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PRINCIPLES AND MEASURES OF TRUE DEMOCRACY.



THE ADDRESS

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OF THE SOUTHERN AND WESTERN

LIBERTY CONVENTION,

HELD AT CINCINNATI, JUNE 11, 1845,

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES;

ALSO, THE

LETTER OF ELIHU BURRITT TO THE CONVENTION.



5 CINCINNATI:

PRINTED AT THE GAZETTE OFFICE.

1845.

NOTICE.

THE *Southern and Western Liberty Convention*, held at Cincinnati, on the 11th and 12th June, 1845, was the most remarkable Anti-Slavery Body yet assembled in the United States. The call embraced all those who were resolved to act against Slavery by speech, by the pen, by the press, and by the ballot. It was not therefore exclusively a Convention of the Liberty party; and accordingly not a few were in attendance, who had not acted with that party. The whole number present as Delegates, was about two thousand—from the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan; from the Territories of Wisconsin and Iowa; from Western Pennsylvania, and Western Virginia, and from Kentucky. Deputations were also present from Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island; and the whole assembly, including spectators, varied during the sittings from two thousand five hundred to four thousand persons. JAMES G. BIRNEY, formerly of Alabama, but now of Michigan, presided, assisted by MESSRS. S. C. STEVENS, H. MENDENHALL and S. S. HARDINGE, of Indiana; STEPHEN E. GIFFEN, JOHN KEEP and SAMUEL LEWIS, of Ohio; EDGAR NEEDHAM and JOHN G. FEE, of Kentucky; I. CODDING, OWEN LOVEJOY, JAMES H. DICKEY, of Illinois; A. L. BARBER, of Wisconsin; ROBERT HANNA and THOMAS MILLER, of Pennsylvania, and DAVID CRAIG, of Virginia, as Vice Presidents. The Secretaries of the Convention were THOMAS HEATON, of Ohio, RUSSELL ERRETT of Pennsylvania, and M. R. HULL, of Indiana. The Committee which reported the Address, consisted of MESSRS. CHASE, of Ohio, SMITH, of Pennsylvania, CABELL, of Indiana, DICKEY, of Illinois, and FEE, of Kentucky.

The proceedings of the Convention were marked by unanimity, vigor and decision. An Alabama paper, in anticipation of its assembling, spoke of the Convention as "the most important movement" of an Anti-Slavery character yet made, and declared that it "should look upon its proceedings as speaking more fully the real sentiments of Northern Anti-Slavery people" than any previous meeting of like character. The Address, which follows, embodies the views of the Convention. It is commended to the candid consideration of the people of the South, West, North and East. The movement of which it is a herald and a sign, cannot go back, but must go forward. It is the part of wisdom to know its nature, its progress, its tendency, and its end. The purpose of the Address is to reveal fully, explicitly, without reserve, its whole character. It is desired, therefore, that each one into whose hands it may fall, will read it carefully; and, when read, hand it to a neighbor for perusal; and so let it go round!

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us reflect what would have been the condition of the country had the original policy of the nation been steadily pursued, and contrast what would have been with what is.

At the time of the adoption of the Constitution, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania had become non-slaveholding States. By the ordinance of 1787, provision had been made for the erection of five other non-slaveholding States. The admission of Vermont and the District of Maine, as separate States without slavery was also anticipated. There was no doubt that New-York and New Jersey would follow the example of Pennsylvania. Thus it was supposed to be certain that the Union would ultimately embrace at least fourteen free States, and that slavery would be excluded from all territory thereafter acquired by the nation, and from all States created out of such territory.

This was the true understanding upon which the Constitution was adopted. It was never imagined that new slave States were to be admitted; unless, perhaps, which seems probable, it was contemplated to admit the Western Districts of Virginia and North Carolina, now known as Kentucky and Tennessee, as States, without any reference to the slavery already established in them. In no event, to which our Fathers looked forward, could the number of slave States exceed eight, while it was almost certain that the number of free States would be at least fourteen. It was never supposed that slavery was to be a cherished interest of the country, or even a permanent institution of any State. It was expected that all the States, stimulated by the examples before them, and urged by their own avowed principles recorded in the Declaration, would, at no distant day, put an end to slavery within their respective limits. So strong was this expectation, that JAMES CAMPBELL, in an address at Philadelphia, before the Society of the Cincinnati, in 1787, which was attended by the Constitution-Convention then in session, declared, "the time is not far distant when our sister States, in imitation of our example, shall turn their vassals into freemen." And Jonathan Edwards predicted in 1791, that, "in fifty years from this time, it will be as disgraceful for a man to hold a negro slave, as to be guilty of common robbery or theft."

It cannot be doubted that, had the original policy and original principles of the Government been adhered to, this expectation would have been realized. The example and influence of the General Government would have been on the side of freedom. Slavery would have ceased in the District of Columbia immediately upon the establishment of the Government within its limits. Slavery would have disappeared from Louisiana and Florida upon the acquisition of those territories by the United States. No laws would have been enacted, no treaties made, no measures taken for the extension or maintenance of slavery. Amid the rejoicings of all the free, and the congratulations of all friends of freedom, the last fetter would, ere now, have been stricken from the last slave, and the Principles and Institutions of Liberty would have pervaded the entire land.

How different—how sadly different are the facts of History! LUTHER MARTIN complained at the time of the adoption of the Constitution,

"that when our own liberties were at stake, we warmly felt for the common rights of men: the danger being thought to be passed which threatened ourselves, we are daily growing more and more insensible to those rights." This insensibility continued to increase, and prepared the way for the encroachments of the political slave power, which originated in the three-fifths rule of the Constitution. This rule, designed perhaps as a censure upon slavery by denying to the slave States the full representation to which their population would entitle them, has had a very different practical effect. It has virtually established in the country an aristocracy of slaveholders. It has conferred on masters the right of representation for three-fifths of their slaves. The representation from the slave States in Congress has always been from one-fifth to one-fourth greater than it would have been, were freemen only represented. Under the first apportionment according to this rate, a district in a free State containing thirty thousand free inhabitants would have one representative. A district in a slave State, containing three thousand free persons and forty-five thousand slaves, would also have one. In the first district a representative could be elected only by the majority of five thousand votes: in the other he would need only the majority of five hundred. Of course, the representation from slave States, elected by a much smaller constituency, and bound together by a common tie, would generally act in concert and always with special regard to the interests of masters whose representatives in fact they were. Every Aristocracy in the world has sustained itself by encroachment, and the Aristocracy of slave-holders in this country has not been an exception to the general truth. The nation has always been divided into parties, and the slave-holders, by making the protection and advancement of their peculiar interests the price of their political support, have generally succeeded in controlling all. This influence has greatly increased the insensibility to human rights, of which MARTIN indignantly complained. It has upheld slavery in the District of Columbia and in the Territories in spite of the Constitution: it has added to the Union five slave States created out of national Territories: it has usurped the control of our foreign negotiation, and domestic legislation: it has dictated the choice of the high officers of our Government at home, and of our national representatives abroad: it has filled every department of executive and judicial administration with its friends and satellites: it has detained in slavery multitudes who are constitutionally entitled to their freedom: it has waged unrelenting war with the most sacred rights of the free, stifling the freedom of speech and of debate, setting at naught the right of petition, and denying in the slave States those immunities to the citizens of the free, which the Constitution guarantees: and, finally, it has dictated the acquisition of an immense foreign territory, not for the laudable purpose of extending the blessings of freedom, but with the bad design of diffusing the curse of slavery, and thereby consolidating and perpetuating its own ascendancy.

