

A TRIBUTE TO JAMES G. BIRNEY.

One generation has passed away since JAMES G. BIRNEY attempted to show that the enslaving of men, as an institution could not be safely tolerated in a republican government. There were peculiarities in his history that make his case eminently an illustration, in the treatment exhibited toward him, of the powerful and almost irresistible influence that slaveholders had acquired in society, in the church, in politics, and in the control of the government in Northern as well as Southern States. They will also shew that such opposition as he elicited, was not excited by anything unacceptable, in himself, personally, but was owing to the fact that he announced truths, for which the public mind was *not then prepared*.

It is the purpose of this article, by brief allusion to incidents occurring in the career of JAMES G. BIRNEY, to illustrate the remarkable hold slavery possessed upon the regards of the people of the United States, and how difficult has been the task to diminish the deference almost universally entertained for it.

In order to show that the treatment exhibited toward him as a public man, was an expression of the influence of slavery, it will be necessary to make some reference to his antecedents, and social position.

JAMES G. BIRNEY was a native of Kentucky. His father, through application to business, and by contracts with the government, for furnishing supplies to the army, during the war of 1812, had acquired a large estate. Woodland, his residence, in the vicinity of Danville, had celebrity as one of the most attractive sites in the State. Having only two children, he spared no expense in their education. His daughter married John J. Marshall, an eminent lawyer at Frankfort, and afterwards, for many years, Chancellor at Louisville, Kentucky.

The early education of the son was under the tutorage of Mr. Priestly. Subsequently he was transferred to Transylvania University at Lexington, Ky., thence to Nassau Hall, at Princeton, N. J. At this latter institution, James G. Birney was graduated in 1810, being regarded as one of the most proficient linguists of his class. To accomplish him in the study of the law, he was entered as a student in the law office of Mr. Dallas, of Philadelphia, where he spent two years.

After traveling extensively, he entered upon the practice of the law at Danville, his native place. Within the following two years he was elected a member of the Legislature of Kentucky.

His marriage to Miss McDowell, allied him to a large connection, both in Kentucky and Virginia.

He soon after removed to Huntsville, Alabama, where he gained an enviable position in his profession, and enjoyed the fruits of a lucrative practice. He was elected Solicitor General for the State, and was offered a seat upon the Bench. His partner, in the law, for several years, was the Hon. Arthur F. Hopkins, subsequently Judge of the Supreme Court of Alabama, and United States Senator from the same State.

When John Q. Adams was nominated for the Presidency in 1828, James G. Birney was selected by the Whig party of Alabama as one of the Presidential Electors for that State.

Having made a profession of religion, he became an active member of the Presbyterian Church, and exerted an extensive influence as an elder in that denomination, the more so, perhaps, from having been previously regarded as altogether a man of the world.

By inheritance and purchase, he became the owner of slaves, and had a cotton plantation carried on under his direction.

After his mind became engaged upon the subject of slavery as a question of morals, he was solicited by the American Colonization Society, to accept the superintendency of its interests in a district composed of the States of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. While thus engaged he was treated with every manifestation of popular favor. When traveling through the district a free passage, accompanied by every courtesy was tendered him upon all public conveyances. Funds were placed in his hands, for the purpose of fitting out a vessel to sail from New Orleans freighted with Colonists for Liberia. He had, by these opportunities, abundant means of forming an opinion as to the future effect of colonization upon the permanency of slavery.

At the earnest entreaty of his aged father, he returned to Kentucky, to be near him during his declining years. Here at his native place, he was offered the Professorship of Belles Lettres and Political Economy, in Centre College, an institution sustained by the Presbyterian Church of Kentucky. This he declined chiefly for the reason, that he was then interesting himself in organizing into an association, those in Kentucky who were in favor of gradual emancipation. Having known Henry Clay from boyhood, he sought in several interviews, his co-operation, but although receiving expression of sympathy from him in private conversation, he failed to obtain any avowal publicly in favor of the plan.

Upon giving the subject longer and more mature consideration, his mind reached the conclusion, that the doctrine of immediate emancipation was the only adequate remedy for the system of slavery.

No sooner had he adopted this conviction, than he had all the slaves upon his farm, and in his household assembled, and informed them that he had executed deeds of manumission, for each and all of them, that they would be recorded, and the bonds required filed, so that they would no longer be slaves, but freemen and free women. He further informed them, that from that time, to so many as preferred to remain with him, he would pay wages for their services, and they would be regarded and treated as hired persons.

He then called upon a clergyman present, to ask the blessing of God upon the act. Hereupon the entire household, white and black, knelt in worship, and the sobs and responses! of the negroes made indeed an impressive scene.

Coming, at the same time, to the conclusion, that colonization was inadequate as a remedy for slavery, he resigned his position as Vice-President of the State Society, and in a letter to the Secretary, gave his reasons at length for doing so. The concluding paragraph of that letter is as follows:

* Permit me, in conclusion, to say that the views submitted in this communication, are entertained after long and very circumspect examination of the main subject to which they apply. Born in the midst of a slaveholding community—accustomed to the services of slaves from my infancy—reared under an exposure to all the prejudices that slavery begets—and being myself heretofore, from early life, a slaveholder—my efforts at mental liberation were commenced in the very lowest and grossest atmosphere. Fearing the reality, as well as the imputation of enthusiasm, each ascent that my mind made to a higher and purer moral and intellectual region, I used, as a *stand point* to survey deliberately

all the tract I had left. When I remembered how calmly and dispassionately my mind has proceeded from one truth connected with this subject to another still higher,—that the opinions I have embraced are those to which such minds and hearts as Willberforce's and Clarkson's yielded their full assent—that they are the opinions of the disinterested and excellent of our own country; I feel well satisfied that my conclusions are not the fruits of enthusiasm. When I recur to my own observation through a life already of more than forty years—of the anti-republican tendency of slavery—and take up our most solemn State paper, and there see that all men are created equal, and have a right that is alienable to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; I feel a settled conviction of mind *that Slavery, as it exists among us, is opposed to the very essence of our government, and that by prolonging it, we are living down the foundation principles of our happy institutions.*"

"But one word more. The views contained in this letter are my own, and they have been the result of my own reading, observation and thought. I am a member of no anti-slavery society, nor have I any acquaintance, either personally or by literary correspondence, with any of the Northern abolitionists. No one, besides myself, is committed to any thing I have said."

The Rev. Dr. Cox, of New York, commenting upon this letter said :

"A Birney has shaken the continent by putting down his foot; and his fame will be envied before his arguments are answered or their force forgotten."

The sentiment that influenced his conclusions is shown by the following extract from another letter published at that time.

"Any plan of emancipation, however gradual it might be, would be better, than perpetual slavery; but surely it is the great desideratum of any plan, that it leave the parties *friends as freemen*. None will effect this, which is not founded on Christian principle—and there can be none, so far as I can see, which so fully recognizes Christian principle, as its basis, as that which urges *immediate* emancipation."

When giving his impression of what would be the effect practically of this doctrine, he adds :

"There would be no danger of personal violence to the master from emancipation brought about by Christian benevolence. Such an apprehension is the refuge of conscious guilt. Emancipation brought about by the principles above mentioned, I hesitate not to say, would in most instances, where superior intelligence of the master was acknowledged, produce on the part of the beneficiaries, the most entire and cordial obedience to his counsel and friendship. I do not believe that I have any warmer friends than my manumitted slaves, none, I am sure, if sacrifices were called for, who would more freely make them, to promote my happiness."

Speaking of the effect of such action, in his own case, he says :

"My own manumitted slaves, at the end of the first year of their employment on wages, will have used but half the amount they are entitled to receive. They have not fallen into disorderly or vagrant habits, but have manifested, at least the younger ones, an increased desire for knowledge and for attendance on the sabbath schools, and the common ministrations of the sanctuary."

*"What to-day is the position of the men, who for the past thirty years, have worked to bring our practice into conformity with the principles of the government? And who in the struggle against established and powerful interests, have accepted political disability and humiliated lives? Have any of those been put in governing places, where their proved fidelity, would guarantee the direct execution of what is to-day the nearly unanimous will of the people? Certainly not yet. So far the virtue of Reformers is its own reward. While yet living their mantles have fallen upon the shoulders of others to whom you have given high position, but they are still laboring in narrow paths,—broadening, to be sure, and brightening,—for the rough ground is passed and the sun of victory is already rising. We give deep sympathy and honor to the men who in the interests of civilization, separated themselves from mankind to penetrate the chill solitudes of the arctic regions. Their names remain an added constellation in polar skies. But we know that bitter skies and winter winds are not so unkind as man's ingratitude. And why then, do we withhold sympathy and honor from these men who have so unflinchingly trod their isolated paths of self appointed duty—accepting political and social excommunication—these heroes of the moral solitudes?"

—From address of Gen. Fremont, Feb. 29th, 1864, N. Y.

TREATMENT IN A SLAVE STATE.

Feeling, that unless such views were generally accepted, the true glory, of his country must be eclipsed by the growing magnitude of slavery, he determined to devote himself to their dissemination in the midst of those whom they were designed to influence. He did not seek to go North where the risk might be less, but to discuss the subject with slaveholders whom he wished to persuade to act as he had. He bought press and type for the publication of a paper at Danville, Ky. He made a contract with the printer of the weekly newspaper at that place, to publish under his editorial control, a paper to be called *The Philanthropist*. He issued a prospectus in which occurs the following paragraph:

"Those who have investigated the subject of slavery, with one consent declare, if something effectual be not done without any delay, it will become, in a short time unmanageable, and in the end *overwhelming*. In our condition, to do nothing, would show an unpardonable lack of manhood. Something effectual ought to be—for as yet it *can* be done. With the *sin* of slavery, its evils may be terminated, our land may be blessed of God; raised, cleansed from defilement, and without a single remaining blood spot, stand clothed in the majesty of her free principles, the rebuke of tyrants, the refuge of the oppressed."

When the fact became known that Mr. Birney had freed his slaves, it was regarded by neighboring slaveholders as satisfactory evidence of his earnestness, and there was immediately an entire change of feeling toward him. It was altogether allowable for him while he held slaves, to say what he pleased upon the subject, but the moment his theory was converted into practice, he was regarded as a dangerous member of society.

