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THE  
**LETTER OF APPOMATOX**  
TO THE  
**PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA:**  
EXHIBITING A CONNECTED VIEW  
OF THE  
*Recent proceedings in the House of Delegates,*  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
**THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY;**  
AND  
A SUCCINCT ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
DOCTRINES BROACHED BY THE FRIENDS OF ABOLITION,  
**IN DEBATE:**  
AND THE  
**MISCHIEVOUS TENDENCY**  
OF THOSE  
**Proceedings and Doctrines.**

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**RICHMOND:**

Thomas W. White, *Printer.*

**1832.**

**TO THE PUBLIC.**

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THE following essay is published in this form, not by the author, but by a number of gentlemen who believe that it presents a condensed view of the proceedings and debates of the house of delegates on the abolition of slavery within the commonwealth; and contains a fair exposition of the evils likely to result from such doctrines as have been advanced in this discussion. It is hoped that it will be read with attention, especially in eastern Virginia.

*Wm. Everett, Esq.*

*August 10<sup>th</sup> 1867.*

## TO THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA.

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[From the Richmond Enquirer of February 4, 1832.]

THE insurrection, which occurred in Southampton last summer, was, in every point of view, a most extraordinary event; most extraordinary, whether we have regard to its exciting causes, or its immediate mischiefs, or its general effects. For, as the very peculiar incentives by which it was instigated, could never have been detected by any effort of reason without the positive evidence of facts developed in the trials of the conspirators, and as the gloomiest imagination could hardly have prefigured such a scene of atrocious crime as that which marked the brief career of this rebellion, so no human sagacity could have foreseen, or conjectured, those general and remoter consequences, which have already flowed from it, and which, but too probably, may still flow on; consequences, the direct reverse of what common reason would have anticipated; stranger than the exciting causes of the insurrection; and involving and portending dangers and mischiefs, compared with which the murders perpetrated in its progress, were evils too partial and trivial to deserve a further thought. The proceedings of the house of delegates, would almost seem to justify a belief, that there was something prophetic in that hallucination, by which Nat Turner declared he was himself incited, and instigated to incite others, to that detestable and detested massacre; namely, that "he had repeated revelations from The Spirit, which fully confirmed him in the impression, that he was ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty."

We have this man's own account of those instigations of the devil (to give them the appropriate epithet) which prompted the conspiracy, and directed, throughout, the execution of its designs. It is curious to observe, how exactly, in his confessions, he describes the usual course of an imposter; the affectation of mystery, sanctity and importance, the partial self-delusion which seems necessary to his success, the resort at last to ordinary incentives to mischief, and the whole process by which he works on the minds of others. He was moved, he says, by "divine inspiration"—by "revelations of the Holy Ghost" often repeated—by visions, wherein "he

saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened, the thunder rolled in the heavens, and blood flowed in streams"—by "loud noises in the heavens" also, announcing The Spirit, which instantly appeared to him, "and said that the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that he (Nat Turner) should take it on, and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching, when the first should be the last and the last should be first"—by promises of The Spirit, that "by signs in the heavens it would make known to him when he should commence *the great work*"—by the appearance of the first sign, which was no other than the eclipse of the sun in February last—and by the appearance of the sign again, namely, that unusual state of the atmosphere shortly preceding the outbreaking of the conspiracy, which gave the sun's rays a bluish tint. Prompted and directed by these supernatural influences, upon the appearance of the first sign, "the seal was removed from his lips, and he communicated *the great work laid out for him to do, to four* in whom he had the greatest confidence;" and, when the sign appeared again, he got together a petty gang of six followers, whom he incited, partly by the contagion of the evil spirit with which he was himself possessed, and partly by another spirit, which he invoked doubtless with better assurance of its efficacy, the spirit, namely, of brandy, to conspire with him in *the great work*. And by these seven men, was *the great work* commenced. Others joined them in their progress: but the whole gang of insurgents, from first to last, seem not to have exceeded *sixty* men, of whom *five* were free negroes. That there was no general plot of insurrection among the slaves of that district of country, or even of the immediate vicinity, is now quite certain. There was no concerted plan of action among the conspirators themselves; no provision of means to accomplish their object; hardly, indeed, any definite object. They rose in the dead of night; and, in a thinly peopled neighborhood, where the alarm could not be rapidly spread, they succeeded, during that night and the following morning, in murdering ten men, fourteen women, and thirty-one children. It was a mere scene of massacre, than which, for the narrow bounds of space and time to which it was confined, none ever was more indiscriminate, ruthless and abominable. Their last effort was an attack on Dr. Blunt's house by a party of twenty; which was repelled by two men and three boys. They were met, as promptly as could possibly have been expected, considering the circumstances of the onslaught, by the militia of the county, or rather of the neighborhood; by whom, before any of the forces wisely ordered

thither from a distance had arrived at the scene of action, the whole gang had been dispersed, and all of them either slain in the pursuit, or made prisoners, except the ringleader, whom the sense of "divine inspiration" by no means divested of an especial regard for his own safety. I did not understand at the time, but I perfectly understand now, why so much pains was taken to fix upon the people of Southampton, the imputation of want of promptitude and courage upon the occasion; a charge founded on the single circumstance, that the first very small party which encountered the insurgents, fired with precipitation and without effect, and retreated to another party which was advancing, that they might return to the charge (as, in fact, they did) with assured certainty of success. I now understand, likewise, the reason of that graver imputation of wanton cruelty practised on the innocent, after danger from the guilty was over. I believe there never was a more groundless slander. If, under the excitement produced by the sight of their murdered neighbors and relatives, and of the mangled bodies of women and children, and in the uncertainty existing at the time as to the extent of the conspiracy, some few slaves were slain, whom terror, not the sense of guilt, had urged to flight, far from being surprised at the fact, much more imputing blame to the militia on that account, a candid mind will find cause for wonder, and for praise, in the extreme moderation with which they checked the impulse of vengeance.

The general effect which the news of this insurrection produced upon the public mind, so far as I could judge from my own observation and information diligently sought from others, was exactly such as might reasonably have been expected, and no more. At first, the thought naturally presented itself, that the rebellion grew out of some more general plot for insurrection, extending to that whole district of country, if not farther; and a thousand rumors (of course) were invented and circulated, well suited to confirm, keep alive and renew that impression, in the nervous and timid; but all thinking men saw, at once, that if any such general plot had been in agitation, the partial outbreaking of it in Southampton was alone sufficient to avert its mischiefs. There remained a vague sense of insecurity, arising from the reflection, that the mischief of such insurrections, however partial and transient, must, like the thunderbolt, fall on some particular spot; and that, in the lottery of evil, it may perchance fall on ourselves, our friends or neighbors. This, I suppose, disturbed not the slumbers of any man of ordinary firmness. No such man entertained the least apprehension, that any enterprise of the kind can ever eventuate in any general, exten-

sive, permanent injury to the free white race which (for the present) constitutes this community; since the first alarm must always dispel the danger: the only serious apprehension was, and is, that repetitions of servile rebellion may result (in what all good men would lament) such a destruction of the slave race as may exceed the just measure of punishment and the necessity of example. Whatever may be thought abroad, these people engage our care, not only because they are subjects of property, but because they are objects of humanity, and, in very numerous instances, of affection. As to that universal panic produced by the Southampton insurrection—those thrilling agonies of terror, affecting, not only old women of both sexes, and children of all ages, from infancy to dotage, but bearded men, men of reflection and courage—that utter abjection of spirit, in short, and dastard cowardice, which, as I am informed, certain orators of the house of delegates, in the debate on the question of reference of the memorial of the Society of Friends, depicted with such glowing eloquence; I must protest, that I have seen nothing of it; I never heard any thing of it, till I heard of that debate; and, to speak plainly, notwithstanding the respectability of the gentlemen by whom it was avouched, I do not believe a word of it. I am quite sure, that the gentlemen, who thought proper to display their rhetoric on that topic, (those, at least, with whom I am acquainted,) have never themselves felt any thing of this panic. I know hundreds and thousands who are wholly exempt from this panic. Do we see any symptoms of the panic in the conduct of the Southampton militia? in the promptitude and vigour with which they suppressed the insurrection which is supposed to have produced the panic, or in their moderation after it was suppressed? Let it be put to the test of experiment, when and how it may, I am convinced the experimenters will find there is no panic. Yet this supposed state of panic has afforded the main arguments, by which not only the project of liberation by colonization with due regard to the rights of slave property, but the schemes for abolition without the least regard to those rights, have been recommended!

Suppose this unmanly panic does, or did exist; was it wise to proclaim it to the world? to bond and free? thereby, so far forth as the publication of the disgraceful truth can operate, encouraging our slaves to rebellion as an enterprise of probable success and little danger or difficulty, and discouraging their masters from any efforts of resistance, as likely to be unsupported, and therefore vain. Suppose information of the existence of such a panic addressed to a *body of practical statesmen*; and suppose it agreed on all hands (as is reported to have been “*emphatically said,*” or rather repeated after Mr. Ritchie, who repeated it after some southern editor,



who copied it from the slang of the English newspapers) that *something must be done*; that, unless *something can be done*, we ought to “flee to the mountains for our lives;” that if *nothing can be done*, this land may be justly likened to Sodom and Gomorrah about to be consumed by fire from heaven, and the favored few must be warned to “stay not in the plain:” how could it be accounted for, that the direct obvious methods of dispelling alarm, and re-assuring the community of safety, should be overlooked? that no care should be given to revise and improve the ordinary police of the country, and to infuse into it more vigilance, activity, order, prudence? that it should occur to no man, to provide such a disposable force, as would stifle the spirit of insurrection if it exists, or quell it in its first movement? I say, with entire confidence, that if the legislature would only provide, that a company of minute men shall be drafted from each regiment on this side the mountain, completely armed and equipped, placed under the command of officers appointed by the executive and acting under its general instruction, trained with more frequency and care than usual, subjected to martial law from the moment of warning—organized, in short, upon the principle on which minute men were organized in the revolutionary war; this would be such a disposable force as would give complete assurance of safety to the country, and render insurrection hopeless and innocuous, if not impossible. Who could have anticipated, that the bloody horrors of the Southampton massacre, instead of suggesting plans for stricter discipline, would give birth to schemes of emancipation? Who could have imagined, that the friends of liberation by abolition, and the friends of liberation by colonization, would, *by that cause*, be stimulated to more active exertion, and to a rivalry of zeal? who could have divined that the projects of either party would find, *in the recollection of that scene*, the motive to a more favorable hearing? Have the accursed deeds of Nat Turner and his gang elevated the slave race in the opinion of our philosophers and philanthropists, and established a new title to favor? If the wisdom of any of these projects was as certain and obvious as their absurdity seems glaring, ought they to have been brought forward—ought they to have been entertained at such a time and in such a juncture of affairs, as to give the appearance at least, if not to manifest the reality, that they are not recommended to our sense of justice or of policy, but addressed to our *fears*? *Our fears of danger*, present or prospective, *from our slaves!* I blush—I cannot repress the sentiment—I burn with shame and indignation at the thought.

