

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 23, 1839.

NUMBER 8.

THE VOICE OF FREEDOM.

For the Voice of Freedom.

Reasons why we should be Abolitionists.

Do Christians contribute cheerfully to send the glad news of salvation to benighted Africa, and will they not so much as turn their eyes upon those within our own borders who are from the same country, and equally needy? I am aware that this may be considered, by some at least, as a strong, and perhaps unwarranted expression; but I believe it is the opinion of wise and prudent men who have made themselves acquainted with their true condition.

On the 5th of Dec. 1833, a committee of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, to whom was referred the subject of the religious instruction of the colored population, made a report in which the following language is used:

"Who would credit it, that, in these years of revival and benevolent effort,—in this christian republic, there are over two millions of human beings in the condition of heathen, and in many respects in a worse condition? From long-continued and close observation we believe that, as regards their moral and religious condition, they will bear comparison with heathen in any country in the world."

If such then is their deplorable and wretched state, can we who profess to be actuated by the pure principles of the gospel, be at loss to determine what is duty? Shall we not rise from our lethargy, burst the shackles of listlessness and inaction, and go forth girded with the bright helmet of truth, determined to ameliorate their condition or fall in the conflict? Yes, doubtless, is the response from every heart that beats with high and generous emotion.

But have not some, moved by sympathy, and conscious that the commands of High Heaven were resting upon them, already gone forth? Yes,—and some, too, have fallen! But what is the effect produced by their labors, and the sacrifice of life? Just what every reflecting mind would have expected;—just what it has been in all ages of the world, when there has been a call for truth to be wielded in defence of the rights of man, in opposition to error and flagrant injustice. Who, that is acquainted, in the slightest degree, with the history of the past, does not know, that to advocate principles contrary to the common sentiment of a people, however just they may be, is calculated to draw down upon their propagators the most malignant hatred and cruel revenge. Such was the case when our Saviour appeared to fulfil the prophecies of inspired men, and reveal the glad news of salvation, which speaks peace to the perturbed mind and solace to the mourning and disconsolate heart. The same spirit which abused the Saviour when he dwelt on earth in the form of a man, which condemned Him without evidence, and insulted Him when He hung bleeding on the cross, actuates men at the present day who traduce, abuse, and even slay those who dare thwart the plans of selfishness, by lifting their voice in the cause of injured humanity.

It is in vain for us to deceive ourselves as to the spirit we are of. If we find ourselves disposed to justify the riotous proceedings of mobocrats, and the foul deeds of the cold-blooded murderer,—depend upon it, our hearts are not right in the sight of God. If we are not willing to undo the heavy burdens, to break every yoke and let the oppressed go free,—be assured we lack that spirit of benevolence and christian kindness without which it is impossible to please God. Do you say, we have no slaves in New-England, and therefore have nothing to do with the subject of slavery? I reply, that this is the very reason why we should have something to do with it; for the very fact that we have no slaves, supposes us unprejudiced by self-interest, and therefore qualified, so far as that is concerned, (which sometimes strangely warps the judgment,) to decide impartially.

If we had been born and educated in a slaveholding community, accustomed to the unwearied attentions and ready offices of the submissive slave, then the force of habit, united with the love of ease and preferment, had disqualified us for a candid and impartial consideration either of our own claims or the rights of the slave. I remark, then, that it is not strange that the people of the South should favor the system of slavery, and desire others to do so, since it is by the fruits of this system that they are supported in affluence and nourished in the lap of luxury. But it is strange that there should be found a man, in this favored section of our country, who, endowed with a sound judgment and good understanding, could persuade himself to be silent as to the voice of his admonition,

When justice reads her rigid law,
And mercy makes her moving plea.

But, strange as it may seem, there are men, even in our very midst, who not only remain silent, but give countenance to a practice that has done more to tarnish the brightness of our country's glory than any other that has ever found place amongst us. For one, I must say that I do not think conscience has anything to do with such support; or, if it has, it must have ceased to be a faithful guide. But there is consolation in the reflection, that while there are some of this character to retard the work, there are others who have enlisted in the glorious cause with hearts as pure as it is given to human nature to possess; and who labor in this work of benevolence until the dark sin of slavery shall be known only as a historical fact,—until freedom's bright banner shall supersede the gorgeous signs of kings and despots,—until the rising sun shall not discover a single remaining vestige of cruelty and oppression, nor his setting beams witness the dejection that encircles the pale brow of the weary and sorrowing captive.

