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Anti-Slavery Movement.

From the Scottish Press.

EDINBURGH ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

The Anti-Slavery agitation has been resumed in Edinburgh—but not we trust to stop there. It was meet that in the city which rung the death-knell of British slavery,—where Andrew Thomson invoked the hurricane of a West Indian revolution rather than the pestilence of slavery,—and before whose mighty voice, expediency trembled, and procrastination fled, and the immediate emancipation of the slave was agreed to, public feeling should again shape itself into action, public sentiment give forth its utterance, and, if there is to be an agitation, that agitation commence.
"If there is to be an agitation"——for many persons will question its expediency. It will be said, have we not as a nation enough of work and of quarrels upon our hands——is not the old world cast loose from its moorings and Britain riding on the topmost billows; and is this the time to revive an agitation which is sure to stir up all that is violent and hostile in American society against us, and it may be to embroil us with the new world, as well as the old? The scepticism which would prompt this inquiry is not unnatural and not surprising. And we would say that had nothing occurred to provoke the agitation——nothing to awaken it——nothing to justify and necessitate it——but after a lull of so many years the time had been selected through caprice, instigation, or adventitious circumstances, we for our part would not have been prepared, in the spirit of warm sympathy and advocacy, to have bid it God-speed. But the agitation is not of choice, but of moral necessity. Not one event or circumstance, but a variety of events and circumstances in American slavery has introduced a crisis. Either the slaveholders of the great republic are entirely to overthrow by undermining its free constitution,—or the Northern States, encouraged, stimulated, and sustained by British sympathy, will roll back the encroachments of the South, and assert as a fact as well as a theory that all men are born equal and free.

How stands the case? First Congress quailed before the bowie-knife and lynch-law demands of the South, and enacted that which is America's shame and curse should not be whispered in the Senate; then followed the atrocious Fugitive Slave Law, which proclaimed the free States no longer an asylum for the poor runaway——the man who escaped with his own soul and body——and under the use and abuse of which law even emancipated slaves and their descendants have been ruthlessly torn from home and all that makes home sweet, and sent into bondage on a thousand miserable and lying pretences. And now we have the Nebraska Bill, carried through the American Senate, receiving the solemn imprimatur of the President, and, as we showed in our last, intended to give, promoted to give, and giving an immense preponderance to the Slave States, whose authority is already paramount at Washington. This bill has been carried in the teeth of a positive compact entered into between the South and the North——such a compact as the Czar would subscribe with the Sultan——to be violated whenever it could be done with impunity and advantage——and so the slaveholders, emboldened by their recent successes, have resolved that nothing will satisfy them but the gradual and speedy and entire subversion of that which makes America great, her Christianity and political freedom, uncontaminated, undegraded by "the peculiar institution" of the south.

Here then has arisen——stands out——a great crisis, and on Britain devolves a sacred duty to both the contending parties. The Americans are, in a sense in which no other nation is, ourselves——they draw their blood from the same veins, they speak the same language, they appeal to the same great principles of civil and religious liberty——and they engage with us in a generous rivalry to spread the blessings of Christianity and civilisation over the world. But more, we encouraged them to hold slaves and taught them to vindicate slavery. Unless, then, the waters of the mighty Atlantic can interfere between us and moral obligation, unless a Queen ruling over us and a President over them can cancel the responsibility which rests on men, as men, by the authority of heaven, unless duty is a mere ornament to be put off and on at pleasure, we have no choice in this matter. We must give our sympathy and co-operation to those noble spirits in America who are contending
often against fearful odds in favor of liberty and truth, and we must send
our remonstrances directed to those men who are taken in this horrid
snare, and especially to those ministers and Churches who are involved
in a still deeper degradation and sin—that of an attempt, in which they
neither impose upon themselves nor others, to reconcile God and
mammon, truth and a lie, the foulest of corruption with the purity of
heaven's law.

We trust the agitation, resumed so auspiciously, will be prosecuted not
fitfully but steadily, uninterruptedly, and in a firm, temperate spirit. "Soft
words and hard arguments" were never more needed than now and
here.

We annex here the proceedings of the meeting for the Inauguration of
the "Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society."

A public meeting for the inauguration of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery
Society was held on Tuesday night in Queen Street Hall, which was well
filled. On the motion of Mr. Duncan, S.S.C., the Lord Provost was called
to the chair; and beside his Lordship on the platform we observed the
Rev. Dr. Nisbet, Rev. Dr. Duncan, Rev. Dr. Candlish, Rev. Sir Henry
Moncrieff, Rev. Mr. Cullen of Leith, Rev. James Ballantyne, Rev. Wm.
Reid, Rev. A. Wallace, Rev. Berkeley Addison, Rev. Mr. Robertson;
Bailie Fyfe; Dean of Guild Blackadder; Councillors Grieve and Sibbald;
Dr. Greville, ex Bailie Boyd, Edward Cruickshank, Esq.; Gregory
Wortabet, Esq., from Syria; H. D. Dickie, Esq.; William Duncan, Esq.,
S.S.C.; J. B. Murdoch, Esq.; William M'Crie, Esq.; J. Macandrew, Esq.; J.
B. Tod, Esq.; George Johnston, Esq., &c., &c.

