

he conquered his "prejudices," performed "a disagreeable duty" as an office of "high morals and high principle;" he kept the "law" and the "constitution" and did all he could to save the "Union;" nay, he was a saint, "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." "The law of God never commands us to disobey the law of man." *Sancte Iscariote, ora pro nobis.*

It is a little strange to hear this talk in Boston and hear the doctrine of passive obedience to a law which sets Christianity at defiance, taught here in the face of the Adamses, and Hancock, and Washington! It is amazing to hear this talk respecting such a law amongst merchants. Do they keep the usury laws? I never heard of but one money-lender who kept them, and he has been a long time dead, and I think he left no kith nor kin! The temperance law, is that kept? The fifteen-gallon law—were men so very passive in their obedience to that that they could not even "agitate?" yet it violated no law of God—was not unchristian. When the government interferes with the rum-seller's property the law must be trod under foot, but when the law insists that a man shall be made a slave I must give up conscience in my act of prayer and stoop to the vile law men have made in their act of passion!

It is curious to hear men talk of law and order in Boston, when the other day one or two hundred smooth-faced boys and youths, beardless as girls, could disturb a meeting of three or four thousand men for two hours long, and the chief of the police and the mayor of the city stood and looked on, when a single word from their lips might have stilled the tumult and given honest men a hearing.

Talk of keeping the Fugitive Slave Law! Come, come, we know better. Men in New England know better than this.

We know that we ought not to keep a wicked law and that it must not be kept when the law of God forbids!

But the effect of a law which men cannot keep without violating conscience is always demoralizing. There are men who know no higher law than the statute of the State. When good men cannot keep a law that is base some bad ones will say, "Let us keep no law at all," then where does the blame lie? On him that enacts the outrageous law.

The idea that a statute of man frees us from obligation to the law of God is a dreadful thing. When that becomes the deliberate conviction of the great mass of the people, north or south, then I shall despair of human nature; then I shall despair of justice and despair of God. But it will never come.

One of the most awful spectacles I ever saw was this: A vast multitude attempting at an orator's suggestion to howl down the "higher law," and when he said, "Will you have this to rule over you?" they answered, "Never!" and treated the "higher law" to a laugh and a howl! It was done in Faneuil Hall under the eyes of the three Adamses, Hancock, and Washington, and the howl rung round the venerable arches of that hall. I could not but ask, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, and the rulers of the earth set themselves, and kings take counsel against the Lord and say, 'Let us break his bands asunder and cast off his yoke from us?'" Then I could not but remember that it was written, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. He taketh up the isles as a very little thing and the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers before him." Howl down the law of God at a magistrate's command! Do this in Boston! Let us remember this—but with charity.

Men say there is danger of disunion, of our losing fealty for the constitution. I do not believe it yet! Suppose it be so. The constitution is the machinery of the national mill; and suppose we agree to take it out and put in new—we might get worse, very true, but we might get better. There have been some modern improvements; we might introduce them to the State as well as the mill. But I do not believe there is this danger. I do not believe the people of Massachusetts think so. I think they are strongly attached to the Union yet, and if they thought "the Union was in peril—this day" and everything the nation prizes was likely to be destroyed, we should not have had a meeting of a few thousands in Faneuil Hall; but the people would have filled up the city of Worcester with a hundred thousand men if need be; and they would have come with the cartridge-box at their side and the firelock on their shoulder. That is the way the people of Massachusetts would assemble if they thought there was real danger.

I do not believe the South will withdraw from the Union with five million free men and three million slaves. I think Massachusetts would be no loser, I think the North would be no loser; but I doubt if the North will yet allow them to go if so disposed. Do you think the South is so mad as to wish it?

But I think I know of one cause which may dissolve the Union—one which ought to dissolve it if put in action: that is, a serious attempt to execute the Fugitive Slave Law, here and in all the North. I mean an attempt to recover and take back all the fugitive slaves in the North, and to punish with fine and imprisonment all who aid or conceal them. The South has browbeat us again and again. She has smitten us on the one cheek with "protection," and we have turned the

other, kissing the rod; she has smitten that with "free trade." She has imprisoned our citizens; driven off with scorn and loathing our officers sent to ask constitutional justice. She has spit upon us. Let her come to take back the fugitives—and, trust me, she "will wake up the lion."

