

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

ALLEN & POLAND, PUBLISHERS.

[Published under the sanction of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society.]

CHAUNCEY L. KNAPP, EDITOR.

VOLUME I.

MONTPELIER, VERMONT, FEBRUARY 2, 1839.

NUMBER 5.

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM

Is published every Saturday morning, at \$2 a year, payable in advance. If payment be delayed till the end of the year, Fifty Cents will be added.
Advertisements inserted at the usual rates.
Subscriptions, and all letters relating to business, should be addressed to the Publishers: letters relating to the editorial department, to the Editor. Communications intended for publication should be signed by the proper name of the writer. Postage must be paid in all cases.
Agents of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society, and officers of local anti-slavery societies throughout the state, are authorized to act as agents for this paper.
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THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

For The Voice of Freedom.

MR. KNAPP:

Dear Sir—An article in your last alludes to the very common declaration of, I do not say how interested, a multitude, that the slave of the South is better fed, better clothed, and happier than the free laborer of the North.—I send you the following for insertion if you think it advisable. I send it for obvious reasons. If there be a sin, which the obliquity of the human heart can warrant, or the full circle of human conduct can comprehend,

—“of so frightful mein
As to be hated needs but to be seen”—

That sin is American Slavery. In reference to this, the persuasion of every one who has impartially looked at the subject, must be full and settled. To abhor the system we have only to inform ourselves with regard to it. But of the majority of Northern people, the knowledge of it must be knowledge derived from testimony. From experience we have no knowledge of the system, save when some democratic mob starts into being for the purpose of performing a civil miracle, by contravening, or suspending the laws of our most glorious, free and perfect republic.—From observation, most of us certainly can have none. By way of testimony, we have two distinct and opposite sources of information; the one through those men who, for purposes of speculation, either commercial or political, keep up an intercourse with the South—who are ever ready to yield truth to gold, and principle to political preference; or those who visit the South for pleasure or for health, and whose circumstances or predisposition permits them to look at the pleasing side of slavery, viz. the kind and liberal hospitality of the master; the other, thro' those whose circumstances have permitted them to look at slavery with an eye of candor, and whose freedom from the bias of prejudice or interest allows them to report it with a tongue of truth. The most pernicious and invincible influence with which the friend of freedom has to contend, at the present time, is the testimony of those men who are at all events determined to report favorably—the Northern apologists for Southern slavery. To meet this with a candid, counter declaration of good, discriminating, judicious men, is certainly important. I therefore transmit to you a part of a communication from the Rev. Wm. A. Chapin, of Greensboro'—simply adding, that whoever is acquainted with that gentleman, will be satisfied that such declarations from such a man, are sufficient to put to silence at once and forever the tongue of the apologist; to condemn the system, and arouse all to efficient action for its suppression.—After preliminary remarks, Mr. C. proceeds:

“I spent nearly three years in Richmond and vicinity. I do not know that I can state any facts of peculiar interest on the subject of slavery, for while I was there—altho' I saw enough to convince me that the system is one of the utmost cruelty and oppression—yet it is difficult to state the particular facts which led my mind to this conclusion; especially as, from feelings of delicacy it seemed to be proper to shut my eyes and close my ears as far as possible to those enormities in the abuse of slaves, which would be calculated to cause uneasiness to the masters in case they should be known. I will however state some facts which were forced upon my observation while there. I resided nearly two years in the family of Conrad Webb, Esq. of Hampstead, New-Kent Co., about twenty miles from Richmond, Va. I was employed as family instructor. Mr. W. had three or four plantations, and was esteemed one of the two wealthiest men in the county. It was supposed that he owned about 200 slaves, about 75 of whom were on the home plantation. He was a member of the Presbyterian church, and was appointed Elder in the same during the time I was residing with him. He was a native of Virginia, and a graduate of a N. E. College. The slaves were called in the morning before day-light, and I believe, at all seasons of the year, that they might prepare their food and be ready for work as soon as it was light enough to see; and I know that in the season of husking corn, Oct. and Nov., they usually were compelled to work late—till 12 or 1 o'clock at night. The slaves lived in wretched log cabins, consisting of one room each, without floors or windows. I understood that their food consisted of a daily ration of 2 qts. of corn meal to each man, and one-half of that amount to a child—and once a week a small piece of meat, from one to four ounces, I have seen distributed, or a salted herring or tunc, which I understand was sometimes substituted.

