

* * But, gentlemen, if I have no *immediate* personal interest in this matter, I certainly have a common interest as a colored man, and not a very remote interest in that of my children, who are American citizens. But supposing my interest to be remote—have I no grievance to express?

When I came to your shore, I brought ample means of support for a five years' apprenticeship—and for the thirty-five years that have since elapsed, I have, by my personal labor, contributed to the national wealth, not to mention its population.— And do I possess one iota of political privilege beyond what I possessed the day I landed? Now mark the difference with another class of the population. Look at Europe disgorging her paupers from her alms-houses and work-houses, by ship-loads on your shores. London, Paris, and other European cities, eject from their jails and prisons, their burglars and blacklegs on your shores. These men, after a temporary residence; before they can name the different states of the Union!—the moment they register their intention to become citizens, are permitted to vote. Ignorant of the character of the candidates for whom they cast their ballots – ignorant of the nature of the government; in many cases ignorant of the common language of the land, they can approach the ballot-box—while YOU, natives of the soil, and I, a thirty-five years' resident—acquainted with the public character of prominent candidates for public stations, and, (shall I say it?) as well acquainted with the genius of the government as half the men that are elected to make the laws—are deprived of privileges granted to European *paupers, blacklegs, and burglars!!*

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Gentlemen, if I have no immediate personal interest in this matter, I have opinions on the subject; and if I do not offend you when I express these opinions, I shall not be amenable to your censures. But before I state these opinions, permit me to premise with three indisputable facts. First, that in the recovery of your elective franchise, you will encounter difficulties apparently insurmountable—for it is a part of the Constitution that must be altered. You must first obtain the will of the Legislature, to present the question to the voters, and a majority of the voters to agree to the alteration.

Secondly, If this essay of yours is but an ephemeral excitement, it is not worth the breath that will be spent upon it this evening.

Thirdly. The hardest stone may be worn by a constant dripping on its surface.

From these facts, my opinion is that your motto should be, "*agitate, agitate, agitate!*" If your petition is rejected this year, renew it the next, and the next, and so on, until your prayer is granted.—Be steady, be patient, be persevering in your petitions. But above all, let your addresses, your resolutions, your petitions, and your remonstrances, be couched in language temperate, courteous, decorous and dignified. The old adage is true, that "soft words break no bones." To illustrate: if you come in collision with a consummate villain, and you say, "I believe you to be a dishonest man: I cannot trust you," the offence you give him is not venial. But if you say, "You are a thief, sir, and I can prove it," the words are actionable.—

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Again: if you come in contact with a man that utters a gross falsehood, and you say, "Sir, your assertion is false and contrary to truth," he may or may not retort; but if you say, 'You are a liar, sir,' you may receive a *knock-down argument*, if he possess superior physical strength. The patriarch Job, when afflicted with sore boils, his wife advised him to curse God and die; had he have said, "Be gone, woman! you are a fool," he might have been in danger of adding *blindness* to his other infirmities—for she might have scratched his eyes out!—But he said, "Thou speaketh as the foolish woman speaketh."

If your Legislature are unjust, oppressive and tyrannical, in keeping you out of your elective franchise, it is not necessary that you call them unjust tyrants, when you can, in courteous language, logically prove that they are so. Take the fundamental principles of the government for your theme.—They have incorporated in their constitution the declaration of American Independence.—That instrument declares "that all men are created equal," that governments "derive their just powers from the will of the governed." The words "all men" are not qualified; all thinking beings are men. You are thinking beings, and are men, and being natives of the soil if you are not citizens, for what purpose is there a naturalization law?

But, again. In resisting the tax upon tea, which was the exciting [cause] of the American Revolution, the colonies [declared] that it was not the paltry sum of a [few] pence upon a pound of tea, that they resisted; but the violation of a principle of Represent-

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tative governments, which is that taxation: and representation should proceed [pari pasu,] that the colonies not being represented in, could not be taxed by the British parliament. Now your new constitution makers say that you are not taxed if you are not worth two hundred and fifty dollars; and when you are worth that sum, you *are* represented. Was there ever a more glaring subterfuge! It is a piece of [chicanery] unworthy of a petty fogging Attorney. What! not taxed because you are not worth \$250! Why, you are taxed for your very existence. You pay taxes from the imported luxuries on your table, to the very staff of life. For the sugar you consume in your families, you pay a tripple tax. The importing merchant pays a tax to the United States, to which he adds his state, freehold, and personal taxes, when he sells to the grocer; and when you purchase of the grocer, he adds his portion of taxes; and you being a consumer, pay a tripple tax.—Nay, whatever tenement, however small you occupy, for which you do not pay tax. If you do not pay it directly into the hands of the Collector, you pay it indirectly in increased rent to the landlord, who pays it for you to the Collector. What a sorry subterfuge then is it to say that because you are not worth \$250, you are not taxed!! Be steady, patient, and persevering in your petitions. Let your language be temperate, courteous, and dignified. Let your motto be *agitate*, AGITATE!! AGITATE!!!

