

THE



CENSUS AND SLAVERY;

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R. H. HOBBS, STEREOTYPER, HARTFORD, CONN.

THE CENSUS AND SLAVERY.

“Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation.”—*Isaiah*, xxvi. 15.

THESE are times of great peril and concern for our country, though none the less of thanksgiving to God. For if we have many evils from ourselves, we have naught but good from Him. I could easily revise the discourse I am now to offer, and by only changing dates and times, fit it to our present year and condition. But I prefer not to do it; in the belief that the sentiments expressed will have greater weight, taken as related to a time when the present agitations were unknown. Call it then, to-day, the thanksgiving of 1851—the first after the publication of the new census of 1850—and let us have our discourse upon the census roll itself. Very serious and significant lessons, and even great revelations of God, are sometimes contained, unobserved, in these mere secular inventories and statistical facts of nations.

According to the census of 1790, our country had a population of only three millions nine hundred thousand souls. Now, in the census of 1850, it is found to contain, instead, twenty-three millions; showing that,

in sixty years, we are six-folded in numbers; and affording a statistical basis for the conclusion that, sixty years hence, or in the year 1910, we shall have a population of one hundred and thirty-eight millions; and shall probably be the most powerful nation, all things considered, on the globe.

We naturally regard these facts of our census, or the rapid swell of our population evinced by it, with an exultant feeling. Indeed it is a really pleasant thing in itself to belong to a prospering nation. The sense of being, or rapidly growing to be, a great people, felt and respected as such in the world, enlarges proportionally our own personal magnitudes, by the lifting power it has in our consciousness. In this kind of feeling it was that the prophet broke out in such evident gratulation—"Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation."

And yet, to any really thoughtful person, there is another side to this manifolding growth of numbers, where it takes on a very nearly frightful aspect. We think of it with a certain feeling of recoil, and are half ready to repeat, with uneasy misgivings of heart, another passage of the prophet, where he sings, in mournful refrain—"Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy." What meets us here with a look so appalling is the discovery that we are already so close upon the state of an old, populated, or possibly over-populated, country. And just so close upon us are all those terrible questions of society that overcast the prospects, and disturb the peace, of the ancient

nations and kingdoms. If the present increase continues for but a single century to come, and it is not likely to be much abated, the census of 1950 will show a total population of full four hundred millions of people. And this view is the more impressive in its gravity, when we bring along side of it, what is not generally understood, the fact, that the Chinese Empire itself has a comparatively recent development—just such as we are here anticipating for our own country. In the year 1711, China contained, by the census, only twenty-eight millions of people. Resting at that point from its wars and commotions, the population increased with amassing rapidity. In 1753, a period of forty-two years, the twenty-eight had become one hundred and three millions; in 1793, three hundred and thirty-three millions; in 1812, three hundred and sixty-two millions. The population of the empire has been ascertained by no census since that time, but it is now computed at four hundred and fifty millions. We, then, are not the first nation of the world that, within a single century, becomes a vast, unmanageable, almost incomputable population.

And then what is to follow? Are we thus to rush up, in a tide, upon the great dike of Mr. Malthus, the dike of starvation, and so come to our limit? Is that to be our lot which, for a time, at the beginning of the present century, was the lot of England, viz: a report of deaths keeping exact tally with the prices of wheat? As in other over-populated countries, European and Asiatic, are the great mass of our population

to be found living upon a scanty vegetable diet of rice, or maize, or potatoes, pressing always close upon the verge of starvation, and finally ceasing to increase, only because they are starved off and can no farther go. Shall we have, in the year 1950, according to the ratio of England now, sixty millions of public paupers? Looked at in this manner the increase of our census that we accept with such easy gratulation, is after all no child's play, but a matter even tremendously significant—shaking the ground under our feet like the pour of Niagara!

