

Report By James Elliott on the
Expediency of the immediate abolition
of slavery. ^{Entered} (Class of 1844)

The idea that man can hold property in man has generally been discountenanced by the virtuous and the good in all ages. Every generous heart revolts at the idea that any one, because he is more powerful, may put his foot upon the neck of his brother, tear him from the most endearing ties of earth, and with impunity subject him to any abuse he may see proper to inflict. But the great objection to the efforts of emancipationists, is that slavery now exists in the country, and that although its introduction into the country was an evil of great magnitude, and the efforts to foster and increase it a great wrong, yet that if it were now abolished, the consequences that would follow, would be tremendous, and worse than even slavery itself. They argue that all would be confusion, anarchy and bloodshed if the negro race were restored to freedom. Before we admit these declarations, and draw such conclusions it is necessary to recur to facts. It will not do to make declarations, that the negro race are naturally a miserable, low and stupid ^{people} and unfit to enjoy liberty, unless we can bring forward facts to show that when they have enjoyed equal privileges with others and

had equal inducements to acquire knowledge, and to make mental improvement, that they have then manifested an entire disposition to remain in ignorance. Neither will it do to declare that immediate emancipation would be attended with havoc, desolation and carnage unless facts can be produced to substantiate the position. The facts however are all on the other side of the question. The memorable Irish decree^{ce} that all the English slaves in the whole of Ireland be immediately emancipated and restored to their former liberty" was passed in 1171. Slavery in England was abolished by a general charter of emancipation 1381. In 1766 slavery was abolished in Prussia by special edict. In St Domingo, Cayenne, Guadalupe and Martinique in 1794 where more than 600,000 ^{slaves} were immediately emancipated by the French government. In Java 1811, in Ceylon 1815; in Buenos Ayres 1816, in St Helena 1816, in Columbia 1821; by the congress of Chili in 1821; in Cape Colony 1823; in Malacca 1825; in the southern provinces of Birmah 1826; in Peru, Guatemala and Monte Video 1821; in Mexico 1829. In all the British West Indies August 1st 1834 where 800,000 slaves were emancipated. In our country the Legislature of Pennsylvania passed an act of abolition in 1780, Connecticut in 1784; Rhode Island 1784; New York 1799; New Jersey 1804; Vermont

by constitution 1774, Massachusetts in 1789 and
New Hampshire in 1784. All these countries
either adopted immediate emancipation or a
gradual system which terminated in a few years,
and yet none of those tremendous consequences
followed which the advocates of slavery have al-
ways predicted. The island of St Domingo or
Hayti is alone resorted to as an evidence that
it is not safe to permit the negro race to
enjoy liberty. We are frequently pointed to
the bloodshed, carnage and horrors of St Domingo,
and told that if slavery were abolished in this
country, those tragedies would be reenacted here.
Before we admit these conclusions, it will be nec-
essary to examine the facts in the case.

About the time of the French revolution, there
were in the island of St Domingo, which was
under the French government, 42,000 white persons,
44,000 free blacks, and 600,000 slaves. The free
blacks were not only equal in number to
the whites, but many of them were very weal-
thy and owned slaves themselves. They did
not however, enjoy the right of suffrage as
the whites. About the time of the revolution
in France, the French government passed a decree
that the free blacks should enjoy equal rights.
Upon this in August 1791 a portion of the
whites made a rebellion, declaring that they would
not submit to the law giving the free blacks
the privilege of voting. In this contest many
were killed both of whites and blacks, but the
slaves took no part with either party.

In 1792 France sent over 3 commissioners with 6000 soldiers to enforce the law. Many of the whites then took sides with the government party, and the aristocrats finding themselves unable to resist such a force, sought the aid of the British, who being not upon friendly terms with France, were eager to embrace this opportunity of seizing one of her provinces, and sent immediately a large force to the island.

The chief of the French commissioners upon hearing of their approach, proclaimed liberty immediately to all the slaves in the island, as the only hope of repelling the British, and he exhorted them to drive back the enemy. The commissioner's act in emancipating all the slaves was confirmed by the French government in 1794. The French being engaged in other matters did not take much part in the war, but left the contest between the emancipated slaves and the British.

The struggle between them was severe and bloody, but finally the British were compelled to surrender to the black general and in 1798 an independant government was formed consisting mostly of blacks, but allowing equal suffrage to all. In 1802 Bonaparte aided by the aristocrats of ^{the} island attempted to reduce the blacks again to slavery. But they were determined that after having tasted the sweets of liberty, they would not again wear the chains of slavery.

