

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

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C. L. KNAPP, EDITOR.

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THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

Letter from Gerrit Smith to Hon. Seth M. Gates.

Peterboro, October 22, 1839.

HON. SETH M. GATES, Member of Congress.
Le Roy, Genesee, Co. N. Y.

MY DEAR SIR:—Your Christian principles and rare intelligence give you a deservedly great influence over your fellow abolitionists. How lamentable, that this influence should be employed to turn them from the path of duty! To the exertion of this influence was it owing, in no small degree, that more than nineteen twentieths of the abolitionists of the county of Genesee, voted at the last election, for party, instead of the slave. It is not to flatter you, but to remind you of your responsibilities, that I thus allude to the large share you had in producing the memorable defection of the year 1838, in the ranks of N. York abolitionists—a defection so extensive and cruel, that the cause of the enslaved still lies bleeding at every pore, on account of it.

It is true, that at the last election, you were under an especial and strong temptation; a temptation of sufficient power to blind the wise and the good—to sacrifice duty to interest. But, inasmuch as that temptation ceased with the election—and inasmuch as you have had a year to observe the unhappy effects of the wide betrayal of our cause at the polls, and to reflect on the folly and sin of yielding up principle to calls, however specious, and for gains, however alluring—it was confidently hoped that you would, at the approaching election, evince a penitent sense of your pernicious error, and number yourself, for the future, with those uncompromising abolitionists, who, in whatever circumstances, or under whatever temptations they may be, are true to their heaven and earth witnessed pledges, never to vote for a pro-slavery legislative candidate. How greatly and grievously you have disappointed this expectation of your repentance and amendment, all will see, who read the proceedings of the late meeting of the Genesee anti-slavery society, held at Le Roy. Abolitionists, who cling to the slave, though at the expense of damaging and displeasing party, will be pained to learn from these proceedings, that their holy and beloved cause must, for at least one election, encounter, instead of enjoying, the extensive influence of Seth M. Gates.

It appears that you took the ground in the meeting referred to, that the voter is at liberty to cast his ballot for a legislative candidate, who is not an abolitionist. Thanks to the power and the love of truth, that so large a minority, of the meeting resisted this anti-republican and unchristian doctrine.

What is American Slavery? It is a system, which, by law and in practice, forbids marriage, and the reading of the Bible, and classes immortal and blood-redeemed men with brutes. It is unsurpassed in wickedness and cruelty, by any of the systems, that ever outraged humanity or insulted God. I put it to you then, my dear sir, and would have you answer me as in the light of eternity, rather than under the worldly influences which surround and press upon you. "Can a Christian consistently vote for a legislative candidate, who is opposed to the repeal of any of the laws that uphold such a system?" "Can a Christian consistently vote for a legislative candidate, who is opposed to the repeal of any laws which may sanction and uphold the crimes of counterfeiting and burglary?" He can so vote with much less inconsistency, than he can vote for a pro-slavery legislative candidate. For of how light a hue are the crimes of counterfeiting and burglary, in the eyes of him, who is called on to choose between the evil of having counterfeit money put upon him, or his house robbed every month of his life, and the unspeakable greater evil of wearing the yoke of slavery, for even a single month! In the eye of the slave, the Christian, who sanctions slavery by his vote, is a thousand fold more inconsistent, than he who thus sanctions counterfeiting and burglary; and so would he be in our eye, if our soul were in the slave's soul's stead; and if we obey the apostolic injunction to "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." But you will, perhaps, say that the pro-slavery candidate is not sensible of the sin of slavery, and that the other candidate is sensible of the sin of counterfeiting and burglary. This is true, and because it is, thousands of good men vote for pro-slavery candidates. But the great question with the elector, on going to the polls, should not be, whether the candidate is ignorant or aware of the giant iniquity of a system which that candidate, if elected, will exert his official powers to uphold. This is, indeed, a proper and indispensable question for determining whether the candidate be more or less guilty; but the knowledge or ignorance of the candidate on the point under consideration, in no wise affects the guilt of the elector who votes for him. If, in the good providence of God, I have come to learn, that slavery is enormous wickedness, it is then, at the peril of my soul, that I vote for a pro-slavery legislative candidate. I admit, that I am to exercise Christian charity toward the candidate, and to hope, if I can, that his sin in the premises, is but the sin of ignorance, nevertheless, it is my knowledge, rather than his ignorance, that is to be the prompter and guide, and measure of my conduct. I am to walk in my own light, and not in his darkness. I believe there may be a slaveholder, who is a Christian: but if I vote, for such a one for a law maker—for one, who, if elected, will contribute his official powers to sustain slavery—God will hold me, rather than the benighted slaveholder, for whom I vote, guilty of the sin of slavery.

