APPEAL

OF

CASSIUS M. CLAY

TO

KENTUCKY AND THE WORLD.

BOSTON:
J. M. MACOMBER & E. L. PRATT,
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BOSTON.

APPEAL OF CASSIUS M. CLAY.

THEY who on the eighteenth day of August, 1845, rose in arms, overpowered the civil authorities, and established an irresponsible despotism upon the constitutional liberties of this Commonwealth, in justification of their conduct, "appeal to Kentucky and to the world." So be it. Let Kentucky and the world judge.

When the public peace is disturbed—when the laws are defied—when the Constitution is overthrown,—and when, by the avowal of murderous purposes, natural right and divine justice are impiously violated:—not the loss of property—not the individual wrong and suffering—not even the shedding of blood, are to be weighed a moment: but the *great principles of liberty only* are to be borne in mind; whilst individuals, however high or low, are to be forgotten. If it shall turn out that these principles were by me violated or endangered,—then was it right that my house should have been rudely entered by personal enemies, threatening me with the dread alternative of death or dishonor,—then was it right that the sick chamber should not wake, in the bosoms of the stern vindicators of the law, some feeling of pitying sympathy or magnanimous forbearance,—then was it right that my wife and children should, for long days and nights, suffer the terrors of impending ruin,—then was it right that I should have my property confiscated,—then was it right that I should be outlawed and exiled, from the land of my birth, and the buried ashes of my own loved blood and ever-cherished friends. But if, on the other hand,

they, and not I, have done this deed,—then let me be restored to the confidence of my countrymen—to the security of the laws—to the inviolate sanctity of the home of my native land,—and let them be consigned, not to a felon's fate, which is their due by the Constitution and laws of Kentucky,—but live out their days with the reflection that the most they can hope for in the future, is, that their dishonored names will be swallowed up in the magnanimous forgetfulness of coming generations.

In the spring of 1845 I, in connection with some other Kentuckians, made proposals to publish a paper devoted to *free discussion and gradual emancipation in Kentucky.* On the third day of June of the same year, the True American was issued from the press: having about three hundred subscribers in this State, and about seventeen hundred in the other states. On the twelfth day of August, 1845, the last number of this paper was sent to about seven hundred subscribers in Kentucky, and about twenty-seven hundred of the other states of the Union. These facts are verified by the books of the office, which friend or foe is at liberty to examine. That my readers in Kentucky should have run up, in this short space of about two months, from three to seven hundred, in the face of all the violence and proscription of the enemies of emancipation, voluntarily, without any agencies, and without the distribution of circulars or papers on my part, is a most extraordinary circumstance. And when we reflect that about twenty persons read the paper of each subscriber, making fourteen thousand readers in Kentucky, it proves beyond all controversy that the principles and tone of my press were taking a powerful hold upon the minds and affections of the people.

The Democratic papers were comparatively silent. The Whig press was largely in my favor. The Christian Intelligencer soon raised also the standard of emancipation. The people of Louisville had taken the initiatory step for starting a similar paper there. A Democratic print of the Green river section, the most pro-slavery part of the State, had copied an article from the True American, showing the ruinous competition of slave labor with that of the whites, and seemed ready to wage a common war. For the first time since the formation of the Con-

stitution of the State, was a political party organized for the overthrow of slavery in a legal way; and in the most populous city in the commonwealth a candidate was announced, ready to fight the battle upon the stump. A convention of the friends of emancipation was proposed to be held on the fourth day of July, 1846, and met the approval of many able and patriotic citizens. The principal movers in this cause were slaveholders; so also were a majority of the readers of the True American; and the great mass of laborers, who are not habitual readers of newspapers, began to hear—to consider—and to learn their rights, and were preparing to maintain them; so that all things moving steadily towards the same glorious end, proclaimed, that KENTUCKY MUST BE FREE.

Previous to the issuing of the ninth number of the True American, I was taken sick with the Typhoid fever. A few friends edited the paper till the eleventh number was in press, in which was a leading article written by a slaveholder, and the following editorial written by myself:

"We are called once more to our hard and responsible task, from a bed of long and painful illness. The inquiry has been frequently made, we are told, whether we were living or dead, with hopes for the worst in the bosoms of some: we are proud to say that the man does not live, whom we would, if we could effect it by the mere exertion of the will, cause one moment's pain; far less compass in desire his death. To freemen, the disgrace attending our misconduct is, in my opinion, the most urgent necessity. 'Is Philip dead?' 'No, but in great danger.' How are you concerned in these rumors? Suppose he should meet some fatal stroke: you would soon raise up another Philip, if your interests are thus regarded.' It is the weakness and disease in the State that has forced us into our present position: and if we should perish, the same causes would raise up many more, and abler than we, to vindicate the same cause.

We had hoped to see on this continent the great axiom that man is capable of self-government amply vindicated: we had no objections to the peaceable and honorable extension of empire over the whole continent, if equal freedom expanded with the bounds of the nation: gladly would we have seen untold millions of freemen, enjoying liberty of conscience and pursuit, of resting under their own vine and fig tree with none to make them afraid, standing upon a sacred and inviolate constitution at home, and just towards all nations;—such was the vision of the

immortal Washington, and such was ours. But we are told, the enunciation of the great and soul-stirring principles of Revolutionary patriots was a lie,—as a dog returns to his vomit we are to go back to the foul and cast-off rags of European tyranny to hide our nakedness; slavery, the most unmitigated, the lowest, basest that the world has seen, is to be substituted forever for our better, more glorious, holier aspirations,—the constitution is torn and trampled under foot, justice and good faith in a nation are derided, brute force is substituted in the place of high moral tone: all the great principles of national liberty, which we inherited from our British ancestry, are yielded up,—and we are left without God or hope in the world. When the great hearted of our land weep, and the man of reflection maddens in the contemplation of our national apostacy, there are men pursuing gain and pleasure, who smile with contempt and indifference at their appeals. But remember—you who dwell in marble palaces—that there are strong arms, and fiery hearts, and iron pikes in the streets, and panes of glass only between them and the silver plate on the board, and the smooth skinned woman on the ottoman. When you have mocked at virtue, denied the agency of God in the affairs of men, and made rapine your honied faith: tremble! for the day of retribution is at hand—and the masses will be avenged."

After I had written this, a ride to the office caused a relapse. Whilst I lay prostrate with disease, it was told me, a few minutes before 3 o'clock, of the fourteenth day of August, that there was to be held, at that hour, a meeting of the citizens at the Court House, in Lexington, for the purpose of suppressing the True American. I immediately rose and dressed myself; and in opposition to the remonstrances of my family, and at the risk of my life from the exertion, I determined to confront my enemies face to face, and vindicate my cause at all hazards. At the Court House I found about thirty individuals, including a few who came in after I left; their names were taken down by a couple of friends, and are now in my possession. All these men had grown from political opponents to personal enemies, because of my devotion to the Whig cause, except two, "a Whig" and "Junius," who were influenced no doubt by feelings of revenge, on account of the castigation which I had given them, in the first number of the True American, for their menace of the murderous infliction of Lynch law. After a silence of about half an hour, E. Q. Sayre said, he would speak

out just the same as if I was not present; he was for suppressing the True American as libellous, by legal means. Henry Johnson, a cotton planter, and the brother of R. M. Johnson, said he understood this meeting was to have been equally composed of Whigs and Democrats, and for one he would take no action concerning this Abolition press, unless the Whigs came up boldly and shared the responsibility. Thos. F. Marshall, the apostate Whig, and late hybrid candidate for Congress, said he understood this to be a *public* meeting, and was here by an *invitation;* he held the True American in his hand, and would read what he conceived to be the cause of the public excitement. He then read the article written by me and took his seat.

