

The Social Conflict of Ages;

A RHYME FOR THE TIME;

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO THE PATRONS OF THE

SALEM GAZETTE;

BY THE CARRIERS , THEREOF...

This is an annotated text of *The Social Conflict of Ages*, published by carriers of the *Salem Gazette* (MA) newspaper in 1857. Original spelling, punctuation and page citations have been retained; minor typographic errors have been corrected.

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RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO THE PATRONS OF THE

SALEM GAZETTE,

BY THE CARRIERS, THEREOF,

On New Year's Morning,

A.D. 1857.

The "Conflict of Ages" which Beecher unveiled,
In the tome of his twenty years toiling,
The knot Theological sought to unsnarl,
Yet wound in more intricate coiling;—
For that cunning fable, the wise ones have said, [5]
Just begged the whole question at issue;
While not e'en the clew which bold Thesus saved,
 Could guide through its tortuous tissue.
But we have a "Conflict of Ages" to write,
Which equally needs a solution— [10]
A PRACTICAL conflict, the timorous fear
May lead to a "Dread" revolution.
In the class of Politico-Moral reforms,
In the realm of the Social, we find it;—
'Tis the struggle of RIGHT with merciless MIGHT, [15]
 To strike off the shackles that bind it.
From the time when the Hebrews in Egypt rebelled,
And fled from their haughty oppressors,—
From the days when the Plebeians toppled old Rome,
 And died her Patrician possessors,— [20]
Down through the long ages of darkness and light,
 Of Heathen and Christian dominion.

[page 2]

Th' enslaved have e'er sighed for their God-given right

To be FREE both in ACT and OPINION.

In our own favored land, *called* "The Land of the Free," [25]

The scene of our WASHINGTON'S glory,

The struggle of FREEDOM to LIVE and to REIGN;

Shall furnish the theme of our story.—

For the old rolling year, th' eventful old year,

That many a guerdon hath brought us, [30]

Hath cast a deep shade o'er the track he hath passed,

And lessons of wisdom hath taught us.

Then lift we the curtain, and pass in review

The scenes that most deeply have moved us,

The deeds of bold emprise, for Right and for Wrong, [35]

That have tried and most signally proved us.

As the canvas unrolls, and presents to your gaze

The light and the shade of the pictures,

We purpose to tell you the meaning of each,

And give you our juvenile strictures. [40]

SCENE FIRST.

Scene first lies in KANZAS, by Nature endowed

With a soil of rare richness and beauty,

And a health-giving climate, to tempt and attract

The seekers of homes and of booty.

A few years ago, the red-man alone [45]

Roamed her broad-spreading prairies and mountains,

And hunted, and fished, and counseled, and smoked,

And drank from her translucent fountains.

But a wave from the Emigrant tide rolled along,

O'er the bosom of sparkling Missouri, [50]
And the bold pioneer sought a Paradise home
That might charm a Mohammedan houri.
From the East and the West, the North and the South,
From every quarter and section,
Allured by the promise that LIBERTY'S shield [55]
Should give to the Settler protection,
The Artisan, Tradesman, and Husbandman flocked
To this, the broad Continent's centre,
Till the ruffian minions of Slavery's power
Forbade every Freeman to enter. [60]
Led on by vile Atchison, fallen from grace,
Like Satan, who left his high station,
And backed by the President, viler than he,
With the myrmidon force of the nation,—

[page 3]

The lackeys of Slavery, "the vomit and spew [65]
Of an uneasy civilization"

Invaded her borders, the settler distressed,
And checked for a time immigration.

The Ballot-Box seizing with violent hands,
By fraud they controlled the elections, [70]

And forced on the people a Slave-ridden band
To legislate *Slavery's perfections!*

And *such* legislation—(Lord, save the foul mark!)
As the Bogus Assembly ordained,
The annals of Heathendom never disgraced, [75]

Nor the code of the Despot e'er stained!
THE DIGEST OF DEATH will most fitly express

The laws of this sham Legislature—
Death or the Dungeon to him who maintains
That *all men are free* men by Nature. [80]

With scorn and contempt for these infamous acts,
These "bulls" from debased Shawnee Mission,
Each freeman in Kansas, still bound to be free,
Refuses to yield them submission.

Then rageth the "Conflict" of Right against Might, [85]
With a Slave-hunting, Vandal banditti,

Who, led by Stringfellow, and Atchison, & Co.,
Infest every township and city.

In his "own cabin home," his workshop or field,
At peace with his peace-loving neighbors, [90]

Unprepared for attack, the settler they found
Pursuing his honorable labors.

In demonic fury they hunted him down,
With bowie-knife, pistol and dagger,

His property pillaged, and menaced his life [95]
With fiend-like and insolent swagger.

They lynched the Free State men, and feather'd and tarr'd

A score, for the criminal reason

That love of sweet Freedom inspired their breasts,

Which the Slave-Power had branded as "treason."

