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OPINIONS

ON

'SLAVERY,' and 'RECONSTRUCTION OF THE UNION,'

AS EXPRESSED BY

PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

WITH BRIEF NOTES

BY

HON. WILLIAM WHITING.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN was educated in a section of the country where prejudice against the colored race was imbedded in State constitutions and in local laws. The avowal of anti-slavery sentiments in Kentucky, Indiana, or Illinois before the war, could be made only by men of moral and physical courage. Yet, during the entire course of his public life, he has been a consistent, eloquent, and fearless opponent of slavery.

The following passages, quoted from speeches, letters, and public documents, show that on many occasions since the first protest against slavery recorded by him as Representative in the Legislature of Illinois, down to the present time, he has reiterated his deep and abiding conviction that slavery is morally, socially, and politically wrong; and his more recent letters and official messages to Congress show that he is now convinced that the removal of that institution is essential to the permanent and peaceful continuance of the Union under the Constitution.

1837.

PROTEST AGAINST SLAVERY IN 1837.

The following protest was presented to the House, (of Representatives for the State of Illinois,) which was read and ordered to be spread upon the journals:

Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power under the Constitution to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different States.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power under the Constitution to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; but that the power ought not to be exercised, unless at the request of the people of said District.

(Signed) DAN STONE,
A. LINCOLN.

1858.

NO PERMANENCE TO GOVERNMENT HALF SLAVE AND
HALF FREE.

From Speech at Springfield, Ill., June 17, 1858.

We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "*A house divided against itself cannot stand.*" *I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.* Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

DRED SCOTT CASE THE KNELL OF FREEDOM.

From the same.

Such a decision is all that slavery now lacks of being alike lawful in all the States. Welcome or unwelcome, such decision is *probably coming*, and will soon be upon us, unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown. We shall lie down, pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free, and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State. To meet and overthrow the power of that dynasty, is the work now before all those who would prevent that consummation. That is what we have to do. How can we best do it?

I HATE SLAVERY AS MUCH AS ANY ABOLITIONIST.

From Speech at Chicago, July 10, 1858.

I am tolerably well acquainted with the history of the country, and I know that it has endured, eighty-two years, half slave and half free. I believe it has endured, because during all that time, until the introduction of the Nebraska bill, the public mind did rest all that time in the belief that slavery was in the course of ultimate extinction. That was what gave us the rest that we had through that period of eighty-two years; at least, so I believe. *I have always hated slavery, I think, as much as any abolitionist.*

THE NATION'S VERDICT ON SLAVERY.

From the same.

The American people look upon slavery as a *vast moral evil*; they can prove it such by the writings of those who gave us the blessings of liberty which we enjoy; and that they so looked upon it, and not as an evil merely confining itself to the States where it is situated.

SHAM LOGIC ON MIXTURE OF RACES.

From the same.

I protest, now and for ever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I did not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is, that I need not have her for either; but, as God made us separate, we can leave one another alone, and do one another much good thereby. There are white men enough to marry all the white women, and enough black men to marry all the black women; and, in God's name, let them be so married.

TO JUSTIFY ENSLAVEMENT OF BLACK MEN, JUSTIFIES ENSLAVEMENT OF ALL MEN.

From the same.

Turn in whatever way you will — whether it come from the mouth of a king an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race — it is all the same old serpent; and I hold if that course of argumentation that is made for the purpose of convincing the public mind that we should not care about this, should be granted, it does not stop with the negro. I should like to know if, taking this old Declaration of Independence, which declares that all men are equal upon principle, and making exception to it, when will it stop? If one man says it does not mean a negro, why not another say it does not mean some other man? If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get the statute-book, in which we find it, and tear it out. Who is so bold as to do it?

QUIBBLING AS TO THE EQUALITY OF RACES MUST BE DISCARDED.

From the same.

Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man — this race and that race, and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position — discarding our standard that we have left us, let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.

HATE OF SLAVERY BECAUSE OF ITS MONSTROUS INJUSTICE.

