

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND PERIOD OF MILITANT ABOLITIONISM (1850-1861)

The second stage of militant abolitionism extended from 1850 to 1861. Opposition to slavery as revealed in the literature of America during this period was greater and more effective than ever before in the history of the abolition movement. It found expression in all the literary forms of the period, and became a powerful means of converting thousands of people of the North to the cause of abolition; while it also served to intensify the feeling of the South against abolition, and thus to make all the more difficult any peaceable solution of the problem. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act on September 18, 1850, and the subsequent attempts to enforce it revealed slavery in one of its worst forms and called forth most of the anti-slavery productions of the period. The real effect of this Act upon the anti-slavery movement in America, said Mr. Edward Channing, "was not so much the increase or diminution of running away from the Slave States or the increase of the free negro colony in Canada, or the spectacular events that are associated with fugitive slave cases; it was that these things put together converted hundreds of thousands of people of the North from a position of indifference or of hostility to abolition to a position of hostility towards the slave power. It induced hundreds of thousands of voters, who cared very little whether the negro was a slave or a free man, to use all means at their disposal to stop the further extension of slavery and put an end to it whenever they could, constitutionally."¹ Of the many arguments used against slavery at this time, those based upon moral, religious, and sentimental grounds were the most numerous, and, by the very nature of their appeal, were capable of influencing the greatest number of people; yet strong pleas for the abolition

¹ Channing, *A History of the United States*, VI, 103.

of slavery as a social, economic, and political necessity were not wanting.

I. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS

The extraordinary growth of the moral and religious movement against slavery between 1850 and 1861 must be attributed largely to the passage of and the attempt to put into execution the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The abolitionists instantly resented this law and supported most of their arguments by references to its injustice. One of the first to do this was the poet Whittier. In a poem entitled "A Sabbath Scene" (1850), he attacked Northern clergymen who were urging the prompt execution of the law as a Christian duty. After describing vividly a female fugitive seeking refuge in a church, the pastor of which assisted her pursuer in binding her hands and feet, the poet wrote:

“My brain took fire: ‘Is this,’ I cried,
 ‘The end of prayer and preaching?
 Then down with pulpit, down with priest,
 And give us Nature’s teaching!
 “ ‘For shame and scorn be on ye all
 Who turn the good to evil,
 And steal the Bible from the Lord,
 To give it to the Devil!’ ”²

The first really significant reaction to this law, however, was Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which first appeared in the *National Era*, Washington, D.C., between June 5, 1851, and April 1, 1852, and which became the most popular and effective of the anti-slavery literary productions. The author said that for many years of her life she had avoided all reading upon or allusion to the subject of slavery, “considering it as too painful to be inquired into, and one which advancing light and civilization would certainly live down”; but when she heard, “with perfect surprise and consternation, Christian and humane people actually recommending the remanding escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens,” she realized the

² Whittier, *Poetical Works*, III, 162.

necessity of exhibiting slavery in its true light, of showing it "fairly, in its best and its worst phases."³ In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she not only brought together in a most effective way all of the important arguments against slavery which had appeared in the literature before her time, but by her skilful employment of numerous narrative devices for making her story convincing, she supplied her successors in the anti-slavery novel with the best methods of attacking slavery. Whether she was describing the comforts and pleasures of slave life, such as were made possible by the generosity of a Mrs. Shelby and a St. Clare, or the worst side of that life, as exemplified in Haley, Legree, and the other villainous characters, her argument never lost its forcefulness. Slavery in no form, she contended, was justifiable. There were ten chances of a slave's finding an abusive and tyrannical master, to one of his finding a considerate and kind one;⁴ and even when he chanced to be sold to a kind master, either the loss of the master's fortune, as in the case of Mr. Shelby, or his death, as in that of St. Clare, usually rendered the slave's condition even more wretched than it could have been had he never enjoyed kindly treatment. The action of the Shelbys in disposing of Tom was intended to show that the most humane and generous slaveholders were powerless to protect their favorite slave when economic pressure was brought upon them.

Numerous instances were cited in this novel of the detrimental effect of slavery from a moral and religious point of view. When Mr. Shelby reported that Tom and Eliza's boy were to be sold,

"Mrs. Shelby stood like one stricken. Finally, turning to her toilet, she rested her face in her hands, and gave a sort of groan.

"This is God's curse on slavery—a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing—a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil. It is a sin to hold a slave under laws like ours—I always thought so when I was a girl—I thought so still more after I joined the church; but I thought I could gild it over—I thought by kindness, and care,

³ Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (ed. 1852), II, 314.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

and instruction, I could make the condition of mine better than freedom—fool that I was!’⁵

In a conversation with Miss Ophelia, St. Clare contended that slavery was more detrimental morally to the master than to the slave:

“It takes no spectacles to see that a great class of vicious, improvident, degraded people among us, are an evil to us, as well as to themselves. . . . They are in our houses, they are the associates of our children, and they form their minds faster than we can; for they are a race that children always will cling to and assimilate with. If Eva, now, was not more angel than ordinary, she would be ruined. We might as well allow the small-pox to run among them, and think our children would not take it, as to let them be un-instructed and vicious, and think our children will not be affected by that.’⁶

Topsy, before she came into direct contact with Eva; Cassy, before she freed herself from the demoralizing influence of Legree; and Legree himself were but a few of the many products of the slave system. After the death of Eva, St. Clare reflected upon the sin of slavery more seriously than ever before:

“My view of Christianity is such that I think no man can consistently profess it without throwing the whole weight of his being against this monstrous system of injustice that lies at the foundation of all our society, and, if need be, sacrificing himself in the battle. That is, I mean that *I* could not be a Christian otherwise, though I have certainly had intercourse with a great many enlightened and Christian people who did no such thing; and I confess that the apathy of religious people on this subject, their want of perception of wrong that filled me with horror, have engendered in me more skepticism than any other thing.’⁷

When published in book form *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an immediate popular success.⁸ On the day of its publication three thousand copies were sold, and, within one year, more than three hundred thousand were sold in this country alone.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 57-58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 24.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸ For an account of the popularity of the work in this country and abroad see James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States*, I, 278-285, and Florine Thayer McCray, *The Life-Work of the Author of Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 105-123.

In commenting upon the influence of this novel, Mr. Edward Channing said:

“*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* did more than any other one thing to arouse the fears of the Southerners and impel them to fight for independence. On the other hand, the Northern boys who read it in the fifties were among those who voted for Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and followed the flag of the Union from Bull Run to Appomattox. Its influence on the plain people of France and Great Britain was so tremendous that no man possessed of political instinct in either of those countries,—no matter what were his wishes and those of his class,—no ruler of Great Britain or of France could have recognized a Confederacy whose corner-stone rested on the mutilated body of ‘Uncle Tom’.”⁹

In 1852, the same year in which *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* appeared in book form, G. C. Howard, manager of the Museum at Troy, New York, desirous of seeing his daughter Cordelia take the part of Eva, requested George L. Aiken to dramatize the story. Aiken complied and the play was at once a great popular success. There were several other adaptations of Mrs. Stowe’s novel, including one by Mrs. Stowe herself, called *The Christian Slave* (1855), but the Aiken version was the most popular one.¹⁰ When one considers the unprecedented popularity of the novel itself and the suitability of much of the material of the story for dramatic representation, it is not difficult to account for the great popularity of the play. Apart from the necessary changes incident to its passing from novel to play, the work, which covered six acts, was a close following of the original and exhibited practically the same anti-slavery features. The desperate struggles of Eliza and George Harris for their freedom, the cruelties of Loker, Marks, and Legree, the tragic death of Uncle Tom, as well as the more pleasant side of slavery as described at the Shelby and St. Clare homes—all were included, with the addition, for theatrical effectiveness, of a final scene in which, amid gorgeous clouds, little Eva was borne to heaven, while St. Clare and Uncle Tom looked anxiously up to her.

⁹ Channing, *A History of the United States*, VI, 114-115.

