

A STATEMENT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH INDUCED 'FIFTY STUDENTS OF PHILLIPS' ACADEMY, ANDOVER.

To ask a Dismission from that Institution.

We regret the necessity, which compels us to appear before the public in vindication of our conduct. The course which we have pursued may seem, we are persuaded, at the first glance, to many of the readers of this paper, to be that of rashness and fanaticism. And, in the outset, it will naturally be asked, who are these students? What their age and character? Every feeling of our hearts would prompt us on these 'delicate' topics, to maintain an entire silence. But when, by withholding facts on such points, we run the hazard of being held up by unprincipled and designing men, as a 'parcel of insignificant and deluded youngsters,'

*Fixed figures for the hand of scorn,
To point her slow, unsmiling finger at,*
we are not at liberty to be silent.

A large majority of our number have reached that period, when by the laws and usages of the land, we may lay claim to all the privileges and immunities of free American citizens. The average age is more than twenty-one years. There is but one of us, who, by the laws of the State, is not of age to be required to pay an annual tax into the public treasury. Nearly all are professors of religion, and studying for the Christian ministry. We do not propose on the present occasion to enter into a labored exposition of Anti-Slavery principles; neither to heap calumny and disgrace upon the head of any man, or set of men living; much less to exhibit any thing approximating even in the slightest degree to a spirit of recklessness and bravado. Our simple object is, to present *in brief* before the world the circumstances and the facts in our case. And though in these days we have embodied all the unkindness and severity of unwelcome truth, yet just to ourselves and the world, calls upon us to make them known. Only let our statements be fairly and impartially weighed, and we are willing to abide the decision of an enlightened and christian public. We now proceed to detail that unhappy train of circumstances which has finally resulted in our withdrawal from the Institution.

In the fall of 1834, a committee was appointed by the abolitionists in Phillips' Academy, to wait upon the Principal, Mr. Johnson, for the purpose of obtaining his permission to form an Anti-Slavery Society in said Institution. Their suit was promptly rejected.

In January, 1835, by vote of the Abolitionists in the same Institution, a respectful memorial was drawn up, by a committee appointed for that purpose, asking permission, a second time, from the Principal, to form an Anti-Slavery Society. This petition was not presented, from the fact that our Instructor informed one of the committee, that he had made up his mind upon the subject—that he objected to its formation, but that the committee wished to *instruct him* on the subject, he would not do this. We could, of course, proceed no farther than the attitude of 'Instructors,' which, as modest young men, as pupils, we could not do without outraging all rules of propriety. This ended our second effort to form an Anti-Slavery Society in Phillips' Academy. The next inquiry was—Can we join a society in the Theological Seminary, or in the village, in case of its formation? At the answer given at this time, and then recorded with a law, enacted a short time subsequently, for the purpose of preventing the students from joining the Anti-Slavery Society in the village, which we shall soon introduce. The substance of this answer, was as follows: 'If you divide these fees, to connect with either of these societies, I do not prohibit them, though I could not give my advice. From what quarter does the breeze next blow? You shall hear. Truth is our property, facts are our weapons, and wield them we must, let shame and confusion fall upon whom they may.'

