

[1844.]

(This paper written at the time.)

At the Annual Business Meeting of the A. U. A. Tuesday evening May 28., after the election of Officers, the following Resolution was offered by Mr. May of Leicester:

Resolved, That the Executive Committee of the Association be, and they hereby are, instructed, in all cases where the assistance of this Association is rendered to individuals or Societies in the Slaveholding Sections of our Country, to accompany such assistance with a protest against the institution of Slavery as inhuman and unchristian, and with earnest entreaty to those addressed that they cease from the sin of supporting said institution and that they bear a faithful testimony against it, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There being no time for the discussion of the Resolution, on account of the public meeting, an adjournment was voted to the same place (Berry St. Vestry) the next day, Wednesday, at 3 1/2 o'clock P. M.

Wednesday, 29 May 3 1/2 P. M. Met again at Berry St. The Vestry was crowded. President being absent, Mr. Stephen Fairbanks of Boston was called to the Chair. The question came up, on Mr. May's resolution. A few words in explanation were made by the mover. Exceptions were taken by several speakers to the form of the resolution. They objected to requiring the Exec. Com. to pursue any given course "in all cases". Some objected to the Committee's being "instructed" at all. Mr. Lotthrop of Boston offered an amendment, which however did not meet the point of the original resolution at all. Mr. Jones of Manchester, N. H. offered an Amend. ment, and Mr. Ozgood of Providence, another, copies of which I regret I cannot give.

The hour of 5 having arrived, at which time the Convention is held, the Association adjourned to meet in the Hall of the Mechanic Apprentices' Library Association, Phillips Place, the following day at 3 P. M.

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Thursday May 30. 3 P.M. The Association met, according to adjournment. The Hall was filled. After considerable opposition from Henry H. Fuller Esq. of Boston, the Resolution under consideration, with its various amendments, was laid on the table, to give the mover of the original resolution an opportunity to offer ~~a~~ new ones, which were as follows: (offered by Mr. May)

1. Resolved, That the American Unitarian Association, desirous that the pecuniary or other aid rendered by them from time to time to individuals and Societies in the Slaveholding Sections of the Country should not be misunderstood or misconstrued, do hereby declare their conviction that the institution of Slavery, as existing in this country, is contrary to the will of God, to the Gospel of Christ (and especially to the views which we entertain concerning it,) to the rights of man, and to every principle of justice and humanity; and in a spirit not of dictation but of friendly remonstrance and entreaty would call upon those, whom they may address as believers in One God and Father of all, to bear a faithful testimony against Slavery.

2. Resolved, That the Exec. Com<sup>tee</sup> of the Assoc<sup>n</sup>. be, and they hereby are, requested to transmit a copy of the preceding resolution to each of our Auxiliary Assoc<sup>ns</sup>., and to such Societies in the Slaveholding Sections of the Country as may, from time to time, receive pecuniary aid from this Assoc<sup>n</sup>.

[It is a source of deep regret to me that I did not take minutes of our meetings henceforward. I have only some imperfect notes of this P.M.'s meeting - which I give.]

Mr. Morison objected to any action by the Association - 1<sup>st</sup>. Because we shall thereby lose our influence at the South. 2. Because we shall convert the Assoc<sup>n</sup>. into an Abolition Society; 3. Because it would be a dastardly proceeding, at our distance from the scene of danger, to utter ~~sentiments~~ sentiments hostile to Slavery, with which the Southern Unit<sup>n</sup>. Societies might be identified. 4. Because it would be travelling out of our record - we are an Unitarian Association and nothing else.

Mr. Bulfinch (S.G.) differed from Mr. Morison. He hoped some action would be had on the subject - liked the Resolutions before the meeting, and, with an additional one (which he should propose) tending to allay the fears of the South, ~~and etc. etc.~~ could vote for them. He said the South would be the better for such an expression of opinion from us.