Prayer having been offered up by the Rev. Dr. Duncan,

The LORD PROVOST, after reading a letter from the Rev. Dr. Andrew
Thomson, apologising for being absent, and expressing his warm
approval of the object of the meeting, said he was glad to see such a
numerous and influential meeting of the inhabitants, to inaugurate a new
movement in the city of Edinburgh, in behalf of the anti-slavery cause.
(Applause.) All who took an interest in the question must be aware that
for the last thirty years no town in the kingdom had worked with more
zeal or energy in the cause of abolition than the city of Edinburgh.
(Hear.) But unfortunately of late years the Anti-Slavery Committee had
first been allowed to sleep, and latterly had been allowed to dissolve;
and various attempts which had been made to re-organise a large and
efficient committee had failed, from causes which it was not necessary
to notice. Now, however, all these difficulties had been got over, and a
large, zealous, and united committee, earnestly intent on the abolition of
slavery in every form, and especially of slavery as it existed in the
United States of America, had been organised; and the present meeting
had been called to give it the sanction of public approbation. He hoped
that this committee would not be allowed to go to sleep, and then awake
by fits and starts, but that it would steadily and perseveringly keep the
question of the total and immediate abolition of slavery before the public
mind, and especially to hold up to the public opprobrium, so justly
merited, the conduct of the American slaveholders, who, claiming for
their country the enjoyment of the greatest amount of freedom
possessed by any nation on the face of the earth, yet cherished and
defended the accursed system of slavery, and held three millions of their
fellow-men in the most debasing of all forms of slavery—dealing with
them as mere animals—as goods and chattels to be disposed of as
they might think fit. Such a system could not long withstand the face of
The Rev. Dr. NISBET moved the first resolution, which, with those subsequently submitted, will be found in our advertising columns. He alluded to the retort of Americans regarding the evils in our own social system as exemplified in connection with slop-shops and long hours of labor, and said we ought be thankful to them for pointing this out. It had been said that, if ever there was an inauspicious period for doing anything grating to the feelings of our American brethren, that time was the present. We were now at war with a colossal power, whose perseverance seemed proportionate to its guilt, and the tide of battle might turn against us; surely, then, if we aroused that irritable nation of America, at all times jealous of its personal honor, and procured a chasm to be made where there was now the closest union, the result might prove fatal to us as a nation. He did not think, however, that this objection to remonstrance against American slavery deserved any weight when viewed with a Christian eye. He believed that victory would always perch more readily upon our banners, if with pure hands and feeling, and prayerfully hearts they raised these banners in defence of the right and the truth, as well in the nations that were now the seat of conflict as in those where the cries of misery were continually ascending. And, surely, if there was one single aspect of misery in the whole range of nature in this world that was almost vocal with the groans and watered with continual tears, that miserable aspect was presented in so-called free America, where the accursed system of slavery was found actually to prevail. If a stranger were to visit many of the plantations in the Southern States he (Dr. N.) believed he would find slaves there—the goods and chattels of their masters—in circumstances that might well tempt us to wish many of our free-born brethren in as comfortable a position. It had been asserted that they were better fed than our own artisans, or even than the most favored of our English peasants. We were farther told of their light-heartedness, that no sooner was the labor of the day over than immediately the calm twilight was taken advantage of to lead on the dance under the palm tree, and the negro's singing and light-heartedness was proverbial all over the world; but still if we found that these persons were light-hearted in a position in which they were placed against their will, and in which they were bound down by iron fetters which they could not break, which we must hold that an inalienable right of humanity was taken from them, and never rest until we made them happy in the possession of those rights which God, who made of one blood all nations of men, had conferred upon all alike. (Applause.) But, from all he had read, and he had made it his business to inquire into the state of slavery in America where it presented itself in its gentlest and most benignant aspect, he was given to believe that these happy plantations were the exception, not the rule, and that misery, beyond all power not only of words "to express, but of imagination to conceive," was to be found in every form in every quarter of the slaveholding States of America. (Applause.) The rev. doctor graphically described the groans and miseries of slaves torn from their native country, and crowded into the hold of a slave-ship, and said that, paint it as they might, when they considered that these sufferings on the voyage were to be succeeded by still deeper misery on arrival at the plantation, the conviction could not but be forced upon them that the horrors of negro slavery remained a black spot on the map of civilization, and a reproach to our Christian feelings, and that without remonstrance on our part that spot should continue. It was our duty, by every sacred dictate of humanity—by every calm, resolute, prayerful, determined, persevering means, to go forward and endeavor to wipe the foul stain away. (Applause.) Dr. Niisbet painted in striking colors the heartrending scenes which present themselves after the landing of the
black cargo—dearest relatives separated, the most sacred ties
severed, feelings lacerated, cruelties of every kind inflicted—and then
proceeded: Such a miserable spectacle could not but bring down the
indignation of Almighty God, a land thus watered with the tears of misery
and the blood of oppression was near to cursing; and unless we kindly,
for the sake of their souls urged upon our brethren who were now
committing that fearful sin, with calm, Christian, pleading remonstrance,
the impropriety of harboring and nursing such a system, we were
partakers of their sins, and must expect to be also partakers of their
plagues. (Applause.) And he believed that if they calmly and in a
Christian spirit addressed the slaveholding people of America, they
would find, where they least expected them, hearts beating true to every
kindly and generous feeling, and bidding us God speed in a cause which
would give them an opportunity of unwrathing from their necks that
miserable yoke which had pressed upon their feelings as well as been
such an object of sorrow to every Christian and unimpassioned
observer. Surely we did not do our duty, unless, disregarding all
dangers, which he believed never would come, and all considerations of
ease and interest, we used every means which God had put into our
hands, by prayer, by Christian wishes, that are heard and spoken in
heaven, and by remonstrance, to make our influence felt with the
American people, that that accursed system of slavery shall be the
reproach and the blot of the nations and of our common religion no
more. (Loud applause.)

