

# THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

ALLEN & POLAND, PUBLISHERS.

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

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VOLUME I.

MONTPELIER, VERMONT, APRIL 6, 1839.

NUMBER 14.

## FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE VERMONT ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

The Executive Committee, in again presenting their Report, renew their expressions of confidence in the soundness of the cause in which they and the Society of which they are the agents, are engaged, considered either as a question of morality, religion, philanthropy or politics; and their unwavering conviction, judging from all that has transpired within the progress of the abolition effort, and especially within the last year, that the downfall of the hideous system against which our organization is arrayed is certain, and not far distant. The pledges of successful advancement in the great struggle for freedom in which we are enlisted, are furnished on every hand; and the presages of an approaching triumph thicken on every side. It is, therefore, with cheerfulness and alacrity that the committee once more give an account of their labors for the unpitied and helpless outcasts of our land, and once more cheer on all who are coadjutors with them in such labors, to prepare themselves for more untiring and devoted efforts for the time to come. If our cause were faltering, it should be our pride, as it is our duty, to infuse new vigor into its operations; but if it is advancing with an unimpeded and accelerated step to the great consummation for which we all pray, that fact should, of itself, inspire us with new energies for the work, and unite us in a closer union and a mightier effort to hasten that day in which the deliverance of the captive from the thralldom of the fetters and the lash, shall work out for the free a nobler emancipation—an emancipation from intolerance, prejudice, and the debasing spirit of caste.

The committee propose, in what they now have to present for the consideration of the society, to give, in the first place, a concise sketch of their own labors for the past year, and, in the second place, to offer a few general remarks upon the state of the cause, and the duties which all abolitionists owe to it.

The committee, in order to effect a more systematic effort both among themselves and the friends of abolition, have had, during the past year, regular monthly meetings, at which they have taken into consideration the necessities of the cause, and have devised such means as they deemed most effectual in meeting them.

In order to keep up an intercourse with the abolitionists of other parts of the country, and thus promote concert of action, harmony of feeling and union of effort, the committee appointed delegates to attend the anniversaries of the American and New England Anti-Slavery Societies, in both of which this society was represented. In order, also, to enlist, as far as possible, the ministers of that gospel which professes to bring peace on earth and good will to men, in the work of abolishing a system which is the nurse of discord, and hatred, and every evil passion of the human heart, and to obtain such an expression of sentiment against slavery from a large and influential denomination of christians among us as would be calculated to arrest the attention of slaveholding professors of religion, and lead them to reflection upon the tendencies and influences of their system, the committee appointed Rev. H. F. Leavitt and Rev. Jona. Blanchard, delegates to the General Convention of Congregational ministers of this State, which met at Vergennes during the last summer, with instructions, if permitted, to lay the cause of the slave, of humanity and freedom before that body, and obtain, if possible, a direct expression of opinion from it upon the sinfulness of slaveholding, and the duty of all who practice it immediately to repent of and renounce it. The delegates appeared before the convention and were heard; and the convention subsequently adopted the following resolutions:

"Whereas slavery is regarded by this Convention as morally wrong, therefore,

"Resolved, That this Convention cannot, by any opinion or act of theirs, support or give encouragement to this evil.

"Resolved, That as individuals, the members of this Convention are ready to do any thing politically and morally right, to accomplish the entire removal of slavery from this country.

"Resolved, That it is the wish and earnest request of this Convention, that our fellow-citizens in the slaveholding states should immediately make efforts to abolish slavery; and that as individuals we tender to them our prayers and our efficient cooperation in this benevolent work."

At the last annual meeting of the state society, it was recommended to the committee by the society, to hold four State anti-slavery conventions in different sections of the State for the year to come. The committee, in accordance with that recommendation, called three conventions, (being all which, in the opinion of the committee, could be held with success,) of the character above mentioned; one of which was held at Chester, one at Danville, and one at St. Albans. These conventions, as the committee are informed, were well attended, and had a salutary effect in disseminating anti-slavery principles among the community and in arousing public attention to the importance of discussing the nature and tendency of slavery.

