

A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED APRIL 12, 1797,

AT THE REQUEST OF AND BEFORE THE

NEW-YORK SOCIETY

FOR

PROMOTING THE MANUMISSION OF SLAVES,

AND

PROTECTING SUCH OF THEM AS HAVE

BEEN OR MAY BE LIBERATED.

By **SAMUEL MILLER, A. M.**

**ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK, AND
MEMBER OF SAID SOCIETY.**

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—1797.—

Presented to the Am. Antiquary Socy

At a Stated Meeting of The New-York Society for promoting the Manumission of Slaves, &c. held at the Society's School-Room, in Cliff-street, the 16th of May, 1797 :

THE Society having received Information that the Annual Discourse on Slavery was delivered, by SAMUEL MILLER, on the 12th ult. agreeably to Appointment,—

Resolved,

That WILLIAM DUNLAP and ELIHU H. SMITH be a Committee to wait on Mr. MILLER, to present him with the Society's Acknowledgements for his excellent Discourse, and to request a Copy for publication.

Extracted from the Minutes.

E. H. SMITH, *Secretary.*

TO
THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY

FOR
PROMOTING THE MANUMISSION OF SLAVES,
AND
PROTECTING SUCH OF THEM AS HAVE
BEEN OR MAY BE LIBERATED,

The following Discourse,

DELIVERED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

The AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT will, perhaps, be asked, why the detail of common place observations and arguments which the following Discourse presents, was thought necessary at the present day, on a subject so well understood, and concerning which there is so little variety of opinion among enlightened men?—To this question it may be answered, that this Discourse being the first that was delivered, in consequence of a late determination of the Society to institute an Annual Oration, it was thought pardonable, and even proper, to begin with an *elementary* view of the subject—that the subject of slavery, however familiarly understood by a few benevolent individuals among us, has been but little attended to by the generality of our citizens; and that, strange as it may seem, the objections and principles which the Author combats are daily advanced, with confidence, by many with whom he converses.

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

Friends, and Fellow Citizens,

IN meeting you on this occasion, I am deeply impressed with circumstances which demand the warmest congratulations. We cannot survey the present condition of the civilized world, without forming a contrast, at once pleasing and melancholy, between our peaceful and happy situation, and the convulsed and distracted state of those countries with which we are most nearly connected. No invidious feelings—no insensibility to the calamities of others, will be supposed to suggest this comparison. It is forced upon us by a conjuncture in human affairs so extraordinary and interesting, that no one can be inattentive to it—so gloomy and dark, that none can calculate the danger, or see the end.

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At this æra, momentous at present, but still more pregnant with the future, the voice of Humanity, alas ! is but too seldom heard. Persecuted and chased from almost every corner of the globe, she knows not where to find an asylum. The struggles of Ambition, grasping and devouring every thing within his reach ; and the desolations of War, widely spread, and murderous beyond former example, exhibit the prominent features of Europe, and engross, almost exclusively, the attention of the passing hour. Europe, more highly favoured and cultivated than the rest of the world, and regarding the other quarters of the globe with a fastidious superiority, is become as pre-eminent in crimes, as in opulence, refinement, and power. She offers few examples, but those of rapine and violence—little intercourse, but such as is calculated to corrupt and destroy.

From scenes equally affecting to our view, and destructive to human happiness, let us turn away our eyes, and fix them on the means of promoting the welfare and improvement of our own country. Among these, there is one object which pathetically invites our attention. The institution of the SOCIETY which I have now the honour to address, and the occasion of the present meeting, designate this object. The importance of it can escape the observation of none. For, however justly we may prize the comparative felicity of our country ; however

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ever justly we may exult in the excellence of our Constitution, and the humanity of our laws; we are forbidden to be idle, while a single source of human misery, admitting of relief, remains to tarnish our character.

That, in the close of the eighteenth century, it should be esteemed proper and necessary, in any civilized country, to institute discourses to oppose the slavery and commerce of the human species, is a wonderful fact in the annals of society! But that this country should be America, is a solecism only to be accounted for by the general inconsistency of the human character. But, after all the surprise that Patriotism can feel, and all the indignation that Morality can suggest on this subject, the humiliating tale must be told—that in this free country—in this country, the plains of which are still stained with blood shed in the cause of liberty,—in this country, from which has been proclaimed to distant lands, as the basis of our political existence, the noble principle, that “ALL MEN ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL,”—in this country there are slaves!—men are bought and sold! Strange, indeed! that the bosom which glows at the name of liberty in general, and the arm which has been so vigorously exerted in vindication of human rights, should yet be found leagued on the side of oppression, and opposing their avowed principles!

