

PUT UP THY SWORD.

275
5614

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THEODORE PARKER'S SOCIETY,

AT THE

MUSIC HALL, BOSTON,

Sunday, March 11, 1860.

By W. H. FURNESS,

MINISTER OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY R. F. WALLCUT, 21 CORNHILL.

1860.

Ms. A. 9. 26. 69a '05
T
A. S. 13-13/11

DISCOURSE.

JOHN xviii. 11 — "Put up thy sword into the sheath."

My friends, I do not believe there ever has been an occasion, since the world began, when the sword might have been used with greater honor and advantage than that upon which it was thus commanded to be sheathed. If there ever were a person, whose life it was worth attempting to preserve, even at the cost of any number of common lives, it was he, who, when a band of ruffians, with a traitor at their head, had come to seize him, thus bade the friend who drew a sword in his defence, to put it back again into its sheath. So great was his wisdom, so life-giving his presence among men, that it would seem that no means should have been suffered to go unused, of saving mankind from so heavy a loss. He was, too, but in the blossom of his greatness. When, but a youth as he was, he had uttered so many inspired sayings, and, in his personal bearing, given assurance of such a man as all history cannot parallel, what communications of truth, what a powerful influence for good, might not have been looked for from him, had his life only been prolonged, had that extraordinary nature only reached its full maturity! A life so precious to the world, not one sword, but a thousand swords should have flashed from their scabbards to protect.

And the prospect of success in defending that valuable life was by no means so desperate at the moment as would appear. The popularity of Jesus was great. His enemies did not dare to approach him with hostile intent in public and in the day-time, so high was he in favor with the masses who crowded around him, and were very attentive to hear him, whenever he showed himself among them.

And yet, beyond all computation valuable as his life was, and successful as armed resistance to his capture might have proved, he forbade a finger to be raised in his defence; he commanded back into the sheath the sword that was drawn for him. And now, we may be well assured, that if the sword was not to be drawn then, it is never to be drawn. It may stay in its sheath, and rust wholly away, or be beaten, without any ado, into a pruning-hook. It is not an instrument that fits the hand of man, or serves any human purpose.

What a blessed thing it is for the world, that the sword that was drawn on that most critical occasion was put by with no stain upon it of mortal strife; that, even for his own dear life, would Jesus give no countenance to any act of violence! Happy is it, I say, for the whole human race, for the completeness of the grandest ideal that has ever dawned upon our twilight, for the animation of every high hope, that not a drop of blood was shed in his behalf by his permission, for now stands there imperishably the Divine Fact, that the most exalted person, and the most abundantly inspired, that ever walked the earth, he whose presence here had made for every true soul a new heaven and a new earth, chose rather to die in the bloom of his years, before he had made himself understood by a single human being, to all human seeming, under the most disastrous circumstances, than to save his great life by harming a hair of any man's head; a Fact, which, setting to every word that he uttered the seal of a sovereign sincerity, and directly addressing itself to whatever of sensibility there

is in human nature, to what is magnanimous, is an inexhaustible fountain of inspiration; a Fact, which, being a fact, is a word spoken to man in the great language of God, and containing therefore a wealth of wisdom, with which all the truth that might be articulated by a human voice in a thousand years could not approach to a comparison. So that in that one event, this death of Jesus, there is a power, which his life, however prolonged, never could have exerted.

