LETTERS OF SALMON P. CHASE, HENRY CLAY,
HENRY GEORGE.

ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS.

THE following letters are in the possession of Mrs. Grace
Julian Clarke, of Irvington, Indianapolis, who inherited them
from Joshua R. Giddings, her grandfather, and George W. Julian,
her father. They have never been published.

The letters from Chase are an admirable illustration of his
voluminous correspondence in the days of the anti-slavery agita-
tion. It can readily be seen how little confidence he had in the
possibility of the Whigs as a party doing anything against slav-
ery, and how he, as an independent Democrat, resented the as-
signment of pro-slavery sentiment to the Democratic party as a
whole. He was evidently strongly inclining toward an entirely
new alignment of parties, which he rather expected to take place
anyhow in 1844 or 1848, but which did not come till the fifties.
Giddings in 1842 and 1844 was still working as an anti-slavery
man in the Whig ranks.

The Henry Clay letter is of the greatest interest. Clay’s let-
ters probably defeated him in his race, as the nominee of the
Whig party for the presidency in 1844. The burning question
was that of the annexation of Texas, to which Polk and the
Democratic party were passionately committed and which the
Whig party inclined to oppose. Clay, in a letter to the National
Intelligencer (the so-called Raleigh letter of April, 1844), strong-
ly opposed the projected annexation of Texas. This letter gained
strong support from those who opposed slavery and looked upon
the annexation of Texas as a pro-slavery conspiracy involving
great injustice. Clay was the unanimous choice of the Whig
convention on May 1, for the presidency. With the thought,
apparently, that some Southern votes could be won, Clay wrote
his famous “Alabama” letters to Stephen F. Miller, of Tuscaloosa,
on July 1, in which he made the unfortunate statement, “Per-
sonally I could have no objection to the annexation of Texas,”
and on July 27, in which he added, “I should be glad to see it
indianapolis, march 22, 1842

my dear sir:

i thank you for your two last very interesting letters. the nation is greatly indebted to you and other friends of freedom for the noble stand taken by you in regard to the right of petition. the country is beginning to awake at length to the danger of slaveholding encroachments, and the time is rapidly drawing on, i trust, when the champions of freedom will have the place which of right belongs to them in the confidence and favor of a long deceived and oppressed, but now awakening public.

i think, however, that it will be necessary to go to the bottom and plant ourselves upon the rock of fundamental principles. it will not do to compromise any more. the principle must be established and acquiesced in that the government is a non-slaveholding government—that the nation is a non-slaveholding nation—that slavery is a custom of state law—local—not to be extended or favored, but to be confined within the states.
which admit and sanction it. I hardly think that the Whigs as a party are prepared to take this ground. The most they will do is to tolerate liberty. They will, in this quarter, hardly do that. They will not do it at all unless attachment to liberty is made subservient to party ends and secondary to party obligations. There has been something said of nominating Judge King by the Whig party. I do not expect it, though he has been a distinguished, able and influential Whig. Nor, to say the truth, do I desire it. For such is the policy of opposition to anti-salvery principle, with many of the Whig party, that thousands would vote for Shannon in preference to him, while many of the Democrats who would otherwise support him, will be persuaded that the nomination is a Whig maneuver, and will fall back into their party ranks. I would prefer, for one, to go into the battle with our own strength. We may be defeated now, but at the next election parties must divide on principle, and then we must triumph.

I will send under cover to your address, a number of copies of our Liberty Address, directed to various gentlemen in Washington to whom I will thank you to have them delivered. Why cannot the members from Vermont, who accord in principle with the Liberty convention, go home and plant the standard of Liberty upon the Green Mountains? I feel confident that the State would at once rally under it. Why submit any longer to the degradations so long endured? Why consent, at all, that the principles and rights of the free States—of the Nation, indeed—shall be trampled upon, or if recognized at all, recognized as a matter of grace and favor. I am tired of the cap-in-hand policy. I am unwilling to feel myself and my opinions to be contraband articles in my political party; only tolerated because not safely to be dispensed with. I cannot but think that you and others have these sentiments. Why not then act upon them? Excuse me if I seem too earnest. It seems to me that there is now a glorious opportunity to restore the government to its original principles, and I cannot but hope that before the Congress rises you and others will feel free to take the position of leaders of the Liberty party and issue an address to the people which will be responded
to throughout the land. I verily believe there are multitudes even in slave States who would hail such a movement with joy. If Mr. Adams could be induced to take a part in it, how could his illustrious life be more brightened at its close?

I have written to him a letter which I enclose. It is some years since I have seen him, and he has probably forgotten me. He knew, however, my uncle, formerly Senator from Vermont, and perhaps also my uncle, the Bishop of Illinois, well. I want you to vouch for me and to get for me, if possible, an early answer to my letter. It is principally upon the subject of slavery in the District, and the fundamental principles of the Liberty party. It does not, however, suggest any action such as is referred to above. It would not be fit for me to suggest a course to him. You can converse with him on the subject with propriety. I should be glad to have you read my letter to him.

We are organizing our Liberty party in this county, and expect to make a respectable rally.