[100]

Their Presses they seized, and sank 'neath the wave

These *Types* of Archimedes Lever—

Four Offices levelled, the Editors mobbed,

And bade them quit Kansas forever.—

The *Register* first, the *Luminary* next,

[105]

The *Herald of Freedom* succeeded;

And lastly the *Tribune* their vengeance received,

For these had for LIBERTY pleaded !

[page 4]

They marched against Lawrence, with Jones at their head,
Equipped with "Sam's" rifles and cannon; [110]
Its treasures they pillaged, its buildings consumed,
Unchecked by weak Governor Shannon.
Nay; true to the Minotaur *Slavery's* behest,
And thirsting for blood, more than treasure,
They murder our freemen with fiendish delight, [115]
And torture their loved ones with pleasure.
Newman, and Collins, and Stewart, and Brown,
And Dow, and young Jones, and James Barbour,
Are shot down like brutes, while their murderers find
With their fellows protection and harbor! [120]
Not only for these are our sympathies moved,
And others, in martyr graves sleeping;
But, sadder than all, for BUFFUM'S sad death
We join in the general weeping.
Yet how nobly he goes to his premature grave, [125]
While grief for his stiff 'ring unmans us!—
"I AM WILLING TO DIE," the Patriot says,
"FOR THE TRIUMPH OF FREEDOM IN KANZAS!"
Thus Outrage, and Plunder, and Murder abound,
With Tyranny's rule co-extensive, [130]
While the people are forced to forsake their pursuits,
And act on the purely defensive.
Their arts and their trades therefore languish the while,
And the soil which the husbandman cultures,
For all must be watchful to save their effects [135]
From the talons of Slavery's vultures.
So the Reign of Oppression in Kansas goes on,
Enshrouding her dwellers with sorrow;
Tilt the bright star of Hope the promise unfolds
That Peace shall return on the morrow. [140]

SCENE SECOND.

The canvas unwinds. The proud Halls are in view

Where America 's wisdom assembles;

Some theme of vast import their counsels portend,

For the dome of her Capitol trembles!

The Wrongs of fair KANZAS, just partially sketched, [145]

The mightiest minds are reviewing,

Again, in a fiercer and deadlier strife,

The "Conflict of Ages" renewing.

Whose towering form is that, do you ask,

That rivets the gaze of all others, [150]

[page 5]

Like CHATHAM and BURKE, when in Parliament Halls

They plead for their tyrannized brothers?

'Tis our own chosen SUMNER, with Athenian grace,

And a pure and classical diction,

Unfolding 'THE CRIME,' with a keenness which shows [155]

That Fact is far stranger than Fiction.

Since those Titans of Eloquence, WEBSTER and HAYNE,

Contended for CICERO'S laurels,

No voice like brave SUMNER'S has treated so well

The cause of his countrymen's quarrels. [160]

The Great Speech is spoken. The Great Orator now

Returns to his desk and his writing;

Some eloquent subject, that crowds on his brain,

His eloquent pen is inditing.

An adjournment is made; and SUMNER'S compeers, [165]

Who just from the Hall have retreated,

Leave the Hero of Freedom, unwearied with toil,

At his labors still quietly seated.

But look ye! and mark how that BROOKS sneaks along,

That vile *latet anguis in herba!* [170]

"Uncle Butler," says he, with a cravenly air,

"Won't like your *ipsissima, verba.*

You've insulted his State, and I will avenge

The words which I take in high dudgeon!"

So saying, the villain, with cowardly haste, [175]

His victim assails with a bludgeon.

The murderous blows on the Senator's head

With violence follow each other,

As the bully displays all the malice with which

His prototype, Cain, slew his brother. [180]

This wanton assault on the Freedom of Speech

Arouses the North to her danger;
The "*honorable*" South commends the dark deed,
Though Brooks is to "*honor*" a stranger.
Brave WILSON now springs to his colleague's defence, [185]
With dauntless and statesman-like bearing—
Denounces the act and the actors alike,
And scorns all their bluster and daring.
And BURLINGAME, too, with true lion heart,
Beards the bristling dog in his kennel; [190]
And when he accepts the brute's challenge to fight,
The cur sneaks away to his kennel.
With arrogant flaunt, and insolent speech,
Brooks claims to be SLAVERY'S Hero;

[page 6]

Don't question his title, but give his his place [195]
With Caligula, Galba, and Nero!
This *gallant* defence of "the rights of the South,"
 His constituents land with a relish,
Which shows the foul spirit that Slavery begets
To be always and every where hellish. [200]
Ovations and honors are paid him at home
By gentlemen, matrons, and misses,
And misguided fair ones of chivalric blood
Salute his smooth visage with kisses!
And presents are made him (most fittingly, too,) [205]
Of *Canes*, by the dozen or hundred;
Perchance they *intended* the *irony* here—
But, if not, they into it blundered!
Whenever these emblems of fratricide blows
Engage his dispassioned reflection, [210]
They'll torture his conscience, if conscience he has,
With woes for his guilty deflection.