It is not at all strange, that such monstrous theological theories of the death of Christ have been proposed, representing it as an offering of Love, mighty enough to quench the flames of an Infinite wrath and atone for the sins of the whole world! Barbarous as is this representation of it, in its logical form, its very extravagance bears witness to the profound impression which the Fact was forcible enough to make. It shows, in the wild and unregulated activity to which the imagination has been impelled by it, the power of the Fact. Whatever makes us feel deeply, always stirs the imagination, and generates the most extravagant fancies. So it is, that the facts and events which touch us most nearly have given occasion to the bewildering fictions of Theology. Such dogmas as the death of Christ has been interpreted to justify and involve never could have obtained acceptance, had not that fact been profoundly felt. They have been rendered credible only to an imagination so enormously excited that it could not be satisfied to accept the fact in its unexaggerated simplicity as a natural expression of a human heart, penetrated as heart never was before with faith in the competency of Truth and the omnipotence of Love. Nevertheless, it is on this very account, because it was natural as it was unprecedented, because it was in as perfect accord with simple human feelings as the flower with the root, because, in all its greatness, it was wholly within the sphere of human action and suffering, and not for any mysterious significance, such as theologians find

in it, that it has fixed itself as a great primary fact on the heart and history of the world.

Taken up and cleared from these fantastic interpretations, seen as a natural human act, prompted by a soul of unequalled generosity, it has, like all facts, which are the words of God, infinitely related, and therefore infinitely significant, a world of power in it, yet to be explored. Far are we yet from having risen to the height of its sublimity, or penetrated to the vigorous vitality of its meaning.

One of the most obvious lessons which it teaches is this, that death, the death of the greatest, of a world-deliverer, suddenly and violently occurring on the very threshold of the most beneficent activity, in the grey dawning hour of his career, so far from being the utter defeat which it appears, may prove a success far more decisive than a life prolonged to the uttermost could have achieved. And why? For this plain reason: because, in giving it to be seen that he, who suffers death thus prematurely, as it seems, chooses to endure any suffering rather than inflict the least, it makes grandly manifest the fact, that he is complete in the highest power that we know, which is Love, and which wins for him the confidence and veneration of mankind for ever, — a conquest which neither any mere spoken or written truth, nor a world bristling all over with swords and bayonets, has any power to achieve.

Here, I say, is a truth incontestable, because, in the crucifixion of Jesus, it exists as a fact; a fact, of which all the high sentiments of human nature, with which it is in harmony, are so many heavenly witnesses. What truth is there which can be more interesting to us now than this? What lesson is there which we at this hour more urgently need? It is the most important meaning which the death of Jesus has for us.

We are here, my friends, having part and place in the course of human affairs, at a juncture most momentous in the history of the world. Such is our lot. A great hour is com-

ing, and now is, when that transcendent interest, the central soul of all human things, the cause of human liberty and progress, which was once impersonated in Jesus of Nazareth, identified with his personal being, is again incarnated, and in the scarred and bleeding flesh of the American slave, in the wail of whose agony, the same heart-searching voice is again articulated, that was heard speaking as man never spoke, centuries ago, in Judea. It is not the bare fact of his personal wrongs and sufferings, though multiplied to millions of instances, and well demanding, on the mere score of humanity, our instant sympathy, that invests the case of the slave with its indescribable importance, with its irresistible authority. But what gives it its commanding claim upon us is the consideration, that the gross violation of the great gravitating law of justice on the person of the slave is an act which our whole social power, political, commercial and religious, is deliberately organized to commit; that organization, in the origin, maintenance and working of which, we, and all that we hold dear, are implicated; that organization, to which the whole world of mankind, specially invited by the public and formal declaration of this people, have been looking for the fulfilment of the great hope of human liberty, and from whom they are turning away with fear, indignation and shame, now that they are slowly learning to know what an imposture it is.

As this most unhappy and unrighteous condition of the American slave is thus caused, and stands thus related to all interests, sacred and secular, he stands out this hour, before all mankind, the most public person in the whole world, for in his fate, in the treatment which he is thus receiving at the hands of this sworn nation of freemen, the destinies of nations are involved; and the liberties of Europe stagger and halt, bewildered and made weak, as that music of hope which went to them over the ocean, waking them to life, is drowned in the clanking of chains and the cries of the oppressed.