“I know that Mr. W.'s slaves were better clothed than many in the neighborhood whom I occasionally saw, and I have reason to believe, were better fed also, as I heard him remark that many gave only half the rations which he

gave. I believe the slaves sometimes suffered for want of food. One evening as I was sitting in the parlor, one of the most resolute of the slaves came to the door and said, “Master, I am willing to work for you, but I want something to eat.” The only answer was, “Clear yourself.” I learnt that the slaves on the plantation had been without food all day because the man who was sent to mill could not obtain his grinding. He went again the next day and obtained his grist, but the slaves had no food until he returned. He was obliged to go about five miles. I know the slaves were sometimes severely whipped. I saw the backs of several which had numerous scars, evidently caused by long and deep lacerations of the whip; and I have good reason to believe that the slaves were generally in that condition, for I never saw the back of one exposed which was not thus marked, and from their tattered and scanty clothing their backs were often exposed. From what I saw and heard among slave-holders, I have reason to believe that a promiscuous sexual intercourse between the white males and female slaves was very common indeed. I should judge from my own observation that not half the slaves were unsexed blacks.”

The slave of the South in no good circumstances, as well fed and clothed, as contented and happy as the free laborer of the North! Farmers of Vermont willing to exchange places with the slave of Virginia!! Willing that your sisters and your daughters should take the place of the female slave!!!

WM. SCALES.

Lyndon, Jan. 19, 1839.

From The Friend of Man.

SPEECH OF ALVAN STEWART, Esq.,
Before the Vermont Legislative Committee,
(Concluded.)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

May it please the Honorable Committee.

We will now look at slavery, in the District of Columbia. This district has been a sort of manufactory, in which the grand experiment has been tried for thirty-eight years, by the consent of the nation, to see whether men can be converted into beasts, or things, by putting them into the same legal scale, annexing the same legal consequences to their acts, except where cruelty is to be practised; there the punishments would, from their variety, and rigour, assume that the offenders were above men, yea, the compeers of angels. One would think the 200 years of slavery and debasement, on this continent, of man, in the shape of a slave, was a period of sufficient length, to settle the question, whether slaves could be learned to walk on all fours, like the beasts, or not.—But no, the grandeur of his celestial descent, his heavenly lineage, the capital of mind the slave receives direct from God, will forever make an impassable gulph, between this noble, though abused immortal, and the beasts which perish.

To suppose it necessary to make a parade of constitutional learning, to convince any man, who feels and acknowledges the common import of words and sentences, is to suppose that nothing can be made certain in the English language. It is clearly expressed in the Constitution of the U. S. that Congress has power, given by the Constitution, to “legislate in all cases whatever, over the District of Columbia,” and therefore has a right to abolish slavery; the same right that it had to establish it, because that Congress adopted it, and therefore has a right to abrogate it. To say that Congress has not the power to abolish slavery in the District, is a crime against the English language, as well as our common humanity. The language is explicit beyond the most malignant carplings of the most fiendish criticism. To say it is contrary to the spirit of our Constitution, is to say that the preamble to the Constitution is false, which says “it was ordained for the purpose of establishing justice and liberty.” It is as clear as though it had been written, “Congress shall have power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.” It is one of those cases where the proposition is itself more clear, than any argument, evidence, or illustration assumed as true, can make it. “Claruius luce,” more clear than light, as the Roman orator once said. Whoever undertakes, by other arguments than the text of the Constitution itself, to make it appear that Congress has, and should exercise the abolition power it possesses, for the benefit of 7000 persons, would make the question more doubtful by words, and might as well undertake to prove the existence of the sun, by his light reflected from the moon, rather than by his own shining in all the glories of noon.