[Query. Is Bulfinch artful? His course, the following day, of opposition to action, appears quite at variance with the views expressed above. Did the earnestness of the next day's contest compel him to show his true colors? Did he seem to favour anti-slavery action on Thursday, with the view of having passed ~~some~~ some resolutions of his own <sup>also</sup>, essentially anti-abolition?]

J. F. Clarke - said that Slaveholding was not always, & under all circumstances, a sin - adduced the recent case of J. G. Palfrey.

[Query, again. What constitutes Slaveholding? Mr. P. never was a Slaveholder, in God's sight (supposing the circumstances to be, as they are generally understood). From the moment he knew that, by Louisiana laws, he was invested with this ~~the~~ power over Slaves, he resolved to throw it off. He never was a Slaveholder by his own will, and he took immediate measures to emancipate, when he found was so by the unhallowed laws of man. Supposing, br. J. F. C., that a thief conveys into your house <sup>some</sup> stolen property. Are you therefore a receiver of stolen goods? No - provided you proceed without delay to make the case known, & take other measures for restitution. Yet, meantime, de facto, you are a holder of stolen goods.]

E. S. Gannett - (a motion having been previously made, I think by Morison, to lay on the table, or indefinitely postpone, the whole matter) - said that the Association never contemplated any action on Slavery; it was contrary to the objects of its formation. It would also <sup>be</sup> an invasion of the rights of conscience, being the setting up of a Creed with reference to this subject. Also, it would be ~~an~~ injurious to the Slaves - ten years ago, their bondage was much lighter than at present. Also, it would be to identify ourselves with the Abolitionists of the Free States, whom he most unsparingly & vehemently condemned. He alluded to their demand of a dissolution of the Union with Slaveholders, and to their attacks upon the American Churches; and said there was little comparative need for us to go South to rebuke an evil, when we had such a "hellish spirit alive and active here in our very midst - even in New England."

[This was thought to be aimed at W. L. Garrison, who was present at one session as a listener, having inquired if such were admitted.]

Hon. S. C. Phillips of Salem (made a long speech, of which I can recal but a little) - he was not, I think, in favour of such Antislavery Actions by this Assoc<sup>n</sup>. as my resolutions proposed, but still thought we should take some action, and that a way was opened for us to take it. He brought up the Savannah Case, - said the Assoc<sup>n</sup>. had never taken definite & final action upon it - that he had fully expected the Exec. Comtee. would bring forward a Report of the Case this year through their Gen<sup>l</sup>. Secretary, and thought they ought to have done so - as they had not, it should be taken up here - and in connexion with that case, we should present, as we fairly might, our views on the whole subject of Slavery. He said there had been great error in so long silence on this subject - that our leading policy had been to avoid it - that ~~the~~ much injury ~~had been the consequence~~, and the prevention of much good, had been the consequences - he said "the time had come when no man could be silent, everywhere and at all times, on this question with impunity" - (without guilt, seemed to be his real meaning.) He quoted a remark made to him by a prominent Southern Gentleman, "I should despise the men of the North if they were to take an attitude of hostility to the Antislavery movement."

at 1/2 past 6, adjourned to following morning, 9 o'clock.

Friday, May 31. 9 A.M. [of this day's meeting, I took not the slightest notes, feeling very unwell; and can give but ~~very~~ little help about it. Mem. I wonder if any body kept the run of all the motions which were made to adjourn, to postpone, to lay on table, to refer to Committee, to amend, &c. &c.] Mr. Phillips moved to amend the Res<sup>ns</sup>. before the meeting, by striking out all after the word Resolved, and inserting a Preamble & Six Res<sup>ns</sup>. which he had drawn up. These Res<sup>ns</sup>. were the subject of discussion through the morning till 2 o'clock after 2, when an adjournment was had to 1/2 past 3; thence again till 1/2 past 9 P.M., when the Association adjourned, sine die.