In the debate between Lincoln and Douglas, held at Ottawa, in August, 1858, he said:

This declared indifference, but, as I must think, *covert real zeal* for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the *monstrous injustice of slavery itself*. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence on the world, enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites, causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.

THE NEGRO HAS A RIGHT TO EAT THE BREAD HE EARNS.

From Speech at Springfield, July 17, 1858.

Certainly the negro is not our equal in color — perhaps not in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have

earned, he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you cannot be justified in taking away the little which has been given him.

THE CONVULSION CAUSED BY EFFORTS TO SPREAD SLAVERY WILL CEASE WHEN SLAVERY CEASES.

From Speech at Jonesboro, Ill., Sept. 15, 1853.

All the trouble and convulsion has proceeded from efforts to spread slavery over more territory. It was thus at the date of the Missouri Compromise. It was so again with the annexation of Texas; so with the territory acquired by the Mexican war, and it is so now. Will never there has been an effort to spread it, there has been agitation and resistance. Now, I appeal to this audience, (very few of whom are my political friends,) as national men, whether we have reason to expect that the agitation in regard to this subject will cease while the causes that tend to reproduce agitation are actually at work. Will not the same cause that produced agitation in 1820, when the Missouri Compromise was formed — that which produced the agitation upon the annexation of Texas, and at other times — work out the same results always? Do you think that the nature of man will be changed — that the same causes that produced agitation at one time will not have the same effect at another?

REPUDIATES THOSE WHO HOLD SLAVERY NOT WRONG.

From Speech at Quincy, Ill., Oct. 13, 1858.

I will say now, that there is a sentiment in the country contrary to me — a sentiment which holds that slavery is not wrong, and therefore it goes for the policy that does not propose dealing with it as a wrong. That policy is the Democratic policy, and that sentiment is the Democratic sentiment.

THE TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION IGNORES SLAVERY.

From the same.

In all three of these places, being the only allusions to slavery in the instrument, covert language is used. Language is used not suggesting that slavery existed, or that the black race were among us. And I understand the contemporaneous history of those times to be that covert language was used with a purpose, and that purpose was, that in our Constitution, which it was hoped, and is still hoped, will endure for ever — when it should be read by intelligent and patriotic men, after the institution of slavery had passed from among us — there should be nothing on the face of the great charter of liberty suggesting that such a thing as negro slavery had ever existed among us. This is part of the evidence that the fathers of the Government expected and intended the institution of slavery to come to an end. They expected and intended that it should be in the course of ultimate extinction. And when I say that I desire to see the further spread of it arrested, I only say I desire to see that done which the fathers have first done.

1859.

THE MAN BEFORE THE DOLLAR.

From Letter to Boston Jefferson Anniversary Committee, April 6, 1859.

The Democracy of to-day hold the liberty of one man to be absolutely nothing, when in conflict with another man's right of property. Republicans, on the contrary, are both for the man and the dollar, but in the case of conflict, the man before the dollar.

HE WHO WOULD BE NO SLAVE MUST HAVE NO SLAVE.

From the same.

This is a world of compensations; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.

DEPRESSED CONDITION OF THE BLACKS DEPLORED—MEASURES INFRINGING THEIR RIGHTS DISAPPROVED.

From Letter to Dr. Canisius, and other German citizens, May 17, 1859.

It is well known that I deplore the oppressed condition of the blacks; and it would, therefore, be very inconsistent for me to look with approval upon any measures that infringe upon the inalienable rights of white men, whether or not they are born in another land, or speak a different language from my own.

CONSEQUENCES OF ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPLE THAT THERE IS NO WRONG IN SLAVERY.

From Speech at Columbus, Ohio, Sept. 1859.