But many will assert it inexpedient to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, because the slaveholder is opposed to it. Shall we wait till the slaveholder is willing, where the nation has the power? Shall we reverse the first principles of our government, and allow the minority to rule, and commit crime, when the majority should rule, and must be responsible for all the wrong and misery which they have power to prevent?

Is the friendship of wicked men and slaveholders more important to a majority of the nation than an approving conscience, which is the voice of God, and the opinion of good men all round the world? If the free states refuse (having the power as they really possess it) to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, it becomes, truly, the sin of the North, of the free states, and on us rests the responsibility of every pain of mind or body, which may be endured by these 7000 slaves, which they would not suffer, were they free; yea, more, the horrid countenance we seem to lend to the slaveholders, in the states, where they as states, claim to have the only power to abolish slavery. Yes, slavery may put forth a very plausible defense of the system, by saying that the North, without profit from slavery, permit it to exist, when they have power to abolish it, therefore, they of the North can not consider slaveholding very wrong, or they would abolish it, where they have the odium of its existence, without the profit of its continuance. Gentlemen of the committee, we now come to the legislature of Vermont, asking it with great respect, to embody and express to Congress the desire of this sovereign state, that slavery should be immediately and forever abolished in the District of Columbia. Your citizens of this state, have besought you by their petitions on this subject to lend suffering humanity a helping hand.

The peculiar posture of affairs in the present Congress seems to invite the states to come forward in their highest legislative capacity, and rescue the Constitution of our common country from the most gross violations; violations for which every patriot should tremble for the perpetuity of our blood-bought liberties. The citizens of Vermont, as well as those of the other free states, have sent thousands and tens of thousands of petitions to Congress, praying for the abolition of slavery in the district of Columbia, and the internal slave-trade and for kindred objects; all of which in the past year, have been laid upon the table, unread, unrefereed, unprinted, undebated, and unconsidered.

Thus have the members of Congress, from the free states, bowed themselves lower, in base submission, to the footstool of slavery, than on all other propositions ever before united. But the northern members, who voted the Patton gag, before they got so low, they had to grope their way down on a ladder of perjury. There was no other invention, by which they could have debased themselves, and found for themselves so abject a point. “It was only by jumping the life to come.”

The Constitution has secured the eternal and heaven-descended right of petition to the people of this country, not that the constitution gave or conferred this right, no sirs, it barely spurs against its violation, it threw its powerful arms out in defense of this right, coeval with man. But these members of Congress, who voted for the resolution of the 21st December, 1837, to lay the petitions of the free men and women of the North on the table, unread, unconsidered, and unprinted, must stand on the page of history in all coming time as the assassins, yea, the perjured assassins of their country's reputation, for the infamous purpose of upholding slavery in the capital of the nation, and the slave-trade between the states, in its most diabolical form, which this world has ever seen, in the long range of 600 years.

The regicides of Charles the First, many of them perished at home on the scaffold, others died of misery and want in foreign lands, the objects of the world's contempt and scorn, for having tried, condemned, and executed their sovereign. These regicides alleged, they destroyed the king, and broke through the Constitution of England, in vindication of humanity outraged, and for the delivery of liberty from chains. But how much greater judgment should be awarded against these members of Congress, who on the 21st December, 1837, laid their sacrilegious, polluted hands upon the written Constitution of their country, after they had solemnly sworn by the retributions of the eternal judgment, to maintain its provisions; then to turn round and violate that Constitution, not as the regicides did to aid human liberty, but for the malignant purpose of transfixing liberty to a cross, and make her expire in her own temple, as a mark of open shame? Before these *constitutionicides* could withhold the consideration of the wretched slave's case, they had to walk over the dead body of the Constitution of their country.

