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The Boston*

THE BOSTON KIDNAPPING:

A

DISCOURSE

TO COMMEMORATE

THE RENDITION OF THOMAS SIMMS,

DELIVERED ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY THEREOF,

APRIL 12, 1852,

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE,

AT THE MELODEON IN BOSTON.

BY THEODORE PARKER.

5 BOSTON:

CROSBY, NICHOLS, & COMPANY,

111, WASHINGTON STREET.

1852.

F. J. C. Hunt

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REV. THEODORE PARKER.

Dear Sir, — We know that we express the earnest and unanimous wish of all who listened to your appropriate and eloquent address last Monday, in asking a copy of it for the press.

Yours respectfully,

WENDELL PHILLIPS,	} Committee of Arrangements.
HENRY I. BOWDITCH,	
TIMOTHY GILBERT,	
JOHN P. JEWETT,	
M. P. HANSON,	
JOHN M. SPEAR,	}

Boston, April 16, 1852.

BOSTON :

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DISCOURSE.

THERE are times of private, personal joy and delight, when some good deed has been done, or some extraordinary blessing welcomed to the arms. Then the man stops, and pours out the expression of his heightened consciousness; gives gladness words; or else, in manly quietness, exhales to heaven his joy, too deep for speech. Thus the lover rejoices in his young heart of hearts, when another breast beats in conscious unison with his own, and two souls are first made one; so a father rejoices, so a mother is filled with delight, her hour of anguish over, when the gladdened eyes behold the new-born daughter or the new-born son. Henceforth the day of newly welcomed love, the day of newly welcomed life, is an epoch of delight, marked for thanksgiving with a white stone in their calends of time,—their day of Annunciation or of Advent, a gladsome anniversary in their lives for many a year.

When these married mates are grown maturely wed, they rejoice to live over again their early loves, a second time removing the hindrances which once strewed all the way, dreaming anew the sweet prophetic dream of early hope, and bringing back the crimson mornings and the purple nights of golden days gone by, that still keep “trailing clouds of glory” as they pass. At their silver

wedding, they are proud to see their children's manlyfying face, and remember how, one by one, these olive plants came up about their widening hearth.

When old and full of memories of earth, their hopes chiefly of heaven now, they love to keep the golden wedding of their youthful joy, children and children's children round their venerable board.

Thus the individual man seeks to commemorate his private personal joy, and build up a monument of his domestic bliss.

So, in the life of a nation, there are proud days, when the people joined itself to some great Idea of Justice, Truth, and Love; took some step forward in its destiny, or welcomed to national baptism some institution born of its great idea. The anniversaries of such events become red-letter days in the almanac of the nation; days of rejoicing, till that people, old and gray with manifold experience, goes the way of all the nations, as of all its men. Thus, on the twenty-second of December, all New England thanks God for those poor Pilgrims whose wearied feet first found repose in this great wilderness of woods, not broken then. Each year, their children love to gather on the spot made famous now, and bring to mind the ancient deed; to honor it with speech and song, not without prayers to God. That day there is a springing of New England blood, a beating of New England hearts; not only here, but wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of New England, there is the memory of the Pilgrims in the midst of them; and among the prairies of the West, along the rivers of the South, far off where the Pacific waits to bring gold to our shores of rock and sand, — even there the annual song of gladness bursts from New England lips.

So America honors the birth of the nation with a holiday for all the people. Then we look anew at the national idea, reading for the six and seventieth time the programme

of our progress, — its first part a revolution; we study our history before and since, bringing back the day of small things, when our fathers went from one kingdom to another people; we rejoice at the wealthy harvest gathered from the unalienable rights of men, sown in new soil. On that day the American flag goes topmast high; and men in ships, far off in the silent wilderness of the ocean, celebrate the nation's joyous day. In all the great cities of the Eastern World, American hearts beat quicker then, and thank their God.

But a few days ago, the Hebrew nation commemorated its escape out of Egypt, celebrating its Passover. Though three and thirty hundred years have since passed by, yet the Israelite remembers that his fathers were slaves in the land of the stranger; that the Pyramids, even then a fact accomplished and representing an obsolete idea, were witnesses to the thralldom of his race; and the joy of Jacob triumphant over the gods of Egypt lights up the Hebrew countenance in the melancholy Ghetto of Rome, as the recollection of the hundred and one Pilgrims deepens the joy of the Californian New Englanders delighting in the glory of their nation, and their own abundant gain. The pillar of fire still goes before the Hebrew, in the long night of Israel's wandering; and still the Passover is a day of joy and of proud remembrance.

Every ancient nation has thus its calendar filled with joyful days. The worshippers of Jesus delight in their Christmas and their Easter; the Mahometans, in the Hegira of the Prophet. The year-book of mankind is thus marked all the way through with the red-letter days of history; and most beautiful do those days illuminate the human year, commemorating the victories of the race, the days of triumph which have marked the course of man in his long and varied, but yet triumphant, march of many a thousand years. Thereby Hebrews, Budhists, Christians,

Mahometans, men of every form of religion; English, French, Americans, men of all nations, — are reminded of the great facts in their peculiar story; and mankind learns the lesson they were meant to teach, writ in the great events of the cosmic life of man.

These things should, indeed, be so. It were wrong to miss a single bright day from the story of a man, a nation, or mankind. Let us mark those days, and be glad.

But there are periods of sorrow, not less than joy. There comes a shipwreck to the man; and though he tread the waters under him, and come alive to land, yet his memory drips with sorrow for many a year to come. The widow marks her time by dating from the day which shore off the better portions of herself, counting her life by years of widowhood. Marius, exiled, hunted after, denied fire and water, a price set on his head, just escaping the murderers and the sea, "sitting a fugitive on the ruins of Carthage" which he once destroyed, himself a sadder ruin now, folds his arms and bows his head in manly grief.

These days also are remembered. It takes long to efface what is written in tears. For ever the father bears the annual wound that rent his child away: fifty years do not fill up the tomb which let a mortal through the earth to heaven. The anniversaries of grief return. At St. Helena, on the eighteenth of every June, how Napoleon remembered the morning and the evening of the day at Waterloo, the beginning and the ending of his great despair!

So the nations mourn at some great defeat, and hate the day thereof. How the Frenchman detests the very name of Waterloo, and wishes to wipe off from that battlefield the monument of earth the Allies piled thereon, commemorative of his nation's loss! Old mythologies are true to this feeling of mankind, when they relate that the spirit of

some great man who died defeated comes, and complains that he is sad: they tell that —

“Great Pompey’s shade complains that we are slow,
And Scipio’s ghost walks unrevenged amongst us.”

An antique nation, with deep faith in God, looks on these defeats as correction from the hand of Heaven. In sorrow the Jew counts from the day of his Exile, mourning that the city sits solitary that was full of people; that among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her; that she dwelleth among the heathen and hath no rest. But, he adds, the Lord afflicted her, because of the multitude of her transgressions; for Jerusalem had greatly sinned. Now, in the day of her miseries, the Jew remembers her pleasant things that she had in the days of old; now her children have swooned from their wounds in the streets of their city, and have poured out their soul into their mother’s bosom; Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen, because their tongue and their doings were against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

It is well that mother and Marius should mourn their loss; that Napoleon and the Hebrew should remember each his own defeat. Poets say, that, on the vigil of a fight, the old soldier’s wounds smart afresh, bleeding anew. The poet’s fancy should be a nation’s fact.

But sometimes a man commits a wrong. He is false to himself, and stains the integrity of his soul. He comes to consciousness thereof, and the shame of the consequence is embittered by remorse for the cause. Thus Peter weeps at his own denial, and Judas hangs himself at the recollection of his treachery; so David bows his penitent forehead, and lies prostrate in the dust. The anniversary of doing wrong is writ with fire on the dark tablets of memory. How a murderer convicted, yet spared in jail, — or, not convicted, still at large, — must remember the day when he

first reddened his hand at his brother's heart! As the remorseless year brings back the day, the hour, the moment and the memory of the deed, what recollections of ghastly visages come back to him!

I once knew a New England man who had dealt in slaves; I now know several such; but this man stole his brothers in Guinea to sell in America. He was a hard, cruel man, and had grown rich by the crime. But, hard and cruel as he was, at the mention of the slave-trade, the poor wretch felt a torture at his iron heart which it was piteous to behold. His soul wrought within him like the tossings of the tropic sea about his ship, deep fraught with human wretchedness. He illustrated the torments of that other "middle passage," not often named.

Benedict Arnold, successful in his treason, safe, — only Andre hanged, not he, the guilty man, — pensioned, feasted, rich, yet hated by all ingenuous souls, not great enough to pity, hateful to himself; how this first great public shame of New England must have remembered the twenty-fifth September, and have lived over again each year the annual treason of his heart!

It is well for men to pause on such days, the anniversary of their crime, and see the letters which sin has branded in their consciousness come out anew, and burn, even in the scars they left behind. In sadness, in penitence, in prayers of resolution, should a man mark these days in his own sad calendar. They are times for a man to retire within himself, to seek communion with his God, and cleanse him of the elephantine leprosy his sin has brought upon his soul.

There are such days in the life of a nation, when it stains its own integrity, commits treason against mankind, and sin against the most high God; when a proud king, or wicked minister, — his rare power consorting with a vulgar aim, — misled the people's heart, abused the nation's strength,

organized iniquity as law, condensing a world of wicked will into a single wicked deed, and wrought some hideous Bartholomew massacre in the face of the sun. The anniversary of such events is a day of horror and of shivering to mankind ; a day of sorrow to the guilty State which pricks with shame at the anniversary of the deed.

The twelfth of April is such a day for Boston and this State. It is the first anniversary of a great crime, — a crime against the majesty of Massachusetts law, and the dignity of the Constitution of the United States ; of a great wrong, — a wrong against you and me, and all of us, against the babe not born, against the nature of mankind ; of a great sin, — a sin against the law God wrote in human nature, a sin against the infinite God. It was a great crime, a great wrong, a great sin, on the side of the American government, which did the deed : on the people's part it was a great defeat ; your defeat and mine.

Out of the iron house of bondage, a man, guilty of no crime but love of liberty, fled to the people of Massachusetts. He came to us a wanderer, and Boston took him in to an unlawful jail ; hungry, and she fed him with a felon's meat ; thirsty, she gave him the gall and vinegar of a slave to drink ; naked, and she clothed him with chains ; sick and in prison, he cried for a helper, and Boston sent him a marshal and a commissioner ; she set him between kidnapers, among the most infamous of men, and they made him their slave. Poor and in chains, the government of the nation against him, he sent round to the churches his petition for their prayers ; — the churches of commerce, they gave him their curse : he asked of us the sacrament of freedom, in the name of our God ; and in the name of *their* Trinity, the Trinity of money, — Boston standing as godmother at the ceremony, — in the name of their God they baptized him a Slave. Said the New England church of

commerce, "Thy name is Slave. I baptize thee in the name of the gold eagle, and of the silver dollar, and of the copper cent."

This is holy ground that we stand on: godly men laid here the foundation of a Christian church; laid it with prayers, laid it with tears, laid it in blood. Noble men laid here the foundation of a Christian State, with all the self-denial of New England men; laid that with prayers, with tears, laid that in blood. They sought a church without a bishop, a state without a king, a community without a lord, and a family without a slave. Yet even here in Massachusetts, which first of American colonies sent forth the idea of "inherent and unalienable rights," and first offered the conscious sacrament of her blood; here, in Boston, which once was full of manly men that rocked the Cradle of Liberty,—even here the rights of man were of no value and of no avail. Massachusetts took a man from the horns of her altar,—he had fled to her for protection,—and voluntarily gave him up to bondage without end; did it with her eyes wide open; did it on purpose; did it in notorious violation of her own law, in consciousness of the sin; did it after "fasting and prayer."

It is well for us to come together, and consider the defeat which you and I have suffered when the rights of man were thus cloven down, and look at the crime committed by those whom posterity will rank among infidels to Christianity, among the enemies of man; it is well to commemorate the event, the disgrace of Boston, the perpetual shame and blot of Massachusetts. Yet it was not the people of Massachusetts who did the deed: it was only their government. The officers are one thing; and the people, thank God, are something a little different.

If a deed which so outraged the people had been done by the government of Massachusetts a hundred years ago, there

would have been a "Day of Fasting and Prayer," and next a muster of soldiers: one day the people would have thought of their trust in God, and the next looked to it that their powder was dry. Now nobody fasts, save to the eye; he prays best who, not asking God to do man's work, prays penitence, prays resolutions, and then prays deeds, thus supplicating with heart and head and hands. This is a day for such a prayer. The twelfth of last April issued the proclamation which brings us here to-day.

We have historical precedent for this commemoration, if men need such an argument. After the Boston Massacre of the fifth of March, 1770, the people had annually a solemn commemoration of the event. They had their great and honored men to the pulpit on that occasion: Lovell, child of a tory father, — the son's patriotism brought him to a British jail; Tudor and Dawes, honorable and honored names; Thacher, "the young Elijah" of his times; Warren, twice called to that post, but destined soon to perish by a British hand; John Hancock, — his very name was once the pride and glory of the town. They stood here, and, mindful of their brothers slain in the street not long to bear the name of "King," taught the lesson of liberty to their fellow-men. The menace of British officers, their presence in the aisles of the church, the sight of their weapons on the pulpit-stairs, did not frighten Joseph Warren, — not a hireling shepherd, though he came in by the pulpit-window, while soldiers crammed the porch. Did they threaten to stop his mouth? It took bullet and bayonet both to silence his lips. John Hancock was of eyes too pure to fear the government of Britain. Once, when Boston was in the hands of the enemy of freedom, — I mean the foreign enemy, — the discourse could not be delivered here; Boston adjourned to Watertown to hear "the young Elijah" ask whether "the rising empire of America shall be an empire of slaves or of free men."