A semi-annual meeting was also held at Montpelier, at the call of the committee, during the session of the Legislature, at which Alvan Stewart, Esq., at the request of the committee, attended. Mr. Stewart lectured several times to large and attentive audiences, composed to a considerable extent of the members of the legislature, and with others, a committee appointed for that purpose, appeared and were heard before a select committee of the legislature to whom had been referred certain anti-slavery petitions. The report of the legislative committee was favorable to the prayer of the petitioners, and the legislature, with great unanimity, passed the following explicit and plain-spoken resolutions:

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives, That our Senators in Congress be instructed and our Representatives be requested to use their utmost efforts to prevent the annexation of Texas to the United States and to procure the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia and the territories of the United States, and the slave trade between the several states and territories of the Union.

"Resolved, That the adoption by the House of Representatives of the United States on the twenty-first of December last, of the resolution by which all "petitions, memorials and papers touching the abolition of slavery, or the buying, selling or transferring of slaves, in any state, district or territory of the United States" were "laid upon the table without being debated, printed, read or referred," was a daring infringement of the right of the people to petition, and a flagrant violation of the Constitution of the United States; and we do, in the name of the people of Vermont, protest against the passage of the same, or any similar resolution by the present or any future Congress of the United States.

"Resolved, That our Senators in Congress be instructed, and our Representatives be requested to present the foregoing resolutions to their respective Houses, and use their influence to carry the same into effect.

"Resolved, That the Governor be requested to transmit a copy of the foregoing resolutions to the President of the United States and to each of our Senators and Representatives in Congress."

The committee, aware of the importance of having a general agent for the State, have had that subject constantly before them, but have unfortunately been unable to procure the services of any one to that capacity. Two persons have been appointed, one of whom declined, and the other, Rev. Joab Seeley, has not yet entered upon the duties of his appointment. Rev. Amos Dresser and Rev. Guy Beckley have been employed by the committee as agents for the society for a short time each, and the committee have also appointed ten or twelve local agents in different parts of the state, several of whom have been efficient auxiliaries of the cause.

In the course of the year the committee have, in addition to

one thousand copies of the annual report, caused to be published several circulars to the friends of abolition and the town and county societies—also petitions and remonstrances touching slavery, the slave trade, and the right of petition, addressed to the state legislature and to Congress, and have, also, published and distributed, gratuitously, one thousand copies of an Appeal to the females of Vermont, by a female, which the committee have reason to believe has done essential service to the interests of the slave.

Of the pledge of \$2,000 to the parent society, directed by the committee to be made by our delegates, there has been collected and paid since the last annual meeting the sum of \$2,259 60. Of this sum there has been paid for collecting by the parent society \$471 04, leaving the sum of \$1788 56 as the amount furnished the parent society from this state, free of expense, for the furtherance of the general interests of the cause. There has also been collected in the state \$347 34, not included in the above, making the whole amount received in the state the past year \$2606 94. Of the above sum of \$2259 60 the sum of \$500 has been raised to meet the pressing necessities of the parent society upon the personal responsibility of the members of the committee, relying upon the contributions of individuals and auxiliaries to enable them to meet the payment of the sum when the obligation against them becomes due.

After considerable difficulty and delay, the committee succeeded in making arrangements with C. L. Knapp, Esq. for the publication of an anti-slavery paper in this state, to be devoted principally to the interests of the abolition cause, and to be published under the sanction and control of the committee. In accordance with this arrangement, "The Voice of Freedom" was issued at Montpelier early in January last, under the editorial charge of Mr. Knapp, and, if sustained by the abolitionists of the state, will continue to be published until slavery shall be no more. The committee feel it both a duty and a pleasure to recommend this paper to the patronage of all friends of the anti-slavery movement, and of all who wish to become acquainted with the merits of the great question which is occupying the mind of the nation and will ere long be the absorbing topic of discussion and contest.