In my humble opinion this law is a wedge—sharp at one end, but wide at the other—put in between the lower planks of our Ship of State. If it be driven home we go to pieces. But I have no thought that that will be done quite yet. I believe the great politicians who threatened to drive it through the gaping seams of our argosy will think twice before they strike again. Nay, that they will soon be very glad to bury the wedge "where the tide ebbs and flows four times a day." I do not expect this of their courage, but of their fears; not of their justice—I am too old for that—but of their concern for property which it is the "great object of government" to protect.

I know how some men talk in public and how they act at home. I heard a man the other day, at Faneuil Hall, declare the law must be kept, and denounce not very gently all who preached or prayed against it as enemies of "all law." But that was all talk, for this very man on that very day had violated the law; had furnished the golden wheels on which fugitives rode out of the reach of the arms which the marshal would have been sorry to lift. I could tell things more surprising—but it is not wise just now!

I do not believe there is more than one of the New England men who publicly helped the law into being, but would violate its provisions; conceal a fugitive; share his loaf with a runaway; furnish him golden wings to fly with. Nay, I think it would be difficult to find a magistrate in New England willing to take the public odium of doing the official

duty. I believe it is not possible to find a regular jury who will punish a man for harboring a slave, for helping his escape, or fine a marshal or commissioner for being a little slow to catch a slave. Men will talk loud in public meetings, but they have some conscience after all, at home. And though they howl down the "higher law" in a crowd, yet conscience will make cowards of them all when they come to lay hands on a Christian man, more innocent than they, and send him into slavery forever! One of the commissioners of Boston talked loud and long last Tuesday in favor of keeping the law. When he read his litany against the law of God and asked if men would keep the "higher law," and got "never" as the welcome and amen for response—it seemed as if the law might be kept, at least by that commissioner and such as gave the responses to his creed. But slave-hunting Mr. Hughes, who came here for two of our fellow worshippers, in his Georgia newspaper tells a different story. Here it is, from the "Georgia Telegraph" of last Friday. "I called at 11 o'clock at night at his [the commissioner's] residence and stated to him my business, and asked him for a warrant, saying that if I could get a warrant I could have the negroes [William and Ellen Craft] arrested. He said the law did not authorize a warrant to be issued: that it was my duty to go and arrest the negro without a warrant and bring him before him!" This is more than I expected. "Is Saul among the prophets!" The men who tell us that the law must be kept, God willing, or against his will—there are Puritan fathers behind them also; Bibles in their houses; a Christ crucified whom they think of; and a God even in their world who slumbers not, neither is weary and is as little a respecter of parchments as of persons! They know there is a people as well as politicians, a posterity not yet assembled,

and they would not like to have certain words writ on their tombstone. "Traitor to the rights of mankind," is no pleasant epitaph. They too remember there is a day after to-day; aye, a forever; and "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have not done it unto me," is a sentence they would not like to hear at the day of judgment!

Much danger is feared from the "political agitation" of this matter. Great principles have never been discussed without great passions, and will not be for some time I suppose. But men fear to have this despotic idea become a subject of discussion. Last spring Mr. Webster said here in Boston, "We shall not see the legislation of the country proceed in the old harmonious way until the discussion in Congress and out of Congress upon the subject [of slavery] shall be in some manner suppressed. Take that truth home with you!" We have lately been told that political agitation on this subject must be stopped. So it seems this law, like that which Daniel would not keep, is one that may not be changed and must not be talked of.

Now there are three modes in which attempts may be made to stop the agitation.

1. By sending—

"—troops, with guns and banners,  
Cut short our speeches and our necks,  
And break our heads to mend our manners."

That is the Austrian way, which has not yet been tried here and will not be.

2. By sending lecturers throughout the land to stir up the people to be quiet, and agitate them till they are still; to make them sign the pledge of total abstinence from the discussion of this subject. That is not likely to effect the object.

3. For the friends of silence to keep their own counsel—and this seems as little likely to be tried as the others to succeed.

