

Letters on Slavery, Abolitionism, etc.
By a former resident of Lancaster County
then in Natchez, Mississippi.

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LETTERS WRITTEN
BY
DR. JOHN CARMICHAEL JENKINS
TO
WILLIAM B. FORDNEY, ESQUIRE
OF LANCASTER.

See scrap book #81, p. 38:

The Jenkinses of Churchtown.

¹ David, migrated to America in 1700.

² John

³ David

⁴ Robert, of Windsor Place, Churchtown,

m. in 1799 to Catherine Mustard Carmichael,
daughter of Rev. John Carmichael.

T H E L A N C A S T E R I N T E L L I G E N C E R

Lancaster, February 24, 1852.

GEO. SANDERSON, EDITOR.

THE SLAVERY QUESTION, &c.

In another part of this paper will be found the first of a series of letters, (three in number,) from a gentleman residing in Mississippi to his friend in this city, on the subject of Slavery, Abolitionism, &c. They are written with great force and ability, and cannot fail to have a happy effect in enlightening public opinion in the North in reference to the real condition of things as growing out of these questions. It will be seen that he takes up the subject in all its bearings--moral, political and financial--and places it in such a way before the people that everybody can read and understand for themselves. We therefore, commend these essays to the attention of all our readers.

E D I T O R I A L

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LETTERS ON SLAVERY,

ABOLITIONISM,

& C. ,

BY A GENTLEMAN OF MISSISSIPPI, TO
HIS FRIEND IN THIS CITY.

NO. 1.

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NEAR NATCHEZ, (Miss.,)
November 1, 1851.

My Dear Friend--I send you a discourse written by the Rev. Dr. Wheaton, of New England, upon a subject which, for some years past, has agitated our whole land, North and South. No man among you who professes to take the Bible for his guide, and will carefully read the able, independent and manly exposition of this gentleman, but must be convinced what his duties are to his brethren of the South in regard to the return of fugitives from labor. Dr. Wheaton does not stand alone among the northern clergy, in his views upon this question. It has been cheering to the South to see that your ablest divines, especially in the large cities, have pointed out as clearly as Dr. Wheaton has done, the course which patriotism, and wisdom, and the laws alike of God and our country, enjoin upon all your citizens in regard to the enforcement of the Fugitive Law. But these sermons do not reach the masses, and for this reason I hope you will have this discourse of Dr. Wheaton printed in such one of your local papers, as will give it a large publicity.

Is it not time then that you, and I, and all men who appreciate the blessings of this glorious Union, should rouse ourselves to counteract the efforts of fanatics who are aiming at its overthrow.

Putting aside, however, the plain injunctions of the Bible, let us look to the teachings of the Constitution of our country, which alone ought to quiet the whole people of the North in relation to the matter. I quote you the language of one of its ablest expounders: "Historically (says Judge Story,) it is well

known that the object of this clause (the fugitive bill) was to secure to the citizens of the slave-holding States, the complete right and title of ownership in their slaves as property, in every State of the Union into which they might escape from the State in which they were held in servitude. The full recognition of this right and title was indispensable to the security of this species of property in all the slave-holding States, and indeed was so vital to the preservation of their interests and institutions, that it cannot be doubted that it constituted a fundamental article without which the Union would not have been formed.-- The clause was therefore of the last importance to the security and safety of the Southern States, and could not be surrendered by them, without endangering the whole property in slaves. The clause was accordingly adopted in the Constitution by the unanimous consent of the framers of it."

Another distinguished judge of the same court, (Judge Baldwin,) in referring to this same clause of the Constitution, says: "Thus you see the foundations of the Government are laid, and rest upon the right of property in slaves. The whole structure must fall by disturbing the corner stone." Here then is the opinion of two of the most distinguished jurists of their age, upon the Constitutional rights of the South as regards slavery, and fugitives from labor. And has this plain provision of the Constitution been carried out in good faith by all our northern brethren? Why, since this abolition agitation began, the legislatures of some of the northern States, instead of co-operation, have given aid and comfort to the fugitive, and have even passed laws to render the fugitive law a nullity. I could instance States wherein Governors, Judges, Sheriffs and Magistrates, have palpably violated their

