

AN APPEAL  
TO THE  
CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF SHEFFIELD,  
FROM THE ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE  
UNIVERSAL ABOLITION  
OF  
SLAVERY.

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them."

HENRY, xiii. 3.

SHEFFIELD:  
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[The following pages are in part compiled from *Anti-Slavery Papers* already in print, especially from an interesting *Address* recently printed at New York; but the sentiments and expressions thence selected, are so interwoven with other matter, that it has been found impossible, distinctly to refer to the sources from which they were obtained. This general acknowledgment must therefore suffice.]

## AN APPEAL, &c.

### CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

As children of one common Father, and sisters in one blessed Faith, we venture to come forward affectionately to remind you of an important duty;—a duty which we are conscious we have ourselves too much neglected, but to a sense of which we are now awakening. This duty is comprised in the brief injunction of the Apostle, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.” Turn not away, we entreat you, from the serious consideration of a question founded on the authority of Scripture, but grant us a patient hearing, while we plead with you in behalf of the injured and suffering Slave.

It is not now for the first time, that the women of Sheffield express their sympathy with this most oppressed portion of the human race. In the year 1825, a society was formed in this town, designated “*The Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society*,” having for its object the diffusion of information on the subject of Slavery, and the promotion of the immediate and complete extinction of that cruel and iniquitous system, throughout the

British dominions. This small society continued its labours amidst many discouragements, till the year 1833. In that year the bill for the Abolition of Slavery, received the royal assent; and though the expectations excited by that *half measure* were by no means sanguine, and though it could not be considered as either "safe" or "satisfactory," yet the question seemed, for the time, to be set at rest; and no plan, at that juncture, presenting itself, by which it appeared that the cause of Freedom could be served, the society was dissolved, the members holding themselves in readiness to re-assemble, if their aid should be required at any future period.

That period has now arrived. For a time, indeed, we were held in suspense; but, of late, the evidence has been rapidly accumulating that *Slavery is not abolished*. It continues under another name to brutalize and crush our coloured fellow-subjects in the British Colonies. Negroes themselves have told us their simple and heart-rending stories;\* missionaries have proclaimed the appalling fact; magistrates have sounded it in our ears; and now, at length, the report of intelligent, impartial, and noble-minded men, returning from one of the most benevolent missions that humanity ever undertook, precludes the possibility of doubt.† Yes! we are reluctantly driven to the sad and humbling conclusion,

\* See the affecting Narrative of James Williams. Dark and loathsome as are the secrets it reveals, it ought to be sent from house to house, and read by every man and woman in the land, till all the intellect and virtue in the nation are combined in one strong and impassioned resolution, at once to terminate this monstrous system.

† See "The West Indies, in 1837," by Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey.

that in islands, protected by British power, and enriched by British liberality, that accursed system, whose destruction the British people had decided upon, is *not* destroyed, but exists in aggravated severity. The wretched negro possesses but the *mockery* of freedom. The most essential parts of the Imperial Act have been defeated by colonial legislation. *Women*, especially, are the victims of every species of degradation and cruelty, in many respects more afflictive than when they bore the name of slaves. Barbarities, unheard of in the worst days of Slavery, are heaped upon them. Flogging is continued to a most frightful extent. The small ration of food formerly allowed is considerably diminished. The demand for fetters during the last three years, has been greater than was ever before known. Several of the poor apprentices have said in the bitterness of their anguish that "*they should be glad if the 1st of August, 1834, had never come; they wish things had remained as they were before;*" and when reminded that in a few years they will be free, their reply has been, "*If our masters are so hard upon us, we shall not live till then.*" Negro mothers have been known to say, pressing their children to their bosoms, "*We would rather see them die than become apprentices.*" Surely these facts speak volumes as to the character of the present system.

