

ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF KENTUCKY, ON THE SUBJECT OF EMANCIPATION.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: In August next the duty of selecting delegates to the Convention called to remodel the Constitution of our beloved Commonwealth, will devolve on you. You have already been frequently addressed by those in favor of certain proposed reforms, who have not seen fit to urge on your attention the necessity of reform in relation to the greatest evil under which we labor. We regard slavery as by far the greatest of all the evils now afflicting the people of this State, and are deeply solicitous that some steps shall be taken toward its gradual removal from among us. It is our present purpose to urge you to co-operate with us in the great and good work of Emancipation. We beg you to give us your attention while we proceed to enumerate some of the evils which slavery inflicts on us, and to point out some of the many benefits which would result from its removal.

When we examine American slavery by the light of history, we find it condemned by large and respectable meetings of the citizens in the slave States before the Revolution. We find the deliberate opinions of such men as Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Henry and Franklin recorded against it. Commencing at the Revolution and coming down to our own day, we find a very large proportion of our own wisest legislators and statesmen testifying to its blighting and withering influence. In our own State, and in the halls of our own Legislature, it has frequently been characterized as an institution weighing down the prosperity of the State.

We venerate the memories of these men—the lessons of political and moral wisdom they taught us we hope ever to cherish. Their opinions upon the great question of slavery must command high respect from every well constituted mind.

Washington, it is well known, provided for the emancipation of all slaves over whom he

had control, by his will. In a letter to General Lafayette he said:

“The benevolence of your heart, my dear Marquis, is so conspicuous on all occasions, that I never wonder at fresh proofs of it; but your late purchase of an estate in the colony of Cayenne, with a view of emancipating the slaves, is a generous and noble proof of your humanity. Would to God, a like spirit might diffuse itself generally into the minds of the people of this country! But I despair of seeing it. Some petitions were presented to the Assembly at its last session, for the abolition of slavery; but they could scarcely obtain a hearing.”

In another letter addressed to John F. Mercer, he said:

“I never mean, unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it, to possess another slave by purchase; *it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law.*”

Mr. Jefferson's abhorrence of slavery was often expressed. In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, he expressed the greatest indignation towards the British King for capturing and bringing to the colonies “a distant people who had never offended him.” In a letter to Mr. Warville, he gives the following melancholy and yet truthful picture of slavery:

“The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions; the most unremitting despotism on the one part and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives loose to his worst passions, and thus nursed, educated and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stained by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. And with what execration should the statesman be loaded, who permitting one-half the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms these into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of the one part, and