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Chester County
Pennsylvania

Lancaster History

Beverly N. J. Albany N. Y. 1870.

To the members and friends of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in thanksgiving meeting assembled.

Beloved Coadjutors,

Foremost among the numerous thoughts which press for utterance on this joyful occasion are the hallowed memories of our co-laborers in the Anti-Slavery cause who did not live to witness on earth the full fruition of our mutual hopes of universal freedom in this country. Until we are permitted to hold sweet communion with them in a higher sphere we may not know how much of the necessary strength to continue the work to its final triumph was imparted to us by the ministrations of their glorified spirits. Soon all will change the form and there will be no eye witnesses left to narrate the leading events which have transpired since the new Era commenced. It is therefore not only commendable in those who survive to often repeat the reminiscences of which they are cognizant but they should impress them upon the minds of their children and friends with the most sedulous care. By so doing the number of incredulous future readers of the more startling facts of Anti-Slavery history may be lessened and the cause of truth be promoted.

If I were asked to give the date of the new Era I think I should be justified in saying that it began in the fall of the year 1830 when William Lloyd Garrison first promulgated in this country the doctrine of immediate emancipation heralded by Elizabeth Heyrick of England. His earnest lectures upon that and kindred topics attracted immediate attention and soon created the demand for a newspaper in which larger audiences might read the new doctrines in print.

It is well known that the publication of the Liberator was commenced in Boston Massachusetts by Messrs. Garrison and Knapp on the first of January 1831 but a full inside view of the privations which these brave men suffered for the first year or more in order to keep the paper afloat was never given to the public. They had no paid up subscription list or other capital to begin with.

At first they did all the composition, press work, and mailing themselves. Mr. Garrison sometimes performed the difficult task of settling up editorial matter without loss of time in writing it out. He worked and lived in a small inconvenient third story room. They used an old-fashioned hand press and inking balls with other fittings in keeping with them. A rough board bunk with tick and sand straw served them for a sleeping place. Their creature comforts were very limited. I happened to be in their office one morning when they were at their breakfast of bread moistened with milk shipped from a pitcher but they were in good spirits and better times were in reserve for them. After the paper was enlarged they took Thomas Paul a colored boy and learned him the printer's trade.

The Liberator was not published long before it became known that there were a goodly number of kindred spirits scattered throughout the non-slaveholding States. Interchange of views among them disclosed the fact that concert of action was considered to be indispensable to success and that the organization of Societies was the most practicable mode of securing such action. But who would take the initiative? A few men in Boston responded to the call. It is doubtful however whether any of them anticipated the difficulties incident to the formation of the first Society.

Samuel J. May in his excellent work entitled "Some Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Conflict" speaks of being in Boston on a visit in the month of November 1831 when it was proposed to attempt the formation of an Anti-Slavery Society. Fifteen gentlemen met for that purpose and agreed on the spot that if there apostolic number of twelve should be found ready to unite upon the principles that should be thought vital and on a plan of operations deemed wise and expedient they would then and there organize an association. Mr. Garrison announced the duties of immediate emancipation which he had so ably expounded in his papers and lectures for a year previous as being essential to the extirpation of slavery. They discussed the point two hours. Only nine were brought to see eye to eye with him as to the right of the slave and the duty of the master. The rest of the company partook of the bread cast on that day that it would be very dangerous to

set millions of slaves free at once. Mr. May returned home to Connecticut disappointed. But the object was not abandoned. On the 16th of December another meeting was held at which the subject was further discussed and an adjournment was had to the first of January with the expectation that an organization without limitation as to number would then be effected. At that meeting a constitution was considered, article by article and adopted but no time was left for final action upon the preamble and another adjournment to the 26th instant was agreed to. On that occasion at the first meeting fifteen were present but not all the same persons. The discussion which was then resumed was the most earnest for the sake of the meeting that I ever witnessed. It was all upon the new motive power in the preamble represented by the potential word "immediate" and lasted about three hours. The constitution was then adopted as a whole and the following twelve names were appended to it viz: William Lloyd Garrison, Lewis Knapp, Joshua Coffin, Robert D. Hall, William J. Snelling, Millman B. Newcomb, John E. Fuller, Moses Thacher, Samuel Buffum, Benjamin C. Bacon, Henry H. Stoughton, Oliver Johnson. They were all residents of Boston except Moses Thacher who came to the city from his home in North Wrentham that day notwithstanding the alternating rain, snow, hail and sleet, which lasted full twenty-four hours in order to attend the meeting in the evening. Samuel E. Sewall, David Lee Child, and Ellis Gray Loring who withheld their names for the time but not their hearty good will were also citizens of Boston. They all signed it before the year expired. In due time George Lewis of Lynn, Abijah Blanchard and John Cutts Smith of Boston enrolled their names. They were present at the previous meeting and in full accord with the majority but the constitution was not then ready for signatures.

Of the twelve original members Mr. Thacher, W. L. Garrison, O. Johnson and myself only remain. Of the six others S. E. Sewall and D. L. Child are still living.

This was the New England Anti-Slavery Society organized on the

6th of January 1832 a little more than thirty-eight years ago. It was the parent Society of at least eleven hundred others which were at one time known to be in existence all formed upon the same vital principles. In a few years the number of Societies in the New England States had increased so much that it was deemed proper to change the name of the parent Society to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.

As we were leaving the room that evening to go to our respective homes Mr. Garrison gave utterance to these memorable words. "We have met to night in this obscure school-house; our numbers are few and influence limited but united my prediction I repeat shall shall overcome with the principles we have set forth. We shall shake the nation with our might power."

While I am deeply conscious that all credit on my part should be forever excluded I cannot help feeling with pride that I was the third subscriber to the Liberator and an original member of the parent Society.

Yours jubilant friend and fellow laborer

Wm. Lloyd Garrison

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