Can a republican consistently vote for a legislative candidate who is in favor of pro-slavery laws? The question is readily answered in the negative by a reference to the foundation doctrine of a republic—the doctrine that "all men are created equal." The subject of a government which sanctions the counter doctrine of inequality between the natural rights of one man and another—the doctrine that a select portion of the human family are made of porcelain, and the bulk of them of common clay—may, with comparatively little political inconsistency, vote in favor of slavery; but, surely, no republican can do so, save at

the expense of warring upon the genius and theory, and trampling upon the fundamental laws of his government. If I am the subject of a republican government, I am guilty of treachery to all its essential principles if I vote to make a law maker of any other than a republican; and however wise and virtuous may be the candidate, if he subscribe not to the doctrine of the equality of men in their natural rights, he is, manifestly, not a republican. Here again I must remark, that ignorance of the real nature of slavery on the part of the candidate, who espouses pro-slavery views, constitutes no excuse for voting for him. The elector is to see to it, that his vote corresponds, not with the ignorance of the candidate, but with his own views, and with just views of the character of the political institution of his country, and with the political character of slavery.

The wheel of reform would move but slowly if the reformer shape his course and adapt his demands to the views and wishes of those whom he seeks to reform. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord." We can be no reformer of his fellow men and no follower of God, who, instead of keeping pace with the divine revelations to his soul, contributes to elevate to places of power, persons, who will carry out the opposites of his own great moral principles, and respond to his increasing light, but in deeds of darkness. Christian reformers can never lower the standard of truth in accommodation to the voluntary or involuntary, the guilty or the guiltless ignorance of any man—a candidate for the legislature or the pulpit not excepted.

You will, perhaps, say, that, in ascribing to you the doctrine that we are at liberty to vote for a legislative candidate who is an anti-abolitionist, I misrepresent you. But does not your language justify the ascription? You would have us vote for a man who is "five-sixths an abolitionist." But, what is a "five-sixth abolitionist?" What is a five-sixth honest man? What is a five-sixths man of truth? A liar, and "there is no truth in him." What is a five-sixths sober man? A drunkard, and but a drunkard.—"And so also a 'five-sixths abolitionist,' is simply an anti-abolitionist, and has yet to learn the abolition alphabet. I recollect that you think it right to vote for a man "who will vigorously support nine measures we advocate, but falters at the tenth." So do I think it right, in case "the tenth" be not a test of principle. But, if it be, I promptly reject him as unworthy of the votes of a republican and a Christian. Was Herod a Christian, because he favored nine-tenths of John's measures? Perhaps he favored ninety-one hundredths of them, for it is said that "he did many things and heard him gladly." These "many things" doubtless met the Baptist's approbation. But there was one thing which he would not do, and in refusing to do that, he evinced his entire destitution of the spirit of Christian obedience. So, in our day, a man may do "many things" that a Christian does, and yet not have the heart of a Christian—and yet totally reject Christianity. He may, for instance, be honest in his dealings in property. He may drink no intoxicating liquors. He may read his bible daily. He may daily call to God in prayer; and yet if he refuses to forgive his enemies, he has not a particle of Christian religion in his heart. Analogous to his case is that of the member of Congress, who is in favor of the right of petition—the abolition of the inter state slave trade—of a dozen other anti-slavery measures—and yet be opposed to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Such a one has yet to learn his first lesson in abolition. His heart is an entire stranger to the principles of abolition. The anti-slavery measures, which he supports, are not espoused by him in answer to the principle of abolition—to the principle of impartial and universal liberty—for, if that principle were within him, it would manifest itself, as well in behalf of the slave in the District of Columbia, as elsewhere—as well against oppression and pro-slavery laws in one place as in another. To vote then for "a five-sixths abolitionist"—or even for one "who will vigorously support nine" anti-slavery measures out of ten, and thus make himself a nine-tenths abolitionist by your scale, is to be guilty of voting for an anti-abolitionist; for one who is not in principle opposed to the crime of slavery. And one thing more; since it is from considerations of expediency, and not from principle that the candidate favors five of the six, or nine of the ten, anti-slavery measures; he who votes for him can feel no reasonable assurance that the shifting of expediency will not bring his candidate into speedy opposition to the very measures he now advocates. What is but expedient to day, may be inexpedient to-morrow; whilst that which is now eternal immutable principle, will be so always.