BAILIE FYFE rose at ten minutes to 8 o'clock to second the resolution,
and said that as he had to leave Edinburgh by train at eight o'clock, his
observations must necessarily be very brief. He very cordially
concurred in the remarks made by the Rev. Dr. Nisbet. Surely if they
were convinced that the system of slavery was evil, and if they were,
what they professed to be, followers of Christ Jesus; moreover, if they
were convinced, as they must be from experience and observation, that
combination for the accomplishment of a great object was the most
effectual means of securing that object, then he thought they could not
refuse to yield their cordial assent to the resolution which had been
moved and which he now begged to second. (Applause.)

The Rev. WILLIAM REID moved the next resolution. A resolution (said
Mr. Reid) such as the one now submitted to the meeting, gives to the
proposer the happy alternative of saying as much as he pleases, or
saying nothing at all. Called upon as I have been unexpectedly to take
the place of my friend Dr. Thomson, I am strongly tempted to avail
myself of the privilege to which I am entitled; should I however
transgress so far upon the time of the meeting as make a few
observations, I am sure they will bear with me. (Applause.) The
reconstruction of the Anti-Slavery Society in this city was never more
urgently demanded. I know that it is a difficult thing to sustain a cause
by the mere discussion of its abstract principles, or a repetition of its well
known facts. I know that the prosecution of some practical measure
enlists sympathy and aid because it proposes something definite and
attainable. So long as we had our own slaves, we felt we had a duty to
discharge. So long as this emancipation depended upon legislative
enactments, and we knew that the voice and votes of a free people had
influence upon our legislature, we felt that we had something to do, and
something which we could do. The case stands different with us now. It
is in behalf of the slaves of oth-nations we have now to contend.
Distance places the evil to some extent beyond the circle of their control.
It is the evil of another people and can only be directly dealt with by that
people. Now all this may be true and yet we have to do with it. I
apprehend that if the protection of the Turks demands the aid of our
arms, the protection of the South American slaves demands the aid of our moral influence and prayers. [Applause.] Of the thirty-one States which form the American Union, there are sixteen in which slavery is contrary to law, and fifteen in which it is legalised. The number of slaves in these fifteen States is estimated to be about three millions and a half. Tho' a foreign slave trade is prohibited by the laws of the American Union, it is believed that from 10,000 to 16,000 slaves are annually smuggled into the States from Cuba and other quarters to assist in supplying the deficiency from the fearful destruction of life in the rice and cotton plantations. Now, what is the social, moral, and religious condition of the slave? He is denied all civil right. He is denied the privilege of law; or, if he has law in his favor, it is just the kind of law that the brutes themselves are privileged with. If you aid a slave's escape by breaking his fetters, you get two years' imprisonment, and are amerced a fine of 1000 dollars; but if you choose to cut out his tongue, put out his eyes, burn or deprive him of his limbs, you get off with a fine of 500 dollars; or, if a slave be killed by a cruel whipping, the master is liable to a fine, or to imprisonment for six months; but, as slave testimony is not received in evidence, the commission of the offense cannot be proved against the master if none but negroes were present at the time.

