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THE EMANCIPATION QUESTION.
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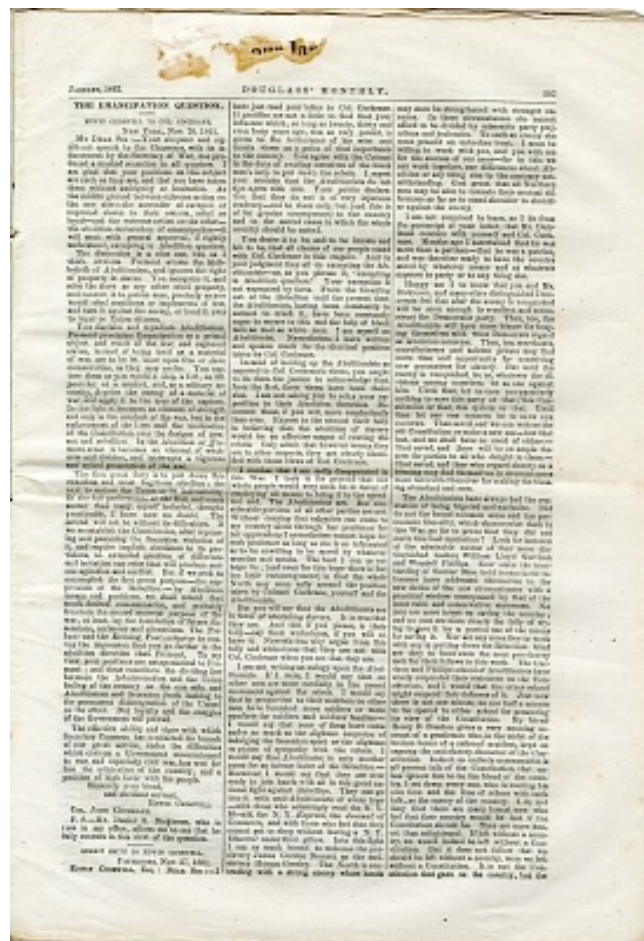
EDWIN CROSWELL TO COL. COCHRANE.
NEW YORK, NOV. 20, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR:—Your eloquent and significant speech to the Chasseurs, with its indorsement [sic] by the Secretary of War, has produced a marked sensation in all quarters. I am glad that your positions on this subject are such as they are, and that you have taken them without ambiguity or hesitation. As the middle ground between extreme action on the one side—the surrender of escaped or captured slaves to their owners, rebel or loyal—and the extreme action on the other—the abolition declaration of emancipation—it will meet with general approval, if rightly understood, excepting in Abolition quarters.

The distinction is a nice one, but, as I think, obvious. Fremont avows the Shibboleth of Abolitionism, and ignores the right of property in slaves. You recognize it, and seize the slave as any other rebel property, and convert it to public uses, precisely as you would rebel munitions or implements of war, and turn it against the enemy, or hand it over to loyal or Union citizens.

You disclaim and repudiate Abolitionism. Fremont proclaims Emancipation as a primal object and result of the war, and captured slaves, instead of being used as a material of war, are to be let loose upon free or slave communities, as they may prefer. You capture them as you would a ship, a fort, an 80 pounder, or a musket, and, as a military necessity, deprive the enemy of a material of war, and apply it to the uses of the captors. In this light it becomes an element of strength not only in the conduct of the war, but in the enforcement of the laws and the vindication of the Constitution over the designs of treason and rebellion. In the Abolition or Fremont sense it becomes an element of weakness and division, and interrupts a vigorous and united prosecution of the war.

The first great duty is to put down this causeless and most flagitious rebellion; the next to restore the Union to its indivisibility. Of the full performance of the first, and much sooner than many, myself included, thought practicable, I have now no doubt. The second will not be without its difficulties. If we reestablish the Constitution, after repressing and punishing the Secession violation of it, and require implicit obedience to its provisions, no extended question of difference and irritation can arise that will produce serious agitation and conflict. But if we seek to accomplish the first great purpose—the suppression of the Rebellion—by Abolition means and positions, we shall retard that much-desired consummation, and probably frustrate the second material purpose of the war, at least, lay the foundation of future dissensions, acrimony, and alienations. The Tribune and Evening Post endeavor to convey the impression that you go further in the abolition direction than Fremont. To my view, your positions are antagonistical to



Freemont; and these constitute the dividing line between the Administration and the Union feeling of the country on the one side, and the Abolitionism and Secession (both looking to the permanent disintegration of the Union) on the other. But loyalty and the energies of the government will prevail.

The effective ability and vigor with which Secretary Cameron has conducted his branch of our great service, under the difficulties which environ a Government unaccustomed to war, and especially civil war, has won for him the admiration of the country, and a position of high favor with the people.

Sincerely your friend,
and obedient servant,
EDWIN CROSWELL.

COL. JOHN COCHRANE.

P.S.—Mr. Daniel S. Dickinson, who is now in my office, allows me to say that he fully concurs in this view of the question.
[[short line]]

GERRIT SMITH TO EDWIN CROSWELL.

PETERBORO, NOV. 27, 1861.

EDWIN CROSWELL, ESQ.: DEAR SIR:—
[[/column 1]]

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have just read your letter to Col. Cochrane. It gratifies me not a little to find that your influence which, so long as twenty, thirty and even forty years ago, was so very potent, is given to the furtherance of his wise and timely views on a point of vital importance to the country. You agree with the Colonel in the duty of availing ourselves of the black man's help to put down the rebels. I regret your mistake that the Abolitionists do not also agree with him. Your public declaration that they do not is of very injurious tendency—not to them only, but (and this is of far greater consequence) to the country and to the sacred cause in which the whole country should be united.