Not that we are to be really discouraged or appalled by bad prognostications of the kind referred to. I do not believe in the principle, or supposed law of Mr. Malthus, even though supported by abundant facts; for I believe that other and better facts are possible, and that we are to be an example of them. A people who live in burrows and piles of turf, like animals, and not in houses; who have learned to want neither furniture, nor meat, nor scarcely fire; may well enough go on to multiply till starvation stops them; but a people of great wants, like ours, accustomed, by severe economy and provident industry, to get the supplies that, to them, are necessaries, will make a very different figure. So, too, a people historically trained, like ours, to independence and sturdy self-assertion, will look before and after, maintaining a steady forecast, and will come to the limit of increase much sooner than one that never thinks of minding any thing, but only stops eating because it has nothing to eat, and dies because

it can not longer live. So of a people whose piety belongs to their own care of themselves, and not to what a priesthood may do for them; for, if they have learned to take care of their souls, they will not be incapable generally of taking care of their bodies. And they will do it all the more certainly, if they have been accustomed to take care of their religion itself, by their own voluntary maintenance. No such people, I am sure, is going to be the herd for any Malthusian theory whatever. God will bring no people to their limit by starvation, who do not consent to be starved. If I thought otherwise, I should wish the world itself to be adjourned. ✓

[Still it must not be overlooked that a great increase of population carries with it, of necessity, many and great changes. A people increased by numbers is not that same people, simply magnified. They become inevitably another people, in many respects. They pass into migrations, change their modes of culture and production, their polity, policy, character, public bearing, and the whole tenor, in fact, of their history. The Hebrew people, for example, multiply with such rapidity that their Egyptian masters become afraid of them, contriving how to stop their increase; and, there, begins the exodus. The institutions of Lycurgus, on the other hand, are able to hold their continuance for centuries, only because they have destroyed the family state, and made a kind of lair of the city, reducing the popular increase to such a degree as barely keeps the numbers good and allows the original polity and prescribed regi- ✓
Exod

men to remain. Had the population increased in the ratio of some well-conditioned modern city, the public tables and the tough state-discipline would have been utterly swept away, in a single half century.] Again the great northern hives of Asia, getting full, begin to swarm; and their immense armed migrations, pouring fourth in quest of room and land, roll down out of the midland heights of Europe, and cover and submerge, so to speak, all the southern nations; where, as we may see, the mere increase they have had has sent them careering, from their far-off home, into the very bosom of the great world's history. Probably the immense conceit of the great Celestial Empire is a recent character, begotten by the immense overgrowth of the empire; and just this conceit is going, not unlikely in the coming years, to provoke successive public chastisements, till it has accomplished even the total overthrow of the nation. [And so we may say, universally, that growths imply phases and currents of motion. Nothing stands still when it grows. Ascertain the fact that a nation is rapidly increasing in the census of its people, and you may know that it is just as rapidly becoming other and different from what it was.]

I come now to that which is to be the principal point of my subject, viz: the relations of our census, or of the immensely rapid growth in population, evidenced by it, to the inevitable extinction of slavery, at no very distant day.

[It requires but the very smallest perception to see

that the wonderful increase of our people must bring along with it some very great changes; and this, in particular, the extinction of slavery, appears to be the one that is evident before all others. I undertake, therefore, to show, and without misgiving, that our popular increase is to be our principal reformer in this direction; bringing slavery to its inevitable end, doing it peacefully, doing it without deferring to the consent of any body, doing it in a manner to abate all the hardships and woes of the transition, and in a way so natural and beneficent as to carry the consent of every body.]

The only reason why we have not seen the operation of this force more distinctly hitherto, is that it has not yet begun to act in a way that is more than barely visible. The great fact finally to be discovered is this; that, as population advances in this northern tier of states, the free-labor states, an immense tide of overflow will be pouring in upon the northern slave states, buying up the plantations and distributing them in small farms to be occupied by free labor, in just the same manner as it has been taking possession of the new lands of the West. This has been done, thus far, only to a limited extent, as in Maryland and Virginia; for the reason that it has, till now, been a very little easier and more advantageous to appropriate the public lands of the Mississippi Valley. But it does not appear to be understood that these rich lands of the West are beginning to be very much reduced. In the first place, that whole midland region between Missouri, or a meridian line four degrees west of it, and the great