I am not indulging in mere figures of speech. I beseech you, do not for a moment imagine it. I am only trying to give an adequate statement to a truth, which it is of unspeakable moment that we should every soul of us appreciate. And I repeat, our oppressed brother, weak, degraded and maltreated as he is, and because he is all these, and we do all conspire to keep him so, upholding our whole social order upon his wrongs as its chief corner-stone,— he is the special representative person of the nation and the world. He represents the dearest human interests. And in like manner, precisely as the fate of Jesus of Nazareth once changed the condition of mankind, so the whole course of human history now waits upon the fortunes of the slave.

Dear friends, as every one who has eyes to see may now see, it was not only to a benevolent instinct, blind, yet divine, but to the clearest-sighted wisdom, that Jesus gave utterance, when, in the most solemn manner possible, he represented the least of men as standing in his stead, and identified sympathy for the lowest with the homage due to the highest. Yes, just as Jesus, by virtue of his matchless truth, stood to his country and to the whole world, baptising men with the Holy Ghost and with fire, with his fan in his hand, separating the chaff from the wheat, and thoroughly sweeping his floor, so now his wretched brother, the slave, stands to this country and to the age, by virtue of the mighty wrongs which we all conspire to inflict upon him, and which, for the very reason that he has no power to utter them, clothe him only the more fully with the same divine authority that invested the words of Christ, to search and try the souls of men. Is not the Fan which was once held in the strong grasp of the Lord Jesus waving mightily now in the manacled hand of the slave over the whole land, winnowing the nation as with a fiery blast, coming straight out of heaven, bearing down all human efforts to lull the divine storm? What

precious grain it is separating to sow the world with, or to gather into the garner of heaven! And the air is thick with the chaff, political and ecclesiastical, which it is whirling away, and which a little while ago lay so quietly and in huge heaps, undistinguishable from the finest of the wheat.

Since the slave occupies this critical position, since such vast interests are involved in his rights and wrongs, and since every event that occurs tends to fix our attention upon him, to the exclusion of every thing else, the question is forced upon us, What are we to do about him, — we, especially, of the North?

To this vital inquiry, there are still not a few who are quick and confident to reply, "We are to let him alone; we are to do nothing." But, unhappily, or happily, that is impossible, absolutely impossible. I am free to confess, that for myself, there is not any thing that I would be so glad to do in regard to this trying subject as just that: Nothing. But that is the thing which, of all things, I repeat, cannot possibly be done. What! cannot a man fold his arms, and hold his tongue, and shut his eyes, and turn his back, and stand perfectly still? Hardly, if he have a spark of humanity in him. It is about as easy as to hold one's breath for any length of time, or to stop one's pulse. And yet, I believe there have been men who were able to do this last; men who had the power of voluntarily suspending all perceptible signs of animation for an extraordinary length of time, — some months; I think I have read of such cases. So, also, there are those, not a few, men too, that labor apparently under no organic defect in regard to a heart, who seem to possess a like power of suspending all signs of moral life, of suppressing every pulse of human sympathy, and remainin wholly unmoved in the presence of the most flagrant oppression. How they do it, I do not know. But they do it, and become as dead men to the claims of humanity. I think there must be some black

Art practised, some charm employed, more potent than ether or chloroform, made out of cotton or of gold. Gold has occult powers of mighty energy. We have the high authority of Faraday for the homœopathic faith, that a minute quantity of this metal will give to five hundred thousand times its weight of water a bright ruby color, and man is made of water chiefly, they say. So there is no knowing what organic changes gold may not accomplish in man and account for.