¹⁰ Among other persons who dramatized the novel shortly after its appearance were the following: Charles W. Taylor, Clifton W. Tayleure, Mrs. Anna Marble, Mark Lemon and Tom Taylor, H. J. Conway, and Henry E. Stevens.

Mrs. Stowe's own dramatic version of the story, which she published in 1855 and called *The Christian Slave*, was based upon only a portion of the novel. Although George Harris, Loker, and Marks did not appear here at all; and although the auction mart, which formed the first scene of the fifth act in the Aiken version, was omitted, nevertheless the general spirit of the original story and many other of its anti-slavery features were retained. It was written in three acts, the first two of which contained descriptions of the Shelby and St. Clare homes, and the last a description of Legree's cruelty to his slaves.

Remarkable as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* undoubtedly was, it did not complete the labors of its author for the slave; for in two other novels, *Dred* (1856) and *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), she continued her fight for his emancipation. The scene of *Dred* was laid in North Carolina, in the vicinity of the Great Dismal Swamp. Nina Gordon, the mistress of her deceased father's estate, allowed Harry, a mulatto half-brother, whose judgment and business tact qualified him admirably as her adviser and protector, to transact her business. Having discouraged two of her suitors to whom she had thoughtlessly allowed herself to become engaged, Nina discovered that Edward Clayton was the man whom she really loved, and she looked forward with delight to becoming his wife. She did not live to realize her hopes, however, for of the many who subsequently succumbed to the ravages of the cholera, she was among the first. At her death the entire property, including the slaves, passed into the hands of her brother, Tom Gordon, a villain of the worst type. Tom's cruelty forced Harry and his wife, Lisette, to seek refuge in the Great Dismal Swamp, where they were protected by Dred, a mysterious Negro and a religious fanatic who dwelt there. Tom pursued them, and during the encounter which ensued Dred was killed. The minor plot dealt with the activities of John Cripps, a worthless trader, whose neglect of his wife and children was responsible for his wife's death. The cruelty of Cripps and his second wife compelled

Old Tiff, their Negro servant and the only person to whom the children might look for protection, to flee with the children into the Swamp. Here they joined the other fugitives. Clayton furnished the fugitives with money and sent them to the North. Later he bought a large tract of land in Canada, moved thither his servants, and formed a township there. Through Edward Clayton the author exposed many of the injustices of slavery, particularly as they affected the slave. This was done, for example, in Clayton's defense of Milly, who had been beaten badly and shot by a man to whom she had been hired as a servant. Clayton subsequently refused to remain in the practice of law in a state in which no protection was offered the slave. Mrs. Stowe's account of the activities of Tom Gordon, John Cripps, and the other villainous characters revealed much regarding the demoralizing influence of slavery upon both the upper and the lower classes of Southern society. Her attitude toward the religion of the slaveholders and their Northern abettors was probably best expressed by Father Dickson. Addressing a group of Presbyterian ministers, for the most part from the North, he said:

"The church is becoming corrupted. Ministers are drawn into connivance with deadly sin. Children and youth are being ruined by habits of early tyranny. Our land is full of slave-prisons; and the poor trader—no man careth for his soul! Our poor whites are given up to ignorance and licentiousness; and our ministers, like our brother Bonnie, here, begin to defend this evil from the Bible. Brother Calker, here, talks of the Presbyterian Church. Alas! in her skirts is found the blood of poor innocents, and she is willing, for the sake of union, to destroy them for whom Christ died. Brethren, you know not what you do. You enjoy the blessings of living in a land uncursed by any such evils. Your churches, your schools, and all your industrial institutions, are going forward, while ours are going backward; and you do not feel it, because you do not live among us. But take care! One part of the country cannot become demoralized, without, at last, affecting the other. The sin you cherish and strengthen by your indifference, may at last come back in judgments that may visit even you. I pray God to avert it! But, as God is just, I tremble for you and for us!"¹¹

¹¹ Stowe, *Dred*, II, 198. For another effective religious argument made during this period, see Henry Ward Beecher's "American Slavery," an address de-

Shortly after this utterance Father Dickson, by the direction of Tom Gordon, was suspended from a tree in the presence of his wife and children and whipped severely until rescued by Edward Clayton.

In John Brougham's dramatic version of *Dred*¹² (1856), even though the love story of Nina and Clayton received greater proportionate attention than it did in the novel, most of the anti-slavery features of the original story were retained. Nina and Clayton were among the fugitives who sought safety in the Swamp; and Tom Gordon, who pursued them, was killed by Dred. Mrs. Stowe's camp meeting scene, in which Dred figured so significantly and which gave her an opportunity of attacking the evils of slavery through the clergy, was mentioned in the play; but Milly, one of the best drawn of her female Negro characters, and the father and the sister of Clayton did not appear at all. Local color, however, remained, and some few characters were well drawn, notably Old Tiff, who lost none of his pride and honesty.

Mrs. Stowe did not write *The Minister's Wooing* solely to attack slavery; yet through her leading character, Dr. Hopkins, she expressed very strong sentiment against it on religious grounds. Dr. Hopkins became convinced as he reflected upon the evils of the slave system, that he ought to express publicly his condemnation of slavery. In a conversa-

livered in New York on May 6, 1851, before the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Here he answered the familiar argument of pro-slavery writers that the Bible sanctioned slavery, by showing that slavery among the Hebrews was very different from American slavery. The bond-slaves of the Hebrews could be made only among the heathen; no one could be made a slave from among them until he had been introduced into the privileges of the church; and the master was obliged to give them a religious education. Then there were only five books; and in these every slave had to be educated. If the same regulation should be carried out in America, it would require the Southern slave-owner to send his slave to the academy and then to college. Again, among the Hebrews, if a slave was wronged or abused, he could go into a court and get speedy and sure redress. "Ah!" said he, "if you will only bring American slavery on the platform of Hebrew slavery—if you will give the slave the Bible, and send him to school, and open the doors of the court to him, then we will let it alone—it will take care of itself." See Beecher, *Patriotic Addresses*, p. 184.

¹² C. W. Taylor and H. J. Conway also wrote dramatic versions of this story.

tion with Mrs. Scudder he remarked that the enslaving of Africans was a disgrace to the Protestant religion, and that he could not look upon slaves without feeling as if they were asking him what he, a Christian minister, was doing that he did not come to their aid.¹³ In speaking upon the subject of slavery with Simeon Brown, a wealthy slaveholder and a member of his congregation who refused to be converted to the cause of abolition, he made the following query :

“Did it ever occur to you, my friend, that the enslaving of the African race is a clear violation of the great law which commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves,—and a dishonor upon the Christian religion, more particularly in us Americans, whom the Lord hath so marvelously protected in our recent struggle for our own liberty ?”¹⁴

These sentiments were even more vigorously expressed shortly after in a sermon before his congregation. Simeon Brown severed his connection with the Doctor’s church, but the Doctor to the end of his life, said the author, “was the same steady, undiscouraged worker, the same calm witness against popular sins and proclaimer of unpopular truths, ever saying and doing what he saw to be eternally right, without the slightest consultation with worldly expediency or earthly gain.”¹⁵

These novels by Harriet Beecher Stowe, particularly *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, exerted a tremendous influence upon the minor anti-slavery writers of the period, most of whose novels were built upon the same general plan as hers and contained almost the same subject-matter. The separation of husbands from their wives and parents from their children, sometimes because of the financial ruin of the master, but more often for less justifiable reasons; the cruelties of overseers; the hair-breadth escapes of fugitives from their wicked pursuers; the insincerity of pro-slavery clergymen; the demoralizing influence of the slave system as a whole upon the white people of the South, and so forth, were all