valley of California, is very nearly a desert—a most arid, stony, sun-burnt, frost-bitten, God-forsaken country as there is in the world—never to be occupied, save here and there, in some nook of irrigation, by any but outlaws, or bands of cattle thieves and brigands. There is a great deal of land still unoccupied in the new states and territories already organized; but it must be understood that the first choice commonly takes the first quality, and that when the first is taken, the second only is left. Besides, there is a large amount of waste land which nobody will ever choose, till hard necessity compels. On the whole, if we suppose the population of 1850 to be doubled, as it will in 1880, it may be said that the free territory of the west is by that time substantially taken up. And now there commences a new movement, or rather a movement already begun takes new impulse, and begins to reveal itself in such force as to show what result is finally to be accomplished. The pressure is now on, and the loosened populations will be precipitated, in a kind of sea-swell, over the border. Free labor cries after land. [The West is full. We get no fortunes any more by going West, but we must have land. Virginia, meantime, is glad to have new citizens, and see the opening of new prospects; glad to make a speculation by the sale of plantations, often exhausted by low culture, for more than she could get, a little time back, for both lands and slaves together. So the trains of emigration pour along, overspreading by degrees that magnificent state, tenfolding its value, starting every thing into a career of prosperity, popular increase, and

power.] Neither let it seem to be impossible, now that New York has become the great commercial center of the continent, that another very large city and mart of trade should be opened thus in Virginia. Great, ancient London was no reason why a Liverpool, scarcely second to it in the amount of trade, should not exist. And what other state has a water front and harbor for shipping, like Virginia on the Chesapeake? What other has better river channels for an inland trade? What other has finer scenery, a more fruitful soil, or, on the whole, a more comfortable and healthier climate? Here is the great future of Virginia. Having it given her by right of nature to be the most magnificent state of the union, and having a great history behind her to fulfill, she now reaches the true mark of her destiny, even that which her patriot fathers so nobly earned for the generations to come. In this grand felicity of change, inaugurated by the census, Maryland and Delaware take a part correspondent. Missouri, bounded on the west, by a territory protected for freedom by the Compromise, and north by Iowa, and east by Illinois, is a state notched into free territory, and being also on the great highway westward, can, by no possibility remain a slave state long. [After the wave of population has rolled across the first line of states, and floated slavery ✓ away, the same process, a census or two later, will reach the next tier south, and with the same result. All this, you observe, by an operation silent as the movements of the stars. No questions are raised, that shake the fabric of society. The only questions will be questions

of profit and loss, or rather of profit alone; for, so far, nothing will be lost by any body.]

[But the end is not here. Another and different kind of operation will be going on, meantime, in the most southern states, commonly called the cotton-growing states. For the census, it will very soon be found, is at work there also, to put an end to slavery in a manner that suffers no debate, and is not to be resisted. Many persons in these states, I know not with what or how much real intent, are heard breaking out, every few years, in threats of a Southern Confederacy. By this separation they propose to save and make sure the institution of slavery. They do not appear to observe that they are abolishing it themselves with inevitable certainty, by just that in which they are most pleased, viz: by the increase of their census. Why, if they were separated from us by a Chinese wall, drawn along their whole northern frontier, if the terms of non-intercourse were so perfect that they would never even know on their side what is passing on the other, they would still be pressing on to the extinction of slavery, by all the momentum of their social increase, and would have the institution virtually finished, by just about the time when it is finished, through the social increase and the irruption of free labor, on the other side of the wall. Indeed we may take it either way; if they fall into so great poverty and public misery as to make no increase, that will put an end to slavery; and if they thrive by a rapid growth of numbers, as they expect and desire, that will put an end to it quite as certainly. By no

human possibility can such a proposed confederacy keep the institution alive for more than about seventy-five or a hundred years—a very short life for the new halcyon age, to be inaugurated.

