

A WORD  
FROM

A PETITIONER, TO CONGRESS.

BY J. PIERPONT.

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WHAT! Our petitions spurned! The prayer  
Of thousands—tens of thousands—cast  
Unheard beneath your Speaker's chair!  
But ye *will* hear us, first or last.  
The thousands that, last year, ye scorned,  
Are millions now. Be warned! Be warned!

Turns not, contemptuous, on your heel;—  
It is not for an act of grace  
That, suppliants, at your feet we kneel—  
We stand:—we look you in the face,  
And say—and we have weighed the word—  
That our petitions SHALL be heard.

There are two powers above the laws  
Ye make or mar:—They're our allies.  
Beneath their shield we'll urge our cause,  
Though *all* your hands against us rise.  
We've proved them, and we know their might:  
The CONSTITUTION and the RIGHT.

We say not, ye shall snap the links  
That bind you to your dreadful slaves:  
Hug, if ye will, a corpse that stinks,  
And toil on with it to your graves!  
But, that ye *may* go, coupled thus,  
Ye never shall make slaves of *us*.

And what, but more than slaves, are they  
Who're told they ne'er shall be denied  
The right of prayer; yet, when they pray,  
Their prayers, *unheard*, are thrown aside?  
Such mockery they will tamely bear,  
Who're fit an iron chain to wear.

"The ox, that treadeth out the corn,  
Thou shalt not muzzle."—Thus saith God.  
And will ye muzzle the free-born—  
The man—the owner of the sod—  
Who "gives the grazing ox his meat,"  
And you—his servants here—your seat?

There's a cloud, blackening up the sky!  
East, west, and north, its curtain spreads:  
Life to its muttering folds your eye!  
Beware! For, bursting on your heads,  
It hath a force to bear you down:—  
'T is an INSULTED PEOPLE'S frown.

Ye may have heard of the Soltan',  
And how his Janissaries fell!  
Their barracks, near the Atmeidan',  
He barred, and fired;—and their death-yell  
Went to the stars,—and their blood ran  
In brooks across the Atmeidan'.

The despot spake: and, in one night,  
The deed was done. He wields, alone,  
The scepter of the Ottomite,  
And brooks no brother near his throne.  
Even now, the bow-string, at his beck  
Springs round his mightiest subject's neck.

Yet will *He*, in his saddle, stoop—  
I've seen him, in his palace-yard—  
To take petitions from a troop  
Of women, who, behind his guard,  
Come up, their several suits to press,  
To state their wrongs, and ask redress.

And these, into his house of prayer,  
I've seen him take; and, as he spreads  
His own before his Maker there,  
These women's prayers he hears or reads:—  
For, while he wears the diadem,  
He is instead of God to them.

And this he *must* do. He may grant,  
Or may deny; but *hear* he must.  
Were his Seven Towers of adamant,  
They'd soon be level'd with the dust,  
And "public feeling" make short work—  
Should he not hear them—with the Turk.

Nay, start not form your chairs, in dread  
Of cannon shot, or bursting shell!  
These shall not fall upon your head,  
And once\* upon your house they fell.  
We have a weapon, firmer set  
And better than the bayonet:—

A weapon that comes down as still  
As snow-flakes fall upon the sod;  
But executes a freeman's will  
As lightning does the will of God;  
And from its force, nor doors nor locks  
Can shield you:—'t is the ballot-box.

Black as your deed shall be the balls  
That, from that box, shall pour like hail!  
And, when the storm upon you falls,  
How will your craven cheeks turn pale!  
For, at its coming though ye laugh,  
'T will sweep you from your hall, like chaff.

Not women, now,—the *people* pray.  
Hear us, —or *from* us ye will hear!  
Beware!—a desperate game ye play!  
The men, that thicken in your rear—  
Kings though ye be—may not be scorned.  
Look to your move! Your stake!—YE'RE WARNED.

\*When the British entered Washington in the war of 1812-1815.