

CATHARINE BEECHER

AN ESSAY ON
SLAVERY AND
ABOLITIONISM

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Catharine E. Beecher
An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism With
reference to the duty of American females

PREFACE

The following are the circumstances which occasioned the succeeding pages. A gentleman and a friend, requested the writer to assign reasons why he should not join the Abolition Society. While preparing a reply to this request, Miss Grimké's Address was presented, and the information communicated, of her intention to visit the North, for the purpose of using her influence among northern ladies to induce them to unite with Abolition Societies. The writer then began a private letter to Miss Grimké as a personal friend. But by the wishes and advice of others, these two efforts were finally combined in the following Essay, to be presented to the public.

The honoured and beloved name which that lady bears, so associated as it is at the South, North, and West, with all that is elegant in a scholar, refined in a gentleman, and elevated in a Christian, – the respectable sect with which she is connected, – the interesting effusions of her pen, – and her own intellectual and moral worth, must secure respect for her opinions and much personal influence. This seems to be a sufficient apology for presenting to the public some considerations in connexion with her name; considerations which may exhibit in another aspect the cause she advocates, and which it may be appropriate to consider. As such, they are respectfully commended to the public, and especially to that portion of it for which they are particularly designed.

ESSAY ON SLAVERY AND ABOLITIONISM

Addressed to Miss A. D. Grimké

My dear Friend,

Your public address to Christian females at the South has reached me, and I have been urged to aid in circulating it at the North. I have also been informed, that you contemplate a tour, during the ensuing year, for the purpose of exerting your influence to form Abolition Societies among ladies of the non-slave-holding States.

Our acquaintance and friendship give me a claim to your private ear; but there are reasons why it seems more desirable to address you, who now stand before the public as an advocate of Abolition measures, in a more public manner.

The object I have in view, is to present some reasons why it seems unwise and inexpedient for ladies of the non-slave-holding States to unite themselves in Abolition Societies; and thus, at the same time, to exhibit the inexpediency of the course you propose to adopt.

I would first remark, that your public address leads me to infer, that you are not sufficiently informed in regard to the feelings and opinions of Christian females at the North. Your remarks seem to assume, that the *principles* held by Abolitionists on the subject of slavery, are peculiar to them, and are not generally adopted by those at the North who oppose their *measures*. In this you are not correctly informed. In the sense in which Abolitionists explain the terms they employ, there is little, if any, difference between them and most northern persons. Especially is this true of northern persons of religious principles. I know not where to look for northern Christians, who would deny that every slave-holder is bound to treat his slaves exactly as he would claim that his own children ought to be treated in similar circumstances; that the holding of our fellow men as property, or the withholding any of the rights of freedom, for mere purposes of gain, is a sin, and ought to be immediately abandoned; and that where the laws are such, that a slave-holder cannot *legally* emancipate his slaves, without throwing them into worse bondage, he is bound to use all his influence to alter those laws, and, in the meantime, to treat his slaves, as nearly as he can, *as if* they were free.

I do not suppose there is one person in a thousand, at the North, who would dissent from these principles. They would only differ in the use of terms, and call this the doctrine of *gradual emancipation*, while Abolitionists would call it the doctrine of *immediate emancipation*.

As this is the state of public opinion at the North, there is no necessity for using any influence with northern ladies, in order that they may adopt your *principles* on the subject of slavery; for they hold them in common with yourself, and it would seem unwise, and might prove irritating, to approach them as if they held opposite sentiments.

In regard to the duty of making efforts to bring the people of the Southern States to adopt these principles, and act on them, it is entirely another matter. On this point you would find a large majority opposed to your views. Most persons in the non-slave-holding States have considered the matter of Southern slavery, as one in which they were no more called to interfere, than in the abolition of the press-gang system in England, or the tythe system of Ireland. Public opinion may have been wrong on this point, and yet have been right on all those great principles of rectitude and justice relating to slavery, which Abolitionists claim as their *distinctive* peculiarities.