J. H. BENTON.

For The Voice of Freedom.

Do the Slaves desire Freedom?

MR. EDITOR:

In presenting the claims of the Anti-Slavery Society to the public, and urging the people of the free states to prompt, united and vigorous efforts in behalf of the abused and down-trodden,—it is often said, in apology for American slavery, that, though the system is wrong in the abstract, when we come to matter of fact, the slaves are about as happy as laboring people can be;—they would not accept of their liberty if it should be offered them;—they would not take care of themselves if they were emancipated, &c.

Let us lay aside this theory for a moment, and inquire whether facts teach this strange doctrine. When people are happy, prosperous and contented, we do not expect to see them anxious for a change of circumstances. We

shall not see them rambling to the ends of the earth, enduring hunger, cold and nakedness, and facing all manner of dangers to get into some other condition,—they hardly know what. How is it with regard to the slaves? Let the following "pink of slavery" answer:

"The tender care and protection of the master elicit an affectionate attachment from the slave, which will be looked for in vain from the hired servant of a more Northern clime."—*Charleston Courier.*

From the Mobile Morn. Chronicle, June 8, 1838.

100 DOLLARS REWARD.—Runaway, a negro man named JOHNSON,—he has a GOOD MANY MARKS of the WHIP on his back; he was confined in jail last summer; lay over in jail six months, within ten miles of his master, but would not tell his name. CORNELIUS D. TOBIN.

From the Vicksburg Register, June 13, 1838.

20 DOLLARS REWARD.—Runaway, a man named HAMBLETON, limps in his left foot, where he had been SHOT but a few weeks ago, WHILE RUNNING AWAY. THOMAS HUDNALL.

From the Wilmington (N. C.) Adv., June 1, 1838.

RUNAWAY, my negro man RICHARD. A reward of \$25 will be paid for his apprehension, DEAD OR ALIVE. Satisfactory proof will only be required of his being KILLED. He has with him, in all probability, his wife ELIZA, who ran away from Col. Thompson, now a resident of Alabama, about the time he commenced his journey to that State. DURANT H. RHODES.

NO COLOR EXEMPTS FROM SLAVERY.

From the New-Orleans Bee, July 4, 1837.

DETAINED in jail MARIA, pretending herself FREE, round face, CLEAR WHITE complexion. The OWNER of said SLAVE, &c.

"These facts, and scores like them, are coolly spread out in Southern newspapers." What an awful comment are they upon the institution of slavery,—an institution which is tolerated in this "land of the free, and home of the oppressed" of all nations. No one, after reading the above, can say with the least show of propriety, that the slaves are happy or contented. It is a libel upon human nature to affirm that man, immortal man, "in whose bosom burns the quenchless fire" of eternal life, can be willing to be a slave. It is not until slavery has done its work of death, and the man is destroyed, that the system becomes tolerable.

THEY CANNOT TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.

"In a statement published by the guardians of the poor of the city and county of Philadelphia for 1836, it appears that out of 549 out-door poor relieved during the year, only 22 were persons of color, being but five colored to every hundred white inhabitants thus provided for; and that the colored paupers admitted into the almshouse for the same period, did not exceed that proportion, while their ratio of the whole population of the city and suburbs exceeds 8 1-4 per cent.

"It appears that within the same district, the colored people paid in taxes not less than \$2500, while the sums expended to relieve them, from the public funds, rarely, if ever, exceed \$2000 a year,—thus not only supporting their own, but contributing to the support of the white poor."

"The amount of rents which they pay to the owners of property is found to exceed \$100,000 annually." They have private estates to considerable amount; also, eleven or twelve places of worship, owned by themselves. They have Bible, tract and temperance societies, schools, one female literary institution, and beneficent associations in large numbers. As many as four or five hundred people of color in the city and suburbs follow mechanical employments. "This statistical amount proves that, although many of this people may be too regardless of their moral standing, there is a large number who do appreciate the importance of education, and have already realized many of its advantages. It proves not only that they are no burden upon the white population, but that they contribute to the maintenance of others. It shows that they possess a spirit of independence which leads to personal exertion for their own emolument and improvement; and were they free from the obstacles which surround them, it would be fair to conclude that many more would vie with their white neighbors in the refinements of civilized life."