On Tuesday evening, February 3, 1835, an Anti-Slavery Society was formed in the Village, and some 25 or 30 of the students of Phillips' Academy entered their names upon its Constitution—not that the number who would have joined, but for what afterwards transpired. On a subsequent morning our Instructor, learning that his pupils had taken an active part in the meeting above-mentioned, but ignorant that any had actually become members of the Society, in connection with other remarks, gave the following notice to the students: 'I have just received notice, on your behalf, from the Principal, that he has declined your petition for the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society in this Institution. I am sorry to hear of this. I expect you as gentlemen and a christian, to come to me and have his name taken off from my list. And now, my young friends, don't go about complaining that I am unreasonable. There is no compulsion—you are as free as air—but if you will join an Abolition Society, come to me and I will give you an honorable dismission and recommendation to any Institution in the Union, and no man in my presence shall ever say aught against you.' This notice was unnecessary. On the evening of the same day, our Principal, having learned that some members of his school had joined the Society above-mentioned, gravely tells us, 'That he supposes it will be just as easy for us to take off our names as it was to put them on.' But what is the result? Do we forthwith erase every name, and by this act make an expiatory sacrifice for the heinous crime of thinking and acting according to the dictates of our own consciences, on a subject, freighted with interests as weighty as the salvation, temporal and eternal, of two and a half millions of our countrymen, together with the extension and purity of the church universal? No. We immediately conferred not with flesh and blood, but looked to God—took counsel, and, having put our hand to the plough, dared not to look back. Those of us concerned, well remember a bright watch a fiery furnace we were called to pass. All who considered it their duty to continue their membership, were requested to lend in their names to the Principal. Most of them were promptly given. Now in connection with this request, take the so called 'advice' before referred to, and what, we ask, says expulsion, could be supposed to await us? Thus day after day were we kept 'on the tenter.' When we put the question, whether for this high misdemeanor, (?) expulsion must be met; the response was, 'I shall do nothing rashly, as ambiguous as the oracles of Apollo. The fear of dismission was thus brought to bear powerfully upon us. And when this method proved entirely futile, and in many instances was put in requisition; and, in many one instance, when we addressed in terms like the following: 'Now if all the rest will erase their names, will not you also? Now if you will not do it from principle, will you not out of respect to my feelings? It is all in vain. Conscious that we had planted our feet upon the rock of eternal truth, we stood unmoved. No name was taken off.

And now we ask the candid consideration of our readers to a law enacted a short time subsequent to the above proceedings, but not, however, till after the famous vote of neutrality was passed in the Theological Seminary. It was couched in the following language, viz: 'No member of

Phillips' Academy shall join any society in the town of Andover, without permission from the Principal!! Now, premising that this law was made, not to regulate the conduct of minors alone, but to be enforced upon those arrived at the age of manhood, and who of course were entitled to the rights of suffrage and assent as citizens of the State, and as such, they have the least liberty from their veteran fathers, who fought the battles of the revolution? We appeal to the statesman, and ask him to tell us, if such a law is in keeping with our Declaration of Independence and inimitable Constitution? And finally, we ask the ministers of our holy religion, if they have thus learned liberty in the school of Christ? And had we, in consequence of the liberty simply to which this enactment exposed every one, immediately dissolved our connection with the Institution sanctioning it, who would have been our accuser? But we did not act hastily. We waited its operation. We could hardly persuade ourselves to believe, that any pious and consistent individual of our generation could be hindered from joining any Society with which he might feel in duty bound to unite, (though in such cases we utterly repudiate the principle of acting by permission.) But what, think you, were our feelings, when we saw a beloved brother of devoted piety, and 25 years of age, with a heart burning with a desire to do something for his poor, degraded, impotent, enslaved countrymen, by the administration of this law, prevented from bearing his testimony against a sin, more foul than which, none exists on the face of the globe—we mean Slavery. And how did the case become aggravated, when another of our number, of similar character, and 40 years of age, was prevented from going to meet at the Anti-Slavery Society, the church to which he belonged, composed of his own brethren and sisters in Christ, and having for its president his own pastor? And had we then, at once and forever, dissolved our connection with an Institution, fostering within its bosom a principle like this, and thereby proclaimed to the world our honest indignation against such an unwarrantable exercise of power, who, we triumphantly ask, would have dared to stand forth as our accuser? But, strange as it may seem, we still forebore, preferring rather to risk a high charge, on the score of weakness and pusillanimity, than to expose ourselves to any just imputation of rashness or folly. And we resorted to this final step, only when the last lingering hope of redress was utterly extinguished, and the dark night of despair was settling thick and heavy upon our heads. The successive steps which led to this unhappy result, shall now be minutely and honestly detailed.