Against this influence, against these infractions of the Constitution, against these departures from the National policy originally adopted, against these violations of the National

faith originally pledged, we solemnly protest. Nor do we propose only to protest. We recognize the obligations which rest upon us as descendants of the Men of the Revolution, as inheritors of the Institutions which they established, as partakers of the blessings which they so dearly purchased, to carry forward and perfect their work. We mean to do it, wisely and prudently, but with energy and decision. We have the example of our Fathers on our side. We have the Constitution of their adoption on our side. It is our duty and our purpose to rescue the Government from the control of the slaveholders; to harmonize its practical administration with the provisions of the Constitution, and to secure to all, without exception and without partiality, the rights which the Constitution guaranties. We believe that slaveholding in the United States is the source of numberless evils, moral, social and political; that it hinders social progress; that it embitters public and private intercourse; that it degrades us as individuals, as States, and as a Nation; that it holds back our country from a splendid career of greatness and glory. We are, therefore, resolutely, inflexibly, at all times, and under all circumstances, hostile to its longer continuance in our land. We believe that its removal can be effected peacefully, constitutionally, without real injury to any, with the greatest benefit to all.

We propose to effect this by repealing all legislation, and discontinuing all action in favor of slavery, at home and abroad; by prohibiting the practice of slaveholding in all places of exclusive national jurisdiction, in the District of Columbia, in American vessels upon the seas, in forts, arsenals, navy yards; by forbidding the employment of slaves upon any public work; by adopting resolutions in Congress declaring that slaveholding in all States created out of national territories is unconstitutional, and recommending to the others the immediate adoption of measures for its extinction within their respective limits; and by electing and appointing to public station such men, and only such men as openly avow our principles, and will honestly carry out our measures.

The constitutionality of this line of action cannot be successfully impeached. That it will terminate, if steadily pursued, in the utter overthrow of slavery at no very distant day, none will doubt. We adopt it because we desire, through and by the Constitution, to attain the great ends which the Constitution itself proposes, the establishment of justice, and the security of liberty.—We insist not, here upon the opinions of some, that no slaveholding in any State of the Union is compatible with a true and just construction of the Constitution; nor upon the opinions of others, that the Declaration of Independence setting forth the creed of the nation, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with an inalienable right of liberty, must be regarded as the Common Law of America, antecedent to and unimpaired by the Constitution; nor need we appeal to the doctrine that slaveholding is contrary to the Supreme Law of the Supreme Ruler, preceding and controlling all human law, and binding upon all legislatures in the enactment of laws, and upon all courts in the administration of justice. We are willing to take our stand upon propositions generally conceded:—that slaveholding is contrary to

natural right and justice; that it can subsist nowhere without the sanction and aid of positive legislation; that the Constitution expressly prohibits Congress from depriving any person of liberty without due process of law. From these propositions we deduce, by logical inference, the doctrines upon which we insist. We deprecate all discord among the States; but do not dread discord so much as we do the subjugation of the States and the people to the yoke of the Slaveholding Oligarchy. We deprecate the dissolution of the Union, as a dreadful political calamity; but if any of the States shall prefer dissolution to submission to the Constitutional action of the people on the subject of slavery, we cannot purchase their alliance by the sacrifice of inestimable rights and the abandonment of sacred duties.

Such, fellow citizens, are our views, principles, and objects. We invite your co-operation in the great work of delivering our beloved country from the evils of slavery. No question half so important as that of slavery, engages the attention of the American people. All others, in fact, dwindle into insignificance in comparison with it. The question of slavery is, and until it shall be settled, must be, the paramount moral and political question of the day. We, at least, so regard it; and, so regarding it, must subordinate every other question to it.

It follows as a necessary consequence, that we cannot yield our political support to any party which does not take our ground upon this question.

What then is the position of the political parties of the country in relation to this subject?—One of these parties professes to be guided by the most liberal principles. "Equal and exact justice to all men;" "equal rights for all men;" "inflexible opposition to oppression," are its favorite mottos. It claims to be the true friend of popular government, and assumes the name of democratic. Among its members are doubtless many who cherish its professions as sacred principles, and believe that the great cause of Freedom and Progress is to be served by promoting its ascendancy. But when we compare the maxims of the so-called democratic party with its acts, its hypocrisy is plainly revealed. Among its leading members we find the principal slaveholders, the Chiefs of the Oligarchy. It has never scrupled to sacrifice the rights of the free States or of the people to the demands of the Slave Power. Like Sir Pertinax McSycephant, its northern leaders believe that the great secret of advancement lies in "bowing well." No servility seems too gross, no self-degradation too great, to be submitted to. They think themselves well rewarded, if the unity of the Party can be preserved, and the spoils of victory secured. If, in the distribution of these spoils, they receive only the jackall's share, they content themselves with the reflection that little is better than nothing. They declaim loudly against all monopolies, all special privileges, all encroachments on personal rights, all distinctions founded upon birth, and compensate themselves for these efforts of virtue by practising the vilest oppression upon all their countrymen in whose complexions the slightest trace of African derivation can be detected.

Profoundly do we revere the maxims of True Democracy; they are identical with those of True Christianity, in relation to the rights and

duties of men as citizens. And our reverence for Democratic Principles is the precise measure of our detestation of the policy of those who are permitted to shape the action of the Democratic Party. Political concert with that party under its present leadership, is, therefore, plainly impossible. Nor do we entertain the hope, which many, no doubt, honestly cherish, that the professed principles of the party will at length bring it right upon the question of slavery. Its professed principles have been the same for near half a century, and yet the subjection of the party to the slave power is, at this moment, as complete as ever. There is no prospect of any change for the better, until those democrats whose hearts are really possessed by a generous love of liberty for all, and by an honest hatred of oppression, shall manfully assert their individual independence, and refuse their support to the panders of slavery.

