

CHAPTER XI.

THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT IN MILFORD – AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL DOCUMENT – THE “COME-OUTERS.”

It can truthfully be said that in no town in New Hampshire were the seeds of opposition to the institution of African slavery earlier planted than in the town of Milford. From the time of the adoption of the constitution there were those who felt deeply upon the subject, and as occasion offered expressed themselves. Prior to the year 1840, meetings had been held in town and an interchange of views with anti-slavery leaders in other sections had upon the question which was becoming a burning one. Garrison, Phillips, Rogers, Foster, Pillsbury, Douglas, Kelly, Remond, and others were among the anti-slavery speakers who addressed the early anti-slavery gatherings in Milford.

In December, 1842, a call for an anti-slavery meeting in the old town meeting-house was published in *A Voice from the Jail*, a sheet issued by Thomas Parnell Beach, during his confinement in Newburyport jail, for, as he alleged, “opening his mouth in behalf of two and a half million of his enslaved fellowmen.” As an important historical contribution and an interesting paper, read in the light of all that has transpired in a full half century, the document is given entire.

RALLY! RALLY!! RALLY!!!

Beach Anti-Slavery Meeting at Milford, New Hampshire,
January 4th and 5th, 1843.

Friendly Greeting to all the friends of Humanity and Christian Liberty to whom this may come:

Brethren and Sisters: Nearly three millions of our kindred lie bleeding at our feet with uplifted and imploring hands entreating for help. Few only, will open their ears to hear the imploring cry, when it should arouse every emotion of the soul, and receive a hearty response from every friend of God and man. The Priest and Levite pass by on the other side; nor will they stop, or stoop to listen to the cries of their colored brother. Neither will they suffer others to plead his cause in the Rimmon houses over which they preside. A brother who dared to open his mouth for the wounded, mangled, and bleeding, *has been thrust into a felon's cell, and is there DYING BY INCHES!* Incarcerated by whom? By the professed *enemies* of Christ? No! but by those who *profess* to be his friends and followers! Oh! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the *heathen* shall rejoice over that religion which imprisons him who will plead the cause of God's poor! **WHAT SHALL BE DONE?** Has New Hampshire nothing to do in the matter? Is not the one of her own most faithful and self-sacrificing sons, whose “Voice” we hear surrounding through those accursed bars and grates? And were it not so, if we hold our peace, the stones will cry out against us. Anti-Slavery knows no geographical limits. Our country is the world, and every human being our countryman. *Beach is not alone imprisoned.* Our liberty, your liberty, **EVERY MAN'S LIBERTY IS IN JAIL!** Our principles are imprisoned, and we stand exposed to be, if we dare speak contrary to the will of the “brotherhood.”

COME ONE, COME ALL, then, and let a voice like a tempest go forth from the Milford Convention, that shall make those cowardly organizations and clergy, who trample roughshod upon three millions of human beings, shake like aspen leaves, and rend or melt those bars and bolts that shut our brother from the free breezes of heaven, and lift the foot from the neck of the struggling slave. By your love for three millions of enslaved brothers and sisters, by your love for our imprisoned brother, by your love for universal liberty, in a word, -- by your love to God and man, we invite you to come up to the Convention, baptized into the spirit of Liberty. Let there be such an Anti-Slavery gathering as has never been witnessed in the Granite State. Our houses shall be open, and we pledge you as good fare, at least, as the poor slave receives, or as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides for our engaged brother.

Come, ye New Hampshire host! Let Massachusetts and New Hampshire commingle their voices! Let the thundering eloquence of **DOUGLASS** and **REMOND**, and the soul-stirring tale of **LATIMER**, unite to break the death-like slumbers of the Granite State! Finally, we extend the invitation to every friend of humanity – to all who feel for others' woes and others' wrongs.

Leonard Chase,
Benjamin Gooden,
Benj. F. Hutchinson,
James Johnson,
Bethiah, Johnson,
Mary I. D. Chase,
Luther Melendy,
Abel Hutchinson,
John W. Hutchinson,
Eugene Hutchinson, Jr.,
Phebe B. Hutchinson,
Eliza R. Hutchinson,
Peter Burns,
John Burns,
Sarah E. B. Mills,
Fredrick Benden,
Jesse Hutchinson, Jr.,
Ezekiel Mills,
E. G. Mills,
Susan D. Hutchinson,
E. H. Hutchinson,
Aaron Mills,
Abigail W. Gooden.