The Resolutions were ably supported by the Mover - <sup>advocated also</sup> by Rev. Messrs. Stetson, Clarke, Pierpont, J. L. Russell, S. Barrett, C. Brooks, G. W. Briggs, F. A. Hedge, J. W. Thompson, <sup>W. H.</sup> Lord, Wm. Holland of Rochester,

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and others, and by Mess. H. M. Bayley, W. A. Barrett, G. G. Channing,  
G. W. F. Mellen, &c.

Rev. Mr. Lunt of Quincy opposed any action, and spoke with great severity of the Abolitionists, whom he charged with being Revolutionists, and also with endeavouring to subvert and destroy Christianity. I. B. This was most emphatically denied from all parts of the Hall.

Mr. May of Leicester vindicated the Abolitionists from Mr. Lunt's charges - he spoke of the ground which Dr. Channing had taken with respect to Disunion, in case of the Annex<sup>n</sup>. of Texas - he showed that the Abolitionists oppose a false & corrupt Church, as they believe it to be, not the Church of Christ, & still less Christianity itself, in which they glory as the basis & principle of their ~~entire~~ whole movement.

H. A. Fuller of Boston made a long & rambling <sup>self-</sup>contradictory speech - (so much so, that one gentleman <sup>(Caleb Stebbins)</sup> inquired of him, which he, Mr. F., desired us to accept as his final conclusions, his Anti-Slavery views or his Pro-Slavery views.) He objected to the original resolutions on several grounds, particularly because Slavery was declared to be "contrary to the will of God", which he did not believe - he did not know that anything could be contrary to His Will, &c. He objected to the resolutions of Mr. Phillips, but said he knew the difficulty of drawing up resolutions; he had never been able to draw up any exposition of his own views <sup>on this subject</sup>, which would satisfy himself. (!)

Rev. E. S. Gannett vindicated the Savannah Society against certain statements in Mr. Phillips's Preamble. He maintained that justice had never been done to that Society, and that we were about to do them a greater injustice than all. (Much was said by him, & others, about ~~private~~ information, from private sources, concerning Mr. Motte's reception, & the course of the Savannah Unit<sup>n</sup>. But Mr. Phillips sustained himself & kept the ground he had taken.) Mr. Gannett dwelt much on the injury we were doing to the great principle of individual liberty of conscience.

Rev. G. G. Bulfinch moved an addition to the Resolutions, referring the Savannah Society of our continued regard, and also that we would never countenance any insurrectionary movement, or send a mission-ary there who would preach such (!!!) (This was adopted as an amendment! - but afterwards by a decided majority was rescinded.)

He expressed great fear that our action would lead to some violent & tumultuous action at the South - he had a child in Savannah, & felt peculiarly anxious.

Rev. Mr. Prepont said that ~~with regard to this matter it~~ it were better not to leave a child in a state of society where the whole Gospel could not be preached, but to take the idea suggested by a certain passage of Scripture, & say, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son".

Rev. Mr. Fordick of Sterling - thought the Savannah case had been sufficiently acted upon by the A. S. C. M., in the fact of the re-election of the same <sup>Exec.</sup> Committee who had managed that affair.

J. Prentiss Esq. of Keene wished to add a Resolution condemnatory of the denunciatory language of the Abolitionists towards Slaveholders & of their ~~off.~~ course respecting Disunion and the Church. This Res<sup>n</sup> was twice decidedly rejected.

Near the close, objection to action was made by several on the ground that there were some 6000 members of the A. S. C. M. in all, and we had no right to act for them. This was sifted, & its untenableness fully manifested. 1<sup>st</sup>. ~~As we~~ This was the regular, Annual Meeting of the A. S. C. M., fully & properly notified. 2<sup>d</sup>. We had a representation of all parts of the country, & of all shades of opinion.

Mr. Phillips' resolutions were finally ~~and~~ passed by a vote of 40 to 15, without additions.

Mr. Bulfinch acknowledged the courtesy and liberality of the majority towards the minority, and hoped no protests would be entered. Mr. Dummer Chapman read a protest for himself. Vote of thanks to the Moderator passed unanimously. Dr. Parkman closed with prayer.