Learning that he had provided press and type, and engaged a printer to give publicity to his views, slaveholders assembled in mass meeting in the town of his residence, and pledged themselves to use every means in their power, whether peaceable or violent to prevent their publication. Having known him from childhood, they felt assured that he did not lack the courage necessary to carry out his plans. The meeting appointed a committee to address him a letter of remonstrance. This they did on the 12th of July, 1835. The following extract shows the spirit by which they were actuated:

"We address you now in the calmness and candor that should characterise law abiding men, as willing to avoid violence, as they are determined to meet extremity, and advise you of the peril that must and inevitably will attend the execution of your purpose. We propose to you to postpone the setting up of your press, and the publication of your paper, until application can be had to the Legislature, who will, by a positive law, set rules for your observance, or by a refusal to act, admonish us of our duty. We admonish you, sir, as citizens of the same neighborhood, as members of the same society in which you live and move, and for whose harmony and quiet we feel the most sincere solicitude, to beware how you make an experiment here, which no American slaveholding community has found itself able to bear."

Mr. Birney replied, refusing in respectful yet dignified and decided terms, to comply with their request. He suggested that it would have been far more becoming, and more like the spirit of law abiding men, had they abstained entirely from the threat that a resort might be had to violence, to prevent the exercise of one of the most precious rights of an American,—a right, which, however it might be violated in the destruction of his property, or cloven down in the abuse of his person, can never for a moment be surrendered. He, therefore, after giving his reasons, concluded:

"However desirous I may be of obliging you, as citizens and neighbors, I cannot accede to your proposition."

The Committee finding him determined to persevere, succeeded through bribery, and by exciting his apprehensions of personal danger, in inducing the printer to violate his contract, by refusing to print the paper.

When the report reached Alabama that Mr. Birney had freed his slaves, various devices were resorted to for the purpose of dishonoring him, and showing their contempt for such a heresy.

The Supreme Court of Alabama, being at that time in session, a member of the bar moved the Court, that the name of James G. Birney be expunged from the roll of attorneys of that Court, as unworthy to remain there longer. And although Judge Hopkins, his former partner and bosom friend, was the President Judge, he had not courage to say aught in objection, or to express a word in extenuation, and ordered the motion to be granted.

While he was resident in Alabama, the University of that State was organized upon an endowment of remarkable liberality. On account of his reputation as a classical scholar, and the interest he had uniformly shown in the cause of education, Mr. Birney was commissioned by the Trustees to visit the New England States and form the acquaintance of literary men, with the view of selecting competent professors for the several departments of the University. He did so, and the President and Professors of that institution were elected to their several posts, chiefly upon his recommendation. He had frequently attended upon examinations and taken an active part in promoting its welfare, being a member of the Board of Trustees. The literary societies connected with it, had chosen him as one of their honorary members. But no sooner did they hear that he had given liberty to slaves, than they hastened to pass resolutions declaring him unworthy of such membership, and expelled him.

In Northern Alabama a large meeting was held about the same time, for the purpose of denouncing Mr. Birney. They appointed a vigilance committee to inflict blows and death upon the objects of their vengeance, wherever they may lay their lawless hands upon them. Of this committee, more than one-third were described as professed Christians, belonging to three of the leading denominations in our country, one of whom was a Baptist minister.

This committee took special pains to communicate these proceedings to Mr. Birney. The following is an extract from the answer which he published and sent them :

"In this reply, which after no hurried reflection, I have thought proper to make to your proceedings, I shall take but little time in noticing what was done that was strictly personal to myself. I will stop only long enough to remind you—especially that portion of you who profess to be followers of Christ—of the unjust impression you have attempted to make on those to whom I am a stranger, by associating me, in your proceedings, with *gamblers, blacklegs*, and suspicious characters. It is well known to you all, that with laborious diligence I prosecuted in your county, and with no mean success, a profession arduous in its duties, and to a conscientious mind, beset with difficulties and temptations. To the generosity of my practice the bar will testify, and with parties and witnesses bear record to my exemptions from the petty tricks and advantages which bring the profession into disrepute. Knowing me by an acquaintance of many years, as you did, in my profession—as a member of the church—as a citizen—you have tried to produce an impression you knew to be unjust and injurious. As christians, and as gentlemen, now that you have had time for reflection, you should be sorry for it, and ashamed of it.

HIS TREATMENT IN A FREE STATE.

The foregoing incidents tend to show what kind of treatment slaveholders were disposed to manifest to one who left their ranks, and how they regarded conduct, designed practically, to exemplify the teachings of the Declaration of Independence. His reception by men of the North will now be adverted to.

Having lost his printer, in his native State, rendering it impracticable to carry out his design as to the publication of his views there, he concluded to seek the protection of the constitution of the free State of Ohio, which guarantees to her citizens, freedom of speech and of the press.

He removed his residence to Cincinnati. He had scarcely put his domicile in order, before he was assured upon all hands that so imperative was the sway of Southern influence in that city, that he could not, for a day, publish a paper that would oppose slavery. Not desirous of seeming rash in facing opposition that seemed irresistible, he, at greatly increased expense and inconvenience, made arrangements for the publication of the paper at the town of New Richmond, on the Ohio river, twenty miles above Cincinnati, for the purpose of giving an example of the spirit and manner with which he designed to conduct the discussion of that subject which then seemed almost impossible to allude to without agitating the public mind.

After the paper had received very general commendation for the excellent spirit with which the subject was discussed, he concluded to remove the press to Cincinnati. He had not been there long before the men of property and standing united in saying that it must be suppressed by all means, right or wrong, peaceably or forcibly. He contended for his constitutional right to speak and write.

The report of the First Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society, held April, 1836, shows that Mr. Birney offered the following resolution:

"That in order to perpetuate our free institutions, the subject of slavery ought to be fully discussed by the non-slaveholding States."

With a view to inflame the public mind, and increase the excitement, it was stated at a large public meeting in Cincinnati, that Mr. Birney had agreed that he would not establish a paper in that city. In a letter of the date of July, 1836, he replied to this statement, in the following manner:

"I do not hold myself accountable for erroneous impressions which others may receive, when I have not designed to make them. In this, no reasonable person will differ with me. Now, sir, I have on no occasion used words, which according to my understanding of them, were intended to convey the idea that I would not, whenever I might deem it expedient, establish my press in this city. On the contrary, I have uniformly said from the commencement, that soon as the paper, *Philanthropist*, had won for itself the character for fairness, moderation, and kind and sober discussion, that I determined it should deserve, I would remove the press to this, my place of residence."

"And so far, from giving a solemn pledge at a public meeting in this place, that I would not do so, I endeavored at the meeting referred to, to correct in the most express and unequivocal terms—so far as the noise and confusion which prevailed, enabled me to do so—an erroneous impression, which the Mayor had received from a previous conversation on the same subject. I then stated that I had never intended to make the impression that I would surrender any of my constitutional rights, reiterating in the last words of my remarks—
"THAT I NEVER WOULD."

Kentuckians were active in urging Cincinnatians to suppress discussion. No sooner had the *Philanthropist* made its appearance, than a Kentucky editor, through his journal, exclaimed: "We have no doubt that his office will be torn down, but we trust that Mr. Birney will receive no personal harm. Notwithstanding his mad notions, we consider him an honest and benevolent man. He is resolute too."

The agitators determining that something must be done, that the city might not lose the good will of the South, convened a large meeting, at which a committee was appointed to call upon Mr. Birney and insist that the paper must be suppressed. This committee consisted of those who were considered the first men in the city; among them, were Judge Burnet, Judge Burke and Rev. Mr. Spencer. When the committee called, Mr. Birney, inferring from their remarks, that they were indifferently informed as to the object of those they called abolitionists, proposed to discuss the subject with any of them in any public place they might select. It was at once replied that such a meeting could not be held in the city, that the people would not bear public discussion on slavery, and that the speaker would lose his life in attempting to dis-

ness it. Mr. Birney promptly assured them, that with their sanction for the call of such a meeting, he was willing to hazard all personal peril to himself.

The committee were asked if they had read the *Philanthropist*, and if they had, whether the objection to its continuance was made on the ground of there being anything exceptionable in the manner and spirit, of conducting it. They replied, that the *manner* and *spirit* of the paper had nothing to do with the question, it was the discussion of slavery here, that was thought to be injuring the business of the city,—that the paper was believed to be a prominent instrument in carrying on this discussion, therefore its absolute discontinuance was called for, that the public sentiment would be satisfied with nothing short of this, and it was in such condition that it could not be reasoned with."

To this demand of the Committee, Mr. Birney on the next day, in behalf of himself and associates, submitted a reply in writing of which the following is a part.

"While we feel ourselves constrained altogether to decline complying with your request as submitted last evening, to discontinue the *Philanthropist*, we think it but just to ourselves, and respectful to our fellow-citizens generally, to offer a brief exposition of the reasons that persuade us to this course."

1. We decline complying, not so much from the fear that the particular cause in which our press is employed may be injured, but because compliance involves a tame surrender of the freedom of the Press—the right to discuss.

2. "The *Philanthropist* is the acknowledged organ of some twelve thousand or more of our fellow-citizens of Ohio, who believe that slavery, as it exists in this country, is altogether incompatible with the permanency of her institutions; who believe that the slavery of the South or the liberty of the North must cease to exist; and who intend to do what in them lies, to bring about a happy and peaceful termination of the former, and this as speedily as facts, and arguments and appeals to the conscience and understandings of the Slaveholders can be made instrumental to effect it."

3. "The *Philanthropist* is the only journal in this city or neighborhood through which these facts, and arguments and appeals can be fully addressed to the community. It has been conducted with fairness and moderation, as may be abundantly proved by the acknowledgments of those who are opposed to its objects. It has invited the slaveholders themselves to the use of its columns for the defense of slavery, and has given up to a republication of their arguments a large share of its space. To discontinue such a paper under existing circumstance would be a tacit submission to the exorbitant demand of the South that *slavery* shall never more be mentioned among us."

4. "We decline complying with your request, because we would not preclude ourselves and others from discussing, in the most advantageous manner, a subject, which by the acknowledgment of all, is of momentous consequence, and which is now occupying the mind of the whole nation."

5. "We decline complying, because the demand is virtually the demand of slaveholders, who having taken down all the safeguards of liberty in their own States, in order that slavery may be perpetuated, are now for the fuller attainment of the same object, making the demand of us to follow their example."

6. "We decline complying, because the attempt is now first made in our case formally and deliberately to put down the freedom of speech and of the Press. We are, to be sure, the objects of the attack, but there is not a freeman in the State whose rights are not invaded, in any assault which may be made upon us for refusing to succumb to an imperious demand to surrender our rights."

"With these reasons, to which many more might be added, did time permit, we leave the case with you: expressing, however, our firm conviction, should any disturbance of the peace occur, that you, gentlemen, must be deeply, if not almost entirely responsible for it before the bar of sober and enlightened public opinion."