Much, indeed, has been done by many benevolent individuals and societies, to abolish this disgraceful practice, and to improve the condition of those unhappy people, whom the ignorance or the avarice of our ancestors has bequeathed to us as slaves. Still, however, notwithstanding all the labours and eloquence which have been directed against it, the evil continues; still laws and practices exist, which loudly call for reform; still **MORE THAN HALF A MILLION** of our fellow creatures in the United States are deprived of that which, next to life, is the dearest birth-right of man.

To deliver the plain dictates of humanity, justice, religion, and good policy, on this subject, is the design of the present discourse. In doing this, it will not be expected that any thing new should be offered. It is not a new subject; and every point of view in which it can be considered has been long since rendered familiar by the ingenious and the humane. All that is left for me is, to bring to your remembrance principles which, however well known, cannot be too often repeated; and to exhibit some of the most obvious arguments against an evil which, though generally acknowledged, is still practically persisted in.

And here I shall pass over in silence the unnumbered cruelties, and the violations of every natural and social tie, which mark the African trade, and
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which attend the injured captives in dragging them from their native shores, and from all the attachments of life. I shall not call you to contemplate the miseries and hardships which follow them into servitude, and render their life a cup of unmingled bitterness. Unwilling to wound your feelings, or my own, by the melancholy recital, over these scenes I would willingly draw a veil; and confine myself to principles and views of the subject more immediately applicable to ourselves.

That enslaving, or continuing to hold in slavery, those who have forfeited their liberty by no crime, is contrary to the dictates both of justice and humanity, I trust few who hear me will be disposed to deny. However the judgment of some may be biased by the supposed peculiarity of certain cases, I presume that, with regard to the abstract principle, there can be but one opinion among enlightened and candid minds. What is the end of all social connection but the advancement of human happiness? And what can be a more plain and indisputable principle of republican government, than that all the right which society possess over individuals, or one man over another, must be founded either upon contract, express or implied, or upon forfeiture by crime? But, are the Africans and their descendants enslaved upon either of these principles? Have they voluntarily surrendered their liberty to their whiter brethren? or
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have they forfeited their natural right to it by the violation of any law? Neither of these is pretended by the most zealous advocates for slavery. By what ties, then, are they held in servitude? By the ties of force and injustice only; by ties which are equally opposed to the reason of things, and to the fundamental principles of all legitimate association.

In the present age and country, none, I presume, will rest a defence of slavery on the ground of superior force; the right of captivity; or any similar principle, which the ignorance and the ferocity of ancient times admitted as a justifiable tenure of property. It is to be hoped the time is passed, never more to return, when men would recognize maxims as subversive of morality as they are of social happiness. Can the laws and rights of war be properly drawn into precedent for the imitation of sober and regular government? Can we sanction the detestable idea, that liberty is only an advantage gained by strength, and not a right derived from nature's God? Such sentiments become the abodes of demons, rather than societies of civilized men.

Pride, indeed, may contend, that these unhappy subjects of our oppression are an *inferior race of beings*; and are therefore assigned by the strictest justice to a depressed and servile station in society. But in what does this inferiority consist? In a difference

difference of *complexion* and *figure*? Let the narrow and illiberal mind, who can advance such an argument, recollect whither it will carry him. In traversing the various regions of the earth, from the Equator to the Pole, we find an infinite diversity of shades in the complexion of men, from the darkest to the fairest hues. If, then, the proper station of the African is that of servitude and depression, we must also contend, that every Portuguese and Spaniard is, though in a less degree, inferior to us, and should be subject to a measure of the same degradation. Nay, if the tints of colour be considered the test of human dignity, we may justly assume a haughty superiority over our southern brethren of this continent, and devise their subjugation. In short, upon this principle, where shall liberty end? or where shall slavery begin? At what grade is it that the ties of blood are to cease? And how many shades must we descend still lower in the scale, before mercy is to vanish with them?