The distinctive peculiarity of the Abolition Society is this: it is a voluntary association in one section of the country, designed to awaken public sentiment against a moral evil existing in another section of the country, and the principal point of effort seems to be, to enlarge the numbers of this association as a means of influencing public sentiment. The principal object of your proposed

tour, I suppose, is to present facts, arguments, and persuasions to influence northern ladies to enrol themselves as members of this association.

I will therefore proceed to present some of the reasons which may be brought against such a measure as the one you would urge.

In the first place, the main principle of action in that society rests wholly on a false deduction from past experience. Experience has shown, that when certain moral evils exist in a community, efforts to awaken public sentiment against such practices, and combinations for the exercise of personal influence and example, have in various cases tended to rectify these evils. Thus in respect to intemperance; – the collecting of facts, the labours of public lecturers and the distribution of publications, have had much effect in diminishing the evil. So in reference to the slave-trade and slavery in England. The English nation possessed the power of regulating their own trade, and of giving liberty to every slave in their dominions; and yet they were entirely unmindful of their duty on this subject. Clarkson, Wilberforce, and their coadjutors, commenced a system of operations to arouse and influence public sentiment, and they succeeded in securing the suppression of the slave trade, and the gradual abolition of slavery in the English colonies. In both these cases, the effort was to enlighten and direct public sentiment in a community, of which the actors were a portion, in order to lead them to rectify an evil existing among THEMSELVES, which was entirely under their control.

From the success of such efforts, the Abolitionists of this country have drawn inferences, which appear to be not only illogical, but false. Because individuals in *their own* community have aroused their fellow citizens to correct their own evils, therefore they infer that attempts to convince their fellow-citizens of the faults of *another* community will lead that community to forsake their evil practices. An example will more clearly illustrate the case. Suppose two rival cities, which have always been in competition, and always jealous of each other's reputation and prosperity. Certain individuals in one of these cities become convinced, that the sin of intemperance is destroying their prosperity and domestic happiness. They proceed to collect facts, they arrange statistics, they call public meetings, they form voluntary associations, they use arguments, entreaties and personal example, and by these means they arrest the evil.

Suppose another set of men, in this same community, become convinced that certain practices in trade and business in the rival city, are dishonest, and have an oppressive bearing on certain classes in that city, and are injurious to the interests of general commerce. Suppose also, that these are practices, which, by those who allow them, are considered as honourable and right. Those who are convinced of their immorality, wish to alter the opinions and the practices of the citizens of their rival city, and to do this, they commence the collection of facts, that exhibit the tendencies of these practices and the evils they have engendered. But instead of going among the community in which the evils exist, and endeavouring to convince and persuade them, they proceed to form voluntary associations among their neighbours at home, and spend their time, money and efforts to convince their fellow citizens that the inhabitants of their rival city are guilty of a great sin. They also publish papers and tracts and send out agents, not to the guilty city, but to all the neighbouring towns and villages, to convince them of the sins of the city in their vicinity. And they claim that they shall succeed in making that city break off its sins, by these measures, because other men succeeded in banishing intemperance by labouring among their own friends and fellow citizens. Is not this example exactly parallel with the exertions of the Abolitionists? Are not the northern and southern sections of our country distinct communities, with different feelings and interests? Are they not rival, and jealous in feeling? Have the northern States the power to rectify evils at the South, as they have to remove their own moral deformities; or have they any such power over the southern States as the British people had over their own trade and their dependent colonies in the West Indies? Have not Abolitionists been sending out papers, tracts, and agents to convince the people of the North of the sins of the South? Have they not refrained from going to the South with their facts, arguments, and appeals, because they feared personal evils to themselves? And do not Abolitionists found their hopes

of success in their project, on the success which crowned the efforts of British philanthropists in the case of slavery, and on the success that has attended efforts to banish intemperance? And do not these two cases differ entirely from the Abolition movement in this main point, that one is an effort to convince men of *their own* sins, and the other is an effort to convince men of the sins of *other persons*?

The second reason I would urge against joining the Abolition Society is, that its character and measures are not either peaceful or Christian in tendency, but they rather are those which tend to generate party spirit, denunciation, recrimination, and angry passions.

