



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Anacostia Community Museum Archives*

## **Douglass Monthly, October 1860, Vol. III, NO. V**

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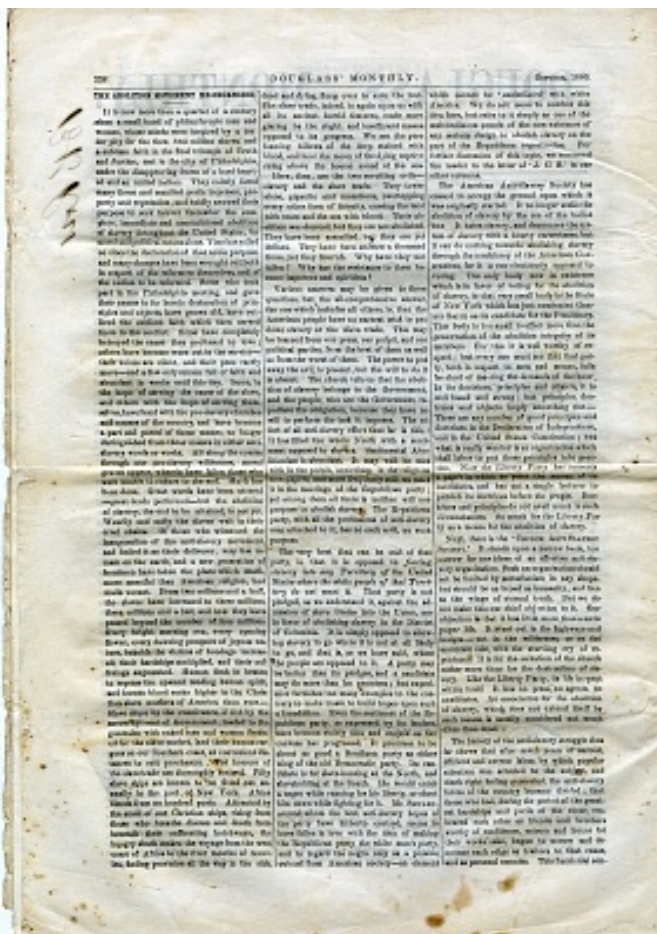
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# THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT RE-ORGANIZED. [[line]]

It is now more than a quarter of a century since a small band of philanthropic men and women, whose minds were inspired by a tender pity for the then two million slaves, and a sublime faith in the final triumph of Truth and Justice, met in the city of Philadelphia, under the disapproving frown of a hard-hearted and an united nation. They calmly faced many fierce and manifest perils to person, property and reputation, and boldly avowed their purpose to seek forever thereafter the complete, immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery throughout the United States, by moral and political means alone. Time has rolled on since the declaration of that noble purpose, and many changes have been wrought out, both in respect of the reformers themselves, and of the nation to be reformed. Some who took part in the Philadelphia meeting, and gave their names to its heroic declaration of principles and objects, have grown old, have outlived the sublime faith which then nerved them to the conflict. Some have completely betrayed the cause they professed to love; others have become worn out in the service - their voices are silent, and their pens rarely move - and a few only remain full of faith and abundant in works until this day. Some, in the hope of serving the cause of the slave, and others with the hope of serving themselves, have fused with the pro-slavery churches and masses of the country, and have become a part and parcel of those masses, no longer distinguished from those masses in either anti-slavery words or works. All along the course through our pro-slavery wilderness, moral graves appear, wherein have fallen those who were unable to endure to the end. Much has been done. Great words have been uttered - great deeds performed - but the abolition of slavery, the end to be attained, is not yet. Wearily and sadly the slaves wait in their cruel chains. Of those who witnessed the inauguration of the anti-slavery movement, and hailed it as their deliverer, very few remain on the earth, and a new generation of bondmen have taken the place which death, more merciful than American religion, had made vacant. From two millions and a half, the slaves have increased to three millions, three millions and a half, and now they have passed beyond the number of four millions. Every bright morning sun, every opening flower, every dawning prospect of joyous nature, beholds the victims of bondage increased, their hardships multiplied, and their sufferings augmented. Human flesh is beaten to repress the upward tending human spirit, and human blood ranks higher in the Christian slave markets of America than ever. - Slave ships, by the connivance, if not by the encouragement of Government, loaded to the gunwales with naked men and women destined for the slave market, land their human cargoes on our Southern coast, at convenient distances to suit purchasers. The horrors of the slave trade are thoroughly revived. Fifty slave ships are known to be fitted out annually in the port of New York. Africa bleeds from an hundred ports. Attracted by the smell of our Christian ships, rising from those who breathe disease and death from beneath their suffocating hatchways, the hungry shark makes the voyage from the west coast of Africa to the river mouths of America, finding provision all the way in the sick,



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dead and dying, flung over to save the rest. The slave trade, indeed, is again upon us with all its ancient horrid features, made more glaring by the slight and insufficient means opposed to its progress. We see the pure foaming billows of the deep stained with blood, and hear the moan of the dying captive rising above the hoarse sound of the sea.