SCENE THIRD.

Our last scene's before you;—more grand in extent,
As from Ocean to Ocean it reaches;
But grander than all, in Philosophy's view, [215]
Is the *Moral* its history teaches.
The GODDESS OF LIBERTY, exiled from Greece,
 And by Rome only treasured in story,
Our Fathers enshrined on Columbia's soil,
As America's Genius and glory. [220]
With emulous pride their sons have e'er toiled
In the love of mankind to exalt her,
And true-hearted Patriots, prizing their trust,

Devotions have paid her at her alter.
With the Scales of Equality evenly poised, [225]
The Sword of true Justice she beareth;
Ev'ry Art of sweet Peace, that her reign can protect,
The smile of Prosperity weareth.
But the GENIUS OF SLAVERY—tutelar saint
Of Indolence, Pelf, and Oppression— [230]
Suspicious of Liberty's wide-spreading power,
On her realm waged a war of aggression.
Not boldly, at first; for her devotees then
Admitted her reign to be evil,
And begged the forbearance of Liberty's friends, [235]
Till Time should "exorcise the devil."

[page 7]

But, nurtured and fed in the warm, sunny South,
The viper increased in dimensions,
Till insatiate lust of dominion and rule
The Union embroiled in dissensions. [240]
The wrongs and the sorrows by Kansas endured,
The murd'rous assault in the Senate,
Already have shown us the *practical* fruits
Of enforcing the Slavery tenet.
For Central America, and Cuba's fair isle, [245]
The Southrons now lustily clamor;
More States they must have, where the image of God
Shall be sold 'neath the auctioneer's hammer.
No matter if Spain *is* unwilling to cut
Her Cuban possession asunder; [250]
They want it—and if she won't sell it for cash,
Why, the South will then have it by plunder!
But lovers of God and their own fellow-men,
Abhorring such venal propension,
Resist the base purpose, and boldly declare [255]
A war against Slavery Extension.
The "Conflict of Ages" thus opens anew—
The combatants marshal their forces;
Slavery enlists her Tartarean posters—
Liberty, her Moral resources, [260]
This "Line" on the canvas, uneven but bold,
From Eastward to Westward extending,
The *Political Equinox* 'twixt North and South,—
Divides the great parties contending.
The Chieftains have each, in their councils of war, [265]
Prepared for a vig'rous contention—
The one to do battle for Liberty's rights,
The other, for Slavery Extension.

The *Fourth of November* now hastens apace,
—A day to be ever remembered— [270]
When the army of Slavery must conquer the field,
Or the *Union* shall then be dismembered!—
For redoubtable Hotspurs, in all the Slave States,
With Freedom ne'er holding communion,
Had sworn, if *her* banners in triumph should wave, [275]
The South would step out of the Union!
The day-star arose; and the gallant FREMONT
Led Liberty's hosts to the battle;
Unflinching they charged on the powerful foe,
And swelled the sharp musketry's rattle. [280]

[page 8]

"So close was the contest, and wide-spread the fight,
That long the result was disputed;
Both claim'd that triumphant they march'd from the field,
And the vict'ries of both were saluted.
Still the Nation discusses the "fortunes of war"— [285]
The problems continue to haunt it:
Shall Liberty's banner e'er wave o'er the land,
Or the blackflag of Slavery supplant it?
But the *Union* "still lives," and ever will live,
When the *Platform of Slavery's* forgotten; [290]
The seeds of decadence inhere in its make,
For its timbers already are rotten.
Not e'en that illusion, so pregnant with fear
To CHOATE in his mental inversion,
"Th' *excess and the outbreak of VIRTUE*," (not Vice!) [295]
Can compass the Union's subversion.
Then courage, ye Freemen! The day is yet ours—
The Dragon is mortally wounded;
The bugle that called us to "war with the beast,"
The death-knell of Slavery sounded. [300]
E'en *Douglas* has caught a faint glimpse of the truth,
In the slough of his moral declension,
That millions of Freemen, all over the land,
Are hostile to Slavery Extension.
When the knights of the dark "Institution" proclaimed [305]
The barb'rous but cognate position,
That *servitude vile*, for *black* man and WHITE,
Is the *Laborer's* "normal condition"
They aroused in their midst a long-depressed foe,
Whose resentment has filled them with terror; [310]
Already the signs of a gathering storm
Are waking these "lords" to their error.

Then watch ye, and pray ye, and *work* with your might,

So *the crime* shall not always degrade us;

And wise men, and good men, in all the broad earth,

[315]

And God and good angels, will aid us.

Vigilance Eternal is Liberty's price—

And is she not worthy her hire?

Then "strike" for her birth-right to live and to reign,

Till her last arm-ed foe shall expire.

[320]

The day will yet dawn when our sons shall enjoy

LIBERTY and UNION *together*;

And then the glad shout shall exultingly swell,

LIBERTY AND UNION FOREVER!