oaths to support the Constitution of their country, by conniving at the escape of fugitive slaves by sham legal and other proceedings; and when this resource failed, mobs of black and white have rescued them by force. The ashes of a murdered Kennedy are scarcely cold, before we hear of another victim in the person of the venerable Gorsuch, offered up to the bloody Moloch of fanaticism. Need I call your attention where even murder and rape have been committed by slaves in the South, and who escaping to free soil States, have set their pursuers at defiance. Are not such cases as these calculated to keep up in the breasts of a high-spirited people, conscious of their rights under the Constitution, a deep sense of intolerable insult, and of a broken covenant. Look too at the character generally of these runaway slaves. We are told that the Gorsuch runaways had committed theft--and in a more recent case, at Syracuse, New York, (where also the fugitive was rescued) the papers assert that this negro had been four times in the penitentiary of that State. Now we do not envy the abolitionists the possession and companionship of the black thieves, murderers and rakes, they are taking to their bosoms; but will your honest and reflecting citizens permit such a class to become domiciled in their midst? Mark my prediction! If this state of things should continue much longer, Pennsylvania will be forced to pass laws as Indiana has already done, expelling the negroes from your borders.

Let me now call your attention to the condition of our country, when our fore-fathers established this Union, and see what this much abused Constitution has done for us. As you well know, we came out of the war of the Revolution with an immense debt, and with little or no commerce. Industry was paralyzed, rebellion

against the laws a not unfrequent occurrence, and all was chaos and confusion, until our present Constitution was adopted. Under its benign rule see what we have effected. Where is the country upon the face of this globe, so blessed with plenty and strength, and beauty and grandeur? And has slavery had nothing to do in bringing about these sublime results?-- Look at the vast super-structure of wealth and power which has been reared upon the foundation of slave labor in this country. The exports of the great southern staples of cotton, tobacco, rice and hemp alone, amount annually to over one hundred millions of dollars; while the exports of the north do not generally equal one third of that amount. To be more exact, I will give you the exports of North and South for several years past, drawn from the reports of the Commissioner of Patents:

1846.	Northern exports,	-	27 millions.
1846.	Southern "	-	74 "
1847.	Northern "	-	48 "
1847.	Southern "	-	102 "
1848.	Northern "	-	34 "
1848.	Southern "	-	98 "
1849.	Northern "	-	32 "
1849.	Southern "	-	99 "
1850.	Northern "	-	34 "
1850.	Southern "	-	100 "

Thus you see in a period of five years, there has been but one year in which the exports of the North have approximated to one half of that of the South; and this is explained by the unusual demand for bread stuffs for Europe caused by the loss of the potatoe crop. I would also mention that a large item in your exports is for manufactured articles out of southern staples. Now as the imports of a country are paid for by its exports, is it not plain that seventy-five per cent. of the entire importations of our country are annually paid for by the product of slave labor? Again. Look at the millions we annually spend at the north

in travelling expenses, (and which is underrated at fifteen millions) as well as for purchases of food and clothing, for our three millions of slaves--as also for horses, and mules, and cattle, and ploughs, and wagons, and other implements for carrying on our plantation operations: For the iron and stone coal, and steam engines, and cotton gins, not to mention the thousand articles of luxury and comfort for the white race, and for all which the South is annually pouring millions upon millions into the lap of the North, either in money or in exchange for her productions. See again the industry called into life and activity among you, for the transportation of our great staples upon the ocean. Your lumbermen who float down the giants of the forest to the ocean, your shipwrights, blacksmiths, sheathers, caulkers and others who convert them into ships. Your sailors, stevedores, cartmen, clerks and merchants, all, all, are mainly dependent upon the great carrying trade which our southern staples has developed. Need I point you further to the vast amount of capital invested in commercial houses, in cotton factories, in rail roads, in machine making, and all the trades and occupations connected with these great interests, a capital which may be safely estimated to exceed three hundred millions of dollars, all of it dependent upon slave labor, and which the abolition of slavery would demolish at a blow. And there too is our great internal marine, the thousand steamers which ply our magnificent rivers--an internal trade which eclipses that of any other nation, and which the interchange of our productions has built up in less than thirty years. What American heart does not swell with patriotic pride at the contemplation of such a picture of industry and grandeur? and yet we have fanatics among us who say, let our industry become annihilated--let commerce disappear--

let the spindles of the north cease to run, and silence reign over the deserted streets of our cities, and famine rage round our habitations. Let contending armies riot over our fields, and the earth drink in the blood of brothers. Let wild beasts come from the mountains of the north and the cane brakes of the south and occupy the land. Let even the temples of our holy religion disappear, and mourning, and desolation, and woe, cover the earth, rather than have slavery!

I now purpose to look at some of the objections made by these people against the institution of slavery, and which have so bleared and perverted their judgment and conscience as to cause them to combine (in laboring for its overthrow) to bring upon their country the appalling calamities I have above depicted. And first: The foundation of their warfare against slavery rests upon the quicksands of error and falsehood. They assert that slavery is a sin and a crime. We contend that slavery was established by divine authority, and among God's chosen people, the Hebrews.-- Can the following plain words of the Bible be misunderstood? "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids which thou shalt have, shall be from the heathen that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaidens. Moreover of the children of the strangers that sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession--and ye shall take them for an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: They shall be your bondmen forever." Lev. XXV, 44-46.