Up to this period no Whig had made his appearance. D. M. Craig now made his entrance; he was a Whig; but the supposed author of "a Whig," as before stated. He was in a most lachrymose mood,—avowing himself my personal friend,—but at the same time his determination to use his musket against my life,—he said this was a *private* meeting, and in this he was clamorously seconded by the whole mass. During all this time I lay upon a bench, only at intervals being able to sit up. I said I was far from intruding myself upon any set of men,—that I had understood this was a public meeting—I threw myself upon their magnanimity—I acknowledged I was in the midst of enemies, yet trusted I would be allowed to explain the article read by Mr. Marshall, which from his few comments I found was utterly misconceived, and tortured from its true meaning. I was promptly refused a hearing. Faint, and with lips parched, I turned to T. F. Marshall, as the most chivalric of my enemies —a man whom I had met but a few months before in this same Court House, in the presence of an impartial audience of my countrymen, and driven to the walls, upon this same subject of the liberties of men—a man from whom I had extorted an open avowal, "that he had (putting his hand to his heart,) *the most profound respect for the gentleman and his opinions and arguments, so new, and strong, as to demand his more deliberate consideration*"—Who coldly replied: "That he had no more power here

than I, being a single individual." I then protested against his construction of my writings, and retired.

Exhausted by this effort I returned once more to my bed. But feeling the necessity of meeting the vindictive machinations of my enemies, I dictated a handbill to the people. (No. 1,) which was taken down by my wife, explaining the offensive editorial, and asking a suspension of public opinion and action, till my health would allow me to be heard.*

I had hardly got through with this when my chamber was entered by T. H. Waters, my personal enemy, with the following letter:

LEXINGTON, 14th Aug. 1845.

CASSIUS M. CLAY, Esq.

SIR:—We, the undersigned, have been appointed as a committee upon the part of a number of the respectable citizens of the City of Lexington to correspond with you, under the following resolution.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed to wait upon Cassius M. Clay, Editor of the "True American," and request him to discontinue the publication of the paper called the "True American," as its further continuance, in our judgment, is dangerous to the peace of our community, and to the safety of our homes and families.

In pursuance of the above, we hereby request you to discontinue your paper, and would seek to impress upon you the importance of your acquiescence. Your paper is agitating and exciting our community to an extent of which you can scarcely be aware. We do not approach you in the form of a threat. But we owe it to you to state, that in our judgment, your own safety, as well as the repose and peace of the community, are involved in your answer. We await your reply, in the hope that your own good sense and regard for the reasonable wishes of a community in which you have many connexions and friends, will induce you promptly to comply with our request. We are instructed to report your answer to a meeting, to-morrow evening, at three o'clock, and will expect it by two o'clock, P. M. of to-morrow. Respectfully, &c.

B. W. DUDLEY,
THO. H. WATERS,
JOHN W. HUNT.

* In this handbill I briefly narrate the circumstances of the meeting, as here stated. D. M Craig being the only Whig present, I supposed it a party affair, and so stated it. B. W. Dudley and G. W. Hunt had not then come in, who are Whigs, but are said to have been present after I left there.

I now saw that the union of which H. Johnson had spoken, had been consummated, and that a portion of the Whig party, sure enough, were about to give me up as a sacrifice to the malice of foes made by venturing my life in their cause.* Being determined to die in the defence of my birthright, the freedom of the press and the liberty of speech, I appended this short appeal to all true men and friends of law, and sent it to the press:

[No. III.]

KENTUCKIANS:—

You see this attempt of these tyrants, worse than the *thirty despots* who lorded it over the once free Athens, now to enslave you. Men who regard law—men who regard all their liberties as not to be sacrificed to a single pecuniary interest, to say the least, of doubtful value—lovers of justice—enemies of blood—laborers of all classes—you for whom I have sacrificed so much, where will you be found when the battle between Liberty and Slavery is to be fought? I cannot, I will not, I dare not question on which side you will be found. If you stand by me like men, our country shall yet be free; but if you falter now, I perish with less regret when I remember that the people of my native State, of whom I have been so proud, and whom I have loved so much, are already slaves.

Lexington, August 15, 1845. C. M. CLAY.

I immediately made preparations for the defence of my office, warned my chosen friends to be ready—to which they manfully assented—wrote my will, and next morning sent my camp bed to the office, as I was unable to sit up. I had thus made every preparation to meet these men of chivalry, who on Monday ventured to hurl defiance at a prostrate foe. They had demanded of me to give them an answer, to discontinue my paper, or that after three o'clock on that day my "personal safety" was lost! Did they come up to their threats? Not they. They found I was still able to drag my feeble body to the place of attack and rally around me many brave hearts.

* The part which the Johnsons took in Wickliffe's and Brown's attempt to assassinate me, a few years ago, is generally believed to have arisen solely from political motives of getting rid of a formidable opponent. The system they imported from Scott county, was to bully opponents in the canvass or at the polls, and this game they were beginning to play quite successfully with the friends of Garrett Davis, till the affair at Russell's Cave taught them that impunity would not await them.

With five hundred or more "unanimous" men in the Court House, on Friday, at three o'clock, they basely cowered, gave up all hope of a successful attack, put off the contest for three days, well knowing that before then, from the report of my physicians, I would be dead or unable to head my friends. They abandon the *secret* conclave and appeal to the *public*. On Saturday, the inflammatory piece, "A Kentuckian," made its appearance, and on the same day, they issued a long and lying handbill signed by the committee, to the "People of Lexington and county of Fayette." Yet they send this with runners and private letters to the *adjoining counties*, calling, in the printed bills, upon all the enemies of liberty, to rally to the "suppression of the True American," but writing on the backs of the same, "to Hell with Clay." Seeing that my handbills were relieving the public mind in this county and city, and giving way to their fears of being entirely thwarted in their murderous purposes, they issue another handbill, calling for help from the "adjoining counties," from the whole district where Marshall had but just finished a most bitter canvass, and where it was too well supposed that there would be many desperadoes ready for any deed. In their pamphlet they say this last handbill was authorized by the meeting of Friday, which is false. The resolution as reported by them, confines their call to "the people of Fayette and city of Lexington!"

Finding that the "*secret conclave of cowardly assassins*" had backed out from their purpose of making my "personal safety" "involved in my answer," and had appealed to a public "constitutional" meeting, I told my friends to disarm the office, and leave it to the untrammeled decision of the citizens.

I then wrote my plan of Emancipation, addressed to the people, (No. 4,) from which I make the following extracts:

[No. IV.]