On July 11, 1835, the Abolitionists in Phillips' Academy, convened for the purpose of forming an Anti-Slavery Society. After choosing a committee to draft a memorial and present it to the Principal, it was unanimously

Resolved, That we regard Anti-Slavery as the cause of God and humanity, and that christians should do the work of Christ; to its promotion, with that boldness, meekness, and prayer, which make the gospel of the living God; no other spirit will in reality advance the cause, or be acceptable to God.

July 15, The Academy having been refused, a meeting was held under the broad canopy of heaven. At the opening of the meeting, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That this, and all our future meetings be opened with prayer.

The following memorial was then read and adopted. It is but proper here to remark, that this article was written without any expectation that it would be made public, which may serve as some apology for any inaccuracies of language or infelicity of arrangement.

RESPECTED INSTRUCTOR—We, whose names are undersigned, are well aware that the relations we sustain to yourself, make it our duty ever to hold you in the highest respect and regard; and the more so, as we have the fullest evidence that all your feelings and all your conduct toward us, are the result of a tender regard for our welfare and that of the world. And, while such are our impressions, how can we have any other feeling than those of filial love and obedience?—But there are certain occasions, as every one will admit, when we are not at liberty to do as we would. Even now, if we could act as feeling would suggest, we would throw aside our pen, and forever hold our peace. But when, principle is concerned,—when we must follow the advice of our superiors, or of our own fathers even, if we do so at all, at the expense of conscience, and our own sense of right and wrong, we cannot, we dare not do it. Otherwise we should plainly disregard the injunction of wisdom and the bible—that we ought to obey God rather than men.—Such are the feelings, and the feelings which make our request for your permission to form an Anti-Slavery Society in Phillips' Academy. It is with great delicacy indeed that we prefer this request, as you have already twice given your refusal to a similar one. But we are conscious that we do it not to trifle with your feelings. We have a higher motive.—Something within tells us that it is our duty—our right; that it is Heaven's high boon to us, to think and act on the subject of Slavery as on every other moral subject, according to the dictates of our own consciences. We feel that this is as sacred—as unalienable a right, as the immortal principle of life itself; a right bestowed on us as at the beginning by our wise and beneficent Creator, and which none but he who confers it, or assumes His high prerogative, can take from us. You will, Sir, doubtless inquire the reasons which impel us again to prefer this request, and which lead us to hope for its favorable acceptance. They are briefly these:

First, We believe, that we believe Slavery to be a sin; and that the church, whose sin it is, in a great measure, and who never prospers, will be prepared to do with the Holy Spirit, bringing about the glorious purposes of the divine Redeemer, until this shackle is thrown off.

Second, We believe that we individually and collectively have a duty to perform in the removal of this sin, and that if we stand aloof, and give our countenance against it, we are the authors of abominable blood, and thus doing violence to that precept of our holy religion, which solemnly demands, 'Be not partakers of other men's sins.' And furthermore, we feel it to be our duty to act on this subject, as much as on the subject of temperance, or missions, or on any of the great questions of religion or morals, which are now agitating the community. And that while on these subjects we are not permitted either by yourself, the public, or the word of God, to remain indifferent in thought and action, so we cannot, consistently and righteously, exclude the slave from our sympathies, our prayers, and our efforts.

Third, We feel that the only effectual way to exert our influence, is by a regular, systematic co-operation, and an open declaration of our abhorrence of the sin. Were the world filled with drunkards, we could not feel our duty done, we merely think them wrong, while we raised not our voice to warn them of their sin and danger. We were all mankind infidels, and contemners of God, we should feel bound to say a decided word, and to stand forth in the eyes of the guilty, and proclaim that there was a God who, should he forbore, would yet be the punisher of sin, and the avenger of trampled justice.

