

Fearless though few, Thy presence ne'er withdraw,
But quench the kindling flames of hot, rebellious war!

"And ye, sad victims of base avarice,
Hunted like beasts, and trodden like the earth;
Bought and sold daily at a paltry price;
The scorn of tyrants and of fools the mirth;
Your souls debased from their immortal birth!
Bear meekly, as ye've borne, your cruel woes;
Ease follows pain; light, darkness; plenty, dearth.
So time shall give you freedom and repose,
And high exalt your heads above your bitter foes!

"Not by the sword shall your deliverance be;
Not by the shedding of your masters' blood;
Not by rebellion, or foul treachery,
Upspringing suddenly, like swelling flood;
Revenge and rapine ne'er did bring forth good.
God's time is best! nor will it long delay;
Ev'n now your barren sense begins to bud,
And glorious shall the fruit be! Watch and pray,
For, lo! the kindling dawn that ushers in the day!"

The sentiment embodied in these lines was repeated again and again. Thus, in May, 1831, Mr. Garrison writes: "While we acknowledge that the oppression of the slaves exceeds that of any class of white people on the face of the earth, we deny their right, and the right of any people to slaughter their oppressors. 'For I say unto you,' is the commandment of Christ, 'that ye resist not evil, but overcome evil with good.' This is the noblest and most productive retaliation." On the 7th of May he said: "Ours is the patriotism of Jesus Christ, not of this world. We justify no war. The victories of liberty are bloodless, and effected solely by spiritual weapons."

A short time before the *Liberator* was established, a negro named David Walker had published a highly inflammatory and vindictive "Appeal" to the colored people of the United States, depicting their wrongs and endeavoring to incite them to a bloody resistance of their oppressors. Walker was illiterate, but a man of powerful intellect, and his words burned like fire. Speaking of his insurrectionary appeal, Mr. Garrison said (Jan. 8, 1831):

"Believing, as we do, that men should never do evil that good may come; that a good end does not justify wicked means in the accomplishment of it; and that we ought to suffer, as did our Lord and his apostles, unresistingly—knowing that vengeance belongs to God, and he will certainly repay it where it is due;—believing all this, and that the Almighty will deliver the oppressed in a way which they know not, we deprecate the spirit and tendency of this 'Appeal.' Nevertheless, it is not for the American people, as a nation, to denounce it as bloody or monstrous. Mr. Walker but pays them in their own coin, but follows their own creed, but adopts their own language. We do not preach rebellion, but submission and peace. Our enemies may accuse us of striving to stir up the slaves to revenge; but their accusations are false, and made only to excite the prejudices of the whites, and to destroy our influence. We say, that the possibility of a bloody insurrection at the South fills us with dismay; and we avow, too, as plainly, that if any people were ever justified in throwing off the yoke of their tyrants, the slaves are that people. It is not we, but our guilty countrymen, who put arguments into the mouths and swords into the hands of the slaves. Every sentence that they write—every word that they speak—every resistance that they make against foreign oppression, is a call upon their slaves to destroy them. Every Fourth of July celebration must embitter and inflame the minds of the slaves."

The *Liberator* was not seven months old when there occurred, in Southampton, Va., an insurrection led by a slave named Nat Turner, who persuaded his deluded followers that he was a prophet divinely commissioned to lead them out of the house of bondage. He was joined by about fifty of his fellow slaves, armed with guns, swords, axes, and clubs. They killed sixty-one white persons; but the number of slaves killed or executed by the whites exceeded a hundred. Turner was arrested, tried and hung. This outbreak afforded a fresh illustration of the dangers of slavery as depicted by Abolitionists. There was not a particle of evidence that Turner had ever seen or heard of Mr. Garrison, and yet the friends and apologists of slavery were quick to hint that he found an incitement to attempt his vast scheme in reading the *Liberator*. As if insurrections had not always been an accompaniment of slavery, and as if slaves ever needed anything beyond the bitter consciousness of their wrongs to prepare them to follow any bold and desperate leader of their own class who promised them freedom. Respectable newspapers—such was the madness of the hour—accused Mr. Garrison of insurrectionary designs, and Governor Floyd, in his message to the Legislature of Virginia, said there was too much cause for the suspicion that the plans of the insurrection had been "designed and matured by unrestrained fanatics in some of the neighboring States." The Governor was understood in this to accuse Mr. Garrison and his associates of "treason, insurrection and murder," and the charge was extensively echoed at the North as well as the South. It was assumed to be incredible that a class of laborers so "happy and contented" as the slaves were said to be had planned an insurrection for themselves. Mr. Garrison was prompt to repel these accusations. "We have not," he said, "a single white or black subscriber south of the Potomac." When the news of the insurrection was first received he said:

"What we have so long predicted—at the peril of being stigmatized as an alarmist and declaimer—has commenced its fulfillment. . . . Ye accuse the pacific friends of emancipation of instigating the slaves to revolt. Take back the charge as a foul slander. The slaves need no

THE EARLY ANTI-SLAVERY DAYS.

No. VI.

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IN order to a clear understanding of the spirit and purpose of Mr. Garrison it is important to observe that he was, from the outset, as much opposed to war as to slavery, and, therefore, made his appeal, not to the vindictiveness of the slaves, but to the intellect and conscience of the slaveholders, and of the whole country. I am the more careful to emphasize this fact, because I know that the *Christian Union* circulates widely in the Southern States, where an opposite opinion long prevailed. On this subject the masses of the Southern people were grossly deceived by designing men. They were led to believe that Garrison and his associates were a band of reckless, unscrupulous incendiaries, who intended to excite the slaves to insurrection and lead them to freedom through seas of blood. There never was a greater delusion. Mr. Garrison's peace principles were avowed long before he started the *Liberator*, and have been adhered to with conscientious tenacity to this day. In his prospectus, issued in 1830, he said:

"The cause of Peace will obtain my zealous and unequivocal support. My creed, as already published to the world, is as follows: That war is fruitful in crime, misery, revenge, murder, and everything abominable and bloody; and, whether offensive or defensive, is contrary to the precepts and example of Jesus Christ, and to the heavenly spirit of the gospel; consequently, that no professor of Christianity should march to the battlefield, or murder any of his brethren for the glory of his country."

The man who wrote these words would no more have incited the slaves to seek their freedom by violence than he would have committed the crime of burglary or murder. He warned the slaveholders that their cherished system was itself a perpetual incitement to insurrection on the part of the slaves, and that by emancipation alone could this danger be averted. In the very first number of the *Liberator* is a poem of his from which I quote these lines:

"Thou who avengest blood! long-suffering Lord!
My guilty country from destruction save!
Let Justice sheathe his sharp and terrible sword,
And Mercy rescue, e'en as from the grave!
Oh! for the sake of those who firmly brave
The lust of power, the tyranny of law,
To bring redemption to the perishing slave,

inocentives at our hands. They will find them in their stripes . . . in your speeches, your conversations, your celebrations, your pamphlets, your newspapers—voices in the air, sounds from across the ocean, invitations to resistance above, below, around them. . . . In all that we have written, is there ought to justify the excesses of the slaves? No. Nevertheless, they deserve no more censure than the Greeks in destroying the Turks, or the Poles in exterminating the Russians, or our fathers in slaughtering the British. For ourselves, we are horror-struck at the late tidings. We have exerted our utmost efforts to avert the calamity. We have warned our countrymen of the danger of persisting in their unrighteous conduct. We have preached to the slaves the pacific principles of Jesus Christ."

The denunciations of the *Liberator* as an insurrectionary sheet were so fierce, and the calls from the South for its suppression so urgent, that for a time there seemed to be danger that an attempt would be made to suppress it through violence or a perversion of legal authority. The *Washington National Intelligencer*, a journal of great influence both in the South and at the North, uttered itself as follows:

"No one knows better than we do the sincerity with which the intelligent population of New England abhor and reprobate the incendiary publications which are intended by their authors to lead to precisely such results (as concerns the whites) as the Southampton tragedy. But we appeal to the people of New England, if not in behalf of the innocent women and children of the whites, then in behalf of the blacks, whose utter extermination will be the necessary result of any general commotion, whether they will continue to permit their humanity to lie under the reproach of approving or even tolerating the atrocities among them which have already caused the plains of the South to be manured with human flesh and blood. To be more specific in our object, we now appeal to the worthy Mayor of the city of Boston, whether no law can be found to prevent the publication, within the city over which he presides, of such diabolical papers [copies of the *Liberator*] as we have seen a sample of here in the hands of slaves, and of which there are many in circulation to the south of us. We have no doubt whatever of the feelings of Mr. Otis on this subject, or those of his respectable constituents. We know they would prompt him and them to arrest the instigator of human butchery in his mad career. We know the difficulty which surrounds the subject, because the nuisance is not a nuisance, technically speaking, within the limits of the State of Massachusetts. But, surely, surely, if the Courts of law have no power, public opinion has, to interfere, until the intelligent Legislature of Massachusetts can provide a durable remedy for this most appalling grievance. The crime is as great as that of poisoning a well. . . . We know nothing of the man [Garrison]: we desire not to have him unlawfully dealt with: we can even conceive of his motive being good in his own opinion: but it is the motive of the man who cuts the throats of your wife and children."

To these accusations, so well calculated to excite the uninformed and prejudiced multitude to violence, Mr. Garrison made prompt reply; but the *National Intelligencer* refused to publish his triumphant defence. He said:

"I appeal to God, whom I fear and serve, and to its patrons in proof that the *real* and *only* purpose of the *Liberator* is to prevent rebellion, by the application of those preservative principles which breathe *peace on earth, good will to men*. I advance nothing more, I stand on no other foundation than this: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' I urge the immediate abolition of slavery, not only because the slaves possess an inalienable right to liberty, but because the system, to borrow the words of Mr. Randolph, is 'a volcano in full operation;' and, by its continuance, we must expect a national explosion. So far from advocating resistance on the part of the slaves, . . . every one, who is familiar with my public or private opinions, knows that I expressly maintain the criminality of war."

"The present generation cannot appreciate the purity of my motives or the value of my exertions. I look to posterity for a good reputation. The unborn offspring of those who are now living will reverse the condemnatory decision of my contemporaries. Without presuming to rank myself among them, I do not forget that those reformers who were formerly treated as the 'offscouring of the earth' are now lauded beyond measure; I do not forget that Christ and his apostles—harmless, undefiled, and prudent as they were—were buffeted, calumniated, and crucified; and therefore my soul is steady to its pursuit as the needle to the pole."

"If we would not see our land deluged in blood, we must instantly burst asunder the shackles of the slaves—treat them as rational and injured beings—give them lands to cultivate and the means of employment—and multiply schools for the instruction of themselves and children. We shall then have little to fear. The wildest beasts may be subdued and rendered gentle by kind treatment. Make the slaves free, and every inducement to revolt is taken away. It is only while we are crushing them to the earth, and heaping our curses and our blows upon them, and starving their bodies, and darkening their minds, and selling them as beasts, and goading them to desperation, that we have reason to tremble for our safety, and to feel an unpleasant sensation with regard to our throats."

"I see the design of the clamor raised against the *Liberator*. It is to prevent public indignation from resting upon the system of slavery, and to concentrate it upon my own head. *That system contains the materials of self-destruction.*"

In reply to the charge that the *Liberator* was circulated among the slaves, he said: "Unfortunately I have not a single subscriber, white or black, south of the Potomac." The charge that he had circulated it at the South by "secret agents" he pronounced "silly and false."

These were serious and anxious days to Mr. Garrison and his little band of supporters; the more so because almost every mail from the South brought him (postage unpaid) letters threatening him with abduction or assassination if he did not desist from his labors. Many of these letters, illustrated by pictorial devices of the most sanguinary character, and filled with the most

horrible profanity, I saw and read. To the honor of the Democratic postmaster of Boston be it said that he promptly refunded the postage on them when they were exhibited to him.

Mr. Garrison was advised and even urged by some of his friends to arm himself for the defense of his life in case he should be assailed; but he steadfastly adhered to his Non-resistance principles, believing them to be binding upon his conscience, and that if he should fall by the hands of bloody men, his death would be overruled for the furtherance of the cause of emancipation.