

From the Boston Recorder.

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DR. OSGOOD'S LETTERS.—No. 2.

TO THE REV. RALPH EMERSON, D. D.,

*Professor in the Theological Seminary at
Andover.*

Dear Brother,—As the first part of your 5th letter is occupied with a continuation of your arguments in favor of the sincerity of the clergy in their declaration of opposition to slavery, I shall pass it by and offer a few remarks upon that sentence in my speech, in which I said the opposers of the abolitionists “are bound to strike out some new plan,” &c. This obligation I consider to be of a moral character, of course. It arises out of the nature of slavery, and the effects which the system uniformly produces. These effects you are as ready to deprecate as any abolitionist in the land.—I hope you have made yourself acquainted with the most abhorrent of them. I hope that you and all your christian brethren who stand aloof from the anti-slavery societies, are fully aware of the horrible licentiousness which is nourished by this system; this I consider to be the most revolting feature of the monster, and one which ought to rouse the feelings of every Christian throughout the land, and bring them to some action. You are aware, Sir, that the details of evidence, which would establish this particular enormity of the slave system, would be too disgusting to be spread before the public, either in a lecture

or in a printed form. But you cannot question the fact, though you may not have travelled in the Slave States, and seen the numberless "living epistles" which establish it. We will say nothing of this amalgamation of the blacks and whites, which abolitionists are tauntingly accused of wishing to bring about. Yes Sir, accused by respectable men, who have no better arguments with which to withstand the power of truth, spread out in the lectures and writings of the abolitionists. But I ask, in what light ought Christians to regard that universal system of concubinage which is practiced by the blacks themselves in all the slave States? The slave laws do not recognize the marriage institution.—The master has the power to dissolve it at pleasure, and either of the parties, cohabiting together, may break off their connection, at will, and do so, in multitudes of instances. As to the validity of marriage, it is a mere nullity. I will not pursue this subject further; but I ask again, if the consideration of it ought not to excite inquiry in the minds of good people, which would lead to some united action?—As to your question, in what light, any new movement, which should awaken much interest in the community, would be regarded, I believe I can answer for many

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ardent abolitionists, that they would rejoice to see "a more excellent way" pointed out to "give liberty to the captive." I believe Sir, that very few persons expected much from the "American Union." If I am not misinformed, some of its members had no confidence in its success, and therefore could not labor with much ardor to accomplish its measures. As to the Colonization

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Society, you are well aware that the abolitionists very generally regard it as a heartless concern as it respects the poor slave.-- They consider it as a scheme, patronized by many slave holders, which is calculated to hide from philanthropists in the free States the enormities of slavery, and thus prevent their efforts to overthrow it by feasible measures. I would not impeach the motives of many of the members of this society. There are certainly some of the most respectable and the most benevolent and high minded men in the free States connected with it. These men fully believe that they are sustaining the claims of humanity and producing a happy influence in favor of the slave by their measures. Let them go on. For one I have never uttered any anathemas against this society. I was one of its earliest advocates, in this section of the State, and did what I could to carry forward its plans. I hope it will be the instrument of great good to Africa, but I must say that I consider it of no worth in connection with the emancipation of the slaves. Those members of the society, with the Hon. President at their head, who cry hosanna at their anniversaries, and who still hold their fellow men in bondage, must excuse us "weak fanatics, if we suspect their sincerity, in their professed hatred of slavery. I do not apprehend that I shall "be judged as the father of sedition, or be cast out (of the abolition ranks); for having created a new race of nonconformists," if I recommend to good men, who object to the measures of the abolitionists, "to strike out some new plan for themselves." And now, my brother, since you belong to no society, and feel so tenderly for the slave, I think you are the most suitable person to lead the way. You have not taken the ground against all "voluntary associations," and I think if you will further examine the subject you will change the opinion you have

expressed against employing such power in reference to the removal of slavery. Send out your call for a meeting; spread your reasons before the Christian community; wake up the churches more extensively and thoroughly; tell them that there remains a great work to be done, and that you and multitudes of others cannot go with the abolitionists, or with the American Union; but that you are constrained in your conscience to do something. The more sober and considerate among the abolitionists, will be disposed to remain quiet as it respects your action, and give you a fair opportunity to make the experiment, and if you are successful, and do more for the slave than we have done, we will rejoice.— For one I should be delighted to see my brethren ardently engaged in this business; action on their part is all that is requisite to bring them on to sure ground. They would soon find that the abolitionists are not so wild and fanatical as they now consider them, and they would very soon give us “the right hand of fellowship” and be fellow helpers in the cause.

