

**AN ESSAY ON SLAVERY
AND ABOLITIONISM, WITH
REFERENCE TO THE DUTY OF
AMERICAN FEMALES. [1837]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649750009

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by Catharine E. Beecher

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Cover @ 2017

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CATHARINE E. BEECHER

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ON
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DUTY OF AMERICAN FEMALES.

BY CATHARINE E. BEECHER.

Philadelphia:
HENRY PERKINS, 134 CHESTNUT STREET.
PERKINS & MARVIN, BOSTON.

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1837.

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Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1837, by
Henry Perkins, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the
Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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B41

L. ASHMEAD AND CO. PRINTERS.

PREFACE.

THE following are the circumstances which occasioned the succeeding pages. A gentleman and a friend, requested the writer to assign reasons why he should not join the Abolition Society. While preparing a reply to this request, Miss GRIMKÉ's Address was presented, and the information communicated, of her intention to visit the North, for the purpose of using her influence among northern ladies to induce them to unite with Abolition Societies. The writer then began a private letter to Miss Grimké as a personal friend. But by the wishes and advice of others, these two efforts were finally combined in the following Essay, to be presented to the public.

The honoured and beloved name which that lady bears, so associated as it is at the South, North, and West, with all that is elegant in a scholar, refined in a gentleman, and elevated in a Christian,—the respectable sect with which she is connected,—the interesting effusions of her pen,—and her own intellectual and moral worth, must secure respect for her opinions and much personal influence. This seems to be a sufficient apology for presenting to the public some considerations in connexion with her name; considerations which may exhibit in another aspect the cause she advocates, and which it may be appropriate to consider. As such, they are respectfully commended to the public, and especially to that portion of it for which they are particularly designed.

ESSAY
ON
SLAVERY AND ABOLITIONISM.

ADDRESSED TO MISS A. D. GRIMKÉ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your public address to Christian females at the South has reached me, and I have been urged to aid in circulating it at the North. I have also been informed, that you contemplate a tour, during the ensuing year, for the purpose of exerting your influence to form Abolition Societies among ladies of the non-slave-holding States.

Our acquaintance and friendship give me a claim to your private ear; but there are reasons why it seems more desirable to address you, who now stand before the public

as an advocate of Abolition measures, in a more public manner.

The object I have in view, is to present some reasons why it seems unwise and inexpedient for ladies of the non-slave-holding States to unite themselves in Abolition Societies; and thus, at the same time, to exhibit the inexpediency of the course you propose to adopt.

I would first remark, that your public address leads me to infer, that you are not sufficiently informed in regard to the feelings and opinions of Christian females at the North. Your remarks seem to assume, that the *principles* held by Abolitionists on the subject of slavery, are peculiar to them, and are not generally adopted by those at the North who oppose their *measures*. In this you are not correctly informed. In the sense in which Abolitionists explain the terms they employ, there is little, if any, difference between them and most northern persons. Especially is this true of northern persons of religious principles. I know not where to look for northern Christians, who would deny

that every slave-holder is bound to treat his slaves exactly as he would claim that his own children ought to be treated in similar circumstances; that the holding of our fellow men as property, or the withholding any of the rights of freedom, for mere purposes of gain, is a sin, and ought to be immediately abandoned; and that where the laws are such, that a slave-holder cannot *legally* emancipate his slaves, without throwing them into worse bondage, he is bound to use all his influence to alter those laws, and, in the meantime, to treat his slaves, as nearly as he can, *as if* they were free.

I do not suppose there is one person in a thousand, at the North, who would dissent from these principles. They would only differ in the use of terms, and call this the doctrine of *gradual emancipation*, while Abolitionists would call it the doctrine of *immediate emancipation*.

As this is the state of public opinion at the North, there is no necessity for using any influence with northern ladies, in order that they may adopt your *principles* on the sub-