The committee have made considerable effort to carry into effect the library system. In addition to the personal exertions of the members of the committee, one or two agents have been employed, for a limited period, to form library societies and furnish them with books. Books, to the amount of \$750, have been purchased, and such as have not been disposed of for libraries, remain in the Anti-Slavery depository at Vergennes. The committee have considered it of vital importance to the interests of the cause, that this system should be adopted throughout the state, deeming it as among the best and most efficient means of enlightening the public mind on questions connected with slavery and its abolition, and of enkindling and increasing the zeal of abolitionists themselves in the work. They therefore recommend this branch of the anti-slavery operations, to the particular attention of the society, and the friends of abolition generally.

During the past year the whole control of the cause in this State has been relinquished by the parent society, and assumed by the committee. Notwithstanding many forcible reasons which exist for the adoption of this course, it may still be doubted whether the general interests of the cause will be promoted by it. If upon a fair trial it should be found not to succeed as well as the plan of central action through the parent society, it will, without doubt, be cheerfully abandoned. It must be manifest to all, upon the slightest reflection, that, if this system is adopted generally, the pledges of the State societies must be liberal, and must be promptly met, or the parent society will be shorn of its strength and will become entirely unable to go forward in its operations with any systematic effort.

In taking into consideration the present state of the abolition cause and the duty of its friends in relation to the means to be employed to further its advancement and success, the most prominent topic which presents itself for discussion, is the attitude assumed by Congress in regard to petitions relating to slavery. The resolutions passed by the House of Representatives on the 11th and 12th of last December, are similar in spirit and principle, and designed to effect the same object as the resolutions of Mr. Pinckney, Mr. Hawes and Mr. Patton of previous sessions of Congress, though they evince, on the part of their framers and supporters, some slight regard to public opinion, in that they embrace reasons, justificatory of the course of their movers, which were manifestly intended to satisfy the people of the propriety of their passage. That the opponents of abolition in Congress have been brought to offer reasons for the high-handed and arbitrary course which they have seen fit to pursue, is a great point gained, for when the principles for which abolitionists contend are brought to the test of scrutiny and discussion, their success is at hand. And notwithstanding the resolutions in question had for their object the stifling of discussion, yet when their framers so far departed from the position of the despot as to offer reasons for their atrocious warfare upon the constitution and rights of the people, they made themselves amenable to the bar of public opinion, and when those reasons fail them on their trial before that tribunal, they drop, from haughty dictation, into irreproachable culprits, waiting only their sentence from the indignant judiciary to which they have appealed. We propose to examine as hastily as possible, the positions taken in those resolutions. They are as follows:

"Resolved That this government is a government of limited powers; and that, by the constitution of the United States, Congress has no jurisdiction whatever over the institution of slavery in the several states of the confederacy.

"Resolved, That petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the territories of the United States, and against the removal of slaves from one state to another, are a part of a plan of operation set on foot to affect the institution of slavery in the several states, and thus indirectly to destroy that institution within their limits.

"Resolved, That Congress has no right to do that indirectly which it cannot do directly; and that the agitation of the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia, or the territories, as a means and with the view, of disturbing or overthrowing that institution in the several states, is against the true spirit and meaning of the constitution, an infringement of the rights of the states affected, and a breach of the public faith upon which they entered into the confederacy.

"Resolved, That the constitution rests upon the broad principle of equality among the members of this confederacy, and that Congress in the exercise of its acknowledged powers, has no right to discriminate between the institutions of one portion of the states and another, with the view of abolishing the one and promoting the other.

"Resolved, therefore, That all attempts on the part of Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, or the territories, or to prohibit the removal of slaves from state to state, or to discriminate between the institutions of one portion of the confederacy and another, with the views aforesaid, are in violation of the constitution, destructive of the fundamental principles on which the union of these states rests, and beyond the jurisdiction of Congress; and that every petition, memorial, resolution, proposition, or paper, touching or relating in any way or to any extent whatever, to slavery as aforesaid, or to the abolition thereof, shall, on the presentation thereof, without any further action thereon, be laid upon the table without being debated, printed or referred."