But be this as it may, let it be that at this time, when oppression numbers its victims by millions steadily increasing, and is demanding to be recognized and protected as a God-ordained institution, and every whisper against it to be hushed,—let it be, that it is perfectly easy to stand still, and hold one's peace, and ignore the whole thing. But this, friends, this is not doing nothing. On the contrary, this standing still and keeping silent,—why, it is equivalent to doing every thing, every thing to favor the great iniquity. I do not know what more effectual thing any man can do to strengthen and extend the power and misery of wrong than just this: to keep his eyes, ears and mouth shut. It is the very thing; it is all that the upholders of the wrong ask of us. It is all, at least, that they presumed to ask of us a little while ago, that we would just keep quiet, which modest request there were a great many people only too willing to comply with, if only the Slave Power would itself have kept quiet. But as that could not be, as, by the very necessity of its nature, it had to commit new and more flagrant outrages, silence and quiet have grown more and more difficult. So that now, naturally enough, something more than the negative countenance of silence is demanded; and the menace is that, if we dare to open our lips, except to admit the constitutional right and Christian duty of man to hold his fellow-man as property, we do it at the risk of being mobbed and outlawed. For this monstrous and Heaven-defying despotism, and for the out-

rageous lengths to which it is now pushing its demands, we are indebted to the do-nothing method of dealing with it. It has all come from that, from letting the evil thing alone, — alone to grow, of course, unchecked. It is the standing still and keeping silent, which this nation practised so thoroughly for half a century that we actually forgot that there was a human being on our soil that was not free, when there were actually millions in that miserable plight, — it was this closing of the eyes to slavery, until we lost sight of its existence, that has enabled oppression to extend wide its branches and strike deep its roots, and diffuse the death-distilling influence which has paralyzed the conscience and the Religion of the land, and so deadened our ordinary human sensibility that we can hardly distinguish bitter from sweet.

No, my friends, it is not possible in this matter to do nothing. God help us! we cannot be neutral. What passes for neutrality is only another name for downright interference and meddling with human rights, with the rights of property, and especially with that right of property which every man has to own himself, and which is the foundation of all rights of property. It is the neutrality which has been pretended, that has fed oppression with victims by the hecatomb, and has generated and deepened the black clouds that threaten to hide for ever the beacon light of Hope which has been kindled on this continent. As we cannot be neutral, as we must do something; what are we to do?

This question, which has been steadily coming home to us now for some years with increasing weight, in one shape or another, has recently been pressed upon us with sudden and great urgency, by events, which, fresh as they are in all minds, and still profoundly agitating the nation at large, there is no need that I should detail any more particularly than to say that they compose the incidents of an attempt to answer the great question in a certain way, namely, by resorting to

a certain degree of physical force, in order to the deliverance of the oppressed; an attempt, the aim of which, as its leader declared, and upon his word all who knew him rely, was, with the utmost humanity possible, with a careful avoidance of all personal injury to the master, save in self-defence, to provide a way of escape for the slave, and to arm him against recapture on his way to the mountains or to a free soil beyond the borders of our slave soil; an attempt, undertaken not without the hope that in Virginia, as in Missouri, it might be carried out "without the snapping of a gun." Such was the object of John Brown, a man of such impressive truthfulness and dignity of character, that the light of his high personal qualities broke at once through the blinding mists of rage and terror that gathered round him upon the very threshold of his enterprise, and commanded the respect and admiration of those who overpowered him and dragged him to the scaffold.

Considered, therefore, in its intention, this enterprise was not an express and formal attempt to solve our great problem by asserting the right of insurrection. It was not designed to stir up the slaves to a murderous assault upon the persons and families of their masters. So that it may be affirmed that no man in the North, no Anti-Slavery man certainly, not even John Brown himself, ever contemplated instigating the oppressed to rise upon their oppressors and put them to the sword. All that he sought was to assist the slaves to escape from the house of bondage, and to provide them with arms to defend themselves from being re-taken.

I do not imagine there is a man among us so destitute of common sense and humanity as to think of inciting the slaves to acts of vengeance and murder. No friend of the black race can regard such a thought with any feeling but of horror. Why, the first intimation of the existence of such a purpose would be a signal for the instant outbreak of a war of exter-

mination upon that unhappy people. It has been thought, that it would help certain party and political purposes to charge certain persons at the North with this bloody design. But of those who made this charge, I do not suppose that any believed it, but those who were bereft of their senses by rage and terror. It is not in the people of the North to entertain any such murderous idea. Indeed, so utterly incapable do I hold them to be of any such savage intent, that I can hardly bear to seem to be defending them against the charge.