However much injured a slave may be by personal violence, he cannot prosecute his master or any one else for damages. But what are the slaves' homes like? There is undoubtedly in some cases all that snug cabins and plenty of food can do for human comfort. Still, the slave has no home. The sacred tradition of marriage has no place among slaves. Male and female may live together as man and wife, but the duration of their union depends upon the will of their owners. And what is their intellectual condition?——As the owner has most to dread from the most intelligent of his slaves, his object is to keep them in ignorance. There is the risk of conspiracy and of escape. Every particle of instruction given to a slave, beyond what is consistent with his remaining a passive and obedient work machine, is so much money taken from his master's pocket. And what is their religious condition? Slaves are with few exceptions as ignorant of the Gospel as if it had never been preached to them. The profession which has been made of imparting to them religious instruction is a mere sham. The master has no interest in the instruction of his slaves. Nay, he will oppose it. And will the minister instruct him? The minister who can wink at his wrongs, who can withhold from him the knowledge of his right to liberty, is not the man to concern himself about his spiritual interests. The revised statutes of North Carolina forbid that any colored person should act the part of preacher or exhorter at prayer meetings. And for every instance of violation there shall be inflicted a punishment of not more that thirty nine lashes. If a poor slave dares to speak to another of Jesus he gets thirty nine lashes. Now, notwithstanding all that has been done in behalf of abolition of slavery in America, the slaveholding power is in the ascendant. We have proof of this in the passage of the famous Nebraska bill in the American Congress, by means of which 3000 additional square miles of territory have been added to the dominion of the slaveholding power, and that in the face of the most disgraceful violation of solemn compact. And, besides, we have the crowning infamy of the system, the Fugitive Slave Law which was passed in the autumn of 1850. Before the passing of this measure, the slave who managed to escape from the Southern States found refuge and shelter in the northern ones. There he was safe; public opinion guarded him. Now the case is altered; the slave may be tracked, and claimed, and sent back to slavery. This law denies the privilege of trial by jury. By the law of the United States a trial by jury is granted in all cases where the value at stake exceeds twenty dollars; by the slave law this privilege is denied. Now, what has been the result of passing that infamous measure? Horrors more frightful than the pen of Mrs. Stowe ever
portrayed; workmen have been violently dragged from their honest labor; husbands have been torn from threat wives, and parents from their children. In some instances in which the law has been enforced, riot, violence, death, has been the result. At one place the fugitive is shot; at another the slave hunter is shot. This law which has for some time been virtually a dead letter, has been suddenly revived. Elated with success in the Nebraska affair, the masters of runaway slaves have commenced to put the law in force in the city of New York, the brother and nephews of Dr. Pennington have been seized. The doctor has been denied the liberty of speaking to his brother, who along with his two sons have been hurried back to Maryland. Then there is the case of poor Burns, who, after having for a short time tasted the sweets of liberty has been seized and dragged to prison. The prison has been assailed by the indignant populace, life has been lost in the struggle, and he too under the patronage of American law has been sent back to slavery.

Listen to this account of his departure back to the region of slavery as given in the Scottish Press of to-day:—"At half-past two Burns was taken from the Court House and placed in a hollow square of 100 special deputies of the State Marshal, each armed with a cutlass and revolver. The marines, infantry, and a detachment of the 4th regiment of artillery, with a brass nine-pounder, loaded with grape, under command of Major Ridgeley, United States Artillery, acted as a special escort. The United States troops numbered 145 rank and file. The State troops, embracing lancers, dragoons, infantry and artillery—altogether 1000 men. The entire police force of the city was also engaged. The standards of the troops were received with hisses, and cries of 'shame.' Burns was put on board about three o'clock, amid a crowd of thousands of persons congregated on the wharves and vessels, many of the spectators having come seventy or eighty miles from the interior. The steamer soon proceeded down the harbor to the revenue cutter, Morris, which, after received Burns on board, with half a dozen officers who accompanied him, sailed for Norfolk, Virginia." Think of this glorious exhibition of the might and majesty of a free republic, a republic which bears on the face of its constitution, that all men are born equal in the sight of God! (Applause.) Troops of soldiers guarding a poor helpless slave! Why all this martial display? No, but feeble as he seemed, he presented in his person the cause of outraged freedom; tyranny, alarmed at the sympathy which even a poor helpless slave could invoke, called to her aid the only power on which she can ever depend.

America may boast as she pleases of her greatness as an empire, she has more reason to be ashamed than proud so long as the cry of the slave is heard within her borders. (Applause.) Peace man, though I am, I would rather see our troops fighting in behalf of the poor Turks, then engaged in depriving the poorest mechanics in our land the liberty which is their birthright. (Applause.) Look on this picture and on that. Britain braving despotism in the person of Nicholas, and Columbia outraging freedom in the person of a helpless negro. (Applause.) And yet there are those in our own day, who will stand up unblushingly in vindication of the system of slavery. I find, for instance, that the American Minister at Copenhagen, a Mr. Bedinger, in a discussion he had with Sir Charles Napier on this subject, describes the interview, in a letter which he thought worth while to send to an American newspaper, and states how Sir Charles returned to the attack, and quoted "Uncle Tom's Cabin." To this he replied:—"But that, you know, is a huge collection of falsehoods." 'I will admit,' said Sir Charles, 'that it may contain exaggerations, but there must be some foundation in truth for the story it tells.' 'Yes,' said I, 'such foundation as I could easily find for writing a book condemning the institution of marriage as it exists at present.' For the last six or eight months past there seems to have existed among your people a perfect momania for men beating, maiming and murdering their wives. I never glance at your police reports that I am not sickened...
by the recital of some fresh instances of this peculiar species of barbarism. Women with their noses knocked from their faces, or their eyes bunged up, their teeth smashed out, their arms broken or their skulls cut open, daily come before your magistrates, suing for the protection of their miserable lives, against their beastly husbands, whose barbarism you punish by three and six months hard labor."