Fourth, We wish to associate together, that we may the better inform ourselves on this subject, in order to pray and act more intelligently, and by our mutual encouragement, to enlist our sympathies and efforts in behalf of suffering humanity. But permit us, Sir, to state briefly, what our object is, not.

First, To create a feverish, party excitement. On the contrary, we believe, that should you grant our request, it would greatly tend to allay such an excitement. For what can be more likely to effect this, than for every one to think and act for himself? Or what more to create, than a disposition in one party to denounce and crush another?

Second, It is not that we wish to gratify our own self-will, or follow the impulse of feeling, in opposition to our better judgment. Such is not the fact. We have been driven to it by a settled and imperious conviction of duty to God, and our fellow men.

Third, It is not that we wish to favor any man, or set of men. The principles of Abolition are what we love, and upon which we feel bound to act.

Fourth, It is not that we may gain popularity—we expect rather the public odium. We expect to be branded with the epithets of fanatics, as the dupes of a wild phrenzy, of ignorant enthusiasm, and as zealots without knowledge. We see before us a fearful array of the great, the wise, and the good, those who will not readily be looked upon as fanatics, as disturbers of the peace rather than as the advocates of equal rights. But amid the universal din of anathemas and denunciations, we hear the still small voice whispering,—'Go on, and fear no evil, for I am with you.' And how can we linger? Conscience must speak out. Her mandate must be heard. And when we walk as she plainly directs, with the consequences we have nothing to do. Committing ourselves therefore to the God of the oppressed, we feel prepared for the unequal contest. In your co-operation, Sir, your prayers and sympathies, we should indeed rejoice. But if you cannot conscientiously grant them, all we ask is the privilege of thinking and acting for ourselves.

[Signed by eighty-eight individuals.]
Wednesday, July 22.—At a meeting held in the Academy, the committee, having presented the memorial, reported a negative answer from Mr. Johnson. A resolution was then offered, the purport of which was, that we do not impeach the motives of our Instructor in refusing our request, but consider it our imperative duty to ask a dismission from Phillips' Academy. After remarks, both for and against the resolution, the following petition was introduced to the meeting, and after its import was fully made known, the yeas and nays on the resolutions were taken, each one answering affirmatively, with his own hand subscribing his name to the petition.

PETITION.
RESPECTED INSTRUCTOR—It is with feelings of sincere regret, that existing circumstances render it necessary for us to dissolve our connection with Phillips' Academy—and especially so as our protracted connection has only served to bind nearer to our hearts our Instructor, who has ever given us reason to believe that in all things he desires our highest happiness and the ultimate good of the world. But, when we feel that no ties, however tender, should deter any man from the prompt discharge of his whole duty. We, therefore, the undersigned, do respectfully request an honorable dismission from this Academy, with that recommendation to other Institutions which our character and scholarship in your opinion deserve.

[Signed by fifty individuals of the age and character stated in the commencement of this article.]

Now we wish it to be distinctly understood, that up to this time, our Principal had not only made no complaint against us, but on the contrary, had indignantly repelled the foul charge of insubordination, so wickedly and meanly preferred against us, and publicly attested to our gentlemanly and christianlike deportment, and given it as his testimony, that as a body, we were respected by none but the purest mortals. Here then, is the commencement, 'the head and front of our offending,' as a body; and for individual acts and expressions, we are not responsible. And were we thus responsible, we should be willing to place whatever individuals of our number have said unadvisedly, aside by side, with what has been said rashly and inconsistently, by our opponents, some of whom may be found in high places, clothed with authority and with heads silvered 'with age.' To private and confidential intercourse we have aimed not to descend. We would, however, forewarn our opponents, that if provoked, as we are, we never shall be 'to engage in a contest of this kind, that as a body, we are prepared to scarcely be deemed victorious, 'give up,' and respectfully 'suggest' that those who live in glass houses, beware how they throw stones. But to the petition. For here lies our imputed guilt—as proof of which, we here insert a copy of the certificate given to those who received their dismission.

