

Dec. 10 - 1851

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THE LIBERTY BELL.

To Kossuth.

BY WM. LEWIS GARRISON.

I.

AMIDST the roar of public acclamation —
The loudest greetings of a mighty throng —
The cannon's thundering reverberation —
The civic fête, with toast, and speech, and
song —
The grand "All hail!" of a rejoicing nation,
A million times repeated loud and long —

II.

Can one lone voice, all tremulous with feeling,
Be heard by thee, O glorified Kossuth,

*"The Liberty Bell" 1852**By Friends of Freedom, Boston**National Antislavery Bazaar, MDCCCLII (1852)*

TO KOSSUTH.

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To all thy noblest attributes appealing,
As one who knows Oppression's bitter fruit;
And to thy listening ear the truth revealing,
When sycophants and cowards all are mute?

III.

My claims for audience thou wilt not discredit,
For they are based on kindred love of Right;
And as for Liberty, world-wide to spread it,
I, too, have suffered outrage, scorn and slight;
Known what the dungeon is, and not to dread it;
And still am zealous in the moral fight.

IV.

Thou dreaded foe of Austrian oppression,
With earnest love of liberty imbued,
Since through America's strong intercession,
Thy liberation has at last ensued,
'Tis meet thou comest here to give expression
To thy sincere and heartfelt gratitude.



V.

But, while thy obligation thus admitting,
O let it not thy generous soul enspare ;
Act thou, while here, a manly part, befitting
Thy name and fame as one to do and dare,
Whate'er the peril of the hour, — acquitting
Thyself right valiantly, a champion rare.

VI.

Is it for thee to deal in glowing fiction ?
To call this land great, glorious and free ?
To take no note of its sad dereliction
From all that constitutes true liberty ?
To feel upon thy spirit no restriction
By aught that thou canst learn, or hear, or see ?

VII.

While this republic thou art warmly thanking,
For aiding thee once more to breathe free air,

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Three million Slaves their galling chains are
clanking,
Heart-broken, bleeding, crushed beyond com-
pare,
At public sale with swine and cattle ranking
The wretched victims of complete despair !

VIII.

The government that thou art now extolling,
As well-deserving measureless applause,
By its strong arm these millions are enthralling,
And persecuting those who plead their cause :
O, rank hypocrisy, and guilt appalling !
Like Draco's code, in blood are writ its laws.

IX.

For 't is by-law the father, son, and brother,
Know nought of filial or parental ties ;
By law the sister, daughter, wife, and mother,
Must claim no kindred here beneath the skies ;



All, at the fiendish bidding of another,
Their God-given rights must basely sacrifice.

X.

By law the fugitives from stripes and fetters,
Who seek, like thee, a refuge safe and sure
From murderous tyrants and their vile abettors,
Are hunted over mountain, plain and moor;
Dragged back to Slavery, as absconding debtors,
To toil, like brutes, while life and strength
endure.

XI.

By law 'tis criminal a Slave to pity,
To give him food and shelter from his foes;
For him no hiding-place in town or city;
He must be hunted wheresoe'er he goes;
And they are branded as a vile banditti,
Who for his freedom nobly interpose!

XII.

Behold what scenes are in our courts transpiring !

Behold on trial placed the good and brave,
For disobedience to the law requiring
That he whom God made free should be a
Slave !

Arraigned as traitors with a zeal untiring,
And, if convicted, hurried to the grave !

XIII.

Thou hast proclaimed, in tones like ringing clarion,
That freedom is the gift of God to all ;
That as a man, not as a mere Hungarian,
In its defence thou 'lt bravely stand or fall ;
For Jew and Greek, for Scythian and Barbarian,
Alike are summoned by its trumpet-call.

XIV.

I take thee at thy word, out-spoken hero !
Forget not those who are in bondage here ;



For our humanity now stands at zero,
And threatens utterly to disappear;
Rebuke each merciless plantation Nero;
Reprove our land in accents loud and clear!

XV.

While praising us wherein we are deserving,
Tell us our faults, — expose our crime of
crimes;
Be as the needle to the pole unswerving,
And true to Freedom's standard in all climes;
Thus many a timid heart with courage nerving
To meet the mighty conflict of the times.

XVI.

Say Slavery is a stain upon our glory,
Accursed of Heaven, and by the earth abhorred;
Show that our soil with negro blood is gory,
And certain are the judgments of the Lord;
So shall thy name immortal be in story,
And thy fidelity the world applaud.

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XVII.

Yet first, for this, thou shalt be execrated

By those who now in crowds around thee press ;

Thy visit shall be sternly reprobated ;

Thy friends and flatterers grow less and less ;

Thy hopes for Hungary be dissipated ;

America shall curse thee, and not bless.

XVIII.

But if, alas ! thy country's sad condition,

And need of succor, a pretence be made,

Why from thy lips should fall no admonition,

Lest she should lose our sympathy and aid ;

No blessing can attend thy selfish mission —

The cause of freedom thou wilt have betrayed.

XIX.

O, shall the millions here in bondage sighing,

Branded as beasts, and scourged with bloody

whips,

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The "property" of tyrants God-defying,
Hear not one word of pity from thy lips?
O be not dumb, to thy reproach undying—
And thy great fame save from a dire eclipse!

XX.

Courage, Kossuth! Be true,—fear not the trial!
Pluck out thy right eye, and thy right hand lose!
Though on thy head be poured out every vial,
To wear a padlock on thy lips refuse!
And thou shalt gain, through lofty self-denial,
A brighter crown than all the world can choose.

Boston, December 19, 1851.