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ing Jailer was a female) I wish Mrs. Jailer would send up the potato skins, and dead flies and meat in separate dishes; then we might have a variety of dishes, you know.'

'Capital idea,' said the Canadian.

'I think,' said the old soldier 'that this "hash" is very harsh; it is as coarse as the bread we used to eat during the Revolution.'

'How was that?' said the portrait painter.

'Why,' replied the veteran, 'it was sifted through a ladder with every other round broke out.'

Now, Gentlemen and Ladies, there is as much sense in our celebrating Independence as there was in the celebration I have endeavored to describe; for we are all liable to the like imprisonment. There must be a change in our laws, or our liberties will sink in darkness. Our legislators must haul their wind, and go about, unless they are wilfully determined to wreck the ship. We pass laws in many of the States to make lotteries, in consequence of which many suicides are committed. In England fifty suicides were committed on the drawing of one lottery, and most of you remember the melancholy end of Ackers, who destroyed his own life, in Boston, in consequence of lottery gambling.

There is one effect of Avarice which I feel in duty bound to mention, respecting the situation of our manufacturing population. In twelve of the United States there are about 57,000 persons engaged in manufacturing, in cotton and woollen mills, of which 31,044 are under sixteen years of age. In Rhode Island alone, out of this number, about 4,000 under sixteen: now these 31,044 are deprived almost totally of any kind of instruction to fit them for active life: they labor on an average thirteen hours and ten minutes in Griswold, Connecticut. In Pawtucket there are at least 500 children who scarcely know what a school is. These facts, with a vast many more which I have collected and published in my Address to the Working Men of New England, go to prove that manufacturing, as now conducted, is extinguishing the flame of knowledge; and, to add to the darkness of the picture, if blacker shades are necessary to rouse the spirit of indignation which should glow in our bosoms at such disclosures, in all the mills in Pawtucket, a committee of working men had been able to reach, all books, newspapers and pamphlets are absolutely prohibited.*

Avarice is seen in all the intercourse of life; you see its influe-
ence in courtship and marriage; frequently the first question asked by a young lady, if addressed by a gentleman, is this, 'Is he worth anything?' if he is not, she cannot love him; but if he has $20,000 dollars, she can love him dearly. A good character, industrious habits, good disposition and good moral qualifications are of no account. If a gentleman wishes a partner, he generally looks out for some one who can 'have a good setting out in the world,' as it is termed. Hence so many unhappy marriages. An estimate on conjugal happiness, I have somewhere seen, gives in the catalogue only three happy marriages in the vast city of London, with its millions of inhabitants.

With respect to Avarice being one great cause of suicide, the Portland Courier holds language so much in accordance with my own views, I shall take the liberty of quoting it as follows: 'We allude to the undue estimate of wealth, now pervading all classes of society, from the minister of Him 'who had not where to lay his head,' to the miser who secretly hoards and counts his tens and hundreds of thousands; all alike worship in some manner or other the mammon of this world. It is true they disavow this; but look at their splendidly furnished dwellings, and their luxurious apartments, and judge; it is here, from the language of the fireside in the atmosphere of home, where the most permanent impressions are always made, that our youth learn to attach an inordinate importance to the possession of wealth. Instead of training our young men to manly exercise, and useful occupations, adapted to the spirit of our institutions, and calculated to form characters capable of upholding our dear-bought liberties, they are reared in habits of indolence, effeminacy and luxury. Characters thus formed have little of the enterprize and fortitude essential to support them under misfortunes, and to enable them to bear up under the vicissitudes of life. When reverses overtake them, it is scarcely wondered at that minds so constituted, should yield to the temptation to self-destruction, as the most ready way to escape difficulties. Such is the omnipotence of wealth that we may look in vain for the republican simplicity, the manly independence, and contempt of hardships and poverty, which characterized our Pilgrim ancestors. Formerly a young man of steady habits, of intelligent mind and proper enterprize, was considered worthy of a station in the best circles of society; now these qualities seem totally disregraded, and the fair one bows down a willing worshipper to a heavy purse. While worth and talents are but secondary recommendations and money is the sine qua non in the eyes of the ladies, is it strange that our young men should strain every nerve to secure this golden passport to all hearts? Where the opinions of society have made money a substitute for, if not superior to, virtue and genius,
is it wonderful that the young aspirant, who finds himself by untoward circumstances reduced from affluence to poverty, from the sunshine of favor to the gloom of averted smiles and chilling politeness, should turn to the refuge of suicide? We wish all our ladies would exercise an elevated independence upon these subjects, and prove that they are capable of appreciating worth, as well as wealth: they may be assured, could their views undergo a radical change in this respect, there would be fewer old maids; our young men would have greater inducements to marry, and less temptation to speculate, to gamble and defraud; we should, in short, hear more of matrimony, and less of suicide. Thus far the quotation; and I remark, that in my opinion the views here expressed would stand the test of the most rigid scrutiny. If they had been written with the finger of God, as were the tables of the law, they could not have been more true. Indeed, every person of any age and observation, knows them to be true: almost any one knows that courtship and marriage in these degenerate days is but little more with some people than a mere trade, a bargain, the same as buying a horse, or a yoke of cattle. I knew a man in this city who was passionately fond of a young lady, who was told by her that if he would go to South America and make a fortune, he might come and marry her. 'O what a falling off was here!' a girl that he adored, as almost as an angel from the bright world above, in one moment reduced to a low, sordid, avaricious, human being. I have every reason to believe that her mother gave her the lesson she so well repeated. How very foolish, how detestable is such conduct, especially in the fair sex!

Having endeavored to point out a part of the evils arising from the disorder called Avarice, the query arises, What is the remedy? We answer that the antidote must be made of prevention instead of cure; for it would be as impossible to cure a man who had this disorder in his heart, as it would be to wash the Ethiopian white. When the leopard changes his spots, then we may hope to change the heart of a man who worships gold. It would seem—I speak with reverence—it would seem almost beyond the power of Almighty GOD; for we even see many who profess to have their treasure in heaven, grasping with intense desire the world, the world, the world; and it seems that the nearer they get to the earth, the closer they hug it. Such persons give no evidence whatever of being what they profess to be, followers of him who has said, 'Ye cannot serve GOD and MAMMON.'

Prevention, then, is our only resource; prevention must save us, and that only. This brings us back to the starting point,
from whence we took our departure, to wit: the early education of
the child. A different mode of education must be adopted. The
child must be taught that wisdom, knowledge, virtue, and benev-
olence, are far better than diamonds, rubies, and fine gold. This
education must commence early, and the mind be filled with en-
tirely different motives for action, than those which now actuate
the whole community. Gold cannot make us happy; the experi-
ence of a miserable world drenched in blood, speak in a voice
of thunder, that all hopes of happiness founded on glittering dust,
are vain and fallacious. GOD, heaven, earth, and hell unite their
voice to convince us, that we make a hell of this fair world by
the love of money, which is the root of all evil. And yet we, worms
of the dust, soon to lie down in the deep dark grave, we must
very soon say to the worm, ‘Thou art our sister; and to corruption,
thou art our mother,’ we cling to gold, as a God. I venture to say
there is as much actual idolatry in New England as among the
disciples of Brahma in Hindostan. Take away riches from an av-
aricious New Engander, and he will exclaim, ‘Ye have taken
away my gods, and what have I beside?’ Next comes the pistol to
blow out his brains, the razor to cut his throat, the halter to break
his neck, or the laudanum to make him sleep the deep sleep of
death. We pretend to pity the idolatry of the worshipper of
Juggernaut, when they throw themselves under the wheels of his
ponderous car, and are crushed to death; when we hear of the
bones of the victims strewed on the highways of India, and left to
bleach in the sun and rain, we shudder. But if all those who
have been crushed under the wheels of the god mammon, even
in the City of Boston, were left thus, we should see bones laying
about in all our streets—on the common—everywhere; they would
count ten to one with the victims of oriental superstition. How
many suicides, and attempts at suicide have we had directly trace-
able to this cause in the city of Boston, within two years; and who
doubts but that the demon Avarice was the cause of that melancho-
ly double suicide not long since, which sent a thrill of anguish
through every feeling heart in this vast republic. But to the reme-
dy. We must establish Manual Labor Schools, open alike to
the rich and the poor, for the benefit of all, at the expense of all.
We must make labor respectable, and then all will labor. Then
you will hear but little about dyspepsia and dyspepsia bread. You
will see less of those miserable beings yearly disgorged from those
purveyors for death, the Colleges. You will hear less, and see
less of persons contriving all manner of ways to get a little exer-
cise. You will see less of people dying from excessive laziness,
and others dying, as they do now, from excessive labor to support
the drones of society. Look at Prussia, a monarchical, despotic
Government. She puts free America to the blush; every one of her millions of children are educated. New England may boast as much as she will of her free school system: Boston may boast of her thousands annually expended for education. But Prussia, despotic Prussia, will cast all these things into the shade, and the Literary Emporium of the New World, with all her advantages, will be obliged to shrink from a comparison with a European State.

If we adopt the manual labor school system, if we do what we never have yet done, 'educate' the people, we shall have no need of Jails and State-prisons, Penitentiaries and Almshouses, Houses of Correction and popular executions. Suicide would be a thing unknown, except as the history of the 'dark ages' of the present day. You would not see so many puny sickly mothers bringing forth a race of sickly infants, requiring a quart of paragoric every four weeks to get the little darling to sleep, so that it won't cry. You would not see that race of men-monkeys, called dandies, waiting on angels without wings, in the shape of nothing human or divine, laced up till the heart and lungs are impeded in their action, and prevented from performing their functions, and filling the heads of the female sex with hysteries and megrims and blue-devils. You would see nothing of this: then a dandy-man and a dandy-woman, if placed in Greenwood's Museum, would confound all the Naturalists in creation, from Buffon to Audubon, before they could ascertain to what species of baboon or ourang-outang these Lusus Naturæ belonged. If manual labor schools were established, it would place the rich and the poor on a level in regard to intellectual worth; we should then, and not till then, be able

'From filmy error to cleanse the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day.'

Then would the dark clouds of Bigotry and Superstition be driven from the mind, our political sky would no longer lower with the dark and portentous blackness of ignorance, poverty and crime. The rainbow of truth would adorn the morning of intellectual day: then would it be truly said, we are a free people, free from error poverty, superstition and ignorance; free from Avarice, the greatest curse heaven, earth or hell ever knew; free from all those curses which now threaten our ruin, in language not to be misunderstood, not to be unheeded.

To the young I would remark, that you are soon expected to take the places of those now your elders. You, who now hear me, are to be the governors of the vast republic; the precious deposit of rational liberty is about to be put into your hands: like as the casket containing the jewels of Scotland were placed in the hands.
of William Wallace, so a casket by far more valuable is to be placed in your hands; I beseech you, guard it well, even with your life; let your heart's blood drip, drop by drop, from the seat of life before you dare the vengeance of heaven by proving false to the trust.

Where are the recreant spirits who falter,  
False to their Country, betraying her trust;  
Let them spend their last sixpence to purchase a halter  
And hang up their bodies like traitors — accurst.

But you must prepare yourselves for this important trust. Now how will you do it. In one way, and but one. You must get wisdom, instead of gold; not that I would discourage industry and economy and prudence; this I have advocated in a previous place. By getting knowledge you will be capable of sustaining important stations in society. Who knows but that at some future President of the United States is not, now in this house, in the person of some poor boy? The present Chief Magistrate of this nation, was a poor widow's son. Who knows but that there are females in this house who may one day be the instrument of saving this nation, as was the mother of George Washington.

At any rate, you all have important stations to fill. You are to be fathers and mothers, of a happy or a miserable race, according to the knowledge you have, and virtue you possess. If a sensible man marry a simple, uneducated woman, whose whole delight is in decorating her empty head, she will make him unhappy and miserable. She may curl her hair sweetly, smile like an angel, show an elegant set of teeth, as she laughs at nothing; her eyes may shine like a diamond of the first water, or the morning star; she may dance elegantly, show a well turned ankle, and a delicate foot as small as Cinderella's; but if her mind be barren, she will only be pitied and despised by her acquaintance, when her beauty fades, and at best she will be a mere plaything for her husband, who will soon be cloyed and disgusted with charms so fleeting, and pleasures so evanescent. Nothing is more despicable than a proud, vain, beautiful, ignorant woman. It is necessary that their minds be cultivated. It is important that both sexes understand something of the spirit of our laws and our government. You must encourage habits of observation. You must consider this world as a vast school-house and yourselves as pupils, and that for life. You then will obtain information of a kind impossible to be obtained in any schools, more especially our common schools. These schools go little farther than to give a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and a very superficial knowledge of geography. You must study
men and things: if you do so, you will soon find that all is not
gold which glistens. You will find that every man who smiles
upon you town-meeting days is not your friend, any longer than
he can answer his ends. You will discover that a man may
'smile and smile, and be a villain still.' You will discover that
the mere possession of wealth will not make you happy, for the
plain simple reason, it is counter to the nature of things; for any-
thing which hardens the heart and sears the conscience, must
make man a miserable being; indeed, anything that dries up the
milk of human kindness in our breasts, will leave the fire
of hell in its stead; the vulture, Avarice will eat the heart, and the
eagles of remorse will pluck out the eyes of those who make
gold their God and Saviour.

Our common schools are certainly defective in a very impor-
tant branch of instruction, to wit, a knowledge of the spirit of
our laws, and nature of our institutions. Who in our common
schools read and study the Declaration of Independence, the
Constitution of the United States, and of the several States?
How many of us have a sufficient knowledge of the history of
our own country, to converse with any degree of satisfaction with
an intelligent person, or one with another to the advantage of all?
How many of us have read the Life of Washington, and the
history of the American Revolution? Who among us are found
early acquainted with the writings of Ramsay, and Botta, and
Thatcher, on this interesting subject? How many of us read the
newspapers of the day, and watch the progress of our legislative
bodies, in their march either to despotic power or a more enlight-
ened, liberal policy towards their constituents? These are im-
portant questions indeed. For myself, I had no advantages but
those of a common school, and that of a far inferior kind to those
of the present day, which no doubt is discovered by you without
my naming it. I am indebted for what little I do know to news-
papers and books, and to a constant habit of observation, which
I ever keep in exercise in all situations, at all times, and under
all circumstances. In travelling about 45,000 miles, in and about
14 of the United States, including a visit to the frontiers of Upper
Canada and East Florida, I have considered nothing beneath
my notice, from the vast cataract of Niagara to the purling brook
singing its gladsome song in the deep silent valleys of the Alle-
ghany mountains; rocks, trees, waterfalls, machinery, shipping,
steam-boats, canals, rail-roads, mountains, hills, valleys, corn-
fields, cotton fields, rice plantations, orange groves and myrtle
bowers, log-houses and splendid mansions. I have been de-
lighted, after a journey of 40 miles per day on foot, in the vast,
gloomy, grand forests of the West, I have been extremely de-
lighted to enter the hospitable log cabin of the hardy pioneer in the march of civilization, and listen to his well-told tale of hardships endured, of difficulties surmounted, and domestic happiness obtained by perseverance in a course of industry and economy. I have been led to exclaim, as I approached those abodes of simple happiness and contentment, way-worn and cast down, 'O that for me some home like this might smile.' The farmer of the West would narrate to me, in the glowing colors of truth, the history of the early days of his emigration. He would tell me, when he first began to fell the forest, that it might be said,

'Here midnight fiends on hellish errands walk,
And bathe in brains the murderous tomahawk.'

How the young mother clung to her babe, and clasped it closer to her bosom, as the horrid war-whoop of the red man rung through the forest, and fell like the voice of a demon on her ear, piercing her heart with an indescribable agony which mothers only feel or know, and which they cannot express. As I heard these things related, I almost

Saw the savage drinking blood,
Heard dying infants shriek,
Beheld stern misery's darkest flood
O'erwhelm the poor and weak.

Much of the misery the West has suffered has been produced by Avarice. British gold sharpened the tomahawk and made the scalping-knife keen. — I have travelled on the road through the wilderness of the West with the red men of the forest, with their tomahawks and scalping-knives hanging at their sides. I have gained information from them, and have not considered it beneath my attention to ask information of these sons of nature. And I have received from their hands a cup of cold water, when in my utmost need, when almost perishing with intense and burning thirst, without being told 'Get you gone paleface,' as we sometimes say to them, 'Get you gone, you Indian dog.' On the soil of the slave States I have conversed with the poor slave; and he, degraded as he is, could impart new and correct ideas and views on many subjects, which I have since found extremely useful. I found, that although black, he had a white soul. He seemed by his conduct and conversation to speak to my heart and say, 'Am not I a man and a brother?' The honesty of some of these poor creatures would make a State Street note-shaver blush, if such an impossibility could occur. If the heart of the usurer could be exposed, it would look as much darker than the negro's skin as
the negro's skin is darker than the white rose. I have travelled mile after mile over the prairies of the West, parched with thirst almost to madness, yet my habits of observation never forsook me. How earnestly have I listened to catch the sound of the lowing cattle, or the shrill crowing of chanticleer, as indicating the vicinity of human habitations. How sincerely and earnestly have I thanked God, when the log-cabin of the Wyandot Indian met my eager gaze. With what intense anxiety and almost distracted impulse have I grasped the cup of cooling liquid from the Indian's hand, as he held out the best beverage on earth to cool my parched tongue. In such cases, almost desperate with suffering previous to such relief, I have not relaxed for a moment in my habits of observation, so essential to improve the mind and mend the heart. I have taken my seat on a burnt log under a tree, during a severe rain storm, to fill up my journal, and pencil down my reflections. When the heavens were clothed in darkness, wrapped in the thunder-cloud as with a garment; — when the torrents of rain were descending, when the thunder was roaring, the lightning flashing, and the wind in its terrible power bowing the sturdy forest tree to the earth; then have I heard a voice, as it were speaking with the tongue of the elements, saying to me, Observe, observe, observe. Think, ponder, reason, reflect, improve your mind and mend your heart. Although you cannot have the same opportunities some have had, you can keep the habit of observation in constant action at all times. Depend upon it, there is no safety in ignorance. No safety, public or private, without education. No education can be of use unless united with habits of observation and reflection; in fact, there can be no education but with observation. Before closing, I beg to be permitted to make a remark or two on the accusations made against the class of people to which I belong, and whose cause I have endeavored to advocate to the best of my limited abilities. We are accused of a wish to divide property; to take from those who have, and give to those who have not; to rob the rich, and divide among the poor, without the color of law or reason, justice or common sense. Now I, in the name of the working men, feel myself authorized to say, that this statement of our views is false, utterly, totally, and maliciously false. All we wish is to be paid a fair equivalent for our labor: we claim to be the most useful class. We claim for labor, the source of all wealth, a reward commensurate with its usefulness. To say that this reward never, never has been given, is to tell something that every body knows, let them say what they may. We have been officially accused of a malicious design to injure the public, by attempts to fix the hours of labor, during the hot and sultry summer months, to
preserve our health, in accordance with the opinion of the ablest physicians in the United States, and in all Europe. The Judge, who acted the part of an informer, jury and judge, in the charge I have brought to your notice, has publicly charged us with a mischievous design to disturb the public peace, and stigmatized the Mechanics of Boston with the name of a Combination. The Judge knew, at the same time that the Lawyers, and Doctors, and Booksellers had a Combination, under various forms and names. He knew that the Merchants at that moment had a Combination, backed up by all the wealth and influence of that body of men, and signed by over one hundred, and published in the papers of the city. He knew that these Merchants issued what was called, by the Mechanics, a Ukase, from its resemblance to the tyrannical acts of the Emperor of Russia, under that title. Why did not the impartial Judge attack them. He dare not do it. This Ukase permitted the Mechanics of Boston to take time to escape the Cholera,—it met with the scorn, contempt, and deep curses of every man in the community who had a soul; and the Merchants of Boston engaged in that mean affair, enlightened as they are, met the utter detestation of all fair, candid minds, wherever this unprecedented document found its way, both in Europe and America. Why did not the Judge present to the grand jury the Lawyers who have a Combination under the head of Bar-Rules, by which they grind to powder the poor, and sell, not justice, but injustice to the indigent. Not a word about that Combination, nothing about it. The Mechanics, the men who daily, nightly, hourly, protect the property of the rich; the men who dragged the engines over Warren bridge when the west end of it was in flames, to save property not their own: these, these are the men denounced by a grave Judge, who lowered himself from the high dignity of the bench to become an informer, when he himself in that charge said 'there was no complaint, and he was sure he did not wish to make any;' but he did make it, to his everlasting dishonor, as an impartial man, as an unbiassed judge, and good citizen.