Upon this answer, the *Cincinnati Whig* of the next day made the following comment:

"Upon the answer of the abolitionists we have at present but few remarks to make, but we think its tone and character highly exceptionable. The language used in the second, fourth and sixth reasons assigned we consider exceedingly insolent, and offensive, and well calculated to augment rather than allay the excitement at present existing in the city. The position assumed that the slavery of the South or the liberty of the North must cease to exist, we think pre-eminently insulting, and atrocious both in reference to our Southern brethren and ourselves."

The excitement however increased. Handbills were posted for a large meeting of those disposed to suppress discussion. An extract from a letter of Mr. Birney, written at this time, shows how he regarded these movements.

"Sir, I have enough to do here. The war is raging—the proslavery spirit feels as if it had been struck, and is girding itself for the strife. An anti-abolition meeting is to be held this evening, called by gentlemen of property and standing. The hand of the South has almost benumbed the spirit of freedom here; * * * * I cannot print my paper here; I lectured here one evening to a small audience, in a private manner, no notice of it having been given in the papers. This is the exciting cause of the meeting this evening. It was but yesterday that a wealthy slaveholder of Kentucky called to let me know that my paper in Ohio would be destroyed by a band of his fellow-citizens, who had determined upon it; that almost the whole country would be summoned to the service, and that my life was in constant danger. A few days before, a citizen of Cincinnati, a high commissioned officer of the militia, called to inform me that I would be disgracefully punished and abused, and my property destroyed, if I persisted in my anti-slavery movements, * * I pray you press on. It is not a time to be indolent. If we are our children may wear the livery of the slave. If I fall in this cause, I trust it will bring hundreds to supply my place."

In another letter referring to a lecture he delivered in the vicinity of the city, he says:

"During the hour I spoke, the mob having crowded about the door, were engaged in discharging at me their lighted missiles; when I had finished, and was returning to my lodgings, a mile distant, I was attended by them the greater part of the way, they breaking in on the stillness of the night with their fierce and demoniac shouts. But why, you may ask, do you dwell on such things, of late by no means of uncommon occurrence? I recall them that our friends, the friends of Freedom, to the slave, of freedom to the white man, of protecting law, of inalienable rights, of constitutional liberty, may be more and more animated to the conflict. Every day is disclosing to us more evidently the dangerous condition of our country, and how a God of Justice is bringing on an impenitent nation, retribution in the loss of our own liberty, for having plundered and violated the liberty of others. Let us then, still more industriously gird up ourselves to the work before us, of bringing our country to penitence, as the best, nay the only means of saving her. We, who are now in the field, may all perish. But what of this! Our faithfulness unto death, if we be called thus far to suffer, will animate others to fill our places, whilst we go home to reap our reward, and be forever with the Lord. We fight not with the courage of despair, but with the calmness of certain victory—with the strength of those who feel that the power is from the Almighty."

Just at this time, citizens of Kentucky sent over to the city and had a handbill posted, offering a reward for the delivery of "one James G. Birney, a fugitive from justice, from old Kentucky," and describing him as "of white complexion, though black in heart."

Mrs. Birney having left the city on a visit, Mr. Birney went to the Franklin House to board. The guests, composed of gentlemen of business in the city, no sooner heard that an abolitionist was a guest of the house, than they met and resolved that they could not tolerate such an intrusion, and more than a score of them abandoned the house.

As the crisis approached, Mr. Birney prepared an address, which in behalf of himself and associates, was published, and from which the following is an extract:

"A band of lawless men array themselves against the constitution, declaring that their will, and not that of the people, is paramount. What, fellow citizens, ought we to do in such a case? Ought we to yield to fear? * * * We have now in some degree, from the force of circumstances, committed to our custody the rights of every freeman in Ohio, of their offspring, of our own. Shall we as cravens voluntarily offer them up sacrifices to the spirit of misrule, or as American citizens, contend for them, till a force which we cannot withstand, shall wrest them from our hands? The latter part of the alternative we have embraced with a full determination, by the help of God, to maintain unimpaired the freedom of speech and the liberty of the press—the *pillars of our rights*."

No expedient was left unturned which might intimidate Mr. Birney and his condutors. The press was plied; large meetings were held; speeches were made; resolutions were adopted; committees organized—everything was put in

motion to reduce or destroy the little band of philanthropists, who had pledged their all to the cause in which they had enlisted.

At length the meeting was held. The *Cincinnati Republican* of June, 1836, describes it, as follows :

"Our predictions with respect to the sentiments of the citizens of Cincinnati upon this subject, were verified fully and unequivocally at the meeting which transpired at the Court House in this city, on last Saturday. To our mind, the proceedings of that evening establish as conclusively, as the expression of public sentiment and public feeling can establish anything, that the doctrine of abolition and its advocates will never be countenanced or encouraged in Cincinnati. This meeting was not confined to party or sect. It was based upon a call from men of all parties, classes, distinctions and callings. The most distinguished and influential men of the city were there and took an active part in the proceedings. There were Judges, Merchants, Lawyers, Divines, Physicians, and the most respectable tradesmen and citizens of every class. There were Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and members of almost every religious denominations. There were Jackson and Harrison men, and men of all political parties, all assembled for the same purpose and intent on accomplishing the same object—the expression of their abhorrence of the diabolical doctrines of the abolitionists."

The Court House was filled and a crowd gathered around it of some four thousand. After the speakers had charged Mr. Birney with every offense that they supposed would increase the excitement, and when the crowd was wrought up to such a pitch as to be ready for any devilish deed, according to the account of the *Cincinnati Gazette*. "A good looking man, past the meridian of life, with hair somewhat grey, here rose and said: "My name is BIRNEY. May I be heard." The audience appeared confounded by such a request coming from such a source. Recovering from their surprise, at the calm fearlessness of the man who dared stand unarmed, save in the panoply of right, in the midst of his enemies. One cried "down with him," others cried "kill him," others cried, "tar and feather him." For a time there was confusion worse confounded. Mr. Birney, with entire self possession, remarked that he would not proceed if he could not have the ear of the assembly. To go on under such circumstances would justify the charge of obstinacy, that had been laid at the door of abolitionists.

At this stage, Gen. Lytle, who had great influence with the mob, rose, and at the top of his voice, cried—"Hear before you strike." The meeting then resolved to hear.

"Mr. Birney thanking them for the unexpected favor, said that his sentiments had been misunderstood. It was no part of the design of the abolitionists to interfere with the constitution of the country. They only asked to make their appeals to their fellow citizens who hold slaves, and endeavor to persuade them that it was wrong to treat in this way their fellow men. Emancipation was a work that could be carried on and consummated without touching the constitution of the country."

"He was not indifferent to the safety of his fellow citizens of the South. He was born in the South—he had spent his life there—he had a numerous beloved kindred who held slaves. To their safety he was not indifferent, and he certainly should pursue no course, which he thought likely to put them in peril. He considered that the ultimate safety of the South was more in danger from perpetual slavery, than from its abolition. See how the blacks increase upon the whites. This disproportionate increase of blacks will finally bring the very catastrophe which is now dreaded. It may be slow, but it will come if slavery is perpetuated. He desired to save his fellow citizens of the South, and his country from the horrors of that day."

"He had reason to believe, that such appeals to his fellow citizens on this subject, would not be in vain. Such appeals had reached his own conscience and influenced his conduct."

When Mr. Birney concluded he mingled among the crowd, and retired upon adjournment without further molestation. His conduct had disarmed the madness of the multitude.

The *Cincinnati Whig* describing the meeting says :

It was altogether worthy of Cincinnati and the Western emporium. It was very large and eminently respectable. It was attended by many of our oldest, and most influential citizens. It was composed of all parties and sects, and the whole assembly seemed to be inspired with a common sentiment of abhorrence of abolitionism. The incidents of the meeting were [exceedingly interesting and somewhat peculiar. The celebrated and fanatical abolitionist, James G. Birney had the boldness and fatuity to attend. Some observations were made by Col. Hale of a severe character, touching Mr. Birney's abolition proceedings, and which was calculated to produce a very unfavorable impression toward him, and to render him and his course still more odious. Mr. Birney rose to reply. Inflammable symptoms of hostility towards him were instantly manifest, and a good deal of confusion ensued. Some were for turning him out, some for compelling his silence, and others for hearing what he had to say. A vote was then taken whether he should be permitted to speak, and was decided in the affirmative by a large majority."

Among the resolutions passed at the meeting, were the following :

Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, nothing short of the absolute discontinuance of the publication of the said abolition paper in the city, can prevent a resort to violence which may be disastrous to its publishers and supporters, as it must be to the good order and fair fame of our city."

Resolved, That a committee, consisting of twelve persons, be appointed by the Chair to wait upon James G. Birney, and his associates, in the publication of the said paper, to remonstrate with them upon the dangerous tendency of the course they are pursuing, to communicate to them, the actual tone of public feeling in the city, to request them by every motive of patriotism and philanthropy, to desist from the publication of their paper, and to warn them, that if they persist, we cannot hold ourselves responsible for the consequences."

The *Cincinnati Evening Post* gave the following account of the result of this meeting, and such resolves :

About dark on Saturday evening, a large number of persons, among them some of our most respectable inhabitants, convened at the Exchange and proceeded up Main to the corner of 7th street, increasing in numbers as they went, having arrived there, a few persons entered the printing office of Mr. Page, where the *Philanthropist* was published, and in a short time threw into the street or demolished everything about the premises, amid the cheers of four or five thousand who were looking on. The printing presses were dragged down to the river, (a distance of half a mile) put on board a skiff and carried into the middle of the stream and sunk. Last evening (Sunday) a number of persons again collected in the streets, and an inquiry and search was made by them in different houses for Mr. Birney and several other abolitionists, whom they expressed their determination to lynch if they caught them."

The *Cincinnati Whig* of Aug. 2, gives this statement :

"On Sunday night last a great number of persons were congregated in front of the Franklin House, on Main street, near Fourth, under the impression that James G. Birney was secreted in the house. They demanded a search, and a committee of several persons were appointed, who after examining every room in the house, reported that he was not there."

It so happened that on the night of the mob Mr. Birney was in Hillsborough, Ohio, some sixty miles from Cincinnati, fulfilling an appointment to lecture, and in this way providentially escaped the violence of the mob, and probably death at their hands.