But on that day there was another commemoration held hard by; one George Washington discoursed from the "heights of Dorchester;" and, soon after, Israel Putnam marched over the Neck, — and there was not a "Red-coat" south of the North End. The March of '76 was not far from the July of '76, when yet another discourse got spoken.

For twelve years did our fathers commemorate the first blood shed here by soldiers "quartered among us without our consent;" yes, until there was not a "Red-coat" left in the land; and the gloom of the Boston Massacre was forgot in the blaze of American independence; the murder of five men, in the freedom of two millions.

The first slave Boston has officially sent back since 1770 was returned a year ago. Let us commemorate the act, till there is not a kidnapper left in all the North; not a kidnapper lurking in a lawyer's office in all Boston, or in a merchant's counting-room; not a priest who profanes his function by flouting at the Higher Law of God; till there is not a slave in America; and sorrow at the rendition of Thomas Simms shall be forgotten in the freedom of three million men. Let us remember the Boston Kidnapping, as our fathers kept the memory of the Boston Massacre.

It is a fitting time to come together. There was once a "dark day" in New England, when the visible heavens were hung with night, and men's faces gathered blackness, less from the sky above than from the fears within. But New England never saw a day so black as the twelfth of April, 1851; a day whose Egyptian darkness will be felt for many a year to come.

New England has had days of misfortune before this, and of mourning at the sin of her magistrates. In 1761, a mean man in a high place in the British Island, thinking that "discussion must be suppressed," declared that citizens "are not to demand the reasons of measures; they

must, and they easily may, be taught better manners." The British ministry decided to tax the colonies without their consent. Massachusetts decided to be taxed only with her own consent. The Board of Trade determined to collect duties against the will of the people. The Government insisted; the mercenaries of the Custom House in Boston applied for "Writs of Assistance," authorizing them to search for smuggled goods where and when they pleased, and to call on the people to help in the matter. The mercenary who filled the Governor's chair favored the outrage. The Court, obedient to power, and usually on the side of prerogative and against the right, seemed ready to pervert the law against justice. Massachusetts felt her liberties in peril, and began the war of ideas. James Otis, an irregular but brilliant and powerful man, from Barnstable, and an acute lawyer, resigned his post of Advocate to the Admiralty; threw up his chance of preferment, and was determined "to sacrifice estate, ease, health, applause, and even life, to the sacred calls of my country," and in opposition to that kind of power "which cost one King of England his head, and another his throne."

It was a dark day in Massachusetts when the Writs of Assistance were called for; when the talents, the fame, the riches, and the avarice of Chief Justice Hutchinson, the respectability of venerable men, the power of the crown and its officers, were all against the right; but that brave lawyer stood up, his words "a flame of fire," to demonstrate "that all arbitrary authority was unconstitutional and against the law." His voice rung through the land like a war-psalm of the Hebrew muse. Hutchinson, rich, false, and in power, cowered before the "great incendiary" of New England. John Adams, a young lawyer from Quincy, who stood by, touched by the same inspiration, declared that afterwards he could never read the Acts of Trade without anger, nor "any portion of them without a curse."

If the Court was not convinced, the people were. It was a dark day when the Writs of Assistance were called for; but the birthplace of Franklin took the lightning out of that thundering cloud, and the storm broke into rain which brought forth the green glories of Liberty-tree, that soon blossomed all over in the radiance of the bow of promise set on the departing cloud. The seed from that day of bloom shall sow with blessings all the whole wide world of man.

There was another dark time when the Stamp Act passed, and the day came for the use of the Stamps, Nov. 1st, 1765. The people of Boston closed their shops; they muffled and tolled the bells of the churches; they hung on Liberty-tree the effigy of Mr. Huske, a New Hampshire traitor of that time, who had removed to London, got a seat in Parliament, and was said to have proposed the Stamp Act to the British minister. Beside him they hung the image of Grenville, the ministerial author of the Act. It was All Saints' Day: two hundred and forty-eight years before, Martin Luther had pilloried the Papacy on a church-door at Wittenberg, not knowing what would fall at the sound of his hammer nailing up the ninety-five Theses. In the afternoon, the public cut down the images; carried them in a cart, thousands following to the Town House, where the Governor and Council were in session; carried the effigies solemnly through the building, and thence to the gallows, where, after hanging a while, they were cut down and torn to pieces. All was done quietly, orderly, and with no violence.

Nobody would touch the hated stamps. Mr. Oliver, the Secretary of the Province, and "distributor of stamps," had been hanged in effigy before. His stamp-office had already given a name to the sea, "Oliver's Doek" long commemorating the fate of the building. Dismayed by the voice of the people, he resigned his office. Not satisfied

with that, the people had him before an immense meeting at Liberty-tree; and at noon-day, under the very limb where he had been hung in effigy, before a Justice of the Peace he took an oath that he never would take any measures . . . for enforcing the Stamp Act in America. Then, with three cheers for liberty, Mr. Oliver was allowed to return home. He ranked as the third crown-officer in the Colony. Where could you find "one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace" to administer such an oath before such a "town-meeting"? A man was found to do that deed, and leave descendants to be proud of it; for, after three generations have passed by, the name of Richard Dana is still on the side of liberty.

No more of stamps in Boston at that time. In time of danger, it is thought "a good thing to have a man in the house." Boston had provided herself. There were a good many who did not disgrace the name. Amongst others, there was one of such "obstinacy and inflexible disposition," said Hutchinson, "that he could never be conciliated by any office or gift whatever." Yet Samuel Adams was "not rich, nor a bachelor." There was another, one John Adams, son of a shoemaker at Quincy, not a whit less obstinate or hard to conciliate with gifts. When he heard Otis in that great argument, he felt "ready to take up arms against the Writs of Assistance." One day, the twenty-second of December of that year, he writes in his journal: "At home with my family, thinking." In due time, something came of his thinking. He wrote, "By inactivity we discover cowardice, and too much respect for the Act."

The Stamp Act was dead in New England and in all America. Very soon the Ministry were glad to bury their dead.

It was in such a spirit that Boston met the Writs of Assistance and the Stamp Act. What came of the resistance? When Parliament came together, the "great com-

moner" said, — every boy knew the passage by heart when I went to school, — "I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of all the rest." The Ministry still proposed to put down America by armies. Said Mr. Pitt: "America, if she fell, would fall like the strong man. She would embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the Constitution along with her. But she would not fall." "I would advise," said he, "that the Stamp Act be repealed, absolutely, totally, and immediately;" "that the reason for the repeal be assigned; that it was founded on an erroneous principle." Repealed it was, "absolutely, totally, and immediately."

But the British Ministry still insisted on taxation without representation. Massachusetts continued her opposition. There was a Merchants' Meeting in Boston in favor of freedom. It assembled from time to time, and had a large influence. Men agreed not to import British goods: they would wear their old clothes till they could weave new ones in America, and kill no more lambs till they had abundance of wool. Boston made a non-importation agreement. Massachusetts wrote a "circular letter" to the other colonies, asking them to make common cause with her, — a circular which the king thought "of the most dangerous and factious character." On the seventeenth of June, 1768, the town of Boston instructed its four representatives, Otis, Cushing, Adams, and Hancock: "It is our unalterable resolution at all times to assert and vindicate our dear and invaluable rights, at the utmost hazard of our lives and fortunes." This seemed to promise another seventeenth of June, if the Ministry persisted in their course.

On the fifteenth of May, 1770, she again issued similar instructions. "James I." says the letter of instruction, "more than once laid it down, that, as it was atheism and blas-

phemy in a creature to dispute what the Deity may do, so it is presumptuous and sedition in a subject to dispute what a king may do in the height of his powers." "Good Christians," said he, "will be content with God's will revealed in his word, and good subjects will rest in the king's will revealed in *his* law. That was the "No Higher Law Doctrine" of the time. See how it went down at Boston in 1770. "Surely," said the people of Boston, in town-meeting assembled, "nothing except the ineffable contempt of the reigning monarch diverted that indignant vengeance which would otherwise have made his illustrious throne to tremble, and hurled the royal diadem from his forfeit head." Such was the feeling of Boston towards a government which flouted at the eternal law of God.

The people claimed that law was on their side; even Sir Henry Finch having said, in the time of Charles I., "The king's prerogative stretcheth not to the doing of any wrong." But, said Boston, "Had the express letter of the law been less favorable, and were it possible to ransack up any absurd, obsolete notions which might have seemed calculated to propagate slavish doctrines, we should by no means have been influenced to forego our birthright;" for "mankind will not be reasoned out of their feelings of humanity." "We remind you, that the further nations recede and give way to the gigantic strides of any powerful despot, the more rapidly will the fiend advance to spread wide desolation." "It is now no time to halt between two opinions." "We enjoin you at all hazards to deport . . . like the faithful representatives of a free-born, awakened, and determined people, who, being impregnated with the spirit of liberty in conception, and nurtured in the principles of freedom from their infancy, are resolved to breathe the same celestial ether, till summoned to resign the heavenly flame by that omnipotent God who gave it." That was the language of Boston in 1770.

True there were men who took the other side; some of them from high and honorable convictions; others from sordid motives; some from native bigotry and meanness they could not help. But the mass of the people went for the rights of the people. It was not a mere matter of dollars and cents that stirred the men of Massachusetts then. True the people had always been thrifty, and looked well to the "things of this world." But threepence duty on a pound of tea, six farthings on a gallon of molasses, was not very burthensome to a people that had a school before there was any four-footed beast above a swine in the colony,—a people that once taxed themselves thirteen shillings and eightpence in a pound of income! It was the principle they looked at. They would not have paid three barleycorns on a hogshead of sugar, and admit the right of Parliament to levy the tax. This same spirit extended to the other colonies: Virginia and Massachusetts stood side by side; New York with Boston.

It was a dark day for New England when the Stamp Act became a law; but it was a much darker day when the Fugitive Slave Bill passed the Congress of the United States. The Acts of Trade and the Stamp Act were the work of foreign hands, of the ministers of England, not America. A traitor of New Hampshire was thought to have originated the Stamp Act; but even he did not make a speech in its favor. The author of the Act was never within three thousand miles of Boston. But the Fugitive Slave Bill was the work of Americans; it had its great support from another native of New Hampshire; it got the vote of the member for Boston, who faithfully represented the money which sent him there; though, God be thanked, not the men!

When the Stamp Act came to be executed in Boston, the ships hung their flags at half-mast; the shops were shut,

the bells were tolled; ship, shop, and church all joining in a solidarity of affliction, in one unanimous lament. But, when the Fugitive Slave Bill came to Boston, the merchants and politicians of the city fired a hundred guns at noon-day, in token of their joy! How times have changed! In 1765, when Huske of New Hampshire favored the Stamp Act, and Oliver of Boston accepted the office of distributor of stamps, the people hung their busts in effigy on Liberty-tree; Oliver must ignominiously forswear his office. After two of the Massachusetts delegation in Congress had voted for the Missouri Compromise in 1819, when they came back to Boston, they were hissed at on 'Change, and were both of them abhorred for the deed which spread slavery west of the great river. To this hour their names are hateful all the way from Boston to Lanesboro'. But their children are guiltless: let us not repeat the fathers' name. But what was the Stamp Act or the Missouri Compromise to the Fugitive Slave Bill? One was looking at a hedge, the other stealing the sheep behind it. Yet when the representative of the money of Boston, who voted for the bill, returned, he was flattered and thanked by two classes of men;—by those whom money makes “respectable” and prominent; by those whom love of money makes servile and contemptible. When he resigned his place, Boston sent another, with the command, “Go thou and do likewise;” and he has just voted again for the Fugitive Slave Bill,—he alone of all the delegation of Massachusetts.

The Stamp Act levied a tax on us in money, and Boston would not pay a cent, hauled down the flags, shut up the shops, tolled the church-bells, hung its authors in effigy, made the third officer of the crown take oath not to keep the law, cast his stamp-shop into the sea. The Slave Act levied a tax in men, and Boston fired a hundred guns, and said, “We are ready; we will catch fugitives for the South. It is a dirty work, too dirty for any but Northern

hands; but it will bring us clean money." Ship, shop, and church seemed to feel a solidarity of interest in the measure; the leading newspapers of the town were full of glee.

The Fugitive Slave Bill became a law on the eighteenth of September, 1850. Eighty-five years before that date, there was a town-meeting in Boston, at which the people instructed their representatives in the General Assembly of Massachusetts. It was just after the passage of the Stamp Act. Boston told her servants "by no means to join in any measures for countenancing and assisting in the execution of the same [the Stamp Act]; but to use your best endeavors in the General Assembly to have the inherent and unalienable rights of the people of this Province asserted, vindicated, and left upon the public record, that posterity may never have reason to charge the present times with the guilt of tamely giving them away."