There have been presented to the house of delegates peti-

tions from *twelve* counties and 1,188 citizens in all, praying that some provisions should be made by law, for the removal of the free negroes from the commonwealth; *their* views, it is obvious, are hostile to all schemes of emancipation whatever, and their petitions seem not, as yet, to have attracted any serious notice. Petitions have been presented from *six* counties signed by 398 citizens, praying that an effort should be made to procure an amendment of the constitution of the United States, authorizing the federal government to assist in ridding us of the black population: these also have hitherto escaped particular notice. Two colonization societies, and 366 citizens of *four* counties, have preferred memorials and petitions, suggesting (I state their general object as I understand it) measures for the removal, first of the free negroes, and then of slaves hereafter to be emancipated by their owners, or purchased by the public at a fair price, with a view to colonization, and the appropriation of means to effect the purpose. Then there have been presented—a petition of *sixty-one* citizens of Warwick, the prayer of which I interpret to mean, generally, that *something may be done*—and petitions from Buckingham and Loudoun, signed by no fewer than *twenty-seven men*;—and petitions from Augusta, signed by *three hundred and forty-three women*,—and a memorial of the Society of Friends (of Hanover, I believe)—and a memorial of a meeting of (we know not how many) citizens of Albemarle—praying for the abolition of slavery; some, upon the plan since proposed by Mr. Randolph; some, in general terms; all without the least regard to the rights of slave property as by law established and vested.

And upon the strength of these petitions, it was said, “that the people, *stimulated by recent occurrences*, with a simultaneous movement and united voice, demanded the interposition of the legislature, and required that *something should be done!*” And these are “the petitions from all quarters of the state,” under which “the table *almost literally groaned*,” crying out in language so strong and so loud as not to be disregarded, for *something to be done*. As that groaning of the table surely cannot be attributed to the *number* of the petitioners, it must have been owing to their *quality*—or, perhaps, the phrase was suggested by the peculiar tone of the petitions, and especially that of the *three hundred and forty-three ladies* of Augusta, who (as the house was solemnly assured) will be compelled to tear asunder the ties that bind them to their country, and to “fly to foreign lands in pursuit of happiness and safety, if *something be not done* to arrest this threatening evil;” that is, something which “*in time* will extirpate slavery.” Were these “doleful jeremiades” (to borrow a phrase

from Mr. Jefferson) composed by persons who would not count, or for persons who they supposed could not count? Or were they, in truth, only flourishes of rhetoric, intended to establish that fundamental proposition, which is the common basis of all the projects, expressed in that happy saying, that *something must be done*? There has been, I must say, a tone of exaggeration pervading the debates upon this subject, dictated no doubt by over-much zeal, which would be ludicrous if it were not mischievous.

The memorial of the Society of Friends (the first, I believe, that was presented to the house) was, after an unavailing opposition, referred to a select committee; to which, of course, in the sequel, were referred all the other memorials and petitions as they were presented. This committee having been (for some reason not necessary to be inquired into) rather slow in making its report, Mr. Goode of Mecklenburg—thinking that the consideration of the subject by the house, coupled with the language of the daily press, which had taken part in favor of abolition, had caused the diffusion of opinions highly injurious to the interests and to the peace of the country, that the action of the house on the subject was useless, that it was creating great pain and anxiety among a large portion of the citizens of the state, and that it was raising expectations in the minds of the black population, doomed to a disappointment which could not fail to engender feelings dangerous to all parties—moved the following resolution: “*Resolved*, That the select committee raised on the subject of slaves, free negroes, and *the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical, massacre in Southampton*—be discharged from the further consideration of all petitions, memorials and resolutions, which have for their object the manumission of persons held in servitude under the existing laws of the commonwealth; and that it is not expedient to legislate on the subject.” Whereupon, Mr. Randolph of Albemarle, moved to strike out the substantial part of the resolution following the word “Southampton,” and to insert an instruction to the committee, which would make the resolution run thus: “*Resolved*, That the select committee raised on the subject of slaves, free negroes, and *the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical massacre in Southampton*,—be instructed to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the qualified voters in the several towns, cities, boroughs and counties of this commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law, that the children of all female slaves, who may be born in this state on or after the 4th day of July, 1840, shall become the property of the commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty-one, and females at the age of eighteen, if detained by the owners

within the limits of Virginia until they shall respectively arrive at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal beyond the limits of the United States; and that the said committee have leave to report by bill or otherwise."

I have nothing to say concerning the motives which dictated this proposition to the mover, or which have gained for it the support of others: the motives of individuals are, generally, of no importance to any but themselves, and affect only their own consciences and characters. I am willing to believe their motives virtuous: I discuss only men's actions, and the consequences of them. It will be remarked, that the very frame of Mr. Randolph's proposition as he has connected it with the beginning words of Mr. Goode's resolution, exhibits this project for the extirpation of negro slavery "in time," as suggested by, as a consequence of, "the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical massacre in Southampton." This was, probably, the effect of accidental collocation: and I should not have noticed it, if the policy of such a measure had not been in fact recommended, throughout the whole debate which ensued, by perpetual references to the Southampton massacre; its actual horrors, the greater horrors it portends, and the terrors it has excited. As the proposal of this scheme stands acknowledged the eldest born offspring of the Southampton massacre, we need not doubt it will have brethren. And the very proposal, and much more the leading topic of argument in favor of it, contain a plain indication to those whom it concerns, that, if the proposal should fail at the present session (as it must have been foreseen that it would,) another insurrection and massacre, a repetition of servile rebellion, would serve to promote the eventual adoption of the plan—or, perhaps, suggest to the friends of this great cause, an improvement upon their plan, whereby emancipation, instead of being deferred to the children of slaves born after the 4th of July, 1840, shall be given presently, to the existing race. The *intelligence* of the *blacks*—aye, and the *ignorance* of the *whites*—have been exaggerated, like the evils of slavery and every thing else that belongs to the subject, as if fancy held the pencil in her wildest mood, and mocked at sober reason and truth: but, (if no incendiaries shall find encouragement to action in these "miraculous" proceedings of the house of delegates) there are some few blacks that have intelligence enough to understand such indications as these, and to explain them to the rest; and the great body of the whites have intelligence enough to understand them too, though some few of them do not, and to apply the means of obviating their effects.

There are two obvious remarks suggested by that part of Mr. Randolph's amendment, which proposes to refer this hopeful plan of emancipation to the qualified voters throughout the commonwealth. The first is, that one cannot but admire, that, either it never occurred to his mind that the inevitable effect of referring such a question to the people, in such a form, would be to present all the topics that belong to it—the same topics that have been debated in the house of delegates—for public discussion in every court yard, in every neighborhood, at every public meeting of the people for any purpose; or, if this did occur to him, he should be utterly unconcerned for the consequences to which such a public general discussion of such a subject might lead; the agitating, exciting, maddening effects it might probably produce in either race, bond or free. The other remark is, that the reference of the question to the qualified voters at large, would be a palpable evasion, if not direct violation, of those provisions of the new constitution whereby the representation of the several parts of the commonwealth is adjusted; and if such a precedent were established; it would not only render those particular provisions nugatory to all practical purposes, but the very principle of a written constitution futile. The history of the late convention cannot, I suppose, be already forgotten. All men must remember the vehement contest concerning the basis of representation, which so long distracted its councils; that that contest grew, chiefly, if not entirely, out of this very subject of slave population and property, and the unequal distribution of it between the western and eastern parts of the state; that the western delegation demanded a representation to be apportioned, from time to time, according to free white population only, to which a portion of the eastern delegation acceded, while the great body of it insisted, that representation ought to be apportioned upon a mixed principle of persons and interests, and this with an especial view to the security of our slave property; and that the arrangement of representation which was in fact made, was what the eastern delegation was at last content to take, though the western was unwilling to give, as our security against impositions of unequal burdens on our slave property, and against all manner of injurious legislation concerning it, by persons who had little or no common interest with us in the subject. It was not supposed, at the time, that they had as little fellow-feeling for us, as common interest with us. And now, within two short years after this arrangement of the representation was settled and ordained, a proposal is made to refer a plan for the violent abrogation of the rights of slave property without the consent of its owners, to the vote of the qualified voters throughout

the commonwealth! If such a proposition should ever be adopted, of what avail would be the scheme of representation ordained by the constitution, to the main purpose for which it was intended? of what avail to any purpose? If such a precedent were once established, these appeals to the people would soon grow into a system. There is a plausibility in such proposals well calculated to work on the timid and wavering who falter under the sense of responsibility; of whom some are to be found in all assemblies of men. Every question of great and vital interest—whatever the ordinary legislature cannot constitutionally do—whatever that body, as at present organized, cannot be prevailed upon to do, by its own authority—will be referred to the people in their collective sovereign capacity. The acts and behests of the sovereignty are, in their nature, paramount and absolute. From them there is no appeal but the last—the appeal to heaven. The obligation of the constitution will be, in effect, abrogated. We shall have no fixed settled principles of government, to which authority will look for direction, and to which individuals may appeal for security of their rights—but a revolutionary government—I do not mean a government established after a revolution, but a government revolutionary in its action—to which obedience, not being due by any ordinary social contract, must be exacted by force. The American principle of a written constitution, according to the school of politics in which I was bred, enforces the obligation of *the* constitution, whatever it may be, so long as it endures, on those who disapprove as well as on those who approve its provisions, and requires a strict observance of them, as the highest political and moral duty, from every functionary entrusted with the exercise of authority.

Let us suppose all objections to Mr. Randolph's plan, founded on the violation it proposes of the rights of slave property as vested by existing laws, surmounted—let us suppose those prejudices (if any one please so to regard them) which attach men to their rights of property of all kinds, and the moral sense of right and wrong which influences vulgar minds, supplanted by a more liberal philosophy, or enlightened by a purer religion, or subdued by an imperious necessity which knows no laws and allows no choice—and then, let us bestow a brief consideration to the plan itself, in point of policy and practicability. I shall confine myself to the most simple and obvious views of it. The plan proposes, “That the children of all female slaves born after the fourth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and forty, shall become the property of the commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty-one years, and the females at the age of eighteen;

if detained by the owners within the limits of Virginia until they shall respectively arrive at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal beyond the limits of the United States." Now, it is well known, that the owners of slaves must bear the charge of rearing the young, tending the sick, and maintaining the diseased, the decrepid and the aged; that they must defray, and are only enabled to defray, this charge, out of the profits of the labor of such as are in the vigor of youth or manhood; and that, in the surplus of those profits over and above that charge, and in the increase of their slave property, very frequently only in the latter, consists their gain. And here is a plan, whereby the charge of rearing the young born after July, 1840, and the charge of maintaining the old, at least until the parent stock which shall then be in existence shall pass away, is to be imposed upon the owners, while the profits of those who are in the vigor of youth and manhood, are to be taken away from them! Without care for themselves, without care for their wives and children, all the profits of their other capital, land or money, skill or industry, must be devoted to the advancement of this scheme; and even that fund would prove inadequate to ensure it success, or even to make a fair experiment of it. They would become slaves to their slaves—they must descend, indeed, to a much worse condition—for they would have the master's care upon their minds and consciences, without the sense of a master's protection. Is it supposed, that any tyranny can subdue us to the patient endurance of such a state of things? Every prudent slave-holder in the slave-holding parts of the state, would either migrate with his slaves to some state where his rights in slave property would be secured to him by the laws, or would surrender at once his rights in the parent stock as well as in their future increase, and seek some land where he may enjoy at least the earnings of his own industry. In the first case, the country would be deserted; in the other, it would be abandoned to the slaves, to be cultivated under the management of the state. The plan would result in a sacrifice, more probably an abandonment, of our *landed*, as well as the abolition of our *slave* property. Can any thing but force, can any force, tame us to wrongs like these? But suppose that, by some miraculous influence exerted upon our minds, we could be brought to submit to the experiment which Mr. Randolph proposes to make upon our property and our happiness, and to direct all our means and all our energies to the accomplishment of his plan. Then, all the children of slaves born after 1840, will in 1858 and 1860, become the

