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Eliza Wigham

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The Anti-Slavery Cause in America and its Martyrs

Eliza Wigham (1820–99), Scots philanthropist and champion of women's rights, was raised as a Quaker, and from an early age was involved in fund-raising and other support for the abolitionist cause in the United States. She published this short book in 1863, with the aim of countering pressure on the British government to support the Confederacy by describing 'the frightful reality of scenes daily and hourly acting in the United States ... a complication of crimes and wrongs and cruelties, that make angels weep'. She takes the story of the American abolitionist movement from its beginnings in Philadelphia in 1775, through the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, to the present state of hostilities between the north and the south. Interwoven with this narrative are stories of individual hardship and cruelty that make harrowing reading, and justify the use of the term 'martyrs' in the book's title.

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THE
ANTI-SLAVERY CAUSE IN AMERICA
AND
ITS MARTYRS.

BY ELIZA WIGHAM.

“ Pledging ourselves that, under the guidance and help of Almighty God, we will do all that in us lies, consistently with this declaration of our principles, to overthrow the most execrable system of slavery that has been ever witnessed upon earth; to deliver our land from its deadliest curse; to wipe out the foulest stain that rests upon our national escutcheon; and to secure to the coloured population of the United States all the rights and privileges that belong to them as men and as Americans—come what may to our persons, our interests, or our reputation—whether we live to witness the triumph of Liberty, Justice, and Humanity, or perish untimely as martyrs in this great, benevolent, and holy Cause.”—*Declaration of Sentiments, signed and issued at the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Dec. 6, 1833.*

LONDON:
A. W. BENNETT, 5 BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT.

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P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this little offering to the Anti-Slavery Cause, it is only necessary to say, that the incidents it contains have been carefully gathered from the most authentic sources, with an earnest desire to adhere strictly to truth in fact and inference, and to leave the narrative and the actors in it to speak for themselves.

It has been difficult, within prescribed limits, to make selections from the great mass of valuable Anti-Slavery literature of the last thirty years; but should any, from a perusal of these meager selections, wish to extend their information, the same deeply interesting sources from which they are taken are open to others also, and will amply repay the research by affording more intimate acquaintance with some of the finest sentiments, utterances, and actions, to be found in the history of men.

It is very important to bear in mind the character of Slavery, in order to estimate the urgency of the call which the Abolitionists felt bound to obey, “to cry aloud and spare not.” It is also important to remember the intimate connexion of Slavery with the whole social, religious, and political organization of America, in order rightly to appreciate the courage of those who began to assail it—two or three against the millions.

“Then to side with Truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside—
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.”

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The late Dr. Andrew Thomson, of St. George's, Edinburgh, says, "Slavery belies the doctrines—it contradicts the precepts—it resists the power—it sets at defiance the sanctions of religion—it is the tempter, and the murderer, and the tomb of virtue."

Harriet Beecher Stowe says, "Nothing of tragedy can be written, can be spoken, can be conceived, that equals the frightful reality. of scenes daily and hourly acting in the United States, beneath the shadow of American law, and the shadow of the cross of Christ;" and Miss M. Griffiths, recently a slaveholder, says, "Mrs. Stowe knows only the *echo* of the system." Mr. Thome, also a slaveholder, says, "Though I am heir to a slave inheritance, I am bold to denounce the whole system as an outrage, a complication of crimes and wrongs and cruelties, that make angels weep."

Such being the case, may all whose eyes rest on these pages be stimulated to a strong determination to do all that in them lies to guard our beloved country from any action, social or political, which may tend to ally her with a Confederacy having for its corner-stone American Slavery, the deadly enemy of the poor slave, and of Righteousness and Freedom throughout the world, and the impious rejecter and opposer of every law and attribute of Almighty God.

And now, in the earnest wish to do some little thing, however humbly, in a Cause which is that of Liberty, Humanity, Truth, and Righteousness, which, in short, is emphatically that of our Lord and Redeemer, the following pages are committed to the Public.

E. W.

Edinburgh, 7th month, 1863.

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