The first of these resolutions asserts, what are generally understood to be truisms. It ought not to be forgotten, however, that some of the most distinguished statesmen of the nation, contend

that under the powers given to Congress to declare war and raise armies for the defence of the nation, Congress might, in certain contingencies, constitutionally exercise jurisdiction over slavery. If, moreover, the slave trade be a part of the "institution of slavery," as it is termed in the resolution, the position of the resolution is manifestly unsound, for no intelligent man can doubt that Congress has jurisdiction of that trade under an express grant of power in the constitution. It is true that the government of the United States is a government of limited powers, in so much that it is confined to the exercise of the powers expressly granted to it by the constitution; but are not many of the powers granted to it as unlimited as the powers of any government can rightfully be? What limit is there, for instance, to the powers of the general government over the District of Columbia, the powers of those natural and necessary limits which restrict and govern all legislation? No restriction, as to its legislation over the District of Columbia, could, in point of fact, be constitutionally placed upon Congress, in as much as the power over the District, given Congress by the constitution, is to "exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever." But, it being true that Congress can exercise no power that is not expressly granted in the constitution, it must follow that if Congress is prohibited by the constitution from doing certain things, any attempt to do those things, is equally a violation of that instrument as an assumption of power not granted therein. Thus, Congress being prohibited from making any law "abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances," if Congress do any act which abridges the freedom of speech or of the press or infringes the right of petition in its fullest extent, that act is equally a violation of the constitution as an assumption of jurisdiction, if it have none by the constitution, over the "institution of slavery" in the several states. This view of the subject seems entirely to have been overlooked by the supporters of the foregoing resolutions, who in their "hot haste" to preserve inviolate the constitution, so far as slavery is concerned, hesitated not to trample with heedless heel upon other provisions of that instrument of the most vital character to the interests and perpetuity of free institutions.

The next resolution simply asserts that petitions for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, are a part of a plan of operations set on foot to abolish slavery in the states. This of itself would require no comment, but taken in connection with the preceding resolution, the argument assumes this form: Congress has no jurisdiction over the institution of slavery in the several states of the Union; but the petitions for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade are designed to effect the abolition of slavery in the states—therefore, for Congress to receive, act upon, and grant the prayer of the petitioners, would be to exercise jurisdiction over the institution of slavery in the several states! A more perfect fallacy cannot be imagined. It is nothing more or less than saying that, for Congress, for good reasons, to exercise powers expressly granted, on the petition of those who had formed a plan to effect that over which Congress had no jurisdiction, would be to assume jurisdiction where it had never before. By this stultifying process we arrive at the sage conclusion, that the exercise of a constitutional jurisdiction becomes an assumption of jurisdiction, when that exercise is in accordance with the wishes of those who aim at accomplishing that over which the body acting has no jurisdiction! In this way, moreover, we have furnished to our hand a new rule of determining the constitutionality of every law passed by Congress, which is, not to resort to the Constitution to see whether the power to pass the law is there given, but to inquire whether those who ask for its passage, or those who pass it, are governed by good, sound, constitutional motives! The motive of the petitioner, or the law-maker, is the test of constitutionality, and not the bringing of the law and its provisions within the powers conferred by the Constitution! The same fallacy runs through the third of the foregoing resolutions, which, if it has any force at all, is an assertion of the doctrine that Congress cannot constitutionally exercise a constitutional power on the passage of a law which may operate incidentally or indirectly to effect that which Congress cannot constitutionally effect by direct legislative action; and that, therefore, Congress cannot abolish slavery in the district of Columbia, although by the constitution it possesses that power, if those members who advocate and vote for its passage do it with the knowledge and wish that, in its indirect and incidental effects, it may operate to extinguish slavery in the states! To what absurdities will not this species of reasoning lead, if adopted, in relation to other questions? A slight analysis will show.

The first branch of the resolution asserts the broad doctrine that "Congress has no right to do that indirectly which it cannot do directly." If this proposition be true in relation to one power of the constitution, it is true in relation to all others. Let us test it.

Congress has no power by the constitution to cause the lives of individuals to be summarily taken without due process of law; but war is necessarily attended with a great sacrifice of human life without process of law—therefore, Congress has no right to declare war, raise and support armies and maintain a navy!

