Le ncou par l'entrec de
M. Alain de Bercquville

Gênes, 11e 18e Dec.

My dear M. de Bercquville, I am delighted by the warmth of your language in regard to slavery. It was the custom of slave owners to admit their misfortunes, and ask with apparent sadness, how they were to get rid of them. But it was reasonable and, in a word, a reasonable and prudent and, in a word, a prudent and tolerant.

But now that they have abandoned that position, and confess that they are not, in earnest, as we are losing patience with them, we are glad to see it. It is high time. They are further demoralized and false, and take advantage of the fact that men, sunk in apparent vice, they are forcing us to shame by boasting of their power, justifying them, and calling them virtuous; this is offensive and disgusting, and it is more, it is dangerous.

Being the manful vice is increasing, decency and science of slavery and the disgrace and danger it brings to free institutions. I cannot imagine any one remaining indifferent and tolerant of it, who has any hope or any faith in human progress or who believes in the retributive law of deliberate wickedness.

Like yourself, I am not an abolitionist, in the sense some words which you give to that word.

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The abolitionists are few in numbers, and without much power of good or of evil. Garrison Smith is their head and front. Anthony Broom is the right wing, and man—boy who the rest of this age are incomplete. This is a wise, ugly, impracticable demoralization, but of no great consequence; the worst thing it has done is to create a bad name, which is manifested by slavocracy as a whole, to the races of persons, very numerous, very dissipated, right-minded, well-poised, deliberate, practiced and resolute, but with very different aims from those of the abolitionists; these are the only ones where the slave owners fear, and do not fear the abolitionists.

I confess however that I never with any danger in immediate emancipation, to be generous and just is not the way to make people hate you and try to kill you; a good nature, laughing, thoughtless and joyous race, which loses and sleeps, and does not rise against its masters when afflicted with the greatest wrongs of the slaves, is not likely to turn against them and act their threats when from being oppressors they become protectors and friends; all presence of danger from this source is vile in them.
It must be a fool who believes it, or a sound conscience that pleads it, but those who pre-ripl to are, in general, only fools.

But as regards the negro themselves, they, like the white race led by, as one of the Egyptians, are not free for freedom; they require a period of 50 years in the wilderness to give time for the clear irreparable to die off, and for the rising generation to be bred up in habits of personal independence.

Nevertheless, if negroes are more tractable than men, but if they are only property, mere chattels, why not bill them and sell them like other chattels! They won't be better eating than a horse!

And I am content to turn over all these views to the metaphysics of slave holders and to the sovereign states where they reside. I claim no more rights to meddle in the affair than in the affairs of Naples or Greece or Turkey or Russia or China. But when we step out from the area of local sovereignty and deal on common ground, as in the general congress, or framing councils of the Nation (when there is a limited scope for constitutional action),

and especially

when we enter the territories which are the common property of all, when every man in the Union is a co-proprietor, the name of a joint and undivided interest, here on this ground it is the clear right and duty of every one to speak out and act out that which is within him.

This is the position of the Free soiler of those who wish this new ground to remain free, who are opposed to the further spread of slavery and who one of them! The slave holders hate us and fear us, and they call us "black republican" "negro-worshipers" "abolitionists" and other names derived from the common nature of plantations.

"Abolitionist" is particularly precise and false in its application, because it means a man of bad faith who disavows his obligation to his neighbor, one who acts on the principle of the slave holder in this, that like the slave owner, he would be a law to himself and would enforce his will as upon others, in their own sphere in their own dominions, in their own homes and houses. We claim nothing of the sort; we disavow that principle, in the abolitionist and in the slaveholder alike. It is the principle.
which holds the slave, subject to the will of his master. We condemn it everywhere, in every form and frame.

We allow precisely the same freedom and scope to the will and the action of every man in his own sphere, and of every body of men in their own place, as we claim for ourselves. This does slavery and everything else, to those to whom it belongs, within their own dimension, and there we are content to leave it, with the responsibility and the shame to them.