Slavery in the East Indies has been comparatively unnoticed, yet it exists throughout the British territories to a fearful extent, and many of its features are of a most atrocious character. In Malabar alone, under the Presidency of Madras, there are upwards of one hundred thousand slaves, who are absolute property, as much as

the cattle upon a man's estate, and in a condition of moral and physical degradation as abject as can be conceived.\*

When we turn to many other portions of the earth, the weary eye rests not on more cheering scenes. We would not limit our view to the British Dominions, nor circumscribe our charity by geographical boundaries. "*God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth;*" and every member of the human family has a claim on our sympathy and regard. Upwards of five millions of our fellow-beings are kept in the most abject bondage, by nations nominally Christian. Half of this number are to be found in the far-famed United States of North America,—that land which boasts of having declared, that "All men are born free and equal." And in addition to these, are the five hundred thousand victims of prejudice—the oppressed *free* people, guilty only of a skin not coloured like our own. Two hundred thousand slaves are toiling beneath a vertical sun on the sugar plantations of Brazil; and the mines of Chili and Peru are peopled by miserable captives. The Foreign Slave Trade is *not* abolished; and there is too much reason to believe that it is, in many instances, supported by British capital, and screened by British ingenuity. Upwards of a hundred thousand negroes are annually put on board the slavers trading to Africa, and either die amidst the indescribable horrors of the middle passage, or are sold in the human flesh markets of foreign *Christian* countries. The only effectual remedy for the Slave Trade, is the Abolition

\* See "Papers relative to Slavery in India," ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, March, 1834.

of Slavery, for the market must be annihilated before the supply will cease.

Oh! how overwhelming and heart-sickening is the consideration of the immense amount of injustice, misery, and pollution comprised in this inhuman system. On every side arises the cry of agony, or the groan of despair. We hear of tens of thousands of our fellow-beings bought and sold in the public markets, like the beasts with which they are herded, and made to suffer a living death by the forcible rending of all the ties of kindred and affection. We hear of chains, and stripes, and tortures inflicted for the most trivial offences, or merely to gratify a savage taste for human misery. We hear of the immortal mind shut up in its dark prison-house; for total subjection of mind, as well as of body, is essential to the safe holding of property in man. And, surely, if the sight of temporal wretchedness excites our sympathy, we, who trust in an Almighty Saviour, can never view with unconcern, millions of the slaves of Christendom, our brethren and sisters, groping their way to eternity in utter ignorance of that Holy Book which contains the records of his great salvation. In vain has the Redeemer given His command, to "*preach the gospel to every creature.*" His professed disciples in the slave States of America have issued a *counter-order*, and rendered it impossible for a large portion of their fellow-men to comply with the injunction, "*Search the Scriptures.*" All access is forbidden to them by pains and penalties, which effectually prevent any attempts for their instruction. In North Carolina, a fine of 2000 dollars is inflicted upon any one

who teaches a slave to read or write. In Georgia, a fine of 500 dollars, and imprisonment at the discretion of the Court. In Louisiana, the penalty is one year's imprisonment for the *first* offence; and for the *second*, DEATH.

Into further details we cannot now enter; nor is it needful. We are assured that Slavery still exists, even under British rule. We regard *all* Slavery as sinful—hostile to the original and essential rights of our common humanity—contrary to the inflexible demands of justice—at variance with the spirit and precepts of the Gospel, and inimical to all that is merciful in the heart and holy in the conduct. Especially, we are impressed with what we have recently heard of the horrors of Slavery, as it *now* exists; and “we feel convinced that the condition of the apprenticed labourers in the British Colonies, and the aspect of the Slave Trade and Slavery throughout the world, impose upon us a solemn duty, again to labour for the diffusion of those principles of Justice and Truth by which these cruel systems are to be utterly and universally abolished.”\* We have dwelt on the exhortation at the commencement of this address, bidding us as Christians, “*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them,*” and in these words of the Apostle, we find a sanction for all the feeling and all the action, which we deem necessary in ourselves or desirable in others. “*As bound with them.*” These words have followed us in our social intercourse, and amid the endearments of home; in the closet and the sanctuary they have lain on our hearts with a constantly

\* First Resolution of the Society.

increasing weight of obligation. In their helplessness and their woe, we see the sable daughters of Africa stretching out their suppliant hands towards Britain.

“*Can we behold, unheeding,  
Life's holiest feelings crushed?  
While woman's heart is bleeding,  
Shall woman's voice be hushed?”*

No!—we dare not longer remain silent and inactive.