property of the commonwealth, to be hired out, thenceforth, until they shall earn by their labor the means of transportation, and (I suppose) settlement, beyond the limits of the United States. There is not a man that ever bestowed a thought upon such subjects, who does not know, that property of any kind in the hands of the public, is worse managed, and more unprofitable, than property of the like kind in the hands of individuals; and slave property let out to hire under the management of public agents, having no other interest than to enhance to the utmost, the expenses of their agency, will be peculiarly unproductive. Select the friends—select the saints—select the philosophers; the officers of this anomalous administrative department will give us the most flattering annual reports, and professions of benevolence, zeal and fidelity, without mercy: but they will not fail to appropriate to themselves as large a share of the profits as they possibly can. The young men of twenty-one, and the young women of eighteen, will not cease to multiply their race; the breeding women will not hire for their victuals and clothes; the children, the maimed and the diseased, will all be a dead charge upon the general fund of profits. We may be quite sure, that the nett profits will never suffice to defray the expense of the transportation of one half—no, nor a tythe of the number of the annual increase—unless, indeed, it may be anticipated, that this slave property of the commonwealth, left to the dominion of those who shall hire them from year to year, without any interest to preserve them, without any object but temporary gain, will be subjected to such hardships and privations, as will not only prevent all increase, but reduce the number within some manageable compass—in which view (and it is by no means an improbable one) the slave trade in its worst form, was humanity to the unhappy victims of it, and calculated to inspire noble and generous sentiments in the ruffians who carried it on, compared with the effects of this plan upon both races. I have no thought, that this plan, or any plan of the kind, will ever be put to the test of actual experiment; but if any such experiment ever shall be attempted, I apprehend that the parent slaves, seeing their children destined to enjoy freedom, will think themselves entitled to participate in the blessing, and that the young men, with liberty held up to them in prospect, will not be inclined to await patiently the slow, interminable operation of that singular system of finance on which the reversion is to depend. There is no imaginable device better suited than this plan, to produce a general servile war, the consequence of which must be the destruction of the negro race; and in this way, possibly, it might tend to “extirpate



slavery in time;" but all men who have any concern for our own peace and happiness, and all who feel any real sentiment of humanity towards the slaves, will concur in condemning and deprecating the means, as most ruinous and most cruel. I see it has been gravely argued, that when slavery shall be abolished throughout the land, and the black race shall have been deported, there will be an influx of white population to supply their place. But *when*—in what "long process of time"—will the abolition and deportation be completed? And while that work is going on, what white man, impelled from any cause, to leave his native land—if he can find another country in the world that will receive him, much more if he may find a happy settlement in the immense regions of the west—will ever migrate to Virginia, and encounter all the numberless and nameless dangers, which the process of abolition and deportation cannot fail to engender?

Mr. Randolph (as I am informed) recommended this plan in debate, chiefly by the authority of Mr. Jefferson. The highest degree of veneration for Mr. Jefferson, and the most boundless confidence in his opinions, are natural in his grandson, and amiable as I doubt not they are sincere; and if *he* carries such sentiments to excess, it only renders him, personally, more the object of esteem. But I am mistaken if Mr. Jefferson's authority is of force to make men forego the exercise of common reason, and neglect the plainest dictates of prudence. And I shall say boldly (without fear or care for the charge of presumption it may bring upon me) that this plan, by whomsoever devised, and by whosever opinions sanctioned, is unwise and impracticable, pernicious, unjust and cruel.

The arguments by which a constitutional power to abolish the rights of slave property, without the consent and against the will of its owners, has been claimed for the legislature, and vindicated in debate, would seem, to an ordinary observer of human affairs, altogether wonderful. Whenever in the late convention, any member of the eastern delegation expressed apprehensions for the security of our slave property, the western delegation, and that portion of the eastern which concurred with them, treated those apprehensions as idle fears, and even as mere pretences, and made the most solemn assurances, that their constituents respected the right of slave property as highly as any other kind, and held them absolutely inviolable. I believed most of them were perfectly sincere—I did not think they were all so—I apprehended there were some, who even then thought of the existence of slave property as a weakness in the constitution of eastern

society, which they might play upon, when it should suit any purpose they might have in view, and by which they might bend us to their wishes. But, in my mind, it was wholly unimportant, whether their professions were sincere or deceitful; for, whoever has any experience of mankind, knows, that men who vainly undertake to regulate affairs and to direct events, are themselves so much the creatures of circumstances, the mere effects of causes, that none but the most vigorous minds are capable even of making an effort to resist them, much more rising above them, or know to-day what sentiments they shall entertain to-morrow. Let us now see how the professions made on that occasion, and those solemn assurances to the east, have been fulfilled.

It has been by some gravely contended (in the debate in the house of delegates) that, though the rights of slave property, in respect to the parent stock now existing, are vested rights of property, yet there is not, and cannot be, any vested right of property in their increase yet unborn—as if every question of property did not depend upon the laws, and was not to be ascertained by reference to the laws—and as if the same laws (they have been in force for ages) which give the owners of slaves a vested property in the existing stock, did not also give them a like vested property in their future increase. If the rights of property in slaves now in being, be admitted to be property vested by law, which the legislature cannot constitutionally take away, how it can be reconciled with the integrity of common sense, that the right of property in their future increase, assured by the same laws, is not equally vested and inviolable, surpasses my comprehension. One gentleman, as he was at first understood, denied that there could be any property in slaves; by which, as he afterwards explained himself, he meant any *constitutional property* in them; that is, any property secured to its owners by the constitution: slave property, according to him, is only *statutory* property; the legislature is competent to repeal the statutes whereby it is vested, and so to divest and abrogate this property. The novelty of the distinction is its only merit; for it deserves not the praise of ingenuity. There is no particular kind of property mentioned in the constitution, and specifically assured to its owners. The constitution intended to secure all kinds of property to its owners, against the power of the public to take it away without compensation; a fundamental principle of all the governments of christendom; a principle, which Louis XIV. or Napoleon, in the plenitude of their power, durst never openly invade. All our property is vested and held under statutory or common law; and, as the legislature has, surely, the same power to repeal the one as the other, I

should like to know what property is to be regarded as *constitutional* property, and therefore inviolable? If there be any property, which, according to this odd distinction, can be regarded as peculiarly *statutory* property, it is the landed property of western Virginia, all of which was derived under statute law, and modern statute law: may the legislature, by repealing the land laws, take that property away from its owners, if it shall see or imagine any cause to do so, and resume the disposition of it according to its arbitrary will?—The constitution ordains, in express terms, that the legislature shall not pass “any law, whereby private property shall be taken *for public uses*, without just compensation:” to obviate which stern interdict, it has been suggested, that the abolition of slave property, by seizing it into the hands of the commonwealth, in order out of its profits to defray the expense of deporting it, is not taking it away *for public uses*, but *for the good of its owners*, however *they* may think to the contrary! a specimen of jesuistry that would have startled *Ignatius Loyola* himself.—But, “a voice has been heard from the west”—a voice from Berkeley—miraculous and overpowering as those “loud noises in the Heavens,” which were heard by Nat Turner—a voice from Berkeley, proclaiming the notable discovery, that our slave property is a “*nuisance*” and may be abated as such. And this notion, which seems to be the result of a mere confusion of ideas, is lauded as absolutely conclusive. It is remarkable, that this “*nuisance*” is more offensive in a direct ratio to its distance from the complaining party and in an inverse ratio to the quantity of offending matter in his neighborhood. That “magazine of gunpowder” in the town of Norfolk, is a “*nuisance*” to the county of Berkeley, and to all the people of the west! The people of the west, in which there are comparatively few slaves—in which there never can be any great increase of that kind of property, because their agriculture does not require it, and because, in a great part of their country, the negro race cannot be acclimated—the people of the west find *our* slave property, in *our planting country* where it is valuable, a “*nuisance*” to *them*! This reverses the proverb, that men bear the ills of others better than their own. I have known men sell all their slave property, and vest the proceeds in stock; and then become zealous for the abolition of slavery. And it would be matter of curiosity to ascertain, if it could be done, the aggregate number of the slaves held by all the orators, and all the printers, who are so willing to abate this “*nuisance*,” of slave property, held by other people—I suspect the census would be very short. The doctrines that have been for many years continually preached in Pennsylvania,

may, for aught I know, have rendered the slave property held in our counties lying in near neighborhood to that state, a "nuisance" to its owners—in which case, I am sure they have known how to get rid of it without the process of abolition—and the same doctrines preached here, may, if we take no care of ourselves, make our slave property a "nuisance" to us. But the great argument by which the constitutional power of the legislature to abrogate our slave property, has been vindicated, is the plea of *necessity*; strong, invincible, absolute *necessity*. And of that *necessity*, what is the evidence? The late massacre in Southampton; the racking sense of insecurity, the benumbing panic, the unextinguishable terrors, which it has produced throughout the principal slave-holding districts of the state! The *necessity* which our western brethren are under, to violate our rights of slave property, to "extirpate slavery in time," and to begin the work without delay, is the necessity of relieving us from this our melancholy state of fear, which (as they have alleged and repeated a thousand times) the advocates of the just rights of slave property themselves, representatives of the east and of the south, have described and avouched. And these having really (it seems) indulged in some flourishes of rhetoric on that topic—having committed themselves (as the phrase is) and thereby imposed fetters on their own minds—are fain to bear the taunt which is offered as an argument for the injustice.

Strange as all this seems, there has been language held in these debates yet more marvellous. I shall collect a few specimens from the printed speeches of the advocates of abolition, in order that the public may clearly apprehend the prudent care they have for our domestic peace and security. The gentleman who opened the debate on that side of the question, was very, very moderate: he only referred to the declaration in the bill of rights that *all men are by nature free and equal*, and applying it to our slaves, said, "It was a truth held sacred by every American and by every republican throughout the world. And he presumed it could not be denied in that hall, as a general principle, that it is an *act of injustice, tyranny and oppression, to hold any part of the human race in bondage against their consent*. That circumstances may exist which may put it out of the power of the owners *for a time* to grant their slaves liberty, he admitted to be *possible*; and if they do exist in any case, it may *excuse*, but not *justify*, the owner in holding them. The right to the enjoyment of liberty is one of those perfect, inherent, unalienable rights, which pertain to the whole human race, and of which they can never be divested except by an act of gross injustice." Another gentleman, after having said, with equal modesty and truth,

that "He was admonished by his youth and inexperience, that this was a matter demanding the most profound experience and the greatest caution and delicacy, and that, therefore, he had neither of those requisites necessary for its decision"—proceeded to pour forth a strain of declamation, whereof I give the following specimens, as proofs of the "great caution and delicacy," which *he* thought "the matter demanded:"—"This question of slavery, Mr. Speaker, is one which seems, in all countries and ages in which it has ever been tolerated, directly or indirectly, to have called to its aid a mystic sort of right and a superstitious sort of veneration, that has deterred even the most intrepid mind from an *investigation into the rights and an exposure of the wrongs* on which it has been sustained."—"I esteem, Mr. Speaker, the exhibition now before our eyes, and the aspect which this hall at this moment presents, as the grandest revolution of the age, a great moral revolution, in which our minds and opinions have triumphed over *error and interest*, and left our judgments free to decide, and our *tongues free to speak, the principles of justice and the voice of humanity*."—He argued that "slaves, which were not property by the common law, were made so by statutory enactments; a statutory enactment, which, by the operation of mere law, has erected, they (his opponents) suppose, an insurmountable barrier to those natural and unalienable rights, which we cannot divest ourselves of, and of which none others can divest us. *The slave has a natural right to regain his liberty; and who has a higher right to reduce them to slavery again?*"—"Look, Mr. Speaker, to France. Though we may deplore the scenes through which she has passed, are there any here who does not rejoice at her revolution? I rejoiced, Mr. Speaker, when her oppressed people tore down every monument of her former kingly greatness. I rejoiced when *all that was venerable and ancient* was prostrated in the dust." [What? the good as well as the bad—the christian religion, as well as the roman catholic hierarchy!] "I rejoiced when I saw a foreign prince on the throne of the Bourbons. And, Mr. Speaker, if those who are slaves here, were not what they are—if, Mr. Speaker, they were white men in oppression and bondage, I would rejoice in a revolution here. It is the line which God and Nature has drawn between us *in their color*, that the appalling consequences of such a result, are so deeply to be feared, so solemnly to be deplored, and so decisively to be provided against"—he means, not by measures to keep the slaves in due subordination, but by projects for the liberation of them. I presume this gentleman can hardly suppose, that the *blacks* (whom he had already told, that *they had a natural right to regain their liberty*, and upon