But why all this legal spite and spleen against the Mechanics, and why this favor to the merchants, the booksellers, and the lawyers? the reason is obvious. He had himself received the benefit of the bar-rules of that body, and it made a difference with him, whether our ox gored the lawyer's cow, or their ox, or his honor's, our cow. If our ox gored his honor's cow, we must pay for it, but if his ox gored our cow, why then—his honor would—see about it; he would think, and consider, and give a solemn decision on the subject. This is perfectly consistent; the lawyer's cow, under the name of 'bar-rules,' gave much more
milk than our cow, and of course was a more valuable animal, inasmuch, as she was new milch all the year round.

We are charged, in various ways, of various things, by our enemies. I take this opportunity to say that our views and motives are as pure as human nature will admit.

We believe in the golden rule, 'whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' We plead the cause of the widow and the fatherless; the poor and needy. We say to the rich, who have obtained property dishonestly, and by oppression, 'Why do ye grind the faces of the poor?' Ye sell the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. Yea, ye sell the refuse of the wheat; 'Behold, the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you, kept back of fraud, crieth, and the cries of them that have reaped, and labored for you, in building your splendid luxurious abodes of opulence, have entered into the ears of the just Governor of the Universe. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.'

We wish to have laws, which will not belie our professions, moral, political, and religious. We are convinced in our hearts, by sad experience and observation, that

"Where Avarice plucks the staff away,
On which the weary lean,
There vices reel o'er the midnight bowl,
With jest and song obscene."

You cannot raise one part of the community above the other, unless you stand on the bodies of the poor; we wish to obtain a mental freedom, as well as political liberty; we wish to be raised from the thraldom of ignorance; we wish to open the prison doors to those who are bound in prison; not for murder, robbery, arson, or manslaughter, but for the far greater crime in the eyes of the world, than either, 'Poverty.' We wish to wipe the tear from the eye of sorrow, to say to the orphan, Dry up your tears. You who have been so long neglected, come cheer up, and let your sobbing cease. You shall receive support and protection from the government, from the people; you shall be instructed, educated, and fitted to stand up in the great congregation of this great nation, and put in your claim to equal rights, and your claim shall be heard and allowed. We wish to abolish licensed monopolies, the militia system, to improve or abolish, and to make it a truth, that all men are created equal. In order to accomplish the objects we have in view, we have adopted the following measures; as the great aim, the bright pole-star, to which we look from every part of this Union, to lead us on to the vic-
tory over ignorance and oppression, poverty and distress. These measures are as follows:

A system of universal equal education, by means of manual labor schools, supported at the public expense, open alike to the children of the poor as well as the rich — abolition of all licensed monopolies, — abolition of capital punishment, — abolition of imprisonment for debt, — an entire revision, or total abolition of the militia system,—a less expensive law system,—equal taxation on property,—and an effective lien law on building of all kinds.

Fortified by these principles, founded on eternal truth, we bid defiance to the world, and ask them to overthrow, if they can, the fortress we have erected. To those who misrepresent us, unwittingly, we say, We pity you; to those who attempt to injure us, maliciously, We despise your wicked, weak, and useless efforts. The march of improvement is onward, and the world will yet see that the adoption of these measures will yet make our earth a paradise of bliss. Thanking you for your kind attention, I leave the subject with you, hoping we all shall remember that wisdom is better than gold. In all your gettings, get wisdom; remember that that passion which is cursed of God, viz. Avarice, is the father of all crime. May virtue and intelligence be your best inheritance; usefulness to your country, your highest aim. Then, when you are called to part with earthly things, may your graves be watered with the grateful tears of your fellow citizens; may your tomb be found like that of George Washington, in the hearts of your countrymen.

NOTE TO READERS.

This Address, originally delivered in Charlestown, before an audience of Ladies and Gentlemen, had gone to the press, and most of it was printed, when I was unexpectedly requested to repeat it in Faneuil Hall. Some alteration became necessary to adapt the Address to an audience composed of Gentlemen only. This will account for those passages which are addressed to females, in the printed copy, and omitted in that delivered in Faneuil Hall.

Respectfully Yours,

Boston Feb. 26th, 1834.

Seth Luther.
ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF RHODE-ISLAND,

FROM THE CONVENTION

ASSEMBLED AT PROVIDENCE, ON THE 22d DAY OF FEBRUARY,

AND AGAIN ON THE 12th DAY OF MARCH, 1834,

TO PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A

STATE CONSTITUTION.

PROVIDENCE:
CRANSTON & HAMMOND, PRINTERS.
1834.
At the first meeting of the Convention, Thomas W. Dorr, Joseph K. Angell, David Daniels, William H. Smith and Christopher Robinson were appointed a Committee to prepare an Address to the People of the State.

At the second meeting of said Convention, Mr. Dorr reported,—

That the Committee had attended to the subject of their appointment, and were ready to offer an Address for the consideration of the Convention.

The Address having been read, it was voted, that the same be adopted, and printed under the direction of the Committee.

NATHAN A. BROWN, President.

WILLIAM H. SMITH, SAMUEL E. GARDINER. Secretaries.
NOTE.

The following Address was intended to comprise a Review of the Defects of our present System of Government, and of the Changes most essential for a proper correction of those Defects. The number and importance of the subjects to be treated of have made it necessary to extend these remarks to a much greater length than the Committee would have desired; but they could not have been much abbreviated, without injustice to the Convention and to themselves. In fact each of the great divisions of the extensive field of Political Reform ought to be separately and fully treated, and would of itself furnish abundant materials for an Address to the People. The political evils under which we are now laboring have been gradually accumulated during a long series of years; and cannot be properly investigated in a hasty survey. They ought therefore to receive a careful attention and examination, in order to insure the application of a judicious and effectual Remedy.

The Reader will find the principal topics of this Address at the following pages—

DEFINITION OF A CONSTITUTION, AND WHENCE IT IS TO BE PROCURED. 10

CHARACTER AND DEFECTS OF THE CHARTER AS AN INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNMENT. - 13

INEQUALITY OF REPRESENTATION, - 20

EXTENSION OF SUFFRAGE, - 26

QUALIFICATIONS OF VOTERS IN EACH OF THE STATES. 46

IMPROVEMENT OF THE JUDICIARY, 57
ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

Agreeably to an invitation from the towns of Cumberland and Smithfield, Delegates from the following towns in this State, namely, Newport, Providence, Smithfield, Bristol, Warren, Cranston, Johnston, North-Providence, Burrillville and Cumberland, assembled in Convention, at Providence, on the 22d day of the last month, to consult together upon the best course to be pursued for the establishment of a written State Constitution; which should properly define and fix the powers of the different Departments of Government, and the Rights of the Citizen.

The Resolutions passed at our first meeting have already been submitted to your consideration. We deemed it a duty to those whom we represent, to ourselves, and to the body of the people of the State, whose co-operation we ask, to set forth in those Resolutions, explicitly, and beyond question or misinterpretation, an outline of the proposed Political Reform; leaving, where it belongs, to those who may be hereafter called to the important duty of framing a Constitution, the task of maturing its provisions.

The articles which we have proposed, we are fully convinced, are indispensable articles in such an instrument; without which it would be insufficient, unsatisfactory and impracticable,—defective in the distribution of political justice, ill adapted to the wants and feelings of the people, and without the promise of permanent duration.

It was a duty to our constituents and to ourselves, thus freely to utter and set forth their and our views, sentiments and plans, and to put an end to all conjectures about ulterior and concealed intentions, because we have nothing to disguise, nor con-

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ceal,—propose no change in the order of Government, which we do not believe to be clearly right, and because we deem it unworthy of men who live under institutions at least nominally Republican, silently to acquiesce in the longer continuance of a system so defective in its structure, and unequal in its operation. It was a duty to the people of the State to announce to them unequivocally the nature and extent of those amendments to their present system, which we offer; especially, to remove every pretence of uncertainty from that part of our plan, which relates to the enlargement of political rights; and to secure to the great principles of a Constitution the benefits of public attention and mature judgment. And we are happy to be assured that the publication of our plan, in its length and breadth, and all its dimensions, has already had the effect of overcoming the doubts and objections of many, who were opposed to us from an imperfect acquaintance with our views; and of enlisting their good will and assistance on the side of Reform.

Having met again, for the second time, in Convention, with the addition of delegates from the towns of Scituate and North-Kingstown, we proceed, fellow-citizens, to state and to enforce, more at large, those reasons and arguments, by which the subject of our Resolutions is recommended to the good sense and justice of the people of Rhode-Island, intending to use great plainness of speech, and endeavoring, at the same time, to present our opinions as briefly as the extent and importance of the matters to which they relate will in any wise permit.

There are some preliminary considerations, with which we would occupy a few moments of your time, before advancing to the principal topics which belong to the present examination.

We desire then to disclaim, in the outset, any design or desire of offering the slightest disrespect to the memory, or to the character of our predecessors, who first established that scheme of government, into which we are now anxious to carry the work of reformation. If any pride of ancestry may be indulged in this country, the people of Rhode-Island may honorably exult in those noble forefathers, who aban-
doned their native home, and again, their adopted land, and encountered the dangers of a savage wilderness, for the sake of that great experiment of Religious Liberty, in the blessings of which we all participate. Assembled as we now are, almost within a stone’s cast of the ashes of Roger Williams, that one of us who should utter a word of disparagement of such a man, or his illustrious fellow-patriots would feel himself rebuked by the Genius of the Place. We revere the names of those venerable ancestors. We glory in our inheritance; and animated, as we trust (though some of us are but the subjects, rather than the citizens of a Republican State) by a portion of their own love of freedom, of their firm purpose, of their zealous and determined perseverance;—and resolved to carry out still farther into practice the life and purport of those principles which they maintained, at the foundation of the state, we would employ our earnest and unremitted exertions for the correction of defects and errors, which, in the progress of time and change, are inevitably found to exist in the best organized system of Government, and which are, at this moment, so visible and palpable in our own. If we bring to our undertaking any of the ancient, sturdy spirit of Rhode-Island patriotism, we shall deserve, and, in the end, obtain a proportionate success.

Nor is the business, fellow-citizens, in which we are engaged, a mere narrow party-affair, got up to promote the sordid views of personal aggrandizement. The aspect of our assembly, composed, as it is, of men of all the political divisions in the State, affords sufficient evidence to the contrary. We have individually sacrificed no opinions on National affairs; we intend to sacrifice none: we have asked no one to make this sacrifice; we do not intend so to ask, nor desire to see it made by any who may act with us. Leaving the field of National politics to every man’s previous preferences and attachments, we find, in the present political necessities of our own State, a common ground for friendly and harmonious action. We meet here as brethren and fellow-laborers, and cast aside all personal feelings and prejudices, for the promotion of an object, which is large enough, and wide enough to comprehend within its limits men of every politi-
cal complexion, and all men, who have at heart the public honor and welfare.

There has been too much strife in this State about Men, and for the benefit of Men; too much Man-Worship. Party after party has come into power; and many of us have lent our aid in effecting these party triumphs. But we have had the mortification of perceiving that very little has been done, for the improvement of our political condition, from the fear of endangering this or that man’s office or expectation of office,—from the fear of offending, or from a desire to conciliate this or that prominent politician,—from an anxiety to stand well with this or that interest in the community. The fact, and the causes of it have been so apparent, that the mere statement is the sufficient proof of them. And it has been for a long time a certain conviction, in the mind of every accurate observer of political affairs, that nothing but a union of men of different parties could ever promise any very decisive change for the better in the condition of our institutions. In the spirit of concession and compromise upon matters of local politics, we have made this union, under the standard of a Constitutional Party.

Few who are seriously in favor of the cause we support will question the expediency, and indispensable necessity of a party organization to insure its success. There must be a head and front to our undertaking. A great political benefit to all parties and classes of men must be brought about by political means. The idea that they who are opposed to a Reformation, or who feel little interest in it, will take any measures for its accomplishment, while its friends remain in apathy, or confine themselves to complaints, resolutions and memorials, instead of presenting themselves in the attitude of political preparation, is too delusive to be encouraged for a moment, and is repelled by all past experience. A party on wide and liberal grounds, such as we hope has now been formed among us, becomes a centre for the accumulation of new forces, it affords a rallying point for the doubtful and hesitating; it collects public opinion, and brings it to bear, in the strongest and surest manner, upon the ends to be attained.
That the present is a favorable time, and the right time for the formation of such a party, we cannot entertain a doubt. The all-absorbing question of a Presidential election has been disposed of for the present, by the re-election of the present incumbent. There is not, at this moment, such a doubtful balance of parties in the State as to give to any attempt at Reform the appearance of being a measure designed solely for the purpose of securing a preponderance to either side. There is also, if we do not greatly mistake the signs of the times, an increasing disposition in all parts of the State, and among all classes of our citizens, in favor of the desired result, founded on the belief of its necessity and justice. In order then to obtain this result, which has been heretofore unattainable by other parties, from the nature of their position, and from other causes, we ask you, fellow-citizens, to approve our design, and to aid us in its execution, if you are already convinced that it is meritorious; or if we shall be able to offer you any arguments adapted to produce conviction. When you are so convinced, the surrender by you of local feelings to the general good, will, we doubt not, be cheerfully and decisively made.

Should you ask us for a more particular expression of our motives of action, we shall make, in reply, no loud profession of good intentions. Such professions, from the too frequent contradiction of them in practice, have fallen under a just suspicion, and are received with a very hesitating confidence by the public. Judge us by our works. By them we wish to be tried; and are ready to stand or fall. If we deviate from the straight and onward course which we have marked out, for the furtherance of secondary or sinister ends, we fail, and justly fail in a cause, of which we shall thus prove ourselves to be the unworthy advocates. But should we proceed with singleness of purpose, with a firm and steady regard to the great object before us,—addressing ourselves with good temper and moderation to the sense and justice of the people,—and if not without reproach, yet above the fear of it, when unjust, we shall not only deserve, but receive the support of our fellow-citizens, and witness the issue of our labors to the honor and advantage of the State.
It would be consuming your time unnecessarily, to enlarge upon the practical evils growing out of the exercise of irresponsible power in general; and which are attendant upon all irregular and fluctuating legislation. To attempt to convince you, by a formal argument, of the truth of this great axiom in political science, would argue a disrespect for your understanding and information of which we shall not be guilty.

It is equally apparent, as a general principle, that a discretionary regulation of the Elective Right, and of the Judicial System, can never be properly and safely vested in the Legislature. In the language of the learned and eminent Chancellor Kent,—"The power of making laws is the supreme power in a State; and the department in which it resides will naturally have such a preponderance in the political system, and act with such mighty force upon the public mind, that the line of separation between that and the other branches of the government ought to be marked very distinctly, and with the most careful precision." (1st vol. Commentaries, page 207.) It will not do to say that the frequency of elections in this State affords a remedy for any evils in the administration of its affairs. Public Opinion, it is true, does operate upon, and in a great degree control the action of the Legislature; but let it never be forgotten that there is always a strong reaction, much stronger than we are sometimes aware, of the Legislature upon the people, in the formation of this opinion. It is in a great measure moulded and shaped by men who hold high stations, with a corresponding influence; and it will ever be the aim of those who exercise irregular power, so to guide and direct the opinion of their constituents, that it shall interfere the least with their own purposes and interests.

We believe then, indeed, we feel positively assured, that the only method of accomplishing political reform in this State is the adoption of a new written Constitution. The great, the single object of our party is the adoption of such a Constitution. This main scheme in which we are engaged necessarily involves in it several important subjects, that require to be treated of in detail. We propose, in the first place, to make known, and in as few words as possible, what we
mean by a written constitution; and we will endeavor to de-
signate, at the same time, the legitimate and proper source.
from which, as we conceive, such an instrument is to be pro-
cured.

A Constitution is the fundamental law of a State. It is
something intended to prescribe the powers and duties of
government, and of the separate branches of the govern-
ment; and also to establish the qualifications of electors, and
generally to define the rights of the citizen. It may consist
of an aggregate of laws and usages, like the Constitution of
England; or, it may be a written instrument, like the Con-
stitution of the United States. There are two classes, at
least, of written Constitutions. The people of Rhode-Island
require not to be informed, that there is one class of written
constitutions consisting of such as are granted by Monarchs
to their subjects; in which class are included the charters
derived from the British crown, and granted to the several
Colonies of North-America; and under which all the colonies
were for a certain period governed, and until they became
independent States. But there is another class of written
constitutions, with which the people of Rhode-Island have
been less conversant; although it is the class, which, upon
just principles, can be most successfully advocated. This
class comprises the Constitutions which come directly from
the free and sovereign People; being such as do now exist in
every State of the Union, with the single exception of Rhode-
Island.

When the American States severed the political tie which
formerly bound them to Great Britain, all obligation to ac-
knowledge obedience to a British Charter, as a Constitution
of government, was, of course, dissolved; and the people of
each State were left free and sovereign. The people of each
State, upon the happening of that momentous event, became
equally tenants in common of the right of sovereignty; and
all were equally entitled to a voice in directing what should
be established as the fundamental rules of government, or in
other words, what should be the Constitution. The sover-
eignty of the King of England passed, therefore, not to the
Governor and Company of Rhode-Island, but to the People
at large, who fought the battles of the Revolution, and to their descendents. These positions are neither new, nor indefensible. It has been judicially, and by one of the earliest appointed Judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, declared, that "the Constitution is the work of the people themselves, in their original, sovereign and unlimited capacity."