Here, then, are the two revolting evils - slavery and the slave trade. They tower alone, gigantic and monstrous, overtopping every other form of iniquity, cursing the land with tears and the sea with blood. Their abolition was decreed, but they are not abolished. They have been assaulted, but they are yet defiant. They have been smitten a thousand times, yet they flourish. Why have they not fallen? Why has the resistance to them become impotent and spiritless?

Various answers may be given to these questions, but the all-comprehensive answer, the one which includes all others, is, that the American people have no earnest wish to put down slavery or the slave trade. This may be learned from our press, our pulpit, and our political parties, from the best of them as well as from the worst of them. The power to put away the evil is present, but the will to do it is absent. The church tells us that the abolition of slavery belongs to the Government, and the people, who are the Government, repudiate the obligation, because they have no will to perform the task it imposes. The effect of all anti-slavery effort thus far is this: It has filled the whole North with a sentiment opposed to slavery. Sentimental Abolitionism is abundant. It may well be met with in the pulpit, sometimes in the religious newspapers, and more frequently still we meet it in the meetings of the Republican party; yet among them all there is neither will nor purpose to abolish slavery. The Republican party, with all the professions of anti-slavery men attached to it, has no such will, no such purpose.

The very best that can be said of that party, is, that it is opposed to forcing slavery into any Territory of the United States where the white people of that Territory do not want it. That party is not pledged, as we understand it, against the admission of slave States into the Union, nor in favor of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. It is simply opposed to allowing slavery to go where it is not at all likely to go, and that is, as we have said, where the people are opposed to it. A party may be better than its pledges, and a candidate may do more than he promises; but experience furnishes too many examples to the contrary to make it safe to build hopes upon such a foundation. Even the sentiment of the Republican party, as expressed by its leaders, have become visibly thin and insipid as the canvass has progressed. It promises to be about as good a Southern party as either wing of the old Democratic party. Its candidate is for slave-hunting at the North, and slaveholding at the South. He would catch a negro while running for his liberty, or shoot him down while fighting for it. Mr. SEWARD, around whom the best anti-slavery hopes of the party have hitherto centred, seems to have fallen in love with the idea of making the Republican party the white man's party, and to regard the negro only as a pitiable outcast from American society - an element

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which cannot be 'assimilated' with white America. We do not mean to combat this idea here, but refer to it simply as one of the multitudinous proofs of the non existence of any serious design to abolish slavery on the part of the Republican organization. For further discussion of this topic, we commend the reader to the letter of 'J.C.H.' in our other columns.

The American Anti-Slavery Society has ceased to occupy the ground upon which it was originally started. It no longer seeks the abolition of slavery by the use of the ballot box. It hates slavery, and denounces the system of slavery with a hearty earnestness, but it can do nothing towards abolishing slavery through the machinery of the American Government, for it is conscientiously opposed to voting. The only body now in existence which is in favor of voting for the abolition of slavery, is that very small body in the State of New York which has just nominated GERRIT SMITH as its candidate for the Presidency. This body is too small to affect more than the preservation of the abolition integrity of its members. For this it is well worthy of respect; but every one must see that that party, both in respect to men and means, falls far short of meeting the demands of the hour. In its doctrines, principles and objects, it is well based and strong; but principles, doctrines and objects imply something else. - There are any number of good principles and doctrines in the Declaration of Independence, and in the United States Constitution; but what is really wanted is an organization which shall labor to put those principles into practice. Now the Liberty Party has scarcely a paper in which to print the names of its candidates, and has not a single lecturer to publish its doctrines before the people. Doctrines and principles do not avail much in such circumstances. So much for the Liberty Party as a means for the abolition of slavery.

Next, there is the 'CHURCH ANTI SLAVERY SOCIETY.' It stands upon a narrow basis, too narrow for our ideas of an effective anti-slavery organization. Such an organization should not be limited by sectarianism in any shape - but should be as broad as humanity, and free as the wings of eternal truth. But we do not make this our chief objection to it. Our objection is that it has little more than a mere paper life. It is not out in the highways and hedges - not in the wilderness, or on the mountain side, with the startling cry of repentance. It is for the salvation of the church rather more than for the destruction of slavery. Like the Liberty party, its life is spent within itself. It has no press, no agents, no auxiliaries. An association for the abolition of slavery, which does not extend itself by such means, is usually considered not much more than dead.

The history of the anti-slavery struggle thus far shows that after seven years of earnest, efficient and UNITED labor, by which popular attention was arrested to the subject, and much right feeling generated, the anti-slavery forces of the country became divided; that those who had, during the period of the greatest hardships and perils of the cause, embraced each other as friends and brothers worthy of confidence, esteem and honor for their works' sake, began to accuse and denounce each other as traitors to that cause, and as personal enemies. This fratricidal conduct

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