Again,—Congress has no power by the constitution to enact laws expressly to increase or lessen the value of any man's property; but to change the standard of value of the gold and silver coin of the country, increases or lessens the value of what each man may possess—therefore, Congress has no right to regulate the value of money!

The unsoundness of the position might be illustrated by instances without number were it necessary, but it is too apparent, upon the slightest investigation, to require further notice.

But the second branch of the resolution puts the question upon a somewhat different footing. It asserts, in substance, that Congress cannot rightfully pass a law, although in the exercise of its acknowledged powers, if those who ask for or enact the law, do it with a view of accomplishing that which Congress could not constitutionally effect by direct legislative action. Thus,

Congress has no power by the constitution to pass laws directly conferring a bounty upon domestic manufactures, or in any way directly protect them by legislation from the effects of foreign competition.

But Congress has power to levy and collect duties and impose upon foreign merchandise; and the tariff law of 1828, laying very high duties on foreign fabrics imported into this country, was advocated and passed with a view to afford the manufacturers of this country protection from foreign competition:

Therefore, Congress had no constitutional right to pass the tariff law of 1828!

This was the reasoning of the Nullifiers of 1832. With them the motive which governed the advocates of that law, and the view with which it was passed, decided the question of its constitutionality, instead of the provisions of the law compared with those of the constitution. But what was the reply of President Jackson to the doctrine, in his celebrated proclamation on the subject of nullification, which was applauded and supported by many of those who voted for the passage of the resolutions under consideration. His reply was:

"It is the tariff law constitutionality is drawn in question from the motives of those who passed it. However apparent this purpose may be in the present case, nothing can be more dangerous than to admit the position that an unconstitutional purpose entertained by the members who assent to a law enacted under a constitutional power, shall make the law void. Who is to make the scrutiny? How often may bad purposes be imputed—in how many cases concealed by false professions—in how many is no declaration of motive made? Admit this doctrine and you give to the states an uncontrolled right to decide, and every law may be annulled under the protest." (Continued next week.)

## Difficulties,—A Dialogue.

A. Your theory, neighbor, may be very good; but then there are difficulties which will forever prevent it from being put in practice.

B. Will you be so good as to name them?

A. Why, they are so numerous, I hardly know where to begin, and if I began, I should hardly know where to end.

B. Well, I will content myself with two or three, or even one of the chief. Among them I suppose is not the difficulty of convincing our fellow citizens of the goodness of our theory, for that, it seems, has been overcome in your case, and in like manner it may be overcome elsewhere.

A. Not at all. Theory is a very different thing from practice. The difficulties are practical ones, and will remain, however popular the theory may become.

B. I am anxious to make the acquaintance of some of them.

A. In that case, I will introduce you to one of them so ably dwelt on by Mr. Clay, in a speech replete with practical wisdom and sound sense. I cannot repeat his words, but the drift of it is that the two races can never live together on terms of equality. No practical man will ever commit such a blunder in politics as to put the black and white races on a level. The consequences are too obvious.

A. May I ask what they would be?

A. Why, in the first place, as Mr. Clay very forcibly remarks, there would be "a desperate struggle for immediate ascendancy of the black race over the white race!"

B. Will you be so kind as to inform me how Mr. Clay knows this?

A. From the nature of the case.

B. The nature of the case I understand to be this. The weaker of the two races is now meanly robbed of every thing, to their bones and muscles; subjected to despotic will; turned into mere merchandise; compelled to work without wages; kept in total ignorance; forbidden to exercise the mind for any emolument purpose. In short, they are placed under the strongest motives that can be devised, to struggle desperately—even to cut their master's throats. Mr. Clay, then, knows that if these motives be taken away, and the weaker race be treated justly, fairly and honorably, they will struggle desperately to gain the ascendancy. He knows that when they have every thing to fight for and will not fight, but when they have nothing to fight for, they will fight.