But, perhaps, it will be suggested, that the Africans and their descendants are inferior to their whiter brethren in *intellectual capacity*, if not in complexion and figure. This is strongly asserted, but upon what ground? Because we do not see men who labour under every disadvantage, and who have every opening faculty blasted and destroyed by their depressed condition, signalize themselves as philosophers? Because we do not find
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men who are almost entirely cut off from every source of mental improvement, rising to literary honours? To suppose the Africans of an inferior radical character, because they have not thus distinguished themselves, is just as rational as to suppose every private citizen of an inferior species, who has not raised himself to the condition of royalty. But, the truth is, many of the negroes discover great ingenuity, notwithstanding their circumstances are so depressed, and so unfavourable to all cultivation. They become excellent mechanics and practical musicians, and, indeed, learn every thing their masters take the pains to teach them.* And how far they might improve in this respect, were the same advantages conferred on them that freemen enjoy, is impossible for us to decide until the experiment be made.

ARISTOTLE long ago said—"Men of little
 "genius, and great bodily strength, are by nature
 "destined to serve, and those of a better capacity
 "to command. The natives of Greece, and of
 "some other countries, being naturally superior in
 "genius, have a natural right to empire; and the
 "rest of mankind, being naturally stupid, are des-
 "tined

* Having been, for two years, a monthly visitor of the African School in this city, I directed particular attention to the capacity and behaviour of the scholars, with a view to satisfy myself on the point in question. And, to me, the negro children of that institution appeared, in general, quite as orderly, and quite as ready to learn, as white children.

“tined to labour and slavery.”* What would this great philosopher have thought of his own reasoning, had he lived till the present day? On the one hand, he would have seen his countrymen, of whose genius he boasts so much, lose with their liberty all mental character; while, on the other, he would have seen many nations, whom he consigned to everlasting stupidity, shew themselves equal in intellectual power to the most exalted of human kind.

Again—Avarice may clamorously contend, that the *laws of property* justify slavery; and that every one has an undoubted right to whatever has been obtained by *fair purchase* or *regular descent*. To this demand the answer is plain. The right which every man has to his personal liberty is paramount to all the laws of property. The right which every one has to *himself* infinitely transcends all other human tenures. Of consequence, the latter can never be set in opposition to the former. I do not mean, at present, to decide the question, whether the possessors of slaves, when called upon by public authority to manumit them, should be indemnified for the loss they sustain. This is a separate question, and must be decided by a different tribunal from that before which I bring the general subject. All I contend for at present is, that no claims of property can ever justly interfere with, or be suffered

* De Republ. lib. i. cap. 5, 6.

ferred to impede the operation of that noble and eternal principle, that “all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights—“and that among these are life, liberty, and the “pursuit of happiness.”

These principles and remarks would doubtless appear self-evident to all, were the case of the unhappy Africans for a moment made our own. Were it made a question, whether justice permitted the sable race of Guinea to carry us away captive from our own country, and from all its tender attachments, to their own land, and there enslave us and our posterity for ever;—were it made a question, I say, whether all this would be consistent with justice and humanity, one universal and clamorous negative would show how abhorrent the principle is from our minds, when not blinded by prejudice. Tell us, ye who were lately pining in ALGERINE BONDAGE! tell us whether all the wretched sophistry of pride, or of avarice, could ever reconcile you to the chains of barbarians, or convince you that man had a right to oppress and injure man? Tell us what were your feelings, when you heard the pitiless tyrant, who had taken or bought you, plead either of these rights for your detention; and justify himself by the specious pretences of capture or of purchase, in riveting your chains?

Let none say, that, notwithstanding all these reasonings, the slaves are *happier* in a state of servitude, than they would be if set at liberty, especially when they are treated with lenity, and provided for in a comfortable manner. That there are different degrees of wretchedness among them, in different circumstances, no one can doubt: and when they fall into the hands of the humane and kind, their depression is less—far less miserable, than when the torture of whips, the pains of hunger and nakedness, and the unreasonable impositions of hard task-masters, are added to servitude. On this account, I am happy in being able to say, that the lot of slaves among us is, in general, much more tolerable than that of those in some other parts even of our own country. But still they are both in bondage. However favoured the situation of either, they are both deprived of that blessing, in possession of which the barren rock has its joys, and without which Eden itself would be a gloomy scene. After all the sordid pleas of those who would measure out enjoyment for them, they are forced to submit to an evil which, “how-
“ever disguised, is a bitter draught, and ever will
“be so till Nature herself shall change.”