¹³ Stowe, *The Minister’s Wooing*, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

repeated in these imitations.¹⁶ In *Cousin Franck's Household* (1853), Emily Clemens Pearson, like the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, condemned the practice among masters of selling certain members of a slave family and retaining others, and emphasized the immoral effect of slavery upon the master and the slave. Because Mrs. Hartley could not endure in her home the presence of certain of her slaves of whom her husband was the father, she compelled Mr. Hartley to dispose of them. "His beautiful wife," said the author, "could not endure the sight of them, because . . . they so much resembled him; and she was always begging him to sell them, or send them off to his Alabama plantation."¹⁷ Although these slaves, through their own ingenuity, eventually secured their freedom, Mr. Hartley's selling them resulted in the tragic death, through grief and insanity, of their slave mother. The whole of Virginia society, the author contended, was degenerating because of slavery. "Virginians," said one of the characters, "have genius enough perhaps, but they are too lazy to exercise it." "If there is no motive for exertion," said another, "what can result but mental barrenness and moral sterility; in a word, social retrograde?"¹⁸ William Wells Brown, a Negro author, published

¹⁶ Two novels by minor writers of the period, *Jamie Parker, the Fugitive* (1851), by Emily Catherine Pierson, and *Thrice Through the Furnace* (1852), by Sophia Louise Little, contained incidents resembling certain ones in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but probably were not influenced by it. *Jamie Parker* had been published several months before *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was completed; and although *Thrice Through the Furnace* was published after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the author in her preface said that it was written before Mrs. Stowe's novel was seen by her or was published. Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, both of these novels were written to oppose the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. In *Jamie Parker* the suffering and death of Jamie's mother through grief over her son's being falsely accused of theft and sold at auction, the death of Old Scipio, with Jamie at his side reading Scipio's favorite passage from the Scriptures, and Jamie's escape to Canada during the excitement which arose on the plantation when one of the slaves murdered the overseer, were very effectively described. *Thrice Through the Furnace* described the three crises through which three fugitives passed in their flight to Canada. They finally reached their destination through the assistance of a Quaker.

¹⁷ Pearson, *Cousin Franck's Household*, p. 107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

in London in 1853 an anti-slavery novel entitled *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, in which he made considerable use of the religious argument. Here a female slave, Currer, had two daughters—Clotel and Althesa—of whom Thomas Jefferson was reported to be the father. At a slave auction the mother and daughters were separated, each being sold to different persons residing in different cities. Concerning the sale of Clotel the feeling of the author was expressed in the following lines :

“ ‘O God! my every heart-string cries,
Dost thou these scenes behold
In this our boasted Christian land,
And must the truth be told?’

“ ‘Blush, Christian, blush! for e'en the dark,
Untutored heathen see
Thy inconsistency; and lo!
They scorn thy God, and thee!’ ”¹⁹

Clotel was bought by Horatio Green, of Richmond, Virginia, who became the father of her daughter Mary, but who later married a white girl and went out of Clotel's life. After serving as the slave of several different masters, Clotel, disguised as a slaveholder, escaped to Cincinnati with another slave and thence to Richmond to secure her daughter, who had become the servant of the Greens; but here she was arrested, taken to Washington, and imprisoned with a view to being sent to New Orleans. She escaped, however, and when hotly pursued committed suicide by leaping into the Potomac River. The religious argument here was presented largely through a series of attacks upon the pro-slavery sermons of a missionary, employed on the farm where Currer was a slave, to insure the obedience of the slaves. “You are servants,” said he; “do, therefore, as you would wish to be done by, and you will be both good servants to your masters and good servants to God.”²⁰ He informed them that if they should happen to receive punishment which they did not deserve, they should bear it patiently and be thankful that God was

¹⁹ Brown, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, p. 64.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

punishing them in this world rather than in the next. Furthermore, they may have done something bad which was never discovered, and God, who saw everything, would not allow them to escape without punishment.²¹ In a novel called *The Curse Entailed* (1857), by Harriet H. Bigelow, the financial ruin of the master was responsible for the separation of the slaves and would have led to the enslavement of two white children, Edward and Emily LeRux, whose mother had been stolen from her parents when she was a girl and sold as a slave to a planter of Louisiana, had not evidence been produced showing that the mother was white. Just before his death the father of the children described to his son the effect that slavery had had upon the morals of the nation and urged him never to submit to the lash as a slave:

“God will yet have a reckoning with this guilty nation, and right the wrongs of its millions of down-trodden victims. By the passage of the Fugitive Bill to a law, this nation has *sealed* her doom. She has administered to her own vitals the fatal poison of despotism, which now rages through all her system; and the day is not distant when American republican liberty will sleep in the grave of oblivion, or this nation be dissolved to its original individual elements. . . .

“O Edward! I adjure thee, hate American slavery, fight it to your last breath; let not her murderous, overwhelming power strike you with fear; give her no quarter; die if you must, like a freeman, but never submit to the lash as a slave! Slavery has destroyed your father and mother; and, when I am gone, she will struggle to hold you and my noble Emily in her loathsome embrace. But there comes a soothing whisper to my soul, saying, that, as you have not partaken in her sins, God will deliver you from her plagues.”²²

There was also in this novel a bitter attack upon pro-slavery clergymen.²³ Another novel containing scenes and incidents

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96. Two later editions of this novel, less rare than the first or London edition, were published in Boston—one in 1864, entitled *Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States*, and the other in 1867, entitled *Clotelle; or, The Colored Heroine*. These differed in many respects from the first edition. There was no reference in them to Thomas Jefferson; Currer became Agnes, and her daughters were Isabella and Marion. Clotelle, the heroine, was the daughter of Isabella. For the most part, Isabella's experiences were those of Clotel in the first edition and the experiences of Clotelle resembled those of Mary in the first edition. The last four chapters of the edition of 1867, dealing with the Civil War, did not appear in the first and second editions.

²² Bigelow, *The Curse Entailed*, pp. 348-349.

²³ See pp. 271-272.

resembling certain ones in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was *Liberty or Death; or, Heaven's Infraction of the Fugitive Slave Law* (1859), by Hattie M'Keehan.²⁴ It dealt with a female slave's attempt to escape across the Ohio River with her children and other fugitives. When overtaken she murdered one of her children and would have murdered the others, but was prevented from doing so by her pursuers. Guilty of two charges—violation of the Fugitive Slave Law and the murder of her daughter—she was remanded to slavery in Kentucky on the first charge; and when the Ohio authorities ordered her to be brought there to answer to the second, she was sold by her mistress, Mrs. Nero, into the far South, Louisiana. The author was very severe on pro-slavery clergymen. One of the characters, Mr. Nero, said:

"I scorn the servility of slavery pulpits, the impiety and duplicity of the clergy, who libel heaven and dishonor the God that made them by maintaining that slavery's a divine institution! . . . Whenever pro-slavery divines make out their case, and show that the Bible sanctions the institution, then my reverence for the Supreme Being will prompt me to kick out of door that venerable book."²⁵

Omitting many of the incidents commonly found in the anti-slavery novels of the period, Elizabeth D. Livermore, in *Zoë; or the Quadroon's Triumph* (1855), made effective use of the moral and religious argument by showing the harmful effect of race prejudice upon a highly sensitive but well-meaning character. Zoë, the heroine of the story and the daughter of a former slave of Santa Cruz, was sent to Denmark to be educated, but was unable to thrive under the environment she found there because of the unsympathetic and prejudiced attitude of her teacher. The attitude of the whites toward her when she returned to Santa Cruz, particularly that of the parents of her dearest friend and classmate,

²⁴ The same story was published at Harrisburg in 1862 and entitled *Liberty or Death! or, The Mother's Sacrifice*, by Mrs. J. P. Hardwick. This later edition, which is exceedingly rare, is in the Library of Congress. The edition of 1859, published at Cincinnati, and equally rare, is in the Harvard College Library.

²⁵ M'Keehan, *Liberty or Death; or, Heaven's Infraction of the Fugitive Slave Law*, p. 31.

