

The Battle of Principles

**A Study of the Heroism
and Eloquence of the
Anti-Slavery Conflict**

By

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Foreword

These are days of destiny for the people of the Republic. Democracy, like a beautiful civilization, is sweeping over all the earth. From Portugal comes the news of a monarchy that is taking on democratic forms. Turkey has announced the liberty of the printing press, Russia is planning a new system of popular education, China is in process of adopting a constitutional government, with a cabinet responsible to the people. Unless one reads the newspapers in many languages, the observer will miss daily some new victory for democracy. Great changes are on also for the Republic. Now that the Civil War is fifty years away, the new North and the new South represent a solid nation. Indeed, if every Northern soldier were to die to-day, not one interest or liberty of this Republic would be permitted to suffer by the sons of the Confederate soldiers, who would defend the nation unto blood as bravely as men born north of Mason and Dixon's line—indeed, who fought gallantly for it in the Cuban [Pg 6] war. The North has entered upon a new industrial epoch, but the South also is in the midst of its greatest industrial movement, and in sight of its enlargement, by reason of the Panama Canal.

The Western Continent is not large, but it holds more than half the farm land of the planet, and it is already evident that the United States and Canada, with their free institutions, will indirectly and directly control the thousand millions of people that will soon live between the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, and Cape Horn. The one question of the hour is how to make all the coming millions patriots towards their country, scholars towards the intellect, obedient citizens towards the laws of nature and God. Our national peril is Mammonism, and the sordid pursuit of gold. Our fathers came hither in pursuit of God and liberty,—not gold and territory. Sixty of our present ninety millions of people have entered the earthly scene since the Civil War. Our young men and women, and the children of foreign born peoples need to open the pages of history, setting forth the great men and events of the Anti-Slavery epoch in this land.

The time has come for the teachers in the [Pg 7] schoolroom and the preachers in their pulpits to assemble the youth of the nation, and drill them in the history of industrial democracy, and of political liberty. If our youth are to make the twentieth century glorious, they must realize the continuity of our institutions, and often return to the nineteenth century and the Anti-Slavery epoch. The phrase, "For God, home and native land," is often on the lips of our teachers. Love towards God gives religion; the love of home gives marriage; the love of country, patriotism. But patriotism is a fire that must be fed with the fuel of ideas. These chapters are written in the belief that the youth of to-day will find in the history of their fathers a storehouse filled with seed for a world sowing, an armoury filled with weapons for to-morrow's battle, a library rich with wisdom for the morrow's emergency, a cathedral, bright with memorials of yesterday's heroes, its soldiers and scholars, its statesmen, and above all, its martyred President.

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[Pg 9] [Pg 8]

Contents

- I. Rise of American Slavery: Growth of the Traffic
- II. Webster and Calhoun: The Battle Line in Array
- III. Garrison and Phillips: Anti-Slavery Agitation
- IV. Charles Sumner: The Appeal to Educated Men
- V. Horace Greeley: The Appeal to the Common People
- VI. Harriet Beecher Stowe; John Brown: The Conflict Precipitated
- VII. Lincoln and Douglas: Influence of the Great Debate

- VIII. Reasons for Secession: Southern Leaders

- IX. Henry Ward Beecher: The Appeal to
England

- X. Heroes of Battle: American Soldiers
and Sailors

- XI. The Life of the People at Home Who
Supported the Soldiers at the Front

- XII. Abraham Lincoln: The Martyred President

I

RISE OF AMERICAN SLAVERY: GROWTH OF THE TRAFFIC

The history of the nineteenth century holds some ten wars that disturbed the nations of the earth, but perhaps our Civil War alone can be fully justified at the bar of intellect and conscience. That war was fought, not in the interest of territory or of national honour,—it was fought by the white race for the enfranchisement of the black race, and to show that a democratic government, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, could permanently endure.

In retrospect, the Great Rebellion seems the mightiest battle and the most glorious victory in the annals of time. The battle-field was a thousand miles in length; the combatants numbered two million men; the struggle was protracted over four years; the hillsides of the whole South were made billowy with the country's dead; a million men were killed or wounded in the two thousand two [Pg 12] hundred battles; thousands of gifted boys who might have permanently enriched the North and South alike, through literature, art or science, were cut off as unfulfilled prophecies in the beginning of their career, and what is more pathetic, another million women, desolate and widowed, remained to look with altered eyes upon an altered world, while alone they walked their Via Dolorosa. In the physical realm the black shadow of the sun's eclipse remains but for a few minutes, but through four awful years the nation dwelt in blackness and dreadful night, while fifty more years passed, and the shadow has not yet disappeared fully from the land.