But it is needful to say what I am saying: we must expect this charge to be made, we must reconcile ourselves to the humiliation of uttering our protest against being accused of these bloody designs, so long as we avow, as the great mass of the people all over the North, all over the South, yes, and all over the world, do avow, the lawfulness, under any circumstances, of resorting to brute force, of drawing the death-dealing sword for God and for man. So long as we maintain the right to shoot and stab to right any wrong, we are fairly open to the suspicion of being ready and willing to shoot and stab to any extent; not only because we are extremely liable to confound our passions with our principles, and to persuade ourselves that we are striking for God and for the Right, when we are only gratifying our anger or our revenge, but because, the right to use violence in any case being maintained, as a principle, we do virtually stand upon the ground of its lawfulness in all cases. It is a principle upon which no restriction can be put, for it asserts aggression to be the dictate of self-defence, and uses not merely a shield, but a sword, and a sword not merely to ward off, but to strike. The distinction is made, I know, between the offensive and the defensive. The line that divides these two seems to be very easily and broadly drawn, but it is very sensitive, and sways to and fro with the slightest breath of human emotion, and may at any moment be obliterated by the surges of passion.

What act of war is there so bloody and inhuman that it has not been justified at the moment, and afterwards, upon the ground that it was rendered necessary for the self-protection of somebody?

So long, therefore, as we assert the right to use the sword upon any occasion, we lay ourselves open to the charge of being ready to use it needlessly, because we are, in fact, liable to use it so; because, when we are aggressive in defence, it is impossible to distinguish aggression from defence. Why, the bare physical exertion required to render a blow effective creates a heat in the blood, and the hot blood goes to the brain, and when the mind is heated, the ordinary effect of heat follows. The thoughts and images that rise in the mind are dilated; trifles are magnified into grave offences; the wild suggestions of an inflamed fancy are taken for self-evident facts, and then all the curbs of Reason and Humanity are consumed in the heat, and the passions rush all abroad to the work of blood and rapine, like so many demons let loose from the abodes of darkness.

So plainly true is all this, that while I heartily honor John Brown for his generous purpose and for his heroic courage, while I freely allow that wherein he was wrong he had this excuse, that he was justified by the public sentiment of the world, which recognizes the sword as the lawful instrument of Justice and Liberty, I nevertheless see, that in resorting to force, in drawing the sword for the slave, he was wrong, and that the means which he employed tended to hurt the cause which it was in his great heart to serve. With all his care so to organize the enterprise which he undertook in behalf of the slave as to keep it strictly within the bounds of humanity and self-defence which he resolved to observe, he was not able, even on the threshold of his attempt, to prevent a shedding of blood, a sacrifice of life, which his purpose and his method did not contemplate, and which aroused against him

and a little company a ferocity so savage that it wreaked its fury upon the dead bodies of those of his friends who fell at Harper's Ferry. Wise and self-possessed as he was, and with all his experience of the barbarity of the Slave Power, and because, as I believe, he was full of the blessed idea of restoring to the oppressed the sacred rights of which they are robbed, he appears to have lost all foresight of the cruelty and bloodshed which would inevitably flow from the frenzy of fear and wrath that the first flash of his drawn sword would certainly kindle in those against whom it was drawn. He did not take into account the undeviating law, that violence produces violence, and that the force, which he intended to employ very guardedly and under the steady restraint of a watchful humanity, would look, in the eyes of those against whom it was directed, like nothing but what it was, pure, untempered, brute force, and so would be sure to arouse a force in them which would regard no restraints. Had he been successful in his first enterprise, had every thing gone as he intended, and a refuge been obtained in the mountains, it would have told fearfully upon the black race, whose blood all over the South would, I believe, have run like water, and whose chains would instantly have been trebled in weight, while at the North, all who sympathise with them would have been the objects of a far fiercer persecution than they have yet dreamed of. I know that the slave has friends here, whose fidelity no persecution, however violent, can shake, but only confirm. I believe, too, that they are prepared for every trial that an uncompromising adherence to the Right may involve. Only the more earnestly to be desired is it, that no unnecessary occasion should be given to the spirit of persecution, that no needless obstacles should be thrown in the way of the great and holy cause of Abolition. It is not worth while that the difficulties with which it has to contend should be aggravated by the employment of