Then, I say, if this principle is established, that there is no wrong in slavery, and whoever wants it has a right to have it, is a matter of dollars and cents—a sort of question as to how they shall deal with brutes; that between us and the negro here there is no sort of question, but that at the South the question is between the negro and the crocodile. That is all. It is a mere matter of policy; there is a perfect right, according to interest, to do just as you please; when this is done, when this doctrine prevails, the miners andappers will have formed public opinion for the slave-trade. They will be ready for Jeff Davis and Stephens, and other leaders of that company, to sound the bugle for the revival of the slave-trade, for the second Dred Scott decision, for the flood of slavery to be poured over the free States, while we shall be here tied down and helpless, and run over like sheep.

ROOM ENOUGH FOR ALL TO BE FREE.

From Speech at Cincinnati, Sept. 1859.

I say, there is room enough for us all to be free, and it not only does not wrong the white man that the negro should be free, but it positively wrongs the mass of white men that the negro should be enslaved; that the mass of white men are really injured by the effects of slave labor in the vicinity of the fields of their own labor.

GOVERNMENT MUST ACT ON THE POLICY THAT SLAVERY IS WRONG.

From the same.

The spread of slavery impairs the general welfare, and is the only thing that threatens the perpetuity of the Union. We want and must have a national policy, in regard to the institution of slavery, that acknowledges and deals with that institution as being wrong. Whoever desires the prevention of the spread of slavery and the nationalization of that institution, yields all, when he yields to any policy that either recognizes slavery as being right, or as being an indifferent thing. Nothing will make you successful, but setting up a policy which shall treat the thing as being wrong. When I say this, I do not mean to say that this General Government is charged with the duty of redressing or preventing all the wrongs in the world; but I do think it is charged with preventing and redressing all wrongs which are wrongs to itself. This Government is expressly charged with the duty of providing for the general welfare. We believe that the spreading out and perpetuity of the institution of slavery, impairs the general welfare.

We believe, nay, we know, that that is the only thing that has threatened the perpetuity of the Union itself. The only thing which has ever menaced the destruction of the Government under which we live, is this very thing. To repress this thing, we think, is providing for the general welfare.

THE SPREAD OF SLAVERY MUST BE PREVENTED.

From the same.

We must prevent the outspreading of the institution, because neither the Constitution nor the general welfare requires us to extend it. We must prevent the revival of the African slave-trade, and the enacting by Congress of a territorial

slave code. We must prevent each of these things being done by either Congresses or courts. The people of these United States are the rightful masters of both Congresses and courts, not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution.

Cooper Institute, Feb. 27, 1860.

NOTHING WILL SATISFY SLAVEHOLDERS BUT THE ADMISSION THAT SLAVERY IS RIGHT.

From the same.

The question recurs—What will satisfy them? Simply this: we must not only let them alone, but we must somehow convince them that we do let them alone. This, we know by experience, is no easy task. We have been so trying to convince them, from the very beginning of our organization, but with no success. In all our platforms and speeches we have constantly protested our purpose to let them alone; but this has had no tendency to convince them. Alike unavailing to convince them is the fact that they have never detected a man of us in any attempt to disturb them.

These natural and apparently adequate means all failing, what will convince them? This, and this only: cease to call slavery *wrong*, and join them in calling it *right*. And this must be done thoroughly—done in *acts*, as well as *words*. Silence will not be tolerated—we must place ourselves avowedly with them.

Nor can we justifiably withhold this on any ground save our conviction that slavery is wrong. If slavery is right, all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away. If it is right, we cannot justly object to its nationality—its universality; if it is wrong, they cannot justly insist upon its extension, its enlargement. All they ask, we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask, they could readily grant, if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right, and our thinking it wrong, is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy. Thinking it right, as they do, they are not to blame for desiring its full recognition, as being right; but thinking it wrong, as we do, can we yield to them? Can we cast our votes with their view, and against our own? In view of our moral, social, and political responsibilities, can we do this?

LET US ABIDE BY OUR FAITH AND DO OUR DUTY.

From the same.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

1862.

APPEAL TO THE BORDER STATES TO EMANCIPATE THEIR SLAVES.

