

Springfield, Ills. Aug: 15. 1855

Hon: Geo. Robertson
Lexington, Ky.

My dear Sir:

The volume you left for me has been received - I am really grateful for the honor of your kind remembrance, as well as for the book - The partial reading I have already given it, has afforded me much of both pleasure and instruction - It was new to me that the exact question which led to the Missouri Compromise, had arisen before it arose in regard to Missouri; and that you had taken so prominent a part in it - Your short, but able and patriotic speech upon that occasion, has not been improved upon since, by those holding the same views; and, with all the light you then had, the views you took appear to me as very reasonable -

You are not a friend of slavery in the abstract - In that speech you spoke of "the peaceful extinction of slavery" and used other expressions indicating your belief that the thing was, at some time, to have an end. Since then we ^{have} had thirty six years of

experience; and this experience has demonstration, I think, that there is no peaceful extinction of slavery in prospect for us. — The signal failure of Henry Clay, and other good and great men, in 1849, to effect any thing in favor of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, together with a thousand other signs, extinguishes that hope utterly. — On the question of liberty, as a principle, we are not what we have been.

When we were the political slaves of King George, and meant to be free, we called the maxim that "all men are created equal" a self evident truth; but now when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim "a self-evident lie". The fourth of July has not quite dwindled away; it is still a great day — for burning fire-crackers!!!.

That spirit which desired the peaceful extinction of slavery, has itself become extinct, with the occasion, and the men of the Revolution. Under the impulsion of that occasion, nearly half the

States adopted systems of emancipation at once; and it is a significant fact, that not a single state has done the like since— So far as peaceful, voluntary emancipation is concerned, the condition of the negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free mind, is now as fixed, and hopeless of change for the better, as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent— The Autocrat of all the Russias will ~~ever~~ resign his crown, and proclaim his subjects free republicans, sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves—

Our political problem now is "Can we, as a nation, continue together permanently— forever— half slave, and half free?" The problem is too mighty for me. May God, in his mercy, superintend the solution—

Your much obliged friend,
and humble servant
A. Lincoln—