Now, I have only to say that it will be time enough for this gentleman, and those who think that along with him, to adduce the crime of wife beating against us when once their courts of law interpose, for the protection of the weak and the punishment of the guilty. The question then is, of what avail can we be in promoting the cause of the oppressed? We can act upon the American Church. That the love of true liberty possesses people of America, I would no more doubt than I could doubt that the love of life possesses them. What is the agitation and tumult consequent upon the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, but the pulse of liberty beating to the cry of freedom? (Applause.) The infamous Slave Law is not the fruit of American sentiment, legitimately expressed, but the [[illegible]] I will admit, which would sacrifice the most sacred rights of humanity to its own aggrandizement. We can influence the American Church. (Hear, hear.) Indeed, I hold it is through the Church this cause is to be gained. The Legislature may require to give it effect, but on the Church devolves the creation of that public sentiment which must tell upon the Legislature, and the Church must exert that power with which her Head has invested her, for the suppression of this and every other evil. While we cheerfully admit that there is a large and growing party in all denominations favorable to the suppression of slavery, and that some denominations have never ceased to testify against the evil, it cannot be denied that the Church, as a whole, is fearfully guilty. Many members of the American Church, ay, many of the Ministers of the American Church, are owners of slaves. Do their synods and associations testify against it in becoming terms? Is it not the fact that all references to slavery is carefully excluded from the books issued by the American Sunday School Union, and by the American Tract Society? Is it not the fact that in republishing the British books which denounce the evil, the objectionable parts are carefully expunged? What appeal have the American Bible Society ever made in behalf of the liberation of the slave? What minister could go from this country, and find access to the pulpit of America, if he faithfully denounced the evils of slavery, and called upon the followers of Christ to wash their hands clean of it? (Applause.) How many of the leading American ministers have lifted up their voice in the condemnation of the Fugitive Slave Law or the Nebraska Bill? In a word, what is the emphatic language of Albert Barnes?——"There is no power out of the Church could sustain slavery one hour if it were not sustained in it." Our influence, then, must be brought to bear upon American society, and the American Church, in every lawful way. The formation of such a society as that which is proposed is most important, as it is of the first consequence that we should create and diffuse a sound anti-slavery feeling in this country, that we may strengthen the hands of the noble band who are struggling in America for the freedom of their sable brethren, and rebuke that indifference to their interests and connivance at their wrongs, with which the American Church is to such an extent chargeable. (Applause.)

Mr. H. D. DICKIE seconded the resolution, which was put to the meeting, and carried unanimously.

Dr. CANDLISH proposed the next resolution, and said that the occurrences mentioned in it would justify, if anything were needed to warrant such a revival, and he said it was peculiarly suitable that there
should be a revival of the cause of emancipation in the city of
Edinburgh, one of the noblest triumphs of which was, that the voice
which carried the immediate emancipation of the negroes in the West
Indies was first sounded in the Assembly Rooms here. (Applause.) If,
however, anything were needed to show that such an movement as this
was imperatively called for, it would be the proceeding which was
condemned in the resolution he had now the honor of submitting. If it
could be pretended that slavery was upon the decline, that the
influences exerted in its support were going down, then something might
be said in favor of acquiescence on their part, in favor of their waiting
until some suitable occasion should present itself. But in the measure
which he had now to bring before the notice of the meeting, they had
unequivocal evidence that the promoters of the accursed system were
all alive and active, ready to avail themselves of every opportunity of
extending, promoting and perpetuating the system. He would endeavor
in a few sentences to put the meeting in possession of the facts in
connexion with the passing of the Nebraska Bill—for he was sorry to
say that it had passed, and had, so late as the 30th of last month,
received the signature of the President. The history of concessions
made to slavery, and to slaveholding States in America, was a very sad
and melancholy one, and afforded a signal confirmation of the truth
asserted in Scripture over and over again, that a little leaven leaveneth
the whole lump. The progress that had been made since the
Declaration of Independence in America, in the way of concession after
concession to slaveholding States was a most remarkable proof of the
inflation and crime of suffering in any constitution a leaven of evil.
When the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed, they must allow
that all the inhabitants of the United States were most hearty and
enthusiastic in the cause of liberty, and they must do them the justice to
suppose that they were in earnest in desiring the full and complete
establishment of liberty and equality throughout the United States, but
the Constitution which set out with the motto, that all men in the sight of
God were born equal, contained the insidious beginning of evil. And we
were now perfectly warranted in casting in their teeth the famous
apothegm. Slavery existed in some portions of the borders of those
noble men who fought the battles of their country's independence, and
that slavery was attributable, to a large extent to the folly of our own
country,—of those islands. Our brethren across the Atlantic
conceived the idea that they could chain the monster, that they could
confine the plague within the limits which it then occupied, and
accordingly they began to act upon the miserable, the false principle of
tolerating within their borders the existence of slavery. That principle
upon which the American Government had acted from the first, had
borne bitter fruits, as might have been predicted. Though it had been
provided at the outset of the Union that slavery should not be allowed to
extend itself, what had been its history? Step after step concessions
were made. First of all, out of the existing States other States were
allowed to be formed, in which site holding was permitted. Then came
the purchase of territories from Spain and Mexico, in consequence of
which a strong plea was afforded that could not well be resisted for
allowing new slaveholding states to be formed, and so on the process
went. Through the annexation of territories that had hitherto been in the
hands of Spaniards, Mexicans or Indians, there came an incessant
pressure in favor of recognizing fresh slaveholding states in America, to
which the northern states had been foolishly yielding. Not to speak of
that infamous enactment, the Fugitive Slave Law, whose recent revival
had been fraught with so many horrors, he now came down to what was
more immediately the subject of the resolution, namely, the passing of
the measure which allowed the whole territory of Nebraska and Kansas
to become a slaveholding territory. He would now go into the details of
the question that had been agitating the House of Representatives and
the Senate. All America had been agitated from north to south upon this question, and one result of the agitation had been that it brought out a much stronger expression of feeling, on the part not merely of those who were professed anti-slavery men, but of a large portion of the community, against this monstrous aggression upon the principles of freedom. (Applause.) Substantially, the iniquity perpetrated by the measure lay here, that some years ago a compromise, called the Missouri Compromise, was solemnly entered upon between the north and south, which proceeded upon the principle, that north of a certain line of latitude which was drawn, there was to be no toleration of slavery, and no admission into the Union of any State that wished to tolerate slavery. South of this line, by the compromise, slavery might be tolerated, and slaveholding States might be admitted to the privileges of the Union. That compromise was understood to be final and conclusive, but there could be no compromise between truth and error, between duty to God and sin against man; no compromise between tyranny and freedom, between liberty and slavery——(applause)——and, ac- such compromise the party who advocated truth and righteousness went to the wall. Let the friends of truth and righteousness, of liberty and freedom stand fast and fight that battle which——