But before bringing evidence to sustain this position, I wish to make a distinction between the *men* who constitute an association, and the *measures* which are advocated and adopted.

I believe, that as a body, Abolitionists are men of pure morals, of great honesty of purpose, of real benevolence and piety, and of great activity in efforts to promote what they consider the best interests of their fellow men. I believe, that, in making efforts to abolish slavery, they have taken measures, which they supposed were best calculated to bring this evil to an end, with the greatest speed, and with the least danger and suffering to the South. I do not believe they ever designed to promote disunion, or insurrection, or to stir up strife, or that they suppose that their measures can be justly characterized by the peculiarities I have specified. I believe they have been urged forward by a strong feeling of patriotism, as well as of religious duty, and that they have made great sacrifices of feeling, character, time, and money to promote what they believed to be the cause of humanity and the service of God. I regard individuals among them, as having taken a bold and courageous stand, in maintaining the liberty of free discussion, the liberty of speech and of the press; though this however is somewhat abated by the needless provocations by which they caused those difficulties and hazards they so courageously sustained. In speaking thus of Abolitionists as a body, it is not assumed that there are not bad men found in this party as well as in every other; nor that among those who are good men, there are not those who may have allowed party spirit to take the place of Christian principle; men who have exhibited a mournful destitution of Christian charity; who have indulged in an overbearing, denouncing, and self-willed pertinacity as to measures. Yet with these reservations, I believe that the above is no more than a fair and just exhibition of that class of men who are embraced in the party of Abolitionists. And all this can be admitted, and yet the objection I am to urge against joining their ranks may stand in its full force.

To make the position clearer, an illustration may be allowed. Suppose a body of good men become convinced that the inspired direction, "them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear," imposes upon them the duty of openly rebuking every body whom they discover in the practice of any sin. Suppose these men are daily in the habit of going into the streets, and calling all by-standers around them, pointing out certain men, some as liars, some as dishonest, some as licentious, and then bringing proofs of their guilt and rebuking them before all; at the same time exhorting all around to point at them the finger of scorn.

They persevere in this course till the whole community is thrown into an uproar; and assaults, and even bloodshed ensue. They then call on all good citizens to protect their persons from abuse, and to maintain the liberty of speech and of free opinion.

Now the men may be as pure in morals, as conscientious and upright in intention, as any Abolitionist, and yet every one would say, that their measures were unwise and unchristian.

In like manner, although Abolitionists may be lauded for many virtues, still much evidence can be presented, that the character and measures of the Abolition Society are not either peaceful or christian in tendency, but that they are in their nature calculated to generate party spirit, denunciation, recrimination, and angry passions.

The first thing I would present to establish this, is the character of the leaders of this association. Every combined effort is necessarily directed by leaders; and the spirit of the leaders will inevitably be communicated to their coadjutors, and appear in the measures of the whole body.

In attempting to characterize these leaders, I would first present another leader of a similar enterprise, the beloved and venerated Wilberforce. It is thus that his prominent traits are delineated by an intimate friend.

"His extreme benevolence contributed largely to his success. I have heard him say, that it was one of his constant rules, and on the question of slavery especially, never to provoke an adversary – to allow him credit fully for sincerity and purity of motive – to abstain from all irritating expressions – to avoid even such political attacks as would indispose his opponents for his great cause. In fact, the benignity, the gentleness, the kind-heartedness of the man, disarmed the bitterest foes. Not only on this question did he restrain himself, but generally. Once he had been called during a whole debate 'the religious member,' in a kind of scorn. He remarked afterwards, that he was much inclined to have retorted, by calling his opponent the *irreligious* member, but that he refrained, as it would have been a returning of evil for evil. Next to his general consistency, and love of the Scriptures, the *humility* of his character always appeared remarkable. The modest, shrinking, simple Christian statesman and friend always appeared in him. And the nearer you approached him, the more his habit of mind obviously appeared to be modest and lowly. His *charity in judging of others*, is a farther trait of his Christian character. Of his benevolence I need not speak, but his *kind construction of doubtful actions*, his *charitable language* toward those with whom he most widely differed, his thorough forgetfulness of little affronts, were fruits of that general benevolence which continually appeared."