It was "voted unanimously that the same be accepted." This is the earliest use of the phrase "inherent and unalienable rights of the people" which I have yet found. It has the savor of James Otis, who had "a tongue of flame and the inspiration of a seer." It dates from Boston, and the eighteenth day of September, eighty-five years before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill. In 1850 where was the town-meeting of '65? James Otis died without a son; but a different man sought to "fence in" the Slave Act, and fence men from their rights.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill was a sad event to the colored citizens of the State. At that time there were 8,975 persons of color in Massachusetts. In thirty-six hours after the passage of the bill was known here, five and thirty colored persons applied to a well-known philanthropist in this city for counsel. Before sixty hours passed by, more than forty had fled. The laws of Massachusetts could not

be trusted to shelter her own children: they must flee to Canada. "This arm, hostile to tyrants," says the motto of the State, "seeks rest in the enjoyment of liberty." Then it ought to have been changed, and read, "This arm, once hostile to tyrants, confederate with them now, drives off her citizens to foreign climes of liberty."

The word "commissioner" has had a traditional hatred ever since our visitation by Sir Edmund Andros; it lost none of its odious character when it became again incarnate in a kidnapper. With Slave Act commissioners to execute the bill, with such "ruling" as we have known on the Slave Act bench, such swearing by "witnesses" on the slave stand, any man's freedom is at the mercy of the kidnapper and his "commissioned" attorney. The one can manufacture "evidence" or "enlarge" it, the other manufacture "law;" and, with such an administration and such creatures to serve its wish, what colored man was safe? Men in peril have a keen instinct of their danger; the dark-browed mothers in Boston, they wept like Rachel for her first-born, refusing to be comforted. There was no comfort for them save in flight: that must be not in the winter, but into the winter of Canada, which is to the African what our rude climate is to the goldfinch and to the canary-bird.

Some of the colored people had acquired a little property; they got an honest living; had wives and children, and looked back upon the horrors of slavery, which it takes a woman's affectionate genius to paint, as you read her book; looked on them as things for the memory, for the imagination, not as things to be suffered again. But the Fugitive Slave Bill said to every black mother, "This may be your fate; the fate of your sons and your daughters." It was possible to all; probable to many; certain to some, unless they should flee.

It was a dark bill for them; but the blackness of the darkness fell on the white men. The colored men were

only to bear the cross; the whites made it. I would take the black man's share in suffering the Slave Act, rather than the white man's sin in making it; ay, as I would rather take Hancock's than Huske's share of the history of the Stamp Act. This wicked law has developed in the Africans some of the most heroic virtues; in the Yankee it has brought out some of the most disgraceful examples of meanness that ever dishonored mankind.

The Boston Massacre,— you know what that was, and how the people felt when a hireling soldiery, sent here to oppress, shot down the citizens of Boston on the fifth of March, 1770. Then the blood of America flowed for the first time at the touch of British steel. But that deed was done by foreigners; thank God, they were not Americans born; done by hirelings, impressed into the army against their will, and sent here without their consent. It was done in hot blood; done partly in self-defence, after much insult and wrong. The men who fired the shot were brought to trial. The great soul of John Adams stood up to defend them, Josiah Quincy aiding the unpopular work. A Massachusetts jury set the soldiers free,— they only obeyed orders, the soldier is a tool of his commander. Such was the Boston Massacre. Yet hear how John Hancock spoke on the fourth anniversary thereof, when passion had had time to pass away:—

“ Tell me, ye bloody butchers! ye villains high and low! ye wretches who contrived, as well as you who executed, the inhuman deed! do you not feel the goads and stings of conscious guilt pierce through your savage bosoms? Though some of you may think yourselves exalted to a height that bids defiance to the arms of human justice, and others shroud yourselves beneath the mask of hypocrisy, and build your hopes of safety on the low arts of cunning, chicanery, and falsehood; yet do you not sometimes feel

the gnawings of that worm which never dies? Do not the injured shades of Maverick, Gray, Caldwell, Attucks, and Carr attend you in your solitary walks, arrest you even in the midst of your debaucheries, and fill even your dreams with terror?

“Ye dark, designing knaves! ye murderers! parricides! how dare you tread upon the earth which has drank in the blood of slaughtered innocents, shed by your wicked hands? How dare you breathe that air which wafted to the ear of Heaven the groans of those who fell a sacrifice to your accursed ambition? But if the laboring earth doth not expand her jaws; if the air you breathe is not commissioned to be the minister of death; yet hear it, and tremble! the eye of Heaven penetrates the darkest chambers of the soul; traces the leading clue through all the labyrinths which your industrious folly has devised; and you, however you may have screened yourselves from human eyes, must be arraigned, must lift your hands, red with the blood of those whose death you have procured, at the tremendous bar of God.”

But the Boston kidnapping was done by Boston men. The worst of the kidnappers were natives of the spot. It was done by volunteers, not impressed to the work, but choosing their profession, — loving the wages of sin, — and conscious of the loathing and the scorn they all are sure to get, and bequeath to their issue. They did it deliberately; it was a cold-blooded atrocity: they did it aggressively, not in self-defence, but in self-degradation. They did it for their pay: let them have it; verily, they shall have their reward.

When the Fugitive Slave Bill became a law, it seems to me the Governor ought to have assembled the Legislature; that they should have taken adequate measures for protect-

ing the eight thousand nine hundred and seventy-five persons thus left at the mercy of any kidnapper; that officers should have been appointed, at the public cost, to defend these helpless men, and a law passed, punishing any one who should attempt to kidnap a man in this Commonwealth. Massachusetts should have done for justice what South Carolina has long ago done for injustice. But Massachusetts had often seen her citizens put into the jails of the North, for no crime but their complexion, and looked on with a drowsy yawn. Once, indeed, she did send two persons, one to Charleston and the other to New Orleans, to attend to this matter: both of them were turned out of the South with insult and contempt. After that, Massachusetts did nothing; the Commonwealth did not even scold: she sat mute as the symbolic fish in the State House. The Bay State turned non-resistant;—"passive obedience" should have been the motto then. So, when a bill was passed, putting the liberty of more than a twelfth part of her citizens at the mercy of a crew of legalized kidnappers, the Governor of Massachusetts did nothing. Boston fired her hundred guns under the very eyes of John Hancock's house; her servile and her rich men complimented their representative for voting away the liberty of nine thousand of her fellow-citizens. Was Boston Massachusetts? It is still the Governor.

As the Government of Massachusetts did nothing, the next thing would have been for the people to come together in a great mass meeting, and decree, as their fathers had often done, that so unjust a law should not be kept in the old Bay State, and appoint a committee to see that no man was kidnapped and carried off; and, if the kidnappers still insisted on kidnapping our brothers here in Massachusetts, the people could have found a way to abate that nuisance as easily as to keep off the stamped

paper in 1765. The commissioners of the Slave Act might as easily be dealt with as the commissioners of the Stamp Act.

I love law, and respect law, and should be slow to violate it. I would suffer much, sooner than violate a statute that was simply inexpedient. There is no natural reason, perhaps, for limiting the interest of money to six per cent; but as the law of Massachusetts forbids more, I would not take more. I should hate to interrupt the course of law, and put violence in its place.

“ The way of ancient ordinance, though it winds,
Is yet no devious way. Straightforward goes
The lightning’s path, and straight the fearful path
Of the cannon-ball. Direct it flies, and rapid;
Shattering that it may reach, and shattering what it reaches.
My son! the road the human being travels, —
That on which blessing comes and goes, — doth follow
The river’s course, the valley’s playful windings;
Curves round the corn-field and the hill of vines,
Honoring the holy bounds of property!
And thus secure, though late, leads to its end.”

But when the rulers have inverted their function, and enacted wickedness into a law which treads down the unalienable rights of man to such degree as this, then I know no ruler but God, no law but natural justice. I tear the hateful statute of kidnappers to shivers; I trample it underneath my feet. I do it in the name of all law; in the name of justice and of man; in the name of the dear God.

But of all this nothing was done. The Governor did not assemble the Legislature, as he would if a twelfth part of the property in Massachusetts had thus been put at the mercy of legalized ruffians. There was no convention of the people of Massachusetts. True, there was a meeting at Faneuil Hall, a meeting chiefly of anti-slavery men; leading

Freesoilers were a little afraid of it, though some of them came honorably forward. A venerable man put his name at the head of the signers of the call, and wrote a noble-spirited letter to the meeting; Josiah Quincy was a Faneuil Hall name in 1850, as well as in 1765. It was found a little difficult to get what in Boston is called a "respectable" man to preside. Yet one often true sat in the chair that night, — Charles F. Adams did not flinch, when you wanted a man to stand fire. A brave, good clergyman, whose large soul disdains to be confined to sect or party, came in from Cambridge, and lifted up his voice to the God who brought up Israel out of the iron house of bondage, and our fathers from thralldom in a strange land; thanking Him who created all men in His own image, and of one blood. Charles Lowell's prayer for all mankind will not soon be forgotten. The meeting was an honor to the men who composed it. The old spirit was there; philanthropy, which never fails; justice, that is not weary with continual defeat; and faith in God, which is sure to triumph at the last. But what a reproach was the meeting to Boston! "Respectability" was determined to kidnap.

At that meeting a Committee of Vigilance was appointed, and a very vigilant committee it has proved itself, having saved the liberty of three or four hundred citizens of Boston. Besides, it has done many things not to be spoken of now. I know one of its members who has helped ninety-five fugitives out of the United States. It would not be well to mention his name, — he has "levied war" too often, — the good God knows it.

Other towns in the State did the same thing. Vigilance Committees got on foot in most of the great towns, in many of the small ones. In some places, all the people rose up against the Fugitive Slave Bill; the whole town a vigilance committee. The country was right; off of the

pavement, Liberty was the watchword; on the pavement, it was money. But the Government of Massachusetts did nothing. Could the eight thousand nine hundred and seventy-five colored persons affect any election? Was their vote worth bidding for?

The controlling men of the Whig party and of the Democratic party, they either did nothing at all, or else went over in favor of kidnapping; some of them had a natural proclivity that way, and went over "with alacrity."

The leading newspapers in the great towns,—they, of course, went on the side of inhumanity, with few honorable exceptions. The political papers thought kidnapping would "save the Union;" the commercial papers thought it would "save trade," the great object for which the Union was established.

How differently had Massachusetts met the Acts of Trade and the Stamp Act! How are the mighty fallen! Yet, if you could have got their secret ballot, I think fifteen out of every twenty voters, even in Boston, would have opposed the law. But the leading politicians and the leading merchants were in favor of the bill, and the execution of it. There are two political parties in America: one of them is very large and well organized; that is the Slave-soil party. It has two great subdivisions; one is called Whig, the other Democratic: together they make up the great national Slave-soil party. It was the desire of that party to extend slavery; making a national sin out of a sectional curse. They wished to "re-annex" Massachusetts to the department of slave soil, and succeeded. We know the history of that party: who shall tell the future of its opponent? There will be a to-morrow after to-day.

The practical result was what the leading men of Boston desired: soon we had kidnappers in Boston. Some ruffians came here from Georgia, to kidnap William and Ellen Craft. Among them came a jailer from Macon, a man of

infamous reputation, and character as bad as its repute; notoriously a cruel man, and hateful on that account even in Georgia. In the hand-bills, his face was described as "uncommon bad." It was worthy of the description. I saw the face; it looked like total depravity incarnate in a born kidnapper. He was not quite welcome in Boston; Massachusetts had not then learned to conquer her prejudices, yet he found friends, got "a sort of a lawyer" to help him kidnap a man and his wife: a fee will hire such men any day. He was a welcome guest at the United States Hotel, which, however, got a little tired of his company, and warned him off. The commissioner applied to for aid in this business seemed to exhibit some signs of a conscience, and appeared a little averse to stealing a man. The Vigilance Committee put their eye on the kidnapper: he was glad to escape out of Boston with a whole skin. He sneaked off in a private way; went back to Georgia; published his story, partly true, false in part; got into a quarrel in the street at Macon,— I traced out his wriggling trail for some distance back,— it was not the first brawl he had been in; was stabbed to what is commonly called "the heart," and fell unmistakably dead. Some worthy persons had told him, if he went to Boston, he would "rot in a Massachusetts jail;" others, that they "hoped it would turn out so, for such an errand deserved such an end." Poor men of Georgia! they knew the Boston of 1765, not of 1850;— the town of the Stamp Act, ruled by select men; not the city of the Slave Act, ruled by a "mayor." Hughes came to save the "Union!"

That time, the kidnappers went off without their prey. Somebody took care of Ellen Craft, and William took care of himself. They were parishioners of mine. Mr. Craft was a tall, brave man; his countrymen, not nobler than he, were once bishops of Hippo and of Carthage. He armed himself, pretty well too. I inspected his weapons: it was

rather new business for me; New England ministers have not done much in that line since the Revolution. His powder had a good kernel, and he kept it dry; his pistols were of excellent proof, the barrels true and clean; the trigger went easy; the caps would not hang fire at the snap. I tested his poniard; the blade had a good temper, stiff enough, yet springy withal; the point was sharp. There was no law for him but the law of nature; he was armed and equipped "as that law directs." He walked the streets boldly; but the kidnappers did not dare touch him. Some persons offered to help Mr. Craft purchase himself. Said he, "I will not give the man two cents for his 'right' to me. I will buy myself, not with gold, but iron!" That looked like "levying war," not like conquering his prejudices for liberty. William Craft did not obey "with alacrity." He stood his ground till the kidnappers had fled; then he also must flee. Boston was no home for him. One of her most eminent clergymen had said, if a fugitive came to him, "I would drive him away from my door."

