

MES-AGE

Of the Proceedings of the Manumission Society of North Carolina, delivered at a Semi-Annual Meeting at Center Meeting house, in this county, on the 8th of September last.

Beloved Members of the Manumission Society of N. C.

Since the period of our Semi-Annual meeting in March but few events connected with the object of our institution, have fallen so fully within my knowledge, as to enable me in making this communication, to mark with much precision, our progress towards its attainment. From the return of Delegates, you will be enabled to discover, to what extent the Society has drawn to itself additional members within the last half year; this, however, will not form the proper, or the only ground on which to estimate the progress of public opinion, in relation to the future destination of our coloured population.

The history of the day furnishes abundant evidence, that the Statesman is beginning to view the subject of gradual Emancipation and Colonization, as inseparably connected with the honor, the welfare, and the safety of his country. This is conducting his political economy to fair conclusions on the comparative value of free and slave labor; and showing him the superiority of the former over the latter, for all purposes of national wealth and greatness: It is rousing his latent energies, to vindicate the purity of our fundamental principles from the insidious invasions of anti-republican practice, and to rescue that beautiful and sublime theory, which is the admiration of the world and the pattern of regenerated nations, from the stigma which absurd and corrupt application has cast upon it. The minister of religion is averting his eye in displeasure from the soul-chilling aspect of valsalage, which degrades the Master, debases the Slave, corrupts them both and disgraces the Church; and with his mild and gentle rebuke he is bringing back his flock to the simple, just, and equitable principles of the Gospel.

Were it not that it would pre-occupy the spare allowed for matter more immediately interesting in our present capacity, we might here with pleasure indulge in a brief retrospect of the declarations and labors, of many of our worthy statesmen and divines, some of whom, alas! are no more. The benevolent exertions of the clergy in aid of that truly national institution, the Colonization Society, merit the highest encomium: but their reward is above all earthly praise. While these things speak to us in tones of conviction, that "the spirit is moving upon the waters," let it awaken our warmest gratitude to Heaven, that we are permitted to live at a day, and in a country, where the operation of public opinion, intelligent and virtuous, can remove the most inveterate prejudices of habit, rectify the greatest abuses, reform the most absurd systems and avert the greatest scourges. And while we move forward with firm and steady purpose, not to be diverted from our object, let us studiously avoid all unnecessary irritation of those deep-rooted prejudices which have grown up with many of our countrymen and cannot be suddenly eradicated without sensible pain: but will yield to a course of mild, gentle and consistent measures. It cannot have escaped your observation, that these propensities are generally found obstinate in proportion to the age of the party affected with them. This points out to the active Philanthropist the proper field for his labors, and affords him the consolation of seeing the youth of his country growing up with a more exalted sense of his country's honor, and more consistent views of his own duty as a patriot and Christian.

In pursuing the supplicatory course which the Society has marked out for herself—The subject of petitioning the next General Assembly will claim your first attention:—it is expedient

to petition that body, this year; to what specific object connected with the general views, will you pray their legislative care? As our free colored population have been long denounced as a nuisance & a pest, there be no doubt in this denunciation, may we not prevail on our legislature to afford some facilities for their transportation? This has been considered an object not unworthy the legislative regard of our sister of Virginia, nor can we suspect less magnanimity in this state, especially, when it is recollected that private munificence (in which this society bore an humble part) has been found sufficient to charter a vessel, for the accommodation of 119 emigrants to a clime, more congenial to their nature, and auspicious to their happiness.

It is believed that many of our citizens are desirous to free themselves of the anomalous practice of holding men in slavery in a Christian republic—but are withheld by the almost insurmountable difficulties in the way to Emancipation: (The existence of which, decisions of our Supreme court on this point abundantly prove) first, the small addition made to their happiness by bestowing that liberty which is merely nominal while they remain among us degraded, and destitute of those immunities which enhance the value of that blessing. Second, the continual danger of their redemption to a state of slavery, by the circumvention of knaves, which must continue so long as our laws permit the flimsy pretensions of the white claimant, to impose the burden of proof on the black person claimed. Thirdly, the path of Emigration from North-Carolina is not yet laid sufficiently open to admit an easy access to those benevolent Masters, who would place their slaves beyond the effect of partial laws co-operating with corrupt repacity. It is therefore, submitted to your consideration, whether it be not expedient to appoint a special agency, whose duty it shall be to open a correspondence with the Colonization Society, through its resident agent; and with other agencies for emigration to the Island of Hayti, with a view to ascertain the most practicable and expeditious means for their conveyance to some port for embarkation, if practicable within this State.

The opposition that has hitherto been made to Haytian emigration, seems mostly to have resulted from fear. (that ever haunting and specter shadow of guilt) lest the growing importance of that Island, combined with other events in the Southern half of our hemisphere, should effect the slave system in the United States, in a way unfavourable to the wishes of its advocates—The visionary fears and false representations concerning that Island, its government and inhabitants sufficiently refute themselves, and leave on our minds a clear conviction that citizenship there is infinitely preferable to VASSALAGE, or nominal freedom here, and that it is no less for our own interest than it is for the happiness of the colored race, to promote their emigration—nor can we fear that both, the channel to Hayti and Liberia, will drain off this part of our population faster than the true interest of our country requires. Should you resolve to persevere measures as suggested above—such an agency, to make it efficient, would require to be vested with ample discretionary powers.

The very cool and repulsive manner (to say the least) in which the friendly overtures of the State of Ohio, was met by the Executive of this State, seems not to lessen those sectional feelings which can never become the source of good to our common country—and subsequently the declarations of some intemperate politicians, are obviously calculated, if not intended, to excite them where they exist and create them where they exist not. It would be erroneous should the official communication alluded to be considered by any sister State, as the universal sentiment of North-Carolina: It may not therefore, be improper to address the le-

gislature of Ohio, in a manner expressive of the sense in which we understand her proffered kindness: Recollecting that the policy for which we are contending is diffused over an extent, embracing no inconsiderable portion of the wealth and population of the state.