What I have said shows that I approve of the resolution of the National Anti-Slavery Convention which requires the candidate to be an immediate abolitionist—or, what is the same thing, an abolitionist in principle;—the gradual abolitionist having never welcomed the principle, or imbibed the spirit of genuine abolition. It shows, too, that, able as are the arguments of the editor of the Cincinnati Philanthropist, against the resolution in question, and much as I admire his rare talent and uncompromising integrity, the proposition which he combats, is, in my judgment impregnable. However satisfactorily the candidate may answer the anti-slavery questions addressed to him, if there still be room to believe he is not an abolitionist, we are not at liberty to vote for him. The main object in addressing the questions should be to obtain answers that may guide us in determining whether the candidate be or be not an abolitionist.

There is one view of the error of voting for a legislative candidate, who is willing to perform but a part of the duties enjoined on him by the principle of abolition, to which I would call your especial attention. A candidate for Congress says, that if he be elected, he will respect the right of petition, but will have no objection to leave the slaves in the District of Columbia in their confessedly unconstitutional chains, or, he will be in favor of terminating the woes and horrors of the inter state traffic in human flesh, but will consent to prolong slavery in the Territory of Florida. Under the misapplication to moral subjects of the maxims, "a half a loaf is better than

none," and "between two evils choose the least," you would vote for this candidate, in case his rival were opposed to all the anti-slavery measures; in other words, you would fall in with, and sustain this scheme of partial justice. But in vain would it be for you to search in Bible ethics for a justification of the policy of according their rights to one portion of men, and of consenting that the rights of another portion be withheld. Who is the ruler that consents to a denial of my clear, natural, essential and inalienable rights! You will not pretend that he is the "just" and "righteous" man, that God requires, that you, therefore, should require the ruler to be. But is his unrighteousness toward me at all diminished by his admission of the rights of another? Neither will you pretend this. What is the ruler, in God's sight, who will deliberately consent to leave innocent men in a bondage that robs its subjects of every right, and even denies them the ownership of their limbs! A monster of wickedness! It is, of course, implied, that the candidate or member of Congress referred to, is aware of the injustice and wickedness of slavery; for if it be not, in the view of this injustice and wickedness, that he adopts some of the anti-slavery measures—if he be entirely insensible to the moral character of slavery—you surely would not think him entitled to the suffrage of his constituents. And is the ruler in question any the less guilty because he is willing to release some other portion of his fellow men from their unrighteous thralldom? Surely his guilt in wronging the one is no wise alleviated by his right doing towards another. "If the trust in his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered."

You are a political partisan—and this accounts for the fact that a man of your excellence of head and heart, should continue so blind to truth and duty on the anti-slavery question. Like other political partisans, you overrate the moral worth of your party, and entertain expectations which no political party will ever fulfil.

You doubtless believe that the Whig party, should it come to be in the ascendancy, would abolish American slavery. But how vain to hope that either that, or the rival party, will ever be found capable of such fearless, self-denying justice! Do you suppose that our political parties have more honesty, more fidelity to principle, than characterizes the American church? But, you know, that this church is too time-serving and corrupt to espouse the anti-slavery enterprise. You know that American Christianity instead of performing the offices of Bible Christianity, and sympathizing with the oppressed, is actually the wicked ally and base tool of the oppressor, and constitutes the grand pillar of American slavery.

Would you, my dear sir, have a clear abolition vision? You can have it. But you must first be crucified to political party, and cease to hope that it will ever exhibit one particle of honesty in any of the great contests between the principles of heaven and the corruptions of earth. "Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day."