"When once begun, Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son, though baffled oft, is ever won——"

and by the help of God, who ruleth over all, they would succeed in the long run.——(Renewed cheers.) But the attempt at drawing a line, and saying that on one side of it there should be truth and freedom; and on the other side falsehood and slavery, was an attempt to be wiser than God, and to be stronger than the Providence which rules this world. (Cheers.) Accordingly, in every such case of compromise, the enemies of God and of men were sure to prevail. The device of the very father of lies had always been to succeed by compromise, and hence we need not wonder at the result which have now been realised in the passing of the Nebraska Bill, in flagrant defiance of this compromise, flagrant violation of the original principles of the American Constitution, and in monstrous outrage of the most sacred rights of man, and the high authority of God. (Applause.) And upon what pretence was this measure passed? It was not to be attempted all at once to make this enormous territory a slaveholding territory. Such a proposal, he believed, could scarcely have been carried. The pretence was this, that the compromise entered into between the north and south, was fully adhered to if the new States annexed to the Union were allowed to judge for themselves, whether they should become slaveholding States or no. Very well, all that the compromise meant, according to this interpretation of it, was that the territories north of the charmed line should be left to follow their own choice as to whether they should become slaveholding States or no.——The Nebraska Bill, therefore, left to the inhabitants of those vast regions whether they should choose to be slaveholding or not; it provided that if the inhabitants of those vast districts of Nebraska and Kansas should choose, when they came to be formed into States, to declare that they were slaveholding——that they tolerated slavery——that declaration should be no obstacle in the way of their being admitted into the Union. Now this pretence was a very shallow one, four in all good faith the meaning of the compromise referred to was, that no slaveholding territories or States north of the line, should ever form part and parcel of the Union at all. The meaning of it was not that north of the line there should be a discretion to States about to be admitted whether they would be slaveholding or not, but that north of the line there should be no slaveholding tolerated in connection
with the American Union. (Applause.) But according to the interpretation now put upon it, what might be the issue? The issue might be, that, through the cupidity of the south, their command of wealth, and the temptations offered by that territory—which, so far as descriptions of it could convey any idea, was about the most fertile, the most promising, and the most auspicious under heaven—Nebraska and Kansas might be occupied by men in the interests of the south, in the interests of slaveholding, and for anything we could foresee, this vast region might, ere long, be formed into States of the Union, all of them as deeply died with the blood of the slave, and as deeply involved in the guilt of slavery, as Carolina itself. (Applause.) And what would be the result of that? He observed a statement in some of the newspapers to the effect that the result would be the interposing between the east and west of that vast continent of North America—that vast region which he thought was destined sooner or later to be all brought under the sway of the American Union, unless the question of slavery broke it up—to interpose, from Canada southwards, a wall of black and bloody slavery between the trade of the east and the commerce and trade of the whole west of America—(applause)—insomuch that it would be impossible to carry any railway from the east to the west, from the Atlantic to the Pacific—to carry on any trade or commerce between these two mighty oceans—to form any bond of connection between the free States in the East and the free States in the West without passing through the accursed line of slavery which pollutes and degrades everything that touches it, everything that it touches.—(Loud applause.) This was a deplorable result to contemplate even as possible, but before he closed this part of the subject he wished to direct attention to what seemed a more hopeful aspect of the case. From what he could gather upon a very imperfect Survey of the documents, he believed one good effect of the passing of the Nebraska Bill would be, that it would annul all compromises, put an end to all past compromises, and shut the door against any such for the future. (Applause.) The game of compromise was over; faith had been broken; the south had violated its engagement to the north, and so much better. (Hear, hear.) Let all compromises based upon concession to iniquity be given to the winds, let right and wrong fight out the battle. And so he believed it would be. But yesterday (said the rev. doctor) I had a conversation in the city of Glasgow with a very intelligent American, on the passing of this Nebraska Bill, and he told me that one effect of its passing has been the awakening of a most extraordinary and most enthusiastic zeal among all the citizens of the free States of America to have that vast territory of Nebraska and Kansas immediately colonized by freemen, and by men determined to uphold the sacredness of freedom. (Cheers.) And he told me that the feeling of enthusiasm and interest in that direction was rising every day in the free States, and that steps were being taken to have it communicated to the Old World—(renewed cheers)—that efforts were to be, or had already been made, in Germany and in other parts of the Continent, to obtain emigrants to go forth and colonise this most beautiful and fertile plains. (Loud applause.) If the passing of this iniquitous measure issue in the procuring, through the influence of our friends in America, vast parties of emigrants from the Old World to settle there, carrying with them that inborn and inbred love of liberty which now pervades the Old World, we cannot fail to see the process of good coming out of evil; and we cannot fail, in terms of the resolution I now propose, to offer our most earnest prayer, and our most strenuous efforts and support, to those who may be desirous of defeating the Nebraska Bill, by making those territories, from north to south, and from east to west, one great free soil,—a soil so free that it shall be true of it as it is true of the British dominions, that the slave has but to touch the soil, and his fetters fall. (Loud cheers.) I think this is an encouraging view to take of the measure, in itself so in
inquitous, and in flagrant violation of good faith and of a solemn compromise, and, above all, in flagrant violation of the rights of man and the laws of heaven; and that it thoroughly breaks for ever any truce, compromise, or understanding between the friends of freedom and the abettors of slavery, and presents as a prize to be fought and contended for by these opposing parties, what promises to be the richest and most important territory in all North America. Surely in that battle we cannot doubt on which side the ultimate victory will turn. It will not be a battle, I trust, to be waged by the sword and the gun, but by weapons of civilization—a battle of emigration and immigration—a battle of settlement, of commerce, and of trade; and can there be any doubt, when it comes to such a battle, as to whether the ultimate success will be on the side of slavery or freedom? (Loud cheers.) After referring to the blighting influence of slavery on all industry and commerce, and on all the arts of peace, paralysing the energies even of the most interprising of men, and observing that all history proved that a slaveholding State had no chance whatever against a free State in the march of civilisation, commerce, and trade, Dr. Candlish said, that if adequate encouragement were given at this crisis to those who were contending for the freedom and emancipation of the slave in America, and who were contending against the extension of the accursed system there, he could not allow himself to doubt that there was a crisis at hand for that vast Continent, and that steps might now be taken which might ere long issue, by the blessing of God, in the thorough downfall of the accursed systems of slavery all over the world. (Applause.) It is (he said) on this account that I rejoice in this movement. I believe we have much to do in this way of awakening American citizens, Christians, and Churches, to a right sense of their duty in reference to slavery, and of endeavoring to leaven then with a wholesome British feeling upon this subject. (Hear, hear.) And I rejoice to think that this Nebraska Bill has had the effect of calling forth a far stronger remonstrance from many Christians in America than any other measure for upholding and abetting slavery ever did. I have the most thorough conviction that the term of the existence of slavery in the United States is doomed—that it is but a short while that this system can be allowed to prevail. (Hear, hear.) I think nobody can shut his eyes to the obvious signs of the times in this respect. There is only one question open for our American brethren, and that question is, the choice between these two alternatives—shall slavery go down by peaceable means, or shall it be put down at the expense of bloodshed and the dissolution of the Union? (Hear, hear.) If the alternative should come to be between the continuance of slavery and the abolition of the Union, with all the bloodshed which that event must occasion as the only way of getting rid of the mischief, of the curse, of the evil, I suppose none of us would for a moment hesitate which side of the alternative to take; but the alternative presented now to our American brethren, and which it will be the duty of this Society continually to present at every fitting opportunity, is not the alternative I have last named, not the alternative between the continuance of slavery and the abolition of the Union—that continuance of slavery is impossible—but it is this—shall slavery be discontinued by peaceful means, through Christian influence, and with the consent of all intelligent and Christian men in America—or shall slavery go down in the wreck and ruin of all American institutions and of all American liberty? (Loud cheers.)