'This may certify that _____, in concert with other individuals, members of Phillips' Academy, having expressed to us by petition, their united request, that their connection with said Academy be dissolved, is hereby dismissed, at his own request; although we consider the manner of getting up that petition, as wholly irregular, and therefore, it is recommended, as having sustained a good moral character, and as having made commendable proficiency in study.'

Now what was the manner of getting up that petition, which is here said to be wholly 'irregular,' and 'regarded with marked disapprobation?' Our readers have already been informed. And on this point we may, without vanity, claim to be as well informed as our Instructors. We therefore again affirm, that this petition was signed by forty-six persons of the fifty, after free and deliberate discussion on both sides of the question, and that the remaining four signed the next day, from a full conviction, that their duty to God and their fellow men absolutely demanded that they should do so.

Has it then come to this? Is a free interchange of thoughts and opinions on a great question of duty, wholly 'irregular,' and to be regarded with marked disapprobation? In what age, and in what country—under what form of government do we live? But it is still objected that the petition was signed in a state of high excitement, after listening to violent and 'inflammatory speeches.' To this, it may be sufficient to reply, what can be clearly proved, that a large majority of the signers had previously signified their deliberate determination to dissolve their connection with the Institution, in case of the rejection of their memorial without satisfactory reasons being assigned.

Thursday, the 23d.—The committee, to whom had been entrusted the petition, reported, that Mr. Johnson had consented to grant an honorable dismission!

Friday, 24.—Those who had petitioned for a dismission had a conference with Mr. Johnson. He then suggested, for the first time, the propriety of inserting in our certificates, the reason of our leaving. To this we object, not on the ground that it would be a disclosure of our private counsel of the fact might incontestably prove) but because it was a needless appendage and entirely

unperturbed. Having ascertained our feelings on this subject, he stated that he was not disposed to press the point, and giving us to understand, that nothing of the kind would be introduced, in the course of the day. But before the next morning arises, information is borne to him, of the 'irregular' (?) manner in which the petition was got up, (which if different from what we have stated above, we pronounce without qualification an utter falsehood) and we are then told, that 'we must wait till further investigation is made.' The records of all our proceedings were at that moment in his (Mr. Johnson's) possession, and were offered, in addition, to meet him, together with his associate Teachers, privately or in a body, and answer face to face, on charges alleged against us. This was refused. 'I am,' says he, 'bound to myself, or others acquainted with the system of operations on Andover Hill. We were ready for the most close and scrutinizing investigation, provided it were conducted on fair and honorable principles. We waited with all due patience from Saturday morning till Tuesday noon, when all our documents were in the hands of our examiners, and might be read in the space of half an hour!' We not only were not permitted to know the crimes alleged against us, but were unblushingly told they would not be revealed 'until published to the world.' Now is this inquisitorial, or is it not? Our friends may decide. The result we know not, and fear not. We have acted in the fear of God, and are ready to answer at His high tribunal, for the course we have pursued. In the mean time we were exhorted to retrace our steps, if we were convinced that we had acted hastily. All very well. But this is not all. One individual of our number who had, several days before, asked a dismission, was publicly expelled, and that too, when he had not been consulted with, and was entirely ignorant of the charges against him, and furthermore was immediately silenced when he arose to answer the charges thus openly preferred against him.

In connection with this expulsion, it was also stated that there were believed to be 'two or three more, fomenters of discord, *alias*, fearless and uncompromising Abolitionists,' who must be cut off.' But with a pot of former days, we said within ourselves,

'Be just and fear not;
Let all the ends within you reach your mastery;
Thy God's and Truth's; them, if thou fall'st,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr!'