The learned Judge to whom we refer, on the same occasion, described what was then understood in this country by a constitution. "A Constitution," he says, "is the form of government delineated by the mighty hand of the People; in which certain first principles, or fundamental laws are established." It is, he adds, "certain and fixed;" it contains "the permanent will of the people," being "the supreme law of the land," being "paramount to the will of the Legislature," and liable only "to be revoked or altered by those who made it."

There is one fact which of itself is adapted to awaken attention, and it is, that such a constitution as has just been described, has been established in every State except our own. That the people of Rhode-Island retain their inherent right to establish (in their original, sovereign capacity) a Constitution, cannot for a moment, be doubted; inasmuch as they never have made a surrender of it either directly or indirectly. Whenever therefore the people shall see fit to organize a government under a constitution of their own making, every good citizen will cheerfully submit to it. The important question then to be examined is—Has there been, or is there now, less occasion for a new written Constitution in Rhode-Island than in any other State of the Union? A moment's consideration makes it appear at least probable, that some amelioration in the condition of the people of the State could be effected by substituting a new Constitution in the place of a British Charter, which was written out more than one hundred and seventy years ago, when the checks and restraints upon government, in no part of the world

* See the Charge of Judge Patterson to the Grand Jury, in the case of Van Horne v. Dorrance, in the Circuit Court of the Pennsylvania District, in 1795; reported in 2 Dallas' Rep. page 304.
were so well adjusted, as they now are, to the maintenance of rational liberty. In Rhode-Island, as elsewhere, the object of government should be understood to be the welfare of the people generally; an object not to be arrived at without taking as a guide the everlasting principles of liberty and justice. Liberty and Justice are no idle, nor insignificant words. In the whole range of human language there are no two words more pregnant in meaning. They comprise, as a part of their definition, restraints upon rulers, protection against legislative aggression, and a perfect guaranty of the rights of the citizen. Are these great objects properly secured by the Charter of Charles II.? We propose, in answer to this question, and in the spirit of candor, to consider that instrument with some attention.

We begin by inquiring whether it be consistent with the spirit of the Declaration of American Independence, and becoming the character of Rhode-Island Republicans, any longer to acknowledge the charter of a British King as a Constitution of civil government? If the trappings of royalty appended to this instrument were taken away, would it not be better suited to a people who have changed the name of "subjects" for that of citizens, even allowing it to be in all other respects, perfect? These royal supplements of "especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion" are the badges of our former colonial dependence; and are as inappropriate to our present condition as the habiliments and toys of childhood are to the proportions and habits of a more mature age. The Declaration of Independence, which severed forever the connection between Great Britain and the Colonies, should teach us a lesson on this subject; and it is this,—that, retaining all which is valuable in the provisions of the old Charter, we ought long since to have discarded its form. But it will be said, are we not all Republicans; and is there any thing in the name of Royalty to affright us? In the political world, more than any where else, names are things, as we all know by experience: and if but a single person, in his inquiry after political truth, and the principles of republicanism, should be misled or offended by the senseless formularies of "divine right," in which our grant of govern-
ment is wrapped up, then ought we forthwith to assume both the form and truth of the Republican system. But admitting, merely for the sake of argument, that the form of the Royal Charter, with all its monarchical appendages, subsists as firmly as when the seal was affixed to it, and that it was derived from a proper source, a far more important inquiry yet remains to be made. Are the Powers and Duties of the different Departments of our Government properly marked out and defined by the Charter?

When we take into view the time at which, and the objects for which the Charter of King Charles II. was granted, we freely admit it to be in many respects a very good instrument. There is however but one of the provisions contained in it, involving legislative power and popular right, that was calculated for all future times. The provision referred to is, That no person shall be called in question for any opinion in matters of Religion, who does not actually disturb the civil peace. In a Constitution for this State, this provision of the Charter should be scrupulously preserved. It cannot be copied too literally, nor retained too tenaciously, the act of the General Assembly, excluding Roman Catholics from the polls, to the contrary notwithstanding.

The main object in procuring the Charter of Charles II. was not to define with exactness the powers of the government it constituted; but it was to define territorial boundaries, and to secure a permanent union of all portions of territory under one domain. This is not only fairly to be presumed from the face of the Charter itself, but it still more clearly appears by a recurrence to the circumstances under which that instrument was solicited and obtained from the government of the mother country. It is a matter of some interest to understand what the circumstances were under which it was solicited and obtained. It appears, that originally the town of Providence constituted a distinct jurisdiction by itself; and so also did the island of Rhode-Island; and Warwick likewise. These several territorial divisions became first united, and were first brought within one jurisdiction, by the charter of 1643. This charter is very short, and is very loose in its terms. It embraces a general power to
establish such a government as should be agreed on by the "voluntary consent of all." In obtaining this voluntary consent in favor of uniting and consolidating different portions of territory under one government, there was much difficulty; for it was not until the year 1647, that a general government was agreed upon and established. In that year was the first General Assembly convened; and the place of convention was the town of Portsmouth. The government thus established was dissolved in 1651, by another Charter obtained by Coddington (constituting him governor) : and this Charter severed the islands of Rhode-Island and Conanicut from the connection which they before had with Providence and Warwick. Though Coddington's Charter was soon vacated, a re-union of the several towns was not immediately thereupon effected; but on the contrary, Representatives from Providence and Warwick met at Providence, while another Assembly met on the Island. When a re-union took place, which, after much difficulty, was effected, it became an object to perpetuate it; and for this purpose, principally, was procured, in 1663, the Charter of King Charles II., which still exists as the nominal Constitution of the State.

That Charter is so superabundant in words, and oft repeated recitals, that no inconsiderable degree of patience is required in extracting from it its exact meaning and import. The only Constitution of government it prescribes may, in plain and more modern language, be embraced within a very small compass. After appointing a Governor, Deputy Governor and Ten Assistants, to continue such until the first Wednesday in May next ensuing, it then provides that those officers shall be elected, on the first Wednesday in May in each year, at Newport, "by the greater part of the said Company for the time being who shall be then and there present." The officers just named, with six persons from Newport, four for each of the respective towns of Portsmouth, Providence and Warwick, and two persons for each other town, to be elected by the major part of the freemen of the respective towns, are to hold a General Assembly, twice in every year; namely, on every first Wednesday in the month of May, and on every last Wednesday in the month of October, or oftener,
if it shall be requisite. The members, or the greater part of the members, constituting this Assembly ("whereof the Governor, or Deputy Governor, and six of the Assistants, at least to be seven") are invested with the following general powers, viz.;—To alter the times and places of holding the General Assembly;—To admit free such persons as they may think fit;—To create such offices, and elect such officers as they shall deem requisite;—To make and repeal such laws, forms and ceremonies of government as shall be deemed advisable;—To establish Courts and appoint Judges;—To regulate the manner of election to offices and places of trust;—To prescribe the number and limits of new towns;—and finally, to use the sweeping words of the Charter, "To direct, rule, order and dispose of all other matters and things as to them shall seem meet."

It will be perceived then that the powers conferred by the Charter for the organization and administration of the government, afford so much latitude, and are of such indefinite import, as to leave a great deal too much to the discretion of the Legislature; more especially, as, since the Declaration of Independence, no appeal can be had, as formerly, by an aggrieved party, to a tribunal of the mother country.* Further than this, a variety of instances can be pointed out, which show that the General Assembly have heretofore considered the Charter an instrument conferring upon them a dominion entirely discretionary.

The Charter, as we have already seen, provides that the Governor, Deputy Governor and Assistants are to be elected on every first Wednesday in May, at Newport, by a majority of the voters then and there present. This provision the General Assembly have deemed themselves competent to annul. By an Act passed in October, 1664,—less than a year after the public proclamation of the Charter, which was made at Newport, on the 24th of November, 1663,—it was provided that all freemen who so desired, instead of coming in person to Newport to vote for General Officers, on the first Wednesday in

*The General Assembly, at the June session 1719, went even so far as to cut off the liberty of appeal to the King in council, unless the matter in controversy was of the value of Three Hundred Pounds.
May, might vote in lawful town meetings; where their proxy votes should be received, and thence transmitted to the General Assembly.

In August, 1760, voting at Newport was entirely prohibited, except to members of the General Assembly; and the voters were directed to vote in their respective towns on the third Wednesday of April.

We have perceived too that the Charter provides, that the Freemen are to be admitted by the General Assembly; whereas the General Assembly, directly contrary to that provision, enacted in the year 1666, that the freemen should be admitted by the freemen of the respective towns, in town-meeting.

The Charter also appoints that the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Assistants, with the Representatives chosen by the several towns, shall hold a General Assembly, without any provision for forming two separate Houses; and yet, by an Act of the General Assembly, passed in 1696, the Governor, Deputy Governor and Assistants are to sit separately.

The act authorizing a Lieutenant Governor, or senior Senator to discharge the duties of Governor, in case of a vacancy by non-election, death or resignation,—or of his absence or inability, is another instance of the exercise of a sovereign discretion by the Legislature, for the purpose of remedying a defect in the Charter.

We wish to be understood, that we consider neither of the above Acts in itself objectionable. We have pointed them out merely as being essential deviations from some of the most precise directions set down in the Charter.

But what must be thought of the Act of the General Assembly* excluding Roman Catholics from the polls? The

*The Act of February, 1783, extends to Roman Catholic citizens all the Rights and Privileges of the Protestant citizens of this State, as declared by the act of the first of March, 1663—4, "any exceptions in the said act to the contrary notwithstanding." (see the last paragraph of this note.) The clause of exclusion in this act—"Roman Catholics only excepted"—was evidently added to the act of 1664, long afterward, sometime between the years 1719 and 1730. It is not to be found in the records of the State so far down as the year 1719; when the first (imperfect) edition of the Laws was published. In the second edition, of 1730, it appears for the first time. The Legislature therefore, when they spoke of this clause as a part of the act of 1663—4,
Charter, in this instance, was treated as a perfectly dead letter; for it expressly provides—"That no person within the said Colony, at any time hereafter, shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences of opinion in Matters of Religion, who does not actually disturb the civil peace." Professors of the Roman Catholic faith were, by the act of tyranny referred to, not only "molested" and "disquieted," but "punished;" and that too, by denying to them the inestimable right of suffrage!

To come down to a later period—Soon after the State was, with the other States, acknowledged Free and Independent, must be understood to have considered it as an addition or amendment. The present Charter was granted in July 1663; and it is altogether incredible that Roger Williams and his associates, then members of the Legislature, should have consented, four months after the reception of the Charter, to an enactment so directly contrary both to the letter and spirit of one of its most essential provisions; for the establishment of which they had used such strenuous exertions. There is extant in a work of Roger Williams, printed in 1652, a full recognition of the religious rights of Papists. If any doubt remained upon this question, it would be removed by the declaration of the Assembly in May, 1665, in answer to the King's Commissioners, That equality of civil and religious rights had been "a principle set forth and maintained in this colony, from the very beginning thereof."

Whatever, then, may have been the occasion of subsequently inserting this clause of exclusion in the Act of 1664 (and it seems probable that it was done to prove the loyalty of the Colony, in the contest between the Government and the Pretender to the throne of England,) it was suffered to remain in three editions of our Statute-Book, as a part of the law of the land, for more than fifty years; and, as far as we can learn, unquestioned as such by any one. So flagrant a violation of the Charter proves conclusively, that the Legislature then, as they did afterward, and do at present, considered and treated that instrument as if it were entirely subject to their control; and that they claimed and exercised an undefined power similar to that of the English Parliament.

It ought to be added here, that what is called, in the act to remove disabilities from Roman Catholics, the Act of the first of March, 1663, is, in fact, the Act of 1st March, 1664. The commencement of the civil and legal year, it will be recollected, was anciently on the 25th of March; and was not altered to the 1st of January, in the British Dominions, till the year 1751, by Act of Parliament. The Charter was granted, in the fifteenth year of Charles II, (1663.) The Act of 1663 above mentioned is stated in the margin of the printed copy to be of the sixteenth year of Charles II, which of course was 1664. All laws passed before the 25th of March would be dated as of the year preceding.
the General Assembly presented a singular example of high
handed prerogative. The Judges of a Court, in discharge
of their imperative duty, had ventured to decide that an Act
passed by the General Assembly, and deeply affecting the
rights of a citizen, was repugnant to the great principles of
liberty contained in *Magna Charta*, and was incompatible
with the acknowledged rights of even British subjects. For
thus daring to deny an unlimited and irresponsible power in
the General Assembly, those Judges were arraigned before
that body, when they barely escaped being punished with
dismissal from office. The conduct of the General Assembly
in that instance, comports well with the declaration made
by one of the most prominent members of the House of Rep-
resentatives, while standing in his place, viz. that the Legis-
lature of Rhode-Island was **OMNIPOTENT**. This declaration
was made within the last twenty years, and cannot have es-
caped the recollection of many now living.

The General Assembly would not have proceeded as they
did in the case just mentioned, had they not been embolden-
ed by the Charter, which leaves it in their power to make
and unmake Judges once a year, or oftener if they see fit. Is
not this a capital defect? We shall have more to offer on this
subject by and by.

What shall we say of an Instrument of Government which
is uncertain enough to leave it to be made a question, whether
upon a failure to elect a Governor and Senators, the Govern-
ment itself fell through, and with it the Legislative Acts of
the ensuing year, the Titles to a large amount of property, and
the Proceedings and Decisions of the Courts? We shall say,
if we are just to ourselves, that it should be forthwith dis-
pensed with, and that a new one should be adopted by the
People without delay.

The Charter is farther essentially defective in having af-
fixed a certain Representation to each town for all time to
come; thus making no provision for the changes that might
happen.

No form of a Constitution can be worth much, which leaves
to the Representative Servants of the People the power of
determining the Rights of the People as voters. The People
ought always to do this for themselves, and not leave it to be done for them. Strange mistakes sometimes happen from this neglect; as in this State, where it has become necessary to ask *Who the People are?* More on this subject in another place.

Who will say by what right the towns of North-Kingstown and South-Kingstown are singled out from the other towns in the State, by the act of June 1722, and each entitled to a Senator?

In May, 1778, the first Senator having declined serving, the General Assembly *promoted* each of the other Senators one degree higher, and *elected* a new tenth senator!!

Without citing any more examples, we appeal then to our fellow-citizens, and ask them whether there does not exist abundant reason for proclaiming what was expressed in one of the Resolutions passed at the first session of the Convention, namely,—That the Powers of the Legislature, and the Rights of the Citizen should be defined and fixed by a written State Constitution?

A subject of just complaint, and one which loudly calls for the corrective hand of a Constitution, is the extreme *INEQUALITY OF OUR REPRESENTATION.* This evil has been entailed upon us by our strange adherence to the Charter of Charles II. This Charter provides (as we have seen) that the towns in the State shall be represented by "not exceeding six persons for Newport, four persons for each of the respective towns of Providence, Portsmouth and Warwick, and two persons for each other town." At the time the Charter was granted, this was a fair and equal apportionment of Representatives, according to the relative population of the several towns. But since that period, the relative population of our towns has so greatly changed, and so many small towns, entitled to two representatives each, have been incorporated, by dividing and sub-dividing larger ones, that the Freemen of this state are now very unequally and unfairly represented in our State Legislature. In order to show the extent of this inequality, we ask your attention to a few statements, which you will find fully supported, by referring to the official returns of votes polled, in
each town at our recent elections, and by comparing the number of these votes with the number of Representatives to which each town is entitled by the Charter.

At the last spring election, the whole number of votes polled in all the towns in this state was 7317. One third of this number is 2439. Our House of Representatives consists of 72 members. 38 of these (being a majority of two members) were elected by 2384 qualified freemen,—less than one third of the qualified freemen of the State who then voted. The remaining 34 members were of course elected by the remaining 4933 freemen. The result is about the same at our other elections.

Half the freemen or (more properly speaking) qualified voters in the State amount by the returns to 3658. 51 Representatives (being a majority of 15) are now elected by 3637 voters; less than half the qualified voters in the State. The remaining 21 Representatives are of course elected by the remaining 3680 qualified voters.

By descending a little to particulars, we shall find instances of inequality still more unjust and indefensible. The town of Jamestown, for instance, sends one Representative to every 18 freemen;—while the town of Burrillville sends but one Representative to every 113 freemen; the town of Foster but one Representative to every 156 freemen;—the town of Smithfield but one Representative to every 206 freemen;—and the city of Providence but one Representative to every 275 freemen.

Thus our system supposes that one freeman of the town of Jamestown is entitled to as much political weight and importance as 6 freemen of the town of Burrillville, 8 of the town of Foster, 11 of the town of Smithfield, and 15 of the city of Providence. It consequently takes 6 freemen in Burrillville, 8 in Foster, 11 in Smithfield and 15 in Providence, to equal one freeman of the town of Jamestown. The result will be very similar by comparing other small towns with larger ones.

An inequality of representation like this is too unjust to be much longer tolerated. It is not uncommon in the monarchies of Europe; but, with the single exception of Rhode-Island,
it is unknown in the United States. It was never intended by our venerable ancestors who procured the Charter; and, if Roger Williams were now to rise from his grave, there can be no doubt that such inequality would, of itself, induce him to take the lead of a political reformation.

If the number of representatives from each town be compared with the whole population of each town, the result will not materially differ from that to which we have arrived in considering the representation of qualified voters only.

The whole population of this State, according to the Census of 1830, is 97,210. One third of this number is 32,433. — 31,318 (being less than one third) are now represented by 38 members of the House of Representatives, being a majority of 2 in that body. The remaining 65,892 are, of course, represented by only 34 members.

Half the population of the State is just 48,605. 47,365 (being less than half the population) are now represented by 51 members of the House of Representatives, being a majority in that body of 15. The remaining 49,845, are, of course, represented by 21 members only.

Of the twelve most agricultural towns in the State, the six largest have less than one third the weight of representation in our Legislature that the six smallest have: yet this inequality is represented by some as a mere question of interest between the agricultural and manufacturing towns.

This inequality of representation has had the effect of placing the majority of the qualified voters in this State, under the control of the minority. This is as certain as the fact that figures speak the truth. Now who does not see that upon all questions in which the local interests of this minority are adverse to the local interests of the majority, they will unite against the majority? And who does not see that whenever they do so unite they will control the majority? It is an odious feature of our present system, that it has given a local character to some of the most general and vitally important questions of legislation. What, for instance, can be more important than a just and equal apportionment of taxes? And yet our present system of representation has given a minority of the Freemen both the interest and the power, to per-
petuate an unequal and unjust apportionment. What can be a more important object of legislation than to establish a just and equal representation of the people? Yet our present system has given to a minority of the Freemen both the interest and the power to continue our present unequal and unjust representation. Our present system is at war with the prosperity of the State. Is not the contemplated accession of territory, wealth and population from the State of Massachusetts important to our interests? Yet our present system has given to a minority of the Freemen both the power and the local interest to defeat this accession.