Faithfully yours,

S. P. Chase.

P. S. Please send the blue book and the census.

[Note in another hand:]

(How would it answer for you or some other gentleman to introduce a bill for the repeal of the laws sustaining slavery in the District of Columbia?)

(Salmon P. Chase to Joshua R. Giddings.)

Cincinnati, February 9, 1843.

My dear Sir:

I take pleasure in acknowledging your kindness in sending me a copy of your very able pamphlet. It exhibits with great clearness and force the real line of demarcation between Liberty and Despotism in this American government of ours. The facts which it brings to view are well chosen and most apposite. In all that you say in reference to the constitutional limitations on the power of the government in relation to slavery, I most heartily concur with you. I might depart, perhaps, from some of your practical applications of your principles to cases
of fugitives from service; but this is nothing. The vindication of great principles by the clear and masterly argument of your pamphlet is a great service to the public, and will no doubt do much towards bringing the minds of those who read it to a correct apprehension of their rights and duties in regard to slavery.

There are some particulars, however, as to which I wish to state my objections. You condemn throughout, at least by implication, the Democratic party as the avowed ally of slavery. And yet it must be admitted that the principles of the Democracy, so vociferously proclaimed by every orator on every stump, and by every newspaper from every press, are in exact harmony with the principles of the Liberty men. "Neither Christianity nor Democracy can be pure," says the Ohio Statesman, "separated from each other; they are both founded on the love of mankind and the immutable principles of equality and justice. Oppressive, unequal and unjust laws are opposed to both Christianity and Democracy." "Equal rights and equal privileges for all men" is forever in the mouths of the Democrats. Will you say that this is pretence and hypocritical profession? Why not rather impute it to the ignorance of the proper application of their principles to slavery as it exists in this country, which you so justly observe, has hitherto prevailed? Why not hope that the Democrats, once enlightened on this subject, will bend their zealous efforts to carry out the principles of equality and justice in all their practical applications?

You refer to the fact that a Democratic legislature passed the "black act." You notice its repeal, but I do not observe that you mention that it was repealed by a Democratic legislature. You may say, indeed, that a majority of Whigs voted for its repeal; but did not a majority of Whigs vote for its enactment? And if it be true that Democrats voted for the law, can it be forgotten that the most conspicuous and influential member of the Kentucky Commission was a Whig? That Mr. Andrew, who drafted the bill (for whom, by the way, I entertain very great respect and regard) was a Whig? That Goddard, and others as influential and distinguished, who supported the bill,
were Whigs? And if the passage of the "black act" must be spoken of as the act of a Democratic legislature, why should not the vote of censure on yourself be spoken of as the act of a Whig Congress? I notice that you say that one of your Democratic colleagues moved the resolution of censure. You do not mention that the resolution was prepared and brought forward by a Whig, who voted with you, I believe, on every distinctive Whig measure. And let me ask you frankly, do you believe you would have been sustained in your own district in the noble and independent position assumed by you, had not the Whig leaders been fearful of driving your friends into the ranks of the Liberty party and thus losing their majority? I have heard that many of the Whigs voted for your opponent, and that not a few Democrats voted for you. In addition to these Democrats might be mentioned a thousand Liberty men who voted for you, so that it can hardly be said that your re-election was made a party question. Be this as it may, however, I know very well that the Whigs here could not be brought to endorse your resolutions or approve your course. I made an effort to get up a public meeting for that purpose, and counselled with some influential gentlemen in relation to it. They were willing to have a meeting called and to attend, to censure the action of the majority of Congress, provided your course should also be disapproved of. Because the consent of your friends could not be obtained to this compromise, the idea of a general meeting was dropped. A meeting of Liberty men was called, which paid a just tribute to your courage and perseverance in maintaining and declaring the true principles of the constitution, and uttered a censure on the conduct of your censurers which I have no doubt the people will ultimately ratify.

I refer to these things to justify myself and others who are charged with want of candor because we will not make—I should rather say cannot make—any distinction between the respective attitude of the Whigs and Democrats, as parties, to the principles and measures of the Liberty men. I readily admit that there are many men in the Whig party whom Liberty men should honor for their steadfast adherence to principles; but so long
as Mr. Botts is just as good a Whig as Mr. Giddings, and Mr. Peyton is just as good a Whig (if not, indeed, in a party sense a much better) as Mr. Adams; so long as not one of the great and comprehensive principles for which Liberty men contend and which, as they believe, are indispensable to the restoration of sound and permanent prosperity, finds a place in any authorized definition of Whig principles, I must be allowed to say that it is unjust in you to charge those who have hitherto sustained you fearlessly and unwaveringly, with want of candor because they will not transfer your merits to your party by political imputation, and that, too, without repentance or the fruits thereof. I have not an opportunity of seeing the Whig papers of the State generally, but I am informed that your essays have appeared in very few of them. Your last was printed in the Gazette of this city, except a few paragraphs, which it was probably supposed would offend the Whig sentiments of its readers. Your expositions are certainly the most clear and able which have appeared of the topics which you discuss. Why, if they express the sentiments of your party, does not the party press publish them and say so? Why not at least let their readers know that such facts and principles exist?