Although I regard slavery as opposed to natural right, *I consider law and its inviolable observance, in all cases whatever, as the only safeguard of my own liberty and the liberty of others.* I therefore have not, and will not give my sanction to any mode of freeing the slaves, which does not conform strictly to the Laws and Constitution of my State. And as I am satisfied that there is no power, under the present Constitution, by which slavery can be

reached, I go for a Convention. In a Convention, which is politically omnipotent, I would say that every female slave, born after a certain day and year, should be free at the age of twenty-one. This, in the course of time, would gradually, and at last, make our State truly free. I would further say, that, after the expiration of thirty years, more or less, the State would provide a fund, either from her own resources, from her portion in the Public Land, for the purchase of the existing generation of slaves, in order that the white laboring portion of our community might be as soon as possible freed from the ruinous competition of slave labor. The fund should be applied after this manner; commissioners should be appointed in each county, who shall on oath value all slaves that shall be voluntarily presented to them for that purpose. To the owners of these slaves shall be issued, by the proper authorities, scrip bearing interest at the rate of six per cent. to the amount of the value of their slaves, and to the redemption of said scrip, this fund shall be applied, principal and interest. By this plan the present habits of our people would not be suddenly broken in upon, whilst, at the same time, we believe that it would bring slavery to almost utter extinction in our State within the next thirty years.

With regard to the free blacks, I would not go for forcible expulsion, but I would encourage by all the pecuniary resources that the State had to spare, a voluntary emigration to such countries and climates as nature seems particularly to have designed for them.

With regard to the political equality of the blacks with the whites, I should oppose in Convention their admission to the right of suffrage. As minors, women, foreigners, denizens and divers other classes of individuals are, in all well regulated governments, forbidden the elective franchise, so I see no good reason why the blacks, until they become able to exercise the right to vote with proper discretion, should be admitted to the right of suffrage. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." The time might come with succeeding generations when there would be no objection on the part of the whites, and none on the account of disqualification of the blacks, to their being admitted to the same political platform; but let after generations act for themselves. The idea of amalgamation and social equality resulting from emancipation, is proven by experience to be untrue and absurd. It may be said by some, what right would a Convention have to liberate the unborn? They who ask equity, thè lawyers say, themselves must do equity, and whilst the slaveholders have rights, they must remember the blacks also have rights; and surely in the compromise which we have proposed between the slave and the slaveholder, the slaveholder has the lion's share.

On Sunday I replied to the committee's handbill of

Saturday, (in No. 5,) showing their falsehoods, and denouncing them, and appealing to the justice of the public at whose bar I intended to appear if possible. Late on Sunday night, finding myself still more than ever prostrated, and despairing of being able to be present at the meeting on Monday, I dictated this last handbill, read the proof-sheets an hour after midnight, and had it circulated Monday morning, fearing that if it was put off to be read in manuscript it would be suppressed or unheard.

(No. VI.)

LEXINGTON, August 18th, 1845.

The Chairman of the Public Meeting assembled to-day will please lay before it the following communication:

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF LEXINGTON, AND COUNTY OF FAYETTE. —Being unable from the state of my health, to be present at your meeting, and even unable to hold a pen, having been sick thirty-five days with the Typhoid fever, I dictate to an amanuensis, a few lines for your consideration. Having been the unwilling cause, in part, of the present excitement in my county, and feeling, as I do, respect for the safety and happiness of others as well as my own, I voluntarily come forward and do all I conscientiously can do for your quiet and satisfaction. I treated the communication from the private caucus with burning contempt, arising not only from their assuming over me a power which would make me a slave, but from a sense of the deep personal indignity with which their unheard-of assumptions were attempted to be carried into execution. But to you — a far differently organized body and a constitutional assemblage of citizens — I feel that it is just and proper that I should answer at your bar; and as I am not in a state of health to carry on an argument or vindicate properly my own rights, I shall, voluntarily, before any action is taken on your part, make such explanation as I deem just and proper.

During my sickness, my paper has been conducted by some friends. The leading article in the last number, which I am told is the great cause of the public disquietude, I have never read, because at the time it was put to press, I could not have undergone the fatigue of reading such a paper through. Although it was read over to me at the time, yet I am fully persuaded now, that had I have been in health it would not have been admitted into my columns. But I felt the less hesitancy in admitting it, because it has been my avowed policy heretofore to admit free discussion upon the subject of slavery, by slaveholders themselves, and the author of this article is largely interested in that

kind of property. You have seen before this time that the course of policy which I commenced, myself, to the State, is widely different, in many essential points, to this author's views. The article written by myself, and published in the same paper, was written a few days after the leader was in type, and which has also been the cause of so much dissatisfaction, the justice of which, to some extent, I am willing to acknowledge. I assure you upon the honor of a man, it was never intended to mean, or to bear the construction which my enemies have given it. I was pursuing the reflections of my own mind, without thinking of the misconstruction that could be put upon my language.

Had I been in the vigor of health, I should have avoided the objectionable expressions, for by sharply guarding against the cavils of my opponents, I would best guard at the same time against any thing which could be considered of an incendiary character. I cannot say that the paper, from the beginning, has been conducted in the manner I could have wished. The cause of this it is not now necessary for me to mention. Satisfied, however, from past experience, that the free discussion of the subject of slavery, is liable to many objections which I did not anticipate, and which followed in an excess of liberality, arising no doubt from the fact that I had been denied the columns of the other presses of the country myself, I propose in future very materially to restrict the latitude of discussion. I shall admit into my paper no article upon this subject, for which I am not willing to be held responsible. This, you perceive, will very much narrow the ground; for my plan of emancipation which I put forth a few days ago, is of the most gradual character. My other views put forth there also, are such as I learn are not at all offensive to the great mass of our people. By this course, I expect to achieve two objects, to enable me to carry on the advocacy of those principles and measures which I deem of vital importance to our state, without molestation and without subjecting the people to the apprehensions and excitement which are now unhappily upon us. You may properly ask, perhaps, why was not this thing done before? I reply that I did not foresee any such consequences as have resulted from a different course. The denunciations of the public press on both sides, I conceived, and am still of the same opinion, arose from the desire to make both parties political capital. And you will see also, when the excitement is worn off, that there have been many selfish purposes sought to be accomplished, at the expense of your peace and mine, by men who are professing to be actuated by nothing but patriotic motives.

Having said thus much upon the conduct of my paper, I must say also, that my constitutional rights I will never abandon. I feel as deeply interested in this community, as any other man in in it. No man is, or has a connection, more deeply interested in

the prosperity of this State, than myself. You ought not, you cannot, if you are just to me as you are to yourselves, ask me to do that which you would not do. I know not in reality, what may be the state of public feeling. I am told it is very much inflamed; I, therefore, directed my publisher, after the publication of to-morrow's paper, to exclude all matter upon the subject of Slavery, until, if my health is restored, I shall be able myself to take the helm.

My office and dwelling are undefended, except by the laws of my country — to the sacred inviolability of which I confide myself and property; and of these laws you are the sole guardians. You have the power to do as you please. You will so act, however, I trust, that this day shall not be one accursed to our County and State.

Your obedient servant, C. M. CLAY.