I have other facts I wish to communicate on this subject, but they are reserved for another communication. G. BECKLEY.

Northfield, Feb. 11, 1839.

Extract of a letter to the Editor.

MANCHESTER, Feb. 9, 1839.

It may not be uninteresting to state, in connexion with the business part of this letter, that the principles of abolition are exciting some considerable interest at present in this place. A society has been recently formed under very favorable circumstances, and bids fair to accomplish in the cause of human freedom much good. Much may be done by the formation of anti-slavery societies, and the free discussion of slavery at the North, towards loosening the bands of the oppressed at the South. If the freemen of the North would but exercise the legal and moral power with which they are invested, slavery in these United States would soon be no more. How obligatory then, upon the North, to exercise this power. But we are told, even by northern men, that we can do nothing to abolish slavery at the south, and that we have nothing to do with the system as it exists in this country. How absurd! If there are any arguments which prove that we have nothing to do to remove the evils of slavery, they will as fully prove that we have much to do, for the simple reason that we can do much.

We can abolish the spirit of slavery which lurks even among us. We can abolish the system of slavery in the District of Columbia, where we are as much concerned in its existence as any part of the nation. And in this way we are affecting for good the moral feelings of the south.—Is it not strange then, when there is such a field open for efficient action, that so many stand aloof from the anti-slavery enterprise? Is there nothing in the condition of the poor slave calculated to excite the feelings and arouse to action every freeman? Methinks there is much. When we behold one-sixth of our American population deprived of all the means of intellectual and moral culture,—reduced to a level with the animal and inanimate creation,—made, by positive law, subservient to the interests of their masters only, and subjected to the cruel lash of brutal taskmasters; it would seem that, at least, our sympathies would be touched. Add to this, the severing of those natural ties, the dearest which unite the human family,—the mat-

rimonial connexion is no barrier against the everlasting separation of husband and wife,—neither the entreaties of a fond mother to be the protector of her clinging child. In view of this subject, the good of the slave requires action; the welfare of the master requires action; our own consciences and the word of God require the immediate action of every northern freeman.

JOHN L. RICHARDSON.

Burr Seminary, Vt.

The following able article, from the pen of E. W. CHESTER, Esq., editor of the Christian Journal, a new Presbyterian paper in the city of New York, should be read and pondered by all who imagine that the anti-slavery enterprise can be materially affected by a two-hours' speech of Henry Clay, the

"Last champion of Oppressions' battle,
Lord of rice-terrace and cotton-bale,
Of sugar-box and human cattle!"

Modern Abolition.

These words are often borne to our ears. They usually come from those who profess to be opposed to slavery. The expression implies in the objector, that he is not opposed to abolition, but to modern abolition. He evidently regards the abolition of the present day as differing from the rightful abolition principles of our fathers. He intends to censure this innovation, to call back the current of feeling into its old channels, and rest in the safety of precedent. On the part of Abolitionists it is frequently urged that their principles are but the principles of their fathers—that there is little difference between the abolitionists of the past and the present age.

We think this an error, and not a small one. The abolitionism of our fathers consisted in opinions mildly and prudently expressed, and which spent their force in securing a gradual emancipation in the northern States. It trusted to the slow, but, as they conceived, sure operation of the principles of the revolution and of the Christian religion. Hence into no fierce collisions with interest. It demanded no present sacrifices, and therefore called up no bitter opponents. It made itself formidable by no extended association, no gathering up of pecuniary means, and no wielding of the gigantic power of the press. It was gentle, mild, harmless. Is such the character of modern abolition? Let us examine it, for whether for weal or for woe it is among us and increasing. It is unsafe to trust to what mere party politicians may say of it. With them, as may best suit their purpose, it will be either a monster with claws to tear up mountains and a maw to engulf a world, or a thing too puny to be contemptible. It would be well for all men to silence their passions and partialities long enough to consider its dimensions and leisurely to measure its power.