Now it is one of the essential parts of the definition of a Republican Government, or Representative Democracy, that it is a government resulting from the will of the majority, ascertained by a just and equal representation. Is that government, then, where the will of the majority is not ascertained by a just and equal representation, but where the will of the minority controls that of the majority, a Republican Government? Is it not, in effect, whatever may be its forms, an Oligarchy—or the Rule of a Few? How, indeed, can we better define an Oligarchy than by calling it a government in which the less number, not by the power of virtue or talent, but by a political appointment, rule the greater? Whether this minority be a small or a large minority does not alter the principle. A large minority has no more right, on republican principles, to rule the majority than a small one. Even a large minority, especially in a small State, is easily brought under the control of a few leading men. We have seen, that in this State the Legislative power is placed, by the inequality of our representation, in the hands of less than one third part of the qualified voters. These elect a majority of the Representatives. A few political managers, who give themselves to the business, have but little difficulty in managing such a minority in this small State, and in ruling the whole State as they please, against the will of two thirds of the freemen, and three fourths of the people. It is not strange, therefore, to find some men of all parties very unwilling to disturb the present order of things.
We by no means contend that representation ought to be proportioned to the amount of property represented, or to the amount of taxes paid. The citizen of small property, who pays a tax in proportion to his means, is as much entitled to a voice in the appropriation of that tax, though small in amount, as the most opulent man in the State. The same principle is applicable to towns and counties.

The True Basis of Representation undoubtedly is that adopted by the Constitution of the United States,—Population: for the representative represents not only the interests of the independent freemen, who are his immediate constituents, but also the interests of the whole population who are dependent upon, or connected with them; and property is so equally distributed among the people in our country, that the practical effect of adhering to this basis is, that those who pay the expenses of government will have a fair voice in the measures of government. We have seen that the relative changes in our population, and the incorporation of small towns have combined to change this basis; and it is certainly an aggravation of this evil, that it has carried along with it an extravagant disproportion between our representation and taxation. This will be made perfectly evident by comparing our present ratio of representation with the act of the General Assembly, passed in 1824, establishing a valuation of the ratable property in every town in the State as a rule of taxation. It will be found by referring to that act, that the taxable property in the County of Providence amounts to 1,650,000 dollars more than all the taxable property in all the other Counties in the State; and yet the County of Providence has considerably less than one third of the representation which those Counties have. It will also be found that the taxable property in six of the towns in this State amounts to about the same as the taxable property in the other twenty-five towns: yet these six towns elect but fourteen representatives, while the other towns elect the remaining fifty-eight representatives. It will also be found that some of our country towns pay five, others six, others seven, others eight and others nine times the amount of taxes paid by other country towns, having the same number of representatives.
as the former; and yet this subject has often been represent-
ed as a mere question of interest between town and country.

These statements prove that the portion of our people who
pay the weight of the taxes are deprived of their fair nume-
rical influence in the appropriation of these taxes. Is this just,
fellow-citizens? Is it right? Will posterity believe that we
are the sons of those men of Rhode-Island who were fore-
most to shed their blood and expend their treasure, in hum-
bling the power of Great-Britain "for imposing taxes upon us
without our consent"? Certainly those who pay the weight of
the taxes are entitled to be equally represented, in proportion
to their numbers, with those who do not. This is all we ask
for them. But to crowd them down below the level of their
equal rights with one hand, and to keep the other hand in
their pockets, only because time and accident have given us
the power to do so, is unworthy of the successors of Roger
Williams,—unworthy of the land of Greene, Olney and Perry!
Strange as it is, the State of Rhode-Island, so far famed
for Religious liberty, seems to have become insensible to the
claims of Political liberty. It is the only State in this great Re-
publican Confederacy in which the People have not limited
the power of their Legislature by a written Constitution;—
the only State in the Union in which the People suffer a fair
and equal representation of their interests to be defeated by a
rotten borough system, almost as odious as that which the
subjects of the King of Great-Britain have too much republic-
ian spirit to endure, and which they have lately in a great
degree corrected by a Parliamentary Reform.

The remark of one of our own citizens is but too true,
"that the great foundations of Republican Liberty and Equal-
ity have virtually ceased to be the basis of the Government
of Rhode-Island." He might have added, with equal truth,
that "the evil is only to be remedied by a Constitution;
a constitution founded upon enlightened and just principles,
and approuated and adopted by the voice of the People."

You have just seen that Thirty-Eight, two more than half
of the Representatives to the General Assembly, represent
less than one third of the population of the State, namely, Thir-
ty-one Thousand three hundred and eighteen inhabitants, and, after
adding that a Majority of that number of inhabitants have no voice in the election of those Representatives, it will be time for us to advance to the very important inquiry, whether the Minority of a Minority ought any longer to govern this State; or, whether there ought to be such an Extension of Suffrage as to include among the voters a Majority of the people. And in prosecuting this inquiry, we have a just claim to your patient attention, even if our remarks should be protracted to a length in any degree proportioned to its great interest and magnitude. A question relating to the rights and disabilities of more than Thirteen Thousand * of your fellow-citizens cannot be hastily and carelessly considered and dismissed, without such an imputation of indifference toward their feelings and claims, both in those who offer reasons, and in those to whom those reasons are addressed, as would be alike discreditable to our candor, justice and patriotism.

We contend then, That a participation in the choice of those who make and administer laws is a Natural Right; which cannot be abridged, nor suspended any farther than the greatest good of the greatest number imperatively requires. And this greatest good is not that of any portion of the people however large, but of the whole population of a State. It may seem strange that a fundamental truth like this, which contains the very life-blood and vitality of a Republican Government, should be called in question at the present day, and in our own country. But it is nevertheless true that there are those, who while they yield a formal and guarded deference to this great doctrine, yet in their reasoning and practice destroy all the force of their hollow and doubtful admission; and maintain doctrines, which, if followed out to their legitimate consequences, would justify almost any exercise of irresponsible and unjust power.

*The number of the white male citizens of this State, over the age of twenty-one years, according to the last census, exceeds Twenty-three Thousand. Ten thousand would be a very high estimate of the number of Freemen: probably a thousand too large. But say there are ten thousand Freemen in the State; it then becomes a matter of the utmost importance to examine a Legislative provision, which excludes the whole of the remaining Thirteen Thousand and some hundreds from all political privileges.
In order to comprehend more clearly the nature of the political right to partake in the choice of Rulers, let us see, in the first place, how rulers came to exist.—A Nation, or State, is a collection of families, held in union by their consent to a form of government for the whole, either express, or implied. This union for purposes of defence, and for the security of previously existing rights of person and property,—founded on the great law of nature, written in every man's heart,—takes place, of course, at the first settlement of a country. In the early and rude ages of the world, and to the present period among uncivilized people, personal strength, courage and fortitude are the only recommendations to public favor; and the affairs of government are usually entrusted to men of war and prowess. In the course of time, the power thus delegated,—having become fixed in the hands of those who hold it, by means of military force; or in other hands, like theirs, by conquest, with the aid of the long train of frauds, and artifices, which might enlists in its service against right, all over the world,—was transmitted, like property, to their successors, who under the names of chiefs, kings, and other appellations to designate the post of supremacy in a state, thenceforth became the established sovereigns of the different nations of the earth.

That the elective process, which has been described, is not the mere fiction of speculative writers, but actually took place, at some remote period in the history of almost every country,—in the old world, for instance, in the progress of population westward, from its earliest seat in the east,—is rendered almost certain by what we know of the institutions of our remote progenitors in the forests of Germany, and by the laws and usages of government in some of the aboriginal tribes of this continent. It was adopted among ourselves by the Pilgrim Fathers, who, when they had passed beyond the execution of English laws, proceeded to form a plan of government, by mutual consent and natural suffrage, which was carried into effect upon their arrival at the rock of Plymouth. The proceedings of Roger Williams and his associates furnish another striking example; and, if we are not greatly mistaken, the accurate history of some of our
Western settlements, at the early period, when the hardy pioneers first buried themselves in the forest, beyond the reach of civilization and law, would elucidate this problem of the formation of government, and fully sustain the suggestions that have been offered.

As a general rule then, Government was first formed by the act, and with the consent of those who were to be governed, given either expressly, or by acquiescence. And what did government confer upon those who established it? Here lies the radical error of those who contend that all Political Rights are the creatures of the Political Compact. Those reasoners will tell you about rights created by society. We wish to ask previously what those rights were, which existed before political society itself. Those rights were the Rights to Life, to Liberty, to Property,—in general, to the Pursuit of Happiness. Life was the gift of the common Maker of all; and could not be taken without committing the greatest act of injustice, which one man can commit against another.—Personal liberty too, the right to walk abroad upon the face of the earth, was another natural right.—The bounties of nature were all at the beginning spread out before the human race for their sustenance and enjoyment; and he who should appropriate the fruits of the earth to his own use,—and more especially those with which he had mixed his own labor, by the cultivation of the soil, had a just right to repel the invasion of him who should seek to dispossess him of what he had acquired. This was the natural right to property.—Each individual also had the right of pursuing his own happiness, in the way which he might prefer, provided he injured no man in the enjoyment of the same right. Another great personal right, already alluded to, has been reserved for the last: it is the Right which every man, among the families by which nations were composed, had, of giving or withholding his voice in every question relating to the union of those families in a form of government; and of removing from its jurisdiction if that union were formed against his consent. The existence of such a natural right is too evident to be disputed. And so far was it from being surrendered when government was once formed, that its continuance was absolutely necessary to maintain the ex-
istence of that government, by the re-election of new magis-
trates, when the terms of those first elected had expired.
This right is the very Right of Suffrage which is the burden of
our present inquiry; and which we call a Natural Right.
Political Society could not confer that right or power upon its members,
by the exercise of which it first came into existence. In other words,
Man, in the exercise of his natural rights, made Government;
and government did not give to man his rights. Why then,
it will be asked, was government established at all, if not to
give rights? We will answer by saying that the end of Government
was to make previously existing rights, conferred by the hand of God,
more secure. Where men live in families, as we have describ-
ed, without laws, each man is the natural, and, in most cases,
the sole, protector of his own rights. If life, liberty, proper-
ty and happiness be threatened or invaded, each man is
then obliged to defend himself against the aggressor; and
victory will attend not upon the best right, but upon the
strongest arm.—The portion of land appropriated out of the
common stock to individual uses will be liable to continual in-
vansion.—Individual happiness will be perpetually insecure.—
The right of Suffrage, which we have shown to exist, but for
which there is no use, in this state of things,—at last brings
men of different families together, and they agree to certain
laws, and upon certain magistrates to execute them; thus
freeing themselves from the necessity of perpetual warfare
individually against individuals, in private defence. This is
Government. It does not give rights; but it defines and de-
fends them. Examine the most extensive collection of laws in
existence, which has been gradually accumulating for ages,—
from the necessities of men in their various relations to each
other,—and which has been matured by the wisdom of the
most enlightened legislators and judges, and you will not find
one just law in the whole of it which is not designed to pro-
mote and protect some one of the great natural rights, which
existed before written law and political society itself. Gov-
ernment then being designed to accomplish a greater good for
each man than he could single handed secure to himself, the
Greatest Good of the Greatest Number must be the everlast-
ing criterion of all governments, in all ages and parts of the
world: and it is the duty of patriots and philanthropists, whenever this greatest good has been disregarded, in the abridgment or suspension of natural rights, to endeavor to bring back government to its original and just principles. The idea of surrendering natural liberty, in any proper sense of that word, upon entering into political society, in consideration of the benefits to be derived from it, is one of those preposterous fictions with which day-dreaming men have so long abused the easy credulity of mankind; and which despotic rulers most readily embrace, that they may, with a greater appearance of justice, enslave and oppress their fellow-creatures. A man upon entering into political society, surrenders to the magistrate the protection of his rights, and not the existence of the rights themselves.

It is very common to attempt to make a distinction between the right of property and the right to participate in political power, founded on the fact that the former is so much less interfered with by governments than the latter. From this fact the inference is drawn that the former is a natural right, and the latter is not. The fact of interference is true, but the inference is not correct. A despotic government will, for its own sake, respect the rights of property; but will carefully suppress all political rights, as coming in contact with itself. And yet, various restraints on the holding of property have prevailed and now prevail in different countries: and the examination of them would be very much to our purpose, if time permitted. The reason why an enlightened regard to the best good interferes so much more with political rights than with the right to hold property, is found in the different directions which these rights take in their exercise. In acquiring property a man directs his attention to the productions of nature and of industry, and to the various exchanges of them; and the more who are at work in this way, the better for the public. The right of voting brings a man in contact with his fellow-citizens in matters of right and interest, and controls the legislation by which the latter are protected. And there will be a great many who are too ignorant to exercise it to the advantage of the whole.
It is also objected to the doctrine of a natural right of suffrage, that Minors and Females are excluded from political privileges. The first part of the objection, regarding minors, proves too much for the objectors; for as the minor is debarred from the full enjoyment of the right of property also, until the age of twenty-one years, it might be argued, with equal show of reason, that there is no natural right of property; for which right the objectors strenuously contend. But the truth is, that the restriction upon minors does not conflict in the least with any natural right; it acknowledges their rights, and only decides the period at which they shall commence and be exercised. This decision is not arbitrary; but founded on a just observation and experience of human nature and character. It is necessary, before the young man can enjoy any of his natural rights to his own advantage, or with safety to the general good, that he should be able to take care of his own interests, should have attained to some knowledge of himself, of affairs, of mankind, of the nature and operations of government. True it is that some are better qualified for political action at the age of eighteen, than others at the most mature and vigorous period of life. But, as a general rule, twenty-one years are not too long a time to acquire the requisites for the full enjoyment of civil and political rights. If men were born in the world in the full possession of their physical, mental and moral powers, without the necessity of development, exercise and cultivation, then there might be some force in the objection which is offered. But as this is not the case, the rule of all civilized countries, which postpones a man's majority until he has obtained the stature and capacity of a man, is founded on a just deference to the greatest good of the whole, without infringing upon individual rights. This rule is merely the continuation of a law of nature, enforced in the families of which we have spoken, before the formation of political society.

With regard to the exclusion of women from the exercise of political power,—we are far enough from denying to them the possession of natural rights. It is well known that they formerly exercised the elective franchise in one of the States of this Union—New-Jersey; and now that they have ceased to do so, the suspension of their rights rests, not upon any
decree of mere force, but upon a just consideration of the best good of society, including that of the sex itself. Their own assent, it should be added, confirms this arrangement of their natural protectors; and being fully aware that the dignity and purity of their sex, character and example would be soon impaired in the conflicts of party strife, they have wisely consented to forego the nominal exercise of political power, and to rule mankind by the only absolute authority which is consistent with their greatest happiness. There is only one criterion of this abridgment or suspension of the rights of our nature,—to which we have frequently referred: and if the greatest good of the greatest number do not require the exclusion of women from our political assemblies, in accordance with the decision of those countries where they are most honored and esteemed, then is this exclusion unjust. The inquiry, in each case, is strictly a question of fact. Any other exclusion of individuals, or classes of persons must be tried and decided by the same rule.

But to proceed,—Political Liberty is not, then, as we hear it sometimes said, the after-growth of refined and cultivated ages, but it is the spontaneous offspring of a natural sense of right and justice; and though harsh in some of its features, in an uncivilized age, it may still vigorously exist, and even then contain within its rude forms the germs of those institutions, which shall become the boast and the glory of subsequent and more enlightened generations. To him who studies the philosophy of history, it is a matter of surprise and pleasure to discover, in the government of the ancient Germans, the elements and principles of liberty which make the most valuable portion of the Constitution of England, and which have been carried out, and so greatly improved in our own admirable form of government.

If at all successful in our investigation, we have arrived at the conclusion, that government was designed for the protection and perpetuation of rights,—not derived from itself, but natural and inherent,—in such a way as to promote the greatest good of the whole: and that the question now before us is not what right of suffrage the government ought to grant, as a gift, but with what restrictions required by this greatest good, suffrage may be claimed as a right by the people of this State.
Is it consistent with this general good that the present landed qualification should be any longer continued as the exclusive condition of exercising the privilege of an elector?

As we are addressing Republicans, who believe that a republican government is the only one which truly consults the rights and happiness of the people, if we should show that the present restriction is, in its operation, inconsistent with republican principles, then we shall secure the aid of all those who consistently hold those principles, in having this restriction removed.

While the general welfare is the great aim and object of the American plan of government, most of the governments of the old world are constructed and operate for the benefit of the few, at the expense of all the rest. The original principle of equality of suffrage at the formation of political society has been set entirely at nought; and you will see a despot whose remote ancestor was elected to the head of a state, on account of his valor and achievements, now claiming to rule over their descendents by divine right, and to exclude them from political privileges. The effect of this kind of government and of the artificial condition of society connected with it, is to place all the wealth and power of the country in the hands of the intelligent few; and, beyond the middle classes, at the other extremity of the body politic, to create a mass of poverty, ignorance and degradation, which is incapacitated to participate, to its own good, in the government of the country, and unfit to accept of a better government if it should be offered. This is the most dreadful effect of a long-standing despotism. In such a state of society, where the vast majority are taught to regard the few who rule them as a higher order of beings,—are imbued with a feeling of entire servility, and have lost that of personal worth and independence, a true lover of his fellow-men may well hesitate about the propriety and the safety of suddenly introducing a Republican system, and making them voters all at once, without the preparatory process of education; since the good of the whole, including the oppressed themselves, might require their exclusion. Such a man, if in his heart a Republican, would, notwithstanding his hesitation about im-
mediate emancipation, still acknowledge their natural rights. He would feel that the poorest and most degraded subject of the most despotic monarch is yet a brother of the human race, and has within him the capacity of better things;—that all who wear the form of humanity are entitled to the hopes and privileges of human nature. He would therefore be anxious to qualify the oppressed as soon as possible, and to raise them to the privilege of self-government. But whatever course a true patriot might feel himself bound to adopt, in one of the corrupt monarchies of the old world, no such reason can be given for a postponement of political rights in our own country. No privileged orders have ever existed in it, to create the vast inequality which prevails elsewhere between the many and the few. A spirit of freedom was brought with them by our ancestors, and has ever subsisted among us. There is a very general diffusion of useful knowledge. The great majority, also, in this country are interested in property of some sort or other; and are thus strictly bound together in interest to support the government. The only exception to this general equality is in the Slave States, where a large part of the population is in a still lower condition, than the degraded populace to which we have alluded. But be the case as it may in those States, there is no pretence of any such marked inequality among the citizens of New-England as to designate any particular class of them, for exclusion from the benefit of political rights. The true American doctrine is that the majority not only have a right to govern, but that they are sufficiently intelligent and honest to govern; and that, if there be any doubt about this sufficiency, we ought immediately to set to work and build more schools. Men in Europe who are opposed to any farther improvement in government may talk about the necessity of "barring out the people," and of "defending themselves against the people." But this will not do here. He therefore who contends in New-England for any limitation of political privileges that excludes a majority of his fellow-citizens from voting, whatever may be his party, or professions, or denunciation of other men on the score of Republicanism, tells you in effect, startled though he may be at the sound of the words,
that he distrusts and is unfavorable to a Republican form of
government—that he wishes “to make it safe” by confining
all power to the minority, who will thus be able to pro-
tect themselves against the people. Protection against the
people in this country! Any man strenuous for the present
system, and who calls himself friendly also to popular rights,
would do well to inquire for the definition of the word Peo-
ple. It includes, besides landholders, many more who are
getting impatient for a new definition of the word, however
its meaning may have been settled by long usage in this
State. Depend upon it, fellow-citizens, that if the People of
this country become ignorant and corrupt, our form of gov-
ernment will be changed, in spite of all the barriers of a land-
ed qualification. While they continue intelligent, it is as
unnecessary as it is unjust to bar out the majority.—We will
not use any flattering words about the intelligence of the
people, as is too often done, because we would not encour-
age any self-satisfaction on this point. Those who now
claim to be made voters in this State wish to see this intel-
ligence greatly increased. They wish to see education taken
out of the range of declamation and made a matter of fact.
They feel a confidence in the stability of our Republican gov-
ernment; and that it would be treason to doubt it. Their
reliance is on the effect of general education. They are
anxious to see the means of a common education greatly in-
creased in Rhode-Island, and are ready to pay their propor-
ton of it by a poll or other tax. They will fear nothing for
the country so soon as but a small fraction of the population
shall be unable to read, write and cipher, and be uninstruct-
ed in the principles of common honesty. Let those among
us who fear to extend suffrage, on account of the alleged ig-
norance of the applicants, lend their aid to introduce an im-
proved and extended system of Public Schools. They will
thus quiet their own scruples, and confer an incalculable
benefit upon the State. This is the true, patriotic, Republi-
can course. We do not concede the name of Republican to
every one who uses it. He only is entitled to it, in our es-
timation, who prefers a Republic above all other forms of
government, who upholds it by his words and his example,
who refuses its privileges to none who are fit for them, who
seeks for its perpetuation in the increase of public virtue and
intelligence. If any thing be wanting to this definition of a
Republican, it will be supplied by the addition that he loves
his country more than his party, however honest it may be.