From Proclamation of May 19, 1862.

On the sixth day of March last, by a special message, I recommended to Congress the adoption of a joint resolution, to be substantially as follows:

Resolved, That the United States ought to coöperate with any State which *may adopt a gradual abolishment of slavery*, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.

The resolution, in the language above quoted, was adopted by large majorities in both branches of Congress, and now stands an authentic, definite, and solemn proposal of the nation to the States and people most immediately interested in the subject matter. To the people of those States I now earnestly appeal. I do not argue—I beseech you to make the argument for yourselves. You cannot, if you would, be blind to the signs of the times. I beg of you a calm and enlarged con-

sideration of them, ranging if it may be, far above personal and partisan politics. This proposal makes common cause for a common object, casting no reproaches upon any. It acts not the Pharisee. The change it contemplates would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking any thing. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time, as in the providence of God, it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it.

LETTER TO AUGUST BELMONT.

July 31, 1862.

DEAR SIR: You send to Mr. W—— an extract from a letter written at New-Orleans the ninth instant, which is shown to me. You do not give the writer's name; but plainly he is a man of ability, and probably of some note. He says: "The time has arrived when Mr. Lincoln must take a decisive course. Trying to please every body, he will satisfy nobody. A vacillating policy in matters of importance is the very worst. Now is the time, if ever, for honest men who love their country to rally to its support. Why will not the North say officially that it wishes for the restoration of the Union as it was?"

And so, it seems, this is the point upon which the writer thinks I have no policy. Why will he not read and understand what I have said?

The substance of the very declaration he desires is in the Inaugural, in each of the two regular messages to Congress, and in many, if not all the minor documents issued by the Executive since the inauguration.

Broken eggs cannot be mended; but Louisiana has nothing to do now but to take her place in the Union as it was, barring the already broken eggs. The sooner she does so, the smaller will be the amount of that which will be past mending. This Government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years, trying to destroy the Government, and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt. If they expect in any contingency to ever have the Union as it was, I join with the writer in saying, "*now is the time.*"

How much better it would have been for the writer to have gone at this, under the protection of the army at New-Orleans, than to have sat down in a closet, writing complaining letters Northward.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

LETTER TO HORACE GREELEY.

HON. HORACE GREELEY:

August 22, 1862.

DEAR SIR: I have just read yours of the nineteenth, addressed to myself through the *New-York Tribune*. If there be in it any statements or assumptions of fact which I may know to be erroneous, I do not now and here controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy "I seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be to the "Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could, at the same time, *save* slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *destroy* slavery, I do not agree with them. My *paramount* object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some, and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save this Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do *not* believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I believe that what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown

to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of *official* duty, and I intend no mollification of my oft-expressed *personal* wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Yours,

A. LINCOLN.

EMANCIPATION THREATENED UNLESS REBELLION SHOULD CEASE. THE COMING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION ANNOUNCED.

From Proclamation of Sept. 26, 1862.

It is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress, to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave States, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which States may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the governments existing there, will be continued.

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and for ever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act nor acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

THE PROTECTION OF THE ARMY AND NAVY TENDERED TO THE ESCAPED BONDMEN OF REBELS.

From the same.

Attention is hereby called to an act of Congress entitled, "Act to make an additional article of war," approved March thirteenth, 1862, and which act is in the words and figures following:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That hereafter the following shall be promulgated as an additional article of war, for the government of the army of the United States, and shall be obeyed and observed as such:

"ARTICLE.—All officers or persons in the military or naval service of the United States, are prohibited from employing any of the forces under their respective commands for the purpose of returning fugitives from service or labor who may have escaped from any persons to whom such service or labor is claimed to be due; and any officer who shall be found guilty by a court-martial of violating this article shall be dismissed from the service.

"Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That this act shall take effect from and after its passage."

