

It had previously been imagined that an impassable gulf separated the two races; but now it is proved that more than half that space can, in a few generations, be successfully passed over, and the humble negro of the coast of Guinea has shown himself to be one of the most imitative and improvable of human beings. Yet the experiment may still be defeated, not so much by the fanaticism of abolitionists, or the prejudices of those slave-owners who are called perpetualists, who maintain that slavery should be permanent, and that it is a blessing in itself to the negro, but by the jealousy of an unscrupulous democracy invested with political power. Of the imminent nature of this peril, I was never fully aware, until I was startled by the publication of an act passed by the Legislature of Georgia during my visit to that state, December 27th, 1845. The following is the preamble and one of the clauses:—

“An act to prohibit colored mechanics and masons, being slaves, or free persons of color, being mechanics or masons, from making contracts for the erection of buildings, or for the repair of buildings, and declaring the white person or persons directly or indirectly contracting with or employing them, as well as the master, employer, manager, or agent for said slave, or guardian for said free person of color, authorizing or permitting the same, guilty of a misdemeanor,” and prescribing punishment for the violation of this act.

“Section 1.—Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That from and after the 1st day of February next, each and every white person who shall hereafter contract or bargain with any slave, mechanic, or mason, or free person of color, being a mechanic or mason, shall be liable to be indicted for a misdemeanor; and, on conviction, to be fined, at the discretion of the Court, not exceeding two hundred dollars.”

Then follows another clause imposing the like penalties on the owners of slaves, or guardians of *free persons of color*, who authorize the contracts prohibited by this statute.

I may first observe, in regard to this disgraceful law, which