A. Oh, Mr. Clay does not mean, or at any rate I do not, that the blacks, when freed, would rise in rebellion and change places with the whites by brute force. But if freed, the next step would be to give them equal political rights, and having these they would immediately gain the political ascendancy in the states where they outnumber the whites. They would push their own color into office, and would aspire to govern the whites. There would every where be a political contest between the two castes. They would not be satisfied with mere equality.

B. I am happy to understand the difficulty more clearly. It would seem to relieve us of another difficulty, as Pharaoh's lean kine ate up the fat ones, and still were lean—if not, indeed, after the manner of the celebrated Kilkenny cats—viz. the difficulty that the slaves, if emancipated, could not take care of themselves. For a party, however numerous, to gain the ascendancy in a political contest, requires a large number of men who can take care of themselves—and a good many other people to boot. Let us suppose, for instance, that the democratic party in New Hampshire could not have taken care of themselves, but had been candidates for the aims house thereof—dropping into vagabondage, wreck and ruin, where would have been Governor Hill, and the famous "Patriot" man? Why, if a majority of the people of New Hampshire had been mere empty bags that could not stand alone, what would the Whigs of New Hampshire have been about while Isaac Hill and a few others were filling them all so as to march up to the polls—taking for granted that Isaac Hill was full enough to stand himself? The votes of such bags, you understand, might be had for the filling.

A. But you forget that there are plenty of white men who for the sake of office would put themselves at the head of the black party.

B. Let me warn you, my friend, not to spoil too soon your side of the argument. This exaltation of white men by black votes is dangerous both to their ascendancy and Mr. Clay's theory. The difficulty, you should remember, is that the blacks will not vote for the whites, but will seek at once to elevate their own race to a superiority.

A. By whatever means they may strive to accomplish their object, the testimony of so clear sighted a politician as Mr. Clay, is enough to satisfy me that they will do so.

B. I have no doubt that Mr. Clay sees one thing clearly, to wit, that without the votes of the slaveholders he can never be President, but that he has a distant vision of the how and why the blacks, if clothed with equal rights, will gain the ascendancy over their white fellow citizens, a freeman must be allowed to doubt. If a common man in the common concerns of life were to reason in the same way, he would make himself a candidate for Bedlam. For instance, I am a rich man; my neighbor is poor; I pull down his fences, turn my hogs into his garden, fence up his road to market, make him and his sons work for me, and cheat them out of their wages; in short, I do what I can to keep him poor, and all to prevent his becoming a rich man like myself, competing with me in the market and making me poor! I vex his very life out of him, lest he should take advantage of kind and honorable treatment to become my enemy! If he were only stout enough to chastise me for my aggressions, I should of course think my only hope of living at peace with him would lie in paying a strict regard to his rights and treating him with respect and courtesy; but inasmuch as he is not stout enough, I will maltreat him, lest good treatment should induce him to do what it would probably prevent his doing if he were stout enough!

A. You forget that wide distinction which God has made between the races. I acknowledge your reasoning might hold true between parties of the same color. I have not yet to learn that "honesty is the best policy" between neighbors of the same complexion. But I do not believe it is in the power of kindness and good treatment to obliterate the prejudice of color, which is, in fact, as strong on their part as ours.

B. Well, then, shall we not console ourselves in our safety from amalgamation, another of Mr. Clay's difficulties? Surely we ought not to be saddled with two such difficulties as too much enmity and too much love, at once. And are we not also rid of another difficulty, that the blacks are an inferior race? So far from that, it seems they ask nothing but the chains off, and, all galled, whip-marked, and wind-broken as they are,—and but one to our five in numbers—they will enter the political arena with us and ask no favors. Aye, southern chivalry confesses, and southern eagle-eyed statesmanship declares that THEY WILL BEAT! So, my dear friend, the glory of our striped bunting, with the picture of Uncle Sam's pot hawk clawing the javelins and packing at the stars, amounts to this, that sea twelve millions, with all the forts and cannon, and ships of war, and powder and ball, and disciples and money and knowledge, and all the printing presses but one or two, in our possession, can keep under three millions of us groans—that is,