

**BLACK DIAMONDS
GATHERED IN THE DARKEY
HOMES OF THE SOUTH**

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Black Diamonds Gathered in the Darkey Homes of the South by Edward A. Pollard

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EDWARD A. POLLARD

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DARKEY HOMES OF THE SOUTH.

BY

EDWARD A. POLLARD,

OF VIRGINIA.

New-York:

PUDNEY & RUSSELL, PUBLISHERS,

No. 79 JOHN-STREET.

1859.

PREFATORY.

THE writer of these simple pages has prepared them for publication from a collection of hasty and unstudied letters, on the subject of slave life in the South, which were originally addressed to DAVID M. CLARKSON, Esq., "Glenbrook," Newburgh, N. Y., a gentleman whose friendship is one among those in the North that he has greatly prized, and whose cultivated patriotism is of that broad and noble type that he has ever fervently admired. The letters are not elaborated: the author wrote them from what he found in his heart. Whether he shall add still further to them will depend upon the reception by the public of this humble offering.



"SLAVE LIFE IN THE SOUTH."*

In general we are strongly averse to mixing up special questions in ethics or in politics with what is called polite literature. Artistically viewed, we doubt whether the mixture is ever allowable. Even satiric poetry, we take it, forms no exception to the rule; for it is the province of that species of literature to attack wickedness and folly from the standpoint of admitted maxims of morality and wisdom, not to agitate debatable or unsettled problems. The introduction into the novel or poem of subjects pertaining to strict polemics or to severe philosophy, as the main purpose of the work, produces an incongruous association, which is never agreeable and is often disgusting. Who wants to read a novel designed to illustrate the beauties of free trade or a protective tariff? Who *does* read Montgomery's maudlin poem, or Longfellow's sentimental cant in rhyme, on the awful sin of negro slavery? Since the publication of Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which led the van of a frightful procession of books of a similar order on both sides of the slavery question, every reader of experience, taste, and discrimination, is predisposed to turn with loathing from any issue from the press whose title page has a perceptible squinting toward the vexed and vexatious subject. He is inclined to avoid it as a premeditated bore and deliberate swindle—a delusion and a snare—a cunning "dodge," by which he may be made the victim of self-inflicted twaddle. Of course there is frequently much matter of pith and moment in the numerous books in which the discussion of the slavery question, in all or a few of its aspects, is thrown into the shape of stories or sketches. Indeed, there are some that touch the subject in a way so incidental and natural, and with so little of a partisan or disputatious spirit, that if the predisposition against them be once overcome, they may be read with equal entertainment and instruction.

* From the *New Orleans Delta*, Editorial.

Among the last productions to which we allude, we unhesitatingly place a small and unpretending volume, being a series of short sketches of slave life in the South, in the form of letters originally addressed by the author, Edward A. Pollard, of Washington City, to his friend, David M. Clarkson, of Newburgh, New York.

The author appears to be a thorough Southerner in education, opinion, sympathy, and attachment; yet, his letters are *remarkably free from sectional prejudice and acerbity*, and, in truth, contain sketches that are amongst the *most catholic, and tolerant, and genial*, we ever had occasion to peruse. He would seem to have travelled much, to have observed much, and to know much of various countries and peoples. But the negro nature he especially knows, profoundly, intimately; knows it, not by intellection merely, but also by heart; knows it, not through the cold light of ethnological science only, but most of all, through the warm, enkindling recollections of boyhood and youth. The negro, who, in his true nature, is always a boy, let him be ever so old, is better understood by a boy, than by a whole academy of philosophers, unless the boy element in the said philosophers is unusually long-lived and prosperous. The author, in this case, guided by his boy-knowledge of the negro, cannot misconceive or untruthfully delineate him. How appreciative, how loving, how tender and sympathetic, he is in his delineations, we will let a few extracts show.

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LETTER OF THANKS FROM THE AUTHOR TO
HORACE GREELEY, ESQ.

WASHINGTON, JUNE 20, 1859.

HORACE GREELEY, Esq.,

Editor New-York Tribune.

MY DEAR SIR: I undoubtedly owe you many thanks for the extraordinary and flattering marks of attention you have bestowed upon my little book of sketches of Slave Life in the South. You have not made them the subject of an ordinary "book notice." You have not bestowed upon them an obscure and stinted paragraph in the literary corner of the *Tribune*. But you have done me the honor of devoting a long editorial to the special subject of the interest of my literary performance. That I have not acknowledged this extraordinary honor sooner has not been, I assure you, my dear sir, for lack of appreciation, but in waiting for occasion to mature wherein I might make my acknowledgments most properly to you.

I was aware that the subject of my little book (the "almighty nigger") was a tender one with you. I had, I must confess, also heard among the miserable, ignorant people of the South many had accounts of you. You had been represented to me as a curious old man, doting on "niggers," and deriding all white persons who fancied themselves superior to your idols. Indeed, report said, that you had taken your models for manners from the negroes, and that, in speaking of your superiors, you were in the habit of adopting that coarse insolence sometimes displayed by Cuffy in adverting to white people at a distance.

Can you then be surprised, sir, that, with such slanders of you made familiar to my mind, I should have heard with some degree of tremulousness that you had devoted a long editorial of criticism to my unobtrusive little book. I naturally concluded from the slanders current in relation to you that your criticism was very adverse; first, because it was