

HERALD OF FREEDOM¹

WE had occasionally, for several years, met with a number of this spirited journal, edited, as abolitionists need not to be informed, by Nathaniel P. Rogers, once a counselor-at-law in Plymouth, still farther up the Merrimack, but now, in his riper years, come down the hills thus far, to be the Herald of Freedom to these parts. We had been refreshed not a little by the cheap cordial of his editorials, flowing like his own mountain-torrents, now clear and sparkling, now foaming and gritty, and always spiced with the essence of the fir and the Norway pine; but never dark nor muddy, nor threatening with smothered murmurs, like the rivers of the plain. The effect of one of his effusions reminds us of what the hydropathists say about the electricity in fresh spring-water, compared with that which has stood over night, to suit weak nerves. We do not know of another notable and public instance of such pure, youthful, and hearty indignation at all wrong. The Church itself must love it, if it have any heart, though he is said to have dealt rudely with its sanctity. His clean attachment to the right, however, sanctions the severest rebuke we have read.

Mr. Rogers seems to us to have occupied an honorable and manly position in these days, and in this country, making the press a living and breathing organ

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to reach the hearts of men, and not merely "fine paper and good type," with its civil pilot sitting aft, and magnanimously waiting for the news to arrive,—the vehicle of the earliest news, but the *latest intelligence*,—recording the indubitable and last results, the marriages and deaths, alone. This editor was wide awake, and standing on the beak of his ship; not as a scientific explorer under government, but a Yankee sealer rather, who makes those unexplored continents his harbors in which to refit for more adventurous cruises. He was a fund of news and freshness in himself,—had the gift of speech, and the knack of writing; and if anything important took place in the Granite State, we might be sure that we should hear of it in good season. No other paper that we know kept pace so well with one forward wave of the restless public thought and sentiment of New England, and asserted so faithfully and ingenuously the largest liberty in all things. There was beside more unpledged poetry in his prose than in the verses of many an accepted rhymers; and we were occasionally advertised by a mellow hunter's note from his trumpet, that, unlike most reformers, his feet were still where they should be, on the turf, and that he looked out from a serener natural life into the turbid arena of politics. Nor was slavery always a sombre theme with him, but invested with the colors of his wit and fancy, and an evil to be abolished by other means than sorrow and bitterness of complaint. He will fight this fight with what cheer may be.

But to speak of his composition. It is a genuine Yankee style, without fiction,—real guessing and calculat-

ing to some purpose,—and reminds us occasionally, as does all free, brave, and original writing, of its great master in these days, Thomas Carlyle. It has a life above grammar, and a meaning which need not be parsed to be understood. But like those same mountain-torrents, there is rather too much slope to his channel, and the rainbow sprays and evaporations go double-quick time to heaven, while the body of his water falls headlong to the plain. We would have more pause and deliberation, occasionally, if only to bring his tide to a head,—more frequent expansions of the stream,—still, bottomless, mountain tarns, perchance inland seas, and at length the deep ocean itself.

Some extracts will show in what sense he was a poet as well as a reformer. He thus raises the antislavery “war-whoop” in New Hampshire, when an important convention is to be held, sending the summons,—

“To none but the whole-hearted, fully-committed, cross-the-Rubicon spirits. . . . From rich ‘old Cheshire,’ from Rockingham, with her horizon setting down away to the salt sea . . . from where the sun sets behind Kearsarge, even to where he rises gloriously over *Moses Norris’s* own town of *Pittsfield*,—and from Amoskeag to Ragged Mountains,—Coos—Upper Coos, home of the everlasting hills,—send out your bold advocates of human rights, wherever they lay, scattered by lonely lake, or Indian stream, or ‘Grant,’ or ‘Location,’ from the trout-haunted brooks of the Amoriscoggin, and where the adventurous streamlet takes up its mountain march for the St. Lawrence.

“Scattered and insulated men, wherever the light

of philanthropy and liberty has beamed in upon your solitary spirits, come down to us like your streams and clouds and our own Grafton, all about among your dear hills, and your mountain-flanked valleys—whether you *home* along the swift Ammonoosuck, the cold Pemigewassett, or the ox-bowed Connecticut. . . .

“We are slow, brethren, dishonorably slow, in a cause like ours. Our feet should be as ‘hinds’ feet.’ ‘Liberty lies bleeding.’ The leaden-colored wing of slavery obscures the land with its baleful shadow. Let us come together, and inquire at the hand of the Lord what is to be done.”

And again; on occasion of a New England Convention in the Second-Advent Tabernacle, in Boston, he desires to try one more blast, as it were, “on Fabyan’s White Mountain horn:”—

“Ho, then, people of the Bay State,—men, women, and children; children, women, and men, scattered friends of the *friendless*, wheresoever ye inhabit,—if habitations ye have, as such friends have not *always*,—along the sea-beat border of Old Essex and the Puritan Landing, and up beyond sight of the sea-cloud, among the inland hills, where the sun rises and sets upon the dry land, in that vale of the Connecticut, too fair for human content and too fertile for virtuous industry,—where deepens the haughtiest of earth’s streams, on its seaward way, proud with the pride of old Massachusetts. Are there any friends of the friendless negro haunting such a valley as this? In God’s name, I fear there are none, or few; for the very scene looks apathy and oblivion to the genius of humanity. I

blow you the summons, though. Come, if any of you are there.

“And gallant little Rhode Island; *transcendent* abolitionists of the tiny Commonwealth. I need not call you. You are *called* the year round, and, instead of sleeping in your tents, stand harnessed, and with trumpets in your hands, — every one!

“Connecticut! yonder, the home of the Burleighs, the Monroes, and the Hudsons, and the native land of old George Benson! are you ready? ‘All ready!’

“Maine here, off east, looking from my mountain post like an everglade. Where is your Sam. Fessenden, who stood storm-proof 'gainst New Organization in '38. Has he too much name as a jurist and orator, to be found at a New England Convention in '43? God forbid! Come one and all of you from ‘Down East’ to Boston, on the 30th, and let the sails of your coasters whiten all the sea-road. Alas! there are scarce enough of you to man a fishing boat. Come up mighty in your fewness.”

Such timely, pure, and unpremeditated expressions of a public sentiment, such publicity of genuine indignation and humanity, as abound everywhere in this journal, are the most generous gifts which a man can make.