In reference especially to negro slavery, we point to the fulfillment of the curse pronounced upon the descendants of Ham: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." And again: "Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem,

and Ham shall be their servant." Has not this prediction been most literally fulfilled? Have not our North American Indians, our Creeks, and Cherokees, and Choctaws, and Seminoles, at this very day, thousands of the sons of Ham, held as slaves, among them? But I have no desire to waste words upon the Bible argument for slavery. In relation to this matter, the Rev. Dr. Hodge, one of the giants of the church, says: "If we are wiser, better, more courageous than Christ and his Apostles, let us say so; but it will do no good, under a paroxysm of benevolence, to attempt to tear the Bible to pieces, or to extort by violent exegesis, a meaning foreign to its obvious sense. Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Again. Do they tell us that slavery is a moral and political evil, and ought for this cause to be at once abolished? We answer, that we do not deny that slavery may be considered an evil; but we further say that the evil was not of our choosing in its origin. That old England, and New England fastened these slaves upon us, against our repeated protests, and that they shall not now dictate to us the time or manner in which we shall get rid of them. If slavery then is an evil from the power it confers upon the master, may not in the same sense the marriage relation, as well as the parental relation, be considered an evil? Civil government even is an evil, since it is an abridgment of our liberties, but who does not prefer the evil of government to the greater evil of anarchy? And so may the slave prefer the evil of slavery, to the greater evils of want, and barbarism, and crime, which attend upon his race when out of that relation. Need I adduce proof in confirmation of this assertion? Look then at Africa. That noble missionary, the lion-hearted Ashmus, in writing from Western Africa, tells us that "children seldom receive parental correction,

or are restrained in any course to which their passions and propensities incline them. Lying, petty thefts, and the entire catalogue of childish vices and follies, when seen in children only excites merriment as long as the consequences are not seriously injurious to themselves or others. The adult is commonly devoid of moral principle altogether. Polygamy is universal; and a licentiousness of practice which none, not the worst part of any civilized community on earth can parallel, give a hellish consummation to the frightful deformity imparted by sin, to the moral aspect of the negro tribes. They are degraded to the condition nearly of the better sort of brutes." Another missionary, speaking of their kings, says: "They are themselves poor, ignorant, naked savages, living in huts but a single grade above the burrows which the lower animals prepare for themselves, and there indulge in reckless indolence, or wallowing in beastly sensuality, regardless alike of their own good, or that of others, they make scarce an effort beyond what is necessary for the supply of their wants, or the gratification of their animal appetites."

The Landers, when in western Africa, insert in their journal as follows: "The rainy season is fast approaching, and what makes us still more desirous of leaving this abominable place, is the fact that a sacrifice of no less than three hundred human beings is shortly to take place. We often hear the cries of many of these poor wretches, and the heart sickens with horror at the bare contemplation of such a scene as awaits us, should we remain here much longer."

Or, need I point you to Hayti, where the black race left to themselves, have relapsed into more than African barbarism. Her exports which, during the existence of slavery, amounted to more

than twenty-five millions annually, are now reduced to a cypher. Her beautiful hills and vallies become a desolation, and her population given up a prey to anarchy and despotism, and, if travellers reports are correct, even to Cannibalism.

Had the abolitionists expended their philanthropy for the slave, in discreet and honest efforts to ameliorate the slave laws of the South, they would have met with the most respectful consideration on the part of many slaveholders. But even these laws, obnoxious to blame as I admit some of them to be, have been magnified and perverted by the abolitionists, to keep up an angry feeling between the North and the South. Harsh these laws may seem to all your people, but I can safely assert that public sentiment in the South is against their general enforcement, and most of them remain a dead letter upon our statute books. If slavery however is so clearly sanctioned by the Bible, and recognized by the Constitution of our country, can the South be condemned for passing laws, which they deemed necessary for sustaining it? Now we do not complain at all, at being told that these laws are afflictive to the slave, and ought to be modified or expunged; but we do with justice complain of the unmerited calumnies that too often, for political or interested purposes, are heaped upon the South and her institutions. It is a fashionable outcry, for instance, among demagogues and abolitionists at the North, in order to make slavery odious to the popular mind, that we hold three millions of slaves in a state of the grossest concubinage. There is some truth, but a greater degree of falsehood in this sweeping assertion. Throughout the entire southern States there are tens of thousands of slaveholders, embracing all the religious denominations of Christian sects, who employ clergymen not only to preach and expound the scriptures to

their slaves, but also to administer to them all the rights of the church. Marriage and religious services at the grave being ministered alike to white and black. Concubinage to a certain extent I admit may exist, but should the large class of slaveholders be insulted who disapprove and labor to suppress it? Might not the slaveholder with as much justice denounce the people of the North for countenancing vice and sensuality, because many instances occur among you of parents prostituting their children, and because brothels are permitted in all your towns and cities. Again. There is another matter in respect to which the slaveholder has been misrepresented and calumniated--and that is, the modes of punishment we adopt for the suppression of vice and crime and idleness among our slaves.

