

American army, and a man whose reputation in that country is hardly second to that which the Duke of Wellington held during his lifetime in this country—General Scott has written a letter on the American difficulty. He denies that the Cabinet of Washington had ordered the seizure of the Southern Commissioners, if found under a neutral flag. The question of legal right involved in the seizure, the general thinks a very narrow ground on which to force a quarrel with the United States. As to Messrs. Slidell and Mason being or not being contraband, the general answers for it, that if Mr. Seward cannot convince Earl Russell that they bore that character, Earl Russell will be able to convince Mr. Seward that they did not. He pledges himself that, if this government cordially agreed with that of the United States in establishing the immunity of neutrals from the oppressive right of search and seizure on suspicion, the Cabinet of Washington will not hesitate to purchase so great a boon to peaceful trading vessels.

Now, then, before I sit down, let me ask you what is this people, about which so many men in England at this moment are writing, and speaking, and thinking, with harshness, I think with injustice, if not with great bitterness? Two centuries ago, multitudes of the people of this country found a refuge on the North American continent, escaping from the tyranny of the Stuarts and from the bigotry of Laud. Many noble spirits from our country made great experiments in favor of human freedom on that continent. Bancroft, the great historian of his own country, has said, in his own graphic and emphatic language, "The history of the colonization of America is the history of the crimes of Europe." . . .

At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this country. They found a home in the Far West; they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there, which was not afforded them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States. There may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm toward the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross or calumny the most wicked can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic.

Now, whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonored independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said among them, that in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.

ON SLAVERY IN AMERICA

[On June 16, 1863, a public meeting was held at the London Tavern, at the instance of the Union and Emancipation Society, in order to hear an address from Mr. M. D. Conway, of Eastern Virginia. Mr. Bright was in the chair.]

IF WE look back a little over two years — two years and a half — when the question of secession was first raised in a practical shape, I think we shall be able to remember that, when the news first arrived in England, there was but one opinion with regard to it — that every man condemned the folly and the wickedness of the South, and protested against their plea that they had any grievance which justified them in revolt — and every man hoped that some mode might be discovered by which the terrible calamity of war might be avoided.

For a time, many thought that there would be no war. Whilst the reins were slipping from the hands — the too-feeble hands — of Mr. Buchanan into the grasp of President Lincoln, there was a moment when men thought that we were about to see the wonderful example of a great question, which in all other countries would have involved a war, settled perhaps by moderation — some moderation on one side, and some concession on the other; and so long as men believed that there would be no war, so long everybody condemned the South. We were afraid of a war in America, because we knew that one of the great industries of our country depended upon the continuous reception of its raw material from the southern States. But it was a folly — it was a gross absurdity — for any man to believe, with the history of the world

before him, that the people of the northern States, 20,000,000, with their free government, would for one moment sit down satisfied with the dismemberment of their country, and make no answer to the war which had been commenced by the South.

I speak not in justification of war. I am only treating this question upon principles which are almost universally acknowledged throughout the world, and by an overwhelming majority even of those men who accept the Christian religion; and it is only upon those principles, so almost universally acknowledged, and acknowledged as much in this country as anywhere else — it is only just that we should judge the United States upon those principles upon which we in this country would be likely to act.

But the North did not yield to the dismemberment of their country, and they did not allow a conspiracy of southern politicians and slaveholders to seize their forts and arsenals without preparing for resistance. Then, when the people of England found that the North were about to resist, and that war was inevitable, they turned their eyes from the South, which was the beginner of the war, and looked to the North, saying that, if the North would not resist, there could be no war, and then we should get our cotton, and trade would go on as before; and therefore, from that hour to this, not a few persons in this country, who at first condemned the South, have been incessant in their condemnation of the North.

Now, I believe this is a fair statement of the feeling which prevailed when the first news of secession arrived, and of the change of opinion which took place in a few weeks, when it was found that, by the resolution of the North to maintain the integrity of their country, war, and civil war, was unavoidable. The trade interests of the country affected our opinion;

and I fear did then prevent, and have since prevented, our doing justice to the people of the North.