There is another party which boasts that it is conservative in its character. Its watchwords are "a tariff," "a banking system," "the Union as it is." Among its members, also, are many sincere opponents of slavery; and the party itself, seeking aid in the attainment of power, and anxious to carry its favorite measures and bound together by no such professed principles as secure the unity of the Democratic Party, often concedes much to their anti-slavery views. It is not unwilling, in those States and parts of States where anti-slavery sentiment prevails, to assume an anti-slavery attitude and claim to be an anti-slavery party. Like the Democratic party, however, the Whig party maintains alliances with the slaveholders. It proposes, in its national conventions, no action against slavery. It has no anti-slavery article in its national creed. Among its leaders and champions in Congress and out of Congress, none are so honored and trusted as slaveholders in practice and in principle. Whatever the Whig party, therefore, concedes to anti-slavery must be reluctantly conceded. Its natural position is conservative. Its natural line of action is to maintain things as they are. Its natural bond of union is regard for interests rather than for rights. There are, doubtless, zealous opponents of slavery, who are also zealous Whigs; but they have not the general confidence of their party; they are under the ban of the slaveholders; and in any practical anti-slavery movement, as, for example, the repeal of the laws which sanction slaveholding in the District of Columbia, would meet the determined opposition of a large and most influential section of the party, not because the people of the free States would be opposed to the measure, but because it would be displeasing to the oligarchy and fatal to party unity. We are constrained to think, therefore, that all expectation of efficient anti-slavery action from the Whig party as now organized, will prove delusive. Nor do we perceive any probability of a change in its organization, separating its anti-slavery from its pro-slavery constituents, and leaving the former in possession of the name and influence of the party. With the Whig party, therefore, as at present organized, it is as impossible for us whose mottos are "Equal Rights and Fair Wages for all" and "the Union as it should be," to act in alliance and concert, as it is for us to act with the so called Democratic party. We cannot choose between these parties for the sake of any local or partial ad-

vantage, without sacrificing consistency, self-respect, and mutual confidence. While we say this, we are bound to add that were either of these parties to disappoint our expectations, and adopt into its *national creed* as its *leading articles*, the principles which we regard as fundamental, and enter upon a course of unfeigned and earnest action against the system of slavery, we should not hesitate, regarding as we do, the question of slavery as the paramount question of our day and nation, to give to it our cordial and vigorous support, until slavery should be no more.

With what party, then, shall we act? Or shall we act with none? Act, in some way, we must: for the possession of the right of suffrage, the right of electing our own law makers and rulers, imposes upon us the corresponding duty of voting for men who will carry out the views which we deem of paramount importance and obligation. Act together we must; for upon the questions which we regard as the most vital we are fully agreed. We must act then; act together; and act against slavery and oppression. Acting thus, we necessarily act as a party; for what is a party, but a body of citizens, acting together politically, in good faith, upon common principles, for a common object? And if there be a party already in existence, animated by the same motives and aiming at the same results as ourselves, we must act with and in that party.

That there is such a party, is well known.— It is the Liberty Party of the United States. Its principles, measures and objects we cordially approve. It founds itself upon the great cardinal principle of true Democracy and of true Christianity, the brotherhood of the Human Family. It avows its purpose to wage implacable war against slaveholding as the direct form of oppression, and then against every other species of tyranny and injustice. Its views on the subject of slavery in this country are, in the main, the same as those which we have set forth in this address. Its members agree to regard the extinction of slavery as the most important end which can, at this time, be proposed to political action; and they agree to differ as to other questions of minor importance, such as those of trade and currency, believing that these can be satisfactorily disposed of, when the question of slavery shall be settled, and that, until then, they cannot be satisfactorily disposed of at all.

The rise of such a party as this was anticipated long before its actual organization, by the single-hearted and patriotic Charles Follen, a German by birth, but a true American by adoption and in spirit. "If there ever is to be in this country," he said in 1836, "a party that shall take its name and character, not from particular liberal measures or popular men, but from its uncompromising and consistent adherence to Freedom—a truly liberal and thoroughly republican party, it must direct its first decided effort against the grossest form, the most complete manifestation of oppression; and, having taken anti-slavery ground, it must carry out the principle of Liberty in all its consequences. It must support every measure conducive to the greatest possible individual and social, moral, intellectual, religious and political freedom, whether that measure be brought forward by inconsistent slaveholders or consistent freemen. It must embrace the whole

sphere of human action; watching and opposing the slightest illiberal and anti-republican tendency, and concentrating its whole force and influence against slavery itself, in comparison with which every other species of tyranny is tolerable, and by which every other is strengthened and justified."

Thus wrote Charles Follen in 1836. It is impossible to express better the want which enlightened lovers of liberty felt of a real Democratic party in the country—Democratic not in name only, but in deed and in truth. In this want, thus felt, the Liberty Party had its origin, and so long as this want remains otherwise unsatisfied, the Liberty party must exist; not as a mere Abolition party, but as a truly Democratic party, which aims at the extinction of slavery, because slaveholding is inconsistent with Democratic principles; aims at it, not as an ultimate end, but as the most important present object; as a great and necessary step in the work of reform; as an illustrious era in the advancement of society, to be wrought out by its action and instrumentality. The Liberty party of 1845 is, in truth, the Liberty party of 1776 revived. It is more: It is the party of Advancement and Freedom, which has, in every age, and with varying success, fought the battles of Human Liberty, against the party of False Conservatism and Slavery.

And now, fellow-citizens, permit us to ask, whether you will not give to this party the aid of your votes, and of your counsels? Its aims are lofty, and noble, and pacific; its means are simple and unobjectionable. Why should it not have your co-operation?

Are you already anti-slavery men? Let us ask, is it not far better to act with those with whom you agree on the fundamental point of slavery, and swell the vote and augment the moral force of anti-slavery, rather than to act with those with whom you agree only on minor points; and thus, for the time, swell a vote and augment an influence which must be counted against the Liberty movement, in the vain hope that those with whom you thus act now, will, at some indefinite future period, act with you for the overthrow of slavery? There are, perhaps, nearly equal numbers of you in each of the pro-slavery parties, honestly opposed to each other on questions of trade, currency, and extension of territory, but of one mind on the great question of slavery; and yet, you suffer yourselves to be played off against each other by parties which agree in nothing except hostility to the great measure of positive action against slavery, which seems to you and is of paramount importance? What can you gain by this course? What may you not gain by laying your minor differences on the altar of duty, and uniting as one man, in one party, against slavery? Then every vote would tell for freedom, and would encourage the friends of Liberty to fresh efforts. Now every vote, whether you intend it so or not, tells for slavery, and operates as a discouragement and hindrance to those who are contending for Equal Rights. Let us entreat you not to persevere in your suicidal, fratricidal course; but to renounce at once all pro-slavery alliances, and join the friends of Liberty. It is not the question now whether a Liberty party shall be organized: it is organized and in the field. The real question, and the only real question, is: Will you, so far as your votes and influence go, hasten or retard the day of its triumph?