whom his eloquence will surely not be lost) will not see any thing *in their own color*, that ought to prevent him from rejoicing at a revolt or revolution effected by them. I was inclined to forgive the mis-timing and misapplication of the common places of eloquence which abound on this subject, in consideration of that "youth and inexperience" which the gentleman himself acknowledges, and upon the unhappy Matthioli's plea, that they were *spoken*, "*par indiscretion et volubilité de langue*;" but they have been written out to be printed, and printed, and published; and indiscretion is as often as mischievous as vice, though certainly never so criminal. Another gentleman, with more art indeed, but in my opinion with equal indiscretion, said, that "He would not advert [no, that he would not] "to the great principles of eternal justice which demand at our hands the release of these people" [the slaves]—"he would not examine here, the authority upon which one part of the human family assume the right to enslave the other—he would not open the great volume of nature's laws, to ascertain if it is written there, that all men are alike in the sight of Him, who must regard, with equal beneficence, the creatures of his hands, without distinction of color or condition." Yet, in the sequel, he did all this, and arrived at the same conclusion with the friend who had preceded him in the same *line of observation*, (to use a modern parliamentary phrase) "*that the slave, as a living man, has a right to assert and regain his liberty if he can.*" It was an observation of the gentleman who opened the debate on the side of abolition, in enumerating the evils of slavery, that the slaves "will be ready to flock to the standard of an invading foe, whenever he may be disposed to tempt them to it by holding out to them the strongest temptation which can ever be presented to the human mind, namely, the possession of liberty;" and that "we may often have enemies, who will not be too magnanimous to avail themselves of advantages which cost them nothing."—Now, I ask any man, who has heard or read these debates in the house of delegates, whether, if a public enemy were landed on our shores, and he should issue a manifesto with design to bring our slaves to his standard, and to arm them against us, there is a single topic which might be expected to be found in such a manifesto, suited to seduce and inflame their minds, that might not be extracted from the speeches in favor of abolition? We might, indeed, expect them from a public enemy; but we never, never should have expected them from our friends and fellow-citizens.

Let it be borne in mind, that these speeches have been delivered in the house of delegates, with all parliamentary solemnity, so as to make the deepest and most general impres-

sion; and that they have been spoken, and written out to be printed, and published, in this city of Richmond, the place of all others, where their influence is most likely to take effect on the minds of the blacks, and to spread. Well, therefore, has this discussion been described as "miraculous!" But the miracle is a menace of evil, not a promise of good. I am very far from suspecting (if I did suspect it, I would say it) that the authors of these speeches, or any man among them, has the least *design* to incite servile rebellion: but, looking to the effects of causes put into action, I do say, that if through our supineness and utter exemption from those fears that have been imputed to us, such an insurrection shall break out, it will be owing, not to the hallucinations or imposture of another Nat Turner, nor to the seditious practices of negro preachers, nor to the machinations of the organized convention of free blacks in Philadelphia, nor to the dissemination of the incendiary writings of *The Liberator*, or *The African Sentinel*, or *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*—but to measures proposed, and to speeches delivered, in our own legislature, published and disseminated by our own public journals. By one of these, indeed, we have been comforted with the assurance, "That the intelligence of the slaves has long ago reached the point to which the fears of some imagined this discussion would conduct it. They have not now to learn those abstract theories which teach the universal equality of man and his rights; but the same extent of intelligence informs them of the impossible, the worse than hopeless expectation of engaging in a successful struggle for their maintenance"—that is, in other words, they have a reason to be convinced, but not passions to be inflamed. Is the justness of this opinion approved by the success of Nat Turner's imposture on his gang? Or has this improvement of slave intelligence, this perfection of stoical philosophy, taken place in the interval that has elapsed since the Southampton insurrection? Let us not rely upon such assurances as these, and neglect to adopt for ourselves, since the legislature will not adopt for us, those appropriate measures of vigilance and precaution, in which, and in which only, we shall be certain of the subordination of our slaves, and the security of our homes.

The evils of slavery have been displayed in this debate, with an emulation of eloquence, most ill-timed, at any rate, if not (considering our actual condition, and while yet no plan of riddance has been settled, and the question is whether any such plan is feasible) unwise, ill-judged and pernicious in the extreme; and, in my opinion, those evils have been exaggerated, too, in a manner which sober reason must forever

condemn. The subject is too large for this paper; neither is it necessary to my purpose, that it should be here discussed. It appears to me, that the real nature of the evil has been very indistinctly understood; while all the "ills that flesh is heir to," physical and moral, evils that flow from a thousand springs, have been indiscriminately imputed to this single cause. The least calm observation would have reduced the black catalogue of evils that has been exhibited, by the half or more: the least exercise of reason would have found some alleviation in a comparison of our condition, for good or evil, with that of other nations, and would certainly have traced many of the evils complained of as infesting our society, to other parentage. For example: I myself heard a gentleman impute the prevalence of the practice of *usury* to the existence of slavery—for, as he ingeniously argued, the slaveholder obtains credit, and contracts debts, upon the faith of the slave property he holds; and when judgment is recovered against the poor debtor, and he has to raise the money or go to jail, "then comes the *paper-shaver*, and kindly proffers the money at *thirty-three and a third per cent.*;" and "the very fact, that we see such *cattle* daily rising into importance from the *dregs of society*"—not meaning "by *dregs of society* the poor but honest man," but "men lost to honor, virtue and common honesty"—"*is a proof of the necessity of a change of our condition.*" It was not perceived, that the argument concludes, not that slave property only, but that all property upon the faith of which men may obtain credit, is an evil, and ought to be abrogated. And I most conscientiously believe, that the day is not far distant, when a direct attack will be made upon the very principle of property. In these debates also, a general demoralization of the master race, has been represented as the necessary and inseparable effect of the existence of slavery: and, accordingly, ignorance in "the great body of the people" throughout the whole slave-holding country—idleness, dissipation, sensual indulgence, enervation, vice—luxury which tempts "the epicure to the groaning tables of the palace, to banquet and to die"—whatever, in short, is most degrading to the national character of a community, has been imputed to us, with a boldness and insolence, which could not fail to kindle resentment, if we were conscious of a single trait of likeness in this attempt at caricature. As to the comparisons that have been made, between the people of the New England states, and those of the slave-holding states, in respect of the general diffusion of education among them, or rather, the contrasts which have been run between their intelligence and our ignorance; I shall not deny, that "elementary education" is more generally diffused among the



people of New England, and especially of Connecticut, than in Virginia, or any of the slave-holding country, or perhaps any country in the world, not excepting the lowlands of Scotland; and I shall agree, that that kind of education is, above all, the most truly useful and valuable in a republican society: but, I apprehend, the superiority of the New England states over us, in this particular, is attributable to far other causes than the absence of domestic slavery there, and the existence of it here. To put the question fairly to the test of experience, let the comparison be instituted between the state of intelligence of "the great body of the people" of Pennsylvania, and that of "the great body of the people" of the slave-holding country—or, between "the great body of the people" of *western*, and "the great body of the people" of *eastern*, Virginia. This last comparison has been attempted; and the result is, a vast superiority of our western fellow-citizens over us, in intelligence, enterprize and moral worth! I presume, the result of all such comparisons would depend very much upon the pre-conceived opinions of those by whom they should be made. The contest is idle, if not pernicious. I disdain to defend the *moral* character of our society. Depravation of the manners and morals of the citizens of a state, the necessary concomitant or the consequence of the existence of domestic slavery! Witness the republics of Greece and Rome, in their best days! Let common candor and justice give us credit for our virtues, and let malice make the drawback for our vices; still, this society of slave-holding Virginia, and I doubt not that of all the slave-holding country, may challenge a comparison, for purity of manners and morals, for kindness, generosity and honesty, with any people under the sun. It is, however, fair to state, that a gentleman, *born in eastern Virginia*, bears testimony against us—"A slave population exercises the most pernicious influence on the manners, habits and character of those among whom it exists. *Lisping infancy* learns the vocabulary of abusive epithets, and struts the *embryo tyrant* of its little domain. The consciousness of superior destiny takes possession of his mind at its earliest dawning, and love of power and rule grows with his growth and strengthens with his strength. When in the sublime lessons of christianity, he is taught *to do unto others as he would have others do unto him*, he never dreams that the degraded negro is within the pale of that holy canon. Unless enabled to rise above the operation of powerful causes, he enters the world with miserable notions of self-importance and under the government of an unbridled temper." I am afraid, that too many young men, every where, "enter the world with miserable notions of self-importance." For the rest (excepting the

christianity in it) the passage I have quoted, and a good deal more that follows it of the same strain, is not *original*: if it had been, I should have passed it by without notice. In what part of eastern Virginia the gentleman was born, I know not; but I am quite sure his own observation never would have suggested the account he has given of us. There is not a man in this whole country, who does not remember playing in his boyhood, with negroes of his own age, and fighting with them too, upon a footing of perfect equality. He could not look upon the face of a negro child in the land, whose sprightly, cheerful, happy countenance, would not beam with evidence that the description is not faithful to the fact. He could not have bestowed a thought upon the actual condition of our slaves—he could not have reflected a moment, upon the ratio of increase of that population—he could not have adverted to his own statistics—without seeing, that we practise not the tyranny, when we attain to man's estate, which he represents us as imbibing in our youth, and without finding in that fact, a complete refutation of the story he has thought proper to repeat. But what shall I say to his *wilful* attempt to dissuade the non-slave-holders among us, from uniting with the slave-holders, in executing the ordinary duties of police, intended to keep our slaves out of mischief and in due subordination? I cannot see the following paragraph (extracted from his speech) in any other light: "At all times, the non-slave-holders of Virginia are subjected to the most outrageous injustice by the presence of this population. To prevent, as far as may be, the mischiefs of insubordination, police laws have from time to time been enacted—the execution of which, for the most part, is thrown upon those, who themselves own none of this property. In the character of PATROLS, they are made to perform onerous and disagreeable duties—not to protect themselves and their property, but to protect the slave-holders in the enjoyment of that which it is the interest of the non-slave-holders should not exist. He is thus made to fold to his own bosom and protect the adder which stings him." The speech from which this extract is taken, bears internal evidence of having been laboriously prepared—a speech *made* rather than *spoken*, and then carefully written out for the press.