But higher laws than those of common justice and humanity may be urged against slavery. I mean THE LAWS OF GOD, revealed in the scriptures of truth. This divine system, in which we profess to believe and to glory, teaches us, that

God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the face of the whole earth. It teaches us, that, of whatever kindred or people, we are all children of the same common Father; dependent on the same mighty power; and candidates for the same glorious immortality. It teaches us, that we should do to all men whatever we, in like circumstances, would that they should do unto us. It teaches us, in a word, that love to man, and a constant pursuit of human happiness, is the sum of all social duty.—Principles these, which wage eternal war both with political and domestic slavery—Principles which forbid every species of domination, excepting that which is founded on consent, or which the welfare of society requires.

There have not been wanting, indeed, men as ignorant as they were impious, who have appealed to the sacred scriptures for a defence of slavery. They have dared to seek for a justification of injuries and oppression in a volume, which teaches nothing but *peace on earth, and good will towards men.* As a specimen of their reasoning—Some have contended, “that the Africans are the posterity of HAM, one of the sons of NOAH; that, “as it was declared by divine inspiration, that his “descendants should be servants to their brethren, “so reducing them to a state of slavery is only accomplishing the will of heaven.”—But this plea can never be maintained, either upon the ground
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of *fact*, or of *sober principle*. The curse pronounced upon HAM was evidently a limited one, and extended only to a part of his posterity. It was only said, that the descendants of CANAAN, one of the four sons of HAM, should serve the posterity of SHEM and JAPHET. This curse, then, had nothing to do with the African nations, who have been so much abused by the civilized world; but was partly fulfilled, when the descendants of CANAAN in PALESTINE became *hewers of wood and drawers of water* to the ISRAELITES, who were the descendants of SHEM: and afterwards was completely accomplished, when the CARTHAGINIANS and TYRIANS were subdued by SCIPIO and ALEXANDER.*

But, admitting the curse pronounced upon HAM to have all the meaning and extension which the advocates for slavery contend; yet we are to remember it was *prophetical* in its nature; and though infinite Wisdom designed to fulfil it, still it is plain, the agents in bringing about the fulfilment cannot be considered the less criminal on this account. It was prophesied, that the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD should be crucified, long before that important event took place; and yet, I presume, none ever supposed that this consideration exculpated his murderers. The truth is, if our being made instru-

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* See STACKHOUSE'S History of the Bible, vol. i. p. 268, 269.

ments of accomplishing the designs of heaven takes away guilt, there is no such thing as crime in the world; the most execrable cruelty that ever disgraced mankind must be pronounced right; and the work of carnage and death, in every age, must receive the benediction of the wise and the good!

The practice of the Jews, the chosen people of God, has also been supposed, by some, to furnish a precedent which we might lawfully follow. That the children of Israel had the permission of God to purchase bondmen and bondwomen of the heathen nations which were round about them, and even to retain some of their own people in servitude, for a limited time, is readily granted. But this permission appears to have been particularly designed for that people, and was not extended to the rest of mankind. It stands on the same ground with many other things, which they were permitted to do, on account of their separation from the rest of the world, and on account of the comparatively servile nature of their dispensation; but in which it would be extremely criminal for us to imitate them. As well might the midnight murderer plead, as an apology for his crime, that God's chosen people were once ordered to destroy the guilty heathen who inhabited the promised land. Besides, if this permission, given to the children of Israel, on a special occasion, and for wise purposes, be considered as extending to all succeeding times
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and people, where shall its operation begin? and where shall it end? If this principle be admitted, then every nation on earth is at liberty to purchase and enslave the citizens of every other. If this be the case, we have a right to make merchandize of our white brethren in Europe, if any can be found so base as to seize and sell them to us; and they, on the other hand, have a like privilege to institute a trade in the flesh of AMERICAN FREEMEN!—Will any say, that this is a forced conclusion? No—though justice, humanity, and religion all rise up against it, it naturally flows from the principle above stated, and is quite as tenable in every point of view.