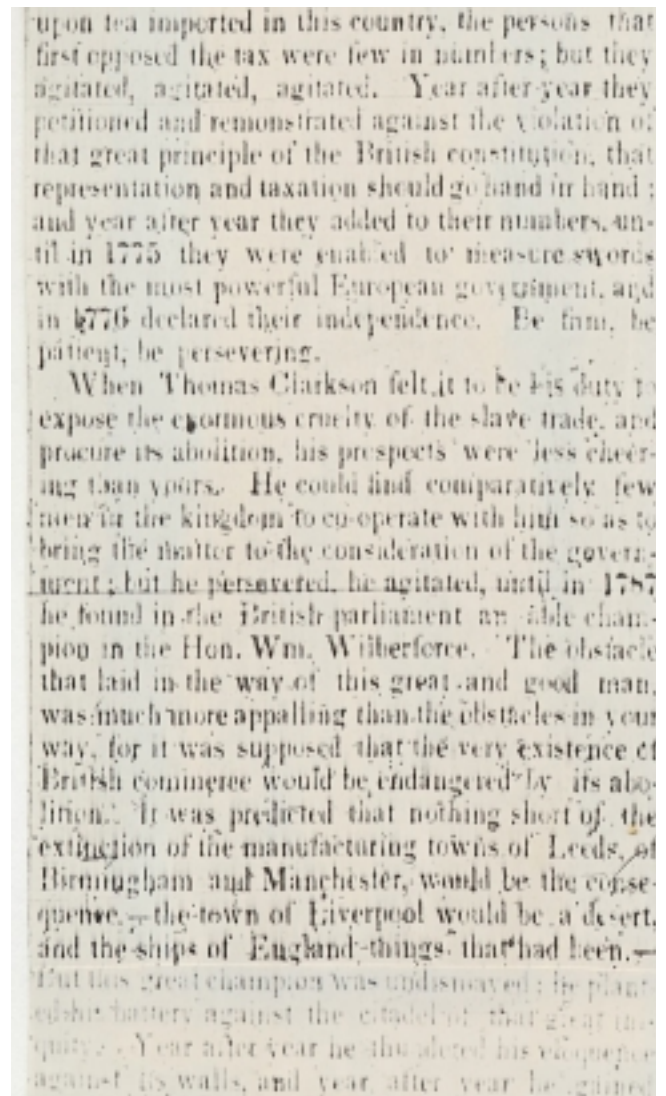
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upon tea imported in this country, the persons that first opposed the tax were few in numbers; but they agitated, agitated, agitated. Year after year they petitioned and remonstrated against the violation of that great principle of the British constitution, that representation and taxation should go hand in hand; and year after year they added to their numbers, until in 1775 they were enabled to measure swords with the most powerful European government, and in 1776 declared their independence. Be firm, be patient, be persevering.

When Thomas Clarkson felt it to be his duty to expose the enormous cruelty of the slave trade, and procure its abolition, his prospects were less cheering than yours. He could find comparatively few men in the kingdom to co-operate with him so as to bring the matter to the consideration of the government; but he persevered, he agitated, until in 1787 he found in the British parliament an able champion in the Hon. Wm. Wilberforce. The obstacle that laid in the way of this great and good man, was much more appalling than the obstacles in your way, for it was supposed that the very existence of British commerce would be endangered by its abolition. It was predicted that nothing short of the extinction of the manufacturing towns of Leeds, of Birmingham and Manchester, would be the consequence—the town of Liverpool would be a desert, and the ships of England things that had been.— But this great champion was undismayed; he planted his battery against the citadel of that great iniquity. Year after year he thundered his eloquence against its walls, and year after year he gained