In the scheme of the colonization society (as I understand the explanation given of it by its principal patron in the house of delegates) the most sacred regard for the rights of slave property, is professed, and, I doubt not, honestly designed, however, in its indirect effects, it may impair the value, or impose a burdensome charge upon the profits of it. This plan also looks to the ultimate liberation of the slaves,

and to the removal and colonization of the whole black population; that is, to the removal and colonization of the blacks now free, in the first instance, then of slaves hereafter to be emancipated, and last, of slaves to be purchased of their owners by the public at a fair price, with a view to the colonization of them; for which purpose, it is proposed to appropriate \$200,000 *per annum*, to be raised (I suppose, for it is hardly to be imagined that any other ways and means will ever be agreed to) by an additional tax on slaves. I shall not, at present, examine the policy or practicability of this scheme; most probably, I shall never have occasion to examine it. I have, however, looked at the gentleman's statistics and estimates; and they have raised in my mind not a little surprise. They are founded, entirely, upon common arithmetic, without regard to the known elements of political economy, which enter essentially into all calculations of the kind, and constitute, indeed, the only difficulty in making them. I tell him that common arithmetic will not work any one of his problems. But I have referred to this scheme now, only for the purpose of remarking, that I never should have expected, that the members of the colonization societies would press their schemes upon the attention of the legislature, *in the present juncture of affairs*, when there was, in truth, so little hope of success—when the only certain consequence they could apprehend from the effort, was to increase the agitation of the public mind, already alarmed by the rumors of projects—when they must have foreseen, that *their* plans could only be recommended by the same topics of argument that would lay the groundwork for schemes of abolition without regard to the rights of slave property, as well as their own—when they ought to have reflected, that it *might appear* (in the words of their own advocate) “that excitement and apprehension was the motive which impelled us to action;” that the adoption of their plan might be regarded by the slaves as a partial “concession” made in “the moment that an insurrectionary spirit had displayed itself,” and thus prove an incentive to other insurrections “in quick succession, until the awful drama would be closed by sweeping from the earth, a poor, ignorant, deluded and misguided people;” that it was “a subject which ought never to be publicly discussed, until the general sense of the community was strongly inclined to efficient action, and *the time, the mode, and the measure of such action generally understood and sanctioned;*” that “above all, we ought never to excite in the minds of this ignorant class of our population, delusive hopes and expectations,” making “them more unhappy and ourselves less secure.” I should never have expected, that the gentleman who recom-

mended this scheme of colonization to the house, would have done so, after seeing the turn which the subject had taken, and after finding all his arguments to prove *that something must be done,* would surely be perverted to the accomplishment of a purpose widely different from his own, and, in his opinion, most unjust and pernicious. How could it possibly have escaped his reflection, that the same prudential and just reasons, which he himself assigned to show the impropriety of entertaining the project of abolition, applied with equal force against his own plan? Will the members of the colonization society never perceive, that their exertions work effects beside their purposes? From the first, their plans have been continually engendering vague hopes in the slave population, which supplanted contentment in their minds—"made them more unhappy and ourselves less secure:" and now, their efforts have mainly contributed to engender projects of another kind, yet more delusive to the slaves, and pernicious and dangerous, in every point of view, to them as well as to us. We are told, "That the idea of restoring these people to the region in which nature had planted them, and to whose climate she had fitted their constitution—the idea of benefitting not only our condition and theirs by the removal, but making them the means of carrying back to a great continent, lost in the profoundest depths of savage barbarism, and unconscious of the existence even of the God who created them—not only the arts, and comforts, and multiplied advantages of civilized life—but what is more valuable than all, a knowledge of true religion, intelligence of a redeemer—is one of the grandest and noblest, one of the most expansive and glorious ideas which ever entered into the imagination of man." It may be so to those who can kindle their imaginations to hope that it can ever be realized; but with me, the vastness of the grandeur takes away all the nobleness, for it argues absolute impossibility.

I observe a western member states, that a certain member from the east, had called on the western delegation for aid—had invited all portions of the commonwealth to join in this sacred cause, to relieve us from the impending danger; and I have heard that the eastern member alluded to, did call upon the western delegation to join with them, in some just, rational and practicable plan for the abolition of slavery. What that plan was, whether he had matured any, whether he had settled the first principles of it in his own mind, I cannot learn. I understand it was not announced. Whatever it was, the time, the juncture, the very predicament in which the question stood, the temper already manifested in the debate, might have admonished him not to give his countenance to

any scheme of abolition whatever; for, it was obvious that no such scheme as *he* could think just, would ever be agreed to by those friends of abolition, who had made up their minds to set at nought the rights of slave property. If I could agree with that gentleman, that it is possible to devise a practicable plan for the abolition of slavery, he would surely agree with me, that no work which human wisdom ever essayed, is beset with more difficulties; that it is not to be accomplished by a simple expression of legislative will; that it would require the most consummate ability, and weeks and months of the severest labor, to digest and mature it for practical operation. Until that work shall be completed, the plan matured, and ascertained to be feasible, all vague suggestions of the kind must be fraught with mischief.— But, in truth, I am convinced that no plan *for the abolition of slavery, and the deportation of the slaves*, is possible. I have given my mind to the subject, over and over again—I have examined all the schemes for the purpose, that have been proposed in my time, with a willingness and earnest desire to be convinced, until I found them all hopeless; and I have never seen one that would bear the lightest touch of examination. It might be possible to remove and colonize the whites—the adoption of any of these schemes for abolition, may, in effect, expel us from our country: but it is morally, politically, physically, impossible to remove and colonize the black population in mass. *Necessity*, it has been argued, imperiously dictates abolition and deportation. On the contrary, we lie under an *invincible necessity* to keep them here, and to hold them in subjection; *a necessity imposed upon us by Providence*. For I firmly believe, that it was a dispensation of Providence which sent them hither; it is the dispensation of Providence, that here they shall remain; and Providence, in its own good time, will dispose of them and us according to its wisdom. Such a change as is proposed, of the destiny of millions of human beings, is a work too mighty for the finite wisdom of man, and it is the part neither of true philosophy nor of true religion to attempt it.

In the event, the house adopted the following preamble and resolution: “Profoundly sensible of the great evils arising from the colored population of this commonwealth; induced by humanity as well as policy to an immediate effort for the removal in the first place, as well of those who are now free, as of such as may hereafter become free; believing that this effort, while it is in just accordance with the sentiments of the community on the subject, will absorb all our present means; and that a further action *for the removal of slaves should await a more definite developement of public opinion*—*Resolved*, that

it is inexpedient for the present legislature to make any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery." It is obvious that the question of the abolition of slavery is intentionally kept alive; and the agitating, perplexing, annoying effects of a general discussion of it, are visited upon the people of the slave-holding districts of the state, to the manifest detriment of their property, and the probable jeopardy of their tranquillity and safety.

Now, I too think, that *something must be done*; and I shall give my fellow citizens, without reserve, my deliberate opinion what it behoves them to do.

1. I earnestly recommend to them to provide (quietly and silently, but, at the same time, promptly and sufficiently) arms and ammunition for the defence of themselves, and their families and neighbors; to concert their plans of action among themselves, in anticipation of any insurrectionary spirit that may manifest itself among the slaves; to hold themselves in constant readiness to meet and suppress servile rebellion, at a minute's warning; to arrange voluntary bodies of minute men, in short, appointing convenient places of rendezvous for them; meantime, to maintain the strictest discipline; to stifle the slightest breath of sedition, to exercise the closest vigilance, to infuse the utmost activity, the highest order and prudence into their ordinary police, of which it is susceptible. Let no man shun the patrol duty. Let there be no inhumanity towards the blacks, whatever cause of excitement may arise—for our own credit, none—but no neglect, no imprudent indulgence. If we exercise due caution, no want of discretion in others will endanger our peace; if we neglect or remit a proper care for ourselves, we need not *now* expect that others will exercise any care for us, and our wives and children must bear the consequences of our supineness and folly.

2. As our wise and considerate representatives have resolved to await, and in effect to invite, a *developement* of the public sentiment, it is hardly necessary to remind the people of eastern and southern Virginia, of the vital importance of their next elections. I trust in Heaven, that no consideration of personal friendship, no partiality for private worth, will have the least influence on their votes—that they will select their representatives with a single regard to this question; upon which their property, their prosperity, their safety, their very existence in this our native land, depends—that they will return no man who shall not openly renounce and abjure all projects for abolition, present or prospective, or for the *liberation of slaves* by colonization; all schemes, in short, professing that object by whatever means or process. To my

western fellow citizens I do not presume to offer advice: but I hope they will seriously and deliberately consider, whether *they* have any ends which can be accomplished by the abolition of slavery (if that were possible) or by projects for abolition, which can never have any other effect than to impair the value of *our* property, to jeopard *our* peace and safety, to light a torch, which, if it shall consume the dwellings of some of us, will surely be extinguished in negro blood; and whether, if they have any *ends* in view, which such projects, portending such consequences, may really tend to the accomplishment of, these are justifiable *means*. I pray them to consider, whether any end can justify such means. And then, their next elections will resolve the question, whether inflammatory language, which can have no effect but *one*, let it flow from indiscretion or over-much zeal and not from vicious design, be excusable and praiseworthy in their eyes.

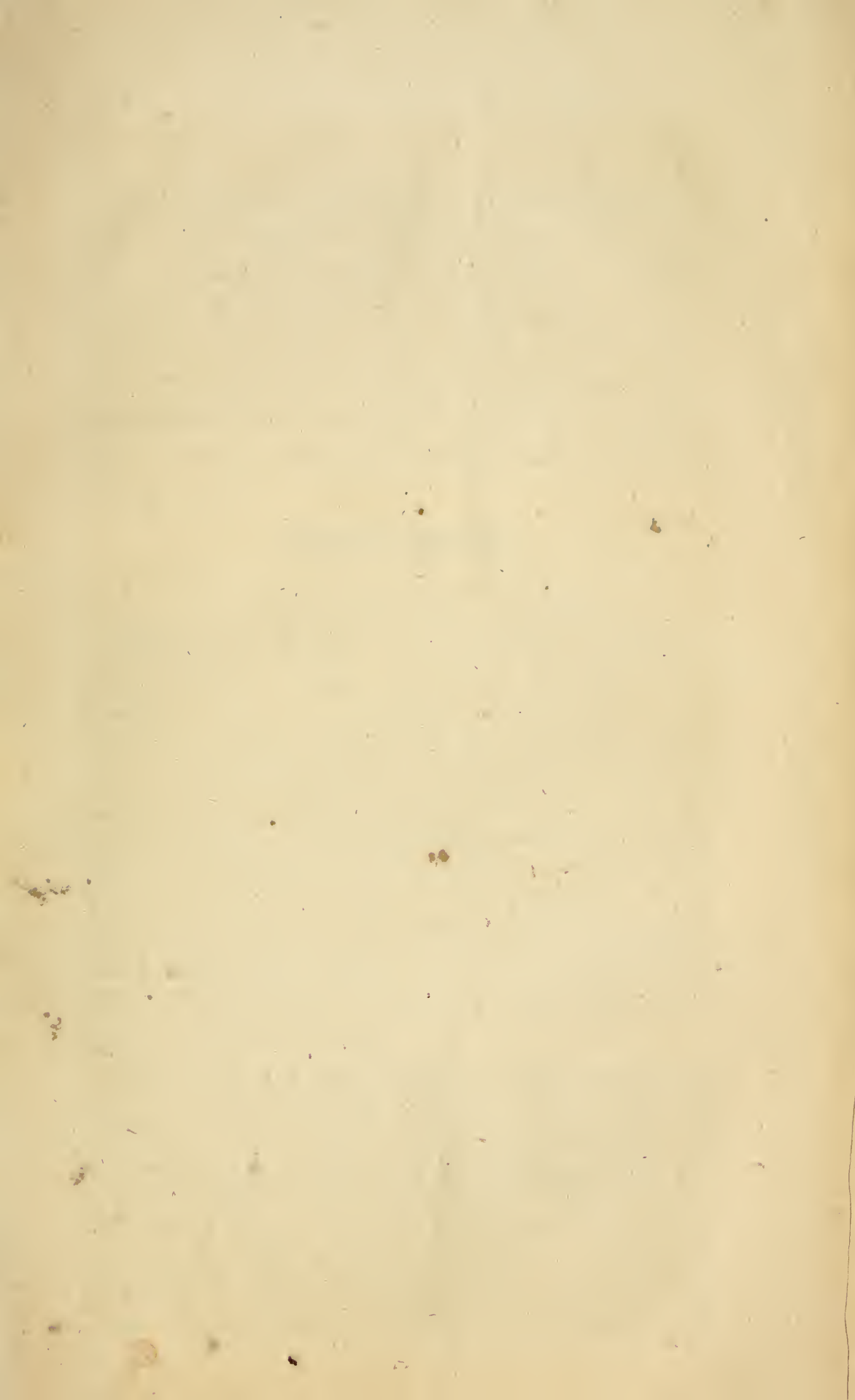
3. I do most earnestly and deliberately recommend to all the people of the slave-holding parts of Virginia—and moreover to all the people of the southern and south western slave-holding states, who have a common interest with us and are exposed to the same dangers—to discourage every man by his own example, and by advice to his neighbors, the circulation among them of the papers of the Virginia *abolition presses*, upon the like reasons of common prudence, that would not tolerate the dissemination of writings wilfully incendiary. I do not think, and therefore I do not say, that *our* abolition presses *are wilfully incendiary*; and, therefore, I entertain no resentment towards the editors. But to *us* it can make no odds, whether their publications are editorial or contributed—in the form of speeches or of essays—dictated by indiscretion, or carelessness of consequences, or blindness to them: to *us* the danger and the mischief are the same, as if they were dictated by the most malignant design. The effusions of inflammatory matter they have already poured forth, and the temper in which they have taken up the subject, should warn us all of the burning lava yet to be discharged upon us; which, like the travail of a volcano in the immediate neighborhood of our dwellings, threatens the more danger and mischief, for coming from *them*. The public sentiment, we see, is to be “developed”—the subject is to be discussed—and he that does not foresee in what tone it will be discussed in the public prints, cannot be made to take warning. Let us pay no regard to the claim which may be asserted for the independence of the press; if, in the exercise of *their* independence, they choose to print, we, in the exercise of *our* independence, may choose to suppress, to the uttermost of our power, what we deem inflammatory, dangerous, mischief-