methods of serving it, which, to say the least, are questionable, and which many of its most faithful friends consider positively and upon principle wrong.

That such consequences as I have mentioned would have resulted from the success of John Brown's attempt, we may see plainly enough from what has actually followed upon its failure. In some of the Slave States, it is seriously proposed, as you know, either to drive out of them all free persons of African blood, or reduce them to the abject condition of slaves. In Kentucky, a company of white people, resembling the primitive Christians in their blameless and devout lives, have been driven into exile, for no reason but because they had pity upon the enslaved and held oppression to be sinful before God. In the city where I dwell, persons, from whose education and position better things were to be expected, have publicly counselled the violent suppression of the most precious principle of our American institutions, Free Speech; counsel which only the commendable firmness of our civil authorities prevented from being carried into effect with blood and fire. And all over the South, every Northern stranger is narrowly watched, and many have been brutally treated and driven away, and a reign of terror inaugurated, under which the bloody law of the Suspect, without needing to be enacted, is going into full operation.

These things are the inevitable consequences of the intrusion of the drawn sword into the great conflict, and they show what far more bloody results would have come, not to the free white people of the South, not to the slaveholders, but to the slaves and their well-wishers, had not the sword that was drawn been instantly driven back into the sheath.

The recent attempt, therefore, which is stirring the heart of the country, "educating the nation," as Wendell Phillips loves to say, teaches us very pointedly what we are not to do for our enslaved brother. Most solemnly does it repeat the

command of Jesus to his rash and ardent friend: "PUT UP THY SWORD INTO THE SHEATH."

The sword can only wound and kill the body, and upon the mind it can have no effect, but to madden it with rage or drive it wild with terror; thus, so far from convincing the understanding, or strengthening the sense of Justice, or breathing into men the spirit of repentance and humanity, closing both heart and understanding against the Truth. Every body knows this. Every body knows that a blow is not an argument, that stabbing and shooting prove nothing, that physical force displaces the greater force of Truth.

The force of Truth, on the other hand, living in a man, sounding in his voice, beaming from his countenance, expressed in his whole person, — that it is that goes to the heart, straight to the heart. No cannon ball goes swifter. The shields which the advocates of wrong hide behind to escape it, the fortifications which they throw up to keep it out, and all the extreme measures to which they have recourse to defend themselves against it, the depths of absurdity into which they plunge to get out of its range, — do they not all betray the fact that the truth is felt and feared? When, some thirty years ago, in the city of Boston, a solitary voice was uplifted, publishing the truth, that to hold a man as a slave is a sin before God, and, as such, must be forsaken without a moment's delay, and the State of Georgia at the other end of the country set a price of five thousand dollars on the head of him who dared to publish this truth, the proof was decisive that the great wrong was hit in the heart.

The force of Truth is indeed so great, that when men will not, through its arguments and persuasions, forsake their falsehoods, it compels them to act out the evil that is in them, and which refuses to yield to any gentler treatment, and so they get a taste of its bitter quality in the ridicule and shame

