CIRCULAR.

ABOLITIONISTS OF MASSACHUSETTS—

Twenty thousand persons have sent memorials to the State Legislature, asking that body to protest, in the name of the people, against the unconstitutional and despotic resolution, adopted by the House of Representatives of the United States, on the 21st of December last. This is well, but well needs to be made better, even on this topic. Farther, a large proportion, full three fourths of these petitioners, it is believed, are immediate abolitionists. Upon this estimate, then, *fifteen thousand* persons, at least, should, before this, have sent in their petitions, asking the Legislature to declare (1) that Congress has Constitutional power to abolish slavery and the slave trade, in the District of Columbia and the Territories, and the slave trade between the States; and (2) that this power should be immediately exercised. Again, there are, in this State, at least 200 Anti-Slavery Societies formed on the principles of immediate emancipation. At a moderate estimate, these will average 100 members each. But few, very few of them are juvenile societies, and of the others, but a small portion of their members are minors. Besides these, there is a multitude of abolitionists in the State, who are not members of any society. So that, upon the most moderate calculation, there are, in this State, at least 20,000 adults, who are immediate abolitionists, and therefore, upon this estimate, instead of fifteen thousand petitioners to the State Legislature, on the above subjects, there ought to have been, before this, at least TWENTY-THOUSAND;—and if there had been, who does not know that the Legislature would at once speak the voice of immediatism on each and all of the topics named? But, alas! what are the facts? Why, that on the first topic, 20,000 have petitioned, and on the latter, only 6,400! Yes, humiliating as it is as a fact, *of twenty thousand adult abolitionists in the State of Massachusetts, not seven thousand have yet even* ASKED *their legislature to do what it can, for the overthrow of that system of abominations, which is professedly the abhorrence of their souls!* Friends of the slave, is this right?—Is this abolitionism?—Is this remembering them that are in bonds, as bound with them?' Are you to be content with this? God forbid.

What then is to be done? We send out this circular to tell you. Last year the legislature passed the resolution quoted in the memorial on the next page. In that resolution, the *right* of Congress to abolish *slavery* in the *District*, is admitted; and also, that nothing but 'the public good' should restrain its exercise. What we want this session is, that the legislature shall take another step, and say that justice, humanity, the honor of the nation, and 'the public good,' so far from restraining, require, not only the exercise, but the immediate exercise of this right, in the abolition of slavery and the slave trade both, in that District. To this end, we must make the District our focal point of action. Besides, with 20,000 petitioners against the resolution of Dec. 21st, and only 6,400 against slavery, &c. in the District, what is the influence on the committee of the legislature? Obviously this—that while multitudes are ready to stand for the right of petition, the abolitionists are but a handful. With this state of things, then, and with a committee less favorable to the prayer of the petitioners than that of last year, the prospect now is, that the legislature will go but little, if it does at all, in advance of last year. The position of our cause is, therefore, most critical. Hence this special circular. Let every person then, who receives it, attend forthwith to the following things:

1. Call at once, a meeting of the officers or members of the Anti-Slavery Society in your place, or if there be no society, a meeting of several friends of the cause, read this circular to them, and adopt measures for the prompt and thorough circulation of the annexed memorial, *in every school district in town.*

2. Let *adults* only sign the memorial.

3. Let men and women sign separate memorials.

4. When the circulation is completed, let the signatures of all the men in each town, be united in one memorial, and the signatures of the women in another.

5. Fold each memorial, and write on the back of it, in a plain hand, the name of the first petitioner, the number of petitioners, and the place—thus—'Petition of A. B. and — others, —of—, for a legislative declaration, &c. that Congress has the right, and ought immediately, to abolish slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia.'

6. Let the memorials be all circulated and *sent to the legislature, within* THREE *weeks, at farthest,*—from this time—sooner if possible. It is important the petitions come in before the committee make up their report, which will be in about this time.

7. It is no objection to persons signing this memorial, that they have signed the former one, as this differs somewhat from that, and is limited to the District.

8. The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States says—'We, the people of the U. States in *order* to establish justice, * * promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution,' &c. The Declaration of American Independence, says—'That to *secure* these rights [those of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'] governments are instituted among men, that wherever any form of government becomes destructive of *these ends*, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government,' &c. The quotations in the memorial refer to these: and yet the legislators of Massachusetts gravely suppose that 'the public good,' or 'the general welfare' forbids the 'establishment of justice' and the giving of 'liberty,' by Congress, to one sixth of 'the people' living upon territory under its 'exclusive legislation'! Our legislators need light. Twenty thousand petitioners will give it. They will make it day-light again, and operate like magic on 'the public good'!

Friends of the slave, the work is yours—will you do it? Rather let me say, what abolitionist is there that will not do it, and do it *now?* Oh! friends! how would the heart of the slave leap for joy, and that of his oppressor quake with fear, to see us, by our petitions, marching up to our legislative halls, in a solid phalanx of TWENTY THOUSAND! Do your duty, one and all, and it can be done.

A. A. PHELPS,

For the Board of Managers of the Mass. A. S. Society.

Boston, Feb. 12, 1838.