ous. Every man has a perfect right to withdraw his subscription from any newspaper, and to discourage the circulation of it; and if he thinks the opinions it maintains, likely to produce evil, he is bound, in duty to his country, to exercise that right. I have been credibly informed, that the publications contained in a certain independent press during the late war, giving an account of the defenceless condition of Washington, were the real incentive to Gen. Ross's visit to that city. The claim to such independence of the press, as not only gives it freedom to publish, but a right to free unrestrained circulation among those whom the circulation may injure, is, in truth, a claim to absolute dominion; which I shall never acknowledge in any man or set of men whatever. I want no sedition laws—I would have none—there is a check, a sufficient check, in the influence of public opinion, if timely, promptly and vigorously exerted; and, in my deliberate judgment, prudence, justice, necessity, require *the people of the whole slave holding country to unite in the exercise of that check, upon the present occasion.*

I have thus laid before my countrymen, a full and fair account of the proceedings of the house of delegates, of the measures proposed and the doctrines broached there, and of the projects not yet abandoned, upon which they are called upon to reflect and to act. My conscience acquits me of ill will towards any man or set of men: it is a deep sense of the duty I owe to society, that alone prompts me to this publication of my opinions. I have given the public my thoughts fully and freely; and I would as freely give my name, if I did not know that that could add no weight to my arguments or opinions.

APPOMATTOX.







There appeared in *The Enquirer* of the 16th February, a piece over the signature of *Jefferson*, intended as an answer to the foregoing letter of *Appomattox*, to which he published a reply in that paper of the 28th. And as this reply may serve to explain some passages of the author's first letter which seem to have been misunderstood, by his opponents at least, and to impress the views presented in that letter more forcibly upon the public attention, it is thought proper to publish it here by way of

### POSTSCRIPT.

*To the Editors of the Richmond Enquirer.*

GENTLEMEN,—The letter I lately addressed to *The People of Virginia*, exhibiting a connected view of the recent proceedings of the house of delegates on the subject of the abolition of slavery, an explanation of their pernicious tendency, and a fair and candid account (fair and candid, surely, since it was extracted *verbatim* from the printed speeches of certain friends of abolition) of the inflammatory and mischievous doctrines broached in the debate, has brought upon me the awful censures of two honorable members of that august body; of the dignity of which, I had not, I own, till I was instructed by them, formed any adequate conception. There are “ear-marks” (as Mr. Pleasants says) which plainly indicate, that your correspondents, *Jefferson* and *A Subscriber*, both belong to that assembly. Under the mortification of censure “falling from such a height,” it requires all my fortitude, and all my pride, or, if they please, my vanity, to enable me to hold up my head.

I see too, that you have on hand some three or four other answers to my first letter, and that one of them is “able and eloquent.” These I hoped to have had the satisfaction of seeing in your last paper, and have withheld this letter, in order that I might be able to make a prompt and suitable return for the honor of their correspondence. No one knows better than I, that he who publishes his sentiments in the newspapers on any subject of immediate political interest, which it is impossible to discuss without examining the conduct and opinions of the actors in the scene, must either invoke the protection of the Goddess of Dullness, under which he may

escape unseen and therefore unharmed, or must make up his mind to incur personal abuse and to bear it with patience; and I know, likewise, that that abuse, however coarse, and however unprovoked and misapplied, never fails to tarnish, in some degree, the reputation of the person on whom it is poured. Therefore, if I had any purpose of personal ambition to accomplish; if I were placed in any station, which required a careful preservation of my own dignity, as essential to my usefulness; if I were possessed with the kind of pride that has been imputed to me; or if I could resist the impulse of duty, which impels me to take part in the domestic affairs of my native state—for I have not, for many years, meddled in any other—the public would never see a line of my inditing in the columns of a newspaper.

I have very few words to bestow on that poor effusion of personal abuse, by which your *Subscriber* has thought proper to expose his own soreness to the laughter-loving world. I think the gentleman might, with a little pains, have found a more significant and appropriate signature; for instance, *Hector*. Let me assure him, that he is welcome, *for me*, to order the affairs and reform the governments of France and Great Britain, according to his wisdom—I make no doubt he understands them thoroughly, since the school of political philosophy to which he belongs, has the advantage of an admirable simplicity of doctrine, that exempts its oldest professors and youngest disciples from all perplexities growing out of the obstinacy of existing circumstances, and fits them all, equally well, to give laws to all nations and societies of mankind. It wants, however, the great recommendation of being a *new* school, for it is one of the very oldest. And now, I have only to ask him to explain the meaning of the following passage, which has baffled my knowledge of syntax and the utmost effort of my sagacity—"The *effect* of his [*Appomattox's*] splenetic ebullition, may hasten the '*end*' which he seems to suppose is had in view by others, and, in that light, will be regarded by those who look to that '*end*' as the object of primary importance (if any such there be) rather as a fortunate occurrence than a matter to be deprecated." Did he mean, that the "*effect*" of my letter—or that "the '*end*'" it "may hasten"—may be regarded as the "fortunate occurrence?" And what is "*the end*," and "object of primary importance," to which *he* alludes? For *I*, certainly, neither made allusion to any *particular end*, nor affirmed that there was any: the remarks of mine, to which doubtless he referred, were hypothetical as well as general, and plainly supposed, that there might be *various ends* (of which I pretended to no knowledge and hazarded no conjecture) to the accomplishment whereof

the annoyance of Eastern and Southern Virginia, by the agitation of projects for the abolition of slavery, *might be thought* to tend. If this writer will vouchsafe to give us an explanation of the passage I have quoted, couched in simple old English, and nowise clouded with common-places "guiltless of a meaning," he may possibly, throw a light on the real springs of the late movement, which will render it intelligible to the meanest capacity.

I willingly distinguish between your *Subscriber* and your other honorable correspondent: the latter (in the language of the *real Jefferson*) "merits the respect of a reply." There are, indeed, some sarcasms in his essay, *aimed* at the author of the letter of *Appomattox*, not at the letter itself, and some rude expressions, apparently imputable to mere want of fluency of speech: but I find nothing that oversteps the freedom usually indulged in polemics of this kind, or that may not be reconcileable with personal good will. And I am glad to find it so. No man is more loath than I am, to incur the ill will of others, if it may be avoided, and none more desirous to cultivate the good will of all mankind, if it may be obtained (which I know, but too well, it cannot) by honorable means. But I shall never sacrifice any principle, or neglect any duty, or suppress any useful truth, or tamely endure any wrong, or surrender any right, or forbear to take the part which it becomes me to take, in order to conciliate the transient favor of others, which would soon give place to their contempt, or to avoid that idle imputation of an "extreme anxiety to appear as the champion of Old Virginia, and the exclusive defender of all her citizens." By the way, let me tell *Jefferson*, (and I hope he will not take the remark as unkind, for it is not unkindly meant,) that he has no talent for satire worth the pains of cultivating, and no turn whatever for wit or humour. For example; he quotes a passage from my letter, concerning certain slanders of the people of Southampton, which he wishes had been made somewhat more intelligible—propounds a string of interrogatories—answers them for himself, so as to implicate the abolition members of Assembly in the charge, though he himself thinks such an interpretation of it altogether unjust and absurd, *but* for the impossibility he is under, of conjecturing the meaning of the passage upon any other supposition—and then adds, "If *Appomattox* has been able to trace any connexion between the supposed attempt to slander the people of Southampton, and the recent proceedings of the house of delegates relative to the colored population, then verily his sagacity can only be equalled by that of the old lady, who declared, that she had foreseen, that the cow would eat the grindstone"!!! I wish he had told us where the saga-

cious old lady and her greedy cow lived ; for I would fain know in what region wit of this order can be acclimated.

*Jefferson*, in the order of his censures, and even, I think, in the vehemence of his indignation, gives the precedency to the Hanover memorial over my letter—it was a *memorial*, and a *spirited remonstrance*, as it ought to have been, and not, as he supposes, a *petition*. I apprehend, there can hardly be a member of the house of delegates, who would have ventured, in his place and upon his responsibility as a representative of the people, so far to have questioned the right, the sacred constitutional right, of any body of citizens, to lay their complaints and remonstrances before that house, concerning any measures proposed or advised there, which they think dangerous to their rights and interests, as to have moved a resolution denying the right ; or reprobating the exercise of it in the very form and language, which the memorialists of Hanover thought proper, with good reason, to adopt on the present occasion. This new-born zeal for the abolition of slavery, has engendered all sorts of anomalies, so that one can hardly recognise the moral identity of his native state. The Society of Friends of Hanover present *their memorial*, wherein they only assume to themselves (in the meekest language, to be sure, as their manner is,) the King's old Irish prerogative, under *Poyning's* law, of devising and proposing measures for the legislature, and hold forth doctrines for its edification, derogating from the legal rights of slave property, and aiming at the abrogation of them, to the manifest detriment of that property, even if their projects should be rejected, to the disturbance of the peace and tranquillity of their neighbors, and to the jeopardy of their safety—and *they* are heard with respect. The partizans of abolition in the house of delegates, hold language equally inflammatory, and (considering that it is resounded through the land from our own legislative hall, and by our own public journals, and speaking still with reference to the effects, not the motives,) more calculated to incite servile war, than any incendiary writings that have been or can be uttered at a distance, and compared with which the language of the Free Negro Convention at Philadelphia, is really moderate in the extreme—and they write out for the press, and publish their speeches, wherein they take occasion to disparage the moral and intellectual character of our society—and *they must* be heard with respect ; and *their* speeches *ought* to be read with respect ; and no man may presume to examine the sentiments or conduct of their High Mightinesses, without observing the most scrupulous delicacy (*they use aqua fortis*, and *we* must use milk and water) under pain of being condemned for arrogance, insolence and impudence. But these forty-six