The abolition sentiment in the United States now number about 150,000 members. But this is less than a moiety, scarcely a tithe of their force. It is but the organized, equipped, and disciplined corps of veterans in the mind of a numerous militia ready for effective organization, whenever the pressure of circumstances shall call for some great effort. They are united together in affiliated societies by a cord stronger than can be manufactured by any legislative machinery—the cord of voluntary union in like principles of conscience and action. And the members are acted upon, not by a principle of mere speculative theology or philosophy, but by the most vital effective principle that can touch the human heart—the love of liberty, in itself both a principle and a passion. And this is purified and hallowed, and made potent by conscious disinterestedness and philanthropy cherished and nursed to its fullest growth. And religion, the most moving power that ever acted upon the human mind, brings to the cause its high sanctions and its operative influence, preparing men, whether mistaken or not, whether rightly adjudged fanatics or rational philanthropists, yet stimulating them to endure without flinching, should need be, the rack and the faggot.

And modern abolitionists are acting under no temporary excitement or evanescent emotion. They have looked at slavery in all its dark colors, and bringing before their minds its most hideous features, they have excited in their hearts against it a hatred unappeasable, and to be extinguished only by death.

Under such feelings they have bound themselves together in organized societies systemized into one great whole. Such are their arrangements that no portion of the country is free from their minute observation, and every spot and every resistance is liable to their concentrated force. And that most potent engine of modern times, the press, the newspaper press, more powerful than all the books and magazines that could be manufactured, has been put in requisition. Every where its influence is felt. Its descriptions of cruelty curdle the blood, and its arguments in favor of equal rights and personal liberty, resistless in their nature, go home with stirring effect both to the understanding and the heart.

And money to carry on the cause—to do all that money can do—is poured into their treasury from thousands of willing hands.

Now here is an army of numbers, and appointments and means not to be trifled with. Their mutual faith pledged—their zeal burning and abiding—religious fervour animating—conscience lending its support—the power of the tongue and the pen—the talismanic charm of liberty—the consciousness, real or fancied, of superiority in the argument and eloquent appeal—the cheering approval of distant nations—the glory through time and even beyond its confines, of accomplishing the disenfranchisement of the millions in bondage—these are the elements which make modern abolition differ from that of our fathers. It differs, too, in the intensity of the interest created by a stern demand to proclaim freedom now, instead of promising it for the distant future.

Such is the abolitionism among us. Spread these facts before the recluse in his cell, who has been enough among mankind to understand human nature. Tell him, too, that every member of these societies is every day and at all times prepared to labor for the advance of his principles—that talented lecturers everywhere, in the free States, preach their doctrines, boldly challenging the world

for a champion to meet them in open debate, spreading their enthusiasm and awakening admiration, and kindling up every where hearts to emulous daring. Spread these things before one knowing our nature, though shut for the present out from the world, & he will tell you whether abolition is on the increase or on the wane. Here are the elements from which he will form a surer judgment than from any oral testimony. He will know, with all the assurance that the laws of nature could give him, that it is increasing and must inevitably pervade the mass, and enlist all hearts in its cause, where the cherished name of master does not interpose its shield.

Now how is effectual resistance to be made against such numbers, organization, skill, activity, and living, burning zeal in a cause of liberty and justice? Will you meet them in argument? You carry to the contest the weight of slavery. Your very offer to meet him calls forth all the enthusiasm of the abolitionist. Sustained by the animating approval of Christendom, he feels that the contest is but the sure harbinger of victory. And he holds you up as the advocate or the apologist or the protector of a system at war with human nature. He holds you up to the gaze of the world, with the bloody thong in your hand as the abettor of a system which changes in fact, as poets have done in fable, man to a brute, leaving to him yet the beating human heart, while his tongue is dumb, and silent tears alone bespeak sympathy. He presents you as the advocate of those who, for self interest, have repealed the laws of God and sneered at the rights of humanity. You endeavor to escape by allying that you are opposed to this system, and he triumphantly demands what you have done to end it, and why all your strength is expended against abolition and none against slavery. He shows you how under your mental opposition, slaves have been multiplied from thousands to millions. You cannot contend with him in argument. He has every advantage and the tact to turn it to account. Thus, if silent, judgment is taken against you by default, and if you plead, a judgment, not less sure and more effective, is rendered on argument.