But farther—the writings of the Apostles, it seems, have been thought by some to furnish a warrant for slavery. In one of the Epistles we find these words—*Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And let them who have believing masters not despise them, because they are brethren, but rather do them service.** Now, even taking for granted what, perhaps, may reasonably be called in question, that the persons referred to in this passage were slaves for life, and under involuntary servitude—still it furnishes no such argument as many imagine. It must be remembered, that the great Author of our religion

* 1 Tim. vi. 2.

religion did not think proper directly to interfere with the political arrangements, and the civil laws, which were established when his Gospel was first preached among men. He always rather inculcated submission, and patience under the most oppressive injuries. This doctrine the Apostle applies, in the present instance, to a particular class of persons, to whom he thought the admonition necessary; and all that he intends to inculcate on such is, that, during the continuance of their servitude, (the origin, nature, or duration of which does not appear) they should faithfully perform their duty to their masters, and patiently submit to their lot. But, does this precept justify those who hold their fellow creatures in illegal and forcible subjection? By no means—No more than the precepts, *Resist not evil*; and, *If any man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*, justify the evil and the abuse which they forbid us to resist—No more than the precept, *Let every man be subject to the powers that be*, can be construed into a justification of the cruelty and despotism which, in those days, and ever since, rulers have exercised over their subjects.

But, though it be granted that Christ and his Apostles, for the reason which has been just assigned, did not in so many words prohibit the practice of slavery; it is evident they taught principles and doctrines utterly abhorrent from such a practice. And they who imbibe the true spirit of their religion,

gion, will not hesitate a moment to pronounce, that invading the liberty and diminishing the happiness of a fellow creature, are directly opposite to the benign genius of Christianity. Hence it is a remarkable and well known fact, that, after the introduction of this religion into the ROMAN EMPIRE, every successive law that was made relating to slaves, was more and more in their favour, abating the rigours of servitude, until, at last, all the subjects of the empire were declared equally free. Nay, a celebrated historian has not scrupled to account for the degree of liberty which is at present enjoyed, throughout most parts of Europe, by the mild and benevolent influence of a system, the uniform tendency of which is, *to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.**

But in vain is a large proportion of mankind addressed on the principles of morality and religion. These they will seldom regard, as long as they suppose *interest* and *policy* to deliver different precepts. For the sake of such, therefore, I add, with the utmost confidence, that slavery is not more opposed to justice, humanity, and religion, than it is to the INTEREST of individuals, and to the TRUE POLICY and HAPPINESS of that society in which it is suffered to exist.

Slavery will always be found, in proportion to
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* ROBERTSON'S History of Charles V. Proofs and Illustrations, vol. i. note 20.

the extent and severity with which it prevails, to INJURE THE MORALS of a people. That it tends to produce, on the one hand, haughtiness, a spirit of domination, cruelty, and lewdness, among the whites, appears probable, upon the slightest consideration of the subject, and is abundantly proved by experience. And, on the other hand, that it has an equal tendency, to produce and cherish almost every species of vice, among the slaves themselves, none, I presume, will hesitate to admit. Should any have a remaining doubt whether this be the case, let them compare the state of morals in those parts of our own country, in which slavery is either unknown, or exists in the most lenient form, with that which is exhibited in those states in which slaves are more numerous and more degraded. That there is a sensible difference between the moral aspect of the one and the other, no one will controvert. That the comparison furnishes a result unfavourable to the latter, the most decided partiality for them can neither conceal nor deny. And that this difference of national and moral character depends, to say the least, in some degree, on the state of slavery in each respectively, I believe the most accurate and candid observers have readily granted.*

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* It is scarcely necessary to say, that no *reflection* on the Southern States is here intended. Many enlightened and benevolent men among themselves acknowledge and lament the

In this State, as well as in most others in the union, the testimony of a slave cannot be admitted in judicial process, excepting in a few cases. What is the ground of this law? The answer is obvious, —“SLAVERY DEBASES THE MIND, AND CORRUPTS THE MORAL CHARACTER.” The unhappy victims of oppression, feeling themselves precluded by violence, from enjoying the benefits of society, neglect the social virtues. Finding their own rights habitually invaded, they soon learn to disregard the rights of others. Living perpetually under the frowns of power, they are insensibly taught the arts of deception, treachery, and fraud, until every moral feeling is blunted or destroyed. Hence slaves, in all ages and countries, have generally exhibited the most odious moral depravity. And nations which, for refinement, virtue, and happiness, were once the glory of the world, under the iron rod of despotism, we now behold sunk into the lowest state of debasement.*

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same things. It is their misfortune to be loaded with an evil, of which they are by no means insensible; but to the best means of removing which, it must be believed they have been, and continue to be most culpably inattentive. The ill-natured remarks and comparisons which have been often made by *party politicians*, on this subject, are too odious and contemptible to be reprov'd: but a sober and candid statement of the truth ought neither to be concealed, nor to offend any.