Strictly speaking, the Civil War began with the debate between Daniel Webster and Calhoun in 1830. These intellectual giants set the battle lines in array in the halls of the Senate. The warfare that began with arguments in Congress was soon transferred to the lyceum and lecture hall, then to the pulpit and press, then to the assembly rooms of State legislatures, until finally it was submitted to the soldiers. At last Grant, Sherman and Thomas witnessed to the truth of Webster's argument, that the Union is one and inseparable, that it should endure now [Pg 13] and forever, but the endorsement

was written with the sword's point, and in letters of blood. The conflict raged, therefore, for thirty-five years, and some of the most desperate battles were fought not with guns and cannon, but with arguments, in the presence of assembled thousands, who listened to the intellectual attack and defense. In their famous debate, Lincoln and Douglas were over against one another like two fortresses, bristling with bayonets, and with cannon shotted to the muzzle.

The many millions of people in the United States, born or immigrated here since the Civil War, busied with many things during this rich, complex and prosperous era, have suffered a grievous loss, through the weakening of their patriotism. Multitudes have forgotten that with great price their fathers bought our industrial liberty for white and black alike. The study of no era, perhaps, is so rewarding to the youth of the country as the study of the Anti-Slavery epoch. It was an era of intellectual giants and moral heroes. Great men walked in regiments up and down the land. It was the age of our greatest statesmen of the North and South,—Webster and Calhoun; of our greatest [Pg 14] soldiers,—Grant, Sherman, Thomas and Sheridan, and of Lee and Stonewall Jackson. It was the era of our greatest orators, Phillips and Beecher; of our greatest editors, led by Greeley and Raymond; of our greatest poets and scholars, Whittier and Lowell and Emerson; and of our greatest President, the Martyr of Emancipation. So wonderful are those scenes named Gettysburg, Appomattox, and the room where the Emancipation Act was signed, that even the most skeptical have felt that the issues of liberty and life for millions of slaves justified the entrance of a Divine Figure upon the human battle-field. This Unseen Leader and Captain of the host had dipped His sword in heaven, and carried a blade that was red with insufferable wrath against oppression, cruelty and wrong.

Now that fifty years have passed since the Civil War, the events of that conflict have taken on their true perspective, and movements once clouded have become clear. For great men and nations alike, the suggestive hours are the critical hours and epochs. That was a critical epoch for Athens, when Demosthenes plead the cause of the republic, and insisted that Athens must defend her liberties, her art, her laws, her social institu [Pg 15] tions, and in the spirit of democracy resist the tyrant Philip, who came with gifts in his hands. That

was a critical hour for brave little Holland, dreaming her dreams of liberty,—when the burghers resisted the regiments of bloody Alva, and, clinging to the dykes with their finger-tips, fought their way back to the fields, expelled Philip of Spain, and, having no fortresses, lifted up their hands and exclaimed, "These are our bayonets and walls of defense!" Big with destiny also for this republic was that critical hour when Lincoln, in his first inaugural, pleaded with the South not to destroy the Union, nor to turn their cannon against the free institutions that seemed "the last, best hope of men." But the eyes of the men of the South were holden, and they were drunk with passion. They lighted the torch that kindled a conflagration making the Southern city a waste and the rich cotton-field a desolation.

At the very beginning, the founders and fathers of the nation were under the delusion that it was possible to unite in one land two antagonistic principles,—liberty and slavery. It has been said that the Republic, founded in New England, was nothing but an attempt to translate into terms of prose the [Pg 16] dreams that haunted the soul of John Milton his long life through. The founders believed that every man must give an account of himself to God, and because his responsibility was so great, they felt that he must be absolutely free. Since no king, no priest, and no master could give an account for him, he must be self-governing in politics, self-controlling in industry, and free to go immediately into the presence of God with his penitence and his prayer. The fathers sought religious and political freedom,—not money or lands. But the new temple of liberty was to be for the white race alone, and these builders of the new commonwealth never thought of the black man, save as a servant in the house. For more than two centuries, therefore, the wheat and the tares grew together in the soil. When the tares began to choke out the wheat, the uprooting of the foul growth became inevitable. Perhaps the Civil War was a necessity,—for this reason, the disease of slavery had struck in upon the vitals of the nation and the only cure was the surgeon's knife. Therefore God raised up soldiers, and anointed them as surgeons, with "the ointment of war, black and sulphurous." [Pg 17]