Hilda, had an equally disastrous effect upon her sensitive mind. During her leisure moments Zoë had written her views on Negro slavery. These at her death she gave to Hilda to publish and to distribute among her oppressed people. Zoë believed that the slaveholders were in reality less fortunate than the slaves. In a conversation with Hilda she said:

“You cannot think that the unjust are ever happier than the injured, if innocent. If the slaves act as well as their circumstances will allow them, they are very near to ‘Our Father,’ which of itself is happiness; while the injurer, by his very injustice, shuts out God’s presence from his soul, and what misery can be so great as that?”²⁶

When Zoë expressed surprise that Hilda’s parents should object to their being friends, Hilda replied,

“I thought you knew, dear, that there is no bottom to the iniquities and absurdities which the system of slavery has entailed upon white people of this island. One is, it has eaten up their souls, leaving them with just about as much capacity of perceiving rightly the eternal truth of things, as my great century doll with Mr. Andersen’s spectacles on. . . . I have come to the conclusion, that if some of the other races don’t rise to their position and sway among the nations, the world will shrivel all up like an old, dry piece of parchment and blow away into the sea in the next hurricane.”²⁷

In commenting upon a conversation between Zoë’s mother, Sophia, and an adulteress, the author touched upon the immoral effect of slavery upon slave women:

“Sophia’s heart sank within her at the thought of the easy virtue of the women of her people, whom the taint of slavery still infected in the holiest sanctuary of married life, and blasted the hopes with which the truth of loving hearts was lighted.”²⁸

In two of the plays of the period, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858), by William Wells Brown, who had lived in the South for eighteen years, and *Neighbor Jackwood* (1857), by J. T. Trowbridge, the same method as that used by the novelists was evident. The author of *The Escape* humorously satirized the religion and morals of certain slaveholders whom he had had an opportunity of observing while liv-

²⁶ Livermore, *Zoë; or The Quadroon’s Triumph*, p. 69.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ing in the South. The play described the struggles of three slaves, Glen, his wife Melinda, and Cato, for their freedom, which they finally secured by defeating their pursuers and escaping to Canada. The author also condemned a practice which he had observed among these slaveholders of separating a slave woman from her husband and marrying her to another slave, and described a marriage ceremony, known as "jumping the broomstick," which he said had been adopted in many rural districts of the South by certain slaveholders for their slaves. According to this method a marriage between two slaves was completed when both had jumped over a broomstick and joined hands. Cato had been married in this way to the wife of another slave. The author also satirized the religion of pro-slavery clergymen whom he had known by having the Reverend Mr. Pinchen describe the manner in which he had converted a slave-trader:

"Before he got religion, he was one of the worst men to his niggers I ever saw; his heart was as hard as stone. But religion has made his heart as soft as a piece of cotton. Before I converted him, he would sell husbands from their wives, and seem to take delight in it; but now he won't sell a man from his wife, if he can get any one to buy both of them together. I tell you, sir, religion has done a wonderful work for him."²⁹

Next to the dramatic versions of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novels, *Neighbor Jackwood*, a dramatic version of Trowbridge's own novel of that name, was probably the most effective criticism of the attitude of slaveholders and their Northern sympathizers toward fugitive slaves that appeared on the American stage during this period. It described the kind of treatment Neighbor Jackwood, an industrious farmer of Vermont, showed the fugitive slave Camille. When pursued by slave-hunters, Camille hid in Jackwood's haystack during a fierce storm, and was thought drowned. She was rescued by Jackwood and restored to consciousness at the home of the Rukelys, only to be caught again when Enos Crumlett, the conventional Yankee rascal so common in the American drama, reported her whereabouts to the slave-

²⁹ Brown, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*, pp. 19-20.

hunter. When she was brought to court and her identity was being sworn to by her pursuers, Hector Dunbury, a white man of Vermont whom she had met in the South and grown to love, rushed into the room and rescued her, aided by Jackwood and others, including Enos Crumlett, who had then become one of her staunchest friends. Dunbury, who had gone to New York and found her owner, secured her freedom and then became her husband. The scenes taking place in the home of the Jackwoods, together with those in which Enos Crumlett and Grandmother Rigglesly took part, were quite vividly portrayed. The Fugitive Slave Law was satirized and the evils of slavery in general were emphasized through the experiences of Camille. Unlike most slaves appearing in the American drama, Camille was represented as an intelligent, virtuous girl who would sooner die a slave than win freedom by yielding to one whom she could not love. Through Neighbor Jackwood the author satirized the religion of Mr. Rukely who, rather than oppose the Fugitive Slave Law, allowed Camille to be taken:

“I tell ye what! I respect the laws, and I don’t think I’m a bad citizen, gen’ly speakin’. But, come case in hand, a human critter’s of more account than all the laws in Christendom. When He was on ’arth, . . . He never stopped to ax whether it was lawful to do a good deed, but went and done it.”³⁰

Rukely soon admitted that Jackwood was right, for said he:

“I find there is a difference between writing from the head and acting from the heart. . . . How have we talked, and written, and fallen asleep, with our cold dead theories, like the thoughtless world around us! But there is a living soul in that room! We are responsible for her to our Divine Master! We will save her.”³¹

Hector Dunbury shared Jackwood’s views on the subject. In rescuing Camille he said:

“I call upon all to do the duty of men! Dogs! bloodhounds! You mocker of justice, in the form of a judge! hear me. . . . Under an inhuman law [referring to the Fugitive Slave Law], you have hunted down a human soul! It is recorded! . . . As ye have done it unto one of these, ye have done it unto Him!”³²

³⁰ Trowbridge, *Neighbor Jackwood*, p. 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

As anti-slavery propaganda this play was very significant. When first produced in March, 1857, it ran for three weeks and for several years after was popular on the Boston stage.

II. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS

To even the casual observer during this period a striking contrast was evident between the growing industrial prosperity at the North, where a large variety of industries had been flourishing under a system of free labor, and the opposite state of affairs at the South, where undue emphasis upon the cotton industry had resulted in almost total dependence upon slave labor. By the impartial observer slave labor was considered far more expensive than free labor. Frederick Law Olmsted, whose publications based upon his extended journeys throughout the South were said to constitute "in their own way an indictment against slavery quite as forcible as that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,"³³ attributed to slavery the great difference between the value of property and all commercial and industrial prosperity in Virginia and in the neighboring free states. He said that a man forced to labor under the slave system was driven to "indolence, carelessness, and indifference to the results of skill, heedlessness, inconstancy of purpose, improvidence, and extravagance"; whereas precisely the opposite qualities were encouraged and inevitably developed in a man who had to make his living by his labor voluntarily directed.³⁴ Hinton Rowan Helper, a native of North Carolina, in 1857 cited copious statistical facts showing the extent to which the North had surpassed the South in commerce, agriculture, manufactures, arts, sciences, and literature, and contended that this great difference in prosperity was to be attributed solely to slavery.³⁵ On June 4, 1860, in a speech delivered in the United States Senate on the bill for the admission of Kansas to the Union

³³ Jesse Macy, *The Anti-Slavery Crusade* (ed. 1921), p. 137. These publications were *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (1856), *A Journey Through Texas* (1857), and *A Journey in the Back Country* (1861).

³⁴ Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (1856), pp. 147-148.

³⁵ Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*.

as a free state, Senator Charles Sumner used a forceful economic argument against slavery by showing that even though the South had the advantage over the North in size, happiness of climate, natural highways, exhaustless motive power distributed throughout its space, and in navigable rivers, nevertheless, because of slavery, it was far inferior to the North in agriculture, manufactures, commerce, growth of population, value of property, and in educational establishments.³⁶ Another writer contended that the amount of cotton produced by slave labor was less than one-third of what it would have been under a system of free labor, and that with the latter there would no longer be such "thriftness, desolation, and debasement" as then existed in the South; but that the colored man would be of increased value to the country; the poor whites of the South would have an incentive to work without their energies being paralyzed by laws framed exclusively for the benefit of the slaveholder; and a large portion of the white population of the North would migrate to the South to add to the general improvement.³⁷

With these social and economic disadvantages of slavery there were frequently combined political disadvantages. Attention was called to the alarming extent to which the small slaveholding minority controlled almost every means offered the large non-slaveholding class in the South of earning a livelihood and of enjoying certain other rights.³⁸ It was estimated that out of nine million Southern white people in 1860, a body of not more than ten thousand families constituted the ruling South in economic, social, and political life.³⁹ The inevitable tendency of slavery, said James Russell Lowell, was to concentrate in the hands of a few the soil, the capital, and the power of that section of the country where it

³⁶ Sumner, *The Barbarism of Slavery* (ed. 1863), pp. 20-32.