You know that I have not written this letter to wound your feelings. You know that to rebuke a brother for the sin that is upon him, is amongst the highest evidences of true friendship. My chief motive however for writing you is to be found in my love of the slave. The influence you are exerting on his dear cause is most disastrous; and just so far as abolitionists are brought under this influence, should all rational hope expire, that American slavery will die a bloodless, peaceful, speedy death. It will be only when abolitionists shall come to regard it as absurd and as wicked to vote for American slavery, as to talk, write, print, or pray for it, that this giant wickedness shall cease to live. It will be only when we shall invite the blessing of Heaven on such consistency and self-denial, that God will crown the anti-slavery enterprise with triumph.

I remain
Your friend and brother,
GERRIT SMITH.

LEGISLATURE OF VERMONT.

From Walton's Daily Journal.

Friday, Nov. 1, 1839.

SENATE.

Bills—From the House, to pay Augustine Clarke the sum mentioned; for the relief of Samuel Simonds, twice read and severally referred to the com. on claims; to pay Cephas Bayley the sum mentioned; to pay Kiah Bayley the sum mentioned, twice read and severally ref. to the com. on military affairs.

Mr. Simonds, asked leave of absence from and after the present week. Leave granted. Adj.

HOUSE.

Prayer by Rev. E. Smith.
Petitions—Of Amos Eddy and others, referred to com. on Slavery; of John N. Hunt and others, to com. on Temperance Memorials. Of G. W. Ames and others to com. on Military Affairs: of sundry inhabitants of Williamstown, to com. on Temperance Memorials.

Engrossed Bills—To pay Cephas Bayley, Kiah Bayley and Augustine Clarke, for the relief of Samuel Simonds severally passed.

Reports of committees—By Select Committee, bill taxing Lamoille county, ordered to a 3d reading. By Select Com. against bill removing Orleans county buildings, and it was dismissed.

Resolution—By Mr. Bard, reviving the rule relative to the revised statutes—adopted.

Bills Introduced—By Mr. Brown, to exempt inhabitants of Averill from military duty, ref. to com. on Military Affairs. By Mr. Shattuck, increasing the salary of Governor to \$1000, and reducing salary of Superintendent of state prison to \$500, referred to General Committee. By Mr. Higley, for the support of the gospel, referred to Judiciary Committee.

The House resumed consideration of the last resolution reported by the minority of the com. on banks, viz:

"That no director or stockholder shall, either directly or indirectly, be suffered to receive any discount at the bank or banks, of which they are severally directors or stockholders."

Mr. Closson moved to add the words—"for a

greater sum than 10 per cent of his stock actually paid in; and in no case shall such discount exceed \$1000 at any one time, nor the aggregate of his indebtedness to such bank at any time exceed \$3000; nor shall any other person, either as principal or surety be indebted to such bank for discount to a greater sum than five thousand dollars."

Mr. Partridge moved to amend the amendment, by striking out "\$1000" and inserting \$500.

Mr. P supported the amendment, followed by Messrs Brown and Sprague, against the original resolution and all the amendments.

Mr. Jackson moved to dismiss the whole subject. Mr Partridge opposed this motion, and took occasion to hint that the party with whom he had usually acted seemed to have entirely forgotten their pledges to the people on bank reform.—Mr. Fairbanks sustained the principle of restricting loans to directors and stockholders, but assented to the rejection of the resolution on the ground that this measure of "reform" was already incorporated into the general banking law, passed at the last session.

The chair here decided that the question, on the amendment to the amendment, was first in order; the amendment to the amendment was then rejected; and Mr. Jackson moved to dismiss the original resolution, Mr Miner opposed the motion, and took the general ground that the security on bond and mortgage, which was the one now adopted by the House, was insufficient; it had failed in Michigan, and would probably here, of accomplishing the intended purpose. That provision did not reach the danger which ought to be removed, viz., the monopolizing of the loans of the banks by a few directors or stockholders—the very thing which has been the cause of every bank failure in New England for the last ten years.

Mr. Butler replied that the principle of this amendment was already incorporated into the general banking law.

