

For the Liberator.

WALKER'S APPEAL. NO. 3.

Walker begins the second article of his Appeal with a retrospective view of the glories of Carthage and Egypt, and promises his brethren that in due time the Lord will give them a Hannibal to lead them to victory and liberty. That some black temporal Messiah may arise, some man of mighty mind, who shall rend asunder the bonds of prejudice and captivity, is by no means unlikely. The darkest regions of the earth have produced their extraordinary men: Persia had her Nadir, the Goths their Alaric and Attila, Tartary had her Genghis Khan; why may not African America produce her champion? But that the Almighty will send a special messenger to our slaves, and strike for those who will not strike for themselves, you will allow me to doubt. I am sorry to see so much of the delusion of fanaticism mingled with so much sound sense and noble feeling.

A dreadful prediction follows, and if it be not fulfilled sooner or later, the order of things will have changed. I would that all slave owners could read it: it might teach them a salutary though unwelcome lesson.

'The whites want slaves, and want us for their slaves, but some of them will curse the day they ever saw us. As true as the sun ever shone in its meridian splendor, my color will root some of them out of the face of the earth. They shall have enough of making slaves of, and butchering, and murdering us in the manner which they have. No doubt some may say that I write with a bad spirit, and that I, being a black, wish these things to occur. Whether I write with a bad or good spirit, I say if these things do not occur in their proper time, it is because the world in which we live does not exist, and we are deceived with regard to its existence.—It is immaterial, however, to me, who believe, or who refuse—though I should like to see the whites repent, peradventure God may have mercy on them; some, however, have gone so far that their cup must be filled.'

Walker says that a great portion of the miseries of the slaves springs from their want of unity of feeling and fidelity to each other. In support of this position, he quotes an account of the mutiny of a gang of slaves against their driver. The blacks, it

seems, overpowered the whites and would have slain one of them, had not a black woman assisted him to escape. He speaks of this woman in bitter terms, and says it is owing, in a great measure, to such persons, that the whites are able to keep the blacks under. Eight blacks, he says, if thoroughly roused, are a match for fifty whites. I can conceive that a band of blacks, goaded to fury, smarting with the sense of wrong, with everything before them to gain, and nothing behind to lose, would be more than a match for treble their number of men who should have no such motives to urge them on. In this sense he may be right.

The following passage has more force, more reason, and puts the condition of the free blacks in a stronger light, than any other in the book. It is written in a sincere and patriotic spirit. Let those who believe in the mental inferiority of the blacks, read it and acknowledge that if their theory is true, David Walker was an exception to it.

'Men of color, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my APPEAL designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore to cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren, and to do your utmost to enlighten them—go to work and enlighten your brethren!—Let the Lord see you doing what you can to rescue them and yourselves from degradation. Do any of you say that you and your family are free and happy, and what have you to do with the wretched slaves and other people? So can I say, for I enjoy as much freedom as any of you, if I am not quite as well off as the best of you. Look into our freedom and happiness, and see of what kind they are composed!! They are of the very lowest kind—they are the very dregs!—they are the most servile and abject kind that ever a people was in possession of! If any of you wish to know how FREE you are, let one of you start and go through the southern and western States of this country, and unless you travel as a slave to a white man (a servant is a slave to the man whom he serves) or have your free papers, (which if you are not careful they will get from you) if they do not take you up and put you into jail, and if you cannot give good evidence of your freedom, sell you into eternal slavery, I am not a living man: or any man of color, immaterial who he is, or where he came from, if he is not

the fourth from the negro race!! (as we are called) the white Christians of America will serve him the same; they will sink him into wretchedness and degradation forever while he lives. And yet some of you have the hardihood to say that you are free and happy! May God have mercy on your freedom and happiness!! I met a colored man in the street a short time since, with a string of boots on his shoulders; we fell into conversation, and in course of which, I said to him, what a miserable set of people we are! He asked, why?—Said I, we are so subjected under the whites, that we cannot obtain the comforts of life, but by cleaning their boots and shoes, old clothes, waiting on them, shaving them, &c. Said he (with the boots on his shoulders) “I am completely happy!!! I never want to live any better or happier than when I can get a plenty of boots and shoes to clean!!” Oh! how can those who are actuated by avarice only, but think, that our Creator made us to be an inheritance to them forever, when they see that our greatest glory is centered in such mean and low objects? Understand me, brethren, I do not mean to speak against the occupations by which we acquire enough and sometimes scarcely that, to render ourselves and family comfortable through life. I am subjected to the same inconvenience, as you all.—My objections are, to our *glorifying* and being *happy* in such low employments; for if we are men, we ought to be thankful to the Lord for the past, and for the future. Be looking forward with thankful hearts to higher attainments than *wielding the razor and cleaning boots and shoes*. The man whose aspirations are not *above*, and even *below* these, is indeed, ignorant and wretched enough.’