Here, then, was as conciliatory an offer as any honorable man could ask. I wrote just as I would have spoken, had I been present in a mixed audience, where a few were attempting to hurry on the many to thoughtless deeds of irrevocable infamy. Had I been personally severe, in the True American, on some citizen high in the confidence of the State, I but spoke the real sentiments of my heart when I regretted it. Had I, when worn down with disease, with no friend of similar views to stand by my bedside and give me counsel upon which I could implicitly rely, given utterance, incautiously, to language which might by any possibility be the cause of disaffection among the slaves, I was willing to be more guarded in the future. Had I dangerously given, when incapable of judging, too much liberty to correspondents, who are not always the best qualified to know the effects of their reflections upon a community surrounded by a large slave population, I was willing for the future to sit in more restrictive judgment upon the freedom and latitude of discussion. All these concessions were freely, frankly, and in good faith, made to save my country's cause and mine. Kentuckians! Americans! was not this enough? Oh! no, it was not the manner, but the thing—it was not the *words*, but *actions*, which they feared. They wanted me to say that I would cease the discussion of the subject of slavery, for well did they see, from a brief experience, that slavery and a free press could not live together. They wanted me to abandon the exercise of my legal rights. Is any

man so base as to say I ought to have yielded? No, my countrymen, remembering what State had given me birth, what I owed my country, what was due my suffering fellow-men, and my obligations to a just God, I replied in words which I supposed to be my last to man, "*my Constitutional rights I shall never abandon.*" But, horrible and fatal necessity! slavery knows not the language of remorse, and cannot indulge the undying instincts of generous magnanimity over a defenceless foe.* She had the decency to listen to my appeal, and I am told that tears stood in the eyes of many — yet the deed must be done, and with melancholy, yet firm despair, she bent herself to the task — and the press fell! and Kentuckians ceased to be free!

On the morning of the 18th of August, George R. Trotter, Judge of the city of Lexington, issued a legal process, enjoining the True American office and all its appurtenances, and on demand I yielded up the keys to the city marshal. At 11 o'clock, on the same day, about twelve hundred persons assembled in the Court-House yard; a Chairman and Secretary were appointed, a manifesto and resolutions were reported by T. F. Marshall, and adopted. A committee of sixty were appointed to take down the press and type, and send them to Cincinnati. The committee proceeded to the True American office, where the mayor of the city, (who by law has the whole militia of the city at his command,) James Logue, warned them that they were doing an illegal act, which he was bound to resist, but he was overpowered by superior force, and yielded up possession and the keys. After boxing up the press and type, and all the furniture of the office, and sending them to Cincinnati, they reported again to the meeting at the Court-House, at 3 o'clock; and after a speech from Thomas Metcalfe, disavowing all connection with abolitionism on the part of the Whigs of Kentucky, the meeting adjourned.

Thus on the 18th day of August, 1845, were the consti-

* Every one of these handbills was dictated by me to an amanuensis whilst my hands and head were continually bathed with cold water, to keep the fever down to a point below delirium. Every relative believed I would be murdered on Monday, and all but my wife and mother advised me to yield up the liberty of the press; but I preferred rather to die.

tutional liberties of Kentucky overthrown, and an irresponsible despotism of slaveholding aristocracy established on their ruins. They who did the deed, call it "dignified," and they supposed that its dignity would shield them from the indignation and curses of men. Did they? No, they were not so contemptibly silly as that. They found it necessary, in order to cover up the enormity of their crime—(murder, cool and premeditated, and only not consummated because no resistance was offered, according to their own admission—but in reality, because they found hundreds of brave men looking on in sullen silence, ready to die in my defence,)—to publish a manifesto to the world, full of darkly studied and damning calumny, in order to shut me off from the sympathies of men and abate the horror of their criminal avowal and dastardly revenge.

They supposed, no doubt, that I would either fall by disease or violence; and, as "dead men tell no tales," it would be easy to blacken my memory, and cover up their own infamy. This last finishing touch was needed to complete the dark portrait of perpetual slavery—that mankind, looking upon this picture of slaveholding cruelty, wrong, and smooth-faced hypocrisy, might be no longer deceived forever!

In this manifesto, and indictment, and verdict, I am accused:

1. Of being an abolitionist in its Southern sense—my northern visit is imputed to me as a crime—and I am declared returning home "the organ and agent of an incendiary sect."

2. I am accused of desiring to put into practical operation the sentiments of the leading article of the True American of the 11th number, where I am spoken of as the very author of the same—"The Western apostle transcends if possible, his mission."

3. It is imputed to me as a crime that I had prepared to defend my property and press against the illegal violence of the people.

4. I am accused of crime in characterizing American slavery as "the lowest, the basest, the most unmitigated the world has seen"—of being a "daring incendiary, hurling his firebrands of murder and of lust"—of "responding

as a haughty and infuriated fanatic, in terms of outrage, to a committee of gentlemen, who made a wonderfully mild request"—and of "denying the right of the citizens to consult together on such a subject"—of being a "madman," or of "preparing himself for a civil war, in which he expected the non-slave-holding laborers, along with the slaves, to flock to his standard"—in calling on the "laborers for whom I have sacrificed so much," of summoning slaves to my help.

5. I am accused of "attacking the tenure of slave property"—of being "a trespasser" upon slaveholders—and of pushing the community to extremity.

These are cruel charges, and most cruelly have they been avenged. Time was when men were heard, tried and punished, now being punished, may I yet be heard?

With regard to the first allegation: I am so far an abolitionist as certain men named George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and some other such "fanatics," who got together in 1776, and enunciated some very "mad and incendiary" doctrines. I followed up the same Washington, who, some years after that memorable event, declared that so far as his vote could go towards the abolition of slavery, it should never be wanting. The same Washington, at some time subsequent, liberated all his slaves; I was "fanatic" enough to follow his advice and example, and would have others do likewise, thinking it better to be just than rich. On the other hand, I am opposed to the violation of law in any respect, either for the purpose of liberating a slave, or of murdering by mobs a loyal citizen. I look upon the rebels of the 18th, who bore death and arms in their hands in order to perpetuate slavery, as infinitely lower in crime and infamy than the "incendiary sect," *if such there be*, who would use similar means to liberate the slave. God forbid that I or my countrymen should form an alliance with, or submit to the despotism of either. Neither the Liberty party nor the Garrisonians hold any such murderous doctrines; they are monopolized by the "respectable gentlemen" of the 18th of August. The Garrisonian abolitionists are non-resistants; they hold, with O'Connell, that no revolution or change of government is worth a single drop of human blood. The Liberty party holds the doctrine put forth by

their convention, held at Cincinnati on the 11th day of June, 1845. They say of slavery "we believe that its removal can be effected *peaceably*, *constitutionally*, without real injury to any, with the greatest benefit to all." So that if I was an Abolitionist, in its broadest sense, there is no cause or excuse for any number of respectable gentlemen to come upon me and murder me, or trample upon the constitutional liberty of speech and of the press. The Whigs call me a Whig—I wrote to the Abolitionists on the 11th of June, a letter published in the True American, where I call myself a Whig—the Abolitionists call me a Whig—and the Democrats call me a Whig; I hold the principles of the Whigs of '76, "eternal resistance to tyrants"—and all the renegades, apostates and traitors in Kentucky shall not shake me from whatever measure I choose to advocate, or from whatever men I choose to ally myself.

When my visit to the North is imputed to me as a crime, and so voted by prominent Whigs of Kentucky, it is time that I should cease to suffer in reputation for their sakes and speak plainly to them and the nation. Time after time did I receive the most urgent invitations from Whigs of the North to come and aid the cause: yet as often did I refuse. I had a great work to perform, and did not wish to place my opponents on the vantage ground. For well did I know that whatever honors I might receive at the North would be construed by the enemies of emancipation in Kentucky into an alliance with abolitionism.