³⁷ John S. C. Abbott, *South and North; or, Impressions Received During a Trip to Cuba and the South* (1860), pp. 329-330.

³⁸ For an excellent account of the cotton-planter as a power in the social, economic, and political life of the South during this period, see William E. Dodd, *The Cotton Kingdom*.

³⁹ A. B. Hart, *Slavery and Abolition*, p. 68.

existed, and "to reduce the non-slaveholding class to a continually lower and lower level of property, intelligence, and enterprise," with the result that their increase in numbers added much to the economical hardship of their position and nothing to their political weight in the community.⁴⁰ It mattered not how enormous the wealth might be which was centered in the hands of a few, it had no longer the conservative force or the beneficent influence which it exerted when equally distributed, but lost more of both where a system of absenteeism prevailed as largely as in the South.⁴⁰ Hinton Rowan Helper saw in slavery alone the source of all these evils:

"In our opinion, an opinion which has been formed from data humiliating dependence on the Free States; disgraced us in the obtained by assiduous researches and comparisons, . . . the causes which have sunk a large majority of our people in galling poverty and ignorance, rendered a small minority conceited and tyrannical, and driven the rest away from their homes; entailed upon us a recesses of our own souls, and brought us under reproach in the eyes of all civilized and enlightened nations—may all be traced to one common source, and there find solution in the most hateful and horrible word, that was ever incorporated into the vocabulary of human economy—*Slavery!*"⁴¹

It is impossible to estimate the far-reaching effect which arguments of this kind had upon the anti-slavery movement preceding the Civil War, Helper's book aroused considerable interest in the North and in the South. In 1857, the year in which it was published, thirteen thousand copies were put upon the market.⁴² In 1860, when it was adopted by the Republicans and distributed as propaganda, it met with instant and bitter opposition from the Southerners, who were then more prosperous than they were ten years before when the statistics upon which Helper had based his argument were compiled.

⁴⁰ Lowell, "The Election in November," in *Political Essays*, pp. 32-33.

⁴¹ Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, p. 25. For Helper's suggestions for a remedy see below, pp. 470-471.

⁴² Edward Channing, *A History of the United States*, VI, 206.

III. SENTIMENTAL ARGUMENTS

Between the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the election of Lincoln in 1860, followed a few months later by the firing upon Fort Sumter, an enormous amount of anti-slavery literature was produced. The moral, religious, social, and economic movement against slavery during this period was sufficient to convince thousands of Northern people, hitherto hostile or indifferent to abolition, of the injustice of slavery. But something more was needed than mere conviction of its injustice. The people had to be moved to action. The sentimental arguments attempted to accomplish this result. These were of two classes, each differing from the other in the intensity of its feeling against slaveholding.

The best examples of the first group were furnished by Walt Whitman and Dion Boucicault. These writers showed no hostility to the slaveholder,⁴³ but allowed the strength of their opposition to slavery to be determined by the depth of their sympathy for the slave. In "Walt Whitman" (1855), a poem which in 1881 appeared under the title of "Song of Myself," the poet Whitman expressed keen sympathy for the fugitive slave without attacking directly the master or suggesting any other remedy for the slave's condition than that of assisting him to escape his pursuers:

"The runaway slave came to my house and stopped outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy
and weak,
And went where he sat on a log, and led him in and assured
him,
And brought water, and filled a tub for his sweated body and
bruised feet,

⁴³ In his anti-slavery poems Whitman was more severe upon Northern sympathizers with slavery than upon the slaveholders themselves. See in his *Complete Prose Works* (ed. 1892) the following early poems: "Dough-Face Song," pp. 339-340; "Blood-Money," pp. 372-373; "Wounded in the House of Friends," pp. 373-374; and in *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Holloway, "A Boston Ballad, 1854," pp. 225-227. See also Henry B. Binns, *A Life of Walt Whitman*, pp. 39-40.

And gave him a room that entered from my own, and gave him
 some coarse clean clothes,
 And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awk-
 wardness,
 And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and
 ankles;
 He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and passed
 north,
 I had him sit next me at table—my fire-lock leaned in the
 corner.'⁴⁴

Boucicault's sympathy for the slave was shown in *The Octoroon* (1859), a play based upon a novel by the British writer, Mayne Reid, called *The Quadroon; or A Lover's Adventures in Louisiana* (1856). In the novel Edward Rutherford, an Englishman, while being nursed back to health at the home of the Creole, Miss Eugenie Besançon, whose life he had saved in a steamboat disaster off the Louisiana coast, fell in love with Miss Besançon's quadroon slave, Aurore. Before plans could be perfected for his securing Aurore, Gayarre, the unprincipled manager of the Besançon estate, had the estate and slaves sold for debt so that he might purchase Aurore for himself. Rutherford and a mysterious youth named Eugene lost their last dollar at a gambling house in New Orleans, on the night before the sale, in their endeavor to win sufficient money with which to buy Aurore. Just before Aurore was sold the youth brought Rutherford three thousand dollars with which to buy her, but this was not enough, for the agent of Gayarre was able to bid higher and Aurore became the property of Gayarre. Rutherford, assisted by Eugene, stole Aurore during the night, but was pursued and caught by the friends of Gayarre. He was about to be hanged when the sheriff rescued him. At the trial Eugene produced documents, taken by Aurore from Gayarre's desk, which showed that Aurore was free and that fifty thousand dollars in bank stock had been bequeathed to Miss Besançon by her father, to be paid to her upon the day on which she should be of age. Gayarre had stolen this from

⁴⁴ Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Holloway, pp. 31-32. For other lines in this poem written in the same spirit, see *ibid.*, p. 56.

her. Accordingly, he was imprisoned, and Rutherford and Aurore were free to marry. The youth, Eugene, turned out to be Miss Besançon, who, from the time that she first met Rutherford, had been in love with him, and had later disguised herself as a youth to assist him in winning Aurore, in spite of her own unrequited love for him. Boucicault made several changes in this story to meet the tastes of the American theater-going public just before the Civil War. He changed the title from *The Quadroon* to *The Octoroon*, giving his heroine one-eighth instead of one-fourth of Negro blood. He gave to his hero, George Peyton, many of the characteristics of Edward Rutherford; to Jacob M'Closky many of those of Gayarre; to Zoë many of those of Aurore; and to Dora Sunnyside only a few of those of Eugenie Besançon. The other important characters of the play, such as Pete, Salem Scudder, Mrs. Peyton, Paul, and Wahnotee, the Indian, had no prototypes in the novel. Such scenes in the play as the photographing of M'Closky while he was murdering Paul, Zoë's taking poison, the burning steamer from which M'Closky escaped, and the death of Zoë did not appear in Reid's novel. M'Closky received no punishment, although his deeds were almost similar to those of Gayarre, who, in the novel, was sent to prison. When M'Closky was last seen, he was fighting with the enemy. Boucicault felt that to have the hero a white man, and the heroine, a girl with Negro blood in her veins, marry, as they did in the novel and in his English version of the play, would have affected seriously the popularity of the play; and so, in the American version he had Zoë take poison and die unmarried. He did, however, retain many of the anti-slavery features of the original story. For instance, he gave suggestions of the general setting of the novel. The scene of both was laid in Louisiana with scenes on the Mississippi in the background; the auction scene appeared in both the novel and the play; and in both there was opposition to lynching just before the villain was exposed. The following speeches uttered by George Peyton in the second act also savored of anti-slavery sentiment:

“Zoe, listen to me, then. I shall see this estate pass from me without a sigh, for it possesses no charm for me; the wealth I covet is the love of those around me—eyes that are rich in fond looks, lips that breathe endearing words; the only estate I value is the heart of one true woman, and the slaves I’d have are her thoughts. . . .