Further, as Political is the only safeguard of Civil Liberty;
or, in other words, as a participation in the choice of those
who make laws is the only security that those laws shall be
just and equal in their operation, we ask, is the civil liberty
of the majority protected as it ought to be in this State?

“In countries,” says an English writer, “where a man is, by
birth or fortune, excluded from offices, or from a power of vo-
ting for proper persons to fill them, that man, whatever be the
form of government, or whatever civil liberty or power over
his own actions he may have, has no power over those of an-
other. He has no share of the government, and therefore has no
political liberty at all. Every man has an absolute and unal-
ienable right to civil liberty; and for the security of it, political
liberty should be extended as widely as possible. No man
should be excluded from the exercise of it, excepting from circumstances
of unavoidable necessity. It may appear, at first sight, to be of lit-
tle consequence whether persons in the common ranks of life
enjoy any share of political liberty or not. But without this,
there cannot be that persuasion of security and independence,
which alone can encourage a man to make great exertions.
A man who is sensible that he is at the disposal of others,
over whose conduct he has no sort of control, has always
some unknown evil to dread. He will be afraid of attracting
the notice of his superiors, and must feel himself a mean and
degraded being. But a sense of liberty, and a knowledge of
the laws by which his conduct must be governed, with some
degree of control over those who make and administer the
laws, give him a constant feeling of his own importance, and
lead him to indulge a free and manly turn of thinking, which
will make him greatly superior to what he would have been
under an arbitrary form of government.” This is the lan-
guage of a foreign writer, the subject of a monarchical gov-
ernment. If it be sound and just in its application to such a
government, it has tenfold force in a country with institu-
tions like our own. We see that a man may be civilly free and politically a slave. An absolute despot may dispense wise laws to his subjects, and maintain them with impartiality. It is especially his interest to guard the right of property, since every addition to the national wealth adds to his own resources and to the strength and splendor of his government. But there is no security for the continuance of this protection; and it is in the power of a despotic successor to overturn all previously established laws, to stop the general transfer of property, and to constitute himself, as the present sovereign of Egypt has done, the sole merchant in his own dominions. Of course we do not mean to intimate that any similar gross abuse of power has ever been perpetrated in this State; but, before leaving this part of the subject, we would ask one practical question, namely, whether there has ever been any reason to suspect in our Legislature, chosen as it is, any tendency to lean toward this or that interest in the State, at the expense of others.

But not only is our present restrictive system opposed to the fundamental principles of a Republican Government, but it is in violation of the real intentions of those who founded our State, and procured the Charter of Charles II. It was declared at the first session of the General Assembly, in the year 1647, that the Government of the State should be a DEMOCRACY, that is to say a Rule of the PEOPLE. That Rule was perfectly consistent, at the foundation of the State, and long after, with a landed qualification. It was then in this State, as it is now in our newly settled western States;—he who did not own land, owned nothing. A man who goes to settle in Missouri is a purchaser of land, as a matter of course. If he be a mechanic, he must, nevertheless, before he exercises his trade, make a clearing and set up his log hut. A few dollars, for the payment of which he has credit perhaps, will purchase a considerable estate. If a landed qualification were introduced into several of the western States, it would not much diminish the number of voters, who now vote upon a more extended plan. It was very much the same in the early days of Rhode-Island. Landed property was not only the principal property of the citizens,
but was so easily attainable, that a landed qualification for voters excluded only a small portion of the people from political power. But the condition of things has changed: the towns have changed. New interests have sprung up; and there are now great numbers of our most honest, industrious and useful citizens, who own no land, but who contribute by their occupations, and by the payment of taxes to the extent of their means, their proportionate measure to the public welfare. Yet these men have no voice in the government which they contribute to support: being excluded upon the false notion, that landed property is the only kind that is decisive of a man's intelligence and honesty. Look at the hardship of the case of a mechanic, for instance. He has received a common education; he has served as a journeyman, and is now about to commence business for himself, with some small earnings of his own. His savings are only sufficient to procure the implements of his trade. After fairly starting in life on his own account, he becomes anxious to provide for himself a home. He marries; he hires a tenement; in the course of time, he acquires more money, which his interest demands should be invested in the stock of his trade. He is fully able to purchase one hundred and thirty-four dollars worth of land; but it is, in most cases, against his interest to do so, until he can purchase a great deal more. In the mean time, he is debarred from the polls; and if he ask why, the answer must be, that the non-freeholders are too ignorant or dishonest to be trusted in so important a matter as voting. This we believe is a fair statement of the case of hundreds of mechanics in this State; of exactly how many hundreds, we are not now able to say, but we hope to lay this information before you at some future time. The people of this State cannot be aware of the real operation of the present system, or they would long since have applied a corrective. Take some examples of the way in which this system works.

"In 1830 there were, in the town of North-Providence, 779 male inhabitants over 21 years of age; of whom 200 were free-holders, leaving 579 non-freeholders. In 1832, 66 of the non-freeholders were taxed for about $50,000 worth of property."
The amount of their taxes was $140. This tax was levied on those only who kept stores, or who were known to have property; while there were probably three times that number, whose bank-stock and other property amounted to as much more, unknown to the assessors. There are residing in Pawtucket five patriots of the Revolution, who have no voice in any of the affairs of the town or State."

"In Providence 65 non-freeholders alone have lately paid a tax of 1078 dollars; and 361, including the 65, a tax of 1810 dollars."—(Some eldest sons are included in this list.)

"In Cumberland there are 210 tax-payers who have no vote. 280 persons voted at the last election in that town."

"In Warren there are 138 freeholders, natives of this State, and 49 resident freeholders, natives of other States. In 1835, 79 non-freeholders were assessed $156.42."

But this restriction is not merely burdensome upon traders and mechanics. How fare the younger sons of farmers? True a sort of virtue is transmitted from the land-owner, but it reaches no farther than the first-born son. We have but a word to say about that remnant of the right of primogeniture, the privilege of the eldest son to vote. If we had a franchise to give away, and the question was, which of the sons in a family should have it, there would be many good reasons for preferring the eldest. But the real question is, why either of the sons, or any other person, should be exempted from the general law of qualification, whatever it may be. No good reason has been, nor can be given.

But the farmer himself does not escape the effect of the present law. Misfortune may overtake him, and he may be obliged to mortgage his estate; perhaps to some non-freeholder, who has accumulated his earnings, and has something to lend. The moment the mortgagee goes into possession, the farmer's former capacity and competency literally fall to the ground: he is no longer fit to be trusted with a vote; and the non-freeholder, who was before not to be trusted, becomes all at once invested with the dignity and immunities of a freeman. But industry retrieves the farmer's losses, and he redeems his estate. His intelligence and trustworthiness return upon him by the magic of his title deed: and the hapless
wight, who has thus been indulged with the brief fruition of political privileges, shrinks away, all at once, into his former insignificance. What does such a farmer think about suffrage?

Take the three professions of law, divinity and medicine. The majority of lawyers, clergymen and physicians, as a body, certainly are not landholders; and yet we freely entrust our property, our consciences and our lives to men, who, the law says, are too ignorant and corrupt to vote for a constable!—We feel a proper respect for the landholders of this State. A great part of this Convention are landholders. We are happy to see that so much of the good old fashioned spirit of the primitive times has been transmitted to our own through the farming interest. But notwith-

*In October, 1718, it was enacted by the General Assembly, that no person should have "in any one cause above two attorneys," and that one of them should be "a freeholder, a freeman, and an inhabitant in this colony."

In October, 1729, an act was passed "restricting all lawyers from being chosen deputies (to the General Assembly) of any towns in this Colony, during their practicing the law." It was repealed at the February session succeeding, having been found, as is stated in the preamble to the repealing act, "to be of ill consequence, and inconsistent with the right of his Majesty's subjects in this colony." A marvelous sense of justice!

It cannot be necessary to do more than allude to a more recent act of the Legislature, imposing a special tax on members of the legal profession;—to a vote excluding them from seats at the bar of the House of Representatives;—and to a vote depriving insolvent petitioners of the benefit of argument by counsel, upon the trial of their petitions.

In October, 1748, a fine of 100 pounds, "for every such offence," was imposed on any physician, who should refuse or neglect to obey the orders of the governor, and a list of other state and town officers, in their attempt to prevent the spreading of a contagious disease. On turning to a previous law (of 1743) to ascertain what could be required of a physician, it appears that the abovementioned officers, might, at their pleasure, send him, or any other "suitable person" on board of an infected vessel, without any regard to his own inclination. Medical men, to their great honor, have, with rare exceptions, been ready, in all times of pestilence and calamity, to sacrifice their health and to risk their lives in the service of the public; and this compulsory process is unjust to their rights and character, and ill suited to their feelings. The act does not specify whether any distinction shall be made between freeholders and non-freeholders in this case. The penalty has been changed from 100 pounds to 40 dollars; and now stands at that sum.—We have had some strange laws in this "Government."
standing the just estimation in which we hold this interest, that we should say, or believe that all the intelligence, honesty and patriotism in the State resides with them, is too much for their modesty to ask, or for our sense of justice to concede.

We see then, that a landed qualification operates, at the present day, very differently from what it did in early times. If one of those ancestors who voted for “Democracy,” in 1647, could speak to us from the tombs, would he counsel us to rescind that vote, and change the name,—or to correct that legislation by which it has become a dead letter? We can be at no loss for an answer to this question.

If we look at the Charter, and the early laws relating to Freemen, we shall see still more clearly how opposed the present law is to the true intention of our predecessors. The Charter vests the election of freemen in the General Assembly, and prescribes no qualification. The Company being a land Company, with powers of government annexed, and having in view to improve and settle their territory as fast as possible, it would have been natural for them, independently of the reason that landed property was then almost the only property, to prefer such members as would take an interest in the cultivation of the soil. The Company was empowered by the Charter to transport to the Colony, for its plantation and defense, such persons as might be willing to accompany them; and the emigrants became farmers, as a matter of course. The Assembly, therefore, in favorably regarding the agricultural interest, evidently had no political design; and practiced no restriction, in the sense in which a landed requisite is one, at the present time. The requisite of admission was not made a political instrument till long after. There is reason to believe that they looked more to the fitness of the person proposed for admission, than to his property in land; though almost every decent person in those times was a land owner of course. There were inhabitants not freemen, but their number must have been small. To show the sense of the Legislature on the subject of qualifications, we ask your attention to some of their Acts.

The Act of March 1663-4 declared “That all persons whatsoever, that are inhabitants within this Colony, and admit-
ted freemen of the same, shall and may have liberty to vote for the electing of all the general officers in this Colony, &c. as is expressed in the Charter of the Colony."

It also enacted "That no person shall be elected to the place of a deputy to sit in the General Assembly of this Colony, but those that are freeholders therein, and freemen of the same."

In the same year it was farther declared "That all men professing Christianity, and of competent estates, and of civil conversation, who acknowledge and are obedient to the civil magistrate, though of different judgments in religious affairs (Roman Catholics only excepted) shall be admitted freemen," and be permitted to choose officers, and to be eligible to office.

No estate of any kind is required by the first act; and none of any fixed value by the last, to make a freeman. It probably varied, both in kind and quantity, with the opinion entertained by the Assembly of the applicant's character and demeanor. It is important to notice the distinction made between the electors and those who might be elected deputies to the General Assembly. The electors were to be freemen,—admitted at first without any specified qualification, and next upon having "competent" estates:—the deputies must have estates in land,—be freeholders, and freemen.

The Act of 1665 continues the qualification of "competent estates," without defining them. (Page 154 of old record.)

In 1666 it was enacted, that the freemen of each town shall have "full power granted them to admit so many persons, inhabitants of their respective towns, freemen of their towns, as shall be by them adjudged deserving thereof." It was made the duty of the town-clerks of all the towns, once a year, to send a list of all the freemen admitted in their respective towns to the General Assembly, the day before the election; and of the general recorder to enroll in the Colony's Book

* Previously to the grant of the present Charter, there was no other requisite for admission than that of "being found meet for the service of the body" politic;—a body, by the way, into which our ancestors first incorporated themselves, by natural and equal suffrage.

† See note to page 17.
"such persons that shall be so returned, and admitted free-
men of the Colony."*

The desert here spoken of must have been good character,
and usefulness to the Colony. The towns might and no
doubt did consider some to be deserving of admission who
owned no land, and others to be unfit who did.

It was enacted in 1724, that no person should be admitted
a freeman, unless he were a freeholder of lands, &c. of the
value of 100 pounds, or to the value of 40 shillings a year;
or the eldest son of such a freeholder: "any other act, custom or
usage to the contrary hereof notwithstanding."

In 1730 it was enacted "That no person whatsoever
shall be admitted a freeman of any town in this Colony un-
less he be a freeholder of lands, &c. to the value of 200 pounds,
or 10 pounds per annum; or, the eldest son of such a free-
holder."

In 1742, it was farther declared, that no person shall be
admitted to vote, but such only, who, at the time of voting,
are freemen, and possessed of land, &c. as above.

The preamble of the Act of 1746 complains of the inroad
of bribery and corruption into the Colony; and gives as the
occasion of it, the manner of admitting freemen, which "is
so lax, and their qualifications; as to their estates, so very low,
that many persons are admitted, who are possessed of little
or no property." The remedy of the evil (whether real or
pretended by the leading politicians to cover their design,
we need not now inquire) consisted in raising the qualifica-
tion to 400 pounds value, or 20 pounds rent per annum; with-
out which no one was "allowed to vote or act as a freeman."

The qualification of voters was changed again in 1762; and

*It appears that there was an intermediate step between the practice of
electing freemen wholly by the General Assembly, and afterward wholly
by the towns. This is more clearly explained in the manuscript Digest
of 1719. The phraseology of the act of 1666 there varies greatly from
that of the printed act. At pages 35 and 36, it is enacted "That every
town, at their town-meeting, hath power to make such men freemen of
their towns as they shall judge may be need, and may be serviceable
to serve in the towns, in town offices." The act goes on to say, that
all such persons may then vote for town-officers; and that after their
names shall have been presented to the General Assembly, and they
"pass by vote to allow them freemen of the colony," they may vote
for general officers.
it was enacted, that no person whatever should be permitted to vote, or act as a freeman, but such only as were possessed of a real estate of the value of 40 pounds, or which shall rent for 40 shillings per annum.

It is sufficiently evident from this brief examination, that a freeman was not necessarily a freeholder; and that the mode of admitting freemen previously to the act of 1724, (which act for the first time in the colony established an exclusive freehold qualification) was entirely irregular: and the language used about its laxity, and the lowness of qualifications, and the allusion in the act of 1724, to "a custom or usage to the contrary" of what was then enacted, show that the restriction had been merely nominal. — There is another important fact apparent from the acts raising the qualification to two and four hundred pounds, namely, that a distinction was thus made among the freemen themselves. All persons (previously freemen, or not, it made no difference) who did not come up to the sum of two and four hundred pounds, were, by these acts, deprived of their privileges. The acts of 1742—46 and 62, directed, not merely who should be admitted freemen in future, but also who should cease to act as such.* This un-making of freemen, or depriving them, without proof of crime, of every thing but the mere name, was a clear violation of the spirit of the Charter, and goes, in addition to the remarks already made upon the operation of that instrument, to show how little it was practically regarded in the business of legislation, and that the General Assembly then exercised, as now, an undefined power, similar to that of the Parliament of England. "If representatives of the people," it has been well said, "chosen for the ordinary purposes of legislation, could assume a control over this right (the right of suffrage) to limit, curtail, or extend it at will, they might disfranchise any portion they pleased of their own electors; might deprive them of the power ever to remove them; and thus reduce the government to a permanent aristocracy."

The existing restriction on suffrage is then, we think, clearly in opposition to the real intention of our ancestors, and to

*Our Statute-Book, at the present day, does not prescribe in direct terms who shall be freemen; but who shall not vote or act as such. The law on its very face is an excluding rather than an enabling act.
the spirit of the Democracy which they established. We have already seen that it excludes many who pay taxes: it is farther objectionable, because it occasions those taxes to be imposed without consent and without any control of their expenditure. It was this same evil to which our fathers refused to submit and which led to the Revolutionary contest. It is still an evil though visited upon a large portion of the people by their own fellow-citizens. If it were unjust for our forefathers to be taxed without representation, it is equally unjust for their descendants to be so taxed by their brethren, as long as they have no voice in determining either the quantity or appropriation. How, let it be asked, are the duties on those articles of foreign importation, which are consumed in this State, paid? By the body of the consumers, who consist as well of non-freeholders as of the owners of the soil. The expenses of the General Government, as we well know, are paid without any resort to direct taxation. The non-freeholders pay their full proportion to government in the shape of duties, and yet they have no part in national affairs; because those only can vote for Representatives to Congress, who are voters for members of the most popular branch of the State Legislature. And these voters are exclusively the owners of the soil. This injustice is so palpable, that we think it must extort the confession of all who give it a moment's attention. Ought it not to be remedied?

The objection that the non-freeholders, if admitted, will vote away the money of other people, comes with a very ill grace from those who are now voting away the money of these very non-freeholders, without their consent.

The present system is also inconsistent with itself. It excludes intelligent and upright men from the polls, because their business is such, that the possession of the requisite landed qualification is impracticable. And yet in many instances they are bound to the soil by a species of real property, consisting in houses, workshops, &c. built upon land leased to them for a term of years. A life estate entitles a man to vote: a lease for 99 years does not. Is this consistency?