Well, with these views on which we intend to act in good faith, we leave the domain of local sovereignty and autocrats on the new and common ground: we admit the equal right of the slaveholder to come there, on the principle and in the spirit that we come, and (theoretically) as much entitled to carry out their views and plant slavery as we are to carry out our views and prevent it. We thus stand face to face in presence of each other opposed to each other, both being in the exercise of our respective and equal rights, and we cannot agree, the case does not admit of compromise; the property cannot be divided; we have tried that, but it will not stay divided, because slavery is fiat law; when it has settled up, one half it repeals the compromise and breaks into the other half; this other half must now be slave or free; it cannot be both, one party or the other must yield, and neither will yield, now what are we to do? There are but two ways of getting out of this difficulty; the first and old fashion way is to fight and sometimes it is not a bad way, but generally it is bad.

Frederick Douglas gained by fighting, it often does, if it wins it does, because it substitutes permanent bad feeling, military law, reaction, military dispositim, and after liberty has won it finds itself lost.

The second way of relief, and the only one which we consider legitimate is, an appeal to the voice of the majority and we are willing to abide by this, this is the union of peace and of freedom, and we do not wish to know any other. Well, we agree, both parties to this appeal, and when the ballot box are opened and open, in such faithful slavery, led by senators Atkinson and String fellow

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from the slave state of Missouri close by, with an armed mob of slave dealers, drive our people from the polls, fill the streets with sporadic ballots, commit riots, destroy property, kill a number of men, maim the women, and then proclaim that the ballot has decided in favor of slavery.

This is the old trick and habit of slavery, how many elections were carried in this manner, in the 1845 election of Rome, by slave senators backed by armed slaves? Slavery never acted nor ever will act in any other way, and it is this which makes it fatal to liberty; it will never abide by law, but will ever resort to force, because it is of the nature of force.

But this is rather a narrow view of the subject, the real contest is political and the question political, and the place of action is Washington, shall the sovereign power continue in the hands of the minority or shall it pass to the majority? Shall we give up government by the people and substitute, the rule of an oligarchy of slaveholders?

This is the only question, the real contest is on this, and the question of the so-called tension of slavery is subsidiary to it. No party is pushing for abolition and no party fears it; the question of danger to the institution is a humbug for political effect.

The slaveholders are struggling to extend slavery, and the freemen are struggling against it. Because of its success or defeat depends in a great degree the other question, who is to rule, the minority or the majority?

It is true, the slaveholders contend that limitation is abolition in disguise, that it will eventually destroy slavery, if it cannot spread it must die. So.

It is not very clear why this effect should follow, seeing the real civil strife has to spread in; but admitting it to be true, it is no reason for not limiting it ; we did not agree to sustain slavery by spreading it. We only agreed to abolish it where it existed, but seeing its growing evil, and illegal and fatal this.

efforts to gain power, and consequent danger to liberty, we have no choice left in self-preservation but to limit it, and we have the right to do so.

It is no objection to a right act, that it may have indirect and indirect consequences, good also, although we might not have the right to aim directly at those consequences.
results, the opposite rule would be all reform, would prohibit all right action, but the force of their example, about what is done, and thus toward the wishes of those who are interested in perpetuating wrong. If the limiting of slavery should deprive it of political power, which is the direct object, and surrounding it by free labor, shall render it valuable. (which is the indirect result), so that, having lost its power and its value, shall render it, from nature and its own action, gradually abandon it, then we realize a desirable end by legitimate means and without any kind of fault. The first step violates no agreement, no faith, but is requisite for self-defense, and if the other effects follow, so much the better.

Note, say we, to this extent and in this way we are abolitionists and in no other way.

This is the nature and the shape of the contest; it was apparent to all engaged, even from the first, that the principle of popular sovereignty, based on the rule of the majority, and the opposite principle of the rule of the minority, which is the principle of slavery, that two such opposite principles could not exist in harmony, in the presence of each other, that each would win at supremacy, and that they would probably come into conflict.

That right was now hoped to avoid this by limiting the sphere of action of the minority principle to the subject of slavery and to the use of the slave states. And the future contest of principle was rendered certain by giving to slavery political power, making 5 slaves count as 3 free men, that is, making a slave owner who has 100 slaves, of as much weight as 100 individual freemen, was the most fatal mistake, and the most vicious bargain in the whole American system. This binds the hands of 23 slave master to

Conquer from the slave state.