Dwell a moment on the process. As yet, they have seen nothing of it, because they have had a boundless scope of territory in which to spread their plantation system unrestricted. But there is an end to this possibility, and the end is much closer at hand than many suppose. Subtracting, first, the exhausted lands, which are increasing almost as fast as the census itself; next, the unproductive sand-plains; next, the marshes, and swamps, and everglades, and lands too broken, or too thin for culture, the white population needs only to be doubled, and the feasible plantation lands are quite taken up. And so, at just about the time when the northern free-labor region gets full and begins to overflow, there will also begin to be a dividing up of plantations between the sons of the former owners. Having no longer any Mississippi, or Texas, to go to for a fresh plantation, the sons will be settled on the homestead. Their sons will make another subdivision, and theirs another. And so, within three or four generations, the grand township ranges, so to speak, of the plantation system will be gone, and the territory will be covered by innumerable small freeholds, cultivated in a small way of industry and economy by their owners. Some will prefer to have no slaves, depending on free labor; others will retain a few, just because it is their habit to believe that none but slaves can work, but with abund-

ant complaints of the vexatious and hard life they make of it. Nothing can be done with slavery in this small way. When the great plantation system dies, slavery dies with it. First, the slave ceases to be a valuable property in the market. Next, he becomes a burden. Then emancipation passes imperceptibly, just as the dead leaves fall off the trees in the autumn. Sometimes a breath of wind rustles among them, and sometimes they drop in the still sunshine by their own simple weight. Nobody notes the day, or the hour, when they are gone, and yet the trees are very shortly bare.)

Another process goes on silently and with only a slower pace, by which the emancipated race are gradually reduced in numbers; for it is, in one view, a sorrowful thing to add, that emancipation brings no hopeful promise to the colored race. I know of no example in human history, where an inferior and far less cultivated stock has been able, freely intermixed with a superior, to hold its ground. On the other hand, it will always be seen that the superior lives the other down, and finally quite lives it away. And, indeed, since we must all die, why should it grieve us, that a stock thousands of years behind, in the scale of culture, should die with fewer and still fewer children to succeed, till finally the whole succession remains in the more cultivated race? At present, the African race, in this country, multiplies only because it has herdsmen for its keepers. But where it has no such keepers, as in the northern states, every census shows that, with all the additions straying in from the south, it

it scarcely holds its own. The difficulty is not that single examples of character and manly power, or even of brilliant endowment, do not appear—such examples have appeared, not seldom, in the Indian race—but it is that the race, as a whole, are too low to get any sufficient spring of advancement. Many are too indolent to work, too improvident to prepare comfort for their families. Many fall into ways of crime. Others are a prey to the vices of civilization, under which they die prematurely, and get their blood so poisoned as to finally cut away the succession of a posterity. In this way, doing what we can for their improvement, they are likely to become finally extinct; passing out of record among us, in precisely the same way as the Aboriginal races themselves.

Here, I conceive, is the fore-doomed issue of American slavery. The true statesman, I think, will scarcely fail to perceive it. He that holds the seven stars and Orion has it in his hand, and He has put His causes down upon it in a sentence of absolute removal—thus, and therefore it must go. As an institution out of date, it lingers behind its time, but the day of its dismissal is sealed. No wisdom of man, or tempest of man's obstinacy can save it; and, what is about equally plain, no agitations of philanthropy, or objurgations of reform, can very much hasten it. About the only thing we can do with much effect or benefit, is to limit the spread of the fire, and leave it to burn itself out. So far we only follow the great fathers of the confederacy, north and south, who not only would not name it in their

Constitution, but agreed, with one voice, to make the Ohio its impassable limit. And, if I am right, there is no part of the country that has an interest so profound in the limitation of slavery, as the most southern section, which has ultimately to bear the condensed evils and the final death of the system. The less, therefore, there is of it, the better for them; for they must take the brunt of it in the end.

Holding, now, this general view of the subject, it is not to be disguised that our duties respecting it will be tempered by qualifications that correspond. Plainly enough we are in no such relation to the question of a summary abolition, as the British people were, when they had only to carry the vote of a home parliament against it. Means to ends, in that case, are not means to ends, with us.