He next opposes the erroneous opinions of his brethren on the subject of education, and exhorts them to get a knowledge of things rather than of words and fair penmanship. He mentions a fact that I deem remarkable, viz. Not one in thirty of the young men of color who have been to school, and who are believed by their parents to be well educated, can answer the easiest question in English Grammar, or point out the errors in an ill-constructed sentence, however simple. Is this so? And if so, what is the reason of it? According to the ‘Appeal,’ it is because no white schoolmaster will communicate a particle of useful instruction to a black boy. I have attended a Sunday School where black infants were taught by bigoted, silly women, and have seen them taught their letters, and have

heard them answer questions on the church catechism. I have seen their cent-a-week spending money wrung from their little hands to endow a missionary, or, perhaps, to help expatriate their parents, but I never saw one item of practical knowledge given or received. Our free black brethren are to blame for this state of things. If they will pay for instruction for their children, they can command it. Interest is stronger than prejudice, and white teachers may be found in multitudes who will impart the stores of the mind for a convincing consideration. I say to you, black men, into whose hands these remarks shall fall, if you wish to see your children happy, prosperous and respected, give them knowledge. There is no able bodied laboring man so poor as cannot spare from his earnings enough to give at least one child as much learning as is necessary or desirable for a seaman, a mechanic, or a tradesman. Give your children the advantages of a good school, and they will be something better than barbers and shoe blacks. There are enough of you to support a school, and, if you can manage to support him, I will myself engage to find a competent and willing instructor.

The principal part of the third article of the ‘Appeal’ is a dissertation on the advantages of religion, and as I do not deem myself a competent critic on such topics, I will, if you please, Mr Garrison, pre-termit the subject altogether. After this, Walker institutes a comparison between the treatment of negroes at the hands of Americans here and of Englishmen elsewhere. The result is in favor of John Bull, as might have been expected. He says that there is no intelligent black who does not esteem an Englishman. Should England ever get a hostile footing in one of the southern states, what might be the consequence of such a feeling?

The fourth and last article begins with a discourse on the miseries inflicted on the blacks by the visionary scheme of colonizing them in Africa. Mr Clay comes in for a share of censure, for having lent his countenance to the Colonization Society. May the Lord forgive Walker for the aspersion he ignorantly casts on that virtuous and eminent man. Mr Clay saw a great evil in the land, the curse of bondage, and like many other good men, caught desperately at the only means to ameliorate it that occurred to his mind.

A panegyric on the late good Bishop Allen, some further remarks on the Colonizing scheme and a criticism of the Declaration of Independence, make up the remainder of the article. In one passage he asks the reason why the blacks are so easily overawed and oppressed by the whites. I will quote his answer, for it is well worthy of note.

'They keep us miserable now, and call us their property, but some of them will have enough of us by and by—their stomachs shall run over with us; they want us for their slaves, and shall have us to their fill. We are all in the world together!!—I said above, because we cannot help ourselves, (viz. we cannot help the whites murdering our mothers and our wives) but this statement is incorrect—for we can help ourselves; for, if we lay aside abject servility, and be determined to act like men, and not brutes—the murderers among the whites would be afraid to show their cruel heads. But O, my God!—in sorrow I must say it, that my color, all over the world, have a mean, servile spirit. They yield in a moment to the whites, let them be right or wrong—the reason they are able to keep their feet on our throats. Oh! my colored brethren, all over the world, when shall we arise from this death-like apathy!—and be men!! You will notice, if ever we become men, I mean *respectable* men, such as other people are, we must exert ourselves to the full. For, remember, that it is the greatest desire and object of the greater part of the whites, to keep us ignorant, and make us work to support them and their families.—Here now, in the Southern and Western sections of this country, there are at least three colored persons for one white; why is it, that those few weak, good-for-nothing whites, are able to keep so many able men, one of whom can put to flight a dozen whites, in wretchedness and misery? It shows at once, what the blacks are; we are ignorant, abject, servile and mean—and the whites know it—they know that we are too servile to assert our rights as men—or they would not fool with us as they do. Would they fool with any other people as they do with us? No, they know too well, that they would get themselves ruined. Why do they not bring the inhabitants of Asia to be body servants to them? They know they would get their bodies rent and torn from head to foot. Why do they not get the Aborigines of this country to be slaves to them and their children, to work their farms and dig their mines? They know well that the Aborigines of this country, (or Indians) would tear them from the earth. The Indians would not rest day or night, they would be up all times of night, cutting their cruel throats. But my color, (some, not all,) are willing to stand still and be murdered by the cruel whites.'