* For farther information on this part of the subject, the reader is referred to an *Essay on the Effects of Slavery on Morals and Industry*, by NOAH WEBSTER, jun. Esquire—a valuable

Nor has slavery a more mischievous effect on the morals of society, than it has on NATIONAL INDUSTRY, POPULATION, AND GENERAL IMPROVEMENT. Men not only become lazy and idle when they can make others the servile instruments of their will; but labour will soon be esteemed disreputable and degrading, when it is chiefly performed by slaves. And whatever diminishes industry, discourages population, and sows the seeds of social weakness and disorder. Besides, slaves, in general, do less work, and waste and destroy much more than free labourers.* Feeling no interest in the property of their owners, they will seldom perform more labour, or exercise more care, than will be merely sufficient to save them from punishment. Of course, agriculture, carried on by such *uninterested machines*, must necessarily languish; lands must become comparatively unproductive; and every species of national prosperity must be impeded, or decline. Those who are acquainted with history, or who take notice of what is daily exhibited in our own country, will be at no loss for facts to exemplify and confirm what is here advanced. In

work, and well worthy the attention of all who would see a judicious and comprehensive exhibition, both of fact and argument, on so interesting a point.

* It is said, by gentlemen well informed on this subject, that *three* blacks, in the Southern States, will not, in general, perform more labour than *one* free white in the Northern.—*Webster's Essay*, p. 7.

In this part of the United States, indeed, the pernicious effects of slavery are displayed in a comparatively moderate degree. But even in our own State they are distinctly perceptible. Even here we should be a happier and a wealthier people, were every labourer a freeman, and, of consequence, the product of every man's labour his own property.—Would to God, however, there were not some of our SISTER REPUBLICS, whose situation is more perilous, and whose prospects are more gloomy! Our southern Brethren, deaf to the dictates of policy, to say nothing of higher considerations, have unhappily suffered the evil in question to take such deep root among them, and to spread its baneful influence so far and wide, that, if it do not prove the ruin, it will probably prove, at least, the long and awful scourge of their land.—“I tremble,” says one who cannot be suspected of undue partiality for the depressed Africans, “I tremble for my country when “I remember that God is just—that his justice “cannot sleep for ever—and that an exchange of “circumstances is among probable events. The “Almighty has no attribute which can take side “with us in such a conflict.”*

I have hitherto confined myself to the consideration of slavery as it exists among ourselves, and of that unjust domination which is exercised over the
Africans

Africans and their descendants, who are already in our country.—It is with a regret and indignation which I am unable to express, that I call your attention, before concluding, to the conduct of some among us, who, instead of diminishing, strive to increase the evil in question. While the friends of humanity, in Europe and America, are weeping over their injured fellow creatures, and directing their ingenuity and their labours to the removal of so disgraceful a monument of cruelty and avarice, there are not wanting men, who claim the title, and enjoy the privileges of American citizens, who still employ themselves in the odious traffic of human flesh. Yes, in direct opposition to public sentiment, and a law of the land, there are ships fitted out, every year, in the ports of the United States, to transport the inhabitants of Africa, from their native shores, and consign them to all the torments of West-India oppression.—Fellow citizens! Is Justice asleep? Is Humanity discouraged and silent, on account of the many injuries she has sustained? Were not this the case, methinks the pursuit of the beasts of the forest would be forgotten, and such monsters of wickedness would, in their stead, be hunted from the abodes of men.