They met the enemy in battle and succeeded in conquering their oppressors and in establishing permanently their Republican institutions. They have maintained this Republican form of government now for nearly half a century, which shows that negroes are capable of self government. It is true, they have had some ruptions and internal difficulties, in the Republic at times. One part has risen in hostility against the other on account of a disagreement with it, and resorted to arms for a redress of what was thought to be a grievance.

But in every storm of this kind, the ship has been preserved, the rock on which other republics have split has been avoided, and St Domingo yet stands among the independant nations of The earth and sends forth to other countries the abundant products of her soil, cultivated by the hands of the African freeman. Although this Republic has not been governed as well ~~as would~~ as would be desirable, yet when we remember that the great Republics of Greece and Rome were torn asunder and destroyed, and when we see in our own continent Mexico and the Republics of South America convulsed by internal divisions and revolutions, and when we reflect that since the independance of the United States, party feeling has sometimes become so strong as to seriously threaten a dissolution of the Union, and that mobs have arisen at times and set aside all law until they had executed their wishes, we think we are not to conclude that the negro race are so low a class of beings, that they should be deprived of the rights of man,

Because in this case, they have not been able to sustain a government free from imperfection. Besides in St Domingo the negroes had not the influences of the gospel thrown around them to prepare them to discharge the duties devolving upon each one in a Republican government. Without general intelligence and an enlightened religion, it is impossible for a republic to thrive and prosper, and when we consider that there is scarcely any religion in St Domingo except the catholic religion, and that in its most corrupt ~~state~~ form, it is surprising that they have managed their government so well as they have.

The British West Indies afford us the best means to test the expediency of immediate emancipation. Slavery existed there in its most oppressive form, and there was the greatest opposition to its abolition. And if under such circumstances, the immediate abolition of slavery, had a good tendency, there can be no doubt but that it would be safe in the United States. The struggle for the overthrow of slavery in the West Indies was long and arduous.

The planters, to the last, opposed every plan for its abolition. No missionary, who came to the islands dared to say any thing against slavery, without exposing himself to the greatest danger. They denounced the English abolitionists in the strongest terms as desiring to ruin them, to take away their property, that their measures if adopted would be attended with carnage.

and insurrection. They had many personal friends in parliament and other high stations in England, who apologized for slavery, and others perhaps honestly thought it was not safe to abolish it. Against all these influences the venerable Clarkson and Wilberforce nobly plead the cause of the oppressed.

They published books, pamphlets and papers showing the great evil of the system of slavery both to the master and slave. They enlightened the mind of every class upon the subject, and the whole people poured into the British Parliament their petitions for the abolition of slavery in the West Indies and they repeated their supplications again and again. In 1831, 5454 petitions were presented, one from Edinburgh was signed by 29,000 persons. Finally after a fierce contest and long struggle against so much opposition, the friends of emancipation succeeded in obtaining the passage through parliament of an act of abolition in 1834. It was however then urged that the planters would sustain a great injury in losing their slaves, and that the negroes were not at all prepared for the enjoyment of freedom immediately. To satisfy these clamors the British government in the bill did not compel any of the islands to manumit their slaves at once, but left them to choose either immediate emancipation or the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system was to terminate six years after the passage of the bill, or on the 1st of August 1840. This system was much better than absolute slavery.

The master enjoyed all the benefit of the labor of the slave, but was bound to give the slave a proper allowance of food and clothing. He had no power to beat the slave, but special magistrates were appointed who heard the complaints of the master against the slave and inflicted such punishment as they thought necessary. The slave also could apply to these magistrates for a redress of grievances. The island of St. Vincent, however in its colonial assembly decided to choose immediate emancipation in preference to the apprenticeship system, and about 95,000 slaves were immediately emancipated, ^{while} there were only about 2,000 whites in the island. There would have been an opportunity for the destruction of the whites, if the negroes had been so disposed. But how different was their course. Messrs Thorne and Shinnle who traveled all through this island in 1837 and spent six months in viewing the workings of Emancipation in the British West Indies, give us the following account, as related to them by the missionaries of a watch meeting of the negroes at St John's on the night previous to their emancipation and of their subsequent conduct.