By a remarkable coincidence, the year that brought a slave ship to Jamestown, Virginia, brought the *Mayflower* and the Pilgrim fathers

to Plymouth Rock. It is a singular fact that the star of hope and the orb of night rose at one and the same hour upon the horizon. At first the rich men of London counted the Virginia tobacco a luxury, but the weed soon became a necessity, and the captain of the African ship exchanged one slave for ten huge bales of tobacco. A second cargo of slaves brought even larger dividends to the owners of the slave ship. Soon the story of the financial returns of the traffic began to inflame the avarice of England, Spain and Portugal. The slave trade was exalted to the dignity of commerce in wheat and flour, coal and iron. Just as ships are now built to carry China's tea and silk, India's indigo and spices, so ships were built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the kidnapping of African slaves, and the sale of these men to the sugar and cotton planters of the West Indies and of America. Even the stories of the gold and diamond fields of South Africa and Alaska have had less power to inflame men's minds than the stories of the black men in the forests of Africa, [Pg 18] every one of whom was good for twenty guineas.

The London of 1700 experienced a boom in slave stocks as the London of 1900 in rubber stocks. Merchants and captains, after a few years' absence, returned to London to buy houses, carriages and gold plate, and by their political largesses to win the title of baronet, and even seats in the House of Lords. This illusion of gold finally fell upon the throne itself, and King William and Queen Mary lent the traffic royal patronage. At the very time when men in Boston, exultant over the success of their experiment in democracy, were writing home to London about this ideal republic of God that had been set up at Plymouth, and the orb of liberty began to flame with light and hope for New England, this other orb began to fling out its rays of sorrow, disease and death across Africa and the southern sands.

At length, in 1713, Queen Anne, in the Treaty of Utrecht, after a long and arduous series of diplomatic negotiations, secured for the English throne a monopoly of the slave traffic, and the writers of the time spoke of this treaty as an event that would make the queen's name to be eulogized as long as [Pg 19] time should last. But two hundred years have reversed the judgment of the civilized world. History now recalls Queen Anne's monopoly of the slave traffic as it recalls the Black Death in England, the era of smallpox in Scot-

land,—for one such treaty is probably equal to two bubonic plagues, or three epidemics of cholera and yellow fever.

Finally, an informal agreement was entered upon between the English slave dealers, the Spaniards and Portuguese,—an agreement that was literally a "covenant with death and a compact with hell." The Portuguese became the explorers of the interior, the advance agents of the traffic, who reported what tribes had the tallest, strongest men, and the most comely women. The Spaniards maintained the slave stations on the coast, and took over from the Portuguese the gangs of slaves who were chained together and driven down to the coast; the English slave dealers owned the ships, bought the slaves at wholesale, transported the wretches across the sea, and retailed the poor creatures to the planters of the various colonies. Between 1620 and 1770 three million slaves were driven in gangs down to the African seacoast, and transported [Pg 20] to the colonies. At this time some of the greatest houses in London, Lisbon and Madrid were founded, and some of the greatest family names were established during these one hundred and fifty years when the slave traffic was most prosperous. De Bau thinks that another 250,000 slaves perished during the voyages across the sea. For the eighteenth century was a century of cruelty as well as gold,—of crime and art,—of murderous hate and increasing commerce. If the prophet Daniel had been describing the Spain, Portugal and England of that time, he would have portrayed them as an image of mud and gold,—but chiefly mud. Little wonder that Thomas Jefferson, in his "Notes on Virginia," treating of the influence and possible consequences of slavery, wrote, "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." As England anchored war-ships in the harbour of Shanghai, and forced the opium traffic upon China, so she forced the slave traffic upon the American colonies by gun and cannon. The story of the English kings who crowded slavery upon the South makes up one of the blackest pages in the history of a country that has been like unto a sower who went forth to sow [Pg 21] with one hand the good seed of liberty and justice, while with the other she sowed the tares of slavery and oppression.

From the very beginning, the climate and the general atmosphere of the North was unfriendly to slavery, just as the cotton, sugar and indigo, as well as the warm climate of the South encouraged slave

labour. At first, neither Boston nor New York associated wrong with the custom of buying and using slave labour. And when, after a short time, opposition began to develop, this antagonism to slavery was based upon economic, rather than upon moral considerations.