This generation is so overcome with the bewildering cry raised against the abolitionists in behalf of the southern rights, that they have not yet opened their eyes and ears to the greatest crimes which have ever been committed on this continent; and those crimes, to add to their malignity, have been committed under the forms of the Constitution. But when truth shall triumph over delusion and the fanaticism of a mistaken and slavery-ridden age, then shall some philosophic Hume, in the next century review the distressing transactions; of this then will the 21st December 1837, be reckoned the most gloomy and disastrous day, which has distinguished the annals of this nation. If the 4th July, 1776 be a day standing pre-eminent for the grandeur of those principles which we then adopted, the 21st December, 1837, may stand as an unspacious contrast; if the former was the birth of American liberty, the latter appears like its funeral.

Behold the monstrous crime committed by the majority of the House of Representatives of the United States, as each member responded “aye” to the famous or rather infamous resolution of Patton of Virginia, of the 21st December, 1837. This resolution was passed under the torquet of the previous question, or strangled debate. The previous question according to parliamentary law, is intended to put an end to a useless and protracted debate, after all have been heard, and the question viewed, in all those shapes and forms through full and free discussion, in which they may wish to present it. Then if garrulous and prating members are disposed to wear out the patience of the House, and waste its time, the previous question may be moved, which puts an end to the protracted and exhausted debate. But here the most important question, which ever came before a deliberative body of men, was taken before a word of debate under the call or motion for the previous question, by which the House of Representatives agreed that all petitions, on the subject of slavery, unread and unconsidered should lie upon the table.

Behold five crimes committed by each member who said “aye” to this resolution, in the same breath. 1st., The Constitution was violated on the subject of petition; 2d., The previous question was prostituted to an object diametrically opposite to that for which it was intended, by which the members opposed to the Patton resolution (which was a violation of the Constitution) were constrained to give a silent vote against a mighty infraction of the Constitution, without being able to speak a single word to beseech the House, not to take this most fatal and unconstitutional leap. 3d., The members who said “aye” committed perjury, for they violated that Constitution which they had sworn to support. 4th., There was a special inhumanity, amounting to a hideous offence, in refusing to inquire into the condition of two and a half millions of slaves, or any part of them, or the laws by which they were deprived of the inestimable boon of liberty. 5th., There was moral treason committed against white and black, bond and free, every man, woman and child in the republic, in violating their rights, their liberties, their humanity struck down through the sides of the constitution; yea it was high treason against the age, the humanity of this 19th century, and the everlasting commands of the great Jehovah.

What monosyllable ever pronounced by man in any day, in any place, was so big with destruction to all the precious hopes of man? Yes, before this high decree, the slave and the freeman, the sovereign state, and an American Congress, all alike, stood speechless. This was despotism in its most solemn form, which orders the victim to be silent, which it intends for sacrifice. If the victim, the Constitution, could have spoken through its friends, and plead against her own violation, her brightest jewel would not have been ravished from her in silence.

Open the black and bloody pages of despotism, recorded in the annals of past ages, and let us see whether ever in one day, Nero, Caligula, Domitian, Dionysius, Aurelian, Bazazet, Robespierre, and Bonaparte, these flails of Almighty God, did roll back the car frightened with the most precious interests and hopes of man, as far into the night of barbarism and blood as these members of Congress, who, on the 21st December, 1837, said “aye” to the Patton slave resolution.

The amazing criminality of this transaction appears more dreadful, when it is considered that this resolution barred the only avenue of the wretched slaves, or their friends, to the District of Columbia, and denied all access to the slave territories, it cut off the hopes of the humane from the hope of abolishing the internal slave-trade, and impliedly forbid our protesting against the annexation of that stranded mass of villains, the cullings of the world's prisons, Texas.

The very reason urged by the South for her counting five of her slaves the same as three of our citizens was, that it might form a counterpoise to that power, given by the Constitution to Congress, “to regulate foreign commerce, commerce between the states and the Indian tribes.” The South contending that the North, only being interested in commerce, would regulate it to the injury of the South, whether foreign or domestic, and that the South must have an additional number of representatives, in Congress, by counting their slaves, to countervail the action of the North on questions of foreign and internal commerce.