which they incur, and the shattering collision with facts into which they rush. This way which Truth takes with the refractory is a violent, and oftentimes a bloody process, for the devils, which she thus arouses and dislodges, rend and tear their victims, and make them mischievous to others as well as to themselves. Nevertheless, the world is greatly obliged to the Truth, whenever she renders it this valuable service. But because her faithful words are often followed by riot and bloodshed, as quickly as if they were so many pistol shots, there are not a few who see no difference between the sword of steel and the sword of Truth, and hold it just as disorderly to employ the one as the other; and for their part, they protest they would as lief be struck by the hand as by the tongue. Perhaps they would, so far as the mere pain is concerned. But there is all the difference in the world between the wounds inflicted on the body by muskets and sabres, and the inflammation of the mind caused by the word-winged shafts of Truth. The wounds of the body are positive injuries, disfiguring, and disabling perhaps to the extent of destroying life, and who shall tell the worth of that? The wounds made by the Sword of the Spirit, when that sword is wielded in love, without heat or malice, however much they may irritate, and notwithstanding the violent spasms they may occasion, tend to heal and make sound the whole man. The fits of profane wrath into which men are thrown by the Truth, are often signs of quite an advanced state of grace. Paul set out from Jerusalem, breathing threatenings and slaughter against the Christians, but before he reached Damascus, he was a Christian himself, of the first order.

Therefore, because the Truth is so great, let the sword be put back into the sheath. We need something stronger than that, and Truth is as much more effectual than any brute

force, as the last most deadly invention of modern military science is than the war-club of a New Zealander.

As I see the immeasurable superiority of intellectual and moral power over all the revolvers and rifles and artillery that ever have been or ever will be devised, as I hold this superiority of the power of the mind over the force of the body to be as true as the shining of the sun there in the heavens, I believe that unless men lose their senses, and are bereft of the commonest faculties of discernment, they must, sooner or later, recognise this truth, recognise it, too, so clearly, that they will be at a loss to conceive how men, laying claim to any civilization, could ever have been so absurd as to undertake to fight against evil with physical force, when the invincible Sword of the Spirit is always within reach. If men are for ever incapable of apprehending this truth, how will it help the matter to hack them in pieces with the sword, or blow them into atoms with gunpowder?

But another reason why I confidently believe that men will come by and by to see this very valuable truth as clearly as they see the light of day is, that to wield the Sword of the Spirit requires that quality, in its highest degree, than which there is nothing that so fascinates us all, men and women, weak and strong, wise and simple: Personal Courage. It is this one quality, and only this, that reconciles mankind, age after age, to the brutal absurdity of war. Because the use of the sword indicates personal courage, we acquiesce in this irrational method of serving the cause of Liberty and Right, nay, we magnify the work of violence and blood, as the most glorious of all human achievements, and warriors are the world's heroes and saints. But there is a far higher courage, there is a far more daring spirit than his who knows how to fight. There is a braver than he. It is the man who knows how to die, who, never thinking to insult the Truth by employing in her behalf any weapons but her own, speaks her message

in love, and without fear, prepared to suffer violence, but never to commit it; who, in a word, is so brave that he holds it cowardly to draw the sword. Is not such a spirit possible? The profession of non-resistance to force by force, I am aware, looks suspicious, — the pretext, it may be, of the timid, of those who dare not confront a drawn sword, or a loaded revolver. If it be only this, it deserves and must inspire only contempt. But, rare as it is, — the exalted valor of which I speak, — it is not impossible. Men and women, under the inspiration of conscious right, have manifested it, over and over again. The late Isaac Hopper gave us some relish of its quality, who, when a kidnapper levelled a pistol at his heart, threatening to shoot him if he advanced a step, quietly replied to the threat: “I am ashamed of thee, — thee’s too old, — thee ought to know better,” and moved on. Captivated, as we all are, by exhibitions of personal daring, this highest form of courage, the valor that flings away the sword, must take the heart of the world, and triumphing over the imagination, enlisting all the fine arts in its service, Painting, Poetry and Music, will level every stronghold of iniquity, though it bristle all around with artillery loaded to the mouth.

It is because of this grander courage, because there is a surer method for the abolition of wrong than the method of the sword, I reply to the question, — What are we to do for the slave? — we are not to draw the sword, or when it has been rashly and unwisely drawn, as it was by Peter in the Garden, as it has been by John Brown at Harper’s Ferry, it must be put back into the sheath, to remain there for ever, unstained by a single drop of human blood.

