

# FREDERICK DOUGLASS

LETTER TO KOSSUTH, Concerning Freedom and Slavery in the United States, in behalf of the American Anti-Slavery Society

P.170.

He who comes to this country, hoping to escape "*entanglements*" on the slavery question, (as it is called by those who shrink from it,) must not only keep his mouth shut and his ears closed, but must actually put his eyes out, or cover them with bandages too thick to allow him to catch the lineaments of our national face; and in choosing one to lead him, must be sure to select an individual as blind as himself; for so sure as these conditions are not complied with, he will find his fond hopes blasted.— The line between Freedom and Slavery, in this country, is tightly drawn; and the combatants on either side are in earnest and fight hand to hand. He who chances to be on one side or on the other, if it be but in the estimation of a single hair, must fight, or die. There is no neutral ground here for any man. Father Mathew looked for such ground, but he looked with his eyes open; and this is the secret of his bad luck.<sup>24</sup> Had he been deaf, dumb, and blind, he might have, peradventure, stumbled on the weak side; but he saw the strongest and consulting his fears, he threw himself in the arms of the oppressor, because on his side was power. Kossuth has tried it, and although, backed by his non-intervention doctrine; and being, perhaps, the greatest tactician of modern times, the result has been the same, and worse than the same. A tourist may visit Austria, Russia, France, Spain and the Barbary States, and perhaps escape committal or controversy; but so he may not do in the United States. Entanglement is certain. We allow no man to enter here without conflict. He must show his hand, try his strength, prove his metal; and there's no escape.

Who are to blame for these bad manners which so annoy and perplex the stranger?—Some say the abolitionists; and they are abused on all sides soundly for the same.—Their impertinent intermeddling with foreigners, is a source of the utmost pain and mortification to the decent, well-behaved, conservative class of our citizens, many of whom would be glad to banish them to Africa with "the *n—rs*" if they could; for you know in this case the innocent have to suffer with the guilty. Our reputation, as a nation, is the thing that is injured; and patriotism cherishes nothing more dearly than national reputation. According to high authority, men will seek this bauble in the cannon's mouth. It is not strange, then, that our "*potent, grave and reverend seniors,*" of Hunker standing, frown upon the abolitionists as an ill-mannered and mischievous set, who must be put down at all hazards.—"What," say they, "has it come to this, that a minister cannot come here from another country to preach the gospel, without being insulted by a request from these impertinent mad-caps to remember the American slave in his prayers!—that Father Mathew, the apostle of temperance, cannot come here without being *bothered* by an invitation to attend an anti-slavery meeting!—that the noble Kossuth cannot come here to address our citizens on the great doctrines of independence, the rights of man and universal liberty, without being pestered with deputations and addresses, exhorting him to be true to himself, to his position, to his history at home and abroad, to the great doctrine of

P.170.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

universal freedom which he preaches! Why! the bad manners of this set are intolerable!"

Such are the sentiments of our pro-slavery noodles. It is they, not we, who are at fault in this manner. They have got a foul, unnatural, loathsome abomination, to uphold against all the noble instincts of human nature; and bowing themselves before this huge and bloody idol, they call upon all men, of every land and nation, who venture within its precincts, to "do likewise;" or at any rate, to padlock their lips, and be dumb, in regard to the monstrosity. They, not we, are the aggressors. They throw themselves athwart the current of nature, of conscience, of truth, of justice, and of the spirit of the living God. *They* make war on *man*, as well as on manners, and when we cry out against it, and call upon others to do so, we, forsooth, are meddling and indecorous!

We have been induced to make the foregoing remarks, in anticipation of the reception which awaits the pamphlet containing the letter to Kossuth, the title of which is given at the head of this article. The subject is a fruitful one, and we would gladly say more, but our space will not permit us to do so. The letter to Kossuth, is a most searching production; and if he be not insensible to the claims of that justice he so eloquently advocates, he must be convinced by it, that he has bestowed eulogies on this nation, *not* deserved; that he has been playing into the hands of tyrants, worse than Austria ever knew; and that he has inflicted a wound on the cause of freedom, which he cannot too speedily do his utmost to heal.

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