Also to the ninth and tenth sections of an act entitled, "An act to suppress insurrection, to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and confiscate property of rebels, and for other purposes," approved July seventeenth, 1862, and which sections are in the words and figures following:

"Sec. 9. And be it further enacted, That all slaves of persons who shall hereafter be engaged in rebellion against the Government of the United States, or who shall in any way give aid or comfort thereto, escaping from such persons and taking refuge within the lines of the army; and all slaves captured from such persons, or deserted by them, and coming under the control of the Government of the United States; and all slaves of such persons found on [or] being within any place occupied by rebel forces and afterward occupied by the forces of the United States, shall be deemed captives of war, and shall be for ever free of their servitude, and not again held as slaves.

"Sec. 10. And be it further enacted, That no slave escaping into any State, Territory, or the District of Columbia, from any other State, shall be delivered up, or in any way impeded or hindered of his liberty, except for crime, or some offence

against the laws, unless the person claiming said fugitive shall first make oath that the person to whom the labor or service of such fugitive is alleged to be due is his lawful owner, and has not borne arms against the United States in the present rebellion, nor in any way given aid and comfort thereto; and no person engaged in the military or naval service of the United States shall, under any pretence whatever, assume to decide on the validity of the claim of any person to the service or labor of any other person, or surrender up any such person to the claimant, on pain of being dismissed from the service."

And I do hereby enjoin upon and order all persons engaged in the military and naval service of the United States to observe, obey, and enforce, within their respective spheres of service, the acts and sections above recited.

IN GIVING FREEDOM TO THE SLAVE WE ASSURE FREEDOM TO THE FREE.

From Message of December 1, 1862.

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We, of this Congress, and this Administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will for ever applaud, and God must for ever bless.

1863.

THE GREAT HISTORICAL EVENT OF THE CENTURY. FREEDOM PROCLAIMED TO THE SLAVE.

From Proclamation, January 1, 1863.

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual and armed rebellion against the authority and Government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above-mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New-Orleans,) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West-Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth,) and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare, that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases, when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION JUSTIFIED. ITS BENEFITS POINTED OUT. "THE PROMISE MADE MUST BE KEPT." "THE JOB WAS A GREAT NATIONAL ONE, AND LET NONE BE BANNED WHO BORE AN HONORABLE PART IN IT." "THANKS TO ALL!" THE MEMORIES OF BLACK MEN AND OF "SOME WHITE ONES," WHEN PEACE SHALL COME.

From Letter to James C. Conkling, August 26, 1863.

You disliked the emancipation proclamation, and perhaps you would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the Constitution invests its Commander-in-Chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said—if so much—is, that slaves are property. Is there, has there ever been, any question that, by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed, whenever taking it helps us, or hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies' property when they cannot use it, and even destroy their own, to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy, except a few things regarded as barbarous or cruel. Among the exceptions are the massacre of vanquished foes and non-combatants, male and female. But the proclamation, as law, either is valid, or is not valid. If it is not valid, it needs no retraction. If it is valid, it cannot be retracted, any more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate favorably for the Union. Why better *after* the retraction than *before* the issue? There was more than a year and a half of trial to suppress the rebellion before the proclamation issued; the last one hundred days of which passed under an explicit notice that it was coming, unless averted by those who revolt, returning to their allegiance. The war has certainly progressed as favorably for us since the issue of the proclamation as before. I know, as fully as one can know the opinions of others, that some of the commanders of our armies in the field, who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation policy and the use of colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion, and that at least one of those important successes could not have been achieved when it was, but for the aid of black soldiers. Among the commanders holding these views, are some who have never had any affinity with what is called Abolitionism, or with Republican party politics, but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit these opinions, as being entitled to some weight against the objections often urged that emancipation and arming the blacks are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted as such in good faith. You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you. But no matter; fight you, then, exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare that you will not fight to free negroes. I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? *But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do any thing for us, if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.*

