

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Convention!—No enactment ever given birth to by the American Congress has created so much dissatisfaction and excitement, as the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. This is not to be wondered at when we remember that mankind are not entirely divested of their humanity, and that this enactment possesses neither the form nor the essence of true law, that it is a hideous deformity in the *garb* of law. Blackstone has justly recorded that real law commands what is right, and prohibits what is wrong. This enactment—unworthy the name of law—reverses this definition, by *prohibiting* what is *right*, and *commanding* what is *wrong*. Such is the outrage of this abomination of all abominations, upon the just and universally admitted principles of the common law. But it does not stop here. By it all the great bulwarks of Liberty are stricken down. It kills alike, the true spirit of the American Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the palladium of our liberties. It is unconstitutional for the following considerations:—It strips man of his manhood and liberty upon an ex-parte trial; sets aside the constitutional guarantee of the writ of Habeas Corpus, which, under the constitution, can never be suspended, except in cases of rebellion or invasion; declares that the decision of the commissioner, the lowest judicial officer known to the law, upon the matter of personal liberty—the gravest subject that can be submitted to any tribunal, shall be final and conclusive; holds out a bribe in the shape of double fees, for a decree contrary to liberty and in favor of Human Slavery; forbids any enquiry into the facts of the case by confining it to the question of personal identity. Thus the law strikes down all the shields of liberty, by aiming to make a local crime a national sin.

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