memorialists of Hanover, who and whose families and neighbors are to abide the jeopardy they have created, because they have dared to state the grievance in the only language in which it could be truly stated, and with a warmth which served but to evince the sincerity of their apprehensions, are to be treated like the frogs of their own slashes, and pelted till they hide their heads under water, and cease their discordant croakings. And here is a member of the house of delegates, who goes into the newspapers, to heap upon them every epithet of contumely and derision he can find—"Knights of the Slashes"—"Lords of Hanover"—"Nabobs", owning "princely domains in the Slashes of Hanover;" and who, after bestowing the utmost pains to represent their memorial as *the height of supercilious insolence*, concludes, that "Doubtless they are all gentlemen *no less distinguished for their talents and their kind and humane treatment of their slaves, than they are likely to become for their unaffected diffidence.*" (It is I that have put the words in italics.) Can *Jefferson* deny, that this passage conveys, and was intended to convey, a plain insinuation, or rather a charge in ironical form, that these gentlemen are *distinguished for their hard and cruel treatment of their slaves?* And can he justify the imputation, or find the least apology for it founded in fact? The *men of Hanover*, very probably, will manifest no anger at this imputation to them of a cruelty they abhor; not because they are wanting in "talents" to understand the irony, or in spirit to resent the insult, but because their consciences are so perfectly void of offence in this particular, that they will not feel it. They will have heard it with the like temper with which Washington received the newspaper charges against him, of partiality towards England. But I ask the *men of the West*, to note and remember the passage I have quoted, and to let us know, at their next elections, whether we are to regard the sentiments entertained concerning us by *Jefferson*, and men like *Jefferson*, as a just representation of the state of *their* fellow citizenship with us. But *Jefferson*, forsooth! "would not have thought it necessary to notice this memorial, had it not been for the unusual step taken in publishing it in the newspapers"—whence, I infer, it is his opinion, that he and his friends have a better right to publish their speeches in the newspapers, than the memorialists to publish their memorial—but wherefore, he alone perhaps can explain. As to his contempt for the "talents" of the forty-six Hanoverians, I only wish, that he, and I too, could have witnessed the mirth with which I am sure they returned it: they are a merry people.

It is a general remark, founded on a thousand instances of daily occurrence, that the most zealous professors of demo-

crazy in theory, are of all others the most apt to entertain in their hearts, and to manifest in practice, the greatest contempt for the intelligence as well as the feelings of mankind. *The people*, in their minds, is an ideal abstraction, a metaphysical-political divinity, capable of conferring every blessing, and requiring no return but worship, which is paid without reserve, since it costs nothing but the breath expended in uttering it: but *men*, who (according to the simplicity of my ethics) constitute *The People*, are poor, frail, natural beings, like themselves; who, being subject to the same wants and passions, cross them at every turn; and to whom no forbearance can be shewn, no good offices can be ministered, not even sympathy given to their sufferings, without some labor or trouble or sacrifice of self love. I pity the man, who values the atom of the essence of *The Divinity of The People*, or the portion of the adoration paid to it, which falls to his share; and so little price do I set on mine, that I would gladly take the slightest kindness to any set of men or single individual, the most trivial good work imaginable, for all the professions, the flatteries, the praises, the worship, adoration and idolatry, offered to *The Divinity of The People*.

Conscious as I am, of being studious of accuracy always, and habituated to the practice of it, and of having been particularly attentive to it in my account of the proceedings of the house of delegates on the subject of slavery, I was a little surprised, when *Jefferson* announced his purpose to mention some circumstances that had escaped my observation, and to dispute some of the inferences I had drawn from the facts I had stated. But I was much more surprised when I found that the circumstances which had escaped my observation, were—"a *rumour*, which prevailed to some extent in the beginning of the winter," "that a gentleman of distinguished talents from the south side of James River" [Mr. Randolph of Roanoke] "had actually taken rooms at a boarding house in the city, in order to prevent any effort being made by the legislature, at its present session, to interfere with the subject of slavery in any way"—and a *conjecture*, "that if the attempt to suppress any inquiry into the subject this winter, should succeed, that then, the gentleman alluded to and the reputed author of *Appomattox*, were to come to the next general assembly, to put the question of emancipation at rest forever:" he adds, "Whether the conjecture was well founded or not, I cannot undertake to determine; I did not think it at all improbable." Now, what had this *rumour* and this *conjecture* to do with any account of the actual proceedings of the house of delegates on the subject? Surely, *Jefferson* would not have us infer, that the *rumour* and *conjecture* con-



stituted *any part of the motive*, that induced the agitation of the question, *at the present session!* If they did, it is one of the oddest circumstances (tho' the least important) of this strange history. I do not doubt, that *Jefferson* heard the *rumour* and the *conjecture*, and gave some credit to the latter, because he says so—besides, all sorts of stories are daily invented, circulated and believed for facts, about every thing and every body, and, especially about Mr. Randolph, concerning whom it is the rarest thing imaginable to hear one word of pure truth. I never heard of either the *rumour* or the *conjecture*; and if I had, I should have known that they were both wholly unfounded. If Mr. Randolph had any thought of spending the winter here, I am quite sure he had no such view as that which the *rumour* attributed to him: he did not impart the purpose to his friends: even *his* sagacity could not have anticipated—mortal man could not have divined—the movement which was made in the house of delegates; and he is the last man in the world, that would think of interfering with its proceedings upon this or any other subject. For myself, I never dreamed of what was to come to pass, *till I read the paragraph in The Enquirer*, which caused the controversy between the editors and Mr. Alexander. That, indeed, roused my attention, like the cry of fire in the dead of night; and I saw, at once, that the flames had burst out, and quickly apprehended the extent of the mischief. Yet I never thought, and do not now think, of seeking a seat in the general assembly.—As to *Jefferson's* other corrections of my narrative, I should hardly notice them but for the ambition I have to establish my claim to the strictest accuracy. I said, that the petitions of the 1188 citizens, suggesting the removal of the free negroes, “seemed not, as yet, to have attracted any *serious notice*”—meaning, the notice of the *house*—public discussion there: *Jefferson* wonders, how it should have appeared to me, “that those petitions had not attracted the serious attention of the *committee*”—namely, the *select committee*, to whom the subject was referred. In my opinion, it was obvious, that the views of those petitioners “were hostile to all schemes of emancipation whatever”—*Jefferson*, on the contrary, thinks it “perfectly obvious, to any unprejudiced man who will take the trouble to read the petitions, that the petitioners were not only *not* obviously opposed to, but that they are obviously in favor of, some scheme for removing the whole of our colored population.” He will not allow *me* to be, and I shall not allow *him* to be, the “unprejudiced man.” I have only to say, that I described the general object and sentiments of the petitioners, as accurately as I possibly could in the few words I gave to the purpose.

My remark, that the select committee was "*rather slow in making its report,*" was a simple statement of the fact, without approbation or blame: but *Jefferson* thinks it injurious to the committee. I *might* have said it was *very slow*—as any man will think, who will reflect on the interest of the subject, and count the time between the reference and the first report. Yet I did not, and do not mean, to impute any blame to the committee, on this account, or indeed any other. I did not say, that that slowness of the committee in making a report, induced Mr. Goode to bring the subject at once before the house, though, I dare say, I might have affirmed it with truth: I stated Mr. Goode's motives in an abridgement of his own words.

It is impossible to make oneself understood by others, if they will insist upon clothing his thoughts in their own language. I spoke not of any "pledges" given by the western to the eastern delegation, in the convention, to hold our rights of slave property sacred and inviolable: I well knew there was but one "pledge" touching the subject, and that that was given by the whole convention, *una voce*, which, explicit as it is, it is now attempted to explain away and evade; namely, the express provision of the constitution, securing private rights of property of all kinds, to the owners, against the power of the legislature. I mentioned the "*professions,*" the "*solemn assurances*" of the western delegation, on this very subject of slave property. My purpose was, to illustrate the value of "*professions*" made by politicians, and to exemplify the folly of giving trust to them. It was a most pregnant example. If a bill for *the abolition of slavery and deportation of the slaves*, shall ever come to be gravely debated in the legislature, and its opponents shall remonstrate, that the *deportation*, being impracticable, will be abandoned upon the first essay of the experiment, and nothing left of the plan but simple *abolition*, the most solemn professions will be made, and assurances given, that the *deportation* is the main object, and never will be abandoned; but the successors of those who shall amuse us with such professions and assurances, will never regard themselves as at all bound to fulfil them, or to stop short of *simple abolition*. That is, in truth, the end to which all these projects tend; and the end, I fear, at which many of the projectors are even now aiming.

I quoted a passage from a speech of Mr. Sumners, wherein he painted the national character of the citizens of the whole slave holding country, as impressed upon us in our very infancy and growing with our growth, in the most odious colors; and I said, that it was not "*original.*" *Jefferson*, knowing well where the *original* was to be found, and having (it would

seem) compared the passage with the answer to the 18th query in Mr. Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, has thought proper to recast my remark in words suited to his own idea of the fact, and to make me charge Mr. *Summers* with "*plagiarism.*" I never thought of making an objection so puerile: the orator might, for aught I cared, have borrowed his whole speech from others, and I should never have taken the pains to ascertain the true owner, provided the sentiments he borrowed were in themselves true and just. My objection to Mr. *Summers'* character of us, was not that it was borrowed, but that it was unjust. And it was because it was not *original*---because it was known to have been drawn by Mr. Jefferson---because, upon his authority, it has been repeated a thousand times---because, upon his authority, it has gone forth to the world, as our true national character, the only one known to the nations of Europe, the only one known to the citizens of some of the states of this union---because it is a most odious one---and because I know and feel that it is most unjust;---therefore, I took the opportunity to refute it, by an appeal to common observation and undeniable facts. And if my own father had been the author of it, I would have refuted it in the same manner. I desire *Jefferson* to understand, that I am perfectly careless what motives he or any body else may find for my conduct.—Mr. *Summers* put the finishing touch to the character of the *young man* of Old Virginia, as affected by the existence of slavery, with the remark, that "he enters the world with miserable notions of self importance, and under the government of an unbridled temper"—upon which I observed, "I was afraid too many young men, *every where*, enter the world with miserable notions of self importance." *Jefferson*, manifestly understanding this observation as a sarcasm upon his friend, Mr. *Summers*, and designing to retort it upon me, asks whether I "might not have added, that there were *at least some* likely to carry the same notions to the grave?" By this unhappy attempt at sarcasm and retort, he has made a general remark of mine a personal reflection, and applied it to Mr. *Summers*. I certainly shall not quarrel with that application of it: but, in truth, I meant no more than to suggest, that the presumption of youth (of which, by the way, I am very tolerant) was nowise peculiar to a slave holding country; and, so far from thinking of any personal reflection on Mr. *Summers*, it never occurred to me, that *he* could be regarded as a *young man just entering into the world*, or that he had not been *bred*, as well as *born*, in eastern Virginia; so that his case was, by no means, in my own opinion, an example to my purpose.