Mr. Miner explained—this provision was indeed in the act in addition to the safety fund act, but it was now proposed to release banks, hereafter chartered, from that act.

The question was then put: yeas 120, noes 65, so the resolution was dismissed.

Mr. Hayward of Addison requested the liberty here to state to the House that he understood that the minority report, just disposed of, was assented to but by one of the minority.

Mr. Smith of P. said there must be a misunderstanding in the matter, he understood that both of the minority assented to the general principles of the report.

The Governor, by message, informed the House of sundry vacancies to be filled, occasioned by the resignation of John Walker, as jail commissioner for Lamoille county; and of Major General Francis E. Phelps, and Brig. General Jacob Washburn and P. T. Kimball.

The bill reported by the com. on Military Affairs was made the order of the day for Monday morning next.

Mr. Hayward of Shaftsbury and Mr. Hewes of Glastenbury obtained leave of absence after to-morrow morning.

Adj.

FRIDAY 2 o'clock P. M.

SENATE.

Bill—From the House, for the relief of Samuel Simonds, reported by Mr Cobb, read a third time and passed.

Bill—Extending an act laying a tax on lands in Granville, read a third time and passed. Adj.

SA T U R D A Y , 2 , 1 8 3 9 .

SENATE.

Prayer by the chaplain.

Bills—From the House, to pay Augustine Clark for services, and for counterfeit money, received when he was Treasurer, read a third time and passed.

Mr. Foster called up the bill, authorizing Banking associations, and moved that 500 copies be ordered to be printed. Motion carried, yeas 15, noes 8.

Adj.

HOUSE.

Prayer by Rev. S. Kellogg.

Mr. Canfield of Arlington, obtained leave of absence after Monday next.

Resolutions—By Mr. Harris, dooming Glastenbury in the sum of \$500—ruled out of order by the chair. By Mr Lynde, for meeting of the House after Tuesday next at half past 8 A. M.—rejected.

The Senate returned the bill annexing part of Orwell to Whiting with an amendment, which was concurred in.

Mr Stark called up the bill for securing bill holders on the closing of banks, and it was made the special order for Tuesday morning.

The General Committee requested to be discharged from further consideration of the bill relating to salaries of certain officers—granted, and the bill dismissed.

Mr. Butler called up the bill abolishing capital punishment, and supported it in an argument at length, denying both the right and expediency of punishment by death.

Mr. Warner of Newhaven, followed in a spirited speech in support of the bill, mainly upon the grounds of expediency; urging that the experience of all time had proved that capital punishment had not operated to deter from the commission of outrageous crimes, while on the other hand the severity of the punishment, and the abhorrence with which it is viewed by the public, had frequently prevented jurors from convicting criminals unquestionably guilty; the result being that the guilty escaped, and the security to the community, which was one object of punishment, utterly failed.

Messrs. Dillingham, Brown and Fairbanks also participated in the debate, the former for and the two latter against the bill.

Mr. Chandler moved an adjournment, which was negatived, when Mr. C. took the floor against the bill, and in defence of the report of the com. adverse to this measure.

Adj.

2 o'clock, P. M.

SENATE.

Mr. Edson, in consequence of sickness in his family, asked and obtained leave of absence from and after Monday next.

Bill—By Mr. Tracy, repealing the act of last

session, relating to the sale of ardent spirits, twice read and ordered to be engrossed; to pay Cephas Bayley, the sum mentioned, for the transportation of arms, the Senate rejected the bill; to pay Kiah Bayley for the repair of cannon and carriage, the sum mentioned; recommended to the com. on military affairs.

Banks—Mr. Kittridge, reported chap. 80, of the revised statutes, relating to Banks, with various proposals of amendment, when on motion of Mr. Pierpoint, the chap. was laid upon the table.

Resolution—By Mr. Tracy, dooming the town of Glastenbury in the sum of nine hundred dollars, read, and referred to committee on finance. Adj.

HOUSE.