The following extracts from letters of Mr. Birney, written at that time, show the spirit with which he received this treatment :

"The enemies of law" said Mr. B. "will adopt a new course—they will hereafter operate privately—their aim will be against the persons of Abolitionists. This is now the course. We fear it not. Threats of personal violence, to ourself especially,—of seizure and deportation, are as common as the air we breathe; nor have they been withheld, which contemplated a still more disgraceful, if not more fatal violence. * * * * But law has been prostrated; violence exults over its downfall; the Constitution lies in dishonorable dust whilst bloody treason flourishes over it. Men are struck dumb, and speech is useless for the reformation of abuses that threaten to load with the fetters of the slave themselves and their children. All this is here, almost upon us now, and shall it be said, *life and fortune*, and *honor* should not be hazarded, that the Constitution and Law and Liberty may be restored to their lost thrones, and sway their mild scepter without a rival? No, this must be done by those who would rather themselves die freemen than live slaves, or our country, glorious as has been her hope, be gone forever."

"Again, grievous threats have been made for some time, chiefly against me personally. I know not whether the ferocity of the slaveholders and their confederates here will lead them to attempt the seizure and deportation to the South of my person, or whether they will attempt a sudden and still more effectual removal of me. If such a thing should be *permitted*, I must of course look on it as the way which an infinitely wise God has appointed for me, as the part I am to act in the great revolution which he has set on foot for the liberation of the oppressed of our land."

In an article reviewing the course of his opponents, Mr. Birney used the following language:

"In the foregoing pages we have endeavored to present to you an impartial account of an attack, the most formidable, because of the character of the persons concerned, and of the deliberation with which it was planned, that has yet been made on our common liberties. Notwithstanding the right to discuss belongs to man as indisputably as the right to use his senses, or the organs of his body, in their appropriate functions; and the exercise of it is, as it ought ever to be, free from all foreign control, save that which makes us responsible for the use of it in invading others' rights no less sacred than our own; yet have we been again and again held up by the slavery presses of this city as obstinate and contumacious, for not surrendering it, on demand of the Market House Committee. This charge has been so confidently preferred, and so often reiterated, that we believe the impression is made on many, that our conduct has been actuated by the spirit to which it is ascribed. They have been led to judge of my course, rather by the fury of the onset, to which we have been exposed, than by the calm steadfastness with which it has been met. We ask if *any* property can be more rightfully ours than that which the Market House Committee demanded of us to lay down? The right to discuss is given to us by God, and secured to us by the highest law of the land. Had the Market House Committee seen proper to demand in the name of their constituents, the absolute surrender of our houses and our goods, backing the demand by the menace that if they were not voluntarily yielded, they would be forcibly taken, would their demand have been less unreasonable? Have we any higher title to these subjects of property, than the gift of God and the security of the Constitution? Ought we then to have rendered a servile compliance? Or ought we not (as we did) to have firmly repelled the unjust demand, choosing to suffer the consequences, however disastrous to ourselves, in order that you, the proper correctors by legal modes of all the public wrongs, might be made fully acquainted with the dishonor in which the majesty of the law was held, and the dangers with which our most precious rights were threatened by a lawless and fierce aristocracy."

"Notwithstanding the unusual outburst of lawless aristocratic violence to which our peaceful, yet decided support of the *freedom* of the *Press*, of *liberty* of *speech*, of the right to discuss, has exposed us, we have lost no confidence in the rectitude of our principles, nor in the judgment which you and those which may succeed us, will pass on our conduct; unconvinced by the *force* with which our arguments have been replied to, we shall still continue fearlessly to maintain and publicly to inculcate the great principles of liberty incorporated in the constitutions of our State and General Governments; believing that if ever there was a time, it is now come, when our republic, and with her the cause of universal freedom is in a strait, where everything that ought to be prized by the patriot should be freely hazarded for her relief."

The reader is asked to pause here, and consider whether in the declarations and writings of Mr. Birney, during this trying ordeal, he discovers anything that partakes of fanaticism. Does he take any position that any lover of this country cannot approve?

CORRESPONDENCE WITH CALHOUN AND ELMORE.

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On the 16th of February, 1854, the Hon. F. H. Elmore, of South Carolina, addressed a letter to Mr. Birney, of which the following is an extract:
To Jas. G. Birney, Esq.

Sir:—"A letter from you to John C. Calhoun, dated 29th January, say (in reference to the Abolitionists or Anti-Slavery Societies) we have nothing to conceal, and should you desire any information as to our proceedings, it will be cheerfully communicated on being apprised of your wishes. The frankness of this unsolicited offer, indicates a fairness and honesty of purpose, which has caused the present communication, and which demands the same full and frank disclosure of the views with which the subjoined inquiries are proposed."

He annexed to his letter some fourteen interrogations.

Mr. Birney answered them with full and minute information, and the correspondence had a wide circulation.

Mr. Elmore, in acknowledging the receipt of the reply, says:

"I heard of you as a man of intelligence, sincerity and truth, who, although laboring in a bad cause, did it with ability, and from a mistaken conviction of its justice. As one of the representatives of a slave-holding constituency, and one of a committee raised by the Representatives of the slave-holding States, to ascertain the intentions and progress of your associations, I availed myself of the opportunity offered by your character and situation, to propose to you inquiries as to facts which would make these developments, so important to be known by our people. My inquiries were framed to draw out full and authentic details of the organization, numbers, resources and designs of the Abolitionists; of the means they resorted to for the accomplishment of their ends, and the progress made, and making in their dangerous work; that all such information might be laid before the four millions and a half of white inhabitants in the Slave States, whose lives and property are menaced and endangered by this ill-considered, misnamed and discouraging philanthropy. The two races cannot exist together upon terms of equality, the extirpation of one, and the ruin of the other would be inevitable. This humanity, conceived in wrong, and born in civil strife, would be baptized in a people's blood. It was that our people might know in time to guard against the mad onset, the full extent of this gigantic conspiracy and crusade against their institutions, and of necessity upon their lives with which they must sustain them, and their fortunes and prosperity, which exist only while these institutions exist, that I was induced to enter into a correspondence with you, who by your official station and intelligence were known to be well informed on these points, and from your well established character for candor and fairness, would make no statement of facts, which were not known or believed by you to be true. To a great extent my end has been accomplished by your replies to my enquiries. We differ no wider than I expected, but that difference has been exhibited courteously."

This enquiry for information evidently came from those who were then laying plans deep and wide, for the very rebellion that is now threatening the severance of the Union, and the overthrow of the Government. Mr. Elmore, was, doubtless, in this matter, the mouthpiece of John C. Calhoun.

The gentlemen were advised of the object of the abolitionists in the following language, of Mr. Birney's letter:

"Confiding in the truth and power of the Almighty, we expect to bring our countrymen to see, that a nation to persist in injustice, is but to rush on its own ruin; that to do justice is the highest expediency; to love mercy, its noblest ornament. In other countries slavery has sometimes yielded to fortuitous circumstances, or been extinguished by physical force. We strive to win for truth the victory over error, and on the broken fragments of slavery to rear for her a temple that shall reach to the heavens, and toward which all nations shall worship."

MANUMISSION OF SLAVES.

In the year 1839, Mr. Birney's father deceased. He left a large estate, unincumbered, consisting of land, money and slaves.

Mrs. John J. Marshall and himself were the only heirs. He was summoned to Kentucky, to be present at the division of the estate of his father. He at once requested that all of the negroes might be computed at their market valuation, as a part of his share. This was assented to.

He immediately wrote the following deed:

"Know all men by these presents, that I, James G. Birney, late of Kentucky, but now having my residence in the city of New York, believing that slaveholding is inconsistent with natural justice, with the precepts and spirit of the Christian religion, and with the declaration of American Independence, and wishing to testify in favor of them all, do hereby emancipate, and forever set free, the following named slaves, which have come into my possession, as one of the heirs of my father, James G. Birney, deceased, at the time of his death."

Then follow their names and description, and the deed concludes:

"In testimony of the above, I have hereunto set my name, and affixed my seal, this third day of September, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-nine."

JAMES G. BIRNEY. [SEAL.]

Several of the men were experienced rope makers, and would have readily commanded the very highest price of the market.

Mr. Birney discovering that Eastern Anti Slavery papers were disposed to speak highly of this act of emancipation, wrote to the editor of the *Emancipator*, and made it a special request, that he would give him no commendation, for the reason that he had done only an act of justice, for which he deserved no praise.

Upon the importunity of Judge Marshall, he loaned him the money which was his share of the estate. Judge Marshall becoming bankrupt, never repaid any of the money, not even the interest, which he was earnestly entreated to pay, to aid in the education of his children. The result was that Mr. Birney realized nothing whatever from the estate, except the privilege of inditing the deed above described.

HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND.

In the year 1840 Mr. Birney visited England, and was received with the utmost cordiality, by the friends of freedom. He was one of the Vice-Presidents of the World's Convention. He spent several months in delivering addresses at different places. The estimation in which he was held in that country may be inferred from the following testimony of the committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society:

"That this Committee are deeply sensible of the services rendered to the anti-slavery cause, by their esteemed friend and coadjutor, James Gillespie Birney, Esq., whilst in this country, in a course of laborious efforts, in which his accurate and extensive information, his wise and judicious counsels, and his power of calm and convincing statement have become eminently conspicuous."

During the same year President Kellogg, of Illinois, visited England, and thus described the impression which was left there by Mr. Birney's visit:

"It was truly refreshing to me while in Great Britain, amid the many complaints against my countrymen to which I was obliged to listen, to hear our excellent friend; James G. Birney so frequently spoken of, and always in terms of unqualified approbation and respect. The mention of his name in those circles in which he was known, and they were both numerous and extensive, invariably imparted pleasure, and many were the enquiries which were made in respect to his welfare. I could not but observe, that intelligent men, both in England and Scotland, very highly appreciated him, for that trait in his character, which I have always, from my first acquaintance with Mr. Birney, regarded as exhibited by him in a remarkable degree. You will doubtless understand me as referring to his candor. In his public addresses and discussions, which were numerous in that country, as well as his private conversations, by the sobriety of his own views, by the fairness and fullness with which he stated the positions and arguments of his opponents, and by the manliness with which he met and refuted them; he ever impressed his auditors with a conviction of the soundness of his sentiments, and of the perfect reliance which might be placed upon his statements. The visits of such men to foreign lands are an honor to our country, and leave behind them a savor which is grateful to an American citizen."

NOMINATED FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1840.