When at last, however, serious apprehensions began to be entertained that Texas would come into the Union, with its unequal representation, slavery, and national dishonor, I felt it my duty to go, and give aid to the cause of my country, in whatever field of battle she called me. I went by the advice of one of the central committee for the Whigs of Kentucky,—by special invitation from about fifty Whig clubs of the North—by the request before and after my departure of four hundred and sixteen committee men, representing clubs, counties and conventions—by the irresistible persuasion of fifty patriotic Whig women of Ohio—and last of all by the tacit approval of the leader of the Whig party, Henry Clay. The day before I left

Lexington, I called upon Mr. Clay, and told him the purpose of my mission; that it was thought by our friends that I could have an influence, from my peculiar position, with the anti-slavery, anti-Texas voters of the free States, which no other man could, and that I was willing to go if I could aid the Whig cause. Mr. Clay said nothing, but nodded his head with an approving smile; and after some unimportant conversation he offered me letters of introduction, which I declined as unnecessary. Whether I accomplished any good there or not remains for others to say. It is enough for me to know, if I were vain enough to assume to myself consideration which belongs to the vital interests which were at stake in the canvass, that never did any man of my age in America draw together so large and intensely interesting audiences. The greatest intellect of the nation, the greatest orator of any age, said to me, "They had rather hear you than me." The most large-souled, uncompromising man in the Union was pleased to compliment me: "We regard you as one of the pillars of the great temple of American liberty." I mention these things not with the silly vanity of self-elation, I knew them undeserved and the overflow of hearts touched with sympathy for a man who had suffered proscription in the cause of justice and truth—for a man of proper feeling is less wounded by censure than unmerited compliment, and loves more to deserve praise than to receive it—but because much enmity and denunciation have been poured upon me here, charging me with being the cause of Mr. Clay's defeat, by my visit to the North, and by forcing him into the Gazette letter!

"The Speed letter—aye, the Speed letter!" Well, then, if the whole truth must be told, the Whigs of New York are solely responsible for the effect of that letter, if any it had; they published it *without my advice, and in opposition to my consent.* The letter on its face shows itself to be confidential and not intended for the public eye. I have by me Mr. Speed's letter, apologizing for the action of his friends in publishing it in his absence and without his consent, because of the eminent service it was thought it would render the cause. As soon as Mr. Clay's letter to the Kentucky Gazette was received by me, I immediately sat down to a table and wrote to him that I was

grieved if I had misunderstood his sentiments, drawn as my opinion was from his whole history and repeated written declarations—that if he was not favorable to emancipation I regretted it on my own account, on his account, and on account of our common country. That I was devoting myself unweariedly and honestly to the success of that party whose triumph was to result in his elevation, but if *he* conceived me doing any injury to the cause, that I would not again open my mouth in the canvass. His answer was that, stolen from Horace Greely, and published without my ever having seen it, by the Democracy of New York. During my whole visit North, although I was cordially received by the anti-slavery men of all parties, I addressed but two abolition meetings: and then it was to defend the proposition of H. Clay and the slaveholders, that "That is property which the law makes property." Everywhere among Abolitionists I made some enemies by defending this dogma, which now by the disregard of all law, avowed on the 18th, is of no more effect, but null and void. Everywhere, among Abolitionists especially, did I make enemies by defending Henry Clay. How then dare Henry Clay's son and Kentucky Whigs sit in solemn conclave and vote me to be "the organ and agent of an incendiary sect?" and under this pretext to rob me of my property, and threaten me with murder? To my brother Whigs throughout the Union I appeal from this ungrateful and calumnious accusation!

The second charge,—holding me responsible for being about to enforce the sentiments of the author of the leader, in the 11th number of the True American, who is of their own brotherhood, not *mine*, being a *slaveholder*, when they had my own written opinions before them, utterly different in many essential respects,—is as false as it is impudent. Denied myself the use of the press of all parties, on my return from the north; criminally accused in my absence, and not allowed to vindicate myself, it would have been strange indeed if I had refused even a slaveholder a hearing, who uttered his thoughts boldly and honestly. My paper was intended to embody the differing opinions of all Kentuckians, and I said in the beginning that all the editorials would admit of very variant opinions without comment from me. In the same

number with this leader, I promised in my very next to give my "individual opinions" upon emancipation. But these they did not want to hear, for well they knew that they would give the lie to all they had been saying about my abolitionism, for months and years. Have our masters grown so fastidious that they cannot hear simple propositions—which are safe and peaceable—stated, without becoming mad with impotent rage? For none of these "respectable gentlemen" have said that the leader was either *unjust* or *untrue*, or that it was incendiary. How then, even if I had endorsed it, could it have been imputed to me as a crime?

In regard to the third allegation: it is indeed a strange state of civil society when the very basis upon which all associations of men are formed, is imputed to a man as a crime. If self defence, which is so much an axiom commanding the instinctive approbation of all men and times as to be known as the "first law of nature," has to be defended, I might as well quit the field in despair. But if it was not a virtue of the highest order, to resist mobs, which are violators of the peace, and in derogation of the dignity and safety of the commonwealth, I need but bring the National and State constitutions to my defence, which place the right of the citizen "to bear arms in self-defence," beyond the power of legislation, higher and more sacred than the Constitution itself. I was threatened with mobs by all the city papers, before I began to publish the True American; then, and not till then, did I prepare for defence. Against partial mobs, emeutes, and black Indians, whether one or a thousand, I was prepared to defend myself; yes, against the "secret conclave of cowardly assassins" I prepared myself, and dared them to the onset; and as I anticipated in the beginning, by them I stood unharmed, only because I was defended. Born free and independent, with my name associated eternally with the commonwealth, whose honor and safety I was bound by the laws of God and nature to support, I did not come "secretly" sneaking as a traitor with bated breath, *whispering treason and murder;* but glorying in my birthright, I proudly spread my banner, "God and Liberty," to the eyes of men, and vowed my determination to defend it or die. But in that once

proud State, for whose best interests I was ever willing to risk my all, I never anticipated a total overthrow of the *civil power;* for upon that, and the justice and magnanimity of the great mass of my countrymen, I relied for security, after I had swept down, if necessary, thousands of traitors and murderers who were as much their enemies as mine. My office, if a fortified, was not a provisioned fort; so these men, not I, are mad, when they would represent me as warring against the whole community. But let no man misunderstand me. Still in that case I would yield only to superior *brute force;* if every man in the district was against me, I do not admit the *right* even of a whole community to do an illegal act. The case of invasion by a foreign power is not a parallel case—that is only not forbidden by law, but these men acted not only *without* the sanction of law, but against it, and in violation of its most sacred purposes, which are to guard the weak against the strong and many. No, my countrymen, there is no liberty here, if every man in this State should join to enslave the press, whilst the Constitution stands an eternal barrier to, and in stern condemnation of the crime.