Are you men of the Free States? And have you not suffered enough of wrong, of insult, and of contumely from the slaveholding Oligarchy? Have you not been taxed enough for the support of slavery? Is it not enough that all the powers of the government are exerted for its maintenance, and that all the Departments of the Government are in the hands of the Slave Power? How long will you consent by your votes to maintain slavery at the seat of the National Government, in violation of the Constitution of your country, and thus, give your direct sanction to the whole dreadful system? How long will you consent to be represented in the National Councils by men who will not dare to assert their own rights or yours in the presence of an arrogant aristocracy; and, in your State Legislatures, by men whose utmost height of courage and manly daring, when your citizens are imprisoned, without allegation of crime, in slave States, and your agents, sent for their relief, are driven out, as you would scourge from your premises an intrusive cur, is to PROTEST and submit. Rouse up, Men of the Free States, for shame, if not for duty! Awake to a sense of your degraded position. Behold your president, a slaveholder; his cabinet composed of slaveholders or their abject instruments; the two houses of Congress submissive and servile; your representatives with foreign nations most of them, slaveholders; your supreme administrators of justice, most of them slaveholders; your officers of the army and navy most of them slaveholders.—Observe the results. What numerous appointments of pro-slavery citizens of slave States to national employments! What careful exclusion of every man who holds the faith of Jefferson and Washington in respect to slavery, and believes with Madison "that it is wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea of property in man," from national offices of honor and trust! What assiduity in negotiations for the reclamation of slaves, cast, in the Providence of God, on foreign shores, and for the extension of the markets of cotton and rice and tobacco, aye, and of men! What zeal on the judicial bench in wresting the Constitution and the law to the purposes of slaveholders, by shielding kidnappers from merited punishment, and paralyzing State legislation for the security of personal liberty! What readiness in legislation to serve the interests of the Oligarchy by unconstitutional provisions for the recovery of fugitive slaves and by laying heavy duties on slave-labor products, thereby compelling non-slaveholding laborers to support slaveholders in idleness and luxury! When shall these things have an end? How long shall servile endurance be protracted? It is for you, fellow-citizens, to determine. The shameful partiality to slaveholders and slavery which has so long prevailed and now prevails in the administration of the government will cease when you determine that it shall cease, and act accordingly.

Are you non-slaveholders of the slave States? Let us ask you to consider what interest you have in the system of slavery. What benefits does it confer on you? What blessings does it promise to your children? You constitute the vast majority of the population of the slave States. The aggregate votes of all the slaveholders do not exceed one hundred and fifty thousand, while the votes of the non-slavehold-

ers will number at least six hundred thousand, supposing each adult male to possess a vote.—It is clear, therefore, that the continuance of slavery depends upon your suffrages. We repeat, what interest have you in supporting the system?

Slavery diminishes your population and hinders your prosperity. Compare New York with Virginia, Ohio with Kentucky, Arkansas with Michigan, Florida with Iowa. Need we say more?

It prevents general education. It is not the interest of slaveholders that poor non-slaveholders should be educated. The census of 1810 reveals the astounding facts that more than one-seventeenth of the white population in the slave States are unable to read or write, while not a hundred and fiftieth part of the same class in the free are in the same condition, and that there are more than twelve times as many scholars at public charge in the free States as in the slave States.

It paralyzes your industry and enterprise.—The census of 1810 also disclosed the fact that the free States, with two millions and a quarter inhabitants more, and ninety eight millions acres less than the slave States, produce annually, in value, from Mines thirty-three millions dollars more; from the Forests, eight millions dollars more; from Fisheries, nine millions dollars more; from Agriculture, forty millions dollars more; from Manufactures, one hundred and fifty one millions dollars more. At the same time, the capital invested in commerce by the free States exceeds the capital similarly invested in the slave States by more than one hundred millions of dollars; and the tonnage of the former exceeds the tonnage of the latter by more than a thousand millions tons! This enormous disparity, which will strike attention the more forcibly when it is considered that much of the capital employed in the slave States is owned in the free, can be ascribed to no cause except slavery.

It degrades and dishonors labor. In what country did an Aristocracy ever care for the poor? When did slaveholders ever attempt to improve the condition of the free laborer.—“White negroes” is the contemptuous term by which Robert Wickliffe, of Kentucky, designated the free laborers of his State. He saw no distinction between them and slaves, except that the former may be converted into voters.—Chancellor Harper, of South Carolina, teaches that, “so far as the mere laborer has the pride, the knowledge or the aspiration of a freeman, he is unfitted for his situation.” And he likens the laborer “to the horse or the ox,” to whom it would be ridiculous to attempt to impart “a cultivated understanding or fine feeling.” Governor McDuffie, in a Message to the Legislature of South Carolina, went so far as to say that, “the institution of domestic slavery supercedes the necessity of an order of nobility, and the other appendages of an hereditary system of government.” Of course the slaveholders are the noble, and you, the non-slaveholders, are the ignoble, of this social system.

Slavery corrupts the religion and destroys the morals of a community. We need not repeat Jefferson’s strong testimony. In a message to the Legislature of Kentucky, some years since, the Governor said, “We long to see the day when the law will assert its majesty, and stop the wanton destruction of life which al-

most daily occurs within the jurisdiction of this Commonwealth.” And the Governor of Alabama, in a message to the Legislature of that State, said, “Why do we hear of stabbings and shootings, almost daily, in some part or other of our State.” A Judge in New Orleans, in an address on the opening of his Court, observed, “Without some powerful and certain remedy our streets will become butcheries, overflowing with the blood of our citizens.” These terrible pictures are drawn by home pencils. Can communities prosper when religion and morality furnish no stronger restraints on violence and passion?

Slavery is a source of most deplorable weakness. What a panic is spread by the bare suggestion of a servile insurrection? And how completely are the slaveholding States at the mercy of any invading foe who will raise the standard of emancipation? In the Revolutionary War, according to the Secret Journals of Congress, South Carolina was “unable to make any effectual efforts with militia, by reason of the great proportion of citizens necessary to remain at home to prevent insurrection among the negroes, and to prevent the desertion of them to the enemy.” We need not say that if the danger of insurrection was then great, it would be, circumstances being similar, tenfold greater now.