"The spacious house was filled with the candidates for liberty. All was animation and eagerness. A mighty chorus of voices swelled the song of expectation and joy; and as they united in prayer, the voice of the leader was drowned in the universal acclamation of

Thanksgiving and praise and blessing and honor and glory to God, who had come down for their deliverance. In such exercises the evening was spent until the hour of twelve approached. The missionaries then proposed that when the clock on the cathedral should begin to strike the whole congregation should fall upon their knees, and receive the boon of freedom in solemn silence. Accordingly as the loud bell tolled its first note, the immense assembly fell prostrate on their knees. Still was silence, ~~save~~ ^{save} the quivering half stifled breath of the struggling spirit. The slow notes of the clock fell upon the multitude, peal on peal, peal on peal rolled over the prostrate throng, in tones of angels voices, thrilling among the desolate chords and weary heart strings. scarce had the clock sounded its last note, when the lightning flashed vividly around, and a loud peal of thunder roared along the sky—God's pillar of fire, and triumph of Jubilee! A moment of profoundest silence passed, then,—then came the burst, they broke forth in prayer, they shouted, they sung "Gloria, Et le- luyah, they stopped their hands, leaped up, fell down, clasped each other in their free arms, cried, laughed and went to and fro, tossing upward their unfettered hands; but high above the whole there was a mighty sound which ever and anon swelled up, it was the utterings in broken Negro dialect, of gratitude to God. After this gush of excitement had spent itself, and the congregation became calm, the religious exercises were resumed, and the remainder of the night

was occupied in singing and prayer, in reading the bible and ⁱⁿ addresses from the missionaries, explaining the nature of the freedom just received, and exhorting the free people to be industrious, steady, obedient to the laws, and to show themselves in all things worthy of the high boon which God had conferred upon them. The first of August came on Friday and a release was proclaimed from all work until the next Monday. The day was chiefly spent by the great mass of negroes, in the churches and chapels. Thither they flocked in clouds and as doves to their windows. The clergy and missionaries throughout the island were actively engaged, seizing the opportunity in order to enlighten the people on all the duties and responsibilities of their new situation and above all urging them to the attainment of that higher liberty with which Christ maketh his children free. In every quarter we are assured that the day was like a sabbath. Work had ceased, the hum of business was still, and noise and tumult were unheard in the streets. Frangquillity pervaded the towns and country. At Sabbath indeed when the wicked cease from troubling and they ^{become} were at rest and the slave was freed from his master. The planters informed us that they went to the chapels where their own people were assembled, greeted them, shook hands with them, and exchanged most hearty

good wishes?

When these things transpired those in England who had opposed emancipation, said wait a little while longer and after the first two or three weeks you will see the terrible disasters. But the negroes immediately went cheerfully to work on the plantations, now receiving wages for their labor. And by their own industry they were able to support their families, to build themselves cottages, to buy small spots of land, to send their children to school and to give some to support the missionaries. Every year brought in the most encouraging accounts from this island, so that the mouths of the gainsayers were stopped and friends of emancipation were multiplied upon every hand.

Immediate Emancipation worked so much better than the apprenticeship system, that Great Britain thought she had erred in permitting any of the islands to have an apprenticeship system, and in 1838, two years before the expiration of the apprenticeship system, she passed a decree that on the 1st of August all the slaves in the various islands should be immediately emancipated, by which 500,000 slaves obtained their liberty. The best of consequences have attended emancipation in all these islands. Those planters, who were formerly opposed to it, now rejoice in it. None desire the return of slavery.

The marriage relation which was formerly prostrated is now restored. In Jamaica 28,000 marriages took place between the years 41 and 44 and the negro people are now permitted to act in the sphere the Creator designed for them.

The annual reports of the affairs of all these islands give the most cheering accounts of the results of immediate abolition. Mr Gurney, who visited the West Indies in 1840 furnishes us with interesting accounts of the workings of emancipation which may be relied on. He was in no way connected with the American abolitionists, and hence cannot be accused of giving a favorable report on account of his prejudice in favor of them. Upon visiting the island of Tortola in his excursions he called upon Robert Claxton, the solicitor general of the island, a gentleman of great intelligence and respectability. Mr Claxton speaking of a small property on the island belonging to himself, said, "six years ago (that is shortly before the act of emancipation,) it was worth only £2,000 with the slaves upon it. Now without a single slave it is worth three times the money. I would not sell it for £6,000." Mr Gurney learned upon inquiry that this remarkable increase in the value of property was not confined to particular estates but was general.

another said to him of the industry of the negroes, "They will do an infinity of work forager". Mr Godman, the Methodist minister, stated to him, that since Emancipation, "The change for the better in the dress, demeanor and welfare of the people was prodigious". Imports in that island had also vastly increased in so much that the duties arising from them in 1839 doubled that of 1835. Mr Gurney next visited Antigua. Upon ^{inquiring} here of the value of landed property, the universal answer was that "At the lowest computation, the land, without a single slave upon it, is fully as valuable now, as it was including all the slaves before Emancipation". Mr Gurney also informs us that there were no less than 7,000 scholars in the various charity schools in the island at that time. The marriage institution had also become respected. He says that, "The vicar of St John's, during the last seven years of slavery married only one hundred and ten pairs of negroes. In the single year of freedom, 1839, the number of pairs married by him was 155". "With respect to crime" he says, "it has been rapidly diminished during the last few years. The number committed to the house of correction in 1837—chiefly for petty offences, formerly punished on the estates—were 850; in 1838 only 244; in 1839, 311. The number left in the prison at the close of 1837 was 147; at the close of 1839 only 35. Mr Gurney also gives us an account of the staple productions ^{of this} island."