Charles A. Burns
Samuel Ames,
William Hays,
Dennis Holden,
Elhanan W. Hutchins,
Nathaniel Towns,
L.L. Flanders,
Sophronia Hutchinson,
Thadeus G. Holt,
Caroline Johnson,
Martin W. Hall,
Sarah C. Whitney,
Harriet Lovejoy,
Susan B. Hutchinson,
Nancy Wilkins,
Abby Smith,
Mary A. Dodge,
Gilman C. Jones,
Horace C. Jones,
John Mills,
Susan D. Burns,
Mary Abbott,

☞ Convention will be held at the Old Meeting House, commencing at 10 o'clock A. M. January 4.

☞ Friends from abroad will call on **LEONARD CHASE**, who will direct them to places where they can be accommodated.

Milford, December 19th, 1842.

The signers of the forgoing call were well known and respected citizens, and most of them had, a short time before, withdrawn from the Congregational and Baptist churches, and had received and taken the name of "come-outers." These aggressive pioneers in the anti-slavery cause took issue with the churches because of lukewarmness or supposed lukewarmness upon the vital question of human slavery, and doubtless in many churches there was great need of plain and perhaps severe admonition, if not denunciation. But when we reflect that Parson Moore in 1840, upon the floor of the House of Representatives, and in 1841, in the senate of our state, had denounced the institution of slavery in unmeasured terms, and when we further reflect that the warmhearted servant of the most high God, Rev. Abner B. Warner, from the day he entered the pulpit of the Congregational church, in February, 1839, until the day he left it, near the close of the year 1846, with the approbation of his congregation ceased not to cry aloud, with a pathos and an eloquence that few men could command, against the accursed institution of human bondage, we are compelled to say as impartial historians, that the offence of the Congregational church in Milford consisted in nothing worse than an unwillingness to break loose from ecclesiastical fellowship with churches apologizing for, or approving, this barbarous institution whose death blow was struck by the early abolitionists.

Not a few member of the churches were among the warmest friends of the slave. Conspicuous among this class were Dea. Freeman Crosby and his brother, Capt. Fredrick Crosby, of the Congregational church. One Nathaniel Coggin during the early days of discussion attempted to prevent the holding of a free-soil meeting in the Congregational church edifice by surreptitiously obtaining the keys and nailing the windows and doors, and going out of town with the key to the only unbarred door of the meeting-house. The members of the parish rose as one man, broke open the doors, and the meeting was held. From the day of this meeting to the day of his decease, the man who undertook in this way to close the doors of the church against an appeal for human bondage was known as Key Coggin.

The Hutchinson family, coming upon the stage of action at a most opportune time, acted a conspicuous part in the formation of anti-slavery sentiment in town, and throughout the length and breadth of the land. Their wonderful

power as vocalists, together with the ability to compose such poetry as the times demanded, made them a mighty factor in the social revolution which began half a century ago.

The signers of the call for the Beach meeting were reinforced from time to time by large numbers of intelligent and earnest men and women, until the number of those who were called "come-outers" was sufficient to make a respectable audience as they met upon Sunday and other days for conference, and to hear eminent speakers from abroad. Not only was the subject of slavery discussed, but all kindred topics of a social and religious character. These meetings were of especial interest whenever the Hutchinson family were at home and aided by their God-given voices in the success of the meetings.

The "come-outers" had no organization and kept no records. They had no officers bearing authority. Every man was a priest, and every woman a priestess. Jesse Hutchinson, Jr., and John Ramsdell were among their poets. They were earnest men and women, dominated by a great purpose, holding the great truth that all men are equal in the sight of God, and should be before the laws of men, -- that there should be the fullest liberty of religious opinions.

As time went on, and the anti-slavery sentiment in town became well nigh universal, meetings ceased to be held, and the name Come-Outer gradually became a thing of the past.