But here we are met by the question, “What can *Women* do in this cause?” We will attempt to answer the inquiry under a deep sense of our limited ability to accomplish what we desire, but with the prayer that we may each receive the gracious commendation of our Lord, “*She hath done what she could.*”

We are happily excluded from the great theatre of public business, from the strife of debate, and the cares of legislation; but this privilege does not exempt us from the duty of exerting our influence, in our own appropriate and retired sphere, over that public opinion, without which no important moral reformation can be accomplished. We desire not to take part in the final adjustment of these affairs, but we may help on towards a decision. It is ours to shew what may be effected by the combined exertion of gentle influence and steady resolution. Is it assuming too much, to say, that no cruel institutions, or ferocious practices, could long withstand the avowed and persevering censure of the women of England?

We think, that by uniting together, we may make our efforts more effectual, and “We have therefore formed ourselves into a society, designated ‘*The Sheffield Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery;*’ humbly relying on Him who has graciously promised

wisdom and strength to the ignorant and the weak, and who frequently permits the mightiest designs to be accomplished by instrumentality the most feeble.\*

"We propose to meet together at stated periods, to read the latest accounts of the condition of the Slaves, and the progress of Emancipation; and to animate each other to increased diligence in the employment of our energies, our means, and our influence, in this important work. We desire to collect and diffuse information respecting the Slave Trade and Slavery; and for the accomplishment of this end, to circulate books calculated to inform the public mind, and to furnish the means for the delivery of lectures, and the printing of anti-slavery tracts. We also desire to aid and encourage, by every means in our power, those noble-minded and devoted women in America, who are making great efforts and painful sacrifices in defence of the sacred rights of Freedom, by corresponding with them, and assuring them of our sympathy and our prayers; and by assisting them, if our funds permit, to keep their *seventy* lecturers in the field."† But our chief design is to bring the subject before the minds of our acquaintance of every class, especially of ministers of the Gospel, and to bring their moral principles and religious feelings to bear upon it; to revive, extend, and deepen those general convictions of the enormity of slavery, which in too many instances have subsided into reproachful apathy; to keep alive and increase zeal and sympathy at our own firesides; and to instil into the minds of our children right principles and feelings,

\* Second Resolution of the Society.

† Third Resolution of the Society.

training them up to pity and pray for the oppressed. We will labour to envelope the whole earth, in a moral atmosphere in which this hateful and inhuman system can no longer exist.

These, dear Friends, are our principles and our objects, and the means by which we seek for their attainment. *Will you not join us? Christian Daughter!* will you not make some effort for *her*, whose infancy is without the soothing of tenderness, her childhood without guidance, her maturity without protection or self-respect, existence here a joyless blank, and futurity dark as vice and ignorance can render it? By all your obligations to the mother who watched your helpless infancy, whose unwearied love cherished, and whose counsels guided your riper years; by all the blessings of your happy lot, we bid you remember the daughter of the Slave, whose situation contrasts so strongly with your own; and yet this outcast is your fellow-being, made in the image of God, and destined to suffer or enjoy an endless existence, to live when the universe shall have been rolled together as a scroll, and sun, and moon, and stars shall have faded away, before the unchanging realities of eternity. *Christian Wives!* will you not feel for the wife who knows nothing of the marriage covenant, but by the agony she feels when her husband, such only in name, is violently dragged from her side and sent away for ever, while her unutterable misery is mocked and ridiculed by her cruel possessor? *Christian Mothers!* will you not feel for the negro mother, whose children, heirs only of her wretchedness and degradation, are but articles of merchandise; who breathes the bitter prayer as she kisses her uncon-

scious infant, ere she goes forth to her hopeless toil, that it may soon die, and be at rest, beyond the white man's power? Will you not listen to that cry of anguish which comes up from the mother in bonds weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are gone for ever from her sight?