In the month of May, 1840, he was nominated for the Presidency. In his letter of acceptance he made use of the following language:

"The conclusion of the whole matter is, that as a people, we are trying an experiment, as unphilosophical in theory, as it has been, and ever will be, found impossible in practice, to make a harmonious whole, out of parts that are in principle and essence discordant. It is in vain to think of a sincere union between the North and the South, if the first remain true to her republican principles and habits, and the latter persist in her slaveholding despotism. They are incapable from their natures, of being made *one*. They can no more be welded together into one body of uniform strength and consistency, than clay and sand. They may, it is true, be pressed together, and made to cohere by extraneous appliances; and the line of contact may be daubed over and varnished, and concealed, but the first shock will make them fall assunder, and disclose the fact, that there never was any real incorporation of substance."

"A large oligarchy, as the South is, made up of a multitude of petty despotisms, acting on the principle that men are not created equal—that a favored few are born ready booted and spurred, to leap into the saddles with which the backs of the many are furnished by nature. Such a government I say, when brought by circumstances into close juxtaposition and incessant intercourse with republics, acting on principles diametrically opposite, must

soon be brought to modify, and eventually to relinquish its principles and practices, or *vice versa*, the republics must undergo a similar change, and assimilate themselves in the practices of the despotisms. One or the other must in the end gain the entire ascendancy. An early intimation of irrepressible conflict."

RENOMINATED IN 1843.

In 1843 a large convention of members of the Liberty Party, was held at Buffalo. Mr. Birney was again nominated as a candidate for the Presidency.

The writer was at the time in a situation to know that these nominations were to Mr. Birney, as a personal matter, altogether unacceptable; that his feelings were averse to the notoriety that such a position gave him, and that he would have greatly preferred to have been more retired, but he submitted to the wishes of his co-laborers, under the conviction that this was one of the modes, and perhaps the most efficient mode of publishing the principles and the views, for the dissemination and success of which he had been at such sacrifice and so long laboring.

He considered that while he was consenting to be held up as a target to be shot at, he would incidentally thus be the means of attracting the attention of the national mind to the consideration of the necessity of divorcing the government from subserviency to slavery, and bringing it back to the principles on which it was established. He could expect no advantage to himself. His sensitive mind certainly could not have been pleased with the prospect of the abuse, detraction, and slander that were inevitably to be heaped upon, and thrown against him. He passed through an ordeal that few men have to try; and that undoubtedly shortened his life by several years.

During the summer of 1844, a large meeting was held in Pittsburgh, to consider the subject of annexation. A committee was appointed to correspond with all those citizens whose names were before the public as candidates for the Presidency, and ask of them an explicit declaration of their views, on the subject of annexation. President Green thus speaks of Mr. Birney's reply:

"The reply of Mr. Birney is eminently characteristic. It is directly and wholly to the purpose. The convictions of the writer are described definitely and clearly;—without ambiguity and disguise. The argument is as beautiful as it is compact and concise. The whole paper is a just and striking specimen of genuine statesmanship;—such as is alone adapted to the exigencies in which our country is thrown."

The following is an extract from that letter:

"I am not averse to a liberal construction of the powers of the government, whenever the objects sought are plainly allowed in the constitution. But when they are unknown to the constitution, the liberal construction which becomes necessary to authorize them, is but another name for usurpation."

"It ought never to be lost sight of, that in this country the sovereignty, in substance, as well as in name abides with the people; that the powers of the government are but emanations or portions of that sovereignty imparted to such of the citizens as may be duly called to administrative functions; and that these powers, whilst they are to be exercised solely for the general welfare, must not be exercised at random, but within the limits marked out by the people themselves, in the constitution. Should experience prove that these limits are too narrow, the people, on being duly resorted to, will, through their own instrumentality, the States, enlarge them as they may deem expedient. Mean time the inconveniences arising from powers thought to be too much restricted, but which are so susceptible of so complete a remedy, ought to be partially borne with; for they are as nothing when compared with the uncertainties, the disorders, the perils, the oppressions attending a government all at loose ends; vacillating and distracted by the varying opinions and conflicting theories of those who may successively be called to administer it. Governments without number have been brought to nought, by what is called a liberal construction of their powers, but few have suffered loss by a rigid one. The liberal construction of to-day is not unfrequently made the ground-work of a more liberal, if not a licentious one to-morrow."

"My answer to your third and last inquiry, 'would you be willing to receive it as slave territory?' may be anticipated generally from what I have said in answer to your second inquiry. But I trust you will receive indulgently a brief explanation of my views on the subject."

"I allow not to human laws, be they primary or secondary, no matter by what number or with what solemnities ordained, the least semblance of right to establish slavery, to make property of my fellow man, created equally with myself in the image of God. Individually, or as political communities, men have no more right to enact slavery than they have to enact murder or blasphemy. To establish Slavery is to dethrone right, to trample on justice, the only true foundations of government. Governments exist not for the destruction of liberty, but for its defence,—not for the annihilation of men's rights, but for their preservation. Do they incorporate in their organic law the element of injustice? Do they live by admitting it in practice? Then do they destroy their own foundation, and absolve all men from the duty of allegiance?"

"We have no right to *continue* chains which we have no right to forge or to impose."

After a review of the facts pertaining to the purchase of Louisiana, and the compromise upon the admission of Missouri, he concludes as follows:

"Such is the condition of our affairs now—one for which we have been prepared, mainly by the two annexations that have already taken place, and by the admission of Missouri into the Union. It is a sad condition, but not devoid of hope. For again are the friends of the Constitution and of universal liberty rallying, and fast swelling the ranks of a party in whose success lies, as I firmly believe, the only reasonable hope for the rescue of the Republic from its most dangerous and most insidious foe. Already is it evident that the constancy and energy, and activity of the Liberty Party are not without some of their proper fruits. The sagacious begin to discover that the slave power has met with an adversary more formidable than any it has yet had to cope with; that confusion and despondency are showing themselves among the leaders of its battalia; that the rescue of the government from that dark power, and the crowning blessing of our holy struggle, *its utter and everlasting overthrow*, shall at no very distant period cause the song of praise and thanksgiving to ascend from all the borders of the land to HIM in whose might we have fought, and who has given us the victory. At such a time, in such a crisis, to receive Texas as a slave territory, would be a grievous event, to be added to the already unhappy catalogue of events of kindred character, that have been used to establish injustice in the land, and to perpetuate the evils of the most abominable tyranny that man has ever usurped over his fellow man."

NO UNFRIENDLY FEELING TOWARD MR. CLAY.

The excitement during the canvass of 1844, ran very high. Mr. Clay, the candidate of the Whigs, had many ardent and enthusiastic admirers, who were ready to do everything within their power for his election. They seemed to think that all that was good in principle was upon their side; and that opposition must arise from some personal hostility. The chief whig papers declared that Mr. Birney persisted in being a candidate, because of some personal hostility entertained toward Mr. Clay.

In reply to this, Mr. Birney wrote a letter, of which the following is an extract:

HAMBEN, Ct., October 10, 1844

To Editor of N. Y. Tribune:

"The charge of inveterate hostility to Mr. Clay, if it means anything more than political opposition, is wholly imaginary. I have no reasons for opposing Mr. Clay on personal grounds. On the contrary, the intercourse we have had has been of the most friendly character."

"I oppose his election because he disbelieves the great political truths of the Declaration of Independence—the foundation of all just governments; and because he repudiates the paramount object of the union—the perpetuation of liberty to all. On the same ground I oppose the election of Mr. Polk."

THE GARLAND LETTER.

In October, 1844, a letter, known as the Garland letter, and purporting to be written by James G. Birney, was published, and circulated with the utmost diligence, for the purpose of influencing the October elections.

It was first distributed in an extra of the "Oakland Gazette," a whig paper, published at Pontiac, Michigan, and made Mr. Birney declare full adhesion to the Democratic party, with an affidavit of Mr. Garland before a magistrate, of the

genuineness of the letter. So important was this letter deemed to be, that the Whig State Committee in Indiana issued a public address containing it; the Ohio State Journal issued it in an extra, judiciously timed so as to reach every part of the State about three days before the election; the Portland Advertiser did the same; Mr. Giddings, in the Western reserve, Mr. Webster, in Massachusetts, and other orators pledged themselves for its genuineness.

Statements subsequently appeared, showing that the letter was printed in an office at Pontiac, at midnight, by parties who know that the whole thing was an utter forgery.

The effect of the letter would have been to destroy the confidence of Mr. Birney's supporters, and to have blasted his character among all upright men. False as it was, it doubtless had some effect upon the election.

The great wrong sought to be perpetrated, has never been acknowledged by any who were parties to the preparation of the forgery, and who assisted in its circulation.

DEBATE IN DETROIT.

The bitterness with which a contest was carried on, chiefly through the fears of the two large parties competing for success, was exceedingly disagreeable to him. He submitted to it only on account of an imperative sense of duty.

The mental labor imposed upon him by continuous effort before the public wore upon his health, and he was advised by eminent physicians that he must have rest. On this account, with other reasons, although he had selected and fitted up a residence in central New York, he determined to remove to Michigan, even upon the frontier of civilization. Here he designed to get rid of the excitement in which he had been constantly kept, ever since he did so unpopular a thing as to free a slave. But his renomination for the Presidency kept him still before the public.

An illustration of the kind of treatment the candidate of that unpopular party had to endure, the papers of that date give the following account of his reception in Detroit, on one occasion. "The Liberty Party had provided a hall, which they called Liberty Hall, and opened it for public discussion. After several meetings had been held, Mr. Platt, a zealous Whig, and formerly Attorney General of the State proposed to reply. Judge Wilkins had consented to reply to him, but his duties imposed a temporary delay. Mr. Birney happening to be passing through the city on his way east, on the 8th of July, 1844, was invited to be present, and to participate in the debate. It having been announced that he was to speak, the hall was filled with a dense body of citizens. Mr. Stewart's opening remarks were received with respect. Mr. Platt's evoked hearty and repeated cheers from his party, but when Mr. Birney rose he was received with loud and prolonged hissing. The President had great difficulty in restoring order. A correspondent of one of those papers, visiting in Detroit, under date of July 15, 1844, speaking of this treatment said:

"This ungentlemanlike and inconsiderate treatment of a gentleman of Mr. Birney's known character and standing—a visitor to our city and a guest in our Hall, grated much on the feelings of all present whose sensibilities were not dulled to propriety, by the maddening influences of over party zeal. It was calculated to wound Mr. Birney's feelings, and greatly embarrass his train of thought. This I will say, that nothing in the language or manner of Mr. Birney could ever palliate such a breach of propriety. His language was mild; his manner possessed that calmness and moderation which are its characteristic; he made no charge, and used no epithets. It is due however to Mr. Platt to say that he conducted his part in a handsome and gentlemanly manner. He was most courteous, and even compli-

mentary to the moral and intellectual standing of Mr. Birney. His arguments were candid, and were urged with all the force of which they were capable; they were plausible, ingenious, and well selected; that they were not stronger was not Mr. Platt's fault. They were the best of those put forth by his party, and were well sustained. They failed because of their inherent weakness."