Strange is it to ask us to forbear to talk on a subject which involves the welfare of 20,000,000 men! As well ask a man in a fever not to be heated and a consumptive person not to cough, to pine away and turn pale. Miserable counsellors are ye all, who give such advice. But we have seen lately—the Lion of the Democrats and the Lamb of the Whigs lie down together, joined by this opinion so gentle and so loving, all at once, that a little child could lead them and so “fulfil the sure prophetic word.” Yes, we have seen the Herod of one party and the Pilate of the other made friends for the sake of crucifying the freedom of mankind.

But there is one way in which I would modestly hint that we might stop all this talk “in Congress and out of Congress,” that is to “discuss” the matter till we had got at the truth, and the whole truth; then to “agitate” politically till we had enacted justice into law, and carried it out all over the North and all over the South. Then there would be no more discussion about the Fugitive Slave Bill than about the “Boston Port Bill;” no more agitation about American slavery than there is about the condition of the people of Babylon before the flood. I think there is no other way in which we are likely to get rid of this discussion.

Such is our condition, such its causes, such our dangers. Now for the lesson look a moment elsewhere. Look at continental Europe, at Rome, Austria, Prussia, and the German States—at France. How uncertain is every government! France—the stablest of them all! Remember the revolution which two years ago shook those States so terribly, when all the royalty of France was wheeled out of Paris in a street

cab. Why are those States so tottering? Whence those revolutions? They tried to make iniquity their law and would not give over the attempt! Why are the armies of France 500,000 strong, though the nation is at peace with all the world? Because they tried to make injustice law! Why do the Austrian and German monarchs fear an earthquake of the people? Because they tread the people down with wicked laws! Whence came the crushing debts of France, Austria, England? From the same cause; from the injustice of men who made mischief by law!

It is not for men long to hinder the march of human freedom. I have no fear for that, ultimately,—none at all,—simply for this reason, that I believe in the infinite God. You may make your statutes; an appeal always lies to the higher law, and decisions adverse to that get set aside in the ages. Your statutes cannot hold him. You may gather all the dried grass and all the straw in both continents; you may braid it into ropes to bind down the sea; while it is calm you may laugh and say, “Lo, I have chained the ocean!” and howl down the law of him who holds the universe as a rosebud in his hand—its every ocean but a drop of dew. “How the waters suppress their agitation,” you may say. But when the winds blow their trumpets the sea rises in his strength, snaps asunder the bonds that had confined his mighty limbs, and the world is littered with the idle hay! Stop the human race in its development and march to freedom? As well might the boys of Boston, some lustrous night, mounting the steeples of this town, call on the stars to stay their course! Gently, but irresistibly, the Greater and the Lesser Bear move round the pole; Orion in his mighty mail comes up the sky; the Bull, the Ram, the Heavenly Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Maid, the Scales, and all that shining company pursue their march

all night, and the new day discovers the idle urchins in their lofty places, all tired, and sleepy, and ashamed.

It is not possible to suppress the idea of freedom or forever hold down its institutions. But it is possible to destroy a State; a political party with geographical bounds may easily be rent asunder. It is not impossible to shiver this American Union. But how? What clove asunder the great British party, one nation once in America and England? Did not our fathers love their fatherland? Aye. They called it home, and were loyal with abundant fealty; there was no lack of piety for home. It was the attempt to make old English injustice New England law! Who did it, the British people? Never. Their hand did no such sacrilege! It was the merchants of London with the "Navigation Act;" the politicians of Westminster with the "Stamp Act;" the Tories of America—who did not die without issue—who for office and its gold would keep a king's unjust commands. It was they who drove our fathers into disunion against their will. Is here no lesson? We love law, all of us love it; but a true man loves it only as the safeguard of the rights of man. If it destroy these rights he spurns it with his feet. Is here no lesson? Look farther then.

Do you know how empires find their end? Yes, the great States eat up the little. As with fish, so with nations. Aye, but how do the great States come to an end? By their own injustice and no other cause. They would make unrighteousness their law and God wills not that it be so. Thus they fall; thus they die. Look at these ancient States, the queenliest queens of earth. There is Rome, the widow of two civilizations,—the pagan and the Catholic. They both had her and unto both she bore daughters and fair sons. But, the Niobe of Nations, she boasted that her children were

holier and more fair than all the pure ideas of justice, truth, and love, the offspring of the eternal God. And now she sits there transformed into stone, amid the ruins of her children's bones. At midnight I have heard the owl hoot in the Coliseum and the Forum, giving voice to desolation; and at midday I have seen the fox in the palace where Augustus gathered the wealth, the wit, the beauty and the wisdom of a conquered world, and the fox and the owl interpreted to me the voice of many ages which came to tell this age that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not prosper.