Jonathan Edwards was our great theologian, but at the very time that Jonathan Edwards was writing his "Freedom of the Will" and preaching his revival sermons on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," he was the owner of slaves. When that philosopher, whose writings had sent his name into all Europe, died, he bequeathed a favourite slave to his descendants. Whitefield was the great evangelist of that era, but Whitefield during his visit to the colonies purchased a Southern plantation, stocked it with seventy-five slaves, and when he died bequeathed it to a relative, whom he characterizes as "an elect [Pg 22] lady," who, notwithstanding she was "elect," was quite willing to derive her livelihood from the sweat of another's brow.

And yet even in the Providence plantations, where more slaves were bought and sold than in any other of the Northern colonies, the traffic soon began to wane. The simple fact is that the rigour of the climate and the severity of the winters of New England made the life of the African brief. The slave was the child of a tropic clime, unaccustomed to clothing, and the January snows and the March winds soon developed consumption and chilled to death the child of the tropics. It was found impracticable to use the black man in either the forests or fields, and in a short time slaves were purchased only as domestic servants.

But about 1750 the conscience of New England awakened. Men in the pulpit took a strong position against the traffic. The Congregational churches of Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut declared against slavery and asked the legislatures to adopt the Jewish law, emancipating all slaves whatsoever at the end of the tenth year of servitude. A little later, slavery was made illegal in all the New England colonies, [Pg 23] Pennsylvania at length remembered William Penn, who had freed all his slaves in his will, while the German churches of that State began to expel all members who were known to have bought or held a slave. When, therefore, the conven-

tion met in Philadelphia, in 1776, preparatory to the Declaration of Independence, the delegates were able to say that as a whole the Northern colonies had cleansed their borders of the abuse, and had decided to build their institutions and civilization upon free labour, as the sure foundation of individual and social prosperity.

But the antagonism to slavery in the Southern colonies was only less pronounced, and this, not because of economic reasons, but because of moral considerations. The Southern climate was friendly to cotton and tobacco, indigo and rice. These products made heavy demands upon labour, but white labour was unequal to the intense heat of the Southern summer and workmen were scarce. During the revolutions under King Charles I and Charles II and the wars at the beginning of the eighteenth century, England needed every man at home. Virginia offered high wages and large land rewards, but it was well-nigh impossible for her to secure immigrants and [Pg 24] the labour she needed. In that hour the captain of a slave ship appeared in the House of Burgesses and offered to supply the need, but the people of Virginia instructed the delegates to the assembly to protest against the traffic. Finally, the colony imposed a duty upon each slave landing, and made the duty so high as to destroy the profits of the slave trade. King George was furious with anger, and sent out a royal proclamation forbidding all interference with the slave traffic under heavy penalty, and affirming that this trade was "highly beneficial to the colonies, as well as remunerative to the throne." Growing more antagonistic to slavery, the planters of Fairfax County called a convention at which Washington presided. Later, in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin brought in the resolutions condemning slavery as "a wicked, cruel and unjustifiable trade." Soon the leading men of the Southern colonies sent a formal protest to England. Lord Mansfield supported them in a decision that in English countries, governed by English laws, freedom was the rule, and slavery illegal, unless the colony, through its assembly, expressly legalized the slave traffic.

When the first convention met in Philadel [Pg 25] phia, Jefferson included among the articles of indictment against George the Third this paragraph: "He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and

carrying them into slavery or to incur a miserable death in the transportation thither." This passage, however, was struck out of the Declaration in compliance with the wishes of the delegates from two colonies, who desired to continue slavery. But in 1784 Jefferson reopened the question by reporting an ordinance prohibiting slavery after the year 1800 in the territory that afterwards became Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as the territory north of the Ohio River. This anti-slavery clause was lost in the convention by only a single vote. "The voice of a single individual," wrote Jefferson, "would have prevented this abominable crime. But Heaven will not always be silent. The friends to the rights of human nature will in the end prevail."

Indeed, in the Southern States up to the very beginning of the Civil War there was a strong anti-slavery sentiment. When the first meeting was held in Baltimore to organize the Abolition Society, eighty-five abolition societies in various counties of Southern States sent delegates to the convention. It is a striking fact that the South can claim as much credit for the organization of the Abolition Society as William Lloyd Garrison and his friends in the North. For the real responsibility for slavery does not rest upon Virginia, the Carolinas or Georgia, but upon the mother-land, upon the avarice of the throne, the cupidity of English merchants and the power of English guns and cannon.