“Your birth—I know it. Has not my dear aunt forgotten it—she who had the most right to remember it? You are illegitimate, but love knows no prejudice.”⁴⁵

This play was an immediate popular success and for several years was favorably received in many places in the United States and abroad.

Many minor writers of this group deserve mention. In a novel entitled *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), by Frank J. Webb, the sympathy of the reader was evoked by the hardships which the Garies experienced because of race prejudice. Mr. Garie, a white man, lived on his Georgia plantation with one of his slaves by whom he had children. They would have married, but the laws of the state forbade such a union. Mr. Garie was persuaded, however, to move to the North where his children could be educated. Here he was murdered when a pro-slavery mob attacked his house, and his wife—they were married after reaching the North—died as a result of the shock. The remainder of the story dealt with the experiences of the Garie children, together with the successes of the Negroes in the North in spite of difficulties they experienced in securing an education and employment. In Mattie Griffith’s *Madge Vertner*, a novel which appeared serially in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* between July 30, 1859, and May 5, 1860, the heroine urged many slaves to escape and at her death secured the promise of Colonel Vertner, her father, to liberate his slaves; but like many other well-meaning slaveholders, he could not command the courage to do so. Before her death Madge Vertner discovered that she was the daughter of the Colonel by a quadroon. Among the other minor writers of this group were Elizur Wright, the author of a poem entitled “The Fugitive Slave to the Christian” (1853), in which he elicited

⁴⁵ Boucicault, “The Octoroon,” in *Representative American Plays*, ed. A. H. Quinn, p. 443.

sympathy for the slave by having him plead to the Christian for assistance in escaping his pursuers; J. M. Whitfield, a Negro of Buffalo, New York, whose *America and Other Poems* (1853), contained many fervent appeals in behalf of the slave;⁴⁶ Maria Lowell, whose poem entitled "The Slave Mother" (published posthumously in 1855) touchingly described a slave mother holding her child upon her knee and praying that it might not live to experience the hardships of slavery; and J. C. Swayze, the author of *Ossawatimie Brown; or, The Insurrection at Harper's Ferry* (1859), a play showing sympathy for the slave indirectly through the author's treatment of John Brown.

The authors of the second group of sentimental arguments were more vehement in their attack upon slavery than those already discussed. Their object was to expose the cruelties of masters and overseers and to emphasize any other evils incident to the system by so cleverly playing upon the emotions of the reader as to create the greatest amount of sentiment possible against slavery. Their utterances, most of which were prompted by the attempt on the part of many Northerners to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, must have gone far toward preparing the conscience of the North for the rupture which came in 1861.

The best examples of this kind of appeal were furnished by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The slaves in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* passed through numerous crises in the handling of which she utilized every opportunity to secure the desired emotional effect. Two quotations from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will be sufficient to illustrate her method. While Tom was spending his last few moments with his grieved family before Haley came to take him away, Mrs. Shelby came in to speak with him:

" 'Tom,' she said, 'I come to——' and stopping suddenly, and regarding the silent group, she sat down in the chair, and, covering her face with her handkerchief, began to sob.

⁴⁶ See, for example, his "America," "How Long," "Stanzas for the First of August," and "Prayer of the Oppressed."

“ ‘Lor, now, missis, don’t—don’t!’ said Aunt Chloe, bursting out in her turn; and for a few moments they all wept in company. And in those tears they all shed together, the high and the lowly, melted away all the heart-burnings and anger of the oppressed. O, ye who visit the distressed, do ye know that everything your money can buy given with a cold, averted face, is not worth one honest tear shed in real sympathy?’⁴⁷

A more pathetic scene occurred on the boat which bore Tom and other slaves to the South. Among Haley’s slaves on this journey were a woman and her child whom Haley had bought with a view to selling on some plantation in the far South. The woman was made to believe, however, that she was to be hired out as a cook in Louisville, where she would be with her husband. Before the boat reached Louisville Haley sold the child for forty-five dollars and later stole it from its mother as she was surveying the crowd on the wharf at Louisville, hoping to see her husband. When she returned to her seat where a moment before she had left the child, the child was gone. “Her slack hands,” said the author, “fell lifeless by her side. Her eyes looked straight forward, but she saw nothing. All the noise and hum of the boat, the groaning of the machinery, mingled dreamily to her bewildered ear; and the poor, dumb-stricken heart had neither cry nor tear to show for its utter misery.”⁴⁸ Tom, who saw the entire transaction, tried to console the mother:

“Honestly, and with tears running down his own cheeks, he spoke of a heart of love in the skies, of a pitying Jesus, and an eternal home; but the ear was deaf with anguish, and the palsied heart could not feel.

“Night came on—night, calm, unmoved, and glorious, shining down with her innumerable and solemn angel eyes, twinkling, beautiful, but silent. There was no speech nor language, no pitying voice or helping hand, from that distant sky. One after another, the voices of business or pleasure died away; all on the boat were sleeping, and the ripples at the prow were plainly heard. Tom stretched himself out on a box, and there, as he lay, he heard, ever and anon, a smothered sob or cry from the prostrate creature—‘O! what shall I do? O, Lord, O, good Lord, do help me!’ and so ever and anon, until the murmur died away in silence.

⁴⁷ Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, I, 145-146.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

“At midnight, Tom awoke, with a sudden start. Something black passed quickly by him to the side of the boat, and he heard a splash in the water. No one else saw or heard anything. He raised his head—the woman’s place was vacant! He got up, and sought about him in vain. The poor bleeding heart was still, at last, and the river rippled and dimpled just as brightly as if it had not closed above it.

“Patience! patience! ye whose hearts swell indignant at wrongs like these. Not one throb of anguish, not one tear of the oppressed, is forgotten by the Man of Sorrows, the Lord of Glory. In his patient, generous bosom he bears the anguish of a world. Bear thou, like him, in patience, and labor in love; for sure as he is God, ‘the year of his redeemed *shall* come.’ ”⁴⁹

As already noted, the most significant utterances against slavery during this period were prompted by the effort of many Northerners to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act. Two specific instances of this should be given because of the bitter opposition that was provoked from the abolitionists. In April, 1851, Thomas Sims, a colored man, was found in Boston, arrested on a false charge of theft, then claimed as a fugitive slave, and carried back to Georgia. On April 9, 1852, religious exercises were held in Boston for the purpose of protesting against such events. Theodore Parker delivered one of the addresses and composed an ode for the occasion. Here he called the attention of his hearers to the “Southern chains” that surrounded their home, and urged them, if they did not wish to wear those chains, to protect the slave:

“Sons of men who dared be free
For truth and right, who cross’d the sea,
Hide the trembling poor that flee
From the land of slaves!
.

“By yon sea that freely waves,
By your fathers’ honored graves,
Swear you never will be slaves,
Nor steal your fellow man!

“By the heaven whose breath you draw,
By the God whose higher law
Fills the heaven of heavens with awe;
Swear for freedom now!

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 191-192.