The signs look better. The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea. Thanks to the great North-West for it. Nor yet wholly to them. Three hundred miles up they met New-England, Empire, Keystone, and Jersey, hewing their way right and left. The sunny South, too, in more colors than one, also lent a hand. On the spot, their part of the history was jotted down, in black and white. The job was a great national one, and let none be banned who bore an honorable part in it. While those who have cleared the great river may well be proud, even that is not all. It is hard to say that any thing has been more bravely and well done than at Antietam, Murfreesboro, Gettysburgh, and on many fields of lesser note. Nor must Uncle Sam's web-feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present; not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow muddy bayou; and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been and made their tracks. Thanks to all for the great Republic, for the principle it lives by and keeps alive—for man's vast future—thanks to all.

Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay, and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that among free men there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost. *And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue and with clenched teeth, and steady eye and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation; while I fear there will be some white ones unable to forget that with malignant heart and deceitful speech they have strove to hinder it.*

THE AMNESTY PROCLAMATION.

Whereas, In and by the Constitution of the United States, it is provided that the President "shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offences against the United States, except in cases of impeachment;" and

Whereas, A rebellion now exists whereby the loyal State governments of several States have for a long time been subverted, and many persons have committed and are now guilty of treason against the United States; and

Whereas, With reference to said rebellion and treason, laws have been enacted by Congress declaring forfeitures and confiscation of property and liberation of slaves, all upon terms and conditions therein stated; and also declaring that the President was thereby authorized at any time thereafter, by proclamation, to extend to persons who may have participated in the existing rebellion in any State, or part thereof, pardon and amnesty, with such exceptions and at such times and on such conditions as he may deem expedient for the public welfare; and

Whereas, The Congressional declaration for limited and conditional pardon accords with the well-established judicial exposition of the pardoning power; and

Whereas, With reference to the said rebellion the President of the United States has issued several proclamations with provisions in regard to the liberation of slaves; and

Whereas, It is now desired by some persons heretofore engaged in the said rebellion to resume their allegiance to the United States, and to reinaugurate loyal State governments within and for their respective States:

Therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known to all persons who have directly or by implication participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, that a full pardon is hereby granted to them and each of them, *with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves*, and in property cases where the rights of third parties shall have intervened, and upon the condition that every such person shall take and subscribe an oath, and thenceforward keep and maintain such oath inviolate, and which oath shall be registered for permanent preservation, and shall be of the tenor and effect following, to wit:

"I, ———, do solemnly swear in the presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Union of the States thereunder, and that I will in like manner abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress or by decision of the Supreme Court, and that I will in like manner abide

by and faithfully support *all proclamations* of the President made during the existing rebellion having reference to slaves, so long and so far as not modified or declared void by decision of the Supreme Court. So help me God."

The persons excepted from the benefits of the foregoing provisions are all who are or shall have been civil or diplomatic officers or agents of the so-called confederate government; all who have left judicial stations under the United States to aid the rebellion; all who are or shall have been military or naval officers of said so-called confederate government above the rank of colonel in the army, or of lieutenant in the navy; all who left seats in the United States Congress to aid the rebellion; all who resigned commissions in the army or navy of the United States, and afterward aided the rebellion; and all who have engaged in any way in treating colored persons or white persons in charge of such, otherwise than lawfully as prisoners of war, and which persons may have been found in the United States service as soldiers, seamen, or in any other capacity.

And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known, that whenever, in any of the States of Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South-Carolina, and North-Carolina a number of persons, not less than one tenth in number of the votes cast in such States at the Presidential election of the year of our Lord 1860, each having taken the oath aforesaid, and not having since violated it, and being a qualified voter by the election law of the State, existing immediately before the so-called act of secession, and excluding all others, *shall reestablish a State government, which shall be republican, and in no wise contravening said oath, such shall be recognized as the true government of the State*, and the State shall receive thereunder the benefits of the constitutional provision which declares that—

"The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion, and on application of the Legislature, or the Executive, when the Legislature cannot be convened, against domestic violence."