The Colonization Society having satisfactorily demonstrated the practicability of its object—and the Liberian Colony fast rising into political and commercial consequence: may we not look forward to the next session of Congress as a proper period at which to unite our prayers with them, that the patronage of the national government may be extended to that Institution? However desirable it may be, that our Senators and Representatives be spoken to on this subject through our State Legislature—yet may we not indulge the hope, that if the subject is in any way brought before Congress, pecuniary aid will be afforded, at least to the amount appropriated for the suppression of the Slave Trade.

"The American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the United States," seems never to have lost sight of their grand object: their meetings, it is believed, have been biennially held in the City of Philadelphia, since the year 1786.

It will be recollected, that that institution became an active coadjutor in that first great step towards reformation, which was effected by both Great Britain and America, in the year 1808. But this by no means completed the grand design, or realized the patriotic and benevolent views of a Society, of which, a Franklin, a Rush, a Benzet, and a Pemberton were members: It is much to be desired that all the numerous Societies, which have for their object the amelioration of the African race, could come together in one General Congress, and thus give systematic and united energy to their labors, in this all important and national cause—The institution above alluded to, seems to form the ground for this coalition; and willing to afford every facility to their fellow citizens of the more southern states, whose condition so imperiously require their early and unremitting efforts, they have adjourned their session to the City of Baltimore on the 25th of October. A letter from the secretary of the acting Committee, with an extract of their Constitution, will herewith be submitted to your consideration.

The subject of establishing a Press, devoted to the cause of Emancipation and Colonization, will probably be brought before you from some of the Branches, where it is understood to have been taken into consideration. The expediency of this measure will at some period demand a due and attentive investigation. The freedom of the Press is emphatically called the great bulwark of Liberty—and our Fathers when they entered the social compact for their own government, declared it free from restraint—that is as free as we are "to assemble together to consult for our common good, to instruct our representatives, to petition for redress of grievances, &c." whatever may be said of the Press in this state, as 'the bulwark of Liberty' in the sense in which that term was used by the National Convention in 1776; we know that in a government like ours, it is the grand medium for the transmission of ideas, and the interchange of opinions between man and man, that it is at once the vehicle of intelligence, and a powerful instrument for the reformation of such practices as are heterogenous to free popular government, where it is under no undue or improper influence. These establishments being generally private property, and the comfort and convenience of the proprietor or conductor, in a pecuniary point of view, dependent on their judicious management—It was not to be expected that the columns of our periodical print would be unhesitatingly opened to admit the discussion of a wrong and its remedy, (which can only be adjudged and decided by the people) while popular prejudice springing from false

views of private interest, was so deeply interested to keep off the investigation: But now, that both slaveholder and non-slaveholder are uniting together; conscious that procrastinating the enquiry will not lessen its intricacy and that the country cannot avert her danger by obstinately closing her eyes upon it; And by their labors and calculations are showing incontrovertably, not only the moral guilt, but the political absurdity of slavery, but are proving with mathematical certainty, that our republic must at no distant day, be placed (to mention no more recent instances) in such a predicament as Rome by her Plebeians and Greece by her Helots have been.—Is it not reasonable to expect that this avenue to the public eye shall be a little more liberally opened to us? Are our opponents afraid to meet us on that ground and record their answer to our declaration. But it must be observed, and to the honor of the Editorial fraternity, that many of them have acted, recently, with great impartiality and independence on this subject; indeed most of their papers have been within a few years much improved, in being divested of those odious figures prefixed to slave advertisements. What happy changes might be wrought through the instrumentality of men so intelligent generally—whose situation is so favorable as the editor of a periodical paper. Whenever you shall judge it expedient to take up this subject, I presume you will be disposed either to put in operation a press of your own, or to afford prompt and effectual patronage to one already in operation, pretty centrally situated in the wealth and population of the state.

The great and increasing interests of the Society, require your deliberation on other subjects of equal pertinence, which, though they have been here presented but which, the short period prescribed for the session necessarily precludes, more especially as it is probable that sundry matters will come up from the branches together with others of equal claim to attention, from your Board of Managers should they report.

With this transient and incomplete view of the interest of the Society, permit me in conclusion, to remark on the state of it generally. If we compare its present aspect with what it was in 1823, we have abundant reason to believe we are advancing with tardy steps towards the consummation of our hopes, that is, such a renovation in public opinion, as will put in operation a system of policy before which the degrading anomaly of republican slave laws will shrink into the legitimate regions of despotism, or else be driven from the world. We know that some selfish men have endeavoured to append odious ideas to the term reformation, affect to speak of what they are pleased to call self created societies with contempt; and to stigmatise all efforts for the abolition of slavery with such epithets as only proceed from that contracted rule of vision which is amply filled by the contemplation of their mistaken views of private interest.—Which seems incapable of being expanded so as to take in objects of such magnitude, as their country's welfare, and the happiness of unborn millions, both white and black. But let us at all times recollect, that those are our countrymen, and these are the prejudices naturally produced by a system of slavery; our duty to them requires that we hold our indignation abstractedly—and while we feel a just abhorrence of the system, and labor earnestly for its extermination, let us as much as possible pity and spare its misguided advocates. Their powerless efforts will in the end have no other effect than to rouse the latent energies of reason, truth and justice, into more vigorous action, and show in a more luminous manner, that the reformation contended for is to be effected by the mildest means, and for the noblest of purposes, nothing less than the temporal and eternal happiness of man. What would a great part of Europe have been at this day, had it not been for this abused and calum-