In the fourth and principal charge, the editorial already given is urged against me. It is true that I spoke of slavery, as I felt and knew it to be. Whilst I admit now, and ever have, the humanity of many masters, and whilst I have *never denounced slaveholders as a class*, still I maintain that American slavery, its system, its laws, and its possible abuses, make it "the lowest, the basest, and the most unmitigated the world has seen." The Jews had their jubilees; the Romans and Greeks admitted the freedman at once into the class of masters; the Turk makes his slave his wife and admits her equality in the household; the Asiatic, and the African, and the European slave fall not to the level of ours. For here color, and natural differences of structure and capacity, heighten the deformities of slavery, and increase its difficulties, its cruelties, and its dangers. On this question I spoke as one man to his equal—and who shall be my censors? It can be offensive to none but the basely guilty; if false, let it be proven! If true, let it be remedied. But as for mere clamor—I contemn it. "Go, show your slaves how

choleric you are, and make your bondmen tremble. Must I budge? Must I observe you? Must I stand and crouch under your testy humors? By the gods, you shall digest the venom of your spleen though it do split you." Impartial men must remember that this was written by a man just able to wield a pen, after a most dangerous and brain oppressing fever. It is the dreamy, abstract speculation of the invalid, purified by suffering, unguarded and unsuspecting, because conscious of a high and elevated motive. It is not an invitation to evil, or a vicious gloating upon suffering foreseen, but the great yearning of a heart full of humanity, to save others from impending ruin. There are in it, I frankly admit, words which seem to look to a servile insurrection, and to name such an event is, as the author of "A Kentuckian" also ought to know, to invite it. This I simply regret, not on my own account, but on account of the cause which is more dear to me than life. My war is upon slavery, not upon slaveholders—I repeat once more. As no man in Kentucky had more to lose, so no man had more reason than I to avoid even the suspicion of insurrection. All human probabilities conspire to sustain me, when I assert before heaven and earth that such a thought never entered my head. Come then, ye testy cavillers, I say the proposition is true, in its letter, and in its spirit, and in its broadest meaning! Yes, this much abused article but reiterates that *virtue is the only secure basis for republics.** Such has been the doctrine from Longinus, running down through all writers upon government till the final repetition of it in Washington's Farewell Address to the American people. The consciences of slaveholders bear testimony to its immortal truth, and neither calumny nor murder can eradicate it from the convictions of mankind. Need I maintain an argument to prove that slavery is subversive of virtue, and consequently dangerous to republics and death to liberty? Go, listen to your Ham-

* "Sene summa juititia, rempublicam geri nulla modo posse."—CICERO. "I must fairly tell you that so far as my principles are concerned, that I have no idea of liberty unconnected with *virtue*. Nor do I believe that any good constitutions of government can find it necessary for their security to doom any part of the people to a permanent slavery."—BURKE. See Montesquieu's d'Esprit des Sais; Vattell's Laws of Nations; Paley, etc. Passim.

monds, and let pulpit hypocrites stultify themselves and you, in discussing and refuting the language, reason, and the irrepressible axioms of the heart. Shall I contend that slavery is at war with the virtue and justice of this nation? Behold our broken constitutions; our violated laws; our tarnished faith; our wounded honor; our rapacious wars; our plundering conquests; our insulted ambassadors; our imprisoned citizens; our robbed presses; our murdered people; and tell me if I be a "fanatic" when I say that slavery threatens all law, and our whole system of republicanism, the ruin of property and the loss of life. Whether then slavery stood by the avarice and selfishness of the farmer of Kentucky, the planter of Louisiana, the manufacturer of Lowell, the cotton merchant of New York, the pork dealer of Cincinnati, or the speculators upon slave labor all over the Union—I wished to appeal to the strongest motives of the human heart, the love of money and the adoration of women, to arouse them to its inevitable and disastrous consequences. Will any one of these men tell me the guards which they propose to thrust between the "silver on the board," and the daughters of wealth with hands unhardened by toil; yes—the "smooth skinned woman on the ottoman," and the plundered poor,—the lawless, whose existence is pre-supposed by the very necessity of government at all? Come now, fastidious statesman! you who have had time to reflect, please tell me that I may in the future avoid your wrath, and my country escape this great woe! Shall it be by law? That you have sacrificed to slavery! Shall it be by a long instilled and sacred reverence for the Constitution? That you have trampled under foot! Shall it be by an appeal to a common interest between the rich and the poor, the only basis of republicanism? You have separated the great mass of the American people from you by slavery, by studied contempt and the impassable barriers of ignorance and poverty! You will appeal to a strong government and a king—will you? Look back through history, and learn that no republic has passed into a monarchy, without long years of blood and anarchy, in which perish property, men, women and children, and when are not spared the statues of dead men, or the temples of the living God! The last clause in the arti-

cle, which has been basely tortured into the *present now*, every sensible man will see is dependent upon the contingency, *when*, virtue is lost. It may be now, to morrow, next year, the next hundred years, and if virtue is *never* rooted out of the minds of the people, *never!*

Has it come to this, that I am to be drawn up and publicly censured, for speaking in plain and manly language to men, who order me to relinquish my birthright, or die. "Go, tyrants! I am not yet a slave." Are you *men?* Kentuckians! is not this shameful? Alas! have we so soon "lost the breed of noble bloods?"

It is not true that I "denied the right of the citizens to consult together on such a subject."

On the contrary, I did acknowledge their right, by my repeated appeals to them: not only to consult,—but to advise—to warn,—but then their office was at an end. They could, no more than a single person, go farther than the laws allowed. Had they confined themselves to this, much good would have resulted. There is a moral power in the proceedings and counsel of the assembled people in the public discharge of duty, when within the bounds of law and justice, which no sensible man will disregard so long as principle be not violated. But when they transcend their power they sink into the dust, impotent and contemptible as the meanest faction, and all *men* will stand by me when I defy them, as I do now. Whether they will best accomplish their purpose by the course pursued, time will develope—and may God defend the right!

For whom "have I sacrificed so much?" *For the six hundred thousand free white laborers of Kentucky!* against whose every vital interest slavery wages an eternal and implacable war! For them I lost caste with the slave-holding aristocracy of the land! For them I liberated my slaves! For them have I sacrificed all chance of political elevation in my native State! For them have I lived—and for them have I stood ready to die! They who have never eaten of my bread, and stabbed me in the dark; they, who have stood by me again and again, without hope of reward; they, whose children, gazing in my face with lovely eyes and reproachful confidence—seemed to say, "what are you as a legislator

doing for us?—shall we not be enabled to be fed and clothed as the children of slaveholders?—shall we not have schoolhouses and churches, and be taught to know how to work to advantage?—shall we not be so placed, as to be able to possess a small piece of land, or at all events, if we are manufacturers to sell our wares, or if we are mechanics, to find continual employment at fair wages?—shall we not change our log cabins daubed with mud, and chilled by the winds of winter, into comfortable little cottages, with some evidences of taste in yards, of flowers and shrubs?—save us, we pray you, from *necessary idleness*, and *dishonorable work*—spare yourselves the expense of jails and penitentiaries, and rescue us from the chances of a felon's fate!"—yes, these are the men, the great majority of the people of Kentucky, whose interests in 1841 I swore I never would betray—for whom I then fell, and now suffer. How long, my countrymen, seeing you have the power of the ballot box, shall these things be? Will you not at least be relieved from prejudice, which poisons you with hatred and injustice to the blacks? Enslaved by passions which our masters cunningly infuse into us from our very cradle—will you never open your eyes and be free? Will you not at least awake, arise, and be men? Then shall I be delivered from this outlawry, this impending ruin, this insufferable exile, this living death!