In another part of your 5th letter you give as a reason for not joining the American Union, which you still regard as “a respectable and philanthropic association,” that “the north can do more for the speedy removal of slavery without any organization all *than with one.*” “I have not even wished to strike out any new plan, or to see any new plan invented by others. “The old is better,” in my view; the good old way of exerting “moral power over the south,” on this subject, which has been pursued, with at least no *bad* effect, by every son of freedom at the north, for more than half a century. Instant in season and out of season, always and every where, from the cradle to the grave, the sons of Puritans have testified their aversion to slavery and their desire of universal emancipation. Their voice thus incessantly ut-

tered by every individual, was heard and perfectly understood at the south. And it had all the effect there which moral power, (unaided by physical, like that of England over her colonies,) can be expected to exert. That influence it was exerting slowly but surely. No man at the South dreamed that a pro-slavery man could be found north of the Potomac. But this voice, long so shrill, so clear, so unbroken, and in power like the sound of many waters, has of late been interrupted by the din of all kinds of "jarring cymbals and Babel voices." There is more eloquence in this sentence than reality. If the views here presented are correct, then the abolitionists have done wrong in disturbing this united and all powerful voice, for you clearly intimate that they are the misguided zealots who have produced all their "clangor" and turned the north "upside down," and (as is asserted by others) have put back the cause of emancipation fifty or a hundred years. But Sir, you will expect that we shall carefully examine this ground before we place our feet upon it; before we disband every society which wears either the name or the imputed character of anti-slavery," as you recommend. One word upon this last quoted sentence, before I proceed to remark upon the first. Are you aware that you have here recommended the same course which the slave-

holders have wished the people of the north to adopt? They have called for the action of our Legislatures to this very end. They have vehemently demanded the enacting of laws which should prevent any organization which could bear upon their "domestic institutions." These organizations are the very things they most dread. So long as there was no systematic effort to call out an expression of public opinion at the north, which should be really "like the sound of many waters," they cared not for the "shrill, clear, and unbroken voice," which you say, "was uttered by every individual incessantly." If you could effect what you sincerely desire to see done, viz: "the disbanding of every society that wears either the name or the imputed character of anti-slavery," the slaveholders would consider you the greatest benefactor they could have. There is no worldly honor, within their power to bestow, which they would not confer upon you. They would load you with wealth and hire poets to sing your praise; the names of Howard, Wilberforce, and all other philanthropists whose labors have blessed the world, would sink into the most contemptible insignificance, in comparison with your own. No Sir, these slaveholders perfectly understand the nature of that "moral power," which is now exerted both at the north and west against their institutions. They begin to feel its influence over their own consciences. It has indeed "excited a terrible commotion" at the south, and unless there can be some way devised to stop the mouths of those "troublers of Israel," they will soon despair of maintaining their hold of the slaves.

But to return to the consideration of the

first part of the sentence quoted above.—
You speak of a moral power which has
been pursued by every son of freedom at
the north for more than half a century.”—
Its object must have been the removal of
slavery, “that monstrous offspring and curse
of sin,” as you very properly term it. But
let me ask how much has all this influence
“of all the sons of the Puritans, exerted in
season and out of season, always and every
where, from the cradle to the grave?” how
much I say has it accomplished? Has it
diminished the number of the slaves? Let
the census of the slave States speak. Be-
sides the rapid increase among themselves,
it is believed by many, that thousands have
been smuggled into the extreme south from
Africa. Has this power led to extensive
emancipation among the slaveholders? You
will not answer in the affirmative. Has it
mitigated the condition of the slave or led
to a system of instruction which might ele-
vate their moral character, and prepare
them for that happy state where bonds will
never be felt? Let the letters and speeches
of the Rev. Mr. Jones, a devoted and self-
denying missionary at the south, and a son
of the south, as well as the reports of the
Synods of Kentucky and South Carolina and
Georgia declare. Indeed, Sir, the state of
moral degradation in which they represent
the hundreds of thousands of slaves to be,
almost exceeds belief, and if any abolition-
ist, in these days, should tell such a dismal
tale, every pro-slavery newspaper, (pardon
the expression) from the Journal of Com-
merce downwards, would declare it to
be a lie of the most malignant character, de-
signed to hold up Southern Christians to
contempt. It is well for our cause that

these documents made their appearance before the excitement commenced at the south. The moral courage of those who put them forth would scarcely have been proof against the wrath of the slaveholders, who are thus shown to be destitute of any feelings for the eternal welfare of their slaves. You may be disposed to turn this admission against us, by saying that our movements at the north have paralyzed the efforts of these good men at the south, and that now they cannot appeal to the consciences of slaveholders and exhort them to do something for the religious instruction of the slaves.

I shall probably have occasion to revert to this subject again, if I pursue the discussion; and I will therefore pass it by for the present. I ask, further, if this tremendous "moral power" which has been operating for fifty years, has produced any misgivings in the minds of slaveholders, about the lawfulness of their system? Has it weakened their confidence in the justice of holding their fellow men as "goods and chattels?" Has it gained any assurance from them that they will take any steps for a gradual emancipation? Let the language of the Southern Convention, answer this question.—These gentlemen have come out boldly, and would persuade us that the institution of slavery is the glory of a republic, and that no country, enjoying such a form of government, can arrive at the highest point of civilization, if it does not sustain this system.

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Before the action of the abolitionists commenced, many slaveholders were loud in their condemnation of slavery. They called on us at the north to give them sympathy. They represented themselves as in an unhappy condition, which they would gladly exchange if they could. But since they have been so pressed by the arguments of anti-slavery men, they have faced about and now defend the system, and declare their determination to adhere to it. Now Sir, I ask what favorable influence, the moral power of the north, which has been "slowly but surely operating for fifty years," has had upon the system of slavery? It must certainly require another half century at least, to remove it at this rate. I shall have occasion to refer to this portion of your 5th letter in a future communication. Accept the assurance of my sincere regard,

S. OSGOOD.