And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known, that any provision which may be adopted by such State government in relation to the freed people of such State which shall *recognize and declare their permanent freedom, provide for their education, and which may yet be consistent, as a temporary arrangement, with their present condition* as a laboring, landless, and homeless class, will not be objected to by the National Executive.

And it is suggested as not improper that, in constructing a loyal State government in any State, the name of the State, the boundary, the subdivisions, the Constitution and the general code of laws as before the rebellion, be maintained, subject only to the modifications made necessary by the conditions hereinbefore stated, and such others, if any, not contravening said conditions, and which may be deemed expedient by those framing the new State government.

To avoid misunderstanding, it may be proper to say that this Proclamation, so far as it relates to State governments has no reference to States wherein loyal State governments have all the while been maintained. And for the same reason it may be proper to further say, that whether members sent to Congress from any State shall be admitted to seats constitutionally, rests exclusively with the respective Houses, and not to any extent with the Executive.

And still further, that this Proclamation is intended to present the people of the States wherein the national authority has been suspended, and loyal State governments have been subverted, a mode in and by which the national authority and loyal State governments may be reestablished within said States, or in any of them.

And, while the mode presented is the best the Executive can suggest with his present impressions, it must not be understood that no other possible mode would be acceptable.

Given under my hand at the City of Washington, the eighth day of December, A.D. one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States of America the eighty-eighth.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President,

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, [L. S.]

Secretary of State.

THE PROCLAMATIONS IN REGARD TO SLAVERY INVIO-
LABLE.*From the Annual Message, December 8, 1863.*

But if it be proper to require as a test of admission to the political body an oath of allegiance to the United States, and to the Union under it, why not also to the laws and proclamations in regard to slavery?

Those laws and proclamations were put forth for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the rebellion. To give them the fullest effect there had to be a pledge for their maintenance. In my judgment they have aided, and will further aid, the cause for which they were intended.

To now abandon them would be not only to relinquish a lever of power, but would also be a cruel and astounding breach of faith.

I may add, at this point, while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the Emancipation Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that Proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress.

1864.

I AM NATURALLY ANTI-SLAVERY. IF SLAVERY IS NOT
WRONG, NOTHING IS WRONG.*Letter to A. G. Hodges, April 4, 1864.*

You ask me to put in writing the substance of what I verbally said the other day, in your presence, to Governor Bramlette and Senator Dixon. It was about as follows:

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred on me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took, that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it in my view, that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration, this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I aver that, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery."

"I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that Government, that nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation, and yet preserve the Constitution?"

"By general law, life and limb must be protected; yet often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assumed this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel, that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of the Government, country, and Constitution, all together. When, early in the war, General Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come."

"When, in March, and May, and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the Border States to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying a strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the

latter. In choosing it, I hoped for a greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial, now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force; no loss by it, anyhow or anywhere. On the contrary, it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no cavilling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.

"And now let any Union man who complains of the measure test himself, by writing down in one line, that he is for subduing the rebellion by force of arms, and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be, but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his cause, so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth."

I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale, I attempt no compliment to my sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party or any man devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills, also, that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to revere the justice and goodness of God.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, October 10, 1864.

HON. HENRY W. HOFFMAN:

MY DEAR SIR: A Convention of Maryland has formed a new Constitution for the State. A public meeting is called for this evening at Baltimore, to aid in securing its ratification by the people, and you ask a word from me for the occasion.

I presume the only feature of the instrument about which there is serious controversy, is that which provides for the extinction of slavery. It needs not to be a secret, and I presume it is no secret, that I wish success to this provision. I desire it on every consideration. I wish all men to be free; I wish the material prosperity of the already free, which I feel sure the extinction of slavery would bring.

I wish to see in process of disappearing that only thing which ever could bring this nation to civil war. I attempt no argument. Argument upon the question is already exhausted by the able, better informed, and more immediately interested sons of Maryland herself. I only add that I shall be gratified exceedingly if the good people of the State shall by their votes, ratify the new Constitution.