It is true, as your minister, faithful and well-beloved, has said, all the great charters of Humanity have been written in blood; and therefore he justifies the shedding of blood. It is because they were written in blood, blood shed by their champions, that they have so often proved to be a dead letter;

because they have sanctioned the bloody arbitrament of the sword, the dear cause of man's deliverance has to be fought for over and over again. Revolutions effected by force always end, sooner or later, in reëstablishing the tyranny they undertake to overthrow. And our boasted American Revolution is no exception to this truth, but an impressive instance of it.

It is high time that the savage attempt to convert men by killing them, by wholesale murder, should come to a full end. The time and the country in which we live, with all the uproar with which they are ringing, furnish a grand opportunity to contend for the Truth with the Truth, in the accorded right of Free Speech, of which, struck down, as it now is, at the South, and threatened at the North, I still have faith that the people of the Free States will not consent to be deprived. Of this right we cannot indeed be divested, without our consent, although we may be forced to pay a price for the exercise of it. But there is no price, not even life itself, that is not cheap in comparison with this more than royal prerogative. Only the grander will be the opportunity of serving Truth and Freedom by suffering for them, by showing how highly they are to be prized, allowing no blood to be shed, no lives to be sacrificed for them, but our own. They are worth that sacrifice, a thousand times over. What! is it held sweet and honorable to a proverb to die for one's native land, and shall it not be far sweeter and more honorable to die for that which is the renown of all lands, the desire of all nations? To be willing to cease from life, rather than take the life of the meanest human being that breathes — this is the highest service to the God of Truth and Love which any man can render. This is God-like. This is being made perfect in love. Greater love hath no man than to lay down one's life for his friends and his foes.

Thus serving God and man by a self-surrender which knows

no reserve or stipulation, we shall not, by any means, relinquish, we shall assert, and most faithfully exercise, the first sacred Right of Nature, THE RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENCE; only we do not consider the faint breath of our nostrils, the frail life of the body, subject to many pains, lasting only a few uncertain years, — we do not mistake this shadow for our very self, to defend which we are to cut and thrust and shoot in all directions, and cause human blood to flow in torrents. But the life that we are to guard from every wound and every stain is the life of the sacred, Heaven-descended mind. That is our dear self. To defend that, to preserve it free and pure, free from the bondage of fear, pure from every injurious thought, we must be ready, at any moment, to let the life of the body go, with perfect composure, having, in the consciousness of a deeper life than that, an intuitive conviction that thus to lose one's life is to find it for ever. It was when the sword of steel was taken out of the hand of John Brown, as he himself said, and he was left with only the Sword of the Spirit, that he had a new experience of a higher power than the force of arms. When he was a prisoner, and doomed to death, when he went to the scaffold, with the serenity of the fine country around him in his heart as well as in his eye, then it was that he was robed and crowned with victory. Then shone forth the heroic quality of the man, brighter than any diadem. Then friend and foe were alike touched with his nobleness, and a right loyal thrill of admiring sympathy went through the world.

One word, and I will detain you no longer. I have endeavored, my friends, to give some expression to my deep conviction of a vital principle of the Gospel of Peace and Truth, a principle which, so long as it continues an abstraction, the despotic wrongs under which the world writhes may be subverted, but only to reappear, in forms just as terrible. I believe in the truth and indescribable worth of this princi-

ple. I have not had the slightest hesitation, — I have been glad to utter my faith freely here. For how else, but by a difference, could I better testify the honor and the love in which I hold the devoted minister of God and brother of Christ, who still ministers here, though absent, whose heart is a live coal upon the altar of Humanity, a shining and a burning light, and for whose health and welfare unuttered prayers are constantly ascending far and wide? May Heaven bless him and you, and in times like the present, and in such times as may come, we know not at what hour, may we one and all be faithful to our light!