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THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

"I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson.

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ORIGINAL.

For the Columbia Democrat. THE VISION OF CONFUCIUS.

A POLITICAL ALLEGORY.

"'Tis Education forms the common mind."

One pleasant afternoon in the summer of —, I walked from my cottage for the purpose of amusing myself with a ramble in a neighboring grove, after having read a very interesting debate in a deliberative body. The pleasant season of the year—the serene aspect of the heavens—the music of the birds—the verdure of the landscape, & the murmur of the rills, soothed my mind into tranquillity, and unobscured the tension of thought, occasioned by my previous reading. After having walked myself weary by gaining many a summit for a prospect, and descending many a slope to examine the brakes and the minerals along the brook, I returned to a rustic seat near my cot, shaded with lofty trees and unrobed in the pendant foliage of a grape vine which twined its tendrils round their stately branches.

I seated myself in the shade, and was soon in that indolent mood which is best adapted to that species of contemplation which has no definite object in view. A state of inaction soon increased my indolence of mind to a degree beyond that in which men are impelled by motive, and I instantly found myself in a vision. I saw a long plain or valley extending infinitely before me, to which I could perceive no definite bound. Through this valley I perceived two passages or high ways, which I plainly perceived had their beginning from one common point, and after running a vast distance in a similar direction, though not precisely parallel, I could indistinctly perceive that they were likely to have one common termination. There were various passages from one of these roads to the other, some of which were easy and others difficult of access—some were covered with blood and bones, others desolate and dreary, while some were burnished with gold and curtained with purple and scarlet, silk and velvet. I observed that all the transverse paths had an inclination from me, or onward, and that there were an infinite number of them—and that they were so constructed as to admit of being travelled only the one way: There were also apparently as many from left to right as in the opposite direction, but those which led in that course were comparatively abandoned and solitary, and showed that they had been but seldom trodden. I observed that both roads were crowded with people of all ages and sexes, but that the male part vastly preponderated in the left hand passage. As the multitude emerged from the common goal, it appeared that a number took the left hand track from the start, and even some females went with them; but the majority of the mass seemed by instinct to incline to the right, which was by far the smoother, greener, and more shady road—though I thought the other the more splendid.

Upon examining more closely, I observed that the two roads were separated by a partition of very singular material and formation. It was more than semi-transparent and extended across the collateral passages in the same manner as in the space between them. This partition was so formed as to admit persons to pass through it sometimes with, and sometimes without passport, and yet without making any orifice through it, and without deranging its parts. I observed that a few passengers were forced from the right hand to the left hand road without their consent, but that many more were forced in the opposite directions.—What appeared very singular to me was, that when one man either by himself, or through the aid of others, had passed the partition, without any laceration, he frequently drew a multitude through after him leaving no passage open. It frequently happened that a multitude who expected to be helped through were left behind—some of whom were seen with woful countenances using violent means to batter down

this subtle wall so as to admit them;—others, less stout in heart, contented themselves with heaping curses and imprecations on those who had obtained a passage. It was matter of astonishment to me to see how the crowd on the right pressed towards the wall, especially after they had made considerable progress in their journey—but those on the left almost universally drew off from the partition and walked on the extreme opposite margin of the road. Those who entered the left hand road at the goal, universally kept aloof from the dividing ground, except a solitary individual now and then, who walked near the partition, more with a view to watch those on the opposite side than from any sincere desire of going over to them; and if any one did go over he was commonly despised by those he had left. It frequently happened that individuals who had passed over from right and left, were murdered before they had made any considerable advance—and that very few escaped of all the numerous hosts who passed the partition by violence, if they ventured to the opposite side and tried to walk with those who entered at the beginning. Notwithstanding that those who stood behind could plainly see all that befel those who preceded them—and admitted that they had made an unfortunate stride—admitted that they had relinquished safety for danger—peace for anxiety—happiness for vexation, and aid & co-operation for opposition and distrust, yet they all appeared willing and even anxious to arrive at the same position themselves. I observed too in the formation of this very singular party wall, that it was so constructed as to interpose no obstacle at all to passengers at certain times and places, and that at other times and places it was utterly impossible except by the utmost violence.