Slavery seeks to deprive non-slaveholders of political power. In Virginia and South Carolina especially, has this policy been most steadily and successfully pursued. In South Carolina the political power of the State is lodged in the great slaveholding Districts by the Constitution, and to make assurance doubly sure, it is provided, in that instrument, that no person can be a member of the Legislature unless he owns five hundred acres of land and ten slaves, or an equivalent in additional land. The right of voting for electors of President and Vice President is, in South Carolina, confined to Members of the Legislature; consequently, in that State no non-slaveholder can have a voice in the selection of the First and Second Officers of the Republic. In Virginia the slave population is considered the basis of political power, and the preponderance of representation is given to those districts in which there is the largest slave population. The House of Representatives consists of one hundred and thirty four members, of whom fifty-six are chosen by the counties west of the Blue Ridge, and seventy-eight by the counties east. The Senate consists of thirty-two members, of whom thirteen are assigned to the western, and nineteen to the eastern counties. Already the free white population west of the Blue Ridge exceeds the same class east in number, but no change in the population can affect this distribution of political power, designed to secure and preserve the ascendancy of the slaveholders, who chiefly reside east of the Ridge, so long as the Constitution remains unchanged.

These, non-slaveholders of the slave States, are the fruits of slavery. You surely can have no reason to love a system which entails such consequences. Yet it lives by your sufferance. You have only to speak the word at the ballot-box, and the system falls. Will you be restrained from speaking that word by the consideration that the enslaved will be benefited as well as yourselves; or by the selfish expectation that you may yourselves become slave-

holders hereafter, and so be admitted into the ranks of the Aristocracy? If such considerations withhold you, we bid you beware lest you prepare a bitter retribution for yourselves, and find to your mortification and shame, that a patent of nobility, written in the tears and blood of the oppressed, is a sorry passport to the approbation of mankind.

We would appeal, also, to slaveholders themselves. We would enter at once within the lines of selfish ideas and mercenary motives, and appeal to your consciences and your hearts.—You know that the system of slaveholding is wrong. Whatever theologians may teach and cite scripture for, you know—all of you who claim freedom for yourselves and your children as a birthright precious beyond all price, and inalienable as life—that no person can rightfully hold another as a slave. Your courts in their judicial decisions, and your books of common law in their elementary lessons, rise far above the precepts of most of your religious teachers, and declare all slaveholding to be against natural right. You feel it to be so. God has so made the human heart, that, in spite of all theological sophistry and pretended scripture proofs, you cannot help feeling it to be so.—There is a law of sublimer origin, and more awful sanction than any human code, written in ineffaceable characters, upon every heart of man, which binds all to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them. And where is there one of all your number who would exchange conditions with the happiest of all your slaves? Produce the man! And until he is produced, let theological apologists for slaveholding keep silence. Most earnestly would we entreat you to listen to the voice of conscience and obey the promptings of humanity. We are not your enemies. We do not pretend to any superior virtue; or that we, being in your circumstances, would be likely to act differently from you. But we are all feeble citizens of the same great republic. We feel slaveholding to be a dreadful incubus upon us, dishonoring us in the eyes of foreign nations; nullifying the force of our example of free institutions; holding us back from a glorious career of prosperity and renown; sowing broadcast the seeds of discord, division, disunion: and we are anxious for its extinction.—With Jefferson, we tremble for our country when we “remember that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever.” With Washington we believe “that there is but one proper and effectual mode by which the extinction of slavery can be accomplished, and that is, by legislative authority; and this, so far as our suffrages will go, shall not be wanting.”

We would not invade the Constitution: but we would have the Constitution rightly construed and administered according to its true sense and spirit. We would not dictate the mode in which slavery shall be attacked in particular States; but we would have it removed at once from all places under the exclusive jurisdiction of the national government, and, also, have immediate measures taken, in accordance with constitutional rights and the principles of justice, for its removal from each State by State authority. In this work we ask your co-operation. Shall we ask in vain? Are you not convinced that the almost absolute monopoly of the offices and the patronage of the government, and the almost exclusive control of

its legislation and executive and judicial administration, by slaveholders, and for the purposes of slavery, is unjust to the non-slaveholders of the country? Can you blame us for saying that we will no longer sanction it? Are you not satisfied, to use the language of one of your own number, “that slavery is a cancer, a slow consuming cancer, a withering pestilence, an unmitigated curse.” And can you wonder that we should be anxious, by all just, and honorable and constitutional means, to effect its extinction in our respective States and to confine it to its constitutional limits? Are you not fully aware that the gross inconsistency of slaveholding with our professed principles astonishes the world, and makes the Name of our Country a mock, and the Name of Liberty a byword? And can you regret that we should exert ourselves to the utmost to redeem our glorious land and her institutions from just reproach, and, by illustrious acts of mercy and justice, place ourselves, once more, in the van of Human Progress and Advancement?

Finally, we ask all true friends of Liberty, of Impartial, Universal Liberty, to be firm and steadfast. The little handful of voters, who, in 1840, wearied of compromising expediency, and despairing of anti-slavery action by pro-slavery parties, raised anew the standard of the Declaration, and manfully resolved to vote right then and vote for Freedom, has already swelled to a GREAT PARTY, strong enough numerically to decide the issue of any national contest, and stronger far in the power of its pure and elevating principles. And if these principles be sound, which we doubt not, and if the question of slavery be, as we verily believe it is, the GREAT QUESTION of our day and nation, it is a libel upon the intelligence, the patriotism, and the virtue of the American people to say that there is no hope that a majority will not array themselves under our banner. Let it not be said that we are factious or impracticable. We adhere to our views because we believe them to be sound, practicable and vitally important. We have already said that we are ready to prove our devotion to our principles by co-operating with either of the other two great American Parties, which will openly and honestly, in State and National Conventions, avow our doctrines and adopt our measures, until slavery shall be overthrown. We do not indeed expect any such adoption and avowal by either of those parties, because we are well aware that they fear more, at present, from the loss of slaveholding support than from the loss of anti-slavery co-operation. But we can be satisfied with nothing less, for we will compromise no longer; and, therefore, must of necessity, maintain our separate organization as the True Democratic Party of the country, and trust our cause to the patronage of the People and the blessing of God!

Carry then, Friends of Freedom and Free Labor, your principles to the ballot box. Let no difficulties discourage, no dangers daunt, no delays dishearten you. Your solemn vow that Slavery must perish is registered in Heaven. Renew that vow! Think of the martyrs of Truth and Freedom; think of the millions of the Enslaved; think of the other millions of the oppressed and degraded Free: And renew that vow! Be not tempted from the path of political duty. Vote for no man, act with no party politically connected with the supporters

of Slavery. Vote for no man, act with no party unwilling to adopt and carry out the principles which we have set forth in this address. To compromise for any partial or temporary advantage is ruin to our cause. To act with any party or to vote for the candidates of any party which recognizes the friends and supporters of slavery as members in full standing, because in particular places or under particular circumstances, it may make large professions of anti-slavery zeal, is to commit political suicide. Unswerving fidelity to our principles; unalterable determination to carry those principles to the ballot box at every election; inflexible and unanimous support of those and only those who are true to those principles are the conditions of our ultimate triumph. Let these conditions be fulfilled: and our triumph is certain. The indications of its coming multiply on every hand. The clarion trump of

Freedom breaks already the gloomy silence of Slavery in Kentucky, and its echoes are heard throughout the land. A spirit of enquiry and of action is awakened every where. The assemblage of the Convention, whose voice we utter, is itself an auspicious omen. Gathered from the North and the South, and the East and West, we here unite our counsels, and consolidate our action. We are resolved to go forward knowing that our cause is just trusting in God. We ask you to go forward with us: invoking His blessing who sent his Son to redeem mankind. With Him are the issues of all events. He can and He will disappoint all the devices of oppression. He can, and we trust He will, make our instrumentality efficient for the redemption of our land from Slavery, and for the fulfilment of our Fathers' Pledge in behalf of Freedom, before Him and before the World.