*Jefferson* also, by way of retorting the charge of *plagiarism*

against me, which he supposes I was desirous of fixing upon another, intimates, that all my sentiments, my whole political creed, and especially, my exclamation about overturning the christian religion in France, have been borrowed from *Edmund Burke's* work [letter?] upon the French revolution; and he even insinuates (if I understand him) that I have borrowed from the speeches in the house of delegates on my side of the question. It is a matter of no importance to the only material question, whether my opinions are right or wrong—I should have borrowed whatever suited my purpose, and I myself approved as right, without the least hesitation—but it has been near twenty years since I read the work of *Burke*, to which he alludes, and a very short time since I read some of the speeches—and I may safely defy him to fix the charge of *plagiarism* upon me. I cannot help suspecting, that *Jefferson* is not very conversant with the writings of *Burke*. Would to Heaven that a diligent study of them could transfuse into his readers, his extensive knowledge and profound political sagacity! I have often wondered at the hatred which still pursues his memory. I know nothing so remarkable in his writings, as the precision with which he pointed out the false steps taken by the French reformers in their first revolution, and predicted the consequences, which their subsequent history developed. My political principles and opinions, however, are referrible only to the peculiar circumstances of my own country, and have been gathered, almost exclusively, in the school of American politicians. As to the nations of Europe, I have long ago given them up to their fate—or rather to their own governance—being conscious of my own utter incompetency to make or mend, to preserve, abolish, reform, or re-construct, their political institutions. I am not, indeed, indifferent to their welfare—I cannot be—but I have no anxiety on their account that ever affects my appetite or my sleep.

When I said, that Mr. Randolph (the mover of the plan for abolition and deportation to commence in 1840) recommended that plan in debate, *chiefly* by the authority of Mr. Jefferson, his speech had not been published, and I repeated what I had heard, but with the most cautious delicacy to avoid wounding him. I sincerely respected his feelings, though I could not approve his opinions. Of his *motive* for referring to Mr. Jefferson's authority, I had heard nothing, and therefore said nothing. Whether or no that authority was the *chief* recommendation of the plan, is, after all, matter of opinion.

When I disclaimed the influence of that authority, and said (as a consequence deduced from the view I had just before exhibited of its inevitable operation and effects) that it was "unwise and impracticable, pernicious, unjust and cruel," I

anticipated the charge of presumption it would bring against me ; and, as I did not fear it in prospect, so neither am I appalled by it now that it is made. Mr. Jefferson's character must, ere long, be universally regarded as belonging to impartial history—I so regard it now. Considering how much he had been engaged in real and important business, and his undoubted capacity, he was singularly addicted to speculations merely philosophical, and entertained some odd opinions. For instance: he has somewhere, gravely maintained the opinion, that no country ought to be long without a rebellion. It was more remarkable of him than, perhaps, of any other man known to history, that his opinions once formed, were adhered to, under all circumstances, without the least change or modification. I can call to mind only a single instance of any such change, in the course of his long life, spent in full view of the public ; and that was his change of opinion upon the question of the constitutionality of incorporating Louisiana into the union. I believe he never, to the last, perceived the impolicy and inefficiency of his Embargo and Restrictive System—though it entirely failed to accomplish the purpose for which it was designed—though it was the principal and obvious cause of all the embarrassments that perplexed the government, and distressed the nation, during the war which followed it—and though it affected injuriously every part of the union, more or less, and, especially, was the prime cause and origin of that *decline* (as it is called) of the southern Atlantic States, and particularly Virginia, which our orators seem to take a sort of melancholy pleasure in discoursing of and exaggerating. I well remember, how foreign trade and capital took wing from our shores, upon the first blight of the embargo, as the Sorees disappear upon the first hard frost—a long, severe, and (to us) still continuing winter followed—but, whenever we shall again experience our natural climate, the birds will be sure to return, unless, pursuing Mr. Jefferson's advice for *abolition and deportation*, we shall, with our own hands, wilfully destroy the food they feed on. I thought, till very lately, that it was known to every body, that during the revolution and for many years after, the abolition of slavery was a favorite topic with many of our ablest men, who entertained with respect, all the schemes which wisdom or ingenuity could suggest for accomplishing the object. Mr. Jefferson's plan was generally known, but never regarded as practicable : Mr. Wythe, to the day of his death, was for *simple abolition*, considering the objection to color as founded in prejudice : by degrees, all projects of the kind were abandoned as hopeless, by almost every body but Mr. Jefferson ; he retained his opinion, and now we have these projects revived. And it is

regarded as presumptuous and dictatorial in me,—after having examined the principle of Mr. Jefferson's plan, and stated a few of the arguments against its practicability, *which I had heard in my youth*, but those few (in my opinion, at least) quite irrefragable,—to express my conviction, that “no plan for the abolition of slavery and the deportation of the slaves” (which was Mr. Jefferson's object) “is possible.” To speak of this as a simple annunciation of *my opinion*, without any effort to support it by reasoning, only evinces, either that the terms of the proposition are not understood, or that the whole of my letter has not been read—which is very probable. I shall be perfectly understood by those whom it most concerns.

*Your Jefferson* (I must distinguish) thinks it a *little marvellous*, that I, who consider the speeches made in the house of delegates by the advocates of abolition, as of a dangerous and incendiary character, and who recommend to the people to discontinue their subscription to the newspapers, “in order to prevent those speeches from circulating among them, should be guilty of the glaring absurdity and contradiction of collecting what I myself considered the most exceptionable passages from those speeches, and of publishing them in one paper to be sent to every quarter of the country.” *My* letter was calculated for the meridian of the *free white citizens* of the commonwealth, and I am quite sure the negroes will find in it no encouragement to rebellion: on the contrary, the advice it contains, if attended to, will extinguish every spark of rebellion, in spite of the breeze that may otherwise fan it into flames. And I entertain an opinion, which *Jefferson* will probably regard as *very marvellous*: I have no doubt, that the *inflammatory matter* contained in *the speeches*, had been communicated long before the publication of my letter, to all the negroes in this town and in the surrounding counties. The peculiar interest they must take in the subject, he may be sure, makes their hearing very acute. It is the most combustible matter that takes fire the soonest: it is among combustibles, that the flame spreads the most rapidly and the farthest. And I entertain another opinion, which *Jefferson* will think yet *more marvellous*: that *the speeches* had not been read by the *citizens* of our society, before their attention was so loudly called to them. The debates in congress, as well as the debates in the house of delegates, were in a course of publication, at the same time; and there was such a cataract of speech, that the greediest speech-reader could not swallow all. For the rest, *Jefferson* will be pleased to remark, that it was not “*the speeches*” only (as he supposed) but the abolition newspapers, the editorial remarks and the essays, of which I counselled my fellow citizens to prevent

the dissemination, by withdrawing their subscriptions from the journals in which such dangerous and (in effect) incendiary doctrines are published; and *that*, not for the purpose of preventing the dissemination thereof "among *them*," but among their *slaves*. It is upon these only that they can produce any mischievous effects. And what is the security against the mischief, upon which we are gravely counseled to depend? The *assurance*, that "THE NEGROES HAVE TOO MUCH INTELLIGENCE not to know, that any effort they can make to throw off the yoke must be unsuccessful, and attended with the most dreadful consequences to themselves,"—"that they are not able to contend without arms against the whites,"—and that "notwithstanding all the insinuations that have been thrown out to the contrary," [by whom?] "the western people would march at a moment's warning, to any county in the state, to suppress an insurrection among them." Really, this sounds in my ears, very like downright mockery.

I adhere, upon the fullest deliberation, to the opinion I before expressed, as to the propriety and necessity of preventing the circulation of the *abolition* newspapers throughout the slave holding country, by the just and rightful means of declining any longer to take them: and, for the sake of greater and more prompt efficiency, I hope to see the example of the people of Mecklenburg (with the exception of the *Freeman*) followed in other counties, and meetings held at the court houses, to take the subject into consideration, and to produce concert. No man who knows me, can believe, that I have any personal animosity towards the editors; for, I repeat, that, I do not suspect them of designing the mischief, which, nevertheless, they are doing. Be their intents "wicked or charitable," the mischief is the same to us—the effect is the same upon the slaves—and the same means of obviating it ought, in prudence, to be resorted to, as have been resorted to, and with success, to prevent the dissemination of the wilfully incendiary writings of *The Liberator*.

*Jefferson*, it seems, cannot believe that I was serious, when, after having expressed "my shame and indignation at the thought" of propositions being addressed to "*our fears of danger*, either present or prospective, *from our slaves*," I so earnestly recommend to my fellow citizens to provide arms, and concert measures, to obviate that very danger. And the same remark (in substance) had been made before, by another commentator upon my letter, who thought he had detected me in a glaring inconsistency. I must think these gentlemen have read my letter in detached parcels, without taking the trouble to combine the whole piece in their minds. I first shewed, that there was, *when the house of delegates*

*took up this subject*, no such panic terror prevailing in the country as had been represented, and never any danger that could possibly justify, upon the plea of necessity, the abrogation of the rights of slave property; and then I shewed, how the proceedings of that house, and the inflammatory doctrines broached there, and disseminated throughout the land, were calculated to aggravate all the causes of danger that really existed, and to create and add new incentives to servile rebellion; which is *the danger* against which I warned my countrymen to stand on their guard. Whether the argument is convincing or not, those will judge to whom especially it was addressed: if they *will* not take the *warning*, they *must* incur the *risk*. The consistency of its several parts with each other, can hardly fail to be understood by any one who gives his mind fairly to the consideration of it.

I imputed to a certain orator “a *wilful* attempt to dissuade the non-slave holders among us from uniting with the slave holders, in executing the ordinary duties of police, intended to keep our slaves out of mischief and in due subordination”—and said, I could not see a paragraph (extracted from his speech) in any other light. The whole passage was given; the charge, the evidence, the inference, all fairly submitted for examination. If this be not fair play, I should be glad to know what is. *Jefferson* (without quoting the passage) pronounces this construction “forced, unnatural, and palpably unjust,” and thinks, that I myself will, on cooler reflection, be willing to acknowledge that it is so. I should be willing to acknowledge any thing I was convinced of; but I still think the design I ascribed to the author, was that which the language naturally and fairly indicated. I am very glad, however, that *Jefferson* entertains a different opinion; for I take it for granted, that he has learned the author’s real design from himself; and he may be assured, that the passage, in the sense in which I took it, gave me no pleasure. It seems, now, that the only object is to create a schism in our society,—a sort of civil feud, founded on the possession or non-possession of a particular kind of property; in other words, to set the slave holders and non-slave holders at open variance—which is benevolent enough!

*Jefferson* assures us, that our western brethren have really no intention to violate our rights of property; that the idea, that they wish to take away our property, *without our consent*, is too preposterous and absurd to be entertained by any man; that all that is wished is, to ascertain the sense of the majority of the people, and if that be in favor of abolition, the minority must submit. He does, then, really think, that, if a *majority* of the people *consent* to abrogate the property of the



minority, they may rightfully do so, and that this would be taking away the property of the minority, *with their own consent!* There can be no difference between slave property, in this respect, and any other kind; and if the consent of a majority is all that is wanting to justify the abrogation of slave property, the consent of a majority would suffice to justify an agrarian law, and to abrogate the rights of landed property. All our institutions are founded on the principle, that every man's private property is absolutely his own, and that he holds it independently of the power of the legislature, and of the will of the majority; and when that principle shall be abandoned, republican government must be destroyed with it. It was the knowledge I have long had of the existence and progress of the opinions, which Jefferson has now openly avowed upon this point, that induced me to say, in my former letter, "I most conscientiously believed, that the day is not far distant, when a direct attack will be made on the very principle of property."

I conclude, I beg leave to notice the remark made in *The Whig*, upon the first appearance of my letter—that it had been far surpassed by a discussion of the subject by a strippling—meaning, I supposed, by the speech of Mr. Brown of Petersburg, in the house of delegates. If that was the meaning, I believe the remark was perfectly just; and I earnestly recommend the perusal of that speech to the whole public.

APPOMATTOX.

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