Dr. GREVILLE seconded the motion, and said that this meeting reminded him of days of old, when they raised their voice against slavery in our own colonies. Dr. Candlish had stated that slavery degraded and polluted everything with which it came in contact, and that remark brought vividly to his (Dr. G.'s) recollection a characteristic of American slavery which had not been referred to on the present
occasion. There were middle States in America——three in number, he thought of the soil of which had become exhausted by a ruinous system of cultivation; and the proprietors there as the most profitable substitute, had betaken themselves to the rearing of slaves for the southern market. This formed what was called the internal slave trade of America. Now, they all knew the lax system of morality which prevailed in Slave States, and what he stated now was upon the authority of American writers, that fathers were daily in the habit of selling their children. An American writer declared that the best blood of Virginia flowed in the veins of slaves. By the slave law the condition of the child followed that of the mother; if the mother was a slave the child was held to be so too, and sold. He thought the meeting would agree with him that, there could not be found a better confirmation than this of Dr Candlish's statement, that slavery degraded and polluted everything which it touched. He would mention another fact which showed that up to this moment, slavery in spite of all that was done by the Northern States——for he was afraid they could not help themselves to the extent at least of obtaining a legislative remedy——that slavery was national to the United States. The meeting were aware that by the conditions of the Federal Union slavery was made the subject of discussion and decision in each of the States respectively. Each State had the power to deal with slavery by itself, but Government retained exclusive control over the small District of Columbia, and could at any time declare it to be a Free State; but yet, to this day, Columbia was the mart of the slave trade. There were places of confinement there in which slaves were collected until cargoes were accumulated for the purpose of being exported to the Southern market. Many of them went by land, but many of them went also by sea, and at this day their might be seen in the American newspapers announcements of vessels sailing at stated intervals carrying slaves to the Southern market. The thing was done quite openly; and what was still worse any American citizen or foreigner after becoming naturalized might by paying a trifling sum obtain from the Federal Government a license to deal in slaves. [Hear, hear.]——He had great pleasure in seconding the motion, and trusted that great good would result from the revival of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Association. [Applause.]