Come with me, my friends, a moment more, pass over this Golgotha of human history, treading reverent as you go, for our feet are on our mothers' grave and our shoes defile our fathers' hallowed bones. Let us not talk of them; go further on, look and pass by. Come with me into the Inferno of the nations, with such poor guidance as my lamp can lend. Let us disquiet and bring up the awful shadows of empires buried long ago and learn a lesson from the tomb.

Come, old Assyria, with the Ninevish Dove upon thy emerald crown. What laid thee low? "I fell by my own injustice. Thereby Nineveh and Babylon came, with me, also to the ground."

Oh queenly Persia, flame of the nations, wherefore art thou so fallen, who trodest the people under thee, bridgedst the Hellespont with ships and pouredst thy temple-wasting millions on the western world? "Because I trod the people under me, and bridged the Hellespont with ships and poured my temple-wasting millions on the western world. I fell by my own misdeeds!"

Thou muselike Grecian queen, fairest of all thy classic sisterhood of States, enchanting yet the world with thy sweet witchery, speaking in art and most seductive song, why liest

thou there with beauteous yet dishonored brow, reposing on thy broken harp! "I scorned the law of God; banished and poisoned wisest, justest men; I loved the loveliness of flesh, embalmed it in the Parian stone; I loved the loveliness of thought, and treasured that in more than Parian speech. But the beauty of justice, the loveliness of love, I trod them down to earth! Lo, therefore have I become as those Barbarian States—as one of them!"

Oh manly and majestic Rome, thy seven-fold mural crown, all broken at thy feet, why art thou here? 'Twas not injustice brought thee low; for thy great book of law is pre-faced with these words, justice is the unchanging, everlasting will to give each man his right! "'Twas not the saint's ideal; it was the hypocrite's pretence! I made iniquity my law. I trod the nations under me. Their wealth gilded my palaces,—where thou mayest see the fox and hear the owl,—it fed my courtiers and my courtesans. Wicked men were my cabinet councillors,—the flatterer breathed his poison in my ear. Millions of bondmen wet the soil with tears and blood. Do you not hear it crying yet to God? Lo here have I my recompense, tormented with such downfall as you see! Go back and tell the new-born child, who sitteth on the Alleghanies laying his either hand upon a tributary sea, a crown of thirty stars about his youthful brow—tell him that there are rights which States must keep, or they shall suffer wrongs! Tell him there is a God who keeps the black man and the white and hurls to earth the loftiest realm that breaks his just, eternal law! Warn the young empire that he come not down dim and dishonored to my shameful tomb! Tell him that justice is the unchanging, everlasting will to give each man his right. I knew it, broke it, and am lost. Bid him to know it, keep it, and be safe!"

"God save the Commonwealth," proclaims the governor! God will do his part,—doubt not of that. But you and I must help him save the State. What can we do? Next Sunday I will ask you for your charity; to-day I ask a greater gift, more than the abundance of the rich, or the poor widow's long-remembered mite. I ask you for your justice. Give that to your native land. Do you not love your country? I know you do. Here are our homes and the graves of our fathers; the bones of our mothers are under the sod. The memory of past deeds is fresh with us; many a farmer's and mechanic's son inherits from his sires some cup of manna gathered in the wilderness and kept in memory of our exodus; some stones from the Jordan, which our fathers passed over sorely bested and hunted after; some Aaron's rod, green and blossoming with fragrant memories of the day of small things when the Lord led us—and all these attach us to our land, our native land. We love the great ideas of the North, the institutions which they founded, the righteous laws, the schools, the churches too—do we not love all these? Aye. I know well you do. Then by all these, and more than all, by the dear love of God, let us swear that we will keep the justice of the eternal law. Then are we all safe. We know not what a day may bring forth, but we know that eternity will bring everlasting peace. High in the heavens, the pole-star of the world, shines justice; placed within us as our guide thereto is conscience. Let us be faithful to that

"Which, though it trembles as it lowly lies,  
Points to the light that changes not in heaven."