"Women! the fair, the firm, the free,  
Of England's vaunted isle!  
Tell us, if griefs like these shall be,  
And you be still the while?  
No! strong in Christian virtue rise!  
And heed the negro mother's cries!  
"With plighted hands, a living chain,  
Unsevered but to die,—  
Crusaders, sally forth again,  
To heed that thrilling cry.  
A broken heart your ensign be,  
Your watchword, *Love and Liberty!*"

Women, of every name and station in this favoured land, come to the help of the millions who lie enslaved, weeping, prostrate at your feet. Come from those trifling engagements with which too many, even Christian women, are tempted to fritter away their days, and enter on pursuits more befitting an immortal spirit. Can you turn a deaf ear to those entreaties and complaints? Can you sit unmoved amidst the blessings which Freedom and Christianity have showered around you? Have you no tears to shed?—No prayer to present?—No influence to exert?—No voice of remonstrance for the ear of the oppressor? Remember the admonition once addressed to a woman,—"*If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.*"

Do not seek to shelter yourself under the plea of

limited influence. *Do what you can.* Throw all your talents, all your influence, into the scale of justice and humanity, and leave the result with God. *Read, pray, speak, and act* on this subject; and we place reading before praying, not because we regard it as more important, but because in order to pray aright, we must understand what we are praying for; it is then only we can pray with the *understanding* and with the *spirit* also. We lay great stress upon reading,—torturing to the feelings, as the details of the dreadful evils produced by Slavery must often prove;—for when you have read these accounts you cannot help making them known to others; and the great thing wanted is, that the real nature of the system should become *known*;—it would then seem impossible that its continuance should be longer endured.

Be not turned aside by the often-repeated objection, that this is a *political* question, with which we, as *women*, have nothing to do. *Nothing to do with Slavery!* Nothing to do in behalf of woman, publicly exposed for sale under circumstances the most revolting to human nature—of woman, writhing under the bloody lash—scorned, polluted, ruined, both for time and eternity! "*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.*" Oh! if we *were* bound with them, how should we wish others to feel and act for us? If our parents, brothers, sisters, husbands, children *were* bound with them, could we then turn away from the discussion of the subject, as a *political* question in which we had no interest? Yet, mark the words, "*As bound with them.*" Here we take our stand, and regard it as a decidedly *religious* question.

Yes! it is in the Bible that we have found our abolition sentiments, and we can never give them up, while we take that Holy Book as the rule of our faith and practice. To the Gospel which is revealed in the Bible, we, as females, owe all our influence and standing in society, our exemption from toil and servitude, like that to which our coloured sister is still subjected; all the blessings that cluster around the ties of daughter, sister, wife and mother; in a word, our happiness here and our hopes hereafter. This is the Gospel, of whose blessings we wish all mankind to partake. We seek to raise the Negro from the depth of misery and degradation into which Slavery and unholy prejudice have thrown him, and bring him out into heaven's sunshine, in the full enjoyment of his birthright privileges. And we seek the attainment of these objects by Christian means and upon Christian principles alone. By the concentrated radiance of *light* and *love*, we would melt the fetters of the Slave and let the oppressed go free.

We ask you then, dear Sister, *where* you will find a cause that appeals more directly to the best and warmest sympathies of woman's heart, than the one we advocate? To what object of greater moment can we ask the attention of our townswomen? *Will you not join us?* Do not listen to worldly opinions and influences, but act solely with reference to the great day of judgment. To *you*, as an individual alone in the presence of God, we put the question, How will you wish to have felt and acted, when you stand before the Saviour, and the poor, unpitied Slave, is standing at your side, to tell

the story of his wrongs in the ear of Infinite Justice? It will not avail you then, to plead that you did not recognise in the sick, naked, hungry, and thirsty prisoner, the representative of the Great Redeemer. "*Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the LEAST of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me.*"

We entreat you, then, to look at this subject, aside from the false colouring which interest, prejudice, and party excitement have thrown around it, as a matter in which *you* personally are deeply interested. The Priest and the Levite might have had equally good reason with yourself, for "*passing by on the other side;*" but were they *justified* in the eyes of Him who looketh on the heart?

In conclusion—"Continue instant in prayer."\* Remembering the promise, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you,*" yield not to discouragement. Let unceasing prayer be united with vigorous effort, till the last link of the last chain be broken, and one universal shout of FREEDOM ascend from the inhabitants of the Earth.

\*The Abolitionists of America observe the last Monday evening of every month, as a season of special prayer for the enslaved of their own, and every other land.