Oh AFRICA! unhappy, ill-fated region! how long shall thy savage inhabitants have reason to utter complaints, and to imprecate the vengeance of heaven against civilization and christianity? Is it

it not enough that nature's God has consigned thee to arid plains, to noxious vapours, to devouring beasts of prey, and to all the scorching influences of the torrid zone? Must rapine and violence, captivity and slavery, be superadded to thy torments; and be inflicted too by men, who wear the garb of justice and humanity; who boast the principles of a sublime morality; and who hypocritically adopt the accents of the benevolent religion of Jesus? Oh AFRICA! thou loud proclaimer of the rapacity, the treachery, and cruelty of civilized man! Thou everlasting monument of European and American disgrace! "Remember not against us our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers;" be tender in the great day of enquiry; and shew a christian world thou canst suffer and forgive!

Such, then, is the nature and magnitude of an evil existing among us, and for the diminution and final extinction of which, the SOCIETY which I now address was instituted:—an evil which reason, justice, the religion of Christ, and sound policy, with one voice condemn:—an evil, therefore, against which, whether we consider ourselves as men, as christians, or as patriots, we are bound to unite all our force, and to discourage by all just and equitable means. Commanded by such high authority, and solicted by so many interesting considerations, I persuade myself, that my fellow citizens

zens will neither consider it an object unworthy of their attention, nor be deterred by all the clamours of prejudice and of avarice, from contributing their influence and their exertions to its speedy and everlasting abolition.

Many have been the proposals of benevolent men to remedy this grand evil, and to ameliorate the condition of the injured negroes. But, while I revere the very mistakes of those who have shewn themselves friends to human happiness, yet the most of these proposals appear to me incumbered with insuperable difficulties, and, in some points of view, to involve greater mischief than the original disorder designed to be cured. Immediately to emancipate *seven hundred thousand* slaves, and send them forth into society, with all the ignorance, habits, and vices of their degraded education about them, would probably produce effects more unhappy than any one is able to calculate or conceive. Nor does the plan appear much more plausible, which some have proposed, to collect, and send them back to the country from whence they or their fathers have been violently dragged; or, to form them into a colony, in some retired part of our own territory. I shall not pronounce either of these impracticable; because one of them has been attempted by an European nation, and not altogether without success. I shall not say, that such a removal would be less happy
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for the subjects of it, than their present condition; because, in particular instances, it might prove otherwise. But, in my view, the difficulties and objections attending such a plan, especially on a large scale, are far greater and more numerous than many sanguine speculators have seemed to suppose.

Perhaps no method can be devised, to deliver our country from the evil in question, more safe, more promising, and more easy of execution, than one which has been partially adopted in some of the states, and hitherto with all the success that could have been expected. This plan is, to frame laws, which will bring about emancipation in a **GRADUAL MANNER**; which will, at the same time, **PROVIDE FOR THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL CULTIVATION** of slaves, that they may be prepared to exercise the rights, and discharge the duties of citizens, when liberty shall be given them; and which, having thus fitted them for the station, will confer upon them, in due time, the privileges and dignity of other freemen. By the operation of such a plan, it is easy to see that slavery, at no great distance of time, would be banished from the United States; the mischiefs attending an universal and immediate emancipation would be, in a great measure, if not entirely, prevented; and beings, who are now gnawing the vitals, and wasting the strength of the body politic, might be converted into wholesome
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and useful members of it. Say not that they are unfit for the rank of citizens, and can never be made honest and industrious members of the community. Say not that their ignorance and brutality must operate as everlasting bars against their being elevated to this station. All just reasoning abjures the flimsy pretext. Make them freemen; and they will soon be found to have the manners, the character, and the virtues of freemen.*

In two of our sister States, the important work of which I am speaking is already, in a great measure, atchieved. In MASSACHUSETTS and NEW-HAMPSHIRE there is not a single slave! In both they were all emancipated in a single day; and no inconvenience resulted from an event so honourable to humanity. Noble example! Happy triumph of truth and justice over a mistaken and sordid policy! When shall a similar wisdom pervade the union, and rescue our national character from disgrace? When shall this TOPSTONE be laid upon
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* It is easy to foresee that many strong prejudices, and many feelings not altogether unnatural, will oppose the execution of this plan. The idea of admitting negroes to a state of political and social equality with the whites, even after the best education they can receive, is not a very pleasant one to a great majority even of those who are warmly engaged for their emancipation. I shall not discuss the reasonableness of such feelings at present. It is sufficient to say, that our political body is labouring under a most hurtful and dangerous disease; and that the most skilful physician cannot restore it to health without the exhibition of some remedies which are more or less unpalatable.

