



Writings on Slavery and the American Civil War

Harriet Martineau

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Writings on Slavery and the American Civil War Harriet Martineau

A leading social reformer and pioneering abolitionist, British journalist Harriet Martineau fueled the debate over the abolition of slavery that raged on both sides of the Atlantic before the American Civil War. Her impassioned writings about abolition—with more than fifty essays and articles collected in this premier annotated edition—provide piercing insights into American society, politics, and the issue of slavery.

Determined to give a fair, objective hearing to both sides of the American slavery debate, Martineau crossed the ocean in 1834 and discovered a nation in turmoil. As a prominent writer, she was vigorously courted by both opponents and supporters of slavery who sought her endorsement for their political cause. From northern mansions to southern plantations, from Congress and President Jackson's White House to hospitals, factories, and slave quarters, people opened their doors to Martineau, providing her an unusually comprehensive view of American life.

Shocked by the intensity of the controversy over slavery, and inspired by the bravery and defiance of abolitionists who campaigned in the face of social pressure and physical danger, Martineau publicly declared her support of abolition in 1835. Joining the ranks of the abolitionists made Martineau a prime target for persecution, and the remainder of her stay in America was fraught with death threats. She returned to England and promoted her cause by writing for the British periodical press, a career that would span the next thirty-five years. Martineau's friend and fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison praised her as a "social heretic" whose compulsion to uphold the moral ground of human dignity and freedom outweighed any concern with popular opinions about her character or reputation. Twenty years after her dramatic American tour, Martineau wrote with pride that her name was "still reviled" in the South.

One of the first women to earn a living by her pen, Martineau never faltered in the lifelong crusade that placed her in the forefront of political and social reform efforts. *Writings on Slavery and the American Civil War* conveys one woman's persistent call for absolute, immediate, and universal emancipation.

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