The following message from the Governor was read:

To the House of Representatives:

By the provisions of the bill herewith returned, entitled "an act to incorporate the Memphramagog Literary and Theological Seminary," the corporation is made perpetual. No power is reserved to alter or amend the act by future legislation, as the public good and the circumstances and condition of society may hereafter require. The condition of society is continually changing; that which may be expedient and for the best good of community at this time, may—reasoning from the past—in a course of years require alteration to adapt it to the wants and wishes of our posterity. And in my view, nothing but the most absolute necessity will warrant legislation of this character; it ought never to be resorted to, except when the objects in view are of such magnitude and difficulty of attainment, as to afford no other probable means of accomplishment. I am the more readily brought to this conclusion by the entire confidence I feel in the intelligence and liberality of those who may succeed us.

By leaving acts of incorporation open to future legislation, I cannot for a moment permit myself to believe that the rights or property of individuals or community will be endangered by the imposition of unnecessary or unreasonable restrictions or alterations, or that future legislators will not understand and fully appreciate the wants and wishes of society as it may hereafter exist.

Entertaining these views, I feel it my duty to return the bill in question to the House of Representatives, in which it originated, for their reconsideration. S. H. JENISON.

Executive Chamber, Nov. 2, 1839.

Mr. Gowdey inquired whether the bill was open to amendment? The chair replied that it was not, the constitution itself provided that the question, upon a bill returned by the Governor for reconsideration, must be upon the passage of the bill. Messrs Dillingham and Sprague expressed their satisfaction at the course of the Governor; and, after some conversation as to the power of the House to entertain a new bill, the question was put—shall the bill pass? Yeas 2, noes 141; so the bill was rejected.

Resolutions—By Mr. Fullam, for a joint assembly on Wednesday afternoon next, to supply the vacancies occasioned by the resignation of Generals Phelps, Washburn and Kimball, adopted. By Mr. Bard, appointing Stephen S. Brown, Geo. E. Holmes, and Alden Partridge, com. to examine Windsor and Essex banks, adopted. Adj.

MONDAY, NOV. 4, 1839.

SENATE.

Prayer by the chaplain.

Resolution—From the House, appointing a com. of three, to investigate the Windsor and Essex Banks, concurred in by the Senate.

Bill—Repealing the act of last session relating to the traffic in ardent spirits, read a third time and passed. Adj.

HOUSE.

Prayer by Rev. E. Smith.

Mr. Tappan obtained leave of absence after to-morrow.

The engrossed bill taxing Lamoille county, was passed.

Reports of committees—By com. of Claims, bill to pay G. H. Smith \$50 (expenses of execution of Bates),—opposed by Messrs. Chandler, Brown and Partridge, on the ground that the execution came within the ordinary duties of the sheriff, and that therefore he was not entitled to extraordinary pay; supported by Messrs. Miner, Butler, Needham and Rice, for the reason that the legislature had always paid for services of this kind; this sum was much less than had been usually paid. The sum of \$50 was rejected, 78 to 69, and the bill laid on the table and made the order for Wednesday morning. By com. on Education, on the subject of a geological survey of the state—favorable to such a survey, accompanied by a bill for the appointment of a commissioner to make a survey, and appropriating \$2000 for the commencement of the work. Mr. Gowdey moved to make the bill the order for Thursday morning, stating that the committee would not urge the bill, unless it was found to meet the general consent of the House. Mr. Sprague approved the report and moved the printing of 500 copies; supported by Messrs. Needham, Sprague and Brown, opposed by Messrs. Sanborn and Partridge, when Mr. Fullam moved 1000 copies—negatived 74 to 62; the motion for 500 copies—carried. The same com. made report upon the project for furnishing libraries to school districts—favorable to the object, but stating that there were no funds which could be properly directed to this object, and therefore commending the matter to the voluntary action of school districts. By com. on Roads and Canals, bill to remove obstructions in Fall's stream in Essex county—laid on the table.

The Governor, by message, informed the House of the resignation of Brig. General Green Blackmer.

Resolutions—By Mr. Fairbanks, discharging the members of Caledonia county from the documents relating to the county buildings, supported by Messrs. Fairbanks, Brown, Rice and Bascomb, opposed by Messrs. Chandler, Butler and Needham, and adopted, 86 to 61. Mr. Fairbanks then moved to dismiss the bill on this subject—agreed to. By Mr. Brown, raising an enquiry as to the expediency of placing steamboat stock in the lists for taxation—passed. By Mr. Hubbard, instruct