ELIHU BURRITT'S LETTER.

WORCESTER, May 23d, 1845.

My Dear Sir:—I am almost at a loss for language to express my sense of obligation to you, and the Committee in whose behalf you speak, for those terms of kindness and confidence with which you invite me to be present at your great Convention in Cincinnati, on the 11th of June. And it is with a profound sentiment of regret that I am compelled, by circumstances which I cannot bend to my wish, to forego a pleasure which I should have cherished during the remainder of my life, as one of the choicest souvenirs in the jewelry of my remembrance. It is with great difficulty that I can so arrange my labors as to permit me to be absent from Worcester a fortnight at a time. Still I have longed to see your great and prosperous State; and when, a few weeks before I received your communication, a letter came from certain literary societies connected with the Oberlin Institute, inviting me to deliver their next annual address, in August, I accepted the invitation, that I might associate with my visit some other object than that of mere curiosity. To fulfil this engagement will exhaust all the time that I can force out of the discharge of my labors at home, which would preclude the possibility of making two journeys to Ohio in one season. Although I cannot be with you in person—or rather in body—I shall be present with every earnest sympathy of my soul, with every attribute of my humanity that can pray and hope for man, and labor to lift up my down-trodden brother the SLAVE—God's child, to a new life and the light of a new heaven for his downcast alienated heart, a heaven spanned with God's own handwriting in the fixed stars and every rainbow of hope, that his Ethiopian hue shall no longer impair the dignity of his humanity or his title or access to all the privileges, progress and prospects

of the children of a common Father, either on earth or in heaven. The place, the motives and the members of your Convention, will all conspire to give it a moral might and majesty, which will be felt over the Union, and carry a premonition of death to an institution which, like a huge deep-rooted upas, has diffused its subtle poison over the once greenest portion of this continent, until every thing that lives or lies beneath its shade bears the hectic of the searing curse.

No place in the Union could have been more appropriately selected than Cincinnati. Situated on the heaven side of freedom, a magnificent illustration of what it can do for human nature and human society, well might it say to those who live in the pale and sickly wilderness of slavery, "*Come, and let us reason together.*" And it should quicken the pulse of great-hearted patriotism, that this friendly call has been greeted by a cordial response from the first home of the Anglo-Saxon race on this continent—from unfortunate Virginia, the primeval Eden of Nature in America, now pining beneath the breath of an institution which has blasted the foliage and the fruit of her tree of knowledge, and her tree of life; and which, if it has not banished her into the wilderness without, has brought the wilderness into her paradise. Virginia! oldest patriarch in the ark of Freedom which outrode the universal deluge of despotism—among the first altars it erected in its heritage, was one for the sacrifice of humanity and the immolation of human liberty. First to declare the inalienable rights of man, and, like the antediluvian patriarch, to preach the righteousness of freedom to the world, it was the first to become intoxicated with the spirit of its domestic slavery, and, under its influence, to curse its posterity with an evil which has operated with unspent and unsparing malignity upon young and old, rich and poor,

bond and free, through their successive generations. Virginia! still venerable in her misfortunes and grand in her decadence, the devout and filial memories which cluster about her ancient virtues, like the pious sons of Noah, would approach her behind a mantle of charity which should hide from the subject and object of the sorrowful vision, the sight of her unconscious weakness and insensible prostration.

And old Virginia, the Virginia of the best days of our history, will be with you, represented by a few choice spirits, who, with the sublime chivalry of moral heroism, the offspring and origin of better things in her condition, will go up to your communion, as the estranged and scattered children of Israel went up from their coasts to worship with their Jewish brethren in the temple at Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. And between that ancient jubilee and your Convention, I pray that there may be features of resemblance to which future generations shall revert in grateful memory. If there is one thing more than another, which would enhance my pleasure in being present on the occasion, it would be the privilege of meeting there those heroic spirits from Virginia. Above all the places on earth, I should prefer to give them the warm hand of fraternal fellowship on the green banks of the Ohio. There, in view of the luxuriant fields and all the verdant life of your illimited Eden, I would hold with them a brotherly communion on the gospel of nature and the great principles of humanity. While a beautiful world of exuberant fertility expanded to their view beneath the heaven-blessed labor of free hands, and cities and villages, buoyant with the vigor of youthful activity, vied with vegetation in rapidity of growth—I would remind them, with earnest tenderness, that the rain, the dew and the sunlight fell upon the fields of Virginia with the same richness of beneficence as upon those of Ohio: that nature had lavished upon the "Old Dominion" all that she could do for her choicest vineyard, and never withheld a gift that could make it the garden and glory of America. I would say to them, that if the recent wilderness of your state has been made to blossom as the rose, it is an evidence, bearing the signature of the Almighty, that no *slave* breathes its pure air or treads its free soil; that in it and on it all men are born FREE AND EQUAL, inheriting and enriching all those "inalienable rights" laid down in that Magna Charta of democracy which bears the broad seal of Virginia in the blood of her patriots. I would say to them, that all the difference, in condition and prospects, between Ohio and Virginia exists in the difference of their devotion to that sublime dogma of democracy which stands at the head of the Declaration of our Independence; and that if the mother of the Union, among all the children she has brought up, has none left to guide her: if her walls are broken down and her fields laid waste; if the music of machinery never breaks the silence of her streams, and degraded labor has no songs in the night or the day; if her children fly from her bosom to regions where honest toil is not the condition of the slave, it is because she has not been true to that great doctrine of human rights which she was the first to proclaim to mankind. I would give them the brotherly hand of every liberty-loving son of toil in New England in pledge, that their hatred of slavery is the strongest expression of

their love for Virginia; that no malevolence lurks at the bottom of this great enterprise of freedom, in which the moral sentiment of the world is fast concentrating with an energy which must soon carry it to that issue which shall be greeted with acclamations of *grace! grace unto it!* from every corner of the world. Brethren, I would say, not an effort in this cause is inspired by aught else than the very soul of love to you and your children. The malevolence of which we have been suspected, has this extent, no more: that Emancipation shall be Paradise Regained to Virginia, in all the compass of that condition.