William and Ellen Craft were at the "World's Fair," specimens of American manufactures, the working-tools of the South; a proof of the democracy of the American State; part of the "outward evidences" of the Christianity of the American church. "It is a great country," whence a Boston clergyman would drive William Craft from his door! America did not compete very well with the European States in articles sent to the Fair. A "reaping machine" was the most quotable thing; then a "Greek slave" in marble; next an American slave in flesh and blood. America was the only contributor of slaves: she had the monopoly of the article; it is the great export of Virginia, — it was right to exhibit a specimen at the World's Fair. Visitors went to Westminster Abbey, and saw the monument of marble which Massachusetts erected to Lord George Howe, and thence to the Crystal Palace to

see the man and woman whom Massachusetts would not keep from being kidnapped in her Capital.

In due time came the "Union meeting," on the twenty-sixth day of November, 1850, in Faneuil Hall, in front of the pictures of Samuel Adams and John Hancock, — in the hall which once rocked to the patriotism of James Otis, thundering against Acts of Trade and Writs of Assistance, "more eloquent than Chatham or Burke." The Union meeting was held in the face and eyes of George Washington.

You remember the meeting. It was rather a remarkable platform; uniformly "Hunker," but decidedly heterogeneous. Yet sin abolishes all historical and personal distinctions. Kidnapping, like misery, "makes strange bedfellows." Three things all the speakers on that occasion developed in common: A hearty abhorrence of the right; a uniform contempt for the eternal law of God; a common desire to kidnap a man. After all, the platform did not exhibit so strange a medley as it seemed at first: the difference in the speakers was chiefly cutaneous, only skin-deep. The reading and the speaking, the whining and the thundering, were all to the same tune. Pirates, who have just quarrelled about dividing the spoil, are of one heart when it comes to plundering and killing a man.

That was a meeting for the encouragement of kidnapping; not from the love of kidnapping in itself, but for the recompense of reward. I will not insult the common sense of respectable men with supposing that the talk about the "dissolution of the Union," and the cry, "The Union is in peril this hour," was any thing more than a stage-trick, which the managers doubtless thought was "well got up." So it was; but, I take it, the spectators who applauded, as well as the actors who grimaced, knew that the "lion" was no beast, but only "Simon Snug the joiner." Indeed, the lion himself often told us so. However, I did know two very "respectable" men of Boston, who actually believed

the Union was in danger; only two, — but they are men of such incomprehensible exiguity of intellect, that their names would break to pieces if spoken loud.

Well, the meeting, in substance, told this truth: "Boston is willing; you may come here, and kidnap any black man you choose. We will lend you the marshal, the commissioner, the tools of perjury, supple courts of law, and clergymen to bless the transaction, and editors to defend it!" That was the plain English meaning of the meeting, of the resolutions and the speeches. It was so understood North and South.

At the meeting itself it was declared that the Union was at the last gasp; but the next morning the political doctors, the "medicine-men" of our mythology, declared the old lady out of danger. She sat up that day, and received her friends. The meeting was "great medicine;" the crisis was passed. The Fugitive Slave Bill could "be executed in Boston," where the Writs of Assistance and the Stamp Act had been a dead letter: a man might be kidnapped in Boston any day.

But the meeting was far from unanimous at the end. At the beginning a manly speech would have turned the majority in favor of the right. In November, 1850, half a dozen rich men might have turned Boston against the wicked law. But their interest lay the other side; and "where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." Boston is bad enough, but bad only in spots; at that time the spots showed, and some men thought all Boston was covered with the small-pox of the Union meeting: the scars will mark the faces of only a few. I wish I could heal those faces, which will have an ugly look in the eyes of posterity.

The practical result of the meeting was what it was designed to be: soon we had other kidnappers in Boston. This time they found better friends: like consorteth with

like. A certain office in Boston became a huckstery of kidnappers' warrants; soon the kidnappers had Shadrach in their fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than before for William and Ellen Craft. But the Lord delivered him out of their hands; and he now sings "God save the Queen," in token of his delivery out of the hands of the kidnappers of "republican" Babylon. Nobody knows how he was delivered; the rescue was officially declared "levying war," the rescuers guilty of "treason." But, wonderful to say, after all the violations of law by the Court, and all the brow-beating by the attorneys, and all the perjury and other "amendments and enlargement of testimony" by witnesses, not a man was found guilty of any crime. Spite of "Union meetings," there is some respect for Massachusetts law; spite of judicial attempts to pack the jury, it is still the great safeguard of the people; spite of preaching, there is some virtue left; and, though a clergyman would send back his mother into slavery, a Massachusetts jury will not send a man to jail for such an act as that.

The case of Shadrach was not the last. Kidnappers came and kidnappers went: for a long time they got no spoil. I need not tell, must not tell, how they were evaded, or what help came, always in season. The Vigilance Committee did not sleep; it was in "permanent session" much of the whole winter; its eyes were in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The Government at Washington did not like this state of things, and stimulated the proper persons, as the keeper of a menagerie in private stirs up the hyenas and the cougars and the wolves, from a safe distance. There was a talk of "Sherman's flying-artillery" alighting at Boston; but it flew over and settled at Newport, I think. Then there was to be a "garrison of soldiers" to enforce the law; but the men in buckram did not appear. Then a "seventy-four gun ship was coming," to bombard Southack-street, I suppose. Still

it was determined that the "Union" was not quite safe; it was in danger of a "dissolution;" the "medicine-men" of politics and commerce looked grave. True the Union had been "saved" again and again, till her "salvation" was a weariness; she "was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." All winter long, the Union was reported as in a chronic spasm of "dissolution;" so the "medicine-men" prescribed: A man kidnaped in Massachusetts, to be taken at the South; with one scruple of lawyer, and two scruples of clergyman. That would set the Union on her legs. Boston was to furnish all this medicine.

It was long before this city could furnish a kidnapped man. The Vigilance Committee parried the blow aimed at the neck of the fugitive. The country was on our side, — gave us money, help, men when needed. The guardians of Boston could not bear the taunt that she had not sent back a slave. New York had been before her; the "City of Brotherly Love," the home of Penn and Franklin, had assisted in kidnapping. It went on vigorously under the arm of a judge who appropriately bears the name of the great first murderer. No judge could be better entitled; Kane and kidnapping are names conjuring well. Should Boston delay? What a reproach to the fair fame of her merchants! The history of Boston was against them; America has not yet forgotten the conduct of Boston in the matter of the Stamp Act and Acts of Trade. She was deeply guilty of the Revolutionary War; she still kept its Cradle of Liberty, and the bones of Adams and Hancock, — dangerous relics in any soil; they ought to have been "sent back" at the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill, and Faneuil Hall demolished. Bunker Hill Monument was within sight. Boston was suspected of not liking to kidnap a man. What a reproach it was to her! — 8,975 colored persons in Massachusetts, and not a fugitive returned from Boston. September passed by, October, November, December, January, February, March;

not a slave sent back in seven months! What a disgrace to the Government of Boston, which longed to steal a man; to the representative of Boston, who had voted for the theft; to the Union Meeting, which loved the Slave Act; to Mr. Webster, who thought Massachusetts would obey "with alacrity," — his presidential stock looked down; to his kidnapers, who had not yet fleshed their fangs on a fugitive; — what a reproach to the churches of commerce, and their patron, Saint Hunker! One minister would drive a fugitive from his door; another send back his own mother: what was their divinity worth, if, in seven months, they could not convert a single parishioner, and celebrate the sacrament of kidnapping!

Yet, after all, not a slave went back from old Boston, though more than four hundred fled out of the city from the stripes of America, and got safe to the Cross of England; not a slave went back from Boston, spite of her representative, her Government, her Union Meeting, and her clerical advice. She would comfort herself against this sorrow, but her heart was faint in her. Well might she say, "The harvest is passed, the winter is ended, and we are not saved."

Yet the good men still left in Boston, their heart not wholly corrupt with politics and lust of gain, rejoiced that Boston was innocent of the great transgression of her sister-cities, and thought of the proud days of old. But wily men came here: it was alleged they came from the South. They went round to the shops of jobbers, to the mills of manufacturers, and looked at large quantities of goods, pretending a desire to purchase to a great amount; now it was a "large amount of domestics," then "a hundred thousand dollars worth of locomotives." "But then," said the wily men, "we do not like to purchase here; you are in favor of the dissolution of the Union." "Oh, no," says the Northerner; "not at all." "But you hate the South," re-

joins the feigned customer. "By no means," retorts the dealer. "But you have not sent back a slave," concludes the customer, "and I cannot trade with you."

The trick was tried in several places, and succeeded. The story got abroad; it was reported that "large orders intended for Boston had been sent to New York, on account of the acquiescence of the latter city in the Fugitive Slave Bill." Trade is timid; gold is a cowardly metal; how the tinsel trembles when there is thunder in the sky! Employers threatened their workmen: "You must not attend anti-slavery meetings, nor speak against the Fugitive Slave Bill. The Union is in imminent danger."

The country was much more hostile to man-stealing than the city; it mocked at the kidnappers. "Let them try their game in Essex county," said some of the newspapers in that quarter. Thereupon commercial and political journals prepared to "cut off the supplies of the country," and "reduce the farmers and mechanics to submission." It was publicly advised that Boston should not trade with the obnoxious towns; nobody must buy shoes at Lynn. In 1774, the Boston Port Bill shut up our harbor: it was a punishment for making tea against the law. But penurious old Salem, whose enterprise is equalled by nothing but her "severe economy," opened her safe and commodious harbor to the merchants of Boston, with no cost of wharfage! But the Boston of 1850 was not equal to the penurious old Salem of 1774.

It was now indispensable that a slave should be sent back. Trade was clamorous; the administration were urgent; the administration of Mr. Fillmore was in peril; Mr. Webster's reputation for slave-hunting was at stake; the Union was in danger; even the Marshal's warrant was on the point of "dissolution," it is said. A descent was planned upon New Bedford, where the followers of Fox and Penn had long hid the outcast. That attempt

came to nothing. The Vigilance Committee made a long arm, and "toll'd the bell" of Liberty Hall in New Bedford. You remember the ghastly efforts at mirth made by some newspapers on the occasion. "The Vigilance Committee knows every thing," said one of the kidnappers.

It now became apparent that Boston must furnish the victim. But some of the magistrates of Boston thought the Marshal was too clumsy to succeed, and offered him the aid of the city. So, on the night of the third of April, Thomas Simms was kidnapped by two police-officers of Boston, pretending to the bystanders that he was making a disturbance, and to him that he was arrested for theft. He was had into the "Court" of the kidnappers the next morning, charged with being a slave and fugitive. You will ask, How did it happen that Simms did not resist the ruffians who seized him? He did resist; but he was a rash, heedless young fellow, and had a most unlucky knife, which knocked at a kidnapper's bosom, but could not open the door. He was very imperfectly armed. He underwent what was called a "trial," a trial without "due form of law;" without a jury, and without a judge; before a Slave Act Commissioner, who was to receive twice as much for sacrificing a victim as for acquitting a man. The Slave Commissioner decided that Mr. Simms was a slave. I take it, nobody beforehand doubted that the decision would be against the man. The commissioner was to receive five dollars more for such a decision. The law was framed with exquisite subtlety. Five dollars is a small sum, very small; but things are great or little by comparison.

But, in doing justice to this remarkable provision of the bill, let me do no injustice to the commissioner, who decided that a man was not a man, but a thing. I am told that he would not kidnap a man for five dollars; I am told, on good authority, that it would be "no temptation to him."

I believe it; for he also is "a man and a brother." I have heard good deeds of his doing, and believe that he did them. Total depravity does not get incarnated in any man. It is said that he refused both of the fees in this case; the one for the "examination," and the other for the actual enslaving of Mr. Simms. I believe this also: there is historical precedent on record for casting down a larger fee, not only ten but thirty pieces of silver, also "the price of blood," money too base for a Jew to put in the public chest eighteen hundred years ago.

A noble defence was made for Mr. Simms by three eminent lawyers, Messrs. Charles G. Loring, Robert Rantoul, Jr., and Samuel E. Sewall, all honorable and able men. Their arguments were productions of no common merit. But of what use to plead law in such a "Court" of the Fugitive Slave Bill; to appeal to the Constitution, when the statute is designed to thwart justice, and to destroy "the blessings of liberty"? Of what avail to appeal to the natural principles of right before the tool of an administration which denies that there is any law of God higher than the schemes of a politician? It all came to nothing: a reasonable man would think that the human body and soul were "free papers" from the Almighty, sealed with "the image and likeness of God;" but, of course, in a kidnapper's "Court," such a certificate is of no value.