And the bargain we made and we don't ask to break it, we intend to keep the agreement and keep them hotter.

Government was always carried on by parties, but they were formed upon political theories, commercial theories &c., and slave owners were divided upon them as much as the men of the free states.
But the free states were money-making and busy and left politics to the old South. The planters conceived, naturally, plots for power, and having no other means of securing it, deemed resistance was the way for territory to spread in. At length the people of the free states began to comprehend what all this really meant, and their own danger, which they were very slow to believe. But it was necessary that this conviction should become very strong, strong enough to break up all existing party ties, habits and organizations, and overswell all commercial and other political, and interest questions.

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And for the free states, where democrats and all sorts of persons and men are, to unite, in an entire majority of them, in one party against the slave states, such as they may hate slavery, in regard for the negro would work the free states to work all other feelings and unite on this one, nothing but a clear conviction of danger, to themselves, has power to do this, and this is the element now at work. This is the change now going on.

In the mouth of this declaration came on the Presidential election. The South is fully organized, compact, senseless and desperate. The North is yet in confusion and disarray. It has thrown off its old leaders, but has not yet well into drill under the new ones.

The South openly threatens, discussion of defection: forces of the power of that word disunion: a man must know America to appreciate it: it goes to the heart, and stirs the blood of every American, for they are proud of the Union and they love it, and as they are ready to make great sacrifices for it.

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They are slow and fearful of doing anything which may endanger it. Under these circumstances, the well organized South has been able to carry it enough of the North, the timid, the fearful, and those accustomed to go with that party, under the whole influence of the God patternage, and all, to turn the scale against fusion, and in favor of His Lambs.

But it was a small majority, very surprise in that it was no larger, the Irishmen in Pennsylvania, the Railroad, green, New Jersey, and the South part of Virginia, settled by people from the slave states of Kentucky, turned the scale, carried us over. The Irish vote would have saved us, but they voted...
in a body church and all for slavery.

One of these days the good hearted people will open their eyes to their true interests and then they will go with us. But as now we accept all New England, New York, Ohio, Michigan, all but carried the election, at the first trial and under all disadvantages. So far from being disappointed or discouraged I am full of confidence for the future.

And it is not Mr. Buchanan now Mr. Fillmore, nor any one man, who can settle the question; who ever is in power, the control is of the people, for the people, and can only be settled by the action of the whole people. Slavery is a great evil and a great power to overthrow, and these are great difficulties in the way and it requires time and patience. The first successes are in favor of the ready and the desperate, but that will not last.

Some of the combinations which I rely on with so much confidence for final success are these:

1. The Union can, as potent, will lose its power, because it is an impossibility and a monstrous shame; the leaders it is true are in earnest, but they cannot carry their own people with them. They see too clearly that division would lead to certain speedy and total abolition, greased by severe insurrection. There by only exists by the good faith and forbearance of the North, but the free states one and another vote for free soil and show themselves ready to back that vote and enforce the federal authority.

How can a handful of slave states—will four men and little money and a noble race ready to rise, how can they defy the authority of the laws of the federal Government? And assured from that day, the worst divisions will cease to be afraid. But it takes time for the whole people to see this and feel its truth and know it, and act on it, in the face of grave preparations and threats. But they will come to the knowledge of this fact, and will act on it.

If free labor is the thing in issue, the free laborers are the whole physical force and the whole electoral majority, and control the State.
They are beginning to see that the extension of slavery shuts them from the

terrors, that it degrades and disfigures them all, which is their labor, that

they are the most directly and largely and permanently interested, no free labor,

nor will work besides a slave, it takes time to get this into their dull brains,

but it is working it away with constant help, and these men will overcome

right by and by—and nothing can stop them.

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3d. The causes of slavery.