Will you call in physical force to put it down? This has already been tried and has been found but a sowing of dragon's teeth.

Will you call in legislative aid? To do so you must enter upon an arena exposed to the gaze of the world, and with a consciousness that your very legislation may change the ruling power.

Now whether modern abolition be right or wrong, it has acquired a momentum with the means of continued increase which, if past history and sober calculation be any thing more than the means of deception, will render its progress resistless. Some obstacle may interpose a momentary check to the increase of its speed, but in the nature of things, it will only call forth new efforts producing an increased acceleration. If there be means of effectual opposition, we confess ourselves too blind to see them.

We note this state of things and present it to the reflecting, both political and religious, not for the purpose of arguing for or against modern abolition, but that it may call up sober thought, and save from an expenditure of useless effort.

The Right of Petition.

The following is an extract from the speech of Mr. ANDREWS in the Ohio Legislature, in debate, on the motion to reject a petition from negroes,—which motion, to the disgrace of that State, prevailed—38 to 27.

But it is said, that the constitution has not given to negroes the right of petition; and gentlemen declare that conscientious scruples forbid them to accord to any individual rights which they do not find expressed in the provisions of that instrument. Let me ask gentlemen to point out any clause of the constitution that permits citizens of another State or aliens to petition; and, if there be no such clause, where were all these conscientious scruples when the gentleman from Licking (Mr. Flood) introduced, during the present session, the petition of an alien, asking that he might be relieved from certain disabilities, and which relief most of us voted to extend to him? Why have these conscientious scruples been suffered to sleep under the introduction and reference of the petitions of thousands of the ladies of your State, to whom, it is admitted by gentlemen that the constitution has not expressly granted the right of petition? I cannot believe that a regard for the roles of husbands and fathers, and brothers will influence a legislator in giving a construction to the constitution. I am bound to believe that conscientious scruples will compel gentlemen hereafter to move the rejection of all petitions that do not come within the express provisions of that instrument.

But, sir, the truth is, gentlemen are wrong, wholly wrong in the view they take of the right of petition. It is a right paramount to all written constitutions—one which they have not given, and which they cannot take away. It is not even limited to man. Every thing that lives and moves and has a being, has received this right from the hand of the great Creator. It is this same right which enables the brute creation to make known their wants to man. Your dog in distress whines at the feet of his master; and where is the monster that would stifle the cries by which nature thus bids him ask for relief? Throughout the whole range of animal existence, from the highest to the lowest, the God of nature has made the right of petition the prerogative of distress; and who are we, that we should refuse to listen to the cries of a human being, upon whose forehead the Deity stamped the right of petition when first he made him erect with his face toward heaven?—Can the Great Lawgiver of the Universe stoop to hear the humbles of the creatures of his hand,—and are we so exalted, so dignified, so unapproachable a body, as that we should shut the mouth of a human being because the Creator has made him of a different color from our own?

But, sir, let us trace this new doctrine a little further, and apply it to other departments of our government. If it be true that negroes are not contemplated by our constitution, and if for that reason this Legislature cannot receive their petitions, on what authority do your courts of justice

recognize the rights of a negro? why are not your judges, like the gentlemen from Fairfield, compelled by conscientious scruples to drive the negro from their presence? Sir, if any judge within our border should dare to put such a construction upon our constitution, would not the gentleman from Licking forthwith call the attention of the House to so gross an insult to public justice; and would not we, as a Legislature, with one voice degrade from his high station the man who should thus, under cover of law, trample upon all laws, human and divine? And yet, sir, the unjust judge who should thus shock the moral sense of mankind, would, on the principles that have been this day advanced, be only performing a high duty under the constitution.

But still further: suppose a petition were presented by a negro to the Governor of your State, respectfully soliciting his kind offices and protection in a matter coming within his supervision;—suppose even a verbal request,—for so far as the right of petition is concerned, it matters not whether the petition be written or verbal,—must the conscientious constitutional scruples of the Chief Magistrate triumph over the better feelings which I know he possesses as a man; and must he too, as a matter of duty, drive wretchedness from his door?