"That they did fail, and that those of Mr. Birney prevailed is admitted, I believe by all, of every party, but certainly by a decisive majority, even of the Whigs present. Mr. Birney has devoted a large part of an active life, spent amid slavery in exclusive devotion to this subject. He has brought to it intellect and talents of a high order—a thoughtful and reflective mind, has digested the events of time; memory and order have laid them by ready for use at a moment's call. It does Mr. Platt no discredit to say that on the subject of slavery he was unable to meet James G. Birney."

"Mr. Birney's effort was one of the happiest nature, probably one of the best he ever made—the most powerful and convincing certainly that the writer ever heard from him. His language was mild, clear and of the most classical purity. His action was in strict keeping with his subjects. His reasoning was intelligible and convincing. At times he rose to the highest pitches of the most pure eloquence, thrilling every hearer no less with the nobleness of his subject than the appropriate beauty of his language. He rose with his theme, and as he descanted upon the Buffalo resolutions respecting the constitutional provision for surrendering fugitive slaves, as he dwelt upon the omnipotence of God's law, of the awful daring of men who legislate against it, as he portrayed the iniquity of slavery, the stripes and lashes of the task-master, the escape of the slave at last, the pursuit, the recapture, the mocking claim that the fugitive owes service, he carried with him his whole audience, and a burst of universal applause proclaimed that party feeling for once fled before the more generous sympathies of the American."

"When Mr. Birney closed, a voice in the crowd called for 'three cheers for Birney,' it was heartily responded to, and though so many hundreds of political opponents were present not a sound of disapprobation mingled with this tribute of respect."

Nevertheless, there was a result that frequently attends success. His opponents embraced every opportunity to cover him with abuse. They wished to neutralize any favor which the matter and manner of his speech had gained for him. The *Detroit Advertiser*, then eminently a Clay paper, of the 11th of July, 1844, contained a long article, signed a "Whig," containing a caricature of his remarks, and accusing him of "base and deliberate calumny," of "adding cowardice to falsehood," of "shameless and venomous falsehood," of using "low scandals," and "glaring perversions of truth," "and his whole speech was a tissue of rancorous personal abuse, sly, unmanly inuendo, and harsh and brutal calumny."

This letter in the *Advertiser* was accompanied with an intimation that Mr. Birney or his friends, if agrieved by such a publication, might make corrections and explanations through the same paper that had published the anonymous libel. To which Mr. Birney returned the following reply:

To the Editors of the *Detroit Advertiser* :

"GENTLEMEN:—Duly acknowledging the offer which you have authorized to be made to me, to open your columns for any answer that I might choose to make to an article signed "A Whig," which appeared in the *Advertiser* of this morning, I have only to say, that every consideration of the respect that is due both to myself and to the public, forbid my taking any further notice of the article in question, abounding as it does, in false and reckless assertions, and violating in the language in which the assertions are made, the acknowledged courtesy of newspaper discussion.

Yours, &c.,

JAMES G. BIRNEY."

Detroit, July 11th, 1844.

The editor of the *Signal of Liberty*, of July 22d, 1844, speaking of this debate, said :

"We were in Detroit a day or two after, and were gratified to find that men of all parties and conditions, Judges and Statesmen, down to the class that hold political discussions in the grocery, were unanimous in the opinion that Mr. Birney's vindication of the principles and policy of the Liberty party, against the charges so ably preferred by Mr. Platt, was full, satisfactory, complete and triumphant."

THE DEFEAT OF HENRY CLAY.

At the election of 1844, James G. Birney received 62,300 votes. Henry Clay received 1,299,062, James K. Polk, 1,337,243. Polk's majority over Clay was 38,181. Birney's vote added to Clay would have given a majority of 23,119.

If 5,107 could have been taken away from the Liberty party and added to those cast by the Whig party in New York, Mr. Clay would have received the electoral vote of that State, and that taken from Mr. Polk and given to him, would undoubtedly have elected him President. The friends of Mr. Clay upon making this discovery, gave vent to the most intense disappointment, and put no restraint upon the abuse they heaped upon those who were so obstinate as to cast their votes for a man whom they had not the slightest hope of electing. They could not then see the least benefit to arise from voting for a principle. They seemed to think that the Whig party was a matter of course entitled to the anti-slavery vote. But that was not the only State in which the same result had happened. In Michigan Mr. Polk received 27,759 votes, Mr. Clay 24,337, Mr. Birney 3,632. So that it is perfectly clear in this case also, that if the Liberty party vote "had not been thrown away on Birney," Mr. Clay would have received the electoral vote of Michigan.

Yet a similar fact occurred in the State of Ohio, in regard to the Democratic party. In that State Mr. Clay received 155,057 votes, Mr. Polk 149,117, Mr. Birney 8,050. It is apparent that if the Birney vote had been added to that of Polk, Mr. Clay would not have secured the electoral vote of Ohio. And it might have been that the vote of that State would have decided who should have been President. In that case the Democratic party could have used the same cause of complaint.

THE COURSE OF THE N. Y. TRIBUNE.

At that time the *New York Tribune* was the leading journal of the Whig party. Its editor idolized Mr. Clay. He appeared to think that it was only necessary to make Mr. Clay President, to inaugurate the golden age in which all evil would be surmounted, and every good promoted. His admiration was so complete that he doubtless thought so then. His paper was for a long time filled with the most unmitigated abuse of Mr. Birney, for allowing himself to be voted for, by so many misguided men. Sometime within the following two years, a man by the name of James G. Barney died at the place of Mr. Birney's residence. A vessel arriving at Chicago from Lower Saginaw, reported that James G. Birney had died. The telegraph conveyed the intelligence to New York. The *Tribune* published an obituary, regardless of the ancient adage, *nil mortuis nisi bonum*, but made it the occasion of a malignant attack, assailing his motives, and bewailing the great error of his life, in not electing Henry Clay. Mr. Birney was at the time at the residence of a son in Cincinnati. He replied in a mild letter to the *Tribune*, stating that he had the satisfaction of reading his own obituary and corrected some palpable errors into which the editor had fallen.

Mr. Clay died in 1852. Mr. Greeley wrote his biography in which he repeats the charge above referred to, in the following passage:

Mr. Polk carried most of the Southern States on the assumption that the acquisition of Texas would strengthen the power of slavery, and improve the market for slaves, while New York and other States, hostile to that policy, were lost to Mr. Clay by the anti-Texas votes thrown away on James G. Birney. Mr. Polk received 170 electoral votes, Mr. Clay

105. New York alone would have changed the result, and her electors were secured to Polk by a plurality of 5,106, while more than 15,000 votes were squandered on the Birney Abolition ticket."

Yet in the same biography he makes the following admission :

"During the winter and spring of 1848, Mr. Clay's name was again presented in connection with the Whig nomination for the Presidency, and was very warmly hailed by the great mass of the people, but the leading politicians, believing that the prejudice against him in the minds of the majority of the voters, however unjust, was rooted and invincible, were generally in favor of nominating Gen. Taylor." "Gen. Taylor received 111 votes in convention. Mr. Clay 97, and some 80 were scattered upon other persons."

This idea, as propagated by Mr. Greeley, grew and gained strength, so much so, that in almost everything written on the same point by members of the same party up to 1860, the idea is repeated.

The *American Encyclopedia*, published by Appleton, of N. Y., in 1858, contains what purports to be a sketch of the life of James G. Birney. The following remarkable passage occurs in it :

"His purpose was to build up a political party upon the single question of slavery, to act upon the government within the forms of the Constitution ; and he succeeded in forming an organization in most of the Northern States, under the name of the Liberty Party. During his absence in England, he was nominated in 1840 by that party for the Presidency, but met with little success. He was again nominated in 1844, when he received more votes. It was charged upon his friends, at the time, that by withdrawing their votes from Mr. Clay, especially in the State of New York, they accomplished the election of Mr. Polk, thus aiming the death blow at their own projects."

The author of that article was indeed correct in saying that such a charge had been made. But history, that is now rapidly righting what has been wrong, must find the following facts : The Liberty party, as early as 1839, had announced their declaration of sentiments. To vote for a slaveholder for any office was entirely inconsistent with these sentiments, as much so as the holding of slaves would have been. It was organized to oppose slavery. How then could it support a slaveholder for the highest office in the land—as well ask a christian church to make a bishop of the devil.

The national convention of the Liberty party held in 1843, at Buffalo, adopted a series of resolutions as their platform, of which the following was one :

"That we regard voting, in an eminent degree, as a moral and religious duty, which, when exercised, should be by voting for those who will do all in their power for immediate emancipation."

Could it be said that a Kentucky slaveholder, who was receiving the unpaid toil of slaves, was one who was doing all he could for immediate emancipation ? Absurd ! The Liberty party had better at once have disbanded than have voted for any such man. And the more influential such a man, the greater the probability of his counteracting the sentiments of this newly organized party. To vote for him would have been untying the cord that bound such a party together.

The leaders of the Whig party understood this matter thoroughly. They neither expected, nor had they right to expect, that the Liberty party would vote for a slaveholder. In view of this fact, they selected Mr. Clay as their standard bearer. They conjectured that his popularity, was so great that he could be elected without so contemptible a fragment as the Liberty party.

Did Mr. Birney's friends withdraw their votes from Mr. Clay ? What are the facts ? In 1843, on a vote for State officers in New York, the Liberty party cast 16,275 votes. These votes, therefore, may be considered as committed to the Liberty party irrespective of the claims of Mr. Clay. If in the next year at

the Presidential vote, the number had greatly increased, it might possibly be inferred that some votes were withdrawn from Mr. Clay, although Democrats, as well as Whigs joined the Liberty party. But in 1844, instead of being increased, the Liberty party was according to one account only 15,119, and according to another 15,812. In view of this fact, it might, with much more propriety, be said, that Mr. Clay's friends withdrew from Mr. Birney.

This whole charge has no other dignity than that of a mere complaint of disappointed politicians. History will reject it as false, in fact,—unphilosophical in theory, and as no foundation for a complaint.