Again,—the present system of voting is opposed to the spirit of the Constitution of the United States. That Con-
stitution contemplates no such distinction among the citizens as our law creates. It guaranties to each State a republican form of government; the very nature of which is to extend the right of voting to a majority of its citizens. If we venerate that instrument, why should we any longer withhold those privileges which it intends to confer?

Another objection to our law of restriction, is, that it is opposed to the theory and practice of all the other states with a single partial exception. In North-Carolina, a freehold is still required to vote for a Senator. This is now the only remaining state in which the right to vote for any officer is confined exclusively to landholders.

The following is a Table of the Qualifications of voters in all the States, derived from a careful examination of each of their Constitutions.

**MAINE.** Citizenship of the United States, and three months’ (next preceding) state residence. Untaxed Indians excluded.

**NEW-HAMPSHIRE.** Inhabitance and payment of taxes.

**MASSACHUSETTS.** Citizenship: one year's state, and six months' (next preceding) town or district residence, and payment of taxes.

**CONNECTICUT.** Citizenship of the United States, and settlement in the State, with a freehold of 7 dollars yearly value, and six months' preceding town residence—or, a year's performance of military duty—or, the payment of taxes, with good moral character. Blacks excluded.

**VERMONT.** One year's (next previous) residence, with quiet and peaceable behavior, and an oath to vote according to conscience “touching any matter that concerns the State.”

**RHODE-ISLAND.** Inhabitance in town where vote is offered, with real estate to the full value of 134 dollars, or, which shall rent for 7 dollars per annum—or, being the eldest son of a freeholder to the same amount. Voting by writing name on back of ticket,—same in effect as *viva voce*. Blacks excluded.

**NEW-YORK.** Citizenship, with one year's state and six months (next previous) town or county residence—and payment of a tax within the year preceding an election, unless
exempted—or, performance of military duty within that year, unless exempted—or, performance of labor upon the highways, (unless an equivalent has been paid) with three years’ next preceding state and one (the last) year’s town or county residence. For men of color, three years’ citizenship of the State, with a freehold of the value of 250 dollars, owned for one year preceding an election, and having paid a tax thereon.

**New-Jersey.** One year’s (immediately preceding) county residence, and being worth 50 pounds proclamation money.

**Pennsylvania.** Two years (next previous) residence, and payment of a state or county tax, assessed at least six months before an election. Sons of voters allowed to vote between the ages of 21 and 22 years without having paid taxes.

**Delaware.** Citizenship, with one year’s (next preceding) state and the last month’s county residence, and payment of a tax assessed six months before an election. Citizens allowed to vote between the ages of 21 and 22 years without having paid a tax. Blacks excluded.

**Maryland.** Citizenship, with one year’s state, and six months (next preceding) county residence. Blacks excluded.

**Virginia.** Citizenship and residence—with a freehold qualification, according to the former Constitution—or, a freehold of the value of 25 dollars—or, a reversion in land of the value of 50 dollars—or, the occupancy of a leasehold estate, of a term originally not less than five years, at a rent of 20 dollars a year—or, lastly, having been a housekeeper and head of a family for 12 months next preceding, in the place where application is made to vote, and having paid a state-tax within the preceding year. Voting *viva voce.*—Blacks excluded.

**North-Carolina.** To vote for Senators, one year’s (immediately preceding) residence in any one county, and a freehold, within the same county, of fifty acres of land, held for six months next previous, and at the day of election.—To vote for members of the House of Commons, one year’s (immediately preceding) residence in any one county, and having paid public taxes.
SOUTH-CAROLINA. Citizenship and two years’ state residence previous to the day of election, with a freehold of fifty acres of land, or a town lot, legally possessed at least six months previous,—or, without a freehold, having been a resident in the election district where the vote is offered six months previous. Blacks excluded.

GEORGIA. Citizenship and inhabitance, with six months county residence, and the payment of taxes, if assessed, for the year preceding an election. Voting viva voce.

OHIO. A residence of one year next preceding an election, and being assessed to pay a state or county tax,—or, laboring on the roads. Blacks excluded.

KENTUCKY. Citizenship, with two years state, or one year’s (next preceding) town or county residence. Voting viva voce. Blacks, Mulattos and Indians excluded.

TENNESSEE. Inhabitance in the state, and a freehold in the county where the vote is offered,—or, inhabitance in any one county, six months immediately preceding the day of election.

MISSISSIPPI. Citizenship of the United States, with one year’s (next preceding) state, and the last six months’ county or town residence, and enrolment in the militia,—or, having paid a state or county tax. Blacks excluded.

ALABAMA. Citizenship of the United States, with one year’s (next preceding) state, and the last three months’ county or town residence. Blacks excluded.

LOUISIANA. Citizenship of the United States, with one year’s (next preceding) county residence, and the payment of a state tax within the last six months prior to the election. Blacks excluded.

INDIANA. Citizenship of the United States, with one year’s (next preceding) residence, entitles to vote in the county where resident. Blacks excluded.

ILLINOIS. Residence in state for six months next preceding an election entitles to vote in the county or district where resident. Voting viva voce. Blacks excluded.

MISSOURI. Citizenship of the United States, with one year’s (the next before) state, and the last three months county or district residence. Blacks excluded.
Those who call in question any natural right of suffrage, lay great stress upon the fact that in so many of these Constitutions* the qualifications of persons eligible to the offices of government are fixed much higher than those of the electors themselves. They say that therefore political rights are not self-subsistent, but are derived from an arbitrary appointment of the law-giver. We do not consider any such distinction to be necessary in this State, nor do we contend for it: and it is a sufficient answer to the objectors to say that where the distinction does exist, it was made by the people themselves, in their original, sovereign capacity. The constitutions of all the States proceeded from the great majority of the people, fairly represented in Convention. These constitutions were laid before them for acceptance, or rejection. They could and did define, limit and settle their own rights as they saw fit. The fact above stated so far then from proving any thing against the rights of the people, proves another thing conclusively in favor of the people, namely,—that in manifesting so much solicitude that all places of trust should be filled with those most competent to discharge their duties, and in thus foregoing an equal claim to them in all the voters, they have shown themselves the safe depository of political power, and eminently worthy of republican freedom and self-government.

We do not ask for a change here, merely because a restriction like ours has been abolished in other States; but because such a change is right. Still the fact that twenty-two, out of twenty-three, of the other States, have no such exclusive landed qualification as that now insisted upon in this, ought to go far in overcoming any doubts or scruples on the subject of an extension of suffrage. Are not the peo-

*The States which have made landed property an indispensable requisite for the governor, senators and representatives are the following,—New-Hampshire, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi,—In New-York, the governor and senators; in New-Jersey, the legislative councilors and representatives; in Virginia, the senators and representatives; and in Massachusetts and Georgia, the governor,—must be landholders. In the remaining thirteen States no property in land is exclusively required of any of the above mentioned officers.
ple of the other States our brethren; are we not all bound together as one people, under the glorious Constitution of the United States? Can the people of this State be expected to entertain any less liberal ideas of Republican freedom and government than the vast majority of their brethren elsewhere, who are united to them in interest and feeling, and separated only by the outline of State boundaries? Such an expectation is unreasonable and contradicted by all observation and experience. Are not the people of other States, who have adopted the plan of extension, as enlightened, as capable of understanding the greatest good of the whole, as much blest with sound laws and the wise execution of them, as ourselves? Are we indebted to a landed suffrage for any decided superiority in our civil and social condition? Have we gone farther than all others, in proportion to our means, in providing for public instruction, and public charities? We are obliged reluctantly to admit the contrary. Not to pursue this part of our subject any farther, at present—let any man point to any one practical result in this State, which gives an advantage to a landed qualification for voters over that of the payment of taxes, and we shall be happy to give it a fair consideration, and allow to it all the weight to which it may be entitled.

One of the reasons offered in favor of a freehold qualification is that it tends to a greater division of land, and to check the increase of great landed estates. Even admitting this to be true, the remedy is not wanted, for it has already been supplied by the statute of distributions. The right of primogeniture as it respects property has been done away. An equal division most commonly takes place at the death of a parent; and it is perfectly well known that the third, or fourth generation at most, in this country, scatters the greatest accumulation that the industry and economy of the ancestor is ever able to make. Property is divided and equalized in our country to an extent never known in any other. And the interest in property, of some kind or other, thus created in the majority of the people is one reason, and a strong one, for believing that our form of government will be permanent. In no State, which has exchanged the land-
ed for a tax qualification, has there been the slightest complaint of too great an accumulation of land in a few hands from this cause. The argument is evidently more for the benefit of the present suffrage law, than for the benefit of the people.

What then is the object of any property qualification at all for a voter? The only just object is to raise a presumption of his honesty and intelligence. Where this honesty and intelligence can be ascertained, independently of a particular qualification, there the necessity of it ceases. Men of all opinions readily say, in the discussion of the question of suffrage, we should be perfectly willing to let in all honest and intelligent persons to vote, whether they have property or not, if we could only ascertain them. The man of substance is not admitted to vote, upon any property qualification which may be adopted, because he is a man of substance, but because his qualification raises the necessary presumption in his favor. If the law merely regarded the voter’s substance, then the more substantial he might be, the more power should he have as a voter. If this were the spirit of a law relating to the elective right, then, to be consistent, we ought to go back to the plan adopted by one of the kings of ancient Rome, who divided the voters into classes and centuries, in such a way, that though each man had but one vote, yet the men of substance had the most centuries, and so controlled the elections. But how does property, or the ability to pay a tax, which implies property, and amounts to the same thing, raise an inference of a man’s honesty and intelligence? Only in this way; if a man inherit property, the presumption is, judging by the natural feelings of men, that the parent who left it to him, was able and willing to give him education enough to use it properly; if a man have acquired property, the presumption is, and must be, as a general rule, that industry and probity were exercised by him in so doing, and that the cares and relations, which property brings with it, have sharpened his faculties, and increased his natural intelligence. Now all we ask, is, that every man among us who can be fairly presumed to be honest and intelligent enough to exercise the privilege of a voter, consistently with
the best good of our whole population, should be admitted to that privilege. And we propose such a qualification as will raise, in our condition of society, the presumption of honesty and intelligence: and if a certain minimum, or smallest sum, were fixed, so that every one who chose to pay a tax on not less than —— dollars should become a voter, all pretence of objection, on account of the supposed control the assessors of taxes might have over elections would be entirely removed.

A strict registration of voters we consider indispensable: and voting by ballot, so that it could not be known how the vote was given, would remove the objection of improper influence. We are very desirous to see it introduced.

The distinction proposed between the qualifications of the native and the naturalized citizen is founded on the principle already laid down, viz. that the abridgment or suspension of a political right to promote the greatest good of the greatest number, and for that purpose only, is the self-preserving law of a political society. The restriction places the foreign born citizen in a better condition than the present freeholder; as he is only required to have been once the owner of a freehold, for a certain length of time, to be determined by the framers of a Constitution. The non-freeholders are willing and anxious to be tried by this law of the greatest good. The moment it can be shown that their claim of privilege is inconsistent with the greatest good of the whole community, they are willing to withdraw it. But let it be so shown.

It is a mistake in any to suppose that this restriction is at variance with any provision in the Constitution of the United States. When the Constitution says that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States," it does not mean that they shall carry their rights with them from one State to another, but that they shall accept of such as are provided in the State to which they have removed their residence, and be subject to all distinctions there established.

There are some who consider themselves as making a reply to the arguments which have been offered, by affirming
that "No one ought to interfere with the rules and usages of a land Company"! What idea such persons can have of the nature of the government of this country, or of any government it would not be easy to determine. "The rules and usages of a land company," both civil and political, must then prevail for ever in Rhode-Island, whether right or wrong. We hope to be able on all occasions to manifest a becoming resignation to the appointments of Divine Providence; but we have not any such respect for the decrees and ordinances of men, no better than ourselves, as to believe, or admit that in political affairs, "whatever is is right." The "rules and usages of a land company" may be very convenient for those who hold power and desire to keep it; but they have no recommendations of justice or policy to others who are kept out of possession of their proper share of that power, though they have a permanent interest in the State, and are not destitute of a patriotic attachment to their native land.* The colonists of Rhode-Island were indeed a land company; but they were endowed with political privileges, and have exercised the usual functions of government: and for what purpose government was made, and who ought to partake in it, we have already seen. The friends of reform do not ask, nor do they consider themselves answered by being informed, how old their government is. Their question is whether it be right or wrong. If an attempt were made to get possession of the shares of a trading, banking, insurance, or, if you please, of a land company, without the payment of an equivalent, then there would be just reason for protesting against this invasion of chartered and vested rights. If such an attempt should be made, those who are aggrieved will find complete protection in the strong arm of the law.

We would ask of those, who contend that every thing should remain in this generation, as it came to us from the preceding, one or two questions. Suppose that some eminent in-

* It is a subject for reflection, that, while some of the descendants of the early settlers of the State have no vote in the places of their fathers, any one may come in from abroad, and upon the purchase of real estate, and being propounded three months previously, may become a voter. We welcome strangers, but not to greater privileges than are enjoyed by the majority of our own citizens.
individual in England had been employed to draw up a form of government for the Colony of Rhode-Island, and that for the sake of conformity with the institutions of the mother country, he had introduced a provision into the Charter to the effect, that the offices of governor, deputy-governor, and of the assistants should forever be confined to the male descendants of Arnold, Williams, Olney, and the other persons who were named in the Charter, to fill them for the first time.

Suppose farther, that this hereditary senate had not been abolished at the Revolution, but that it had continued to our own time: would you now advocate it; and if so, might you not say that it was established by the original law of a "land company," confirmed by usage, and too venerable to be disturbed? If opposed to it, would you not say, however determined the senators might be never to surrender their hereditary privileges, that there ought to be and must be some way of voting them down?—To add one more question,—What is the meaning of the clause in the Constitution of the United States which guaranties to each State a Republican form of government? Is it not, that no Constitution, law, nor usage of any State, however agreeable to the majority, shall ever be suffered to compel the submission of a minority to a form of government in any respect anti-republican? If the minority in every State be thus taken care of, most assuredly any expression of the will of the majority, not inconsistent with the definition of a republic will be recognized by the General Government.

It is a great mistake to say that the prescription in favor of the present order of things has never been disturbed. At about the commencement of the Revolution, the General Assembly manifested their sense of the necessity of some change by the appointment of a Committee to report upon

* The Constitution prepared for the State of South-Carolina by the celebrated Locke can hardly be deemed to have created any exception to the statement before made, that no privileged order of men had ever existed in this country; since that constitution was found to be totally impracticable, and was abrogated in 1693, after a duration of only 23 years.

† It is one of the very remarkable features of our State government that the Senate is the more popular branch of the Legislature.
a proper form of Government for the State. No report, it is believed, was ever made. Other attempts, both for partial and general reform, have been unsuccessful; and the evils of the body politic have been suffered to accumulate.

But it ought to be borne in mind that no continuance of usage, or prescription however long, can impair, nor take away political rights from the people. From the ancient English maxim, "Time does not run against the king," erase the word "king" and insert "People," and you have a great and everlasting truth. No delay or acquiescence on their part can ever make it right to govern wrong, or to deprive any man of a voice in public affairs, who is sufficiently honest and intelligent to use it well.

We have seen that our existing freehold qualification for voters is inconsistent with a just regard to natural rights,—that it is opposed to the principles of a Republican Government,—to the real intentions of the founders of this State,—to the Declaration of American Independence,—to the spirit of the Constitution of the United States,—to the practice of all the other States, but one;—that it is inconsistent with itself, and unfair in its operation. Still farther,—admitting, for argument's sake, (and God forbid that we should ever otherwise make the admission, so long as we retain any recollection of the Declaration of Independence, and of the Principles, the Acts and the Men of the Revolution) that there are no natural rights, and that all political power and privilege proceeds from the Government to the People,—the present landed qualification is proved to be highly unnecessary and inexpedient.—But there are many who are capable of feeling the force of these objections, who will call them abstract and theoretical, and say that they want more facts. We want them too; and we ask these objectors to go along with us in the search, bearing in mind, at the same time, that, as the freehold restriction is in derogation of political rights, the burden of proving its necessity rests upon its advocates. We have come to the great Issue of Fact, which we now again tender to our fellow-citizens, and it is—Are those citizens, who by an extension of suffrage would be admitted to vote, such a class of persons as are unfitted by their charac-
ter to participate in the political privileges which they claim? We wish this question to be fairly met. Enough has been said, in vague and general terms, about "unwholesome citizens," "persons not to be safely trusted," "without property and vicious,"—about "protecting the sound part of the community against those who have nothing at stake in society"—"and protecting the people against intruders and adventurers from other States." It is perfectly easy to make this general declamation, and it has its natural and designed effect upon too many minds. Let those who use this language come out and say, if they will venture the assertion, that the body of traders and mechanics, and professional men, and sons of landholders, are the base and corrupt persons who are aimed at in these sweeping denunciations. No others can be meant. They are the men who unite with a large portion of the farming interest in demanding a reform. Shame, then, upon those defamers of their fellow-citizens, who, in the interested defense of a decrepid and tottering system, resort to this wanton and unmanly abuse and disparagement, which the daily business and intercourse of life prove to be wholly destitute of foundation in truth. We shall endeavor to show the people, more in detail, who these men are, who now claim the establishment of their just rights, and how many of them contribute by taxes to the public treasury. We invite you, fellow-citizens, to go along with us, and to aid us in the investigation.

But there is one charge made against the friends of reform which ought not to be passed by without a more particular notice. It is said by some that they are urging on a war against property, and, stirring up the poor against the rich. Was there ever a more unfounded and ungenerous accusation? God forbid that we should ever fall so low as to be capable of resorting to this last and basest expedient of decayed and desperate politicians. The poor against the rich! in a country where all interests and classes are combined and interwoven in mutual dependence, and rise and prosper, or decline and fall together. Does any one seek to take away any right from others and to appropriate it anew? It will be time to throw out such a suggestion when it is made to appear that an attempt to obtain the exercise of his own rights is robbery from other people,—and not till then.
The subject of the Judiciary, though last in the order of consideration, is not the least in magnitude and importance. In introducing this subject, it is proper to state a single fact; and we believe that no comment is required. The fact is this,—that while the most numerous portion of the present freemen are averse to any change in the Judiciary, those who are now excluded from the polls are in favor of it.

The improvement of our Courts of law will be an essential provision in any Constitution that may be hereafter planned for this State. Independence in the judge is essential both to the formation of the best judicial character, and to the best administration of justice. A judge should sit serenely above all the storms of political strife, that he may rightly divide the justice of the law between man and man: he should have nothing to hope from party ascendency, and nothing to fear from the fall of political friends. A judge, however honest he may be, is in great danger of having his impartiality called in question in deciding a case, or instructing a jury, when one of the litigants has been recently placed shoulder to shoulder with him, in a warm contest for victory. The public good cannot be properly consulted, whenever less attention is paid to the qualifications of men to sit and decide as judges, than to services rendered to the appointing power.