Now I am going to transport you, in mind, to Lancashire, and the interests of Lancashire, which, after all, are the interests of the whole United Kingdom, and clearly of not a few in this metropolis. What was the condition of our greatest manufacturing industry before the war, and before secession had been practically attempted? It was this: that almost ninety per cent of all our cotton came from the southern States of the American Union, and was, at least nine tenths of it, the produce of the uncompensated labor of the negro.

Everybody knew that we were carrying on a prodigious industry upon a most insecure foundation; and it was the commonest thing in the world for men who were discussing the present and the future of the cotton trade, whether in Parliament or out of it, to point to the existence of slavery in the United States of America as the one dangerous thing in connection with that great trade; and it was one of the reasons which stimulated me on several occasions to urge upon the government of this country to improve the government of India, and to give us a chance of receiving a considerable portion of our supply from India, so that we might not be left in absolute want when the calamity occurred, which all thoughtful men knew must some day come, in the United States.

Now, I maintain that with a supply of cotton mainly derived from the southern States, and raised by slave labor, two things are indisputable; first, that the supply must always be insufficient; and second, that it must always be insecure. Perhaps many of you are not aware that in the United States — I am speaking of the slave States, and the cotton-growing States — the quantity of land which is cultivated for cotton is

a mere garden, a mere plot, in comparison with the whole of the cotton region. I speak from the authority of a report lately presented to the Boston Chamber of Commerce, containing much important information on this question; and I believe that the whole acreage, or the whole breadth of the land on which cotton is grown in America, does not exceed ten thousand square miles — that is, a space one hundred miles long and one hundred miles broad, or the size of two of our largest counties in England; but the land of the ten chief cotton-producing States is sixty times as much as that, being, I believe, about twelve times the size of England and Wales.

It cannot be, therefore, because there has not been land enough that we have not in former years had cotton enough; it cannot be that there has not been a demand for the produce of the land, for the demand has constantly outstripped the supply; it has not been because the price has not been sufficient, for, as is well known, the price has been much higher of late years, and the profit to the planter much greater; and yet, notwithstanding the land and the demand, and the price and the profit, the supply of cotton has not been sufficient for the wants of the spinners and the manufacturers of the world, and for the wants of civilization.

The particular facts with regard to this I need not, perhaps, enter into; but I find, if I compare the prices of cotton in Liverpool from 1856 to 1860 with the prices from 1841 to 1845, that every pound of cotton brought from America and sold in Liverpool fetched in the last five years more than twenty per cent in excess of what it did in the former five years, notwithstanding that we were every year in greater difficulties through finding our supply of cotton insufficient.

But what was the reason that we did not get enough? It was because there was not labor enough in the southern

States. You see every day in the newspapers that there are four millions of slaves, but of those four millions of slaves some are growing tobacco, some rice, and some sugar; a very large number are employed in domestic servitude, and a large number in factories, mechanical operations, and business in towns; and there remain only about one million negroes, or only one quarter of the whole number, who are regularly engaged in the cultivation of cotton.

Now, you will see that the production of cotton and its continued increase must depend upon the constantly increasing productiveness of the labor of those one million negroes, and on the natural increase of population from them. Well, the increase of the population of the slaves in the United States is rather less than two and a half per cent per annum, and the increase on the million will be about twenty-five thousand a year; and the increased production of cotton from that increased amount of labor consisting of twenty-five thousand more negroes every year will probably never exceed — I believe it has not reached — one hundred and fifty thousand bales per annum. The exact facts with regard to this are these: that in the ten years from 1841 to 1850 the average crop was 2,173,000 bales, and in the ten years from 1851 to 1860 it was 3,252,000, being an increase of 1,079,000 bales in the ten years, or only about 100,000 bales of increase per annum.

I have shown that the increase of production must depend upon the increase of labor, because every other element is in abundance — soil, climate, and so forth. [A voice: "How about sugar?"] A gentleman asks about sugar. If in any particular year there was an extravagant profit upon cotton, there might be, and there probably would be, some abstraction of labor from the cultivation of tobacco, and rice, and sugar,

in order to apply it to cotton, and a larger temporary increase of growth might take place; but I have given you the facts with regard to the last twenty years, and I think you will see that my statement is correct.