Upon looking more closely I ascertained that, on some occasions, persons obtained admittance to the left road by violence so great, that the fissure in the wall was visible, and on some occasions a fearful chasm remained. These rents were in some instances repaired, and so dexterously too, as to leave no scartrace. I was much surprised to see that those who forced the passage which refused to close itself rarely halted to assist in closing it, but hurried forward to the opposite side, leaving the hole open for the convenience of any future adventurer who should choose to use it. In some few instances those on the left, made efforts to close the breach, but it was more commonly closed by those on the right and a chance time by the united labor of both. I saw several places where a breach had been repaired, which left the curtain possessed of all its former elasticity, but from the traces of blood surrounding the spot, I was led to believe that the act, either of sinking or repairing it, had been disastrous to the actors. After examining the dividing material and the transverse ways, I turned my attention to the two paths, and to those walking in them. I saw them on either side frequently loiter and examine the various objects around them—some with apparent satisfaction, many with anxious desires, & still more with disappointment and despair depicted on their countenances. They very frequently stooped down and picked up shining sand, glittering fossils, and many other substances with which the ground was profusely strewed—and I observed that those who through superior industry, superior craft, or any other cause, had secured most of these treasures, seemed to value themselves most, and commonly assumed to themselves many airs on that account. They were evidently much attached to these treasures and clung to them with the most tenacious adhesion, but still they were usually scattered with profusion, to secure a passage to the left hand road. Sometimes an individual, already in the much desired path, invited another to come through the party wall to him, and sometimes even parted with his glittering toys, or lent his hand to assist him in his passage. These instances were not very common however; and in some of the cases

that did occur, I concluded the object of this apparent kindness, was really to subvert some selfish end, and that the protegee was introduced more for the convenience of the master than of himself.

I now observed with astonishment that numbers of persons were every moment lost sight of on the left hand road, before they approached the further end and many even before they had reached half way. I could not clearly perceive the manner in which they disappeared, but found that there were numerous elevations and depressions, precipices and gulfs, in this road, and yet I could only perceive them at intervals, and never twice alike or in the same locality. From this changeable, unstable quality in this path I was led to suppose that many entered it without any knowledge of these dangers, and all without knowledge of their particular location, or any certain method of shunning them. To an inattentive observer this path was as smooth and even as the adjacent one, and much better supplied with artificial ornaments and accommodations. I looked intently on this path, and faintly and imperfectly discerned that these elevations were usually supported by arches and some by pillars—but could not ascertain on what these supports were founded. There were loors in these arches, or between the pillars, and I now saw several persons hastening forward on a lower level and simultaneously spring up to attain the higher one. I almost shrieked when I observed that out of the whole number only one reached the desired spot; several fell against the door beneath them, which being loose, swung open with their weight, and they were precipitated into the gulf below and were never heard of more. One remained standing on the level which he had before occupied. I could plainly perceive chagrin depicted on his countenance at his failure to mount the step—and he and the multitude about him renewed their preparation for a second leap with as much assiduity as if no accident had happened. I saw innumerable accidents & attempts of this kind, and on examining closely found that the failures were frequently caused by tricks. I saw a set of adroit men entangling the feet of the multitude with vines and other incumbrances to prevent their success when they made the final leap, and that many of these coils and meshes were made by persons in the right hand road.—Some who failed to attain the eminence at which they aimed fell down to their former level, and some lower, without material injury, and on recovering from the shock, walked on with as much alacrity as before, and frequently succeeded in a future attempt. I observed however that there was obvious dissatisfaction and grief manifested in the conduct of those who failed in any attempt, and that those who had failed frequently grew weaker at every failure.

Confounded with the mystical chart before me, I turned to every part of it in search of some data on which to ascertain its meaning, its beginning and its end; being disappointed in my search I exclaimed, "Oh! for an Interpreter!" when looking up I perceived before me a supernatural visage, which appeared to be viewing me with attention and interest. I feared to inquire his business, yet I anxiously desired to know—and while I was studying a phrase with which to address him, he said with ineffable sweetness, "Confucius, I am the angel of instruction, and have come in obedience to thy request to interpret in some degree the scene before thee. "The plain before thee" continued he, "is that of human life—the left hand road is that of public preferment, and the other is that of domestic avocations. The goal is the commencement of rational facility, and those taking the road of preferment from the goal are those born to hereditary honors and powers. Those who pass from the domestic road to that of preferment by the collateral passages are those who were born without hereditary honors, and by means of merit, usurpation, or any other cause, have attain-

ed distinction—and the reason that thou didst not clearly perceive the plan of the entrance into these roads, is that rationally and naturally, unaided by prejudice, all men would enter on the same track and pass to the other through their own exertions,—but owing to powers either real or supposed, some families have been permitted to enter the world with superior privileges, and hence the possibility of entering the road of preferment without any agency of their own. The partition is the constitution, charter of our rights, or frame of government, either written or otherwise, that separates the governed from those who govern—and it is more or less transparent in proportion to the right reserved to the people of inquiring into the conduct of those invested with the powers of government. The reason that the collateral passages leading from left to right are forsaken, is, that few men willingly descend from high stations to assume more humble ones voluntarily—and those who have been compelled to do so, have usually been dealt with in a more summary manner and sent to insignificance through the trap doors. With this interpretation thou canst understand the rest of the chart thyself—now therefore take this spy glass and examine its structure more minutely."