Under the power to regulate foreign commerce, we abolished the old African slave-trade. Under the power to regulate internal commerce between the states, we petition Congress to abolish the internal slave-trade between the states. Now the South denies that Congress has the constitutional power to regulate commerce between the states, so as to confine the slaves to the states, where they now are. Yes, after we have purchased this power so dearly of the South, (which gives the South twenty eight additional members) we now find the South denying its very existence; in fact, the very consideration money, if I may so speak, for the privilege of counting five slaves as three free persons, is denied.

Why do the South deny it? Because it is the great door to the slave Bastille, left in the side of the constitutional temple, which, when we have power to abolish it in the District of Columbia, we shall have, the same day, power to enact a law, that no slave shall be taken or removed, or sold from one state to another, under the penalty of perpetual imprisonment or death. What is to be the effect of such a law on slavery? First, to confine the slaves to the states, where they are on the day of the enactment of the law. The state of Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the western parts of the Carolinas have, for twenty years past, maintained themselves by selling their surplus slaves to the states of Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas, and not by selling the productions of slaves, but by selling slaves themselves, as the great article of commerce to the great cotton and sugar districts of the far South. Now if these slave growing states, in the north end of the slave section of the country, were unable to sell slaves, the master and slave could not live together, the slaves of Maryland and Virginia would eat up their masters, and the masters must emancipate in self-defense, to save themselves from destruction. Again, the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and others, if they could not import slaves from the north end of the slave region, there is such havoc annually by death, among the slaves of the great planters, by the unhealthiness of the climate and the cruel treatment of overseers, than in less than seven years, if no slave could be imported, into those southern regions, one half of the plantations would lie uncultivated for want of slaves.

This power, to regulate commerce between the states, is one of the mighty powers of the confederacy which has lain hitherto, in a great degree, dormant, altho' purchased at such a cruel and bitter expense, now amounting to twenty-eight members of Congress; yet it may, if properly wielded, become the great battering ram to knock down the fortifications of slavery. The power to regulate foreign commerce was the battle-axe with which we sundered the neck of the old African slave-trade, in six successive cuts, of Congress, enacted at different periods from 1808 to 1824.

Let no one say that the word “regulate,” as used in the Constitution, may not mean to alter, change, destroy, abolish, or annihilate. That question has been settled in favor of the above definitions by every department of the government, by both Houses of Congress, the President, yes, and several times by the Supreme Court of the United States. These questions of “regulation” under the Constitution, have been up for consideration, by our Senate, in forming treaties of peace; declarations of war by Congress, embargoes, non-intercourse acts—this word “to regulate” foreign commerce, and commerce between the states, has drawn forth an immense amount of ingenious reasoning to restrict the word in its meaning, but the Supreme Court of the United States, as well as the other departments of government, have declared that Congress have power to annihilate and destroy any branch of commerce, for this is one mode of regulating it, if Congress in their wisdom see fit to adopt it. The abolition of the old African slave-trade had no constitutional authority for its exercise, except what was derived from the Constitution, which confers on Congress the power to regulate foreign commerce. The regulation Congress adopted was the utter abolition and annihilation of the trade.

By the abolition of the African slave-trade, the internal slave-trade sprung up in this country, with

more than all the horrors which belonged to this bloody commerce on the African shore.

The bloody slave coasts of the Gambia, and Senegal of Africa, were transferred to the Potomac, the James, the Pedee, Cooper and Ashley and the Savannah rivers. Washington, Georgetown, Alexandria, Richmond, Charleston and Savannah were the marts of blood, where those human being contracts were made, where wives and husbands, parents and children were torn asunder, and uttered the frightful shriek and farewell of despair. Yes, these towns have been the grand slaughter house of the holiest of the human ties. When inquest shall be made for blood, well might these Chorazins, these Sodoms and Gomorrah cry for the Alleghanies to fall on them, and hide them from the accusing ghosts of ruined and thrice murdered families! This trade in slaves on the high seas, or on the coast of Africa, American law and American humanity has pronounced the crime which man can commit against man, and has declared its horrid perpetrators, pirates, and punishable with death. Oh! horrible inconsistency! That which is piracy 3000 miles off, by our laws becomes, by the same lawgivers and a part of the same code when transacted at home in our own sight, so far from being the highest of human offences, it becomes respectable business, not inconsistent with the duties of private citizens, a judge; a President of the United States, a member of any of the Christian churches, yea, a minister in those churches; such a mighty change takes place in the criminal code of the United States by sailing through some 40 degrees of longitude, from the coast of Africa to the capital of the United States at Washington.

