

**AN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
RESPECTING THE OPINIONS OF
THE FOUNDERS OF THE REPUBLIC
ON NEGROES AS SLAVES, AS
CITIZENS, AND AS SOLDIERS**

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GEORGE LIVERMORE

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READ BEFORE THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

AUGUST 14, 1862.

BY GEORGE LIVERMORE.

THIRD EDITION.

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
AUGUST MEETING, 1862.

EXTRACT FROM THE RECORDS.

A stated monthly meeting was held this day, Thursday, August 14th. In the absence of the President (the Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP), Colonel THOMAS ASPINWALL, one of the Vice-Presidents, took the chair.

Mr. LIVERMORE communicated a paper (portions of which he had read at the July meeting) "*On the Opinions of the Founders of the Republic respecting Negroes as Slaves, as Citizens, and as Soldiers.*"

Mr. NORTON moved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to Mr. Livermore, and that a special Committee be appointed to print the paper at the expense of the Society.

Before this motion was put, Mr. LIVERMORE remarked, that he began his research as an individual effort, intending to print a few copies only, for private distribution. He had brought the subject before the Society at the July meeting, that he might receive aid or suggestions from members who were present. At the request of many members of the Society he had extended his investigations; and, as they desired, had now offered the results of his researches. He hoped he might be permitted to carry out his original purpose of printing the paper, at his own expense, for gratuitous distribution. He should, if such was the pleasure of the meeting, print it as a paper read before the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Mr. EVERETT expressed the gratification with which he had listened to a paper containing so much valuable information, and hoped that it might be printed in the manner most agreeable to Mr. Livermore.

He suggested that the motion of Mr. Norton be so modified as to obviate the objections raised by Mr. Livermore. He hoped, if consistent with his plan, that Mr. Livermore would extend his researches so as to include the services of colored seamen in the American Navy. Mr. Everett related an anecdote of an aged slave, the last of his class, showing the mildness of slavery in Massachusetts before its final extinction.

Mr. WATERSTON, Secretary *pro tempore* of the July meeting, said he had made known the proceedings of that meeting to the venerable senior member of the Society, the Hon. Josiah Quincy, who, though unable at present to attend the meetings, retains a deep interest in all the Society's transactions. He had just received from him a letter, which he begged leave to present to the Society:—

“QUINCY, Aug. 9, 1862.

“REV. R. C. WATERSTON,

“DEAR SIR,—Your letter of this date communicates to me the purpose of Mr. Livermore to collect and publish documents on the subject of Slavery and Negro Soldiers, originating from the great men who were guides of public affairs at the time of the American Revolution. I should regard such a publication as useful and desirable, and I heartily wish Mr. Livermore success; and I shall be happy, according to my means, in aiding him in his purpose.

“In respect to the general subject of slavery, I apprehend he will find very little favorable to the institution among the relics of the great men of that period.

“Disgust at it was so general, as to be little less than universal. Among slaveholders, the language and hope of putting an end to the evil as soon as possible was on all their tongues; but, alas! it was far from being in all their hearts. Some of the leaders saw the advantages derived from it by the unity and identity of action and motive to which it tended, and its effect in making five States move in phalanx over the Free States. They clung to the institution for the sake of power over the other States of the Union; and, while they were open in decrying it, they were assiduous in promoting its interests and extending its influence.

“By constantly declaring a detestation of slavery, they threw dust into the eyes of the people of the Free States; while they never ceased to seize every opportunity to embarrass the measures which would

advance the interests of the Free States, and at the same time to strengthen and extend the interests of the Slave States. We can trace their policy in history. We now realize the result.

“With all their pretensions, the leading slaveholders never lost sight, for one moment, of perpetuating its existence and its power.

“Truly and respectfully yours,

“JOSIAH QUINCY.”

Mr. WASHBURN spoke with interest of the letter which had just been read, remarkable as coming from a gentleman of such experience, and at so advanced a period of life. He then gave several historical facts which had come to his knowledge when writing his “History of Leicester,” corroborating the statement of Mr. Livermore respecting the common practice of using negroes as soldiers during the war of the American Revolution.

The vote thanking Mr. Livermore for his paper, and committing the manuscript to him, to be printed in the manner most agreeable to him, was unanimously adopted.

RICHARD FROTHINGHAM,

Secretary pro tem.