By the year 1790, therefore, slavery in the North had either died of inanition, or had been rendered illegal by the action of State legislatures, and the chapter was closed. There are the best of reasons also for believing that in the South slavery was waning, while the influence of planters who believed free labour more economical was waxing. Suddenly an unexpected event changed the whole situation. The commerce of the world rests upon food and clothing. The food of the world is in wheat and corn, the clothing in cotton and wool. But wool was so expensive that for the millions in Europe cotton garments were a necessity. England had the looms and [Pg 27] the spindles, but she could not secure the cotton, and the Southern planters could not grow it. The cotton pod, as large as a hen's egg, bursts when ripe and the cotton gushes out in a white mass. Unfortunately, each pod holds eight or ten seeds, each as large as an orange seed. To clean a single pound of cotton required a long day's

work by a slave. The production of cotton was slow and costly, the acreage therefore small, and the profits slender. The South was burdened with debt, the plantations were mortgaged, and in 1792 the outlook for the cotton planters was very dark, and all hearts were filled with foreboding and fear. One winter's night Mrs. General Greene, wife of the Revolutionary soldier, was entertaining at dinner a company of planters. In those days the planters had but one thought—how to rid their plantations of their mortgages. It happened that the conversation turned upon some possible mechanism for cleaning the cotton. Mrs. Greene turned to her guests, and, reminding Eli Whitney, a young New Englander who was in her home teaching her children, that he had invented two or three playthings for her children, suggested that he turn his attention to the problem. [Pg 28]

Young Whitney had no tools, but he soon made them; had no wire, but he drew his own wire, and within a few months he perfected the cotton gin. When the cat climbs upon the crate filled with chickens, it thrusts its paw between the laths and pulls off the feathers, leaving the chicken behind the laths. Young Whitney substituted wires for laths, and a toothed wheel for the cat's paw, and soon pulled all the cotton out at the top, leaving the seeds to drop through a hole in the bottom of the gin. Within a year every great planter had a carpenter manufacturing gins for the fields. With Whitney's machine one man in a single day could clean more cotton than ten negroes could clean in an entire winter. Planters annexed wild land, a hundred acres at a time. For the first time the South was able to supply all the cotton that England's manufacturers desired. The cities in England awakened to redoubled industry. Southern cotton lands jumped from \$5 to \$50 an acre. Whitney found the South producing 10,000 bales in 1793. Sixty years later it produced 4,000,000 bales. Historians affirm that this single invention added \$1,000,000,000 as a free gift to the planters of the South. [Pg 29]

Although Eli Whitney took out patents, every planter infringed them. Whole States organized movements to fight Whitney before the courts. In 1808, when his patent expired, he was poorer than when he began. Feeling that the Southern planters had robbed him of the legitimate reward of his invention, Whitney came North and

gave himself to the study of firearms. He invented what is now known as the Colt's revolver, the Remington rifle and the modern machine gun. Beginning with the feeling that he had been robbed of his just rights by Southern planters, Whitney ended by inventing the very weapons that deprived the planters of their slaves and preserved the Union.

But the new prosperity and the increased acreage for cotton in the South created an enormous market for slaves, and soon the sea swarmed with slave ships. Prices advanced five hundred per cent, until a slave that had brought \$100 brought \$500, and some even \$1,000. What made slavery no scourge, but a great religious moral blessing? The answer is, the cotton gin and the cotton interest that gave a new desire to promote slavery, to spread it, and to use its labour. For Eli Whitney had made cotton to be king. Cot [Pg 30] ton encouraged slavery; slavery at last threatened the Union and so brought on the Civil War.

The value of the slave as an economic machine depended upon his physique, health and general endurance. The slave hunters were Portuguese, Spaniards and Arabs, who drove the negroes in gangs down to the coast, where they were loaded upon the slave ships. When the trade was brisk and prices high, the hold of the ship was crowded to suffocation, and intense suffering was inevitable. Landing at Savannah or Charleston, Mobile or New Orleans, the slaves were sold at wholesale, in the auction place. Later, the slave dealer drove them in gangs through the villages, where they were sold at retail. The cost of a slave varied with the price of cotton. Of the three million one hundred thousand slaves living in the South in 1850, one million eight hundred thousand were raising cotton. That was the great export, the basis of prosperity. So great was the demand in England for Southern cotton that profits were enormous. The Secretary of the Treasury in Buchanan's time published a list of forty Southern planters in Louisiana and Mississippi. One of them had five hundred [Pg 31] negroes and sold the cotton from his plantation at a net profit of one hundred thousand dollars. Each negro, therefore, netted his master that year five hundred dollars. The working life of a slave was short, scarcely more than seven years, and for that reason the ablest negro was never worth more than from a thousand to twelve hundred dollars.