This is the root of the matter. Were not the slaves of a mean and servile spirit (the consequence of their utter ignorance) they were slaves no longer. They are strong enough to free themselves, and if that object cannot be effected by peaceable means, in God's name let it come in any way, be the consequence what it may, rather than that this great wickedness should pollute our otherwise favored land. The tears of the innocent and the groans of the oppressed cry to Heaven for vengeance, and though I do not look for the arrival of any relief through supernatural agency, I am persuaded that a great change must take place before the lapse of another century. How any one can think and feel otherwise with regard to this subject, I can only account for by supposing that they do indeed regard the blacks as another and an inferior species. Let but an American seaman be impressed into the British navy, where, by the way, he is clad, fed, paid, and not very ill-treated, and the tocsin of alarm is sounded, and the country is in a flame from Maine to Florida. But let a Georgia planter stave or scourge his slaves to death, or shoot them down for his amusement, and the most deathlike apathy prevails. How long, O, Lord, how long!

Walker's remarks on the Declaration of Independence are pointed and to the purpose, but the sum of that argument may be given in few words. The instrument has a most unhappy beginning, for its very first clause, in the mouth of a white inhabitant of any of the slave states, is a base lie, or, at best, a vile piece of national hypocrisy. This language is not stronger than the occasion justifies. How can any man who holds a slave, or assists another to hold him, say that all men are born free and equal? Any foreigner has a right to call him a fool or a hypocrite.

By your leave, I will close my cogitations on this subject with a few remarks on the plan of colonizing our negroes elsewhere.

1. It is cruel.
2. It is unjust.
3. It is impracticable.
4. Were it none of these, it is impolitic.

1. No man of color who knows his own interest will consent to emigrate to a land of which he knows nothing. If advantage is taken of a negro's ignorance to entice him from a soil where he has friends and kindred, and where he may eat bread by the sweat of his brow, to one that offers only other equal advantages, it is cruel. If his situation is changed for the worse, it is doubly cruel. A sudden change of climate, of habits, is, to say the least, no advantage, and I never heard that a black received a remuneration for the trouble and hardship of settling in a new country; for a hardship it certainly is. If, as I believe, the land of promise is a miserable country, at the mercy of savages, and still worse, of greedy speculators, it is the height of cruelty to send him thither, whether willingly or unwillingly.

2. To tell a man that he shall not or cannot enjoy the rights his Maker endowed him withal, but on condition of forsaking the land of his birth, to which his dearest sympathies and affections cling, is unjust. To say to a black, 'here you cannot be respected or respectable, nor shall your children be so after you,' is downright abuse, for who can say what changes may take place? This country is their country as much as ours, and they have as much right to

remain in it. They know no other land; no other language; it is their country. Suppose that the blacks should become more numerous than ourselves, and should set about colonizing us in Europe, what should we say to the plan? Should we not call it downright insult?

3. The whole number exported by the Colonization Society, from its establishment till now, would not balance the increase of a single week. When the ocean can be drained with a bucket, shall we get rid of our black population by such means—but not till then.

4. To what purpose send three millions of our fellow countrymen into exile? Are they not as capable of being useful here as an equal number of whites? If they can be happy and respectable elsewhere, it only depends on ourselves to make them so here. They will make themselves so, if suffered. Supposing we should send an equal number of poor whites to Liberia, should we not suffer in consequence? Who would carry the hod, pave the streets, &c. for us? Certainly blacks are as able to labor as whites. One tenth of the males would suffice to win ten pitched battles for their country.

I will conclude by hoping that what has fallen from my pen may induce some few of both colors to reflect on these matters.

V.