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| **Title:**  The Gathering Storm  **Author:** Hinton Rowan  Helper  **Year:** 1857  **Type of document:**  book excerpt  **Quotation:**  "The value of all the property...in seven slave States...is less than the real and personal estate...in...New York"  **Annotation:**  In 1857, Hinton Rowan Helper (1829-1909), the son of a western North Carolina farmer, published one of the most politically influential books ever written by an American. *The Impending Crisis of the South,* the book argued that slavery was incompatible with economic progress. Using statistics drawn from the 1850 census, Helper maintained that by every measure the North was growing far faster than the South and that slavery was the cause of the South's economic backwardness.  Helper's thesis was that slavery was inefficient and wasteful, that it impoverished the South, degraded labor, inhibited urbanization, thwarted industrialization, and stifled progress. A rabid racist, Helper accompanied his call for abolition with a demand for colonization. He concluded with a call for nonslaveholders to overthrow the South's planter elite. During the 1860 presidential campaign, the New York Tribune distributed 500 copies of the book a day, considering it the most effective propaganda against slavery ever written. Many Southerners burned it, fearful that it would divide the white population.  **Full Text:**  The value of all the property, real and personal, including slaves, in seven slave States, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, and Texas, is less than the real and personal estate, which is unquestionably property, in the single state of New York. Nay, worse,; if eight entire slave States, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas, and the District of Columbia--with all their hordes of human merchandise--were put up at auction, New York could buy them all, and then have one hundred and thirty-three millions of dollars left in her pocket! Such is the amazing contrast between freedom and slavery, even in a pecuniary point of view. When we come to compare the North with the South in regard to literature, general intelligence, inventive genius, moral and religious enterprises, the discoveries in medicine, and the progress in the arts and sciences, we shall in every instance, find the contrast equally great on the side of Liberty.  It gives us no pleasure to say hard things of the Old Dominion, the mother of Washington, Jefferson, Henry, and other illustrious patriots, who, as we shall prove hereafter, were genuine abolitionists; but the policy which she has pursued has been so utterly inexcusable, so unjust to the non-slaveholding whites, so cruel to the Negroes, and so disregardful of the rights of humanity at large, that it becomes the duty of every one who makes allusion to her history, to expose her follies, her crimes, and her poverty, and to publish every fact, of whatever nature, that would be instrumental in determining others to eschew her bad example....  Non-slaveholders of the South! farmers, mechanics and workingmen, we take this occasion to assure you that the slaveholding politicians whom you have elected to offices of honor and profit, have hoodwinked you, trifled with you, and used you as mere tools for the consummation of their wicked designs. They have purposely kept you in ignorance, and have, by molding your passions and prejudices to suit themselves, induced you to act in direct opposition to your dearest rights and interests. By a system of the grossest subterfuge and misrepresentation, and in order to avert, for a season, the vengeance that will most assuredly overtake them ere long, they have taught you to hate the lovers of liberty, who are your best and only true friends. Now, as one of your own number, we appeal to you to join us in our earnest and timely effort to rescue the generous soil of the South from the usurped and desolating control of these political vampires. Once and forever, at least so far as this country is concerned, the infernal question of slavery must be disposed of; a speedy and absolute abolishment of the whole system is the true policy of the South--and this is the policy which we propose to pursue. Will you aid us, will you assist us, will you be freemen, or will you be slaves!...  The lords of the lash are not only absolute masters of the blacks, who are bought and sold, and driven about like so many cattle, but they are also the oracles and arbiters of all non-slaveholding whites, whose freedom is merely nominal, and whose unparalleled illiteracy and degradation is purposely and fiendishly perpetuated.... | http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/graphics/trans.gif |
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