This was the leader, both in and out of Parliament, of that body of men who combined to bring to an end slavery and the slave trade, in the dominions of Great Britain. With him, as principal leaders, were associated Clarkson, Sharpe, Macaulay, and others of a similar spirit. These men were all of them characterized by that mild, benevolent, peaceful, gentlemanly and forbearing spirit, which has been described as so conspicuous in Wilberforce. And when their measures are examined, it will be found that they were eminently mild, peaceful, and forbearing. Though no effort that is to encounter the selfish interests of men, can escape without odium and opposition, from those who are thwarted, and from all whom they can influence, these men carefully took those measures that were calculated to bring about their end with the least opposition and evil possible. They avoided prejudices, strove to conciliate opposers, shunned every thing that would give needless offence and exasperation, began slowly and cautiously, with points which could be the most easily carried, and advanced toward others only as public sentiment became more and more enlightened. They did not beard the lion in full face, by coming out as the first thing with the maxim, that all slavery ought and must be abandoned immediately. They began with "inquiries as to the *impolicy* of the *slave trade*," and it was years before they came to the point of the abolition of slavery. And they carried their measures through, without producing warring parties among *good men*, who held common principles with themselves. As a general fact, the pious men of Great Britain acted harmoniously in this great effort.

Let us now look at the leaders of the Abolition movement in America. The man who first took the lead was William L. Garrison, who, though he professes a belief in the Christian religion, is an avowed opponent of most of its institutions. The character and spirit of this man have for years been exhibited in "the Liberator," of which he is the editor. That there is to be found in that paper, or in any thing else, any evidence of his possessing the peculiar traits of Wilberforce, not even his warmest admirers will maintain. How many of the opposite traits can be found, those can best judge who have read his paper. Gradually others joined themselves in the effort commenced by Garrison; but for a long time they consisted chiefly of men who would fall into one of these three classes; either good men who were so excited by a knowledge of the enormous evils of slavery, that *any thing* was considered better than entire inactivity, or else men accustomed to a contracted field of observation, and more qualified to judge of immediate results than of general tendencies, or else men of ardent and impulsive temperament, whose feelings are likely to take the lead, rather than their judgment.

There are no men who act more efficiently as the leaders of an enterprise than the editors of the periodicals that advocate and defend it. The editors of the Emancipator, the Friend of Man, the

New York Evangelist, and the other abolition periodicals, may therefore be considered as among the chief leaders of the enterprise, and their papers are the mirror from which their spirit and character are reflected.

I wish the friends of these editors would cull from their papers all the indications they can find of the peculiarities that distinguished Wilberforce and his associates; all the evidence of "a modest and lowly spirit," – all the exhibitions of "charity in judging of the motives of those who oppose their measures," – all the "indications of benignity, gentleness, and kind-heartedness," – all the "kind constructions of doubtful actions," – all the "charitable language used toward those who differ in opinion or measures," – all the "thorough forgetfulness of little affronts," – all the cases where "opponents are allowed full credit for purity and sincerity of motive," – all cases where they have been careful "never to provoke an adversary," – all cases where they have "refrained from all irritating expressions," – all cases where they have avoided every thing that would "indispose their opponents for their great cause," and then compare the result with what may be found of an opposite character, and I think it would not be unsafe to infer that an association whose measures, on an exciting subject, were guided by such men, would be more likely to be aggressive than peaceful. The position I would establish will appear more clearly, by examining in detail some of the prominent measures which have been adopted by this association.