Now, can this be remedied under slavery? I will show you how it cannot. And first of all, everybody who is acquainted with American affairs knows that there is not very much migration of the population of the northern States into the southern States to engage in the ordinary occupations of agricultural labor. Labor is not honorable and is not honored in the south, and therefore free laborers from the north are not likely to go south. Again, of all the emigration from this country — amounting as it did, in the fifteen years from 1846 to 1860, to two millions five hundred thousand persons, being equal to the whole of the population of this great city — a mere trifle went south and settled there to pursue the occupation of agriculture; they remained in the north, where labor is honorable and honored.

Whence, then, could the planters of the south receive their increasing labor? Only from the slave-ship and the coast of Africa. But, fortunately for the world, the United States government has never yet become so prostrate under the heel of the slave-owner as to consent to the reopening of the slave-trade. Therefore the Southern planter was in this unfortunate position: he could not tempt, perhaps he did not want, free laborers from the north; he could not tempt, perhaps he did not want, free laborers from Europe; and if he did want, he was not permitted to fetch slave labor from Africa. Well, that being so, we arrive at this conclusion — that whilst the cultivation of cotton was performed by slave labor, you were shut up for your hope of increased growth to the small increase that was possible with the increase of

two and a half per cent per annum in the population of the slaves, about one million in number, that have been regularly employed in the cultivation of cotton.

Then, if the growth was thus insufficient — and I as one connected with the trade can speak very clearly upon that point — I ask you whether the production and the supply were not necessarily insecure by reason of the institution of slavery? It was perilous within the Union. In this country we made one mistake in our forecast of this question: we did not believe that the South would commit suicide; we thought it possible that the slaves might revolt. They might revolt, but their subjugation was inevitable, because the whole power of the Union was pledged to the maintenance of order in every part of its dominions.

But if there be men who think that the cotton trade would be safer if the South were an independent State, with slavery established there in permanence, they greatly mistake; because, whatever was the danger of revolt in the southern States whilst the Union was complete, the possibility of revolt and the possibility of success would surely be greatly increased if the North were separate from the South, and the negro had only his Southern master, and not the Northern power, to contend against.

But I believe there is little danger of revolt, and no possibility of success. When the revolt took place in the island of St. Domingo, the blacks were far superior in numbers to the whites. In the southern States it is not so. Ignorant, degraded, without organization, without arms, and scarcely with any faint hope of freedom forever, except the enthusiastic hope which they have when they believe that God will some day stretch out his arm for their deliverance — I say that under these circumstances, to my mind, there was no

reasonable expectation of revolt, and that they had no expectation whatever of success in any attempt to gain their liberty by force of arms.

But now we are in a different position. Slavery itself has chosen its own issue, and has chosen its own field. Slavery — and when I say slavery, I mean the slave power — has not trusted to the future; but it has rushed into the battle-field to settle this great question; and having chosen war, it is from day to day sinking to inevitable ruin under it. Now, if we are agreed — and I am keeping you still to Lancashire and to its interests for a moment longer — that this vast industry with all its interests of capital and labor has been standing on a menacing volcano, is it not possible that hereafter it may be placed upon a rock which nothing can disturb?

Imagine — what of course some people will say I have no right to imagine — imagine the war over, the Union restored and slavery abolished — does any man suppose that there would afterwards be in the south one single negro fewer than there are at present? On the contrary, I believe there would be more. I believe there is many a negro in the northern States, and even in Canada, who, if the lash, and the chain, and the branding-iron, and the despotism against which even he dared not complain, were abolished forever, would turn his face to the sunny lands of the south, and would find himself happier and more useful there than he can be in a more northern clime.

More than this, there would be a migration from the north to the south. You do not suppose that those beautiful States, those regions than which earth offers nothing to man more fertile and more lovely, are shunned by the enterprising population of the north because they like the rigors of a northern winter and the greater changeableness of the northern sea-

sons? Once abolish slavery in the south, and the whole of the country will be open to the enterprise and to the industry of all. And more than that, when you find that, only the other day, not fewer than four thousand emigrants, most of them from the United Kingdom, landed in one day in the city of New York, do you suppose that all those men would go north and west at once? Would not some of them turn their faces southwards, and seek the clime of the sun, which is so grateful to all men; where they would find a soil more fertile, rivers more abundant, and everything that nature offers more profusely given, but from which they are now shut out by the accursed power which slavery exerts? With freedom you would have a gradual filling up of the wildernesses of the southern States, you would have there, not population only, but capital, and industry, and roads, and schools, and everything which tends to produce growth, and wealth, and prosperity.