At the same time, it is equally clear that we are not to be complained of, because we claim the right of free speech, concerning it. No constitutions, or compromises, or delicacies of pacific relationship, can require us to renounce the older right of good influence, of argument, and of rectified opinion. It is inalienable even; if we gave it up to-day, we should have it still to-morrow. Therefore not to use a right so sacred, in a way of charity and reason, is the greater violation of our duty.

We have also the right as citizens, to resist the agitations of political encroachment and usurpation on the part of slavery, by agitations to repel and roll back its advances, and this right we can not give up. If slavery

has claimed to itself the principal offices and trusts of the government for the past fifty years, if it has led us every few years into purchases and conquests of territory for its possession, if it has stolen our statesmen by the intrigues and promises of party, if it has been using threats of treason to extort new terms of concession from us, we have our remedy and we must use it. Any thing that belongs to firmness, and a conscientious fidelity to our free institutions, any agitation necessary to save the trust committed to us, and keep the balance of our constitutional rights and safeguards, we must be ready for, and no matter what political storms may be raised, we must not spare. The time has gone by for any such timorous and tidy policy in these matters, as some of our advisers have counseled.

But the great moral agitation against slavery, or for the abolition of slavery—what shall we do with this? I certainly would not speak with disrespect of those conscientious, right-designing men, who, seeing no other kind of remedy, have been drawn to enlist in this campaign. Considering how long a campaign it must be, how the reaction against it must only strengthen slavery for at least four generations, and that probably two centuries must pass, even if they bring the whole north into their opinions, before it can begin to make any very decided impression, they show a confidence in principles that is even a little heroic. But, for one, I have not been able, looking at the much more powerful causes at work in the question—working as they do with much greater celerity—to find the motive that

should justify me, in spending the little force I have, in a work so unpromising, as regards real productiveness.

I am well aware that the more impetuous and fiery class of agitators will be shocked, by what appears to be so tame a position. What can be more shameful, they will say, than to take a great moral question, like this, out of the hands of righteous agitation, dismiss all just responsibility concerning it, and give it over to causes purely natural; as if it were a question of the weather! It is cowardly, selfish, heartless, just the way to sacrifice all impression, even of dignity, in those who ought rather to be in the heroic vein of reformers, making the air itself tingle with their appeals. Very well, gentlemen, if you have strength to spend where strength adds nothing, if you can not stand still and see the salvation of God, because you have such quantities of salvation in your own agitating capacity, do not spare, let nothing be lost, add your drop to the Mississippi, and say—"now it is a river!" Excuse me, in the meantime, if I do not strain the blood into my eyes, to push on causes that are going with a momentum of their own; going, too, with such celerity that nobody can even hope to hasten them, scarcely to keep up with them. Why should I be contriving the abolition of slavery, and raising little storms and thunders of human campaigning against it, when the Almighty Himself has a silent campaign of inevitable doom against it, marching on the awful census tramp of south and north to push it forever away. This campaigning, too, of God, if we look upon it rightly, has a moral significance more deep

and vast than the fussing and the noisy clatter of a whole million of reformers. True these are causes that we speak of, but they are God's causes, and God is not in the way of doing idle things. In these causes he hides his arguments, reproofs, and retributions; and when the pillars of heaven tremble at the note of them, it can not be that a very considerable noise of reform and human agitation adds much to the moral significance of the occasion.

However there is something to be said apart from all abolitionizing, which we can never cease to say. There are things in human slavery, against which we can not withhold our testimony, even if it were not to exist a year longer. The tearing asunder of parents and children, husbands and wives; the compulsory concubinage substituted for marriage among human beings; a form of society that denies the right of chastity, the right of a Sunday, the right of serving God with a free conscience, the right of any sort of culture—this is the ineffable, unspeakable wrong of slavery, and we can not be at peace with it for an hour. If slavery can exist without such incidents, then let it so exist. If it can not, we will so far set our testimony against it, day and night, even if we can not shorten its existence by a day. God has no principles of morality or government, if these things are vindicable.