You all know the public account of the kidnapping and "trial" of Mr. Simms. What is known to me in private, it is not time to tell: I will tell that to your children, perhaps your grandchildren. You know that the arrest was illegal, the officers of Massachusetts being forbidden by statute to help arrest a fugitive slave. Besides, it appears that they had no legal warrant to make the arrest: they lied, and pretended to arrest him for another alleged offence. He was on "trial" five days,—arraigned before a Slave Act Commissioner,—and never saw the face of a judge or any

judicial officer" but once. Before he could be removed to slavery, it was necessary that the spirit of the Constitution should be violated; that its letter should be broken; that the laws of Massachusetts should be cloven down; its officers, its courts, and its people, treated with contempt. The Fugitive Slave Bill could only be enforced by the bayonet.

You remember the aspect of Boston, from the fourth of April till the twelfth. You saw the chains about the Court House; you saw the police of Boston, bludgeons in their hands, made journeymen kidnappers against their will. Poor fellows! I pitied them. I knew their hearts. Once on a terrible time, — it was just as they were taking Mr. Simms from the Court House, a year ago this day, — somebody reproached them, calling them names fitting their conduct, and I begged him to desist; a poor fellow clutched my arm, and said, "For God's sake, don't scold us: we feel worse than you do." But with the money of Boston against them, the leading clergy defending the crime against human nature, the City Government using its brief authority, squandering the treasure of Boston and its intoxicating drink for the same purpose, what could a police officer or a watchman do but obey orders? They did it most unwillingly and against their conscience.

You remember the conduct of the Courts of Massachusetts; the Supreme Court seemed to love the chains around the Court House; for one by one the judges bowed and stooped and bent and cringed and curled and crouched down, and crawled under the chain. Who judges justly must himself be free. What could you expect of a Court sitting behind chains; of judges crawling under them to go to their own place? — the same that you found. It was a very appropriate spectacle, — the Southern chain on the neck of the Massachusetts Court. If the Bay State were to send a man into bondage, it was proper that the Court

House should be in chains, and the judges should go under.

You remember the "soldiers" called out, the celebrated "Simms Brigade," liquored at Court Square and lodged at Faneuil Hall. Do you remember when soldiers were quartered in that place before? It was in 1768, when hireling soldiers came, slaves themselves, and sent by the British Ministry to "make slaves of us all;" to sheathe their swords "in the bowels of their countrymen." That was a sight for the eyes of John Hancock,—the "Simms Brigade," in Faneuil Hall, called out to aid a Slave Act Commissioner in his attempt to kidnap one of his fellow citizens! A man by the name of Samuel Adams drilled the police in the street. Samuel Adams of the old time left no children. We have lost the true names of men; only Philadelphia keeps one.

You remember the looks of men in the streets, the crowds that filled up Court Square. Men came in from the country,—came a hundred miles to look on; some of them had fathers who fought at Lexington and Bunker Hill. They remembered the old times, when, the day after the battle of Lexington, a hundred and fifty volunteers, with the firelock at the shoulder, took the road from New Ipswich to Boston.

You have not forgotten the articles in the newspapers, Whig and Democratic both; the conduct of the leading churches you will never forget.

What an appropriate time that would have been for the Canadians to visit the "Athens of America," and see the conduct of the "freest and most enlightened people in the world"! If the great Hungarian could have come at that time, he would have understood the nature of "our peculiar institutions," at least of our political men.

You remember the decision of the Circuit judge,—himself soon to be summoned by death before the Judge who is no

respector of persons,—not allowing the destined victim his last hope, “the great writ of right.” The decision left him entirely at the mercy of the other kidnappers. The Court-room was crowded with “respectable people,” “gentlemen of property and standing:” they received the decision with “applause and the clapping of hands.” Seize a lamb out of a flock, a wolf from a pack of wolves, the lambs bleat with sympathy, the wolves howl with fellowship of rage and fear; but when a competitor for the Presidency sends back to eternal bondage a poor, friendless negro, asking only his limbs, wealthy gentlemen of Boston applaud the outrage.

“O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason!”

You remember still the last act in this sad tragedy,—the rendition of the victim. In the darkest hour of the night of the eleventh and twelfth of April, the kidnappers took him from his jail in Court Square, weeping as he left the door. Two kindly men went and procured the poor shivering boy a few warm garments for his voyage: I will not tell their names; perhaps their charity was “treason,” and “levying war.” Both of the men were clergymen, and had not forgotten the great human word: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” The chief kidnappers surrounded Mr. Simms with a troop of policemen, armed with naked swords; that troop was attended by a larger crew of some two hundred policemen, armed with clubs. They conducted him, weeping as he went, towards the water-side; they passed under the eaves of the old State House, which had rocked with the eloquence of James Otis, and shaken beneath the manly tread of both the Adamses, whom the cannon at the door could not terrify, and whose steps awakened the nation. They took him

on the spot where, eighty-one years before, the ground had drunk in the African blood of Christopher Attucks, shed by white men on the fifth of March; brother's blood which did not cry in vain. They took him by the spot where the citizens of Massachusetts — some of their descendants were again at the place — scattered the taxed tea of Great Britain to the waters and the winds; they put him on board the "Acorn," owned by a merchant of Boston, who, once before, had kidnapped a man on his own account, and sent him off to the perdition of slavery, without even the help of a commissioner; a merchant to whom it is immaterial what his children may say of him.

"And this is Massachusetts liberty!" said the victim of the avarice of Boston. No, Thomas Simms, that was not "Massachusetts liberty;" it was all the liberty which the Government of Massachusetts wished you to have; it was the liberty which the City Government presented you; it was the liberty which Daniel Webster designed for you. The people of Massachusetts still believe that "all men are born free and equal," and "have natural, essential, and unalienable rights" "of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties," "of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness." Even the people of Boston believe that; but certain politicians and merchants, to whom it is immaterial what their children say of them, — they wished you to be a slave, and it was they who kidnapped you.

Some of you remember the religious meeting held on the spot, as this new "missionary" went abroad to a heathen land; the prayer put up to Him who made of one blood all nations of the earth; the hymns sung. They sung then, who never sung before, their "Missionary Hymn:" —

"From many a Southern river
And field of sugar-cane,
They call us to deliver
Their land from Slavery's chain."

On the spot where the British soldiers slew Christopher Attucks in 1770, other men of Boston resolved to hold a religious meeting that night. They were thrust out of the hall they had engaged. The next day was the Christian sabbath; and at night a meeting was held in a "large upper room," a meeting for mutual condolence and prayer. You will not soon forget the hymns, the scriptures, the speeches, and the prayers of that night. This assembly is one of the results of that little gathering.

Well, all of that you knew before; this you do not know. Thomas Simms, at Savannah, had a fair and handsome woman, by the courtesy of the master called his "wife." Simms loved his wife; and, when he came to Boston, wrote, and told her of his hiding-place, the number in the street, and the name of the landlord. His wife had a paramour; that is a very common thing. The slave is "a chattel personal, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever." By the law of Georgia, no female slave owns her own virtue; single or married, it is all the same. This African Delilah told her paramour of her husband's hiding-place. Blame her not: perhaps she thought "the Union is in peril this hour," and wished to save it. Yet I doubt that she would send back her own mother; the African woman does not come to that; only a Doctor of Divinity and Chaplain of the Navy. I do not suppose she thought she was doing her husband any harm in telling of his escape; nay, it is likely that her joy was so full, she could not hold it in. The Philistine had ploughed with Simms's heifer, and found out his riddle: the paramour told the master Simms's secret; the master sent the paramour of Simms's wife to Boston to bring back the husband! He was very welcome in this city, and got "the best of legal advice" at a celebrated office in Court-street. Boston said, "God speed the paramour!" the Government of

Massachusetts, "God speed the crime!" Money came to the pockets of the kidnappers; the paramour went home, his object accomplished, and the master was doubtless grateful to the city of Boston, which honored thus the piety of its founders.

He was taken back to Georgia in the "Acorn;" some of the better sort of kidnappers went with him to Savannah; there Simms was put in jail, and they received a public dinner. You know the reputation of the men: the workmen were worthy of their meat. In jail, Mr. Simms was treated with great severity; not allowed to see his relatives, not even his mother. It is said that he was tortured every day with a certain number of stripes on his naked back; that his master once offered to remit part of the cruelty, if he would ask pardon for running away. The man refused, and took the added blows. One day, the jail-doctor told the master that Simms was too ill to bear more stripes; the master said, "Damn him! give him the lashes, if he dies;"—and the lashes fell. Be not troubled at that; a slave is only a "chattel personal." Those blows were laid on by the speakers of the Union meeting; it was only "to save the Union." I have seen a clerical certificate, setting forth that the "owner" of Mr. Simms was an excellent Christian, and "uncommonly pious." When a clergyman would send back his own mother, such conduct is sacramental in a layman.

When Thomas Simms was unlawfully seized, and detained in custody against the law, the Governor of Massachusetts was in Boston; the Legislature was in session. It seems to me it was their duty to protect the man, and enforce the laws of the State; but they did no such thing.

As that failed, it seems to me that the next thing was for the public to come together in a vast multitude, and take

their brother out of the hands of his kidnappers, and set him at liberty. On the morning of the sixth of March, 1770, the day after the Boston massacre, Fanenil Hall could not hold the town-meeting. They adjourned to the Old South, and demanded "the immediate removal of the troops;" at sun-down there was not a Red-coat in Boston. But the people in this case did no such thing.

The next thing was for the Vigilance Committee to deliver the man: the country has never forgiven the Committee for not doing it. I am Chairman of the executive committee of the Vigilance Committee; I cannot now relate all that was done, all that was attempted. I will tell that when the time comes. Yet I think you will believe me when I say the Vigilance Committee did all they could. But see some of the difficulties in their way.

There was in Boston a large number of crafty, rich, designing, and "respectable" men, who wanted a man kidnapped in Boston, and sent into slavery; they wanted that for the basest of purposes,—for the sake of money; they wanted the name of it, the reputation of kidnapping a man. They protected the kidnappers,—foreign and domestic; egged them on, feasted them. It has been said that fifteen hundred men volunteered to escort their victim out of the State; that some of them are rich men. I think the majority of the middle class of men were in favor of freedom; but, in Boston, what is a man without money? and, if he has money, who cares how base his character may be? You demand moral character only of a clergyman. Some of the richest men were strongly in favor of freedom; but, alas! not many, and for the most part they were silent.

The City Government of that period I do not like to speak of. It offers to a man, as cool as I am, a temptation to use language which a gentleman does not wish to apply to any descendant of the human race. But that Government, encouraging its thousand and five hundred illegal grogeries,

and pretending a zeal for law, was for kidnapping a man ; so the police-force of the city was unlawfully put to that work ; soldiers were called out ; the money of the city flowed freely, and its rum. I do not suppose that the kidnapping was at all disagreeable to the "conscience" of the City Government ; they seemed to like it, and the consequences thereof.

The prominent clergy of Boston were on the same side. The Dollar demanded that ; and whither it went, thither went they. "Like people like priest" was a proverb two thousand five hundred years ago, and is likely to hold its edge for a long time to come. Still there were some very noble men among the clergy of Boston : we found them in all denominations.

Then the Courts of Massachusetts refused to issue the writ of *Habeas Corpus*. They did not afford the smallest protection to the poor victim of Southern tyranny.

Not a sheriff could be got to serve a writ ; the high sheriff refused, all his deputies held back. Who could expect them to do their duty when all else failed ?

The Legislature was then in session. They sat from January till May. They knew that eight thousand nine hundred and seventy-five citizens of Massachusetts had no protection but public opinion, and in Boston that opinion was against them. They saw four hundred citizens of Boston flee off for safety ; they saw Shadrach captured in Boston ; they saw him kidnapped, and put in jail against their own law ; they saw the streets filled with soldiers to break the laws of Massachusetts, the police of Boston employed in the same cause ; they saw the sheriffs refuse to serve a writ ; they saw Thomas Simms kidnapped and carried from Boston ; and, in all the five months of the session, they did not pass a law to protect their fellow-citizens ; they did not even pass a "resolution" against the extension of slavery ! The Senate had a committee to investigate

the affair in Boston. They sat in the Senate-hall, and were continually insulted by the vulgarest of men; insulted not only with impudence, but impunity, by men who confessed that they were violating the laws of Massachusetts.

Massachusetts had then a Governor who said he "would not harbor a fugitive slave." What did he do? He sat as idle as a feather in the chair of state; he left the sheriffs as idle as he. While the laws of Massachusetts were broken nine days running, the successor of John Hancock sat as idle as a feather in the chair of state, and let kid-napping go on! I hate to say these things. The Governor is a young man, not without virtues; but think of such things in Massachusetts!

This is my public defence of the Vigilance Committee. The private defence shall come, if I live long enough.

It was on the nineteenth day of April that Thomas Simms was landed at Savannah, and put in the public jail of the city. Do you know what that day stands for in your calendar? Some of your fathers knew very well. Ten miles from here is a little monument at Lexington, "sacred to liberty and the rights of mankind," telling that on the 19th of April, 1775, some noble men stood up there against the army of England, "fired the shot heard round the world," and laid down their lives "in the sacred cause of God and their country;" six miles further off is another little monument at Concord; two miles further back, a third, all dating from the same day. The War of Revolution began at Lexington, to end at Yorktown. Its first battle was on the 19th of April. Hancock and Adams lodged at Lexington with the minister. One raw morning, a little after daybreak, a tall man, with a large forehead under a three-cornered hat, drew up his company of seventy men on the green, farmers and mechanics like himself; only one is left now, the boy that "played" the men to the

spot. They wheeled into line to wait for the Regulars. The captain ordered every man to load "his piece with powder and ball." "Don't fire," were his words, "unless fired upon; but, if they want a war, let it begin here."