Georgia and South Carolina threatened their sister states that they would not come into the Union, unless the Constitution of the United States guaranteed the continuance of the old African slave-trade twenty years after the adoption of the Constitution, because, they alleged they could purchase slaves direct from Africa, or catch them in Africa, for half the sum they would have to pay the old states of Virginia and Maryland for slaves; and these states further urged that they would not come into the Union, unless the free states would consent to become kidnappers and catch the fugitives slaves for them, when they ran into the free states. For as they had run the slaves down in Africa, and conferred so great a blessing on the country by bringing them over, therefore, to encourage the South in its laudable undertakings, the South insisted that the North, or free states were to act the part of shepherds' dogs to scare, catch and return their wandering flocks, when they came into the northern parts of the land. So these chivalrous states insisted on three points as “sine qua non!” 1st., The African slave trade should be extended twenty years. 2d., That the free states should deliver up fugitive slaves; and 3d., That they should count, for the basis of congressional representation, five of their slaves the same as three of our citizens.— Before the adoption of the Constitution, a constant system of threatening was kept up, that unless all the humanity in the world was violated, they would not come into the confederacy; and now the cry is that unless we permit these same states to be considered honorable pirates, they will go out of the Union. It has always been held over our heads, in terror, first, that they would not come in; and now that they are in, that they would not stay in. And so, these chivalrous states have kept the North holding its breath, occasionally having *connoption* fits, lest the chivalrous human-flesh importers should become enraged at our northern maxims, contained in the Declaration of Independence, that they would run out of the Union down some steep place, and get choaked in the sea.

This nation will, in a short time, be divided into two great parties which will swallow all others up, to wit: an anti-slavery one on one side, and a pro-slavery one on the other; the first holding that all men are created equal; and that labor is honorable in all; and liberty the right of all; while the latter or pro-slavery party holds that one portion of the country is born to be slaves to the other; and that labor is dishonorable, and a badge of meanness, and a kindred principle with slavery.

The liberty-loving, labor-honoring party; the slave-holding, labor-despising party—to this complexion the people of this country must come at last. This will be the grand division between the political parties of this country.

Ye men and women of Vermont, I know I need not ply you with arguments, to show which side of this important alternative you should espouse.

You have always been on the side of humanity and justice in this great question of slavery. Every thing here teaches you liberty; these rocks and hills, these inexorable winters,—all command you as from above, be industrious, laborious, frugal, and just. Your position and soil are perpetual guarantees that you will be industrious, that labor must be considered honorable; where these things exist men will love liberty and hate slavery, or history is a liar and experience without instruction.

EXPEDENCY.

Our fathers have left us one of the most instructive lessons ever given to mankind, showing the folly of expediency; and, its wickedness when adopted by a nation, in opposition to the plain command of God, and the dictates of humanity, and the sober counsels of exact justice. It may not be unprofitable to glance at some of these governmental gales of expediency, into which our fathers and the present generation of public men have been betrayed, under the notion that present expediency required us, as a nation, to use it to commit crimes, at which, as individuals we should shudder. At the time of the Declaration of Independence, the nation was like the great deep at the time of the flood, broken up from its foundations, and casting off the allegiance that bound us to the British empire. Society was resolved in this republic into its original elements, 3,000,000 being the entire population; 500,000, or one sixth of whom had been, and were held as slaves.

All men must have seen by our Declaration of Independence, and almost every state paper, all congressional resolutions, manifestoes, petitions,