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GIVEN BY

Miss Mary Estlin

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Oct. 4, 1851

LETTER FROM WM. LLOYD GARRISON.

Read at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania
Anti-Slavery Society.

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Boston, Oct. 4, 1851.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—A sudden cold, attended with considerable inflammation of the lungs (aside from other considerations), must deprive me of the pleasure of attending the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, at West Chester, next week. Whatever may be the disappointment felt at my absence, it cannot be greater than the regret I feel at the interposing of any obstacle to prevent my being with those whom I have known, loved, and honoured, for so many years, as among the earliest, most reliable, most devoted friends of a sorely afflicted and horribly outraged race.

Your Anniversary is to be held at a time of intense excitement, under circumstances peculiarly trying, in a location not very remote from the Christiana tragedy.* It cannot fail, therefore, to be an occasion of thrilling interest and deep solemnity. Whatever may transpire, I am confident that you all will possess your souls in patience, nor think it "strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" "committing the keeping of your souls to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; but the meek shall inherit the earth. The wicked plot-teth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bow shall be broken." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of

* In which the attempt to capture a Fugitive Slave was resisted by violence, and the life of the Slaveholder sacrificed.

trouble, therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Truly, "This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction; truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. . . . Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. . . . From the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely. . . . They make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught. . . . Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; wasting and destruction are in their paths. . . . They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire; so they wrap it up. . . . And he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey."

Nevertheless, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not. . . . Harken unto me, saith the Lord, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose hearts is my fear; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool. I, even I, am he that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he was ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exileneth that he may be loosed, and that he shall not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. . . . For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him

that puffeth at him. . . . Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. . . . Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

My dear friend, I can find no language so apposite, so reliable, so descriptive, so consoling, in the present time, as that which I have quoted from a volume professedly held by this oppressive nation in the highest veneration as the inspired Word of God, which yet disregards, in the most daring manner, all its admonitions, warnings, expostulations, examples, threatenings, and judgments.

More than three millions of our fellow-creatures are continually crying for deliverance from a servitude, "one hour of which," in the truthful words of THOMAS JEFFERSON, "is fraught with more misery than ages of that which our fathers rose in rebellion to oppose." Their enslavement demonstrates that the guilt of this nation is unparalleled. Our duty, as abolitionists, is still to "cry aloud and spare not," until every chain is broken. We have nothing to change—no steps to retrace—no new course to mark out—no confession to make, except that we have come short in zeal, self-sacrifice, devotedness. If the Declaration of Independence is to be cherished, we are right; if the Gospel is to be obeyed, we are right; if man is man, we are right. We may safely defy the world to show wherein we have demanded any thing unreasonable for the slave, or unjust to the master. What we protest against is conduct so tremendously wrong, so awfully impious, that no language can exaggerate it—the reducing of a rational, accountable, immortal being to the condition of a beast. We deny that man can be rightfully the property of man. It is the plainest of all propositions, and needs no proof. The people that reject this are filled with a tyrannical spirit; the law that contravenes this is iniquitous, and to be disobeyed at all hazards; the government that repudiates this is essentially despotic, and forfeits all claim to respect, all right to exist. Injustice, cruelty, oppression, these are the works of the devil, not to be tolerated, but destroyed. Whoever undertakes to enforce them, whether called President,

Judge, or Commissioner, ranks himself among the enemies of mankind; and must take his place in history by the side of such monsters as Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. A compact made at the expense of the rights and liberties of any portion of the people is "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell;" and that covenant—so runs the promise of God—shall be annulled, and that agreement shall not stand, when judgment is laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; for the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.—"Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the foot of the poor, and the steps of the needy."

With regard to that most heart-rending and atrocious enactment, the Fugitive Slave Bill, to denounce and disregard which is the imperative duty of every one who fears God and regards man; if to put it beneath my feet, and to hold up those who are for executing it to the execration of the world, as the most perfidious, inhuman, and lawless of men, be treason, then I glory in being a traitor, and am ready for the dungeon or halter at any moment. All carnal weapons I have long since renounced, but only to put on "the whole armour of God," that I may "be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, TO STAND."

"Glory to those who die in this great cause!
 Courts, judges, can inflict no brand of shame,
 Or shape of death, to shroud them from applause!
 No, manglers of the martyr's earthly frame,
 Your hangmen fingers cannot touch his fame!
 Still in our guilty land there shall be some
 True hearts, the shrine of Freedom's vestal flame:
 Long trains of ill may pass, unheeded—dumb—
 But Vengeance is behind, and Justice is to come!"

Yours, for universal liberty,

WM. LLOYD GARRISON.

J. MILLER M'KIM.

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