Not upon the slaves did I call. How could I? Is any man in Kentucky so base as to charge that I have held secret conference with the slaves? No, not one! How then could I call upon the slaves, who could not read, one in a hundred? With all my relations and kindred, slaveholders, many of them ministering in turn at my sick couch by day and by night; all to be involved in one common ruin; warring one county against a whole State; and I prostrate, and unable to raise my head, to call upon the slaves to rally to the standard of civil war! I refrain from expressing the great indignation which such gross and monstrous calumny, cannot but generate in the coldest bosom. Go, search my secret and public life from the cradle up, and tell the world by what steps I have gradually prepared myself for this last round of unmixed depravity! When have I stript the poor; when played the

sycophant to the powerful; where have I lied; what party betrayed; what friend deserted; when have I stolen or robbed; when did I counterfeit; whom have I secretly injured; in what penitentiaries have I served an apprenticeship to crime; whom have I secretly poisoned; whom have I openly murdered? Then, before this charge in the face of Kentucky, and the world, I stand mute! Poor and friendless; broken in spirit and in hope; outlawed and exiled though I be, there is something yet remaining, of what a man, a proud, just, honest man, should be, and I shall not stoop to plead not guilty, not here, nor now!

In the fifth and last count of this indictment, I am accused of "attacking the tenure of the property of slaveholders"—of being a "trespasser on them"—and of "pushing the community to extremity." Now I deny that I have ever attacked the legal tenure of slave property; the justice of a law is one thing, its validity another. I call for proof. My writings for five years are before them and the world. I challenge them to the proof. They can never produce it. How then can I be a "trespasser upon them?" I have ever vindicated their legal right to *their property;* they have robbed me of *mine!* They have taken more property from me than the average value of the slaves held by masters in Kentucky. If then their accusation were true and not false, perpetual silence should have sealed their lips; the robber, if I be one, has been doubly robbed!

I did not push the community to extremity. For in addition to my other concessions I was willing to suspend the paper till my health was restored. No, by all that is sacred among men, it was not the community, but slavery, which I was pushing to extremity! Those slaveholders who favored emancipation, cared not what I said of slavery, as my subscription list proves; those who did not and never did intend to favor it, I was not fool enough to attempt to persuade. If slavery never falls till it falls by the consent of slaveholders, it will never fall "in the tide of times." How many of all the monarchs of the world will any man of sense undertake to persuade to lay down the sceptre? Governor Hammond, in speaking of "moral suasion" addressed to slaveholders, tells but simple truth, when in writing to the venerable Thomas Clark-

son he says, "*you know it is mere nonsense.*" John Green, of Kentucky, one of the mildest, the best and most impartial men that ever lived, said in the Luminary, in 1836: "It is but natural that a stranger in passing through our State, should take up such impressions, from the liberal tone in which our politicians and other intelligent men speak on the subject, so long as they are permitted to deal in generals, and to qualify their remarks by the important word IF. But if you call upon them to propose some plan and to commence *action*, they will *almost universally* draw back. I think I know something of our public men, and I tell you they are for doing NOTHING." Let me be no more then "damned with faint praise" that my motives are good, but that I am "rash and denunciatory." No, my countrymen, it is not *words*, but *action*, for which I am now outlawed.

The slaveholders of the other counties have dropt the stale and shallow plea of *incendiarism*, and say that *slavery shall not be discussed.* This is the only and true issue. This manifesto means it—though it was ashamed to say it. Else why speak of its constitutional guarantees? Now the United States Constitution leaves it fairly within the power of change. The Kentucky Constitution, article 7, section 1, thus reads: "The General Assembly shall have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves, without the consent of their owners, or without paying their owners previous to such emancipation a full equivalent in money for the slaves so emancipated." It is true, we of the emancipation party have never pressed this power, because we deemed it impracticable in execution. Yet, here is a clause putting the whole question fairly within the field of *discussion*, because in the field of *action*—which relieves us of the necessity of claiming in our defence the constitutional rights and specific guarantees of the liberty of speech and the press.

I say, then, that this last, and all these allegations against me, are false and calumnious, and for my own justification I "appeal to Kentucky and to the world."

Having said this much upon this subject in connection with my own name, in order to develop its injustice and studied cruelty and determined wrong—I shall now consider it in its far more important bearing on the liberties of the State and the Nation.

Section 2, article 6, Kentucky Constitution, has this definition of treason: "Treason against the commonwealth shall consist only in levying war against, or in adhering to its enemies, giving them aid and comfort." Now here was a great party of men who rose up and declared themselves *armed*—"we are armed and resolved"—they go to the civil authorities, the Mayor and Marshal of the city of Lexington, officers of the commonwealth, who warn them that an illegal act is about to be perpetrated—and with arms and an overpowering force eject them and take property which was yielded up to the possession of the law. Not only do they fail to make restitution, but they avow their determination to continue their illegal action, and if necessary, to shed blood—to commit murder upon peaceable citizens. Now if this is not "levying war against the commonwealth," then is human language utterly incapable of conveying any thing intelligible! It was a *revolution*, bloodless only because no physical resistance was made, as they themselves avow. What is the commonwealth? its officers? Against them they levied war.—What is the commonwealth? its constitution? That they avowedly set aside as being incompetent to meet the case. What is the commonwealth? its laws? They proclaimed that there was no legal power for their action—They put it down in writing that there was usurped an original or revolutionary power. The assembly was called in open day; its president was a magistrate, a sworn conservator of the peace at other times—its action was deliberate and "dignified;" its numbers were large; and its force irresistible; its end the suppression of the press and the constitution of the State; and lastly, it solemnly appealed to the world in justification of its proceedings. If this be not a revolution, then never has one taken place in the history of men. No matter what may have been the provocation on my part; even though I had been proven an insurrectionist; even though I had been caught applying the torch to dwellings of defenceless women and children; even though I had been taken with hands red with the blood of my fellow-citizens—still the character of this action is unchanged in the least respect. The press had passed from my possession—

it was stopped by legal process; whatever danger it threatened, if any, was past; it had become inert matter, incapable of moral or legal wrong; and even if it had not, the commonwealth only was responsible for its influence, whether good or bad, upon the safety of the community, which these men affected to believe endangered, but of which, in reality, they themselves were the only enemies.

On the 18th day of August then were the constitutional liberties of Kentucky forcibly overthrown, and an irresponsible oligarchy of slaveholders established on their ruins.

They may allow Governor Owsley to retain his seat at the head of the executive department—they may permit the legislature to pass such laws as suit them—they may in a word suffer the forms and machinery of a free government to go on—but be assured, men of Kentucky, you are nevertheless *slaves*.

Be assured that you live under an anarchial despotism. The same men who robbed me of my press, sat as a jury and justified the deed, and declared there was no offence against the laws! What care they who plot murder, for violated oaths? The respectable slave-holding mob of the 18th, sat in judgment upon the "ungentlemanly" mob of the 19th, by arms and force, claiming for themselves alone supreme irresponsible power. The "canaille" of the 19th were drawn up before the courts and punished—the respectable gentlemen of the 18th, beyond all human computation more guilty, went unwhipt of justice; surely the king can do no wrong! Whilst I speak there are now ordered some hundreds of armed men, by the Governor, into Clay county, to preserve what little remnant of civil authority and the old form of government, may yet remain. What will this come to? Where does it all lead? It requires no prophetic eye to see blood flowing knee deep ere this damnable usurpation come to the still grave of unresisted and hopeless despotism. Did they say to Stevenson of Georgetown, print no more upon the subject of slavery? Has the Louisville Journal been silenced? In Lincoln, and Jefferson, and Nelson, will a peaceable citizen be drawn from his bed at midnight and be hung to a limb, or shot down like a dog in the day, if he venture to read one-half of the newspapers of Ameri-

ca? Are not these men mad? Are they not spinning for themselves a web, which, like the shirt of Nessus, will, instead of *protecting*, involve them in utter ruin and despair? Who in South Carolina dare now discuss slavery? Can Calhoun—can Hammond plead, if he would, for emancipation? Have they not raised a Devil which the combined intellect of the State cannot lay, though death look them in the face, and the grave open beneath their feet? "Madmen and fanatics," would you place Kentucky in the same category? Will you not allow us to be saved now while it is to-day—and whilst the evil years come not?