So far, at least, we shall not desert the moralities of the cause, even if we do not agitate for the abolition of slavery. Besides, it will be something gained for high principles and the sanctity of religion, if we can but

clear the wretched impostures of principle and doctrine, which have been gendered, in such profusion, by the process, thus far, of the argument. First, we have the outsiders of reason, snuffing ignorance and falsity in the Scripture—philanthropic hyenas, tearing at society and government and gospel, clawing the world in general by their infallible abstractions, and pushing on the abolition of slavery in a way to abolish pretty nearly every thing else. Next, we have the professed insiders of faith and Christian piety, doing, if possible, still greater injury to the Scripture, by the opposite wrongs they put upon it. On one side they go to it to get slavery authorized, and appealing to the facts it records—the curse upon Ham, the slaveholding of the patriarchs, the license given by Moses, the silence of the New Testament, when Christ and his apostles met the fact of slavery wherever they went. Then we have, on the other side, whole volumes written, showing, by an obstinate, fore-doomed exegesis, that real slavery never was, and never was permitted, either in the Old Testament or the New, and drawing out inferences from declared principles to disprove equally well-known facts. And so it turns out that the Scripture is about equally humbled by the opposite perversities of use; on one side by making it an authority to support the eternity of wrong in the world; and, on the other, by torturing its meaning out of it, to save it from being shamed by the progress of society. Were the question between them polygamy and not slavery, they would have the same precise treatment or course of practice to go over.

Opposite to all such low conceptions of Scripture and its authority, the true doctrine, that which does it a real, in place of a mock honor, is that it expects a growth in the moralities, and that God is all the way through putting in new germs of possibility, to raise the conceptions of men and make them capable, in society, of better things. He does not hesitate to say that he has given "statutes that were not good"—only they were the best the people were capable of. And Christ himself allows that the law gave husbands a right of divorce by their own act, doing it "because of the hardness of their hearts;" for the barbarity of the times was such, that, if husbands were not allowed to put away their wives, they would only do what was worse and more shocking to get rid of them. But you, he says, are now capable of better things. The *principle* of virtue remains the same, of course, in all ages; necessary and immutable as God; but the moralities of particular action, in the outward life, are to change, to be more and more refined, and brought closer to God's own perfect beauty. It is to be, in fact, the glory of Christianity, that it prepares a growth in ethics and evens up the world to those higher conceptions of duty and beneficent practice, which are necessary to the well-being of society. Polygamy, slavery and the slave-trade, war, piracy, persecution—all these, by the appointed progress of moral opinion, are to be finally lawed out of the world. So it has been already with piracy, and the slave trade, and, we may almost say, with wars of conquest. So, too, have grown up the

new codes of international, commercial, and maritime law—all moral in their foundations, and all created within the last three centuries.

How beautiful, how truly grand, in this view, is the dignity and frankness of the Scripture, in representing the beginnings of history just as they were; showing what patient yieldings God made, here and there, to barbarism; doing always the best thing possible with men as they were, and then, as better things were possible, raising his standards, still higher to carry them on still farther. And yet what do we see, even in this nineteenth century after Christ, but the assumption, by our anti-slavery and pro-slavery agitators, that God has been able to do nothing for the world, and never can do any thing—going back to the barbaric times even to get the eternal laws of society, and torturing both words and facts, with remorseless industry, to get an authority from them which is not in them, and by God Himself, is never understood to be.

It results, too, on this latter side, the side of the Christian reformers and agitators, that they make their own standards the rule of their judgments of others; denouncing them, or excommunicating them forthwith, as if they had already come into these standards and felt bound by them. The precise dignity of the Scripture, rightly conceived, is that it makes time an element in the growth of moral convictions, and judges or condemns no man till he is found violating obligations already matured in his feeling. Pursuing a different method, we are only calumniators and fanatics; as such,

doing the greatest dishonor to religion, and only wounding the sense of justice, in a way to rob our arguments of a hearing; using, too, even our riper convictions of conduct, as if they had spoiled us of charity itself. It should not be an offense to assume that our southern brethren, living under slavery, are kept back by it from those moral convictions which the ages have been slowly maturing in us all. Exactly the same thing is probably true of us in a hundred points, where we ourselves are not up to the higher conceptions of the future ages.