At this dark and dubious crisis the advocates of 'expediency and expatriation' were busy in advising us to submit to the powers that were, and what is quite inexplicable, were very much alarmed, lest we should injure our cause by leaving the Institution. However, the 'fomenters of discord,' the ringleaders who were to be 'cut off,' were not discovered. Nor were we easily to be persuaded from doing, what in our consciences, and before Heaven, we believed a solemn duty. What more can be devised to delay us or frighten us into an abandonment of our purpose? The mask is presently thrown off, and on Tuesday morning the edict comes forth—'every minor must return to his recitations this-day, or be expelled before tomorrow morning—those of age must either return to recitation,'—and had attended to the nature of the edict, we should have known that our dismission was essentially granted! request to leave, or be dealt with in some other way; which, we supposed, in plain saxon, to be equivalent to the naked phrase, 'must be expelled.' Now was this kindness? Was it justice? Was it giving us an honorable dismission, and permission to 'go right away,' both of which our Instructor had repeatedly guaranteed to all who wished to leave? We need not answer No. But we hardly dare express our honest convictions respecting the design of these movements. Suffice it to say, that in consequence of them, a meeting for deliberation was held, at which the following Resoluble and Resolution were almost unanimously adopted, viz:

'In consequence of the remarks thrown out by our Principal, this morning, and the conditions imposed in order to our longer continuing honorable members of Phillips' Academy, (with which, in the nature of the case, it is impossible for us to comply.) Therefore,

Resolved, That it is our duty each, this day, to submit a written resignation of his membership. Among those withdrawing were two minors; one the son of an influential minister, the other of a poor widow; both of whom, by non-attendance at recitation, had rendered themselves obnoxious to the threat of expulsion. But mark the difference in their treatment. The minister's son is suffered to remain unmolested, while the son of the poor defenceless widow is 'cut off,' and sent home in disgrace! Such a fact needs no explanation from us—it speaks for itself. And, although we were told no notice would be taken of our resignation, yet strange and unaccountable as it may seem, but true, as we are, as expected, were forthcoming on the very next morning.

We have now given a faithful account of the proceedings in Phillips' Academy, Andover, on the great question of Slavery. And now leave it, for what? 'That we may run in and of course bury its Instructors in its ruins' (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say.) Nothing can be farther from the truth. We dissolve our connection with Phillips' Academy, because, under the existing administration of its laws, its members are not allowed in any manner to bring their influence (and it matters not whether that influence be extensive or not) in an associated capacity, to bear upon a most wicked and heinous system of fraud and oppression. And while the energies of our land are enlisted on all their energies in this great cause of philanthropy and Heaven; it is right, it is tolerable, that 'No member of Phillips' Academy shall join any society in the town of Andover, without permission from the Principal?' which, as its administration has indubitably proved, is only a less direct and tangible, and therefore a more mean and cowardly method of saying, 'No member of Phillips' Academy shall join any "Anti-Slavery Society" in the town of Andover.' But it is said, 'we do not object to your being Abolitionists, we only require it, that you do not join an Anti-Slavery Society. Let us see how this reasoning will apply in other cases. Suppose a man says, 'I have no objection to your being a Methodist, only you must not unite with their Church.'—You may cherish the missionary spirit, but you must not join a Missionary Society.' In a word, for this the principle—'you may embrace any theories you choose; but then to come out and take a decided stand on the side of what you believe to be true.' And by organized and combined effort, exert yourself to spread abroad and defend it, this were madness outright; what should we think of such a man? And yet, is not this plainly the reasoning of those, who affect a willingness that all should be Abolitionists, but still object to the formation of societies? And does it not carry with it its own antidote? But we forbear. And in conclusion, we only ask from the public, in view of the course we have pursued in this matter, and the policy adopted by the Institution with which we were connected, a just and impartial decision.

D. C. SCOBEE,
G. S. TOWLE,
A. GROWER,
H. BAYON,
J. W. PILLSBURY,
Committee.

Andover, Mass. Aug. 5, 1835.

*Owing to peculiar circumstances but thirty-six of the signers are yet living.

*There is a flourishing Society in town consisting of more than 300 members.