Here says, "The average reports of the last five years of slavery (1829 to 1833 inclusive) were sugar 12,159 hogsheads; Molasses 3,308 puncheons and rum 2,465 puncheons.

Those of the first five years of freedom, (1834 to 1838 inclusive) were, sugar 13,545 hogsheads; molasses, 8,365 puncheons, and Rum 1,109 puncheons. Showing an excess of 1,356 hogsheads of sugar and of 5,000 puncheons of ~~rum~~ molasses; and a diminution of 1,359 puncheons of rum. This comparison is surely a triumphant one; not only does it demonstrate the advantage derived from free labor during a course of five years, but affords a proof that many of the planters of Antigua have ceased to convert their molasses into rum. It ought to be observed that these five years of freedom included two of drought, one very calamitous.

The statement for 1839 forms an admirable climax to this account. It is as follows; sugar 22,989 hogsheads (10,000 beyond the last average of slavery) 13,433 puncheons of molasses (also 10,000 beyond the last average of slavery); and only 582 puncheons of rum. That in the sixth year of freedom, after the fair trial of five years, the exports of sugar from Antigua almost doubled the average of slavery, is a fact which precludes the necessity of all other evidence.

By what hands was this vast crop raised

and realized? By the hands of that lazy and impracticable race, (as they have often been described) the negroes. And under what stimulus has the work been effected? Solely under that of moderate wages?" Mr Gurney also gives us some good accounts of the workings of emancipation in Jamaica, although everything has not done as well in that island as in some others, owing to some unwise and unkind measures of the proprietors in attempting to force the labor of freemen. The exports of sugar from this island in 1838 was 53,382 hogsheads and in 39 the first year of freedom 48,050, showing a deficiency of 5,332. Yet on the whole Emancipation has been a great benefit to both master and slave in this island. One gentleman said to Mr Gurney "I had rather make sixty three, of coffee under freedom, than one hundred and twenty under slavery; such is the saving of expense that I make a better profit by it." Mr Gurney in the end concludes as follows "The Emancipated negroes are working well on the estates of their old masters. Nor ^{does} Jamaica, when duly inspected and fairly estimated, furnish any exception to the general result. We find, that, in that island wherever the negroes are fairly, kindly, and wisely treated, there they are working well on the properties of their old masters; and that the existing instances of a contrary description must be ascribed to causes which class ^{under} slavery, and not under freedom. Let it not however be imagined, that the negroes who are not working on

the estates of their old masters are, on that account, idle. Even these are, in general busily employed in cultivating their own ground, in various descriptions of handicraft, in lime burning or fishing, in benefitting themselves and the community, through some new, but equally desirable medium. Besides all this, stone walls are built, new houses erected, pastures cleared, ditches dug, meadows drained, roads made and the admixed, villages formed, and other beneficial operations effected; the whole of which, before emancipation, it would have been a folly ^{even} to attempt. The old notion, that the negro is by constitution a lazy creature, who will do no work at all except by compulsion, is now forever exploded.

Since these are the results of immediate emancipation in those countries, we can draw no other conclusion than that such a policy would be safe in the United States. Several of our states have already abolished slavery either immediately or by a gradual process which terminated in a few years, and no evil consequences followed, and if other states would adopt the same policy, the effect would no doubt be good. The prejudices raised against the negro character are often very unjust. Where a colored man becomes abandoned in character, people are apt to bring it forward as an evidence that the colored people are fit to enjoy no privileges, not remembering

That white people often become abandoned and wretched also. Every people will advance morally and religiously in proportion to the moral and intellectual culture they enjoy. Oppress a people, deprive them of their natural rights, keep them in ignorance and shut out from them the enlightening rays of the gospel, and they will most certainly be immoral, degraded, and miserable. But place them under the influence of moral and religious training and they will gradually advance to the dignity the Creator designed all men to maintain. This principle applies to the negro race as well as to all others. They are naturally very religious, when they receive any kind of attention.

Whether they possess equal mental powers with the Anglo-Saxon race does ^{not} ^{enjoy} affect the question whether they should ^{enjoy} "freedom". It is a well known fact that many colored men, who have had few advantages, have made surprising advances in the arts and sciences and some have become most excellent orators.