The Regulars came on. Some Americans offered to run away from their post. Said their captain, "I will run through the body the first man that leaves his place." The English commander cried out, "Disperse, you rebels; lay down your arms, and disperse." Not a man stirred. "Disperse, you damned rebels!" shouted he again. Not a man stirred. He ordered the vanguard to fire; they did so, but over the heads of our fathers. Then the whole main body levelled their pieces, and there was need of ten new graves in Lexington. A few Americans returned the shot. British blood stained the early grass, which "waved with the wind." "Disperse and take care of yourselves," was the captain's last command; and, after the British fired their third round, there lay the dead, and there stood the soldiers; there was a battle-field between England and America, never to be forgot, never to be covered over. The "mother-country" of the morning was the "enemy" at sunrise. "Oh, what a glorious morning is this!" said Samuel Adams.

The nineteenth of April was a good day for Boston to land a fugitive slave at Savannah, and put him in jail, because he claimed his liberty. Some of you had fathers in the Battle of Lexington, many of you relations; some of you, I think, keep trophies from that day, won at Concord or at Lexington. I have seen such things, — powder-horns, shoe-buckles, and other things, from the nineteenth of April, 1775. Here is a Boston trophy from April nineteenth, 1851. This is the coat of Thomas Simms. He wore it on the third of April last. Look at it. You see he did not give up with alacrity, nor easily "conquer" his "prejudices" for liberty. See how they rent the sleeve away! His coat was torn to tatters. "And this is Massachusetts liberty!"

Let the kidnappers come up and say, "Massachusetts! knowest thou whether this be thy son's coat or not?"

Let Massachusetts answer: "It is my son's coat! An evil beast hath devoured him. Thomas is without doubt rent in pieces!"

Yes, Massachusetts! that is right. It was an evil beast that devoured him, worse than the lion which comes up from the swelling of Jordan: it was a kidnapper. Thomas was rent with whips. Go, Massachusetts! keep thy trophies from Lexington. I will keep this to remind me of Boston and her dark places, which are full of cruelty.

After the formation of the Union, a monument was erected at Beacon Hill, to commemorate the chief events which led to the American Revolution, and helped secure liberty and independence. Some of you remember the inscriptions thereon. If a monument were built to commemorate the events which are connected with the recent "Salvation of the Union," the inscriptions might be:—

Union Saved by Daniel Webster's Speech at Washington, March 7, 1850.
 Union Saved by Daniel Webster's Speech at Boston, April 30, 1850.
 Union Saved by the Passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill, Sept. 18, 1850.
 Union Saved by the arrival of Kidnapper Hughes at Boston, Oct. 19, 1850.
 Union Saved by the "Union Meeting" at Faneuil Hall, Nov. 26, 1850.
 Union Saved by kidnapping Thomas Simms at Boston, April 3, 1851.
 Union Saved by the Rendition of Thomas Simms at Savannah, April 19, 1851. — "*Oh, what a glorious morning is this!*"

SICUT PATRIBUS SIT DEUS NOBIS.

The great deeds of the American Revolution were also commemorated by medals. The Boston kidnapping is worthy of such commemoration, and would be an appropriate subject for a medal, which might bear on one side a bas-relief of the last scene of that act: the Court House in chains; the victim in the hollow square of Boston police, their swords and bludgeons in their hands. The motto might be — THE GREAT OBJECT OF GOVERNMENT IS THE

PROTECTION OF PROPERTY. The other side might bear a Boston Church, surrounded by shops and taverns taller than itself, with the twofold inscription: NO HIGHER LAW; and I WOULD SEND BACK MY OWN MOTHER.

What a change from the Boston of John Hancock to the Boston of the Fugitive Slave Bill; from the town which hung Grenville and Huske in effigy, to the city which approved Mr. Webster's speech in defence of slave-catching! Boston tolled her bells for the Stamp Act, and fired a hundred holiday cannons for the Slave Act! Massachusetts, all New England, has been deeply guilty of slavery and the slave-trade. An exile from Germany finds the chief street of Newport paved by a tax of ten dollars a head on all the slaves landed there; the little town sent out Christian New England rum, and brought home Heathen men for sale. Slavery came to Boston with the first settlers. In 1639, Josselyn found here a negro woman in bondage refusing to become the mother of slaves. There was much to palliate the offence: all northern Europe was stained with the crime. It did not end in Westphalia till 1789. But the consciences of New England never slept easy under that sin. Before 1641, Massachusetts ordered that a slave should be set free after seven years' service, reviving a merciful ordinance of the half-barbarous Hebrews a thousand years before Christ. In 1645, the General Court of Massachusetts sent back to Guinea two black men illegally enslaved, and made a law forbidding the sale of slaves, except captives in war, or men sentenced to sale for crime. Even they were set free after seven years' service. Still slavery always existed here, spite of the law; the newspapers once contained advertisements of "negro-babies to be given away" in Boston! Yet New England never loved slavery: hard and cruel as the Puritans were, they had some respect for the letter of the New Testament. In 1700, Samuel Sewall

protested against "the selling of Joseph;" as another Sewall, in 1851, protested against the selling of Thomas. There was a great controversy about slavery in Massachusetts in 1766; even Harvard College took an interest in freedom, setting its young men to look at the rights of man. In 1767, a bill was introduced to the General Assembly to prevent "the unnatural and unwarrantable custom of enslaving mankind." It was killed by the Hunkers of that time. In 1774, a bill of a similar character passed the Assembly, but was crushed by the veto of Governor Hutchinson.

In 1788, three men were illegally kidnapped at Boston by "one Avery, a native of Connecticut," and carried off to Martinico. Then we had John Hancock for governor, and he wrote to all the governors of the West India Islands in favor of the poor creatures. The Boston Association of Congregational Ministers petitioned the Legislature to prohibit Massachusetts ships from engaging in the foreign or domestic slave-trade. Dr. Belknap was a member of the Association, — a man worthy to have Channing for a successor to his humanity. The Legislature passed a bill for the purpose. In July the three men were brought back from the West Indies: says Dr. Belknap, "It was a day of jubilee for all the friends of justice and humanity."

What a change from the Legislature, clergy, and governor of 1788 to that of 1851! Alas! men do not gather figs of thistles. The imitators of this Avery save the Union now: he saved it before it was formed. How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment: righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers.

What is the cause of this disastrous change! It is the excessive love of money which has taken possession of the leading men. In 1776, General Washington said of Massachusetts: "Notwithstanding all the public spirit that is

ascribed to this people, there is no nation under the sun that I ever came across, which pays greater adoration to money than they do." What would he say now? Selfishness and covetousness have flowed into the commercial capital of New England, seeking their fortune. Boston is now a shop, with the aim of a shop, and the morals of a shop, and the politics of a shop.

Said Thomas Jefferson: Governments are instituted amongst men to secure the natural and unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. All America said so on the fourth of July, 1776. But we have changed all that. Said Daniel Webster, at New York, 1850: "The great object of government is the protection of property at home, and respect and renown abroad." John Hancock had some property to protect; but he said the design of government is "security to the persons and the properties of the governed." He put the persons first, and the property afterwards; the substance of man before his accidents. Said Hancock again: "It is the indispensable duty of every member of society to promote, as far as in him lies, the prosperity of every individual." Says the Governor of Massachusetts: "I would not harbor a fugitive." Says a clergyman: I would send back my own mother! If the great object of government is the protection of property, why should a governor personally harbor a fugitive, or officially protect nine thousand colored men? Why should not a clergyman send to slavery his mother, to save the Union, or to save a bank, or to gain a chaplaincy in the navy? But, if this be so, then what a mistake it was in Jesus of Nazareth to say, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth"! Verily the meat is more than the life; the body less than raiment. Christ was mistaken in his "Beware of covetousness:" he should have said, "Beware of philanthropy; drive off a fugitive; send back your mother to bondage. Blessed are

the kidnappers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Even Thomas Paine had a Christianity which would choke at the infidelity and practical atheism taught in the blessed name of Jesus in the Boston churches of commerce to-day. The Gospel relates that Jesus laid his hands on men to bless them; on the deaf, and they heard; on the dumb, and they spoke; on the blind, and they saw; on the lame, and they walked; on the maimed and the sick, and they were whole. But Christian Boston lays its hand on a whole and free man, and straightway he owns no eyes, no ears, no tongue, no hands, no foot: he is a slave.

In 1761, the Massachusetts of John Hancock would not pay threepence duty on a pound of tea, to have all the protection of the British crown: ninety years later, the Boston of Daniel Webster, to secure the trade of the South, and a dim, delusive hope of a protective tariff, will pay any tax in men. It is no new thing for her citizens to be imprisoned at Charleston and New Orleans, because they are black. What merchant cares? It does not interrupt trade. Five citizens of Massachusetts have just been sent into bondage by a Southern State. Of what consequence is that to the politicians of the Commonwealth? Our property is worth six hundred million dollars. By how much is a man worth less than a dollar! The penny-wisdom of "Poor Richard" is the great gospel to the city which cradled the benevolence of Franklin.

Boston capitalists do not hesitate to own Southern plantations, and buy and sell men; Boston merchants do not scruple to let their ships for the domestic slave-trade, and carry the child from his mother in Baltimore, to sell him to a planter in Louisiana or Alabama; some of them glory in kidnapping their fellow-citizens in Boston. Most of the slave-ships in the Atlantic are commanded by New Eng-

land men. A few years ago, one was seized by the British Government at Africa, "full of slaves;" it was owned in Boston, had a "clearance" from our harbor, and left its name on the books of the insurance offices here. The controlling men of Boston have done much to promote, to extend, and to perpetuate slavery. Why not, if the protection of property be the great object of Government? why not, if interest is before justice? why not, if the higher law of God is to be sneered at in state and church?

When the Fugitive Slave Bill passed, the six New England States lay fast asleep: Massachusetts slept soundly, her head pillowed on her unsold bales of cotton and of woollen goods, dreaming of "orders from the South." Justice came to waken her, and whisper of the peril of nine thousand citizens; and she started in her sleep, and, being frightened, swore a prayer or two, then slept again. But Boston woke, — sleeping, in her shop, with ears open, and her eye on the market, her hand on her purse, dreaming of goods for sale, — Boston woke broadly up, and fired a hundred guns for joy. O Boston, Boston! if thou couldst have known, in that thine hour, the things which belong unto thy peace! But no: they were hidden from her eyes. She had prayed to her god, to Money; he granted her the request, but sent leanness into her soul.

Yet at first I did not believe that the Fugitive Slave Bill could be executed in Boston; even the firing of the cannons did not convince me; I did not think men bad enough for that. I knew something of wickedness; I knew what love of money could do; I had seen it blind most venerable eyes. I knew Boston was a Tory town; the character of upstart Tories — I thought I knew that: the man just risen from the gutter knocks down him that is rising. But I knew also the ancient history of Boston. I remembered the first commissioner we ever had in New England, — Sir Edmund Andros, sent here by the worst of the Stuarts "to

rob us of our charters in North America." He was a terrible tyrant. The liberty of Connecticut fled into the "Great Oak at Hartford:" —

"The Charter Oak it was the tree
That saved our blessed liberty."

"All Connecticut was in the Oak." But Massachusetts laid her hands on the commissioner, — he was her Governor also, — put him in jail, and sent him home for trial in 1689. William of Orange thought we "served him right." The name of "commissioner" has always had an odious meaning to my mind. I did not think a commissioner at kidnaping men would fare better than Sir Edmund kidnaping charters. I remembered the Writs of Assistance, and thought of James Otis; the Stamp Act, "Adams and Liberty" came to my mind. I did not forget the way our fathers made tea with salt-water. I looked up at that tall obelisk; I took courage, and have since revered that "monument of piled stones." I could not think Mr. Webster wanted the law enforced, spite of his speeches and letters. It was too bad to be true of him. I knew he was a bankrupt politician, in desperate political circumstances, gaming for the Presidency, with the probability of getting the vote of the county of Suffolk, and no more. I knew he was not rich: his past history showed that he would do almost any thing for money, which he seems as covetous to get as prodigal to spend. I knew that "a man in falling will catch at a red-hot iron hook." I saw why Mr. Webster caught at the Fugitive Slave Bill: it was a great fall from the coveted and imaginary Presidency down to actual private life at Marshfield; it was a great fall. The Slave Act was the red-hot iron hook to a man "falling like Lucifer, never to hope again." The temptation was immense. I could not think he meant to hold on there; he did often relax his grasp, yet only to clutch it the tighter.

I did not like to think he had a bad heart. I hoped he would shrink from blasting the head of a single fugitive with that dreadful "thunder" of his speech; that he would not like to execute his own law. Men in Boston said it could not be executed. Even cruel men that I knew curled at the thought of kidnapping a man who fills their glasses with wine. The law was not fit to be executed: that was the general opinion in Boston at first. So, when kidnapper Hughes came here for William Craft, even the commissioner applied to was a little shy of the business. Yet that commissioner is not a very scrupulous man. I mean, in the various parties he has wriggled through, he has not left the reputation of any excessive and maidenly coyness in moral matters, and a genius for excessive scrupulousness as to means or ends. Even a Hunker minister informed me that he "would certainly aid a fugitive." But, after the Union Meeting, the clouds of darkness gathered together, and it set in for a storm; the kidnappers went and rough-ground their swords on the grindstone of the church, a navy chaplain turning the crank; and all our hopes fell to the ground.

"Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

The relentless administration of Mr. Fillmore has been as cruel as the law they framed. Mr. Webster has thrust the red-hot iron hook into the flesh of thousands of his fellow-citizens. He and his kidnappers came to a nation scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down; they have ground the poor creatures to powder under their hoof. I wish I could find an honorable motive for such deeds, but hitherto no analysis can detect it, no solar microscope of charity can bring such a motive to light. The end is base, the means base, the motive base.

Yet one charge has been made against the Government, which seems to me a little harsh and unjust. It has been said the administration preferred low and contemptible men as their tools; judges who blink at law, advocates of infamy, and men cast off from society for perjury, for nameless crimes, and sins not mentionable in English speech; creatures "not so good as the dogs that licked Lazarus' sores; but, like flies, still buzzing upon any thing that is raw." There is a semblance of justice in the charge: witness Philadelphia, Buffalo, Boston; witness New York. It is true for kidnappers the Government did take men that looked "like a bull-dog just come to man's estate;" men whose face declared them, "if not the devil, at least his twin-brother." There are kennels of the courts wherein there settles down all that the law breeds most foul, loathsome, and hideous and abhorrent to the eye of day; there this contaminating puddle gathers its noisome ooze, slowly, stealthily, continually agglomerating its fetid mass by spontaneous cohesion, and sinking by the irresistible gravity of rottenness into that abhorred deep, the lowest, ghastliest pit in all the subterranean vaults of human sin. It is true the Government has skimmed the top and dredged the bottom of these kennels of the courts, taking for its purpose the scum and sediment thereof, the Squeers, the Fagins, and the Quilps of the law, the monsters of the court. Blame not the Government: it took the best that it could get. It was necessity, not will, which made the selection. Such is the stuff that kidnappers must be made of. If you wish to kill a man, it is not bread you buy: it is poison. Some of the instruments of Government were such as one does not often look upon. But, of old time, an inquisitor was always "a horrid-looking fellow, as becomed his trade." It is only justice that a kidnapper should bear "his great commission in his look."

Said John Hancock in a town full of British soldiers in 1774, on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre:—

“Surely you never will tamely suffer this country to be a den of thieves. Remember, my friends, from whom you sprang. Let not a meanness of spirit, unknown to those whom you boast of as your fathers, excite a thought to the dishonor of your mothers. I conjure you by all that is dear, by all that is honorable, by all that is sacred, not only that ye pray, but that you act; that, if necessary, ye fight, and even die, for the prosperity of our Jerusalem. Break in sunder, with noble disdain, the bonds with which the Philistines have bound you. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed by the soft arts of luxury and effeminacy into the pit digged for your destruction. Despise the glare of wealth. That people who pay greater respect to a wealthy villain than to an honest, upright man in poverty, almost deserve to be enslaved: they plainly show that wealth, however it may be acquired, is, in their esteem, to be preferred to virtue.

“But I thank God that America abounds in men who are superior to all temptation, whom nothing can divert from a steady pursuit of the interest of their country, who are at once its ornament and safeguard. And sure I am I should not incur your displeasure, if I paid a respect so justly due to their much-honored characters, in this place; but, when I name an Adams, such a numerous host of fellow-patriots rush upon my mind, that I fear it would take up too much of your time, should I attempt to call over the illustrious roll: but your grateful hearts will point you to the men; and their revered names, in all succeeding times, shall grace the annals of America. From them, let us, my friends, take example; from them let us catch the divine enthusiasm; and feel, each for himself, the godlike pleasure of diffusing happiness on all around us; of delivering the oppressed from the iron grasp of tyranny;

of changing the hoarse complaint and bitter moans of wretched slaves into those cheerful songs which freedom and contentment must inspire. There is a heartfelt satisfaction in reflecting on our exertions for the public weal, which all the sufferings an enraged tyrant can inflict will never take away, which the ingratitude and reproaches of those whom we have saved from ruin cannot rob us of. The virtuous assertor of the rights of mankind merits a reward, which even a want of success in his endeavors to save his country, the heaviest misfortune which can befall a genuine patriot, cannot entirely prevent him from receiving."

But, in 1850, Mr. Webster bade Massachusetts "conquer her prejudices." He meant the "prejudices" in favor of justice, in favor of the unalienable rights of man, in favor of Christianity. Did Massachusetts obey? The answer was given a year ago. "Despise the glare of wealth," said the richest man in New England in 1774: the "great object of government is the protection of property," said "the great intellect" of America in 1850. Said John Hancock seventy-eight years ago, "We dread nothing but slavery:" said Daniel Webster two years ago, Massachusetts will obey the Fugitive Slave Bill "with alacrity." Boston has forgotten John Hancock.

Said Joseph Warren in 1775, "Scourges and death with tortures are far less terrible than slavery." Now it is "a great blessing to the African." Said the same Warren, "The man who meanly submits to wear a shackle contemns the noblest gift of Heaven, and impiously affronts the God that made him free." Now clergymen tell us that kidnappers are ordained of God, and passive obedience is every man's duty. Said the town of Boston in 1770, "Mankind will not be reasoned out of the feelings of humanity." Says the pulpit of Boston in 1850, Send back your brother.

The talk of dissolution is no new trick. Hear General Warren, in the spirit of 1775: "Even anarchy itself, that bugbear held up by the tools of power, is infinitely less dangerous to mankind than arbitrary government. Anarchy can be but of short duration; for, when men are at liberty to pursue that course which is most conducive to their own happiness, they will soon come into it, and from the rudest state of nature order and good government must soon arise. But tyranny, when once established, entails its curses on a nation to the latest period of time, unless some daring genius, inspired by Heaven, shall, unappalled by danger, bravely form and execute the design of restoring liberty and life to his enslaved and murdered country." Now a man would send his mother into slavery to save the Union!

Will Boston be called on again to return a fugitive? Not long since, some noble ladies in a neighboring town, whose religious hand often reaches through the darkness to save men ready to perish, related to me a fresh tale of woe. Here is their letter of the first of March:—

"Only ten days ago, we assisted a poor, deluded sufferer in effecting his escape to Canada, after having been cheated into the belief by the profligate captain who brought him from the South, that he would be in safety as soon as he reached Boston. . . . He had accumulated two hundred dollars, which he put into the captain's hands, upon his agreeing to secrete him, and bring him to Boston. The moment the vessel touched the wharf, the scoundrel bade the poor fellow be off in a moment; and he then discovered his liability to be pursued and taken. It was then midnight, and the cold was intense. He wandered about the streets, and in the morning strolled into the —— Depot, and came out to —— in the earliest cars. On reaching this town, he had the sense to find out the only man of color who lives here, ——, a very respectable

barber. Mr. —— sheltered him that day and the following night; and early the next morning a sufficient sum had been collected for him to pay his passage to Canada, and supply his first wants after arriving there; but, in the meanwhile, the villainous captain bears off his hard earnings in triumph."

I must not give the names of the ladies: they are liable to a fine of a thousand dollars each, and imprisonment for six months. It was atrocious in the captain to steal the two hundred dollars from the poor captive; but the Government of the United States would gladly steal his body, his limbs, his life, his children, to the end of time. The captain was honorable in comparison with the kidnapers. Perhaps he also wished to "Save the Union." —
SICUT PATRIBUS SIT DEUS NOBIS!

What a change from the Boston of our fathers! Where are the children of the patriots of old? Tories spawned their brood in the streets: Adams and Hancock died without a child. Has nature grown sterile of men? is there no male and manly virtue left? are we content to be kidnapers of men? No. Here still are noble men, men of the good old stock; men of the same brave, holy soul. No time of trial ever brought out nobler heroism than last year. Did we want money, little Methodist churches in the country, the humanest churches in New England, dropped their widow's mite into the chest. From ministers of all modes of faith but the popular one in money, from all churches but that of commerce, there came gifts, offers of welcome, and words of lofty cheer. Here, in Boston, there were men thoroughly devoted to the defence of their poor, afflicted brethren; even some clergymen faithful among the faithless. But they were few. It was only a handful who ventured to be faithful to the true and right. The great tide of humanity, which once filled up this

place, had ebbed off: only a few perennial springs poured out their sweet and unfailing wealth to these weary wanderers.

Yet Boston is rich in generous men, in deeds of charity, in far-famed institutions for the good of man. In this she is still the noblest of the great cities of the land. I honor the self-sacrificing, noble men; the women whose loving-kindness never failed before. Why did it fail at this time? Men fancied that their trade was in peril. It was an idle fear; even the dollar obeys the "Higher Law," which its worshippers deny. Had it been true, Boston had better lose every farthing of her gold, and start anew with nothing but the wilderness, than let her riches stand between us and our fellow-men. Thy money perish, if it brutalize thy heart!

I wish I could believe the motives of men were good in this, that they really thought the nation was in peril. But no; it cannot be. It was not the love of country which kept the "compromises of the Constitution" and made the Fugitive Slave Bill. I pity the politicians who made this wicked law, made it in the madness of their pride. I pity that son of New England, who, against his nature, against his early history, drew his sword to sheathe it in the bowels of his brother-man. The melancholiest spectacle in all this land, self-despoiled of the lustre which would have cast a glory on his tomb, and sent his name a watchword to many an age, — now he is the companion of kidnappers, and a proverb amongst honorable men, with the certainty of leaving a name to be hissed at by mankind.

I pity the kidnappers, the poor tools of men almost as base. I would not hurt a hair of their heads; but I would take the thunder of the moral world, and dash its bolted lightning on this crime of stealing men, till the name of kidnapping should be like Sodom and Gomorrah. It is

piracy to steal a man in Guinea; what is it to do this in Boston?

I pity the merchants who, for their trade, were glad to steal their countrymen; I wish them only good. Debate in yonder hall has shown how little of humanity there is in the trade of Boston; she looks on all the horrors which intemperance has wrought, and daily deals in every street; she scrutinizes the jails,—they are filled by rum; she looks into the alms-houses, crowded full by rum; she walks her streets, and sees the perishing classes fall, mowed down by rum; she enters the parlors of wealthy men, looks into the bridal chamber, and meets death: the ghosts of the slain are there,—men slain by rum. She knows it all, yet says, “There is an interest at stake!”—the interest of rum; let man give way! Boston does this to-day. Last year she stole a man; her merchants stole a man! The sacrifice of man to money, when shall it have an end? I pity those merchants who honor money more than man. Their gold is cankered, and their soul is brass,—is rusted brass. They must come up before the posterity which they affect to scorn. What voice can plead for them before their own children? The eye that mocketh at the justice of its son, and scorneth to obey the mercy of its daughter, the ravens of posterity shall pick it out, and the young eagles eat it up.

But there is yet another tribunal: “After the death the judgment!” When He maketh inquisition for the blood of the innocent, what shall the stealers of men reply? Boston merchants, where is your brother, Thomas Simms? Let Cain reply to Christ.

Come, Massachusetts! take thy historic mantle, wrought all over with storied memories of two hundred years, adorned with deeds in liberty's defence, and rough with broidered radiance from the hands of sainted men; walk backwards, and cover up and hide the naked public shame

of Boston, drunk with gain, and lewdly lying in the street. It will not hide the shame. Who can annul a fact? Boston has chronicled her infamy; and on the iron leaf of time, — ages shall read it there.

Then let us swear by the glory of our fathers and the infamy of this deed, that we will hate slavery, hate its cause, hate its continuance, and will exterminate it from the land; come up hither as the years go by, and here renew the annual oath, till not a kidnapper is left lurking in the land; yes, till from the Joseph that is sold into Egypt, there comes forth a man to guide his people to the promised land. Out of this "Acorn" a tall oak may grow.

Old mythologies relate, that, when a deed of sin is done, the souls of men who bore a kindred to the deed come forth and aid the work. What a company must have assisted at this sacrament a year ago? What a crowd of ruffians, from the first New England commissioner to the latest dead of Boston murderers! Robert Kidd might have come back from his felon-grave at "Execution Dock," to resume his appropriate place, and take command of the "Acorn," and guide her on her pirate-course. Arnold might sing again his glad *Te Deum*, as on that fatal day in March. What an assembly there would be, — "shapes hot from Tartarus"!

But the same mythologies go fabling on, and say that at such a time the blameless, holy souls who made the virtues blossom while they lived, and are themselves the starriest flowers of Heaven now, that they return to bless the old familiar spot, and witness every modern deed; and, most of all, that godly ministers, who lived and labored for their flocks, return to see the deed they cannot help, and aid the good they bless. What a gathering might there have been of the just men made perfect! The patriots who loved this land, mothers whose holy hearts had blessed

the babes they bore, pure men of lofty soul who labored for mankind, — what a fair company this State could gather of the immortal dead! Of those great ministers of every faith, who dearly loved the Lord, what venerable heads I see: John Cotton and the other “famous Johns;” Eliot, bearing his Indian bible, which there is not an Indian left to read; Edwards, a mighty name in East and West, even yet more marvellous for piety than depth of thought; the Mathers, venerable men; Chauncy and Mayhew, both noble men of wealthy soul; Belknap, who saw a brother in an African; Buckminster, the fairest, sweetest bud brought from another field, too early nipped in this; Channing and Ware, both ministers of Christ, that, loving God, loved too their fellow-men! How must those souls look down upon the scene! Boston delivering up — for lust of gold delivering up — a poor, forsaken boy to slavery; Belknap and Channing mourning for the church!

