

8th CONGRESS.]

No. 171.

[1st Session.]

APPLICATION TO PROHIBIT THE IMPORTATION OF SLAVES INTO THE TERRITORY OF LOUISIANA.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SENATE, JANUARY 23, 1804.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

The American convention for promoting the abolition of slavery, and improving the condition of the African race, beg leave respectfully to propose for your consideration the utility and propriety of passing such laws as shall prohibit the importation of slaves into the Territory of Louisiana, lately ceded to the United States.

Your memorialists feel themselves deeply impressed with this important subject, and they deem it their duty to solicit, most earnestly, your serious attention to the proposition. They believe that wisdom and sound policy are so intimately united by their Eternal Parent, that man cannot separate them with impunity. If wisdom urge the performance of any particular act, if it command the formation and establishment of any specific law, the soundest policy will be evinced by obedience to that injunction.

True virtue, the offspring of wisdom, teaches man to love his fellow-man, and enjoins him to perform all that may be within the compass of his abilities for the general happiness of his species. When national Governments comply with this benevolent and sublime law, they become the providential instruments of national blessings; but when they oppose or disregard its dictates, their constituents must necessarily feel, sooner or later, all the calamities which follow such opposition or neglect.

Our ancestors have, unhappily, entailed on some of our States the evils of slavery; many of our fellow-citizens in those States we believe are mournfully sensible of the magnitude of their burden, but they know and feel that man may commit error with more facility than he can eradicate its consequences. Your memorialists entreat you to reflect on, to consider with impartial attention, the dangers and difficulties before you; and beseech you, with deep concern, to preserve the country, whose regulations depend on your wisdom, from similar calamities.

They also respectfully suggest to you, that while the constitution of the United States declares all men equally entitled to liberty, they cannot conceive our Government as acting consistently with its declarations, if it shall, in any instance, authorize man to enslave unoffending man. In compliance with that distinguishing principle of our national constitution, a former Congress judged it expedient to introduce among its regulations, for the government of the Northwestern Territory, a provision resembling that which your memorialists now suggest to you.

There is another consideration to which your memorialists feel themselves bound to call your attention. While the Governments of Europe are shaken by civil discord, or surrounded by the incalculable cruelties and horrors of national warfare, a beneficent and overruling Providence has been pleased to preserve for our country the blessings of peace, to grant us new proofs of his goodness, and to place us in a condition of prosperity, unrivalled in the records of history. Does it not become the duty of a nation, so crowned with the blessings of peace, and plenty, and happiness, to manifest its gratitude, to the whole world, by acts of justice and virtue? For the true honor of our country, from benevolence towards the future possessors of our newly acquired soil, your memorialists hope you will hear and grant their request. And with all the respect which is due to the representatives of a free people, they subscribe themselves, cordially, your friends and fellow-citizens.

Signed by order and on behalf of the convention.

MATTHEW FRANKLIN, *President.*
OTHNIEL ALSOP, *Secretary.*

Attest:

PHILADELPHIA, *January 13, 1804.*

8th CONGRESS.]

No. 172.

[1st Session.]

APPLICATION FOR DIVORCES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 17, 1804.

Mr. NICHOLSON, from the committee to whom were referred the several petitions of Marcella Stanton, of Ann Alricks, and of Judith Crow, late Judith Sayse, of the District of Columbia, made the following report:

That the petitioners respectively pray that an act may pass to divorce them from their husbands. The committee have not thought it necessary to inquire into the merits of the cases brought to their view, as they are of opinion, that if any provision be made, it should be of a general nature. They, therefore, submit the following resolution:

Resolved, That the District Court of the District of Columbia ought to be invested with a power to grant divorces in certain cases.