Different nations differ very much in the powers of mind displayed by the general masses among them, but all people can make great improvement, if they have proper culture, and every one should be willing to let them have every privilege to make as much advancement as they possibly can.

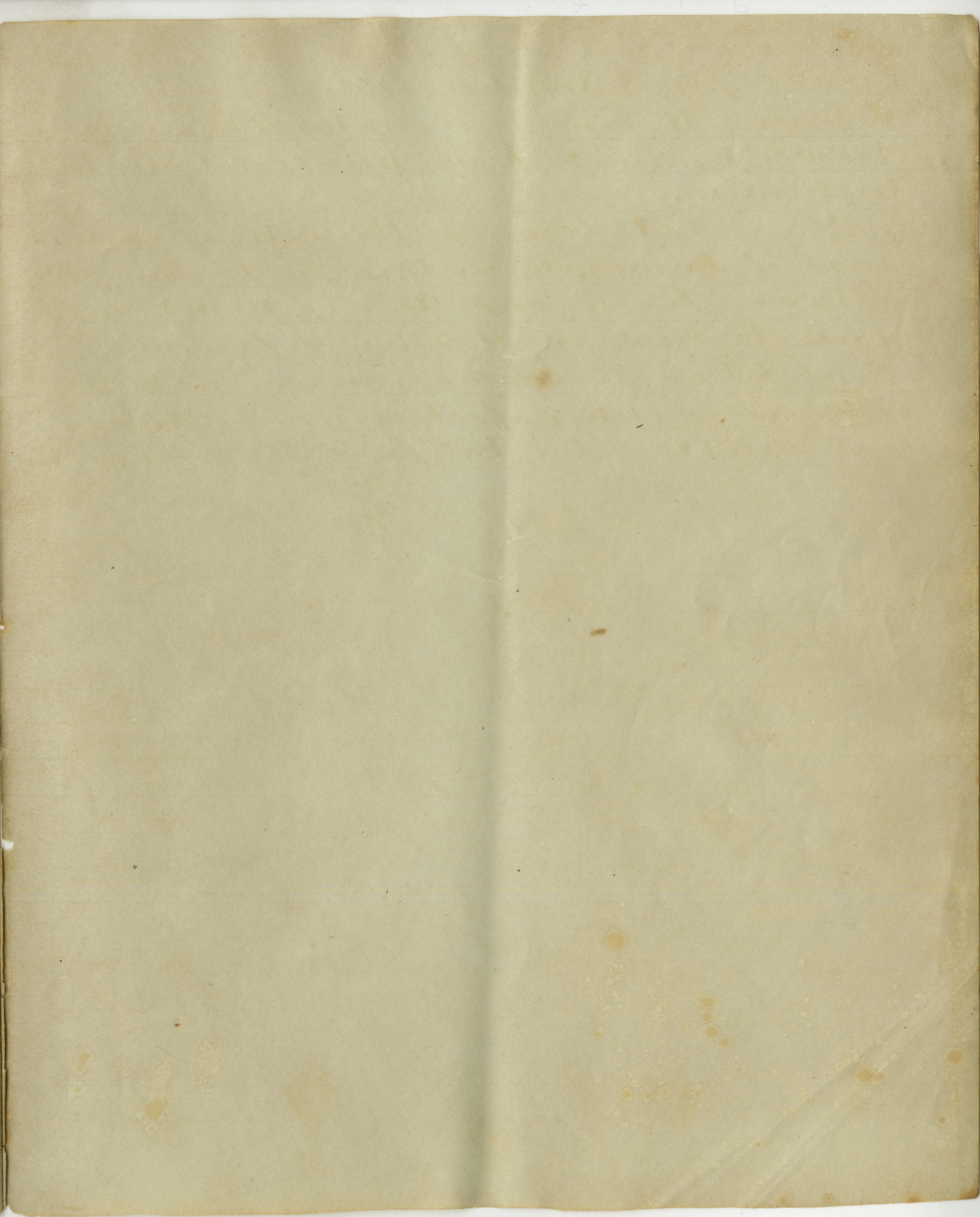
But no person can be prepared for freedom by being kept in slavery, and the only way

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that man can be prepared to fill his proper place in life is by immediately restoring to him his natural ^{rights}, and by throwing around him moral and religious influences.

Hence, it becomes the duty of every lover of humanity, in this great struggle between liberty and slavery, to let his voice be heard on the side of freedom.

And, let us all unite our energies in rooting out every vestige of slavery, not only from our own country, but from the whole world.



But I have not yet found the right
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