One of the first measures of Abolitionists was an attack on a benevolent society, originated and sustained by some of the most pious and devoted men of the age. It was imagined by Abolitionists, that the influence and measures of the Colonization Society tended to retard the abolition of slavery, and to perpetuate injurious prejudices against the coloured race. The peaceful and christian method of meeting this difficulty would have been, to collect all the evidence of this supposed hurtful tendency, and privately, and in a respectful and conciliating way, to have presented it to the attention of the wise and benevolent men, who were most interested in sustaining this institution. If this measure did not avail to convince them, then it would have been safe and justifiable to present to the public a temperate statement of facts, and of the deductions based on them, drawn up in a respectful and candid manner, with every charitable allowance which truth could warrant. Instead of this, when the attempt was first made to turn public opinion against the Colonization Society, I met one of the most influential supporters of that institution, just after he had had an interview with a leading Abolitionist. This gentleman was most remarkable for his urbanity, meekness, and benevolence, and his remark to me in reference to this interview, shows what was its nature. "I love truth and sound argument," said he, "but when a man comes at me with a sledge hammer, I cannot help dodging." This is a specimen of their private manner of dealing. In public, the enterprise was attacked as a plan for promoting the selfish interests and prejudices of the whites, at the expense of the coloured population; and in many cases, it was assumed that the conductors of this association were aware of this, and accessory to it. And the style in which the thing was done was at once offensive, inflammatory, and exasperating. Denunciation, sneers, and public rebuke, were bestowed indiscriminately upon the conductors of the enterprise, and of course they fell upon many sincere, upright, and conscientious men, whose feelings were harrowed by a sense of the injustice, the indecorum, and the unchristian treatment, they received. And when a temporary impression was made on the public mind, and its opponents supposed they had succeeded in crushing this society, the most public and triumphant exultation was not repressed. Compare this method of carrying a point, with that adopted by Wilberforce and his compeers, and I think you will allow that there was a way that was peaceful and christian, and that this was not the way which was chosen.

The next measure of Abolitionism was an attempt to remove the prejudices of the whites against the blacks, on account of natural peculiarities. Now, prejudice is an *unreasonable* and *groundless* dislike of persons or things. Of course, as it is unreasonable, it is the most difficult of all things to conquer, and the worst and most irritating method that could be attempted would be, to attack a man as guilty of sin, as unreasonable, as ungenerous, or as proud, for allowing a certain prejudice.

This is the sure way to produce anger, self-justification, and an increase of the strength of prejudice, against that which has caused him this rebuke and irritation.

The best way to make a person like a thing which is disagreeable, is to try in some way to make it agreeable; and if a certain class of persons is the subject of unreasonable prejudice, the peaceful and christian way of removing it would be to endeavour to render the unfortunate persons who compose this class, so useful, so humble and unassuming, so kind in their feelings, and so full of love and good works, that prejudice would be supplanted by complacency in their goodness, and pity and sympathy for their disabilities. If the friends of the blacks had quietly set themselves to work to increase their intelligence, their usefulness, their respectability, their meekness, gentleness, and benevolence, and then had appealed to the pity, generosity, and christian feelings of their fellow citizens, a very different result would have appeared. Instead of this, reproaches, rebukes, and sneers, were employed to convince the whites that their prejudices were sinful, and without any just cause. They were accused of pride, of selfish indifference, of unchristian neglect. This tended to irritate the whites, and to increase their prejudice against the blacks, who thus were made the causes of rebuke and exasperation. Then, on the other hand, the blacks extensively received the Liberator, and learned to imbibe the spirit of its conductor.

They were taught to feel that they were injured and abused, the objects of a guilty and unreasonable prejudice – that they occupied a lower place in society than was right – that they ought to be treated as if they were whites; and in repeated instances, attempts were made by their friends to mingle them with whites, so as to break down the existing distinctions of society. Now, the question is not, whether these things, that were urged by Abolitionists, were true. The thing maintained is, that the method taken by them to remove this prejudice was neither peaceful nor christian in its tendency, but, on the contrary, was calculated to increase the evil, and to generate anger, pride, and recrimination, on one side, and envy, discontent, and revengeful feelings, on the other.