By what tenure do you hold your slaves? Is it by natural right, or by the constitution? If the constitution be overthrown, is not the slave free? Will the other States return him into bondage? Will they interfere to put down domestic violence, when by you all legal security is first destroyed? When you avow yourselves murderers in purpose, will the North be thus cured of dangerous fanaticism? Will not blood answer to blood, and the earth cry out unceasingly for vengeance? Is not the liberty of the press the common concern of the whole American people? Can you plant your iron heel upon the ten millions of Northern Freemen? Are Bunker-Hill and Lexington ideal names, and do I dream when I find myself planted upon a soil which was named in solemn dedication and remembrance of that land which was wet by the blood of those who knew not how to be slaves, and live? Can any people be free who voluntarily yield to illegal force a single right? Do I not owe allegiance to the National Government—may she not call on me at any hour to lay down my life in her defence? Then does she not in turn owe me protection? Can the sheep be safe when all the watch-dogs are slain? Can the nation be free when all the presses are muzzled? Have not the organs of two administrations made relentless war upon me, a private individual? What is there in my person so terrible to the slave power? Is any thing more terrible to tyrants than the liberty of the press? Will not emissaries from a slave-holding President do in the free States to-morrow what is done with impunity here to-day? Do not the cries of the bloodhounds of national patronage, crying for

my blood as freely as the despots of the South, strike terror into the souls of Northern men?

Can it be that the liberty of the press is so small a thing? Know you not, Americans, that when the liberty of speech and of the press is lost, all is lost? Heavens and earth! must I argue this question with the descendants of Washington and Adams? Well, then, Euripides said: "This is true liberty, where free-born men having to advise the public, may speak free." Said Chatham: "Sorry am I to hear liberty of speech in this house imputed as a crime; it is a liberty I mean to exercise, no gentleman ought to be afraid to exercise it." John Milton: "And although all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?" Daniel Webster, speaking of the freedom of opinion: "It may be silenced by military power, but cannot be conquered. It is elastic, irrepressible and invulnerable to the weapons of ordinary warfare. It is that impassable, unextinguishable enemy of mere violence and arbitrary rule, which, like Milton's angels,

> 'Vital in every part,
> Cannot, but by annihilating, die.'"

Until this be propitiated or satisfied, it is in vain for power to talk either of triumph or repose. Erskine: "The proposition I mean to maintain, as the basis of the liberty of the press, and without which it is an empty sound, is this, that every man not intending to mislead, but seeking to enlighten others with what his own reason and conscience, however erroneously, have dictated to him as truth, may address himself to the universal reason of a whole nation, either upon the subject of governments in general, or upon that of our own particular country; that he may analyze the principles of the Constitution—*point out its errors and defects—examine and publish its corruptions*—warn his fellow-citizens against their ruinous consequences, and exert his whole faculties in pointing out the most advantageous changes in establishments

which he considers radically defective, or sliding from their object by abuse."

John Milton, again: "For this is not the liberty which we can hope, that no grievance should ever rise in the Commonwealth; that let no man in this world expect; but when complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for."

Plutarch nobly says: "Without liberty there is nothing good, nothing worthy the desires of men."

Rotteck: "Curse on his memory! The press is to words what the tongue is to thoughts. Who will constrain the tongue to ask permission for the word it shall speak or forbid the soul to general thoughts? *What should be free and sacred if not the press?*"

Benjamin Franklin: "*Freedom of speech is the principal pillar of a free government: when this support is taken away, the Constitution of free government is dissolved, and tyranny is erected on its ruins.*"

Erskine: "It is because the liberty of the press resolves itself into this great issue, that it has been in every country the last liberty which subjects have been able to wrest from the hands of power. Other liberties are held *under* government, but the liberty of opinion keeps *governments themselves* in due subjection to their duties. *This has produced the martyrdom of truth in every age, and the world has only been purged from ignorance with the innocent blood of those who have enlightened it.*"

James McIntosh: "One asylum of free discussion is still inviolate. There is still one spot in Europe where man can exercise his reason on the most important concerns of society, where he can boldly publish his thoughts on the acts of the proudest and most powerful tyrants."

"The press of England is still free. It is guarded by the free constitution of our forefathers. It is guarded by the heart and arms of Englishmen; and I trust that I may venture to say, that if it be to fall, it will fall only under the ruins of the British Empire."

Curran: "What then remains? The liberty of the press only; that sacred palladium which no influence, no power, no minister, no government, which nothing but the depravity or folly of a jury can ever destroy. As the ad-

vocate of society, therefore, of peace, of domestic liberty and the lasting union of the two countries, I conjure you to guard the liberty of the press, that great sentinel of the state, that grand detector of public imposture; guard it, because when it sinks, then sinks with it, in one common grave, the liberty of the subject, and the security of the crown."

Such are the opinions of some of the great and good of other times, which seem to burst from agonized souls amid tears and blood.

But our fathers did not leave this basis of all liberty to the uncertain opinions of men. The United States Constitution, article 1, of A., says, "Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press." The Constitution of Kentucky, section 7, article 10, says: "The presses shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the Legislative or any branch of government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invulnerable rights of man; and every citizen may freely write, speak, or print, on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty."—Then I call upon William Owsley, Governor of Kentucky, to protect me in the constitutional re-establishment of the liberty of the press. This is a case of domestic violence. If he has not power enough here in Kentucky, I demand of him, in the name of the spirit of the 4th article of the Constitution, to call upon James K. Polk, President of the United States, to assist with all the power of the National arm, in vindicating the violated laws and a broken constitution. The liberty of the press is my inheritance. It is mine, by the common law of the land. Congress has no power to take it away, but to make it secure. I implore the American people to vindicate their birthright and mine. To the National government I owe allegiance, and in turn I claim of it protection; I demand of the Congress of the United States to pass suitable laws, by which the rebels of the 18th, if they attempt to redeem their pledge and renew their violence, may be brought to summary punishment, so that I be protected in the liberty of speech and of the press. Yes, Americans, if you are not slaves, this thing will have to

be done. It is your cause and not mine. Justice demands it—the constitution demands it—your own safety demands it—virtue and humanity demand it,—then in the name of God and Liberty let it be done.

In the mean time, I stand here on my native land, for which my kindred have bled in every field of honorable achievement, one amidst a thousand, undismayed by the dangers and death, which like the plague with mysterious and impassable terrors by day and night, hang over me and mine, trusting that my position may arouse in the bosoms of Americans an honorable shame and a magnanimous remorse; that they may rise up in the omnipotency of the ballot cast by fifteen millions of freemen, and peaceably overthrow the slave despotism of this nation; and avoid the damning infamy which awaits them for all time in the judgment of the civilized world, if they leave me here to die!

To the liberty of my country and of mankind, then, I dedicate myself and those whom I hold yet more dear; and for the purity of my motives, and the patriotism of my life, the past and the future, I "appeal to Kentucky and to the world."

C. M. CLAY.

Lexington, Ky., Sept. 25, 1845.

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1151

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3
144
3.6
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900

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