AN ADDRESS
TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—In behalf of three millions of our brethren, held in Slavery, in the United States: In behalf of two hundred and fifty thousand, so called, free persons of color, occupying various grades of social and political position, from equal citizenship in most of the New England States, to almost chattel slavery in Indiana and the Southern States: In behalf of three hundred thousand slaveholders, embittered with the lawlessness, and drunken with the blood-guiltiness of slaveholding: In behalf of the Constitution of these United States, during sixty years perverted and misconstrued, so as to read things for persons, and Slavery for Liberty: In behalf of the religion of Jesus Christ, brought into shame and disrepute by the evil constructions and worse practices fastened upon it by the American Church: In behalf of the sacred cause of HUMAN FREEDOM, beaten down and paralyzed by the force of American Example—

The undersigned, delegates to a Convention of the People of Color, held in the city of Philadelphia, October 18th, 1855, beg the leave, most respectfully, to address you:—

We claim that we are persons not things, and we claim that our brethren held in slavery are also, persons not things: and that they are, therefore, so held in slavery in violation of the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land.* For the Constitution expressly declares, that all human beings, described under it, are persons,† and afterwards declares, that "NO PERSON shall be deprived of liberty without due process of law:"‡ and that the right of the people to be secure in their persons shall not be violated.§ And as no law has ever been enacted,¶ which reduced our brethren to slavery, we demand

their immediate emancipation, and restoration to the rights secured to every person under the Constitution, as the instant result of that personality with which the Constitution itself clothes them, and which it was ordained to protect and defend.

All human beings who may be born in this land, in whatever condition, and all who may come or may have been brought to this land, under whatever circumstances, are declared by the Constitution to be PERSONS: the idea that such may be property, or may become property, is nowhere recognized, but everywhere excluded by the Constitution.\)

The Constitution, moreover, endows Congress with the power, and calls on Congress to exercise the power to abolish Slavery in the Slave States, when it declares that "Congress shall provide for the general welfare;"* and announces that "the United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government:" and that "this Constitution, and the laws of the United States, which shall be made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any thing in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding." (Art. 6, sec. 2.)

It is not needful to prove that slavery inhibits, obstructs and threatens to destroy the "general welfare," and is therefore an institution which Congress is competent, and in duty bound, to abolish everywhere where it may cause such obstruction. Nor is it necessary to show that slavery is a contradiction of the Republican form of Government, which the United States, that is Congress is constitutionally bound "to guarantee" to each and "every State in the Union:" which guarantee can only be accomplished by immediately abolishing slavery in every State where it may exist. These things contain their own proof in the very statement of them.

We claim, therefore, that the right and duty of Congress to abolish slavery in the slave States, is just as clear and well defined in the Constitution as the right to levy duties, declare war, or make a treaty.

To uphold a contrary view of the Constitution, requires that that instrument should contradict itself, and requires also that the idea of personal liberty, as defined by it, and on which you

* Art. 6, § 2.
† Art. 1, sect. 2, § 3, and sect. 9, § 1, and Art. 4, sect. 2, § 3.
‡ Amendments Art. 1, § 5.
¶ Ibid. § 4.
§ Speech of Judge Mason on Fugitive Slave Bill in Congress 1850. "If it be required that proof shall be brought that Slavery is established by existing laws, it is impossible to comply with the requisition, for so much proof can be produced, I apprehend, in any of the slave States. I am not aware there is a single State in which the institution is established by peculiar law."—Aug. 10th, 1850.