I turn me off from the living men, the living courts, the living churches, — no, the churches dead; from the swarm of men all bustling in the streets; turn to the sainted dead. Dear fathers of the State, ye blessed mothers of New England’s sons, — O holy saints who laid with prayer the deep foundations of New England’s church, is then the seed of heroes gone? New England’s bosom, is it sterile, cold, and dead? “No!” say the fathers, mothers, all, — “New England only sleeps; even Boston is not dead. Appeal from Boston drunk with gold, and briefly mad with hate, to sober Boston in her hour to come. Wait but a little time; have patience with her waywardness; she yet shall weep with penitence that bitter day, and rise with ancient energy to do just deeds of lasting fame. Even yet there’s justice in her heart, and Boston mothers shall give birth to men!”

Tell me, ye blessed, holy souls, angels of New England’s church! shall man succeed, and gain his freedom at the last?

Answer, ye holy men ; speak by the last great angel of the church who went to heaven. Repeat some noble word you spoke on earth !

Hear their reply : —

- “ Oppression shall not always reign :
 There comes a brighter day,
 When Freedom, burst from every chain,
 Shall have triumphant way.
 Then Right shall over Might prevail,
 And Truth, like hero, armed in mail,
 The hosts of tyrant Wrong assail,
 And hold eternal sway.
- “ What voice shall bid the progress stay
 Of Truth’s victorious car? —
 What arm arrest the growing day,
 Or quench the solar star ?
 What reckless soul, though stout and strong,
 Shall dare bring back the ancient wrong, —
 Oppression’s guilty night prolong,
 And Freedom’s morning bar ?
- “ The hour of triumph comes apace, —
 The fated, promised hour,
 When earth upon a ransomed race
 Her bounteous gifts shall shower.
 Ring, Liberty, thy glorious bell!
 Bid high thy sacred banners swell!
 Let trump on trump the triumph tell
 Of Heaven’s redeeming power ! ”

ORDER OF SERVICES
AT THE
FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
KIDNAPPING OF THOMAS SIMMS,
April 12, 1852.

I. VOLUNTARY.

II. READING THE SCRIPTURES,

BY REV. T. W. HIGGINSON.

III. PRAYER,

BY REV. T. W. HIGGINSON.

IV. HYMN,

BY REV. JOHN PIERPONT.

Souls of the patriot-dead,
On Bunker's height who bled!
The pile that stands
On your long-buried bones —
Those monumental stones —
Should not suppress the groans
This day demands.

For Freedom there ye stood;
There gave the earth your blood;
There found your graves;
That men of every clime,
Faith, color, tongue, and time,
Might, through your death sublime,
Never be slaves.

Over your bed, so low,
Heard ye not long ago
A voice of power
Proclaim to earth and sea,
That, where ye sleep, should be
A home for Liberty,
Till Time's last hour?

Hear ye the chains of slaves
 Now clanking round your graves ?
 Hear ye the sound
 Of that same voice, that calls
 From out our Senate-halls,
 "Hunt down those fleeing thralls,
 With horse and hound !"

That voice your sons hath swayed !
 'Tis heard and is obeyed !
 This gloomy day
 Tells you of ermine stained,
 Of Justice' name profaned,
 Of a poor bondman chained
 And borne away !

Over Virginia's springs
 Her eagles spread their wings ;
 Her Blue Ridge towers ;
 That voice, once heard with awe,
 Now asks, " Who ever saw
 Up there a higher law
 Than this of ours ?"

Must *we* obey that voice ?
 When God or man's the choice,
 Must we postpone
 HIM who from Sinai spoke ?
 Must we wear Slavery's yoke ?
 Bear of her lash the stroke,
 And prop her throne ?

Leashed with her hounds, must we
 Run down the poor, who flee
 From Slavery's hell ?
 Great God ! when we *do* this,
 Exclude us from thy bliss ;
 At us let angels hiss
 From heaven that fell !

V. DISCOURSE,

BY REV. THEODORE PARKER.

VI. HYMN.

Sons of men who dared be free,
 For Truth and Right who crossed the sea,—
 Hide the trembling poor that flee
 From the land of slaves.

Men that love your fathers' name,
 Ye who prize your country's fame,—
 Wipe away the public shame
 From your native land.

Men that know the Mightiest Might,
 Ye who serve the Eternal Right,—
 Change the darkness into light;
 Let it shine for all.

Now's the day and now's the hour;
 See the front of Thralldom lower;
 See advance the Southern power,—
 Chains and slavery!

See! the kidnappers have come!
 Southern chains surround your home:
 Will you wait for harsher doom?
 Will you wear the chain?

By yon sea that freely waves,
 By your fathers' honored graves,
 Swear you never will be slaves,
 Nor steal your fellow-man.

By the Heaven whose breath you draw,
 By the God whose higher law
 Fills the heaven of heavens with awe,—
 Swear for Freedom now.

Men whose hearts with pity move,
 Men that trust in God above,
 And stoutly follow Christ in love,—
 Save your brother-men.

VII. BENEDICTION.

L E T T E R S.

[The following letters were received in reply to invitations to attend the meeting.]

BELLEVILLE, N. J., April 3, 1852.

WENDELL PHILLIPS, Esq :

My dear Sir, — I have your letter inviting me to address the Convention to assemble in Tremont Temple on the twelfth of this month, the anniversary of the day on which Thomas Simms, a citizen of Boston, was sent back to slavery, under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

I cannot be with you on the twelfth; but I send to the Convention my heartiest congratulations upon the passage of that infamous and impious climax of diabolical legislation. I hailed its passage as the water-doctor hails the first boil of a crisis. Let the internal ulcer break out upon the skin. That is the place for it.

The driving home of that true life-force, the "Higher Law," has at last wrought wonders at the centre; and that old gangrene, so long festering in the dark, has surged to the surface, and burst open in the run.

Thank God! the sepulchre is no longer *whited*. Its dead men's bones garnish its outer walls, and flout in the face of day. The South was frantic, the North panic-struck, and the Fugitive Slave Law was their joint product. Both outwitted and befooled themselves and each other. Both know it now, but all too late! Let hunted humanity take fresh heart. — "There's a good time coming."

I am all heartiness,

THEODORE D. WELD.

WHITE HALL, P. O., Madison Co., Ky.
April 5th, 1852.

DEAR SIR, — Your letter of the twenty-fourth ultimo, inviting me, on the part of the Vigilance Committee of Boston, to be present and address the Convention, who will “commemorate, with appropriate services, in Tremont Temple,” the twelfth day of April, — that on which Thomas Simms was sent back into slavery, under the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, — was to-day received, and I hasten to reply. I receive this invitation, which circumstances will not allow me to accept, as a very distinguished honor, of which I am proud to make public avowal; and with feelings of gratification, because it will allow me, without the imputation of egotism, to enter my protest, as an American citizen and a man, against that most atrocious of all human laws! When I had the honor to make the canvass last summer, upon the sole basis of the constitutional overthrow of slavery in Kentucky, I separated from some of my ablest and longest-trying personal friends, upon the issue of making this law a part of the basis of the movement; it being generally conceded that my vote for Governor would be run up to twenty thousand without opposition to the law, whilst I would not get as many hundreds by the opposite course. I cut the matter short by saying, that, much as I hated slavery, I hated that law more! And now, after all the argument which time-serving statesmen and canting clergymen and a mercenary press have been able to advance, and the experience of near two years’ action of strife and bloodshed and “CONSTRUCTIVE TREASON,” I am of the same opinion.

We inherited slavery — we made that law! The Constitution of the United States, with sighs and tears, took slavery into its embrace, — believing that our independence could only thus be secured. But the Fugitive Slave Law was begotten in lust of power, and defied all shame and self-respect! We admire our fathers of ’76, whilst we hate the deed! Notwithstanding all my Christian charity, when I look upon the Fugitive Slave Law, I cannot but avow that I hate the deed and the perpetrators! I hate them, because they confound all moral distinctions, — calling evil good, and good evil; because they did an atrocity of such magnitude upon the basest and most selfish motives; but, above all, I hate them because of their smooth-faced, hypocritical cant! This bill was passed under the pretence of preserving inviolate the Constitution, and, as a consequence, the Union of these States. Now, Mr. Mason, of the Virginia school of strict constructionists, its author, knows, — and Daniel Webster, the “expounder of the Constitution,” and the “Union Safety Committee” know, — and every man of common sense knows, that the power of delivering up “fugitives from service” is granted to the States as sovereigns only; and that Congress has no power whatever, not the slightest, to pass any such law. This is not the place for argument, but simple statement of an opinion. If this Union shall ever be

hated, that law will cause it to be hated. If this Union shall ever be dissolved, that law will be its death-blow and cause of dissolution. So that, were I an abolitionist of the disunion school, I should not, on the twelfth, wear sackcloth and ashes, but greatly rejoice that good was being evolved out of evil, in destroying for ever that hypocritical cant of politicians and priests, who can pray for all the atrocities of slavery, on account of the glorious blessings of freedom which the Constitution promises to the down-trodden nations, — when now they are found in the patent scoundrelism of trampling that Constitution under foot, in base submission to the slave-tyrants of this nation!

But as I am really a Union-man, and for submission physically to the laws, I regret the passage of that law for the Union's sake; and whilst, on the one hand, as I avowed to Kentucky, all earth could not make me assist in the execution of that misnomer, so, on the other hand, I cannot give my sanction to a violent resistance of laws, while on the statute-book, and not yet by the proper courts declared null and unconstitutional.

It adds to my regret at not being present on the twelfth, that I shall miss the occasion of hearing the true Christian and man, THEODORE PARKER; and that I shall be unable to meet personally that distinguished band of men and women who constitute the American abolition party, — whose motives I have, on all proper occasions, at great personal sacrifice, vindicated. To you comes no reward of earth; not in the social circle — not of gold — not the pleasures of sensualism, however much purified in the fine and plastic arts, in music and in poetry — not the power of place, where ambition grows immortal in achievement, caring not whether of good or evil — not of fame, to live in “storied urn or animated bust” — but struggling ever for the TRUE and the MERCIFUL — giving utterance, at all hazards, to the voiceless woe of the millions, who else have no advocate. If there be on earth any receptacle of that divine spirit which God through man to man reveals, are you not the true priests? You are the avengers! and though Webster cry peace, and though faithless ministers cry peace, and though the press cry peace, — though all the earth cry peace, — and even though the “Union Safety Committee” cry peace, there shall be no peace till justice be no longer “COMPROMISED!” To this liberty-canting people, of all nations the most oppressive, that God “whose arm is not shortened,” and whose ears are never closed to the poor and feeble who call for help, shall, through many brave spirits, North and South, ever thunder into the ears of tyrants — “*March, MARCH, MARCH!*” — *No more peace for ever, until the iron hand be loosed, and all men shall be FREE!*

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

C. M. CLAY.

JEFFERSON, O., April 3, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR, — Were it convenient, I would gladly meet with the friends of freedom in Boston, to commemorate the re-enslavement of Simms. The day should be observed as one of deep humility before God and mankind. On that occasion, the sons of free, enlightened, and Christian Massachusetts, descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, bowed submissively to the behests of a tyranny more cruel than Austrian despotism; yielded up their dignity and self-respect; became the allies of slave-catchers, the associates and companions of bloodhounds. At the bidding of slaveholders and serviles, they seized the image of God, bound their fellow-man with chains, and consigned him to torture and premature death under the lash of a piratical overseer. God's law and man's rights were trampled upon; the self-respect, the constitutional privileges of the free States, were ignominiously surrendered. A people who resisted a paltry tax upon tea, at the cannon's mouth, basely submitted to an imposition tenfold greater, in favor of brutalizing their fellow-men. Soil which had been moistened with the blood of American patriots, was polluted by the footsteps of slave-catchers and their allies.

But the heart sickens at the review of scenes so disgraceful to the character of our nation. A more encouraging spectacle was presented at Christiana. There man appears conscious of the dignity of his own character. Standing upon the free soil of Pennsylvania, he refused to surrender the freedom with which God had endowed him. Pressed by the barbarous slave-catcher, he nobly vindicated his claims to humanity by slaying his assailant, although they were sons of the same parent. When I first learned that the piratical Gorsuch had fallen by the hand of his brother, whom he claimed as a "chattel," I involuntarily exclaimed, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" The day is not far distant when the name of "Gorsuch the fugitive" shall be registered among the heroes of this age. He nobly defended the Constitution, which guarantees to the people of the North entire exemption from the crime of slavery. To him, in coming time, shall be awarded the gratitude of our people; while infamy of the deepest dye shall gather around the memory of him who, of all others, gave the most efficient support to the law which consigned Simms to slavery, and "Gorsuch the pirate" to an untimely grave.

Yours for humanity,

J. R. GIDDINGS.

WENDELL PHILLIPS,
Chairman of Vigilance Committee, Boston.