It has thrown off all disguises and come forth in full light, it asserts itself to be right necessary and just, approved of God and useful to men; it claims to be the true basis of white freedom, and to be entitled to political power, it denies the patronage of the vast, and the protection of the Treasury, it is settled in the bare opening of the African slave trade, for the benefit of the

Africans, the re-enslavement of theflammatory the conquest of Cuba, to prevent emancipation, the conquest of Central America, to spread in the enslaving of poor white men to get rid of them, it requires to be spoken of with respect, and justifies the slayer in the crime and force in every form out of doors, to make itself felt, not respected, at least feared; it affects religion, justice, and morality, it appeals to all the settled maxims of experience, wisdom and justice, and lends to the meanest evidences truths; it manifests itself every day, more factious, turbulent, capricious, obstinate, revolting and dangerous, as it rushes backw ard to barbarism.

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degradation and crime.

All this and much more like it, is discreetly, daily, in the Southern press, with

cynicism, skill, and fine language, and no concealment; openly and shamelessly.

It cannot stop in this career, it is the nature of it, and must go on.

Effective as it is a great power this self-exposures: no genius could exhibit it so startlingly as it exhibits itself.

This was the thing wanting, while it was weak and humble and hypocritical men would not believe it or bad, now it speaks in its own voice, and its own manner, men hear it and see it, and are amazed.

We have everything to hope from the essence of slavery and it will not disappear.
us; it is helping us as we could not help ourselves. These things alone are
enough to assure us of the future: Time and patience, and constancy will win
the battle for freedom, and without much fighting.
Now as to Mr. Buchanan—he is in the hands of his party; he is a man of
ability and experience and of good intentions. But he is undecided

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and the Chief to follow and not to lead; the political manœuvre was not his; it
was Clay, Davis is and Sillers & and Elkwell's; Buchanan was belligerent in
the last, he did the manœuvre of aggression but from lack of enterprise and will he is not
affirmatively dangerous—only negatively dangerous.
As to his foreign policy, civilization has not much to hope and not much to
fear from him. Whatever he does, the following appearance the slave-owners may
get up, I think they will end in smoke—there is danger in regards to Cuba
so that his stupid and timid government, will on some of its phases, commis-
sion acts which will drag us all into retaliation.
This is all that I am afraid of in that quarter. As to his internal policy, he
will try to be prudent—he will not act, bide and take advice and in trying
to please all, will probably fail with all. As to any decided vigorous and manly
policy—I think it impossible; but if he cuts from extremes and takes to a
middle and

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moderate course, he will be well sustained and I think he is most likely to do this.
This election will retard the settlement of the slavery contest somewhat, but that
is a matter not to be much lamented nor criticized by any man.
We shall get here many violent and threatening scenes if not worse than they
think we may have serious local disturbances, and acts that will irritate
and disgrace us. But as to the final result, let every one be of good cheer and
recall that pretty story of Aesop of the Tortoise whose fate it was to dam a brook
at intervals from the celestial regions, and thus the form of a resembled and
was guilty upon the earth, an object of repulsion and disgust—shameful, ashamed,
that pace guaranteed and tried upon by the tortoise; occasionally an individual
had penetration enough to see through her disguise, and deceive her divine
nature, not to compassion, spirit and spirit her the power of the humble.
pardon, she resumed her celestial form, ascended to the regions above, and became

the presiding genius of those who had defended her in her hour of disgrace, and men felt

it to protect and love her.

So with Liberty: she is often doomed to violence, humiliation and disgrace; that is her

fate, but she never fails to warm the hearts and cheer the souls of those who know

her, and defend her, and love her for her own sake.

I owe you an apology for a letter that I am sure will be tedious to you, but, as

called that you gave me an occasion to express and on a subject that I am so fully

interested in, I hope you will not mind the repetition: you doubtless know that the proposition to exempt

property on the high seas from seizure is making progress. Russia has formally

contemplated it, Stockholm has spoken publicly in its favor, and we have had

an object to it.

We are in good health and good spirits and do not find the weather disagreeable but

with a great deal.

With a thousand good wishes for you and for Madame de Tocqueville from Mrs

Beckworth and myself, I remain sincerely yours,

N. M. Beckworth

N. B. I have a note from Lord Edgwick informing me of the death of his

wife—a noble woman—whose death has been a great grief.