The necessity of a well defined and independent Judiciary is more fully appreciated, when we remember that the Legislature of this State in many instances act as a court of justice. Under their oath of office as legislators they assume the responsibility of judges. They in fact legislate concerning particular facts upon rules and principles unknown to the common law. If they can do so in one instance, they may do so in others.* They may dispense with that palladium of liberty, the trial by jury, and erect themselves into a tribunal to decide both upon the law and the facts.

If there be any one sight more unpleasant than another, it is that of a political judge acting alternately as an administrator of the laws and the manager of a party. And yet the

* The practice of appointing special judges for particular cases, which has existed in this State, is highly improper and dangerous.
fault is all your own. You drive him to the necessity of management in order to retain a place which is opened once a year to new competitors.

A Court appointed during good behavior and receiving a fixed and competent support, is indispensably necessary as the sheet-anchor of a Constitution. It affords a constant barrier against encroachments of the legislative and executive powers, either upon the boundaries of each other, or upon the rights of the citizen. So far from admitting that the acts of the Legislature could not be called in question, it would be the arbitrator between the people and their representatives; between those who make laws and those who are called on to submit to them. The poorest possible of all economy is that which places the salaries of judges, and law-officers generally, so low, that few men of the first rate qualifications can be induced to abandon the superior emoluments of private practice. The money which is annually expended upon protracted litigation in this State greatly exceeds the amount of the most liberal salaries that could ever be desired for our Courts. This loss to the people is never taken into the account in estimating the cost of cheap Justice.—In 1729 the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas in this State were appointed during good behavior. The act regulating their term of appointment was repealed four years after, in 1733;* and they were afterward chosen annually. We want a fundamental law, which shall place their term of office out of the reach of every body but the power that makes and unmakes Constitutions. If you object to independent Courts on account of the cost, the non-freeholders would be glad to pay their part of a poll, or other tax, large enough to support both the Courts and the Schools.

We have spoken to you, Fellow-Citizens, of the nature of fundamental laws, or Constitutions, and of the source whence they are properly derived;—of the history, operation and de-

* The reason given in the preamble of the act of repeal is that the law of 1729 is "found very inconsistent with the constitution of this government, and contrary to the same." An independent judiciary is truly inconsistent with an arbitrary legislature. But any incongruity of this sort may be easily corrected by fixing a proper limitation of legislative powers.
fects of the present Charter;—of the great inequality and injustice in the apportionment of our Representation;—of the duty of extending the privilege of Voters to all our fellow-citizens who are qualified to partake in it consistently with the general good;—of the vital necessity of an independent and permanent Judiciary. Have we, or have we not shown you that there is something radically wrong in the Political Institutions of Rhode-Island; and if so, does it not follow, as an irresistible conclusion, that all political measures, designed and properly tending to produce a complete and effectual change, without any farther delay, are right, expedient, and entitled to your strong and cordial support? A Constitutional Party in this State, if it proceed upon open and fair grounds, directly and resolutely to its end, is most emphatically the Commonwealth's Party. It has a right to expect the adherence of the older portion of our citizens; whose duty it is to transmit to their successors not merely what they have received, but all those additional improvements which the wisdom of age and of political experience has been able to suggest;—it challenges the best energies and the most active co-operation of the younger men. Every motive of duty and of patriotism calls upon them to arrange themselves on the constitutional side, and to aid us in making our government more suitable to the condition, and more “meet for the service of the body” politic. As they successively come forth to refresh the life-blood of the political system let them be found among the friends of Justice and Reformation. We shall make the best return of gratitude to the memory of our venerated ancestors, not by forever retaining the long established and present condition of our inheritance, but by proceeding, with some portion of their spirit, to do what they would do, if now within the range of human affairs and interests, to make it more worthy of the citizens of a free country. In the language of the illustrious author of the Declaration of Independence, “It is not only the right, but the duty of those now on the stage of action, to change the laws and institutions of government, to keep pace with the progress of knowledge, the light of science and the amelioration of the condition of society. Nothing is to be considered unchangeable but the inherent and inalienable rights of Man.”
Without stopping to recapitulate more minutely the different topics and arguments of this address, we now commend them to your earnest attention and deliberate judgment, with confidence as to the result. We have endeavored to speak plainly and distinctly. But if there should remain any doubt in your minds respecting any subject, or part of a subject, which has been considered, we shall be ready to make any explanations that may be desired. We ask you, to call together, by your Representatives, a Convention which shall represent the people at large, and prepare for us a liberal and permanent Constitution. We wish to proceed in the usual course of our brethren in other States; and that the same Legislature which has imposed a landed qualification on the citizens of Rhode-Island not spoken of in the Charter, has at least as much right to suspend it, for the single purpose of facilitating the exercise by the People of the great, original Right of Sovereignty in the formation of a Constitution, we cannot for a moment doubt.

We wait your decision. Let it be worthy of Republican Freemen.
ADDRESS  
TO THE  
CITIZENS OF RHODE ISLAND  
WHO ARE  
DENIED THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE.

[Prefatory Note. It is proper to state that the Society from which emanates the following address, is composed of men conscious that they have a direct interest in the well being of every portion of the republic—a personal and pecuniary, no less than a social and political interest. As “a corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit,” so must each government, so far as it is based on partiality and monopoly, bring forth injustice; and we have no guaranty that the evils caused by such injustice shall not extend to us and our posterity. On the contrary, all experience shows that no people can submit to their own disfranchisement without eventually becoming tools in the hands of their masters to plunder and enslave others; and it is thus that the producers of wealth have for ages been used to bind each other’s chains, and extend the empire of fraud and oppression. Aside from these general considerations, our interest in the subject of the Address is increased by the fact, that a privileged class of about seven thousand men in R. Island, have, by virtue of a foreign charter, the power to neutralize the voice of this great city in our national councils; while the same charter divests of all power for political good those whose interest it is to co-operate with us in our struggle against legislative iniquity, and to whose co-operation we have an undeniable moral right. This justification of our motives is made necessary by the certainty that the enemies of popular government, in despair of vindicating their own pretensions, will seek to divert men’s attention from the truths we utter by denying our right to urge them, except within certain geographical limits, where, happily, they are already triumphant.

It is hardly needful to say, that in attacking the pretended right of the landholders to give laws to all the other classes of society, we are influenced by no hostile feelings towards the landholders themselves. Were the same claim put forth by the clergy, the lawyers, the manufacturers, or any other trade or class of men, we should deem it equally unjust, and hold ourselves equally bound to oppose it.]

Fellow Citizens:

THE State Government under which you live as aliens, is at once a usurpation over the rights of man, and a subversion of the sovereignty of TR. III. 1
the people. A chartered minority, or less than one third of the male adult population, governs the majority, comprising more than two thirds of the citizens; imposes taxes on them at will; denies them all natural and social right of equality; divests them of the best guarantee of freedom, (the elective franchise) and excludes them from any representative voice in legislation or government. Surely, it never can be forgotten by any American, that "taxation without representation" was the original cause of the revolt of the thirteen united colonies against the crown and parliament of England.

Whatever may have been the royal merits of the charter of King Charles the Second, at the time it was granted to the colonists of Rhode Island, when land was more easily acquired than the ordinary products of labor; however beneficent it might have been then, it is injurious to the majority now. The grantor and the grantees of that charter had long passed away with their generation, when our revolutionary fathers declared to the world a still greater charter; and the unanimous voice of three subsequent generations has confirmed the declaration, that "government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed:" consequently, the right of the people to govern themselves is not the boon of kings; neither is the right of sovereignty inherent in, or derived from, real estate; and a more ancient declaration—in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible—emphatically sets forth, that "man shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." Not that the earth shall have dominion over man, or that those who may have title deeds to land, shall be therefore endowed with the right divine to rule over their fellow men. "God is no respecter of persons; all are equal in his sight," says the sacred scriptures. "All men are created equal, and endowed by their
Creator with certain inalienable rights," responds the Declaration of Independence.

"Equal Liberty is therefore God's eternal law; Freedom having been made man's inheritance, when God gave him reason to discern good from evil, and free will to choose." "Suffrage being this free will to choose, and the means of political self preservation, if the poor were not equally entitled to it with the rich, then Christianity would not be entitled to regard; since Christ laid its very foundation on the perfect equality between the rich and the poor, in the eyes of their Creator."

"Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed;" and this consent can only be properly manifested where suffrage is equally possessed by every citizen or member of the community. "To cut off from suffrage, or in other words, from freedom, an individual man, is criminally to mutilate the Body Politick; which is evidently a crime of the nature of treason against the sovereign people, and the majesty of the nation." For, "as an arm, a hand, or a finger, is a vital part or member of a man's natural body; so every individual man in the working classes, or among the poor, by whose productive labor the nation has been, and continues to be sustained, is not only a member, but an important part of the community's Body Politick."

"Exclusion from suffrage, though not visible on a man's person, is truly a slave mark." It is degradation, subjection, inferiority of caste. Therefore, "to cut off from suffrage even a pauper, were wantonly to add an inhuman insult to misfortune, contrary to the good of the state, to which such barbarity is useless, and in which even the poorest of the poor ought still, as a consolation, to find a feeling and compassionate parent, incapable of degrading an unfortunate child born to freedom."
TO THE PEOPLE OF

The property qualification to vote is so utterly inconsistent with reason and justice, that it never has been, nor ever can be equitably admeasured and established according to its principle. For, if any given amount of real or personal estate should constitute a vote, ten times that amount should constitute ten votes to the possessor, and of course, a greater or less number of votes according to the amount. But the advocates of property votes dare not be consistent even with their own postulate, lest its absurdity and injustice should be entirely manifest.

But let us contemplate the property right to vote in another point to view. Let us suppose for a moment that the elective franchise should be exercised only by property holders;—let us suppose that it is a rightful appurtenance of personal or real estate. What then? Does it not clearly follow, if the prerogative of choosing lawgivers and other officers of government, be a purchasable attribute of property, that the whole government is a thing of bargain and sale? Consequently, as respects the State of Rhode Island, if a Stephen Girard or a John Jacob Astor were to purchase the land titles of some three or four thousand persons, who with their eldest sons possess all the elective franchise, he would be sovereign over the state and its one hundred and twenty five thousand inhabitants; and, on the same principle, he would have the right of sending two Senators and two representatives to Congress.

"All men are created equal," says the Declaration of Independence. "On entering into society man gives up none of his natural rights," says Jefferson. "Man," says Channing, "has rights from his very nature, not the gifts of society, but of God; they are not surrendered on entering the social state; they must not be taken away under the plea of the public good. The idea of right is to prevail above all the interests of the State."
"If man," says Professor Wayland in his work on moral science, "form a civil society, he is bound to form it according to the laws which God has appointed. He cannot form it according to any other principles without violating the rights of his fellow men and disobeying the laws of his God. I suppose it to be from a misconception of these principles that our forefathers erred. They conceived that in forming a civil society here in the wilderness, they had a right to frame its provisions as they chose."

"A people, (says Cartwright on the English Constitution,) may assemble, and may will what they call a constitution; but yet no such act will morally bind even those who shall attain adult age next day, unless founded on eternal principles of truth and the inherent rights of man. These principles are therefore the vital essence of a constitution." Again, "a people of one generation may, at any one time, through ignorance, folly or baseness, consent to relinquish their liberty; but the act being contrary to the law of nature, by the parties putting themselves out of a capacity to perform all the duties of morality, cannot bind; wherefore, whenever they shall have the requisite knowledge, sense and virtue, to resume their freedom, it is their duty to do so."

Thus, it is easily seen, that even if civil society or government in Rhode Island were created by the majority of the people, yet inasmuch as the rights of man are violated, and the laws of God, disobeyed by the establishment of a sovereignty of land titles and primogeniture, it is therefore repugnant to nature, to reason, to revelation, to the laws which God has appointed. But, it was created by the charter of a king; and under its provisions, an incorporated body in perpetual succession, holds the sovereignty as an indefeasible "vested right," while the great majority of the population, who, although citizens of the United States, are nevertheless treated as aliens and
as subjects, compelled to bear the burthens and perform the public duties of citizens, while deprived of the dearest rights of citizens in their native land.

"Each generation," says the author of the Declaration of Independence "is as independent of the one preceding as that was of all which had gone before. It has, like them, a right to choose for itself, the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness; consequently, to accommodate to the circumstances in which it finds itself, that received from its predecessors; and it is for the peace and good of mankind that a solemn opportunity of doing this every nineteen or twenty years, should be provided by the constitution, so that it may be handed on with periodical repairs from generation to generation."

Again, "this corporeal globe and everything upon it, belongs to its present corporeal inhabitants during their generation. They alone have a right to declare what is the concern of themselves, and to declare the law of that direction; and this declaration can only be made by their majority. That majority, then, has a right to depute representatives to a convention, to make the constitution what they think will be best for themselves."

Thus fellow citizens, unfranchised men of Rhode Island, is presented to your consideration the sanctions of Holy Writ, of our revolutionary fathers, and of other noble intellects, in favor of man's rights as man, and not as a property holder—in favor of the sovereignty of the people subordinate only to the paramount sovereignty of the laws of Deity. Be no longer then aliens—an inferior caste—in your native country. Let your voice be heard, your will be known by the sovereign act of framing a Constitution to supersede the Charter of a King. You are the majority of the present generation, being more than two thirds of the male adult population; and you have unquestionably the "right to depute representatives
to a convention to make the constitution what you think will be best for yourselves.” Do it then. "Governments," says Jefferson, "are republican only in proportion as they embody the will of their people and execute it.” But the voice or the will of the majority of the people is not embodied in the incorporated government of Rhode Island. Be no longer subjects of a royal charter. Abrogate it at once. Abolish the monopoly of franchise, the worst of all monopolies. Frame a constitution on the broad principles of Liberty, Justice and Equality. Do this, and take that equal station among your fellow men, to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God justly entitle you.

The following preliminary suggestions are respectfully presented for your consideration, as to holding a

STATE CONVENTION.

1. Hold primary meetings, and call a State Convention, naming time and place, and apportioning the number of delegates for each county and town.

2. In holding public elections for delegates, all male citizens over twenty one years of age should vote, and lists should be kept of the voters. The same should be duly certified by those appointed to receive the votes, and appended to the credentials of the delegates.

3. When the delegates meet in convention, the votes received at the election should be summed up, and if it shall appear that the whole number of votes cast, exceeds the whole vote of the previous general election for Representatives to Congress, then the Convention will unquestionably represent the majority of the people, and will therefore as unquestionably have the sovereign right to frame a Constitution for the state.

4. The Constitution thus framed would of course create a State Government entire, and appoint the
time and manner of holding elections for state and congressional officers. The members of Congress elected under it would of course claim their seats at Washington, and the responsibility would then devolve upon Congress of deciding, whether members from a majority of the people, elected under a republican constitution framed by the people themselves, shall have seats in the councils of the nation, or members from an incorporated body of land Lords, and their eldest sons, who, by virtue of a royal charter, are stock holders of the elective franchise and of the government.

Thus obviously easy and efficacious are the means by which you can assume your rights as citizens of the United States, and as human beings. Be assured that the conscience of every just man—that the heart of every friend of liberty and human progress in the Union, will exultingly sanction a movement so righteous in itself and so perfectly consistent with the theory and practice of American Republicanism.

Importance of the Right of Suffrage.

The Laws of a country regulate the ownership of its soil, of its mines, and of all its natural wealth. They regulate the distribution of God's material gifts among its inhabitants. They indirectly regulate the distribution of the fruits of human skill and industry. They can take away not only the earnings, but the life of any citizen. Consequently, the man who is allowed no voice in making the laws he is forced to obey, is, in the fullest sense, a slave. Whether the laws and mandates that govern him proceed from a single privileged despot, or from a privileged conspiracy of thousands, still he is a slave. All his rights are at the disposal of others. He can enjoy such rights and liberties only as his self constituted rulers do not dare to strip him of, or do not think worth taking away.

Nor are the disfranchised the only sufferers from such inequity. The laws framed by an exclusive class, are naturally supposed by the people to regard the interests of such class only. The odium which justly attaches to monopolies and partial restrictions, is eventually attached to all laws; the unfranchised poor follow their self-styled superiors in setting the holy principles of justice at defiance; and government—even society itself—is at last upheld only by the standing army and the gibbet.

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PREAMBLE
AND
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
RHODE-ISLAND
SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION,
ADOPTED
FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1840.

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1840.
PREAMBLE.

THAT all men by nature are free and equal, we consider the plain and simple doctrine of the American Constitution, and a self-evident proposition in itself, and without which republicanism is but a name.

The acquisition of property, however necessary and laudable, we hold, neither increases nor multiplies the natural rights of its possessors, nor diminishes the natural rights of those who possess it not. Independent of artificial government, no distinction of right, privilege, or rank, could exist and be maintained, except by force, nor the superiority of one man over another.

The formation of the social and civil compact, is intended for the equal mutual benefit and protection of all; yet, without a perfect equality of rights, no such equality of benefit and protection can exist.

Originally, in a republic, the only voluntary government on earth formed by common consent, each person enters the associated body, with his own natural and inalienable rights; and which no human power has the rightful authority to wrest from him. The only surrender he makes, and the only compromise into which he enters, is, to lay down his personal independence for his own security, and
to be governed by the majority, for the benefit of the whole. In doing this, it is altogether inconceivable that any man should, of his own accord, resign the right to participate in the selection of members of the body to whom the powers of government are to be delegated, and on which selection his freedom or slavery, and his happiness or misery may depend; and no longer than the majority shall respect this right, can they justly claim his obedience; and that for the very sound and obvious reason, that in so doing he is to be governed as a slave and not as a freeman. But the distinction by which the right of suffrage is made to depend on the possession of property, takes away the natural rights of the man by force, and places him completely at the mercy of those who will be disposed to oppress him.

If the possession of property were one of the conditions originally ordained of heaven, on which were to depend the right of man to be free, and to act as a freeman, we could readily understand how and why the loss of property should involve the loss of those rights also. But when we reflect that all are originally destitute, and that all are originally alike free by nature, it surpasses our comprehension, how or why the accumulation of property by one man should destroy the natural rights of another. Yet precisely to this effect the laws of Rhode Island operate. A large majority of the people of the State, are deprived of all voice in the government, and of a representation in the legislative body: not because of the loss of property by themselves, but because of the accumulation of property by others. By this usurpation of despotic power, and its
exercise by a minority, whose only claim to the exclusive right to govern is based on the fortuitous circumstance of wealth, the majority, equally honest, honorable, intelligent, and patriotic, and equally sharing, or willing to share, the expenses of government, are denied even the name of freemen, and in lieu thereof, have entailed upon them the first and most degrading attribute of slaves; an attribute of which no one can divest himself, under existing circumstances, without still farther degradation, in tacitly acknowledging himself rightfully a slave, by purchasing the right to be a freeman.

All this we consider a gross and palpable infraction of the rights which heaven has conferred on every man, and which no human power has the right to impair; and in violation of the Constitution of the United States; and a principle which converts the term republican to mockery, when applied to the government of Rhode Island.

Against such laws, and such robbery, thus arbitrary and oppressive, we enter our solemn protest; and, in the sight of God and man, we pledge ourselves to use all honorable means, consistent with the American Constitution, to procure their abrogation.