But, sir, I will pursue the argument no farther. Whatever may be the decision of this House, of one thing I am certain—you cannot destroy the right of petition. You may reject this petition, and you may stereotype that rejection upon your journal or upon your statute book, but it will be all in vain. You cannot crush the sympathies of the human heart—above all, you cannot efface the laws that God has written there. In such an effort, like the fool-hardy king of England, you will find yourselves standing on the shore, and attempting to roll back the waves of the sea.

"I do not like your Leaders."—So said a Christian minister to us not long since. "My heart is with you, but I cannot enlist under such men as now lead on the anti-slavery cause. I told some of the brethren that Garrison would ruin the cause." Now if the charge be true, that our cause is in wrong hands, is it the way to get it into the proper hands, to stand entirely aloof from it, and disown it altogether. This same minister admitted that our cause was a good one, "but," said he, "it is under wrong management."

How, in all the world, we ask, is the cause to be brought under right management, if the right men turn their backs upon it? Shall we give it up in expectation that the "right" men will step forward and take it under their auspices? What assurance have we, that if we should let go they would take hold? We have never been opposed to the "right" men taking up this business. We have all along been complaining because they did not. "The work is great and large." There is room enough for us all. If the "right" men don't like to work along side of us, let them choose their own place, and if they can do the thing better than we are doing it, we shall follow up as fast as we can. In the mean time, we think, we had better go on with such "leaders" as we can get, without waiting for the "right" men. And we must think, after all, we have done wondrous well, considering the "leaders" we had. Evidence is abundant that our cause is advancing beyond the most sanguine expectations.

The secret, however, is, that some men will not go at all, unless you will let them "lead." If such men had a little more of the spirit of Paul, who was not ashamed to identify himself with the despised disciples of the crucified One, their difficulty would all vanish.

We wish it to be understood that we do not hold ourselves responsible for all that Friend Garrison, or any other "leader" or follower says or does, any farther than their abolitionism is concerned. And with all our fanaticism, we do not believe in the infallibility of abolitionists, or any other class.

After all, it is a question in our mind, whether the abolitionists of this country, leaders and followers would suffer much in comparison with the same number of any other class of persons, embracing the same variety of views on other subjects.—*Pittsburg Witness.*

NEW "SPECIE BASIS."—In Georgia, under their new "Free Banking Law," Slaves are to be made a part of the Banking capital! The Richmond Whig says,

"A gentleman of much experience in financial matters, has expressed the opinion to us, that the Georgia addition of negroes as bankable property, was a very wise addition to the New York act, whether regarded in a financial or political aspect. Negroes, in his opinion, would constitute the best property we have for banking purposes; and besides, by basing the value of our circulating medium upon our slaves, we interest all who trade with us in preserving our domestic institutions."

This is an improved method of subsidizing the free North. It may succeed in our large commercial cities, but not elsewhere. Nor will "negroes" be as valuable a basis for a "circulating medium," as the Whig supposes. The basis will be a little too "circulating." When the South has built a few more rail-roads, and the North has become more thoroughly abolitionized, the way these "yellow boys" will remove the deposits, giving "leg bail" for their re-appearance, will be "a caution" to bill holders.—*Mass. Abolitionist.*

WEST INDIES. During the Anti-Slavery discussions in Great Britain, two grand objections were urged by the pro-slavery party, against the emancipation of the W. I. colonists. First, They would certainly cut their master's throats, and deluge the Islands in blood. Or, second, If they neglected to do this, they would be unable to take care of themselves—would be cheated and overreached in bargaining with the planters, and thus be vastly worse off than when in slavery. The veracity of pro-slavery, through all coming time, was staked on the fulfillment of these prophecies. At length the day of deliverance came, and 800,000 slaves glided into freedom, without producing a disorderly ripple on the surface of society. Months and years have passed away, and not a drop of insurrectionary blood has been shed. And, as to taking care of themselves, the emancipated have proved to be genuine Yankees in their earnestness in driving good bargains with the planters.—*Ibid.*