“Men whose hearts with pity move,
Men that trust in God above,
Who stoutly follow Christ in love,
Save your brother men!”⁵⁰

Three days later Wendell Phillips, in an address entitled “Sims Anniversary,” advised the slave to flee if he got a chance; and if it should be impossible to do this, to “arm himself, and by resistance secure in the Free States a trial for homicide,”—trusting that no jury would be able “so far to crush the instincts of humanity as not to hold him justified.”⁵¹ In the same address he expressed the belief that force only would be adequate to accomplish the downfall of slavery; and that if he lived until the day of the conflict, he would say to every slave, “Strike now for Freedom”;⁵² for he believed that no civil war was “any more sickening than the thought of a hundred and fifty years of slavery.”⁵³ Then with increased warmth of feeling he elaborated upon this idea. He asked where was there a battlefield, however ghastly, that was not as “white as an angel’s wing” compared with that darkness which had brooded over the South for two hundred years:

“Weigh out the fifty thousand hearts that have beaten their last pulse amid agonies of thought and suffering fancy faints to think of, and the fifty thousand mothers who, with sickening senses, watch for footsteps that are not wont to tarry long in their coming, and soon find themselves left to tread the pathway of life alone,—add all the horrors of cities sacked and lands laid waste,—that is war,—weigh it now against some young, trembling girl sent to the auction-block, some man like that taken from our court-house and carried back to Georgia; multiply this individual agony into three millions; multiply that into centuries; and that into all the relations of father and child, husband and wife; heap on all the deep moral degradation both of the oppressor and the oppressed,—and tell me if Waterloo or Thermopylae can claim one tear from the eye even of the tenderest spirit of mercy, compared with this daily system of hell amid the most civilized and Christian people on the face of the earth.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker*, II, 109.

⁵¹ Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures, and Letters*, pp. 77-78.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Frederick Douglass very probably had in mind the Sims case when, in an address delivered July 4, 1852, on the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, he told his audience that if he had the ability and could reach the nation's ear, he would "pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke"; for it was not light that was needed, but fire. He asked his hearers if they meant to mock him by inviting him to speak on such an occasion, and informed them that to him the Fourth of July was not a day for rejoicing, but for mourning:

"What to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour."⁵⁵

The other case was that of Anthony Burns, a fugitive slave, who in 1854 was arrested in Boston and remanded to slavery. The event aroused so much resentment in Massachusetts that no other fugitive from labor was ever arrested on her soil.⁵⁶ Thomas Wentworth Higginson was one of the few men who, on May 26, 1854, made an attack on the Court House at Boston with the hope of rescuing Burns and received a cut on his chin which left a permanent scar.⁵⁷ Two days later he wrote from Worcester, Massachusetts, to the Reverend Samuel May, Jr.:

"I hear rumors of my arrest, but hardly expect it. If true, I

⁵⁵ Douglass, *Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Edward Channing, *A History of the United States*, VI, III.

⁵⁷ M. T. Higginson, *Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, p. 144.

hope no United States Officer will be sent up, for I cannot answer for his life in the streets of Worcester.’⁵⁸

Shortly afterwards he was arrested, but the indictment was ultimately quashed.⁵⁹ This event also was the occasion of Walt Whitman’s satire against pro-slavery Bostonians entitled “A Boston Ballad, 1854,” first published in 1855.⁶⁰ Henry D. Thoreau was so incensed over the treatment accorded Burns in Massachusetts that on June 16, 1854, he wrote in his Journal:

“For my part, my old and worthiest pursuits have lost I cannot say how much of their attraction, and I feel that my investment in life is worth many per cent. less since Massachusetts . . . deliberately and forcibly restored an innocent man, Anthony Burns, to slavery. I dwelt before in the illusion that my life passed somewhere only between heaven and hell, but now I cannot persuade myself that I do not dwell wholly within hell. The sight of that political organization called Massachusetts is to me morally covered with scoriae and volcanic cinders, such as Milton imagined. If there is any hell more unprincipled than our rulers and our people, I feel curious to visit it. . . . It is time we had done referring to our ancestors. It is not an era of repose. If we would save our lives, we must fight for them.’⁶¹

Thoreau was equally defiant in his “Slavery in Massachusetts,” an address delivered at the anti-slavery celebration at Framingham, July 4, 1854. Here he uttered publicly the same kind of sentiment, expressing contempt for the courts and refusing Massachusetts his allegiance. It was on this day also that William Lloyd Garrison burned before the audience, among other documents, a copy of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Constitution of the United States, which he called “a covenant with death and an agreement with hell.’⁶²

This spirit of defiance characterized also the works of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁵⁹ Higginson, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, p. 162.

⁶⁰ See *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Holloway, pp. 225-227.

⁶¹ Thoreau, *Journal*, VI, 355-357. Five years later, following John Brown’s capture at Harper’s Ferry, Thoreau was equally severe in his criticism of certain citizens of Massachusetts because of their attitude toward Brown. See *Journal*, XII, 400 ff.

⁶² W. P. and F. J. Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison*, III, 412.

many minor sentimentalists of this group. E. P. Rogers said that if ever the slave catcher crossed his threshold, his "bleeding form" should "welter there";⁶³ and William Denton made a vow that no sun should pass over his head without his doing some act

"To break the proud oppressor's yoke

.
And send Oppression to its grave."⁶⁴

The majority of the minor writers of this group, however, achieved their effects largely through their descriptions of the cruelties suffered by the slave at the hands of unprincipled overseers and slave catchers. In some instances the slave was successful in escaping to the North,⁶⁵ but most often he met death through suicide,⁶⁶ or at the hands of his pursuers⁶⁷ or even of a parent. In a novel entitled *Chattanooga* (1858), by John Jolliffe, a beautiful slave woman, Huldah, was assisted in escaping from a cruel master by an Indian. The Indian afterwards married her and took her to Europe, where they remained four years. On their return to America they were sought by Huldah's former master. In the conflict that ensued Huldah murdered her child to prevent his being sold into slavery, and allowed herself to be seized, bound, and sold to a trader in Louisiana. Her husband and father were both killed in their effort to protect her. In Louisiana Huldah toiled incessantly, and, when very old, died in the field under the lash of the slave driver. Many scenes in the book were effective from an emotional point of view. Huldah's separation from her family early in the story when she was sold to a slave trader in Louisiana, and the scene in which she drew a dagger from her bosom, plunged it into the heart of her child, and threw upon his

⁶³ Rogers, *A Poem on the Fugitive Slave Law* (1855), p. 10.

⁶⁴ Denton, "On Being Asked to Take the Oath of Allegiance" (1859), in *Poems for Reformers*, p. 57.

⁶⁵ See H. L. Hosmer, *Adela, the Octoroon* (1860).

⁶⁶ See Thomas B. Thorpe, *The Master's House* (1854).

⁶⁷ See M. Roland Markham, *Alcar, the Captive Creole* (1857). In *The Yankee Slave Driver; or, The Black and White Rivals* (1860), by William W. Smith, a young master's cruelty was responsible for the death of three of his slaves.

bleeding wound the flag of her country were especially strong in the emotional element. An equally forceful description of the horrors of slavery appeared in a poem entitled "Bury Me in a Free Land" (1858), by Frances Ellen Watkins, a Negro poet:

"You may make my grave wherever you will,
In a lowly vale or a lofty hill;
You may make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves.

.
"I could not rest if I heard the tread
Of a coffle-gang to the shambles led,
And the mother's shriek of wild despair
Rise like a curse on the trembling air.

"I could not rest if I heard the lash
Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,
And I saw her babes torn from her breast,
Like trembling doves from their parent nest.

"I'd shudder and start, if I heard the bay
Of the bloodhounds seizing their human prey;
If I heard the captive plead in vain
As they tightened afresh his galling chain.

"If I saw young girls, from their mothers' arms
Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,
My eye would flash with a mournful flame,
My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

"I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated Might
Can rob no man of his dearest right;
My rest shall be calm in any grave,
Where none calls his brother a slave.

"I ask no monument proud and high,
To arrest the gaze of passers by;
All that my spirit yearning craves,
Is—bury me not in the land of slaves."⁶⁸

IV. PLANS FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVE

During this period the majority of the advocates of both gradual and immediate emancipation favored colonizing the Negro in Africa or elsewhere. A rather elaborate plan of gradual emancipation was offered by Hinton Rowan Helper.

⁶⁸ Watkins, "Bury Me in a Free Land," in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, December 4, 1858.