We consider the government of Rhode Island a despotism, and totally unworthy the name of republican, and having no just claim to the confidence and respect of any American citizen. She has not, and never had, as an American republican State, any compact voluntarily entered into by the people. Her only basis of government is an imperfect and almost obsolete instrument given her by the royal prerogative of a British King, as a master pre-
scribes rules for the government of his servants. No formal act of the people of the State of Rhode Island has ever ratified it. Its only force at first, was the paramount authority of the British Crown over its dependent colony; and, since the American Revolution it has been merely submitted to from the difficulty of effecting a change.

As a republic, Rhode Island is destitute of a government:—Destitute, because she has no voluntary compact of the people, and no Constitution to prevent the usurpation of the legislative body, to define the powers of government, or the right of the citizen. These constitute the only true distinction between a republic and a despotism; and of these Rhode Island is destitute, and yet these constitute the only guarantee for the safety of her citizens.—Her government is, therefore, a despotism, because the legislative power is paramount. That body can establish and annul, alter and amend, the principles of government at pleasure, and enact laws which may continue them in office for life.

The right of suffrage is the first principle in a republic. In all free States it should be defined by constitutional provisions, adopted by the people in their primary capacity; and thus placed beyond the power of legislative interference. Otherwise it may become the tool of ambitions and selfish legislators,—be altered and amended to their particular views or desires, to the injury of the State, and to the destruction of individual rights. By the present system, the legislature may at any time increase the number of voters, by diminishing the amount of property qualification, or they may diminish the number by an opposite
mode of procedure, so as to place the control of the affairs of State, at the ballot boxes, into the hands of one-fourth, one-eighth, or one-sixteenth, of her citizens, and there is no principle of our government to prevent it. Such a power is dangerous to the rights of any people, and cannot comport with the principles of republicanism.

Against this whole system we solemnly protest, as one that is arbitrary, oppressive, anti-republican, and disgraceful; and we pledge ourselves to use all honorable means in our power, to eradicate it from the State.

The next great principle of a republican form of government, and growing out of the former, is an equal representation, all-essential to the maintenance of equal rights.—This is self-evident, because without such equality, the minority may generally rule the majority. Our present inequality of representation is monstrously unjust. Of seventy-two members which constitute the House of Representatives, more than fifty represent less than one half the population of the State. Providence, containing one-fifth part of the entire population of the State, sends but four Representatives, while Newport, with less than one half that proportion, sends six. Portsmouth, with a population not equal to that of one of the six wards of the city of Providence, has a representation equal with that of the whole city. Barrington and Jamestown, with both not more than one hundred voters, have each a representation equal to that of any country town. (except Warwick,) having three times as many voters and inhabitants as both of them. Such is the monstrous absurdity of our system of representation. The minority govern the majority at the
ballot boxes; and in the House of Representatives, the delegates of less than one third may govern the other two thirds. If this be republican, then may we expect to see, ere long, Great Britain, with her throne, her aristocracy, her rotten burroughs, and her millions of disfranchised citizens, ranked among modern republics.

Yet worse than this, probably more than twelve thousand free citizens of the United States, out of twenty thousand, resident in Rhode Island, are entirely unrepresented in the legislative body, and deprived of all voice in the government of the State, though called on by law to sustain it, and to protect the lives and property of others. They are deprived of the first and most essential right of freemen, for the want of a few square feet of land, as though those who possessed that qualification were immaculate, and as though those who possess it not, must, in consequence, be destitute of intelligence, honor, honesty, or love of country, and natural and political right.

We solemnly protest against this flagrant usurpation of power over right, as arbitrary, oppressive, and unjust; and which subjects us to a state of involuntary political servitude, to the absolute despotism of a domineering minority. The right of suffrage we do not ask as a favor. We claim it as our own. We demand it as a privilege, a right, bestowed upon us by heaven itself, and unjustly withheld from us by arbitrary power. God helping, we solemnly pledge ourselves, independently of all the political parties and principles of the day, except the great principles of American freedom, steadily to pursue our object till our purpose shall have been accomplished, and we find our-
selves reinstated in the rights which heaven bequeathed us, and which the American Constitution guarantees.

Our first appeal is to heaven, for the justice of our cause. Next, to the whole people of Rhode Island, to aid our efforts through the medium of the ballot box. Next, to the General Assembly of the State, to do us justice.—These failing, our final resort shall be to the Congress of the United States, through an assembly of the people, and if need be, to the Supreme Judicial Power, to test the force and meaning of that provision in the Constitution, which guarantees “to every State in the Union a republican form of government.” Our rights, once for all, we determine to rescue from the grasp of arbitrary power, and not to shrink from the task till it shall have been accomplished. WE KNOW OUR RIGHTS, AND KNOWING, DARE MAINTAIN THEM.
THEREFORE, in order to carry forward more successfully, and efficiently, this object, we will form ourselves into an Association, to be governed by the following

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I. This Association shall be called THE RHODE ISLAND SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

ART. II. The objects of this Association shall be, as set forth in the preamble, to promote by all just and honorable means, an extension of suffrage and equal representation, and to diffuse general information on the subject of equal rights and American liberty.

ART. III. The annual meeting of the Association shall be holden on the evening of the first Monday in April, at such hour and place as the Executive Committee shall direct.

ART. IV. This Association shall hold a quarterly meeting on the evenings of the first Mondays in April, July, October, and January, and such other meetings as the Executive Committee shall direct.

ART. V. At each annual meeting of the Association, the following officers shall be elected, who shall continue in office until others are chosen, viz.:

1st. A President, (by ballot) who shall preside at the meetings of the Association.

2d. Two Vice Presidents, the elder of whom shall perform the duties of President in the absence of the latter.

3d. A Recording Secretary, (by ballot) who shall per-
form the duties of Treasurer, keep a faithful record of the transactions of the Association, keep a correct account of all the financial concerns, and make a quarterly report.

4th. A Corresponding Secretary, (by ballot) who shall perform the correspondence of the Association, and make a quarterly report.

5th. Seven Directors, who, together with the officers before mentioned, shall constitute an Executive Committee; seven of whom shall form a quorum; who shall audit all accounts, call special meetings, and transact all business not otherwise provided for.

Art. VI. Any American citizen, resident in Rhode Island, of the age of twenty-one years, may become a member of this Association, by signing the Constitution.

Art. VII. It shall be the duty of each member, on all occasions, to forward the objects of the Association, and use all just and honorable means to accomplish the end for which it was organized.

Art. VIII. We do hereby disclaim all connexion with the political parties of the day;—an extension of suffrage and equal representation, being our only object.

Art. IX. Any member may withdraw from the Association, by giving notice to the Recording Secretary.

Art. X. It shall be the duty of the Recording Secretary to call a meeting, whenever requested so to do by twenty-five members of the Association.

Art. XI. Any amendment may be made to this Constitution, by a vote of two-thirds of the members present at any regular meeting, provided the same has been presented and read at a previous meeting.
THE

BANNER OF FREEDOM:

A COLLECTION OF

PATRIOTIC SONGS,

ORIGINAL AND SELECTED;

DESIGNED FOR THE

RHODE-ISLAND SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION.

Edited by Miss Ann Page.

The cause of human rights touches the gentlest chords of my heart, and its notes are responsive to the call of Liberty.

PROVIDENCE:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY S. M. MILLARD & CO.
1841.
PREFACE.

This little book of Songs, has been prepared in haste, for the accommodation of a band of sweet singers, who are engaged in the cause of the Rhode Island Suffrage Association in Providence.

The editor is fully aware, that whatever is designed to go before the public, should be maturely scanned, and criticised, both in respect to the correctness of its literary arrangements, and also, in regard to the purity of its moral sentiments.

At the commencement of this plan, which was one week before the present date, the Editor had in her keeping, only one original Ode, which was expressly adapted to the objects of this cause. She has had no assistance whatever in any department of the work, and the promise has been given to the printer, that this manuscript shall be handed in this week on Wednesday. She intends to fulfill her promise notwithstanding some incidental interruptions. The singers are subjected to much inconvenience for the want of printed copies of their songs.

This is the writer's apology for the haste in which the work is got up, and she hopes, that this consideration will render her less subject to the severity of criticism. The introduction of this number will accommodate the singers for the present, and will leave more time for the arrangement of a No. TWO, which she pledges herself, shall possess a greater share of originality, by the united contributions of those friendly to our cause.

ANN PAGE.

Providence, Monday morning, July 26, 1841.
FREEMEN OF RHODE ISLAND WAKE!
BY FRANCES H. WHIPPLE.

AIR—Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled.

Freemen of Rhode Island! wake!
See! Oppression's pillars shake
Hearts that know not freedom quake!
On! for liberty!

Cast out every servile thought,
By the truths our Fathers taught,
By the spirit we have caught;
On! to victory!

Mock not—fear not tyrant power;
Have not we the loftiest dower,
Sealed upon our natal hour
By the hand of God?

Who shall dare to rob us, then,
Of the chartered Rights of Men?
Who shall dare to lift again
Foul Oppression's rod?

Know we not the godlike Mind,
Tyrants have no power to bind?
Let the proud oppressor find,
Chains can never be

Where the heart, itself, is strong,
Loves the right—despises wrong!
Echo, then, by trump, and song!
Freedom! Liberty!

Spurn each passion's base control!
Rouse! we bear the Human soul!
Our Nature is the chartered scroll
From Jehovah's pen!

True, then, to ourselves, we'll be,
Strong, in purest liberty!
Tyrants from our path must flee—
Rouse! for we are men!
SUFFRAGE BANNER.
BY J. A. SHELDON.

Now be the suffrage banners,
Throughout the state unfurled;
And let the British charter,
From off its throne be hurled.
Then every town and hamlet,
Shall hear a freeman's song;
The gentle breeze shall waft it,
Till millions swell the throng.

CHORUS
Hurrah, ye then for freedom,
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah;
Hurrah, ye then for union;
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah.

What though a British legion,
Still bind us with a chain;
Twill goad us on to freedom:
These tyrants to disdain.
Gird on your swords, victorious,
The battle ne'er give o'er:
Your triumph shall be glorious,
And then we'll shout hurrah.

Hurrah, &c.

Then we shall reign in glory,
And be no longer slaves;
And then a freeman's story,
Shall tell of by gone days.
The State now swells in chorus,
Is shouting to be free:
With freedom's flag still o'er us,
We'll shout for liberty.

Hurrah, &c.

The Rainbow of Promise.
BY ANN PAGE.

AIR—As down in the sunless retreats.

MUSIC BY OLIVER SHAW.

Though frailty has clouded those visions of gladness,
We hoped, would have lingered o'er life's troubled,
Though the joy of this bosom, is mingled with sadness,
The prayer of devotion, still rises to thee.  
Oh God! rises to thee,  
"Pure—warm—silent to thee"

Though the joy of this bosom, is mingled with sadness,  
The prayer of devotion, still rises to thee.

The rainbow of promise, is partly unclouded,  
The arch is extended o'er land and o'er sea,  
Though faith, like the rainbow, is often enshrouded,  
The hope of the spirit turns trusting to thee.

Oh God! trusting in thee,  
"Pure—warm"—trusting in thee.

Though faith, like the rainbow, is often enshrouded,  
The hope of the spirit turns trusting to thee.

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Columbia's Great Glory.

Air—Hail to the Chief.

Hallowed the birth-day of Liberty's nation,  
Sacred the flame on her alter that burns,  
A tear to the Chieftain, that wrought her salvation,  
And flowers to the grave that her body inurns

He who from darkest night  
Led us to glory's light,

Remaining before us, our guidance and star;  
Rid every troubled sea  
Pilot of Liberty;

Champion of peace, in the ravage of war.

Hail to the name of Columbia's great Hero!  
Which brighter shines forth through the vista of years,  
Whilst on history's page, stands the contrast of Nero,  
The king of oppression and father of tears.

Then raise our sacred strain,  
Let echo mock again;

Washington rise on each patriot's voice;  
Will all Columbia round,  
Swell with the joyous sound,  
And hill and vale in the anthem rejoice.
The following Ode is respectfully dedicated to Ward No. 1, having this inscription on a banner, "We are American Citizens," on the reverse, "Each State shall have a Republican form of Government."

ANN PAGE.

ODE.

God bless the noble Band.

An—Ihail Masonry Divine.

God bless the noble band,
Who grace this happy land,
Home of the free.

They are a true born race,
Holding an honored place,
In freedom's sacred chase,
They'll never flee.

Nor will they ever bow
Before the scornful brow,
Of those who claim
Right to disown this band,
Reject their helping hand,
Thus to disgrace our land
To seal our shame!

As brothers let us rise
With one accord we prize
This sacred cause,
Each separate State shall share,
The Great Republic's care,
And every man be there
By his own laws.

These laws if they are just
Shall be Rhode Island's trust,
As we will show:
No British king shall rule,
To brand our name with fool,
Our people must bear rule,
Our rights we know.

Each freeman will disdain,
A compromise for gain,
They spurn the dust;
And this our song shall be,
A shout for victory,
Rhode Island men are free,
In God they trust.
Tyrolese Song of Liberty.

Merrily every bosom boundeth,
Merrily Oh! merrily oh!
Where the song of freedom soundeth,
Merrily Oh! merrily oh!
Where the song of freedom soundeth,
Merrily Oh! merrily oh!
There the warrior's arms
Shed more splendor:
There the maiden's charms
Shine more tender.
Every joy the land surroundeth,
Merrily Oh! merrily oh!
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Merrily Oh! merrily oh!

Wearily every bosom pineth,
Wearily oh! wearily oh!
Where the bond of slavery twineth,
Wearily oh! wearily oh!
There the warrior's dart,
Hath no fleetness,
There the maidens heart,
Hath no sweetness,
Every flower of life declineth,
Wearily oh! wearily oh!
Wearily, wearily, &c.

Cheerily then from hill and valley,
Cheerily oh! cheerily oh!
Like your native fountains sally,
Cheerily oh! cheerily oh!
If a glorious death
Won by bravery,
Sweeter be than breath
Sighed in slavery.
Round the flag of freedom rally,
Cheerily oh! cheerily oh!
Cheerily oh! &c.
The Spirit's Gathering.
BY G. W. ROBBINS.

They are gathering proudly round me,
The spirits of the brave,
From all earth's fields of glory,
And many a storied wave,
Of every age and nation,
The sons of every clime,
Who've twined the deathless laurel
Around the brow of time.

No banner floats above them,
No warlike shout is there;
They march, as march the stately stars,
Through pathless fields of air
What charm hath broke the sternness
Of your long and deep repose
Where the warrior's arm forgot at length
To grapple with his foes?

The war cloud burst above ye
Unheeded in its wrath;
The car of triumph rushed along
Ye dreamed not of its path!
Why bide ye not the spirits trump?
'Twill shake the earth and sea,
And all the armies of the dead,
Shall hear that reveille.

RHODE ISLAND.

AN EXTRACT,
With some alterations, and a new title.

Rhode-Island! when nature embellished the tint
Of thy fields and thy meadows so fair
Did she ever intend that a tyrant should print
The footsteps of slavery there?
No,—Freedom! whose smiles we shall never resign.
Our right and our courage maintains,
And 'tis sweeter to toil for an age at her shrine
Than to sleep for a moment in chains.
Can this State forget the brave victors who stood
In the day of distress by its side,
While the moss of the country was red with their blood
They shrunk not but conquered and died.
The sun that now blesses our eyes with its light
Saw them fall,—saw them die on the plain,
O! let him not blush when he leaves us to night,
To find that they fell there in vain.

Man, the Brother of Man.

Let the epicure boast the delight of his soul,
In the high seasoned dish and the rich-flowing bowl;
Can they yield such pure joys as benevolence can
Or as charity feels when she benefits man?
Let him know the kind impulse that suffers with grief,
Let him taste the delight of affording relief,
Let him serve the great author of nature’s great plan,
Who designed man to act as the brother of man?
Though deceived by a friend, let him see what he’ll gain
When the impulse of anger he learns to restrain
Though great the offence, O! forgive if you can
For revenge is a monster disgraceful to man;
Think! the chapter of life oft reverses the scene
And the rich man becomes what the poor man has been.
Think that chapter must end, for but short is the span
That will give us the power to be useful to man.

The Sweets of Liberty.

Air—"Is there a heart that never loved.

Is there a heart that never sigh’d
To set the prisoner free,
Is there a man that never prized
The sweets of liberty?
Then let him, let him breath unseen
Or in a dungeon live;
Nor never, never know the sweets
That Liberty can give.
Is there a heart so cold in man
Can galling fetters crave?
Is there a wretch so truly low
Can stoop to be a slave?
O, let him then in chains be bound,
In chains and bondage live;
Nor never, never know the sweets
That Liberty can give.

Is there a breast so chilled in life
Can nurse the coward’s sigh?
Is there a creature so debased,
Would not for freedom die?
O! let him then be doomed to crawl
Where only reptiles live;
Nor never, never know the sweets
That liberty can give.

The following Ode is respectfully dedicated to Ward No. 2, with a
Banner bearing this inscription:—“We have petitioned in vain”—on the reverse—“We will be free.”

ANN PAGE.

The Banner of Freedom.

Air—American Star.

Hark! hark! a bold shout,—’tis the voice of the Nation;
It comes in its speed on the wings of the wind;
Look! look! what myriads rush for their station,
Undaunted in spirit, unshackled in mind.
The might of our fathers resistless in story,
In war not defective—dear lovers of peace,
As brothers, united and free, in the glory,
They sought in their wisdom, the nation’s release.

How noble their objects! no sordid endeavor
To bind on the neck of a brother, the chain,
The bonds of our union, what Demon would sever?
What coward refuses to join in the strain?
Our song is of freedom, we stand by the soldier
Who dares to go forth in the name of the Lord,
With truth for his sunlight, and strength in his shoulder;
He’ll brave all the darts of our foes men abroad.
And what though our union is partially severed,
The tie that once bound us is riven in twain,
And what, though our rulers in counsel have gathered,
To fill up the gap, with a slavery chain,
Rhode Island is wakeful!—has roused from his slumbers,
A foe is forging a chain for his hand,
He raises his banner, and strike to bold numbers,
And this is his war song—to this will he stand.

In vain have we pleaded—petition unheeded,
We'll ne'er bend the knee, but are firm at our post,
From the flag of our Nation, we've never ceded,
The pure love of freedom, we never have lost.
Arouse ye! arouse ye! we'll lift our huzzas,
We're free in our counsels,—as free in our might,
We rise in our vigor, we spread all our banners;
For life, love, and liberty, freemen's delight.

Freemen's Jubilee.

BY A** P***.

AIR—Forget Not Me.

Hark! glad songs of freedom ringing,
Our souls to cheer.
Hear the gladsome heralds singing,
Both far, and near
They wake the freemen sleeping,
They chant—The watchman's keeping
Guard where virtue's weeping;
Then banish fear.

Sing, now sing in joy and gladness!
Ho! all ye free!
Now banish all this mortal sadness,
Come, list to me.
Pure and precious flowing numbers,
Break our slothful morning slumbers,
Hark! the pealing cannon thunders;
Freemen's Jubilee.