But this new enactment of our Congress, called the Fugitive Slave Law—are we going tamely to submit ourselves to this, under the pretext that the census will take care of slavery for us? I think not, and I say it with the greater sorrow, that the Constitution of the United States plainly gives a right to the recovery of fugitives, which we can not as good citizens deny. Let our part of the bond be religiously fulfilled. The plain truth, meantime, in regard to this particular law, is that it was passed in high blood, and carries the plantation airs, unmistakingly, in its nod. It was meant to insult us, and crack the lash in our faces. No right to *such* a law is given by the Constitution. By the comity of states adjacent to each other, it was common law, before the Constitution, to allow the recapture of stray animals; and so far as a neighboring state, though by its own wrong, is accustomed to claim a property in men, they were commonly allowed to have the right, on their own responsibility, of a peaceful reclamation of these. The

Constitution simply affirms this right. But this is not the import of the law in question. This law allows us, on the comity side where we ought to have some rights, to have no adequate security at all against the kidnaping of our own citizens; nay, it even takes away from our own courts the right of protecting our own personal liberties. Furthermore, it requires us, free men, conscientiously principled against slavery as a wrong, to join the Marshal's *posse*, and give chase to a fugitive—this under heavy penalties if we refuse! And then it adds the mortal taunt of meanness, by offering a double fee to our Commissioner who passes on the question, if he decides *against* the fugitive! Such a law was not fit to be passed. It never can be enforced. Let it be repealed in its obnoxious features, and put in some guise of decency and good manners, allowing the masters to arrest their own fugitives and take them away, on some adequate proof and trial of their ownership, and these northern states will interpose no obstacle, I am sure, but will leave the masters to their own responsibility, under God and the Constitution.

We come back thus to the verdict of the census, and here we rest. It is a very great comfort to us, under so many irritating causes involved in this matter of slavery, to know that it can not always last. Otherwise our future as a people, our chances indeed of remaining a people, would be sadly overcast. One great misery of the institution, both for the masters and for us is, that it creates an imperious, violent, and stormy character; loosens the passions, reduces the sovereignty of law,

and abates the counsel of reason to such a degree as to make them uncomfortable associates in the government, and about as uncomfortable to themselves. God be thanked that his causes are at work, and that the end is visible! If we can manage, by much patience and forbearance, to get by fifty or sixty more years, we have nothing farther to fear for our complete unity, and solid perpetuity as a nation.

For one, I most thoroughly sympathize with the condition of these slaveholding states. And I do not mean by this that I pity them, which would only be a kind of insult added to their misfortune. I mean that slavery is upon them, without their consent. I mean that men naturally, or by a kind of natural honor, approve that into which they have been trained by their laws and by their condition. I mean that the sentiment of the world is against them and is felt to be, while yet they have no power to change it. I mean that they have no bright future before them, but have all the burdens upon them, all the untold miseries to liquidate, of a system crowding to its fall. I mean that if they seriously ask, how they can issue this question of slavery, so as to make a hopeful future for their slaves, the manner is not easy or plain. I mean that if they undertake to establish the family and marriage among their slaves, and redress the other unquestionable wrongs of the institution, there will be so many from whom it has taken away the care for these things, that such as do can not have the comfort allowed them, even of this beginning of righteousness. For all these things I give

them sympathy, and would judge them with allowance. All the greater sympathy would I bespeak for them, that their multitudes of abject and despised poor have so little capacity of self-assertion under slavery, and so little sense, in fact, of the causes that hold them down, making their condition hopeless; greater sympathy still that so many Christian men and women, struggling before God over the felt evils of their condition, are hampered in their prayers; borne away from the meekness they aspire to, by their passions; roughed and made gentle by their necessary exactions. O, it is a dreadful lot, this lot of slavery! Let us have patience with it, speak of it with allowance, bathe it with all heavenly charity. And when we are able to say, in our thanksgiving—Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation—let the census roll he gives us be the welcome, joyful pledge, that He is hasting on to the deliverance of our country, from this most uncomfortable, always boding, and tempestuous evil.