You degrade them, says the abolitionist, by the punishment of the lash. The lash I will not deny may be abused by slaveholders, just as it may be by parents, but this does not constitute a valid objection either against slavery, or against this particular method of punishment. We all know that the labor of the negro in the production of the great tropical staples (a production which has exerted the most powerful influence in the civilization of the white race) must necessarily be compulsory. Their refusal to work in the West India Islands, where this mode of punishment has been abandoned, has set this question forever at rest. The use of the lash is not often called for to compel the slave to labor--the fear of its application being generally a sufficient stimulus to the idle; though for the correction and prevention of crime, we hold it up as a terror to evil doers, just as you do your jails and penitentiaries at the North. In connection with this subject let me refer you to the laws of England, where, if "a man steals a pig, perhaps to keep himself and family from downright starvation,

he is torn from his wife and children and parents, and transported to the antipodes. If he breaks into his neighbor's cottage he is hung for burglary." Now if our slaves commit like offences we punish them with the lash. Which punishment, I ask, is the most revolting to humanity?

Again. Might we not ask the British abolitionist if the lash is never heard in England? Hear the sworn testimony of a factory overseer before a committee of the House of Parliament: "I was obliged to chastise them (the factory children) when they were almost fainting, and it hurt my feelings--then they would spring up and work pretty well for another hour; but the last two or three hours was my hardest work, for they then got so exhausted." And in her armies and navies, numberless instances are upon record where the lash has been applied with such severity and continued application, that the subject has died under the hands of the person who inflicted it; and yet these people have sent over their members of Parliament, and Cockney novelists, and sentimental old maids, to teach us lessons of humanity! Although such cruelty in the use of the lash as I have depicted, would not be tolerated among slaveholders, yet they have found a judicious application of it to be the most prompt and certain corrective against the vices and crimes among slaves; and although they will not tolerate cruelty, yet their feelings of humanity in respect to its use have not yet exhaled in sickly sentimentalism.

Again. There are but few of us who in our younger days have not felt that potent stimulus to lazy school-boys, the birch of the pedagogue; but do we deem ourselves to have been debased by it? Or did Solomon suppose he was requiring parents to debase their children, when he exhorted them not to spoil the child by sparing the rod.

I now come to the most important consideration of all, in regard to this crusade against American slavery. You will agree with me that Abolitionism, like Socialism, and Communism, and Fourierism, are all exotics, and the offspring of a hot bed of atheism and infidelity. Who ever heard of an abolitionist among us until England began to agitate the emancipation of her slaves in her West India colonies? And what enlightened man in her dominions, who does not see that her commercial greatness is paleing before the giant strides of her offspring; and that she well may fear the adult Hercules, if even in his cradle, his strength has been so vast? Yes, my friend! her statesmen see and know that the foundation of our wealth and industry, and commercial prosperity, springs from our tropical productions, the results of slave labor. If she can distract and divide us, and induce the North to keep up an agitation against slavery that would eventuate finally in the emancipation of our slaves, she knows that she will at once enjoy a monopoly of the tropical productions in her East India colonies; a trade which would give her the control of the commerce of the world, and bring hundreds of millions annually into the hands of her subjects. Well could England afford to emancipate her thousands of slaves in her West India colonies, at the cost even of a hundred millions to their owners, if by so doing she could destroy the labor of millions of slaves in this country.

If it was motives of philanthropy (as the abolitionists contend) which actuated her, why then, I ask, has she done nothing to raise up the starving millions of the white race at her own doors? Where was her philanthropy when she ground down her suffering people to support a twenty years war for the "divine right of Kings?" Where her philanthropy, when she drove out the native

of Hisodstan from their fair dominions, and plundered their millions of treasure? Where her philanthropy, when more recently she sent her armies and navies to burn down the cities and slaughter the unwarlike Chinese, because these people had dared to expel from their ports a poisonous drug, which was bringing thousands of them annually to a miserable death?

"Her philanthropy! my friend, twixt you and me, Is all just tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee."

CONCLUSION
NO. 1