You desire it to be, and to be known and felt to be, that all classes of our people stand with Col. Cochrane in this respect. And in your judgment they all do excepting the Abolitionists—or, as you phrase it, 'excepting in Abolition quarters.' Your exception is not warranted by facts. From the breaking out of the Rebellion until the present time, the Abolitionists, having been constantly in earnest to crush it, have been constantly eager to secure to this end the help of black men as well as white men. I am myself an Abolitionist. Nevertheless, I have written and spoken much for the identical position taken by Col. Cochrane.

Instead of holding up the Abolitionists as opposed to Col. Cochrane's views, you ought to do them justice to acknowledge that, from the first, these views have been theirs also. I am not asking you to relax your opposition to their Abolition doctrines. Denounce these, if you will, more emphatically than ever. Expose to the utmost their folly in believing that

the abolition of slavery would be an effective means of routing the rebels. Only admit that however wrong they are in other respects, they are clearly identified with those views of Col. Cochrane.

I confess that I am sadly disappointed in this War. I took it for granted that our whole people would very soon be in favor of employing all means to bring it to the speediest end. The Abolitionists are. But considerable portions of all other parties are not. Without denying that salvation can come to my country alone through her penitence for her oppression, I nevertheless cannot hope for such penitence as long as she is so infatuated as to be unwilling to be saved by whatever muscles and means. The best I can as yet hope for, (and even for this hope there is but too little encouragement) is that the whole North may soon rally around the position taken by Colonel Cochrane, yourself and the Abolitionists.

But you will say that the Abolitionists are in favor of abolishing slavery. It is true that they are. And this, if you please, is their folly--nay their wickedness, if you will so have it. Nevertheless why argue from this folly and wickedness that they are not with Col. Cochrane when you see that they are.

I am not writing an eulogy upon the Abolitionists. If I were, I would say that no other men are more cordially in the armed movement against the rebels. I would say that in proportion to their numbers no other men have furnished more soldiers or more comforts for soldiers and soldiers' families.-- I would say that none of them have come under so much as the slightest suspicion of indulging the Secession spirit of the slightest suspicion of sympathy with the rebels. I would say that Abolitionist is only another name for an intense hater of the Rebellion.-- Moreover, I would say that they are ever ready to join hands with all in this great national fight against Rebellion. They can go into it with anti-Abolitionists of every type--with these who admiringly read the N.Y. Herald, the N.Y. Express, the Journal of Commerce, and with those who felt that they cannot get to sleep without having a N.Y. Observer under their pillow. Into this fight I am as much bound to welcome the pro-slavery James Gordon Bennett as the anti-slavery Horace Greeley. The North is contending with a strong enemy whose hands

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may soon be strengthened with stronger enemies. In these circumstances she cannot afford to be divided by miserable party prejudices and jealousies. To such an enemy she must present an unbroken front. I must be willing to work with you, and you with me for the success of our arms--for in this we can work together, our differences about Abolition or any thing else to the contrary notwithstanding. God grant that all Northern men may be able to tolerate their mutual differences so far as to stand shoulder to shoulder against the enemy.

I am not surprised to learn, as I do from the postscript of your letter, that Mr. Dickinson concurs with yourself and Col. Cochrane. Months ago I ascertained that he was more than a partisan--that he was a patriot, and was therefore ready to have the country saved by whatever means and at whatever expense to party or to any thing else.

Happy am I to know that you and Mr. Dickinson, and many other

distinguished Democrats feel that after the enemy is vanquished will be soon enough to recollect and reconstruct the Democratic party. Then, too, the Abolitionists will have more leisure for busying themselves with what Democrats regard as Abolition nonsense. Then, too, merchants, manufacturers and solemn priests may find more time and opportunity for contriving new guarantees for slavery. But until the enemy is vanquished, let us, whatever the divisions among ourselves, be as one against him. Until then let us care comparatively nothing to save this party or that, this Constitution or that, this system or that. Until then let our one concern be to SAVE OUR COUNTRY. That saved, and we can restore the old Constitution or make a new one--but that lost, and we shall have no need of either.--That saved, and there will be an ample theatre for parties to all who delight in them.--That saved, and they who regard slavery as a blessing may find themselves in circumstances more favorable than ever for making the blessing abundant and sure.

The Abolitionists have always had the reputation of being bigoted and exclusive. But do not the broad common sense and the pre-eminent liberality, which characterize them in the War, go far to prove that they did not merit this bad reputation? Look for instance at the admirable course of their more distinguished leaders, William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. Ever since the bombarding of Sumter these bold iconoclastic reformers have addressed themselves to the new duties of the new circumstances with a practical wisdom unsurpassed by that of the most calm and conservative statesmen. No men are more intent on saving the country; and no men see more clearly the folly of trying to save it by a partial use of the means for saving it. Nor are any more free to work with any in putting down the Rebellion. Glad are they to have even the most pro-slavery men for their fellows in this work. The Garrison and Phillips school of Abolitionists have wisely suspended their strictures on the Constitution, and I would that the other school might suspend their defences of it. Just now there is not one minute, no nor half a minute to be spared to either school for presenting its view of the Constitution. My friend Henry B. Stanton gives a very amusing account of a gentleman who, in the midst of the broken bones of a railroad accident, kept on arguing the anti-slavery character of the Constitution. Indeed, so entirely unseasonable is all present talk of the Constitution, that unless I know him to be the friend of the country, I set down every one, who is wasting his own time and the time of others with such talk, as the enemy of the country. I do not deny that there are many honest men who feel that their country would be lost if the Constitution should be. They are more honest than enlightened. If left without a country, we would indeed be left without a Constitution. But it does not follow that we should be left without a country, were we left without a Constitution. It is not the Constitution that gave us the country, but the

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