

civilized world in withdrawing their allegiance from the British Crown, and dissolving their connection with the mother country."

What? Is that all? Is that little heap of quicksand the whole substructure on which a new organization of society was to be built? The whole foundation upon which the proud and ponderous edifice of the United States rests? They did, then, not mean all men, when they said all men. They intended, perhaps, even to disfranchise those free blacks who in five of the original thirteen colonies enjoyed the right of voting? They meant but the white race. Oh, no, by no means, the whole white race; not the Germans, not the French, not the Scandinavians; they meant but British subjects. "British subjects on this continent being equal to British subjects born and residing on the other side of the great water!"

There is your Declaration of Independence, a diplomatic dodge, adopted merely for the purpose of excusing the rebellious colonies in the eyes of civilized mankind. There is your Declaration of Independence, no longer the sacred code of the rights of man, but an hypocritical piece of special pleading, drawn up by a batch of artful pettifoggers, who, when speaking of the rights of man, meant but the privileges of a set of aristocratic slaveholders, but styled it "the rights of man," in order to throw dust into the eyes of the world, and to inveigle noble-hearted fools into lending them aid and assistance.

These are your boasted Revolutionary sires, no longer heroes and sages, but accomplished humbuggers and hypocrites, who said one thing and meant another; who passed counterfeit sentiments as genuine, and obtained arms and money and assistance and sympathy on false pretences!

There is your great American Revolution, no longer the great champion of universal principles, but a mean Yankee trick — a wooden nutmeg — the most impudent imposition ever practiced upon the whole world!

That is the way Mr. Douglas wants you to read and to understand the proudest pages of American history! That is the kind of history with which he finds it necessary to prop his mongrel doctrine of popular sovereignty! That is what he calls vindicating the character and the motives and the conduct of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Thus he did not blush to slander Jefferson, who, when speaking of his country, meant the world and, when speaking of his fellow citizens, meant mankind; and Franklin, in whose clear head theory and practice were the same, and who, having declared "all men to be created free and equal," became the first president of the first great Abolition Society; and John Adams, the representative of that State which abolished slavery within its limits with one great stroke of legislation; and Washington, who declared it to be "his fondest wish to see slavery abolished by law," and affixed to the Declaration of Independence the broad signature of his heroic sword; and Madison, who deemed it "absurd to admit the idea of property in man;" and of the framers of the constitution, who took care not to disgrace that instrument with the word "slavery," and, before adopting it finally, blotted out from the extradition clause the word "servitude," avowedly because it signified the condition of a slave, and substituted the word "service," avowedly because it signified the condition of a freeman.

Thus Mr. Douglas dares to speak of all those true men, who, after having proclaimed their principles in the Declaration, endeavored to introduce them into practical life in



almost every State, in the way of gradual emancipation! That they have failed in this, is it a fault of theirs? It shows not that they were less great and sincere, but that subsequent generations were hardly worthy of so noble an ancestry!

There is Mr. Douglas's version of your history. He despairs of converting you without slandering your fathers. His present doctrines cannot thrive, unless planted in a calumny on the past. He vindicates the signers of the Declaration of Independence! Indeed, they need it sadly. I see the illustrious committee of five rise from their graves, at their head Thomas Jefferson, his lips curled with the smile of contempt, and I hear him say to Mr. Douglas:

"Sir, you may abuse us as much as you please, but have the goodness to spare us with your vindications of our character and motives."

It is a common thing that men of a coarse cast of mind so lose themselves in the mean pursuit of selfish ends as to become insensible to the grand and sublime. Measuring every character and every event in history by the low standard of their own individualities, applying to everything the narrow rule of their own motives, incapable of grasping broad and generous ideas, they will belittle every great thing they cannot deny, and drag down every struggle of principles to the sordid arena of aspiring selfishness, or of small competing interests.

Eighteen hundred years ago, there were men who saw nothing in incipient Christianity but a mere wrangle between Jewish theologians, got up by a carpenter's boy, and carried on by a few crazy fishermen.

Three hundred years ago, there were men who saw in the great reformatory movement of the sixteenth century, not the

emancipation of the individual conscience, but a mere fuss kicked up by a German monk who wanted to get married.

Two hundred years ago, there were men who saw in Hampden's refusal to pay the ship money, not a bold vindication of constitutional liberty, but the crazy antics of a man who was mean enough to quarrel about a few shillings.

And now there are men who see in the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution, not the reorganization of human society upon the basis of liberty and equality, but a dodge of some English colonists who were unwilling to pay their taxes.

But the dignity of great characters and the glory of great events find their vindication in the consciences of the people. It is in vain for demagogism to raise its short arms against the truth of history. The Declaration of Independence stands there. No candid man ever read it without seeing and feeling that every word of it was dictated by deep and earnest thought, and that every sentence of it bears the stamp of philosophical generality.

It is the summing up of the results of the philosophical development of the age; it is the practical embodiment of the progressive ideas, which, very far from being confined to the narrow limits of the English colonies, pervaded the very atmosphere of all civilized countries. That code of human rights has grown on the very summit of civilization, not in the miry soil of a South Carolina cottonfield. He must have a dull mind or a disordered brain, who misunderstands its principles; but he must have the heart of a villain, who knowingly misrepresents them.

Mr. Douglas's ambition might have been satisfied with this ignominious exploit. But the necessities of the popular sovereignty doctrine do not stop there. After having tried to



explain away the fundamental principles underlying this Republic, which are hostile to slavery and its extension, Mr. Douglas finds it exceedingly inconvenient to encounter facts which prove, beyond doubt, that these principles, from a mere theoretical existence, rose to practical realization. Popular sovereignty, which is at war with the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence, demands the slaughter of the ordinance of 1787, and Mr. Douglas is up to the task. He does not stop at trifles.