It is one of the chiefest aims of our aspirations and efforts, not only to promote the emancipation of the slave, but to emancipate the "Old Dominion" from the old dominion of slavery; to emancipate her institutions of learning and religion from an influence that has poisoned their vitality; to emancipate the energies of her people from that crippling compression which has bent them to the ground; to emancipate her rivers and streams, whose currents have been ice-bound in time of summer, because the mark of the beast was burnt and burning in the brow of labor pining on their banks; to emancipate her soil from that sallow disease with which the sweat of the slave—falling on its face like *aqua fortis*—has devoured its capacity of production; to emancipate the treasures that lie locked and guarded by a huge Cerberus, in her mountains, valleys, and hill-sides; to emancipate nature itself from that iron prevention which has withheld her hand from dropping fatness upon every square acre of her territory. If this is malevolence, it is not the head, nor front, nor end of our offending. To say that, in rescuing Virginia from slavery, we would be content with making her what New England is, comes far short of our object and desire. We would make her what New England *would be*, with the soil, rivers, and streams, and natural resources of Virginia; which, with the indomitable genius and energy of free labor, would enable her to manufacture for a continent and feed half of its population with the productions of her soil. Has she annually expatriated thousands of her most vigorous sons, who could not toil where labor is degraded; we would re-people her borders with her exiles, who should return with songs of joy on their heads, as the ancient Jews to their beloved Canaan. Are her lands lying waste in artificial sterility, we would resuscitate them to all their original fertility, and cut them up into farms clothed with exuberant verdure, and tilled by intelligent and virtuous freemen. "*Is one in twelve of her grown up and governing population unable to read or write,*" we would dot the whole extent of her domain with school-houses, and supply every hamlet with a library and the means of gratuitous instruction. Is Virginia declining in political power, and fast losing her share of influence in the councils of the nation, we would give her far more than she ever possessed. We would double her representation in the representatives of freemen in our national Congress, who should be an honor to the country. With such an aim and end as this, in the inception, prosecution, and issue of this great work of philanthropy, shall we talk of *dissolving the Union*?—that Union to which the success of our efforts must give elements

of cohesion stronger than ten thousand chains of adamant?—that Union, the concentrating nucleus of the hopes and interests of the future ages of humanity?—that Union to which the abolition of slavery would give a moral power that should lift up the race from its darkness and depression? Dissolution of the Union?—What! cut in two the Mississippi, that jugular vein of the New World, and sever all the mighty arteries of the Union, and leave it to bleed to death in hostile segments, both writhing in the canteries of mutual hatred! Nature itself would repel this profane disruption of a system to whose integrity every stream from the Sabine to the St. Johns, is as necessary as any vein in the human body. Dissolve the Union! run the amputating knife through the child of all that the progressive ages of humanity have produced of freedom and virtue! and that because one of its members is infected with a cutaneous disease, which not a drop of blood less than that which now circulates in its whole system will remove! Does God or mankind require the sacrifice of this Union, this ISAAC of the race, in which all nations should be blessed? And shall Americans lift the knife against it, not as an act of faith, but of pusillanimous distrust in God? If nothing in the natural religion of patriotism could stay their suicidal arm: let every lover of his kind pray that the Almighty who arrested the patriarch's descending blow which was to sever his son, may open the cloudy curtain of his pavilion, and interpose a cheaper victim of immolation; or that might

"Come thick night,
And pall it in the dunkest smoke of hell,
That its keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Or heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry Hold! Hold!"

Dissolve the Union! dissolve the whole moral power we have and need to abolish slavery! May God grant that your Convention may banish that treacherous idea from every American heart. I trust that its Satanic lineaments will be detected and detested, should it surreptitiously enter your councils in the guise of an angel of light. No! you will not meet to *dissolve*, but to *evolve* the Union; to renovate it on the basis of the fathers of the Republic.—That basis is broad and deep enough to *unite* the world. A better foundation cannot be laid by fallen men. You will meet as our fathers

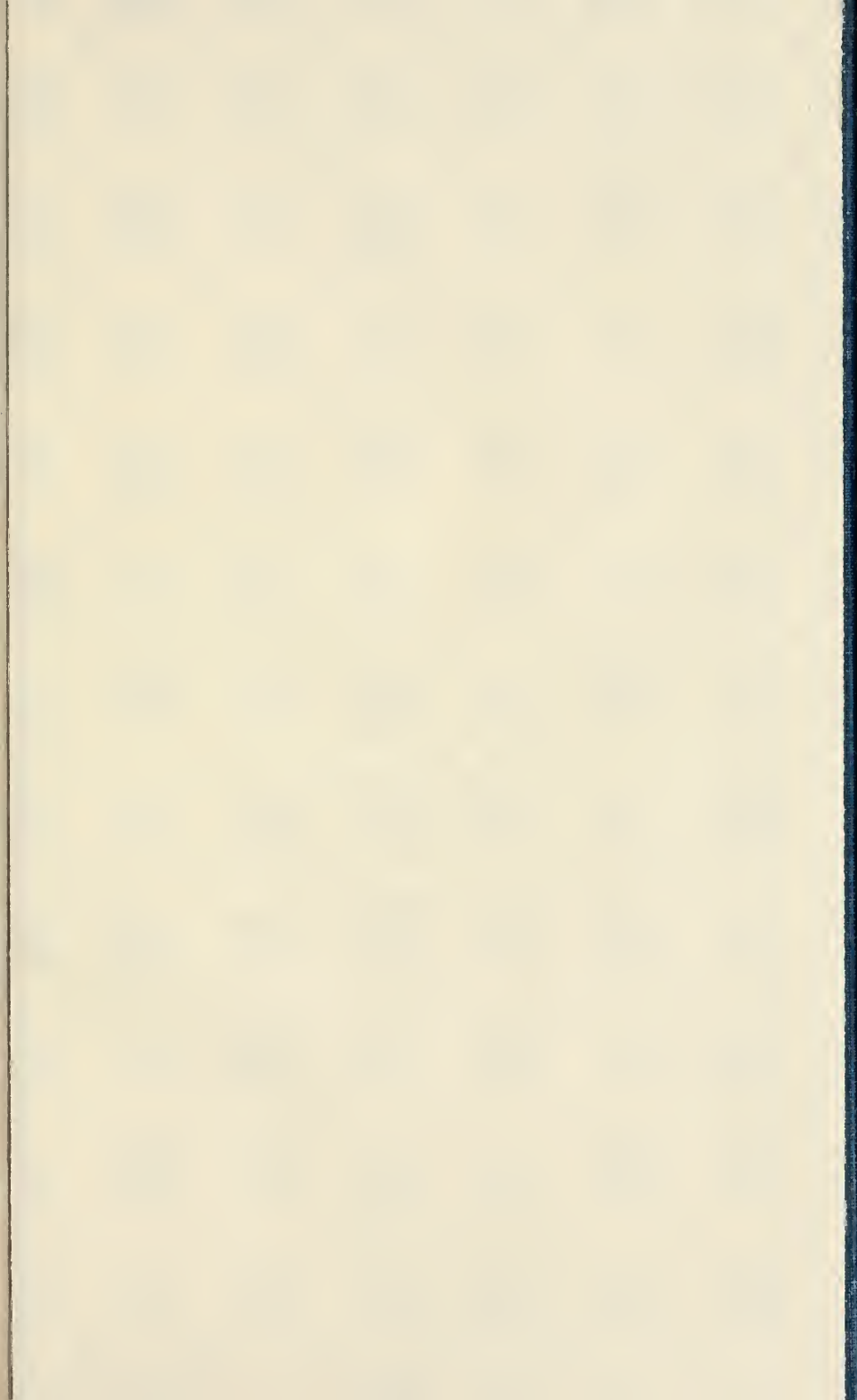
met, you will begin where they begun, and where their degenerate children left off to build. You will meet, TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION, *establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.* This is the work you will *unite* to resume. This is the foundation Δ which you will descend to lay the first stone that has been laid therein since our "fathers fell asleep." As the nations round about Judea contributed materials to the erection of Solomon's Temple, so the world, with all its moral wealth, will become tributary to the structure of the Great American Temple of Liberty, founded on such a rock, and hail its completion as the asylum and admiration of the race. The Union! it is worth the world to the destiny of human nature for the abolition of slavery; and the abolition of slavery will add the wealth and moral power of the world to the Union.—May we speak of the *value* of salvation, and the *extent* of infinity, 'hen, for lack of a more religious term, let me express the hope and belief that your Convention will enhance the *value*, because it shall increase the strength and vitality of the Union. In that hope-inspired imagination with which I am wont to contemplate the destiny of the American Republic, I have fancied that, in the life-time of the present age, some heaven-kissing monument, the offspring of the 11th of June, might be erected from the bed of the Ohio, opposite your city, as a kind of centri-mundane column, saying to all things that shine and sing in heaven, and all that can carry the news on the wings of the wind; saying to all ages, to all men, to all bondmen groaning in the undiscovered habitations of cruelty:

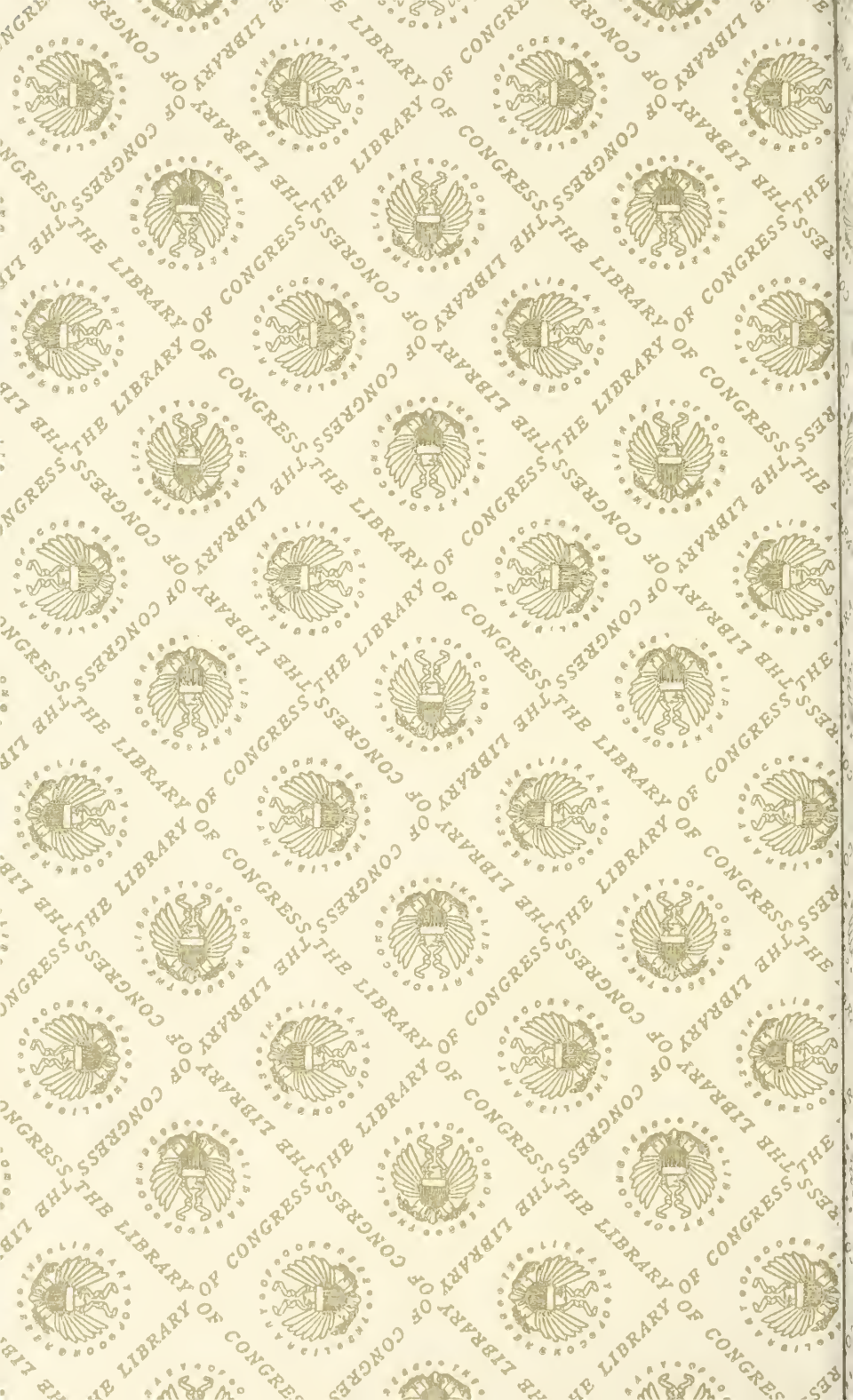
"I stand the plan's proud period;
I pronounce the work accomplished," the warfare closed, the victory won, the TRIUMPH OF THE AMERICAN UNION.

Please, Sir, to accept for yourself, and tender to the other members of your committee the profound sentiments of respect and sympathy with which I am theirs and yours for humanity,

ELIHU BURRITT.

SAMUEL LEWIS Esq. of Com., &c.







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