These are some of the general measures which have been exhibited in the Abolition movement. The same peculiarities may be as distinctly seen in specific cases, where the peaceful and quiet way of accomplishing the good was neglected, and the one most calculated to excite wrath and strife was chosen. Take, for example, the effort to establish a college for coloured persons. The quiet, peaceful, and christian way of doing such a thing, would have been, for those who were interested in the plan, to furnish the money necessary, and then to have selected a retired place, where there would be the least prejudice and opposition to be met, and there, in an unostentatious way, commenced the education of the youth to be thus sustained. Instead of this, at a time when the public mind was excited on the subject, it was noised abroad that a college for blacks was to be founded. Then a city was selected for its location, where was another college, so large as to demand constant effort and vigilance to preserve quiet subordination; where contests with "sailors and town boys" were barely kept at bay; a college embracing a large proportion of southern students, who were highly excited on the subject of slavery and emancipation; a college where half the shoe-blacks and waiters were coloured men. Beside the very walls of this college, it was proposed to found a college for coloured young men. Could it be otherwise than that opposition, and that for the best of reasons, would arise against such an attempt, both from the faculty of the college and the citizens of the place? Could it be reasonably expected that they would not oppose a measure so calculated to increase their own difficulties and liabilities, and at the same time so certain to place the proposed institution in the most unfavourable of all circumstances? But when the measure was opposed, instead of yielding meekly and peaceably to such reasonable objections, and soothing the feelings and apprehensions that had been excited, by putting the best construction on the matter, and seeking another place, it was claimed as an evidence of opposition to the interests of the blacks, and as a mark of the force of sinful prejudice. The worst, rather than the best, motives were ascribed to some of the most respectable, and venerated, and pious men, who opposed the measure; and a great deal was said and done that was calculated to throw the community into an angry ferment.

Take another example. If a prudent and benevolent female had selected almost any village in New England, and commenced a school for coloured females, in a quiet, appropriate, and unostentatious way, the world would never have heard of the case, except to applaud her benevolence, and the kindness of the villagers, who aided her in the effort. But instead of this, there appeared public advertisements, (which I saw at the time,) stating that a seminary for the education of young ladies of colour was to be opened in Canterbury, in the state of Connecticut, where would be taught music on the piano forte, drawing, &c., together with a course of English education. Now, there are not a dozen coloured families in New England, in such pecuniary circumstances, that if they were whites it would not be thought ridiculous to attempt to give their daughters such a course of education, and Canterbury was a place where but few of the wealthiest families ever thought of furnishing such accomplishments for their children. Several other particulars might be added that were exceedingly irritating, but this may serve as a specimen of the method in which the whole affair was conducted. It was an entire disregard of the prejudices and the proprieties of society, and calculated to stimulate pride, anger, ill-will, contention, and all the bitter feelings that spring from such collisions. Then, instead of adopting measures to soothe and conciliate, rebukes, sneers and denunciations, were employed, and Canterbury and Connecticut were held up to public scorn and rebuke for doing what most other communities would probably have done, if similarly tempted and provoked.

Take another case. It was deemed expedient by Abolitionists to establish an Abolition paper, first in Kentucky, a slave State. It was driven from that State, either by violence or by threats. It retreated to Ohio, one of the free States. In selecting a place for its location, it might have been established in a small place, where the people were of similar views, or were not exposed to dangerous popular excitements. But Cincinnati was selected; and when the most intelligent, the most reasonable, and the most patriotic of the citizens remonstrated, – when they represented that there were peculiar and unusual liabilities to popular excitement on this subject, – that the organization and power of the police made it extremely dangerous to excite a mob, and almost impossible to control it, – that all the good aimed at could be accomplished by locating the press in another place, where there were not such dangerous liabilities, – when they kindly and respectfully urged these considerations, they were disregarded. I myself was present when a sincere friend urged upon the one who controlled that paper, the obligations of good men, not merely to avoid breaking wholesome laws themselves, but the duty of regarding the liabilities of others to temptation; and that where Christians could foresee that by placing certain temptations in the way of their fellow-men, all the probabilities were, that they would yield, and yet persisted in doing it, the tempters became partakers in the guilt of those who yielded to the temptation. But these remonstrances were ineffectual. The paper must not only be printed and circulated, but it must be stationed where were the greatest probabilities that measures of illegal violence would ensue. And when the evil was perpetrated, and a mob destroyed the press, then those who had urged on these measures of temptation, turned upon those who had advised and remonstrated, as the guilty authors of the violence, because, in a season of excitement, the measures adopted to restrain and control the mob, were not such as were deemed suitable and right.