The Rev. J. R. CAMPBELL, proposed the fourth resolution. He liked the general spirit of this motion as recognising with so much honor the efforts of Christian churches and members of these churches who had steadfastly set their faces against the evils of slavery. They were contending against an evil of which, in our circumstances, we could have but a faint conception, for it should be remembered that slavery never came so near us as it is to them, it never entwined itself with our institutions as it is inwoven with theirs, and therefore we were not called upon to exercise that degree of steadfastness, determination, and heroic energy which the Christians of America now required to manifest in setting their faces against this abominable system. We ought, therefore, to speak with the very highest honor of those heroic persons and bodies that are lifting up such a steadfast testimony against this evil. The resolution referred to this testimony as an evidence of progress, and it struck him (Mr. Campbell) that great signs of progress in this cause were visible in the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Nebraska Bill, and the temper which these were begetting in the nation. The Nebraska Bill by its effect on the material interests, was moving America, bringing the slave question upon the platform of their legislature, arousing the patriotism of the nation, which was just as strong as that of this country, and making a large portion of that people, who were not prepared for this ten years ago, ready to peril their idolized constitution rather than bear the disgrace in the eyes of the world which such an evil as slavery was bringing upon them. [Applause.] With reference to the unfaithful
part of the Christian Churches in America, the language employed in the resolution was not too strong. Many of them did not protest at all against this great evil, those who did protest gave a muffled and altogether unworthy protest against it; others presented the system under such terms of modification as almost to recommend it, and there were Churches who not merely had members slaveholders, but had actually Church property in the slave. Such Churches must pollute and defile their Christian fellowship by tolerating the worst of evils, to which reference had been made by the preceding speaker. There could be no doubt that such things were utterly at variance with the spirit of Christianity, and we could have no hesitation under all circumstances and at all times in telling them so. But there should be a consideration and tenderness, and patience in dealing with the American people on this subject which should show that while we made no compromise with the evil, we had great consideration and tenderness for the evil doers in so far as the circumstances in which they were placed affected them with timidity or hesitation, or any weakness which we would be apt to feel were we in their position. [Applause.] He was quite persuaded that were our remonstrances thus discriminating, sympathising, and considerate, they would be tenfold more powerful than if these assumed another tone. We ought to tell them that there were not in the world friends half so warm to them as the British people taken as a whole, that were their most devoted admirers, looked upon them as our kith and kin, and consequently could not bear to see this stain upon their reputation——[applause]——that we could bear it with some degree of patience in a stranger, but not in a people so nearly connected with us, and from whom we had a right to expect better things. [Renewed applause.] He would like that when they testified against the evil of slavery in America, it should be examined that it was out of our very admiration of her and our hopes of what she is capable and destined to do, that we were determined never to allow sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids until we removed this black stain from her Constitution. [Loud applause.]

Dean of Guild BLACKADDER, in a few sentences seconded the resolution which was carried unanimously.

Mr. EDWARD CRUICKSHANK read over a long list of names of influential gentlemen, headed by the Lord Provost as President, whom he proposed as the general committee of the Society. He also named those whom he proposed as the committee and the office-bearers.

Dr. SIBBALD seconded the motion, which was cordially passed.

The meeting was then addressed by Mr. WORTABET, from Syria, who was received with protracted cheering. He thanked them sincerely for the kind reception which the announcement of his name had met with, and then referred to the description of the evils of slavery which had been given by the different speakers preceding. Everybody knew these evils; every child of five years old in this country knew them——[cries of "No no"]——and, therefore what we wanted was action. He alluded to the influence of slavery, in the way of retarding progress and civilization, as exemplified in the condition of Norfolk in the United States, a town situated between the north and south, and so beautifully adapted for commerce and trade it might become the emporium of the Union——the New York of America. It had a harbor deeper than that of New York or Boston. Yet through the degrading influence of slavery, it was but a comparatively insignificant town, with a population of only 1,000 or 1,500 people, and those the laziest he ever found anywhere. [Applause and
To remedy these evils they ought to begin in earnest. There are those in the North of America who are doing all they can to abolish slavery, but so long as England bought American cotton and sugar, she was as much responsible for the continuance of slavery as America itself was. Let them stop the purchase of the products of slavery in the United States, and the system was doomed——the slaveholders would soon find that they could not support their slaves. [Applause.] He wished the society every success.

A vote of thanks having been given to Lord Provost on the motion of Sir Henry Moncrieff the Rev. Berkeley Addison pronounced the benediction, and the meeting separated.

Frederick Douglass' Paper
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