I maintain—and I believe my opinion will be supported by all those men who are most conversant with American affairs—that, with slavery abolished, with freedom firmly established in the South, you would find in ten years to come a rapid increase in the growth of cotton; and not only would its growth be rapid, but its permanent increase would be secured.

I said that I was interested in this great question of cotton. I come from the midst of the great cotton industry of Lancashire; much the largest portion of anything I have in the world depends upon it; not a little of it is now utterly valueless, during the continuance of this war. My neighbors, by thousands and scores of thousands, are suffering more or less, as I am suffering; and many of them, as you know—more than a quarter of a million of them—have been driven from

a subsistence gained by their honorable labor to the extremest poverty, and to a dependence upon the charity of their fellow countrymen. My interest is the interest of all the population.

My interest is against a mere enthusiasm, a mere sentiment, a mere visionary fancy of freedom as against slavery. I am speaking now as a matter of business. I am glad when matters of business go straight with matters of high sentiment and morality, and from this platform I declare my solemn conviction that there is no greater enemy to Lancashire, to its capital and to its labor, than the man who wishes the cotton agriculture of the southern States to be continued under the conditions of slave labor.

One word more upon another branch of the question, and I have done. I would turn for a moment from commerce to politics. I believe that our true commercial interests in this country are very much in harmony with what I think ought to be our true political sympathies. There is no people in the world, I think, that more fully and entirely accepts the theory that one nation acts very much upon the character and upon the career of another, than England; for our newspapers and our statesmen, our writers and our speakers of every class, are constantly telling us of the wonderful influence which English constitutional government and English freedom have on the position and career of every nation in Europe. I am not about to deny that some such influence, and occasionally, I believe, a beneficent influence, is thus exerted; but if we exert any influence upon Europe—and we pride ourselves upon it—perhaps it will not be a humiliation to admit that we feel some influence exerted upon us by the great American republic. American freedom acts upon England, and there is nothing that is better known, at the west end of this great city—from which I have just come—than the

influence that has been, and nothing more feared than the influence that may be, exerted by the United States upon this country.

We all of us know that there has been a great effect produced in England by the career of the United States. An emigration of three or four millions of persons from the United Kingdom, during the last forty years, has bound us to them by thousands of family ties, and therefore it follows that whatever there is that is good, and whatever there is that is free in America, which we have not, we know something about, and gradually may begin to wish for, and some day may insist upon having.

And when I speak of "us," I mean the people of this country. When I am asserting the fact that the people of England have a great interest in the well-being of the American republic, I mean the people of England. I do not speak of the wearers of crowns or of coronets, but of the twenty millions of people in this country who live on their labor, and who, having no votes, are not counted in our political census, but without whom there could be no British nation at all. I say that these have an interest, almost as great and direct as though they were living in Massachusetts or New York, in the tremendous struggle for freedom which is now shaking the whole North American continent.

During the last two years there has been much said, and much written, and some things done in this country, which are calculated to gain us the hate of both sections of the American Union. I believe that a course of policy might have been taken by the English press, and by the English government, and by what are called the influential classes in England, that would have bound them to our hearts and us to their hearts. I speak of the twenty millions of the free North. I

believe we might have been so thoroughly united with that people, that all remembrance of the war of the Revolution and of the war of 1812 would have been obliterated, and we should have been in heart and spirit for all time forth but one nation.

I can only hope that, as time passes, and our people become better informed, they will be more just, and that ill feeling of every kind will pass away; that in future all who love freedom here will hold converse with all who love freedom there, and that the two nations, separated as they are by the ocean, come as they are, notwithstanding, of one stock, may be in future time united in soul, and may work together for the advancement of the liberties and the happiness of mankind.