And here we must return to the "Harper's Magazine" manifesto. He leads us through a century of colonial history, in order to show that the people of the colonies claimed the right to legislate on the subject of slavery. And, remarkably enough, all the instances quoted show a uniform tendency adverse to the peculiar institution.

Mr. Douglas then proceeds to discover the germs of his popular sovereignty doctrine in the first congressional legislation concerning the Territories. I will not undertake to criticise that singular historical essay, although some of its statements are such as to make the freshmen of our colleges smile. The "statesman" Douglas does not seem to be aware that the ability to read history ought to precede the attempt to write it.

He leads us back to the Congress of 1784. Mr. Jefferson and his colleagues have just executed the deed of cession of the Northwestern Territory, and the same Mr. Jefferson, as chairman of a committee, then submits "a plan for the temporary government of the Territories ceded or to be ceded by the individual States to the United States."

Mr. Douglas proceeds to describe how the Territorial governments were to be organized, what rights and powers were put into the hands of the people, and how they were to be

exercised; and, after having demonstrated that the term "new States" meant the same thing which is now designated by "Territories," he comes to the conclusion that the spirit pervading that plan was in exact consonance with his doctrine of "popular sovereignty."

Mr. Douglas ostentatiously calls this "the Jeffersonian plan." "It was," says he, "the first plan of government for the Territories ever adopted in the United States. It was drawn by the author of the Declaration of Independence, and revised and adopted by those who shaped the issues which produced the Revolution, and formed the foundations upon which our whole system of American government rests."

But Mr. Douglas skips rather nimbly over the significant fact that the same "author of the Declaration of Independence" put into that plan a proviso, excluding slavery from the Territories. Was that a mere accident? Mr. Jefferson showed thereby, conclusively, that, in his opinion, the exclusion of slavery by congressional legislation was by no means inconsistent with the spirit of "popular sovereignty" which Mr. Douglas discovers in the plan of 1784; but this does not disturb Mr. Douglas.

"The fifth article," says he, "relating to the prohibition of slavery, having been rejected by Congress, never became a part of the Jeffersonian plan of government for the Territories, as adopted April 23, 1784."

Although with a large numerical majority in its favor (sixteen to seven), this article did indeed fail to obtain a constitutional majority, the vote of New Jersey not being counted, in consequence of there being but one delegate from that State present; yet it had been drawn up by Mr. Jefferson, introduced by Mr. Jefferson, and sustained by Mr. Jefferson's vote. Nevertheless, Mr. Douglas persists in calling



a plan, from which the peculiar Jeffersonian feature had been struck out, the "Jeffersonian plan." This is the play of Hamlet with the character of Hamlet omitted.

"This charter of compact," proceeds Mr. Douglas, "with its fundamental conditions, which were unalterable without the joint consent of the people interested in them, as well as of the United States, then stood upon the statute book unrepealed and irrevocable, when, on the 14th day of May, 1787, the federal convention met at Philadelphia."

Does Mr. Douglas not know that on the 16th of March, 1785, a proposition was introduced in Congress by Rufus King, to exclude slavery from the States described in the resolve of April 23, 1784, and to make this provision part of the compact established by that resolve? Does he not know that this provision, restoring the Jeffersonian feature to the "Jeffersonian plan," was committed, by the vote of eight States against four?

Does he not know that the plan of 1784 never went into practical operation, but was expressly set aside by Congress in 1787? Does he not know that the ordinance of 1787 was the first legislative act ever practically organizing a Territory of the United States, and that one of its most prominent features was the proviso excluding slavery from all the Territories then in possession of the United States?

Mr. Douglas's historical recollections of the ordinance of 1787 seem to be very indistinct. Indeed, he deems it only worthy of an occasional, passing, almost contemptuous notice. He speaks of it as "the ordinance of the 12th of July, 1787, which was passed by the remnant of the Congress of the Confederation, sitting in New York, while its most eminent members were at Philadelphia, as delegates to the federal convention."

For three quarters of a century, people were in the habit of thinking that the ordinance of 1787 was an act of the highest order of importance, but we now learn that it was a rather indifferent affair, passed on an indifferent occasion, by an exceedingly indifferent set of fellows, while the plan of 1784, a mere abstract program, completely overruled by subsequent legislation, is represented as the true glory of the age. How is this?

The reason is obvious. Mr. Douglas belongs to that class of historians who dwell upon those facts which suit their convenience, and unceremoniously drop the rest. I once heard of a Jesuit college where they used a text book of history, in which the French Revolution was never mentioned, while the Emperor Napoleon figured there only as a modest Marquis Bonaparte, who held a commission under Louis XVII, and fought great battles for the glory of the Catholic Church.

So it is with Mr. Douglas and the history of this country. He ignores the universal principles of the Declaration of Independence, and represents the great founders of the Republic as merely paving the way for his "great principles," while a few village politicians get up an obscure ordinance, adverse to the general tendency of things.

But as those Jesuits never could prevent their students from peeping out of their college windows into the wide world, where they perceived a very different state of things, so Mr. Douglas cannot prevent us from travelling out of the yellow covers of "Harper's Magazine," into the open records of history, where we find Mr. Jefferson's anti-slavery clause, although accidentally lost in 1784, strenuously insisted upon by the leading spirits of the Republic, incorporated in the great act of 1787, solemnly reaffirmed by the first Congress