He urged that a general convention of non-slaveholders of the South be called with a view to perfecting this plan, which provided, among other things: (1) that the non-slaveholding whites of the South organize to combat slavery; (2) that they refuse to co-operate with slaveholders in politics, religion, business, and social life generally; (3) that they give no recognition to pro-slavery men except as ruffians, outlaws, and criminals; (4) that they hire no more slaves, but give the greatest possible encouragement to free white labor; (5) that a tax of sixty dollars be levied on every slaveholder for every Negro in his possession at that time [1857] or at any intermediate time between 1857 and July 4, 1863—such money to be used for transporting the Negroes to Africa, to Central or South America, or to a comfortable settlement within the boundaries of the United States; (6) that an additional tax of forty dollars a year be levied on every slaveholder for every Negro found in his possession after July 4, 1863; and (7) that if slavery should not be totally abolished by the year 1869, the annual tax be increased to one hundred dollars or sufficiently above that amount to prove an infallible death-blow to slavery on or before July 4, 1876.⁶⁹

Sarah J. Hale also favored abolition, but was convinced that the condition of the slave was not such as to fit him for immediate emancipation. In *Northwood; or Life North and South*⁷⁰ (1852), her hero, Sidney Romilly, retained and educated his slaves so that they might be prepared when emancipation should come. Romilly believed that a great future awaited the Negro in Africa:

⁶⁹ Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, pp. 155, 156, 178.

⁷⁰ This novel was a revision of an earlier story entitled *Northwood; A Tale of New England* (1827) in which the only reference to slavery was made by the hero, who expressed the desire that the time might come when the slaves could be emancipated without danger to themselves or to the country, but at that time he did not see how masters could do better by their slaves than treat them humanely. See *Northwood; A Tale of New England*, I, 157-158. The success of this early edition of *Northwood*, said the author, led to her being made editor of the *Ladies' Magazine*, "the first literary work exclusively devoted to women ever published in America."—S. J. Hale, *Northwood; or Life North and South*

“I am intending to help colonize Liberia. What a glorious prospect is there opened before the freed slaves from America? . . . Millions on millions of his black brothers will bless him. And if there is a country on earth where some future hero, greater even than our Washington, may arise, it is Africa.”⁷¹

Likewise in *Liberia; or Mr. Peyton's Experiment* (1853), by the same author, the hero, Charles Peyton, who had profound sympathy for the African, would not free his slaves until he was able to send them to Liberia. After long and patient observation he had become convinced that nowhere else than in Africa was the African able to attain to his fullest development. Here, unhampered by race prejudice, his former slaves began life anew and became worthy and respectful citizens. A more detailed plan of gradual abolition was presented by Elizabeth A. Roe in *Aunt Leanna, or, Early Scenes in Kentucky* (1855). She related the experiences of a New England family, the Lyons, who moved from Vermont to Kentucky and made many self-sacrificing efforts for the emancipation and improvement of the slaves. Their participation in slaveholding took the form of buying Negroes who were inhumanely treated by their masters, of later emancipating them, and of fitting them for independent living in the free states. The author herself was the youngest member of the Lyon family; and so, wrote her story not as fiction, but as a record of real events in which she herself played an important part. The cruelty of the neighboring slaveholders toward their slaves was contrasted vividly with the kindness of the Lyons toward theirs, and considerable attention was given to a discussion of the colonization of the Negroes in Africa. The expense of sending Negroes to Africa, the author contended, was far less than that of a national war, which she said was inevitable unless some plan of colonization could be effected. Her plan called for the organization of family, neighborhood, county, state, and national colonization societies—all working together harmoniously. By such

(ed. 1852), p. iii. In the edition of 1852 Chapters XIV and XXXIV contained anti-slavery material which did not appear in the earlier edition.

⁷¹ Hale, *Northwood; or Life North and South*, p. 405.

a scheme she was confident that in thirty years every Negro could be in Africa or in some other suitable place far from the whites. She thought that by moral suasion the South could be induced to cooperate with this movement, especially if compensation should be made to those Southerners who would suffer great losses by emancipation.

As would be expected, between 1850 and 1861, a great many abolitionists, influenced largely by the work of William Lloyd Garrison, continued without abatement their advocacy of immediatism. Ralph Waldo Emerson, impressed by the method that Great Britain had employed with regard to her slaves, urged, in an address at Concord on May 3, 1851, that the slaves be freed immediately and that the owners of them be compensated by the government.⁷² Most of the advocates of immediate emancipation, however, so far as American literature is concerned, favored colonization after the Negroes should be freed and educated. Harriet Beecher Stowe belonged to this group. She believed that the Negro race could attain to its fullest development only in Africa. After George Harris had received a thorough education at a French university, he moved with his family to Liberia:

“ ‘I go to *Liberia*,’ he said, ‘not as to an Elysium of romance, but as to a *field of work*. I expect to work with both hands—to work *hard*; to work against all sorts of difficulties and discouragements; and to work till I die. This is what I go for; and in this I am quite sure I shall not be disappointed.’ ”⁷³

Even Topsy later became a missionary to one of the stations in Africa, and Cassy’s son, having been educated by Northern friends of the Negro, was making plans to follow with his family. Mrs. Stowe did not favor, however, an immediate

⁷² Emerson, “The Fugitive Slave Law (1851), in *Complete Works*, XI, 208 ff. Harriet H. Bigelow, in her novel entitled *The Curse Entailed* (1857), likewise favored immediate emancipation, but she opposed the idea that the North should compromise with the South by buying its slaves and emancipating them; for to do so, she said, would serve to “fasten slavery tighter upon the nation. . . . It would soon become an extra stimulus for them [the Southerners] to kidnap our children, that they might sell them back to us as slaves.” See *The Curse Entailed*, p. 465.

⁷³ Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, II, 303.

exodus of the freedmen to Africa. She thought that they should first be educated by the Americans in order to be prepared for the work awaiting them in their native land:

“To fill up Liberia with an ignorant, inexperienced, half-barbarized race, just escaped from the chains of slavery, would be only to prolong, for ages, the period of struggle and conflict which attend the inception of new enterprises. Let the church of the north receive these poor sufferers in the spirit of Christ; receive them to the educating advantages of Christian republican society and schools, until they have attained to somewhat of a moral and intellectual maturity, and then assist them in their passage to these shores, where they may put in practice the lessons they have learned in America.”⁷⁴

Henry Ward Beecher likewise favored colonizing the Negroes after they should be freed and educated:

“I am for colonization. If any one wishes to go to Africa I would give him the means of going, and for the sake of the continent of Africa, colonization is the true scheme; but if colonization is advocated for our sake, I say, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou savor-est not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Do your duty first to the colored people here, educate them, Christianize them, and *then* colonize them.”⁷⁵

A brief survey of the material discussed in this chapter will reveal the fact that between 1850 and 1861 the abolition movement had a rapid, uninterrupted growth which must be attributed largely to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and to the many attempts to enforce it. The first significant reaction to this Act came with the publication in 1851-1852 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This remarkable book, which combined most of the arguments and methods of the anti-slavery writers who came before 1851-1852, and anticipated most of those of the writers who followed, presented the program of the anti-slavery movement more effectively and demanded its acceptance more powerfully than any other

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁷⁵ Beecher, “American Slavery” (1851), in *Patriotic Addresses*, p. 186. For similar views, see Sidney A. Story, *Story of Republican Equality* (1856), p. 503, and H. L. Hosmer, *Adela, The Octoroon* (1860), pp. 383-386. For an opposing view, see William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or The President's Daughter*, p. 158.

single production of the period. The spirit of defiance, which at this time characterized the actions and utterances of a large number of people, also found expression in much of the anti-slavery literature of the period and gave strong intimations of the coming conflict. There was strong advocacy of gradual and immediate emancipation and of colonization—colonization, however, not of the free Negro, but of the *freed* Negro, who should be first educated in America and afterwards sent to Africa.