A. LINCOLN.

The purpose of the President has been, by saving the Union, "to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution."

Life has been sacrificed, property has been destroyed, prisoners of war have been taken, traitors have been arrested, ships have been captured as lawful prize, citizens have been drafted into military service against their will, and slaves have been set free against their masters' consent.

Measures, authorized by the Constitution in time of civil war, have thus been used by the President for the purpose of preventing the overthrow of that Constitution, and in so using them he has strictly and faithfully performed the obligations of his oath of office.

If satisfied that he could have performed *his whole duty* with no sacrifice of life, destruction of property, or release of slaves, under

such circumstances, having no right to do so, he would have taken no life, destroyed no property, and released no slave.

To use such measures without necessity would be to use them without justification, and therefore to violate and not to maintain the Constitution. He was compelled by the conduct of armed traitors, who began the war for the avowed purpose of breaking up the Union, to resist them by employing all available and justifiable means of defence. In his solemn and deliberate judgment the emancipation of slaves in the disloyal States became, in the progress of the war, a military necessity, and therefore an official duty.

To have disregarded that duty, to have allowed the Union to be destroyed, or even to be endangered, by neglecting to employ all authorized means of preserving and defending it, would have been an unpardonable crime.

The question of the necessity of emancipating the enemy's slaves having been decided by the Commander-in-Chief of our army, and that measure having been publicly proclaimed, the President does not feel at liberty to withdraw or to withhold the rights guaranteed by that proclamation, because he deems that the faith of the country is pledged by his proclamations and by Acts of Congress, and because there is no power under the Constitution to return to slavery those who have once been made free.

From a review of the foregoing passages, and especially the later writings of the President, it is obvious that his mind has kept pace with the march of events, and that, at the present time, he entertains the following views and opinions :

First. He condemns slavery as a moral, social, and political evil ; as founded on injustice and bad policy ; as injurious to the race of white and to the race of colored men. To use his own language, " he hates slavery as sincerely as any abolitionist."

Second. He deems slavery to be irreconcilable with the rights of man as set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Third. Though he admits that slavery is covertly recognized in the Constitution, he looks upon it as exceptional, and as not consistent with the general principles therein set forth.

Fourth. He believes that if there had been no slavery there would have been no war, and that the rebellion cannot be long maintained after slavery shall have ceased.

Fifth. In his judgment, experience has now demonstrated that the continuance of that institution in the rebellious States is incompatible with the restoration of the Union and the permanent

tranquillity of the country, both of which are essential to the defence and maintenance of the Constitution and the enforcement of the laws.

Sixth. Entertaining these views, and being desirous to detach the Border States from aid or sympathy with the rebellion, he has proposed and advised compensated emancipation therein.

Seventh. And war having occasioned the necessity, the Constitution having conferred the power and imposed the duty on the President of depriving the public enemy of the aid of their slaves, he has proclaimed emancipation for the purpose of conquering rebellion and thereby of preserving the Union and of defending the Constitution.

Eighth. As slavery has been the means of breaking up the Union, and as the Union cannot be so speedily, safely, and securely restored with slavery as without it, the President has *determined*, so far as the Executive Department of the Government has lawful control over the subject, that in reorganizing or reconstructing local governments in rebellious districts, with a view to their re-admission to the Union, slavery shall be for ever excluded therefrom in the constitutions of their respective States, and that freedom and justice shall be the corner-stone of the Union.

Ninth. The President has pledged himself never to return to slavery any one who has been made or declared free by the terms of any proclamation or law of Congress.

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1864.

Union Executive Congressional Committee.

HON. E. D. MORGAN, OF NEW-YORK,

" JAS. HARLAN, OF IOWA,

" L. M. MORRILL, OF MAINE.

Senate.

HON. E. B. WASHBURN, OF ILLINOIS,

" R. B. VAN VALKENBURG, OF NEW-YORK,

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