I took the glass, which my preceptor had previously adjusted, and turned it to the arches and pillars which supported the elevated parts of the road of preferment. I perceived then instantly that some of them were founded in the affections of the people—others in some real or imaginary decree of an oracle, some on superstition and ignorance, and others stood on a naked sword. My preceptor then explained: "The arches that stand on the affections of the people," said he, "are stronger in proportion to the equality with which they bear on all parts—and the eminences which are supported by them are usually attained and occupied by men from the right hand road. The arches are a firmer support than the pillars, because the more an arch is pressed the more closely its parts adhere, and incline to one common centre. The arches are those governments which encircle, cover and protect all their citizens; and the pillars are those which build up one order of society to the proscription of all others. The pillars are not so safe a support as the arches, inasmuch as they consist of but one part in a detached situation, and all weight added to it tends to destroy it, because it tends to a separation and destruction of that unity. They are further less safe, because the foundation is more narrow, bears more unequally on the people, (even if the foundation be in their affections at all,) and thus a heavy pressure on the column destroys the base by reason of its small size. But the columns are very frequently raised on nothing better than ancient tradition of hereditary capability to sustain it—and that capability sanctioned by no other argument than a sword's point. Some other columns stand on a naked sword alone, and the moment the weight increases beyond that which the strength of a sword will sustain, it must inevitably fall." I then turned the glass towards the termination of the road, and perceived that the two ended infinitely nearer together than they were in the middle. There were a few splendid receptacles at the end of either road, and I found numerous individuals arrived at them—but the greater number were landed in the common depository—OBLIVION. Here, however, I discerned one or two places at which the collateral roads leading from left to right crossed the path of "domestic avocations" and ended their pursuers in an infinitely worse situation than that which fell to the lot of most of the occupants of the latter path. This receptacle was called INFAMY: While many of the votaries of preferment ended there, but few of those travelling in the other path fell lower than oblivion.

My preceptor reminded me that I was spending much time on this subject, and suggested to me the propriety of having the lens of the Telescope so adjusted as to af-

ford a retrospective view of the plain before me. I consented, and he adjusted the glasses accordingly. I now perceived the two roads with the party wall much more dense than before; I observed a man propelled by popular force from right to left along a very plain, unstained, collateral path, till he arrived at an elevated position in the path of preferment. He mounted it without emotion, and sustained his position with dignified firmness, till having subserved the end for which he had been thrust forward, he stepped down to the common level with cheerfulness, took the first path which led back to the domestic road, and never looked back with longing eyes. I saw this man pass through two or three evolutions of this kind and finally saw him repose in the most solid, though plain depository at the further end of the way. "This man is CINCINNATUS," said my preceptor.

I applied my eye to the glass again: I saw an old gentleman high in the road of preferment, whom I took, from his costume to be a Naval officer, holding out his hands and interceding with his son, at the threshold of the way, to follow him with all speed. The youth, however, contrary to custom and the advice of his parent, inclined to the right, and after a time I saw him with ruddy countenance walking beside his mother in the domestic road. The old gentleman showed great dissatisfaction at this, and I think did some acts of violence, but the youth pressed forward, blithe and unassuming. Presently I observed a multitude pursuing this boy with darts and lances, both among the travellers on the right and left paths. He did not seem to fear them, yet he suffered several wounds. I lost sight of him sometimes, and then found him again. After a time I saw him mount a high eminence in the path of preferment, though I could not tell how he arrived there, nor see where he passed the party wall. I thought however that his father had constructed steps by which the youth was secured against the trap door beneath him, and upon which he ascended.—I now saw the party wall in certain places become more transparent—I saw an ocean, a wilderness, a tribe of Indians and a church, pass in the distance before me; after which my friend bade me listen. I did so, and keeping my eye to the glass, saw a multitude of people of every denomination, sect and party, on either side the transparent party wall; I saw them with one accord kneel down, and each one raise his voice at the same moment in prayer to God. I heard their prayers—they were all addressed in different forms and languages, and for various objects, yet all distinct and articulate, and what seemed most strange, was, that they all prayed aloud at once, and yet I heard each as distinctly as though but one had spoken. I observed the leaders walk forth and proclaim universal freedom, love and good will—but I saw, too, that his countenance betokened anger when some one laid a sword in his path. He replied by holding up to the admiring world a picture of "a lion and a lamb feeding together." After he had suffered considerably from the coils and traps set for him, I saw him enter a beautiful eminence, hung round with brown cloth at the further end of the road, where he has rested ever since. "The last man thou hast seen," said my preceptor, "is WILLIAM PENN."

"Look again," said my friend. I did so, and saw a muscular youth enter the plain by the right hand path. He was early pressed towards the party wall—he passed it—he encountered many dangers, but commonly reached his object—the wall grew more opaque in places—he returned to his first path with grief solemnly depicted on his countenance. I saw a band of heroes with whom he kept counsel. I saw them assume a firm attitude, and heard them proclaim, "all men are by nature equal." I saw the first personage except from the group along sword. He took it, examined its edge and point—a solemn sense of duty seemed to have chased away all minor con-