My dear sir, you will pardon me, I trust, if I repeat what I have heretofore said, that I cannot but think that it is the duty of yourself and such as you to come out on our side—on the side of your beliefs and your principles. I cannot but believe that if you, Mr. Adams, Mr. Slade and others would take this ground, there might be a nomination of President which in the present state of parties would command the confidence of the people and receive the sanction of their suffrage. We could carry upon our banners not “Northern Rights” exactly, but Constitutional Rights, Liberty, Justice, Free Labor. We should not be obliged to make promises which the slave power would compel us to break or deprive us of the power of fulfilling. We should not be compelled to wear two faces, one at the South and another at the North. Open, frank and honest, we might hope for success. At any rate, we might deserve it. Will you think of this and write me?
Pardon me for inflicting upon you this long letter, and believe me still,

Very truly and respectfully yours,

S. P. Chase.

P. S. I ought to have mentioned, speaking of the notice taken here in one or two of the papers (except the Phil.) [the Philanthropist, Birney's anti-slavery, Cincinnati paper] of your course in the [illegible] business, that every article approving of your position and justifying you fully was, so far as I observed, written by myself, and printed, tho' reluctantly, because I requested it as a matter of favor to me.

I should have acknowledged long ago your letter about some bankrupt cases last summer. I did as you wished, but neglected to advise you of it. No inconvenience resulted, I hope.

(Henry Clay to Joshua R. Giddings.)

(Private and Confidential.)

Ashland, Sept. 21st, 1844.

My dear Sir:

Before I received your favor of the 16th instant, I had addressed a letter to you which I presume you have since received, but which had not reached you at the date of yours.

In that letter I expressed my great reluctance on account of the necessity arising out of the letter of C. M. Clay, Esq., of my publishing my note to the Lexington Observer. I stated what I still believe, that there was great danger of the loss of four slave States if I left Mr. Clay's letter unnoticed. I stated to you also, that I expected a letter which I addressed to Pittsburgh would be published, but it has not been, and why I do not know.

I regret extremely that state of things which you describe in Ohio; the loss of its Electoral vote will I fear lead to the inevitable defeat of the Whig party. Always prepared myself for any event, and ready to acquiesce in any decision of the People of the United States, I should deplore that defeat less on my own account than that of our common country.

I transmit enclosed a letter in reply to one which you for-
warded from Mr. Hendry; but I sincerely hope it may not be published, because the public mind is in such a state of excitement that anything from me at this time is liable to the greatest perversion.

In certain States, which you can well imagine, it might occasion us a much greater loss than any gain in your quarter; and I must add that I am afraid all your Patriotic efforts to conciliate the support of the Liberty party are vain and fruitless. Their course in Vermont, although our friend, Mr. Slade, was the candidate there for Governor, and their more recent course in Maine, cannot have escaped your observation. Another reason for not publishing my letter to Mr. Hendry is, that I have had many letters from New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio requesting me to forebear writing letters for publication. Notwithstanding which I am almost daily importuned to write others.

I thought that you would be pleased with that part of my note, drawn from me by Mr. Clay's letter, in which I state that the power over the Institution of Slavery in the Slave States is vested exclusively in them.

I will transmit to you in a few days an editorial article on the subject of my three letters in regard to Texas, with which I hope you will be well pleased.

I am faithfully,

Yr friend and ob't Servant,

H. CLAY.

The Hon. J. R. Giddings.

(Henry George to George W. Julian.)

417 First St.,
San Francisco, Nov. 27, 1879.

Hon. George W. Julian,

Dear Sir:

Your kind note of the 19th received. I value your opinion, for I have a high admiration of your services and character, and what you say of my book pleases me very much. It is, as you say, profoundly religious—not that I am what is called a religious man, for I have no formal creed and never go to church—
but that a strong, deep religious idea rises inevitably out of such thought. And to me the faith that has thus arisen has been and is a great comfort—sometimes inexpressibly so. The book, in itself and its antecedents, represents to me a good deal of labor and not a little sacrifice, but it has brought at least this reward. You will understand what I mean, as you have understood what in the book some will not understand. I of course, do not know your inner life, but I know that to every man who tries to do his duty there come trials and bitterness in which he needs all the faith he can hold to.

I thank you for the good words which you tell me you will speak for the book. You can do in this way great service. For much depends upon first reception, and a book which challenges so much that is buttressed by authority, and which moreover comes from an unknown man, will of course be contemptuously pooh-poohed by the commonplace critic and ordinary routine professor. If the book gets a start and attracts attention it will do much toward bringing to the front the great land question, and giving us something real in our politics. Appleton & Co., of New York, have the book in press, and I am anxiously expecting day by day that they will publish it. They will then send it to the papers and magazines, to whom so far I have not been at liberty to send any of the little edition I printed.

I wished very much to get acquainted with you, and was very much chagrined that I missed the opportunity, and especially to find that Mrs. Julian had been here while you were absent in Los Angeles and when we might have paid her some attention. The fault was my own, and arose from a habit of concentration into which I got while writing that book, to which it was necessary. But either East or West, I hope to meet you again. With respects to Mrs. Julian, I am,

Yours very truly,

HENRY GEORGE.