Every intelligent mind readily attributes Mr. Clay's defeat to another cause. The country was then agitated by the question of the extension of the area of slavery. The Northern mind was opposed to extension. The legislatures of the free States, almost without exception, whether Whig or Democratic, solemnly protested against the admission of Texas with slavery. The lower branch of the legislature of New York, adopted the following resolution :

Resolved, That this legislature do, in the name of the people in the State of New York, solemnly protest against the admission of the Republic of Texas into this Union."

The legislature of Michigan,

Resolved, That in behalf and in the name of the State of Michigan, this legislature doth hereby dissent from, and solemnly protest against the annexation for any purpose to this Union, of Texas.

These are but samples of the resolutions passed by several States.

In view of this Northern sentiment, Mr. Clay, when making a tour through the South, in the earlier part of the canvass of 1844, wrote a letter dated at Raleigh, and sent it North for publication, in which he gave the impression that he was opposed to the annexation of Texas. It was not long before the Southern papers commenced assailing him as one opposed to their policy. His Northern friends, doubtless Mr. Greeley among the number, became alarmed by the apprehensions that Mr. Clay was losing Southern support. To counteract this reaction of the slavery sentiment, Mr. Clay prepared and published a letter in the North Alabamian, of which the following is the portion relating to this question :

ASHLAND, JULY 27, 1844.

MESSERS. PETERS & JACKSON.

* * * "But gentlemen you are desirous of knowing by what policy I would be guided in my election as Chief Magistrate of the United States, in reference to the question of the annexation of Texas. I do not think it right to announce in advance, the course of a future administration, in reference to a question of foreign power."

"I have, however, no hesitation in saying, that far from having any personal objection to the annexation of Texas, I should be glad to see it, without dishonor, without war, with the common consent of the Union, and upon just and fair terms."

"I do not think that the subject of slavery ought to affect the question, one way or the other. It is destined to become extinct at some distant day in my opinion, by the operation of the inevitable laws of population."

"It would be unwise to refuse a permanent acquisition which will exist as long as the globe remains, on account of a temporary institution."

"In the contingency of my election, to which you have adverted, if the affair of acquiring Texas, should become a subject of consideration I should be governed by the state of fact, and the state of public opinion existing at the time, I might be called upon to act. Above all I should be governed by the paramount duty of preserving the Union entire and in harmony, regarding it as I do, the great guaranty of every political and public blessing under Providence, which as a people we are permitted to enjoy."

H. CLAY."

This letter as a matter of course, greatly alarmed Mr. Clay's friends at the North. They showed so much apprehension of disaster to the cause,

that Mr. Clay was induced to write another letter, dated Sept. 18, 1844, in which he said that his Alabama letter was not to be taken as differing from his Raleigh letter.

Mr. Clay was evidently in a predicament of the rider who attempts to sit upon two horses at once. While these letters were passing to and fro, to keep matters in balance, Mr. Cassius M. Clay, was stumping New England and on the Boston Common, said :

"I take Mr. Clay by his pledges. I hold him to them, that he will not sanction the admission of Texas."

Can the reader tell which were his pledges? Has it ever been known that such a vacillating policy gained favor with the American mind?

No one has done more than Mr. Greeley in giving currency to the opinion that Mr. Clay was defeated by the "Birney abolition vote." And yet when his thoughts and prejudices are not excited against the Liberty party, and those who stood in the breach in that age of martyrdom, he acknowledges the whole truth. He puts the fact where history will place it.

MR. GREELEY'S RETRACTION.

* In 1860 Mr. Greeley published in the *Tribune* a series of letters signed by himself, and addressed to Hiram Ketchum, Esq., of New York. In one of these letters occurs the following very remarkable passage—remarkable in view of his oft repeated assertions of previous date.

"MR. KETCHUM: I knew you when you could not have been goaded into so base a misrepresentation of the position you have deserted. You told your hearers that you are old enough to have participated in the Missouri struggle which was settled by Mr. Clay's compromise. Why did you not tell them the whole truth? Why not say that you threw your whole soul into that contest on the anti-slavery side—that you resisted, to the bitter end, the admission of a new slave State, formed out of territory that had been slaveholding long before we ever acquired it, and which had now formed a slave constitution in accordance with the all but unanimous demand of her people. You knew that Mr. Clay's compromise was emphatically condemned and resisted by Mr. Webster,—and of course by Mr. Everett and yourself—that you regarded the fourteen out of ninety Northern representatives, who acquiesced in that compromise, as traitors to their constituents. You knew that you heartily re-echoed Mr. Webster's avowal in his Niblo's Garden speech in 1838, that the sentiment of hostility to slavery extension had taken a deep hold on the religious sentiment and conscience of the country, and that he fully shared in that sentiment. You know how vehemently he and you fought the fight of '44, against the annexation of Texas, expressly because of your repugnance to slavery extension, *and how you both execrated Mr. Clay's Alabama letter as having unjustifiably weakened, if not turned, our high moral position on that subject.* Who can forget the thunder of black Dan's brow at the Whig mass meetings throughout that memorable contest, as he made resistance to slavery extension the key note of that struggle. Were you and he then contending that "the Constitution was made, not for the white man but for negroes?" Was it in behalf of the negroes and against whites that you made that glorious though unfortunate struggle—*unfortunate as you and I thought, mainly because Mr. Clay interposed to derange our order of battle, and prevent our fighting it on the anti-slavery ground we had chosen.*

It plainly appears from this, that although Mr. Greeley execrated Mr. Clay's letter, as having unjustifiably weakened his high moral position on the subject of slavery, yet he considered himself justified in heaping abuse upon the man who permitted himself to be voted for by those men, who if they did not execrate the letter could not persuade themselves to give the author of it their political support.

If his position was weakened by such a letter, what would have been the effect upon the position of the Liberty Party, if after all they had declared

and affirmed before the world they had forsaken Mr. Birney, whose letter above quoted showed unqualified objection to the admission of Texas as a slave State, and have given their votes to the author of this letter, who thought that slavery ought not to effect the subject one way or another? It would undoubtedly have been utterly prostrated and dissolved. Mr. Greeley designed to take a high moral position on the subject of slavery. Had not Mr. Birney a right not only to take, but to hold a high moral position on the same subject?

If the Liberty party had then surrendered, at what time would the Republican party have triumphed upon the question of opposition to slavery extension?

But Mr. Greeley as he grows older, also grows more positive on the question of the cause of Mr. Clay's defeat. In the *Tribune* of Jan. 7, 1864, he replies to an article of the *Rochester Daily Union*, in which it is asserted that "Mr. Seward and Thurlow Weed plotted for Mr. Clay's defeat," and that this was known to Mr. Greeley. He denies the charge, and says that although Messrs. Seward and Weed are not his friends, "yet that truth is truth," and he must utter it—that it "has long been his decided conviction that but for Mr. Clay's own unfortunate and sadly perverted letters to Alabama, with regard to the annexation of Texas, his election could not have been perverted."

Great men are often convicted of inconsistency, especially in the heat of party contest, but do the annals of American politics furnish an instance of more complete retraction, or change of base, than this admission of Mr. Greeley? He avers positively that Mr. Clay's defeat was owing to his own unfortunate—execrable letter—that his election could not have been perverted if he had not written it,—yet in the biography of Mr. Clay, he asserts that New York was lost to Mr. Clay because 15,000 anti-Texas votes were thrown away on James G. Birney. Can Mr. Greeley be so simple minded as to suppose that those 15,000 votes would have been cast for Mr. Clay, even if he had not written a letter that his warmest friends could not help execrating? Those 15,000 voters adhered to Mr. Birney amid the vilest abuse that was ever heaped upon any man placed before the public as a candidate for office.

Within the last few months Mr. Greeley wrote an article for the *N. Y. Independent*, in which he gave his opinion of the durability of the reputation of certain modern orators. He takes pains to say as to Mr. Clay, that although his oratory was popular at the time of delivery, yet that he failed to ally himself with any great moral question that would render his fame lasting.

Perhaps Mr. Greeley, in his forthcoming work, giving a history of the struggle for freedom in America, may advance so far as to admit that Mr. Clay never evinced statesmanship in his treatment of the subject of slavery. Certainly it is true, and can be demonstrated that for twenty-four years he made no progress in grappling the problem.

Mr. Benton, in his work "Thirty years in the U. S. Senate," shows conclusively, that the Missouri compromise was brought about by the efforts of Mr. Clay, that he moved the resolutions providing for a joint committee of both Houses, and was allowed to make out his own list of names for a committee, and distributed it through the House, to be voted for, and that the responsibility of the success of that movement devolved upon him. The arguments he used in 1819 in regard to the method in which he thought slavery would be extinguished, were almost in *idem verbis* as those employed in his Alabama letter, of 1844.

Mr. Clay, in conducting the Missouri compromise, found it necessary to argue that the admission of Missouri as a slaveholding State would aid in bringing about the termination of slavery. His argument is thus stated by the Hon. Mr. Sargeant, who replied to him.

"In this long view of remote and distant consequences, the gentleman from Kentucky, (Mr. Clay,) thinks he sees how slavery, when thus spread, is at last to find its end. It is to be brought about by the combined operation of the laws which regulate the price of labor, and the *laws which govern population*. When the country shall be filled with inhabitants, and the price of labor shall have reached a minimum, free labor will be found cheaper than slave labor. Slaves will then be without employment, and of course without the means of comfortable subsistence, which will reduce their numbers, and finally extirpate them. This is the argument, as I understand it."

In the light of the past, as well as of the present, can any intelligent reader declare such views to be those of a comprehensive statesman?

He reiterates them in his Alabama letter, when he says "it, (slavery,) is destined to become extinct at some distant day, in my opinion, by the operation of the inevitable laws of population."

The Missouri compromise was accomplished as a political measure to secure the balance of power for the South. It was a triumph of slavery, and the sanction of the nation was given to it. Its power has ever since been strengthening. Instead of diminishing, its subjects have reached the number of four millions, and the owners are seeking to overturn the government, and establish a sovereignty for themselves, the corner-stone of which, shall be slavery.

When James G. Birney was asked by a public meeting at Pittsburgh, whether he would be willing to admit Texas as a slave territory, he replied:

"Governments exist not for the destruction of liberty but for its defence; not for the annihilation of men's rights but their preservation. Do they incorporate in their organic law the element of *injustice*? Do they live by admitting it in practice? Then do they destroy their own foundation."

"On this ground were there no other, I should say we cannot receive Texas as a slave territory. We have no right to *continue* chains which we have no right to forge, or to impose."