On the 16th of October, 1837, Mr. George Thompson, the devoted friend of the Slaves, closed his arduous labours in this town, by attending a meeting of Ladies, who, aroused to a sense of their duty by the affecting statements and powerful arguments which had been brought before them during the preceding fortnight,—formed themselves into the Society alluded to in the foregoing pages. At this, and at an adjourned meeting, several resolutions were adopted, the most important of which are embodied in the preceding Address.

The following Ladies will have pleasure in receiving subscriptions for the general objects of the Society, and also, contributions of work and drawings, which have been solicited by Ladies in America, for sale in their Anti-Slavery Bazaars:—Mrs. Henry Walker, President; Miss Harrison, Treasurer; Mrs. and Miss Naish, Mrs. Favell, Mrs. J. W. Smith, Mrs. George Younge, Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Congreve, Mrs. John Staniforth, Mrs. Fairbank, Mrs. Smith, Misses Brady, Misses Deakin, Miss Sutton, Miss Mahinson, Miss Ferris, Miss Thomas, Miss Boden, Miss Hall, Miss Elizabeth Dunn, Miss Holy, Miss Salt, Miss Ibbotson, Miss Jane Butcher, Miss Smith, Miss Greaves, Misses Read, Committee; Mrs. Waterhouse and Mrs. W. B. Rawson, Secretaries.

Mrs. Naish, of Brookhall Place, has kindly undertaken the charge of a small number of books, to be circulated amongst those who desire information on the subject of Slavery. Additions to this Library are earnestly requested.

## POSTSCRIPT.

Since the preceding pages have been sent to the press, we have read with feelings of deep sorrow and disappointment, the reply from the Colonial Office to the Memorial of the Anti-Slavery Delegates, affording no hope that her Majesty's Government will introduce into Parliament any measure for bringing to an end the delusive and iniquitous system of Negro Apprenticeship. In consequence of this discouraging reply, the Central Emancipation Committee have met, and expressed their opinion, "that, *without loss of time*, the voice of the country should be loudly raised in behalf of the suffering and oppressed Negroes."

Friends of the injured and the helpless! Let not "hope deferred" so sicken your hearts as to cause you to grow weary in well-doing. "In due season you shall reap, if you faint not." Arouse every dormant feeling of pity and holy indignation, and determine to persevere with increased energy in promoting this great and sacred cause, and never to relax in your efforts, till every unrighteous bond be broken and Slavery be known no more. Forget not, that while the people of England are at their ease deliberating on the subject, the wretched Negro is weeping—bleeding—*dying*. To us, amidst

all the blessings of our happy lot, two or three years may seem a short period to look forward to; but what must it appear to those who measure the lapse of time by stripes, starvation, tortures, and unutterable woes? To them, every *hour* is of importance. The case admits not of a moment's delay. Let us urge every one qualified to sign a petition not to rest till he has firmly, but respectfully, demanded, that the injuries inflicted on the Apprentices, since 1834, be compensated by their *immediate, unconditional, and complete Emancipation*.

Sheffield, December 16, 1837.

scious infant, ere she goes forth to her hopeless toil, that it may soon die, and be at rest, beyond the white man's power? Will you not listen to that cry of anguish which comes up from the mother in bonds weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are gone for ever from her sight?

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Of England's vaunted isle!  
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And you be still the while?  
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And heed the negro mother's cries!  
"With plighted hands, a living chain,  
Unsevered but to die,—  
Crusaders, sally forth again,  
To heed that thrilling cry.  
A broken heart your ensign be,  
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Women, of every name and station in this favoured land, come to the help of the millions who lie enslaved, weeping, prostrate at your feet. Come from those trifling engagements with which too many, even Christian women, are tempted to fritter away their days, and enter on pursuits more befitting an immortal spirit. Can you turn a deaf ear to those entreaties and complaints? Can you sit unmoved amidst the blessings which Freedom and Christianity have showered around you? Have you no tears to shed?—No prayer to present?—No influence to exert?—No voice of remonstrance for the ear of the oppressor? Remember the admonition once addressed to a woman,—"*If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.*"

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