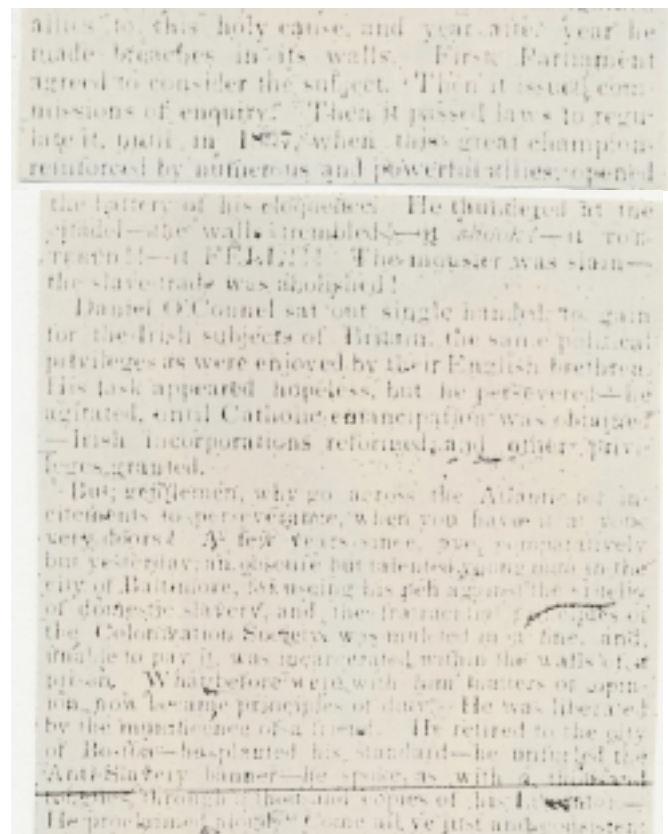
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allies to this holy cause, and year after year he made breaches in its walls. First, Parliament agreed to consider the subject. Then it [issued] commissions of enquiry. Then it passed laws to regulate it, until in 1807, when this great champion, reinforced by numerous and powerful allies; opened the battery of his eloquence. He thundered at the citadel—the walls trembled!—it *shook!*—it TOTTERED!!—it FELL!!! The monster was slain—the slave trade was abolished!

Daniel O'Connel sat out single handed to gain for the Irish subjects of Britain the same political privileges as were enjoyed by their English brethren. His task appeared hopeless, but he persevered—he agitated, until Catholic emancipation was obtained—Irish incorporations reformed and other privileges granted.

But; gentlemen, why go across the Atlantic for incitements to perseverance, when you have it at your very doors? A few years since, aye, comparatively but yesterday; an obscure but talented young man in the city of Baltimore, for using his pen against the cruelty of domestic slavery, and, the fratricidal principles of the Colonization Society was mulcted in a fine, and, unable to pay it, was incarcerated within the walls of a prison. What before were with him matters of opinion, now became principles of duty. He was liberated by the munificence of a friend. He retired to the city of Boston—he planted his standard—he unfurled the Anti-Slavery banner—he spoke, as with a thousand [frigates,] through a thousand copies of his [Liberator.] - He proclaimed aloud, "Come all ye just and [consistent]



countrymen of mine—come, look at our country's inconsistency! We declare all men are created equal—we declare ourselves the freest and most enlightened nation on earth! We declare our country the home of the oppressed of all nations, and the land of the free!—Yet we hold one-sixth part of our population in hopeless bondage! We deny to a certain class of our native born citizens the rights of man, while we receive with open arms the renegade and outlaws of Europe. Come to my aid. Assist me to erase these foul blots upon our country's escutcheon; and here I declare to you—I declare to all America—I declare to the world—I declare in the face of Heaven, that if you are deaf to the calls of humanity, if you are deaf to the dictates of justice, if you are insensible to your country's honor, if you suffer me to contend singly and alone in this fearful contest—come what, come may – come ruin, come [mock]—I will never desert this holy cause! No, not in the last throbbings of my heart!”

What has been the result of this appeal? One Anti-Slavery Society was formed—then another, and another—then by tens, by twenties, by fifties! And now, how many hundred Anti-Slavery Societies can we number? How many thousand members are attached to these Societies! Aye, and they are located in a majority of the states of the Union.

Gentlemen, I have taken up much of your time; I have trenched upon the right of those gentlemen that are to speak after me—yet I am but upon the threshold of the subject. I might exhaust your patience, I might exhaust my strength—but I could not exhaust the subject. Propriety, however, admonishes me to desist.