OUR REPUBLICAN FABRIC, which, until then, must exhibit a most defective and inconsistent appearance?

In the pursuit of this laudable and important object, you, my fellow citizens of the SOCIETY whom I now address, need no exhortations of mine to inspire you with zeal—no hints from me to direct your exertions. Your labours have been so indefatigable and successful, that I have only to repeat the injunction of holy writ,—*Be not weary in well doing*. To tell this audience, that you have no wish to oppose the laws of your country, nor to invade the rights of private property—To say, that you have no desire to excite a spirit of discontent and insolence among those whom the public will, however mistaken, has devoted to slavery—To say, that your only objects, as a Society, are, to rescue those who are *unlawfully* held in bondage; to promote, by all just means, such a gradual manumission, as shall be consistent with the public good; and to cultivate a spirit of sobriety, honesty, and good behaviour among the negroes of every description—To say that these are your only objects, would be condescending to obviate prejudices, and to repel calumnies, which, as I am persuaded they have no just ground, are entitled to but little attention;—prejudices and calumnies, to which the tenor of your proceedings, if examined, will furnish an abundant and honourable answer.

But, amidst all the opposition which you are called to encounter, in pursuing the objects of your association, you have grounds of encouragement and support of the most substantial kind. The good effects of your benevolent exertions are already great and extensive. You cannot look back, without the highest pleasure, on the hundreds, unlawfully held in servitude, whose chains you have broken, and whom you have elevated, in some measure, to the rank of men. You cannot contemplate, without satisfaction, the perceptible and happy influence which your proceedings have had, in impressing the rude minds of the Africans, in general, among us; in giving them some ideas of the importance of their moral conduct; and in leading many of them to sober and industrious pursuits.—And above all, it must reward your past labours, and animate your future exertions, to behold a SEMINARY FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE DESCENDANTS OF AFRICANS, grown up under your fostering care, to a respectability which promises extensive usefulness, and which demands the gratitude and support of every good citizen.*

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* The African School above referred to, was founded in the month of November, 1787. It began with *twelve* scholars. Since that time, it has been gradually improving in every respect. It is under the immediate care and inspection of a board of Trustees. It is provided with a Master, Usher, and Mistress, by whom the pupils are taught Reading, Penmanship, Arithmetic, English Grammar, and Geography; and, in

Go on, then, my Friends and Colleagues, with unabating zeal. You are engaged in the cause of human happiness, and, therefore, in the cause of God. Be not discouraged by the magnitude of the evil which you have associated to encounter; nor by the difficulties which occur in your way. The sentiments of the wise and the good, and the fundamental principles of our government, must have a powerful operation, and they are both on your side. “ Though you cannot controul Legislatures; “ and though, when you plead the cause of humanity, they will not at all times listen to you; yet “ there are other means in your power, perhaps, “ even more effectual. You can do much by directing your efforts to the conviction of individuals; by diffusing proper publications among them; and by presenting the evils of slavery, in various forms, to their minds.”*

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addition to these, the female scholars are instructed in Needlework. The number of scholars, on the first of January, 1797, was *one hundred and twenty-two*; of whom *sixty-three* were males, and *fifty-nine* females. The good behaviour, and teachable character of these scholars, have been before noticed. This institution is supported at the annual expence of *one thousand dollars*; and, of course, employs nearly the whole of the funds of the Society. The benevolent, of every description, will readily perceive, and deeply feel the strong claim which it presents for their support and encouragement.

* Address of the Convention of 1796, to the New-York Society.

The time, I trust, is not far distant, when there shall be no slavery to lament—no oppression to oppose in the United States:—when the EMANCIPATING SPIRIT of our Constitution shall go forth in “the greatness of her strength,” breaking in pieces every chain, and trampling down every unjust effort of power:—when she shall proclaim, even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon American earth, that the ground on which he treads is sacred to LIBERTY; and that the air which he breathes, nourishes FREEMEN ONLY:—when every being, who bears the name of MAN, whatever complexion an equatorial Sun may have burnt upon him, and with whatever solemn injustice his rights may have been infringed, shall enjoy the privileges, and be raised to the dignity which belong to the human character.

THE END