Caucasian races; and the monuments show that red, white, and yellow slaves taken in war were far more numerous than the blacks.

Egyptians condemned for any kind of criminal offence became slaves, or were condemned to public hard labor. As equality before the law prevailed in Egypt, a person belonging to the superior caste (red-skin) was liable thus to become a slave in his own country. Contrary, however, to the custom of almost the whole of antiquity, and even of earlier Christian times, the Egyptians never reduced debtors to personal slavery. A debtor was not personally responsible, and could not be sold into slavery by his creditor.

Slaves of every kind might be redeemed and manumitted. They then became equal to other Egyptians, as is evidenced by the marriage of Joseph with a daughter of a high-priest, and by his eminent official position. Children born from Egyptians and their slave women, whether red, yellow, black or white, were equal in all rights, and shared the inheritance with the legitimate offspring of the same father. The father transmitted his own status to his children, according to a custom general in the East, and ascending to the remotest antiquity.

Slaves worked in the mines, and were employed on every kind of hard labor, but principally, and as far as possible, on those great and almost indestructible public works and monuments that distinguished the cities of the Nile. It was the pride of the Pharaohs to be enabled to inscribe on the structure that the work was not performed by the hands of Egyptians—referring to the hard work, such as carrying blocks, raising and preparing material, digging canals, etc. All the servants about the palace, sanctuary and villa were slaves. They belonged to all races and colors, and as such are represented on the monuments. In ancient, independent

Egypt, therefore, slavery was, in the strictest sense, limited to the household.

Such was Egypt, the most ancient of nations and civilizations. In her, slavery was an incidental and abnormal condition, and did not enter into the vitals of society during the long centuries that this society stood foremost among nations and civilizations. In the last stages of Egyptian history, however, domestic slavery did its terrible work, helped by conquests by foreigners, by the overthrow of its independence, by exactions, tributes, and all kinds of oppressions. Then only was it that political slavery, or what is called oriental despotism, became altogether fused with domestic slavery.

Various are the causes to which the decomposition and downfall of Egypt are ascribed. Some assert that Egyptian society and civilization, traversing all the stages of growth and development, logically ended in senility, decrepitude and death. Others find in the division into castes, one of the pre-eminent causes of the decline of Egypt. But, baneful and destructive as is the organization into castes, it is a blessing when compared with domestic slavery. The rigid organization of the castes was a counter-poison, a check imposed upon the extension of domestic slavery, preventing it from eating up the healthy agencies of society. The caste system—and above all priestly caste—was, to a great extent, a curb on the despotism of the Pharaohs. The castes for many centuries prevented the fusion of the two greatest social plagues: domestic and political slavery.

The all-powerful law of analogies—which in the course of these pages will be more luminously exhibited from the fate of other empires and civilizations—authorizes already the positive, and even axiomatic assertion, that the almost unparalleled by long historical life of the Egyptians, and the