"Two of the objects of the Government, set forth in the preamble of the Constitution, are to establish justice, and to secure the blessings of liberty in the land. With justice and liberty slavery is wholly incompatible. All men so regard it. What then shall we do? Shall we so interpret the silence of the Constitution on this matter as to make it outweigh the establishment of justice and the perpetuation of the blessings of liberty—these high aims of the union, expressed in the diretest terms. Surely not!!"

After such a declaration of views on the part of the respective candidates, which of them should the fifteen thousand voters have supported? Between the upholding of those principles on which the government was founded, and the mere party triumph of Mr. Clay, which will history decide to have been the most important? If the Anti-Slavery men of 1844 were wrong, then the Republican party of 1864 is entirely wrong! The Liberty party warned the nation twenty years ago of the very calamity that is now upon it. Instead of accepting their warning, the multitude have mocked, scoffed and contemned their predictions. The nation is now paying the penalty in the loss of millions of money, and of thousands upon thousands of invaluable lives. That freedom and slavery cannot flourish together, and form a lasting union is now as apparent to reasoning men, as is the astronomical fact to men of science, that the earth moves. Yet there was as great a readiness in this republic of boasted light and knowledge to persecute James G. Birney for uttering the former sentiment, as there was Galileo, centuries ago, for asserting the latter.

The incompatibility of freedom and slavery, and the impossibility of harmonious union upon them as a foundation, is illustrated by the following sentences taken from the letter of James G. Birney, accepting the second nomination for the Presidency, and that they were the words of truth and soberness, and not the ravings of a fanatic, history has fully verified,

"The conclusion of the whole matter is, that as a people, we are trying an experiment as unphilosophical in theory, as it has been and ever will be in practice, to make a harmonious whole out of parts that are in principle and essence discordant. It is in vain to think of a sincere union between the North and the South, if the first remain true to her republican principles and habits, and the latter persist in her slaveholding despotism. They are incapable from their natures of being made *one*. They can no more be welded together into one body of uniform strength and consistency, than clay and brass. They may, it is true, be pressed together, and made to cohere by extraneous appliances; and the line of contact may be daubed over and varnished, and concealed, but the first shock will make them fall asunder and disclose the fact, that there never was any real incorporation of the substance. A huge oligarchy at the South is made up of a multitude of petty despotisms, acting on the principle that men are not created equal—that a favored *few* are born ready booted and spurred, to leap into the saddles with which the backs of the many are furnished by nature. Such a government, I say, when brought by circumstances into close juxtaposition and incessant intercourse with republics, acting on principles diametrically opposite, must soon be brought to modify and eventually to relinquish its principles and practices; or *vice versa*, the republic must undergo a similar change, and assimilate themselves to the practices of the despotisms, one or the other must in the end gain the entire ascendancy."

At each presidential election since 1844, the Anti-Slavery party has cast a vote, with one exception, that, if added to that of one of the other parties, would have determined the election. They may be said to have held the balance of power.

In 1856, John C. Fremont received 1,341,264 votes, not very far short of the vote cast for Mr. Buchanan, the successful candidate. If the 874,534 votes cast for Mr. Fillmore had been added to those cast for Fremont, the latter would have been triumphantly elected.

The Native American party, that supported Mr. Fillmore, was composed almost exclusively of the former friends of Mr. Clay. Might it not be said to them that their vote for Fillmore was worse than thrown away—that it elected Buchanan, who on account of his southern proclivities, allowed this rebellion to gain such head, as to require the entire strength of the nation to suppress it.

When the Whig party, in 1852 nominated Gen. Scott for the Presidency, they made their last nomination for that office. Seeing the hopelessness of success without embracing the doctrines of freedom as held by Anti-Slavery men, they prepared to advance to the adoption of those views. In pursuance of this determination, the Republican party was organized in 1854, by consolidation with what was then more popularly called the Free Soil party. At the next national election it came very near succeeding. It did succeed in Michigan that year. But was not its large vote in a great degree attributable to the discussion of its principles by previous Anti-Slavery organizations? Examine its platform, and can you find anything of excellence in it that may not be found in the Liberty party platform of 1844.

Since the Republican party has been in power, what has it accomplished except the very measures urged by those who first practically adopted political action as the most reliable means of affecting slavery? It has abolished slavery in the District of Columbia. It has stayed its progress in the new territories. It is proposing to amend the Constitution, so that freedom shall no longer be sectional, but national.

These means were all advocated by the several parties that were formed for the purpose of promoting Anti-Slavery action.

The earlier the effort in this direction, the greater has been the odium attached to those who were active in the advocacy of this principle, because the opposition was more extensive, and less enlightened. And it is curious to note, what a variety of names the same principle has been christened with, for

the purpose of avoiding the effect of this odium. After the Liberty party had been abused, so much as to deter men of ordinary courage from connecting themselves with it, refuge was taken under the more popular name of Free Soil. After this name had become sufficiently odious, the title of Free Democrat was tried for a while. This, not being altogether distinctive, was abandoned for the more general name of Republican. Orators are occasionally eulogistic of those who in 1854 stood forth as though clothed with a new principle, and organized the Republican party; and some have claimed that Michigan was entitled to the credit of being the birth-place of the new creation; forgetting that in 1840 there were at least 321 voters in that State who would not bow the knee to the dark spirit of slavery; that in 1844 there were 3,632 equally perverse; that in 1848 those 10,839 who opposed slavery extension; in 1852, there were 7,239 who thought that cotton had been King long enough.

In 1845 James G. Birney received 3,023 votes as candidate for the office of Governor of the State of Michigan. The numbers of the party that supported him increased steadily from that time. They held the balance of power. With their votes added to their own, the Whigs could have carried either of the elections between that year and 1854. Had they allowed themselves to be merged in the Whig party no advance of principle would have been made, but by standing firm the Whigs came to them, and they jointly, as Republicans, have carried every State election since. The three thousand men in Michigan, who stood by James G. Birney in 1845, have never fallen off in their attachment to the principles that then actuated them. They have persevered hopefully until they begin to see the realization of their ardent expectations. They have been true to the faith, and so many as are living are now found in the front of the battle, and there are none in the Republican ranks who surpass them in zeal. Those who have joined them in the eleventh hour dislike to see them placed in responsible posts, but the people are gradually doing them justice. In the language of Gen. Fremont, they "are those who for the past thirty years have worked to bring our practice into conformity with the principles of the government, and in the struggle against established and powerful interests have accepted political disability and humiliated lives. They have not been put in governing places, where their proved fidelity would guarantee the direct execution of what is to-day the nearly unanimous will of the people; but they are laboring in narrow paths, broadening to be sure, and brightening, for the rough ground is passed and the sun of victory is already rising!"

This retrospect shows that James G. Birney spent a large portion of his life in a struggle for free speech, the right to discuss topics, a knowledge of which he deemed essential to the life of the nation—that he evinced his earnestness by confirming his acts to his principles, that for his fidelity he was subjected to an unusual extent to abuse and detraction,—that he expended his estate and his time, unreservedly in the work of warning his countrymen of the incompatibility of freedom and slavery, and of the danger, foreboding the government.

Were he living, is there anything in his course that ought to deprive him of the confidence of his countrymen. Did he do anything that should disgrace his posterity, and disqualify them for preferment on the part of their fellow citizens. If slavery is conceded to be wrong, is the slaveholder to be treated as a sinner above other men when he repents of the wrong and abandons it? And is his sin, for so doing, such a one that it ought to be visited upon his children to the third and fourth generations?

History will do James G. Birney justice, and the foregoing facts are gathered as a contribution to the fund from which the historian must draw, who shall, during the next generation record the past.

No man who undertakes the work of a Reformer need expect to have his labors appreciated until the effects of them have become manifest. It is now apparent that James G. Birney did not labor entirely in vain.

He discussed the subject of slavery in Cincinnati, at constant risk of loss of property and life. It was not very long after, that meetings, both small and great, were held in that city for the discussion of that subject without the slightest molestation: and the paper, the press of which was destroyed, obtained a wide circulation in and out of the city, and instead of being a small weekly published in a Quaker village, for the sake of safety, became one of the leading daily journals of the city.

The men who gave countenance to the mob became heartily ashamed of it, and for the sake of their reputations would prefer the mention of any other subject.

The seven thousand votes he received in 1840, became more than a million in 1856, and triumphantly elected a president in 1860.

At that time the Congress of the United States contained not one member who would risk his popularity by the utterance of a decided anti-slavery sentiment. Since then nothing meets with more acceptance in that body than positive anti-slavery action.

Mr. Chase, who was at the earlier period a co-laborer with Mr. Birney, and was unpopular enough on account of anti-slavery sentiments to render him unavailable to any office in Ohio, has since then, through popular favor been Governor of that State, United States Senator from the same State, and wields now the largest influence in the administration of public affairs.

Since then a President has been elected, who has made proclamation of freedom throughout the land, and an amendment of the constitution is now in contemplation, by the operation of which no slave shall tread the soil over which will wave the "Flag of our Union."

The capitol of the nation is no longer within hearing of the clanking of chains in slave dens and prisons, but is in free territory, and in its walls the voice of even so despised an object as a British abolitionist is heard with applause.

Although such great results are being realized, and such rapid strides are being made in the diffusion of a correct sentiment; yet so slow is the progress of the public mind in ridding itself of early prejudices, that were James G. Birney living, he would probably be associated in the thoughts of a great majority with fanatics. He would not be regarded as available for "governing places."

No man ever more mildly spake the words of truth and soberness than he. He reviled no man. A rule which uniformly guided his own conduct, and which he habitually urged upon his own household, was to "speak evil of no man,"—often has he been known to rebuke a disparaging remark concerning his bitterest opponents. His sin was, that he was a generation in advance of his day. And this is a sin that the multitude are slow to forgive.

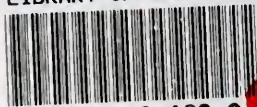
It is the fate of all who promulgate unpopular truth, that cotemporaries form their estimate of them, from the detraction of their opponents. The more important the truth, and the greater the interests assailed, the more bitter will

be the abuse, and the more prejudiced the opposition. When the proposed reform becomes a success, and those who committed themselves to opposition have passed away, a reaction of public sentiment takes place, and credit is awarded for good intentions, and sincerity of purpose. It is rare that this occurs during the first generation.

When Thomas Clarkson was pelted with rotten eggs upon the docks of Liverpool, there were few who would have been willing to step into his shoes. But now no name in England is scarcely more honored.

Thus will it be in the United States. Those who have stood in the front of the battle, and endured the abuse of this generation, will, when their country stands forth redeemed, disenthralled and emancipated, have a niche in the temple of fame, and receive the gratitude of posterity.

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