Now, in all the above cases, I would by no means justify the wrong or the injudicious measures that may have been pursued, under this course of provocation. The greatness of temptation does by no means release men from obligation; but Christians are bound to remember that it is a certain consequence of throwing men into strong excitement, that they will act unwisely and wrong, and that the tempter as well as the tempted are held responsible, both by God and man. In all these cases, it cannot but appear that the good aimed at might have been accomplished in a quiet, peaceable, and christian way, and that this was not the way which was chosen.

The whole system of Abolition measures seems to leave entirely out of view, the obligation of Christians to save their fellow men from all needless temptations. If the thing to be done is only lawful and right, it does not appear to have been a matter of effort to do it in such a way as would

not provoke and irritate; but often, if the chief aim had been to do the good in the most injurious and offensive way, no more certain and appropriate methods could have been devised.

So much has this been the character of Abolition movements, that many have supposed it to be a deliberate and systematized plan of the leaders to do nothing but what was strictly a *right* guaranteed by law, and yet, in such a manner, as to provoke men to anger, so that unjust and illegal acts might ensue, knowing, that as a consequence, the opposers of Abolition would be thrown into the wrong, and sympathy be aroused for Abolitionists as injured and persecuted men. It is a fact, that Abolitionists have taken the course most calculated to awaken illegal acts of violence, and that when they have ensued, they have seemed to rejoice in them, as calculated to advance and strengthen their cause. The violence of mobs, the denunciations and unreasonable requirements of the South, the denial of the right of petition, the restrictions attempted to be laid upon freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, are generally spoken of with exultation by Abolitionists, as what are among the chief means of promoting their cause. It is not so much by exciting feelings of pity and humanity, and Christian love, towards the oppressed, as it is by awakening indignation at the treatment of Abolitionists themselves, that their cause has prospered. How many men have declared or implied, that in joining the ranks of Abolition, they were influenced, not by their arguments, or by the wisdom of their course, but because the violence of opposers had identified that cause with the question of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and civil liberty.

But when I say that many have supposed that it was the deliberate intention of the Abolitionists to foment illegal acts and violence, I would by no means justify a supposition, which is contrary to the dictates of justice and charity. The leaders of the Abolition Society disclaim all such wishes or intentions; they only act apparently on the assumption that they are exercising just rights, which they are not bound to give up, because other men will act unreasonably and wickedly.

Another measure of Abolitionists, calculated to awaken evil feelings, has been the treatment of those who objected to their proceedings.

A large majority of the philanthropic and pious, who hold common views with the Abolitionists, as to the sin and evils of slavery, and the duty of using all appropriate means to bring it to an end, have opposed their measures, because they have believed them not calculated to promote, but rather to retard the end proposed to be accomplished by them. The peaceful and Christian method of encountering such opposition, would have been to allow the opponents full credit for purity and integrity of motive, to have avoided all harsh and censorious language, and to have employed facts, arguments and persuasions, in a kind and respectful way with the hope of modifying their views and allaying their fears. Instead of this, the wise and good who opposed Abolition measures, have been treated as though they were the friends and defenders of slavery, or as those who, from a guilty, timid, time-serving policy, refused to take the course which duty demanded. They have been addressed either as if it were necessary to convince them that slavery is wrong and ought to be abandoned, or else, as if they needed to be exhorted to give up their timidity and selfish interest, and to perform a manifest duty, which they were knowingly neglecting.

Now there is nothing more irritating, when a man is conscientious and acting according to his own views of right, than to be dealt with in this manner. The more men are treated as if they were honest and sincere – the more they are treated with respect, fairness, and benevolence, the more likely they are to be moved by evidence and arguments. On the contrary, harshness, uncharitableness, and rebuke, for opinions and conduct that are in agreement with a man's own views of duty and rectitude, tend to awaken evil feelings, and indispose the mind properly to regard evidence. Abolitionists have not only taken this course, but in many cases, have seemed to act on the principle, that the abolition of Slavery, in the particular mode in which they were aiming to accomplish it, was of such paramount importance, that every thing must be overthrown that stood in the way.

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