

A Canterbury Tale: A Document Package for Connecticut's Prudence Crandall Affair

Samuel J. May, *Some recollections of our antislavery conflict*. Boston, Fields, Osgood, & co., 1869, p. 39-72.

MISS PRUDENCE CRANDALL AND THE CANTERBURY SCHOOL.

Often, during the last thirty, and more often during the last ten years, you must have seen in the newspapers, or heard from speakers in Antislavery and Republican meetings, high commendations of the *County of Windham* in Connecticut, as bearing the banner of equal human and political rights far above all the rest of that State. In the great election of the year 1866 the people of that county gave a large majority of votes in favor of *negro suffrage*.

This moral and political elevation of the public sentiment there is undoubtedly owing to the distinct presentation and thorough discussion, throughout that region, of the most vital antislavery questions in 1833 and 1834, called out by the shameful, cruel persecution of Miss Prudence Crandall for attempting to establish in Canterbury a boarding-school for "colored young ladies and little misses."

I was then living in Brooklyn, the shire town of the county, six miles from the immediate scene of the violent conflict, and so was fully drawn into it. I regret that, in the following account of it, allusions to myself and my acts must so often appear. But as Æneas said to Queen Dido, in telling his story of the Trojan War, so may I say, respecting the contest about the Canterbury school, "All of which I saw, and part of which I was."

In the summer or fall of 1832 I heard that Miss Prudence Crandall, an excellent, well-educated Quaker young lady, who had gained considerable reputation as a teacher in the neighboring town of Plainfield, had been induced by a number of ladies and gentlemen of Canterbury to purchase a commodious, large house in their pretty village, and establish her boarding and day school there, that their daughters might receive instruction in several higher branches of education not taught in the public district schools, without being obliged to live far away from their homes.

For a while the school answered the expectations of its patrons, and enjoyed their favor; but early in the following year a trouble arose. It was in this wise. Not far from the village of Canterbury there lived a worthy colored man named Harris. He was the owner of a good farm, and was otherwise in comfortable circumstances. He had a daughter, Sarah, a bright girl about seventeen years of age. She had passed, with good repute as a scholar, though the school of the district in which she lived, and was hungering and thirsting for more education. This she desired not only for her own sake, but that she might go forth qualified to be a teacher of the colored people of our country, to whose wrongs and oppression she had become very sensitive. Her father encouraged her, and gladly offered to defray the expense of the advantages she might be able to obtain. Sarah applied for admission into this new Canterbury school. Miss Crandall confessed to me that at first she hesitated and almost refused, lest admitting her might offend the parents of her pupils, several of whom were Colonizationists, and none of them Abolitionists.

But Sarah urged her request with no little force of argument and depth of feeling. Then she was a young lady of pleasing appearance and manners, well known to many of Miss Crandall's pupils, having been their class-mate in the district school. Moreover, she was accounted a virtuous, pious girl, and had been for some time a member of the church of Canterbury. There could not, therefore, have been a more unexceptionable case. No objection could be made to her admission into the school, excepting only her dark (and not very dark) complexion. Miss Crandall soon saw that she was unexpectedly called to take some part (how important she could not foresee) in the great contest for impartial liberty that was then beginning to agitate violently our nation. She was called to act either in accordance with, or in opposition to, the unreasonable, cruel, wicked prejudice against the *color* of their victims, by which the oppressors of millions in our land were everywhere extenuating, if not justifying, their tremendous system of iniquity. She bowed to the claim of humanity, and admitted Sarah Harris to her school.

Her pupils, I believe, made no objection. But in a few days the parents of some of them called and remonstrated. Miss Crandall pressed upon their consideration Sarah's eager desire for more knowledge and culture, the good use she intended to make of her acquirements, her excellent character and lady-like deportment, and, more than all, that she was an accepted member of the same Christian church to which many of them belonged. Her arguments, her entreaties, however, were of no avail. Prejudice blinds the eyes, closes the ears, hardens the heart. "Sarah belonged to the proscribed, despised class, and therefore must not be admitted into a private school with their daughters." This was the gist of all they had to say. Reasons were thrown away, appeals to their sense of right, to their compassion for injured fellow beings, made no impression. "They would not have it said that their daughters went to school with a nigger girl." Miss Crandall was assured that, if she did not dismiss Sarah Harris, her white pupils would be withdrawn from her.

She could not make up her mind to comply with such a demand, even to save the institution she had so recently established with such fond hopes, and in which she had invested all her property, and a debt of several hundred dollars more. It was, indeed, a severe trial, but she was strengthened to bear it. She determined to act right, and leave the event with God. Accordingly, she gave notice to her neighbors, and, on the 2d day of March, advertised in the *Liberator*, that at the commencement of her next term, on the first Monday of April, her school would be opened for "young ladies and little misses of color."

Only a few days before, on the 27th of February, I was informed of her generous, disinterested determination, and heard that, in consequence, the whole town was in a flame of indignation, kindled and fanned by the influence of the prominent people of the village, her immediate neighbors and her late patrons. Without delay, therefore, although a stranger, I addressed a letter to her, assuring her of my sympathy, and of my readiness to help her all in my power. On the 4th of March her reply came, begging me to come to her so soon as my engagements would permit. Accompanied by my friend, Mr. George W. Benson, I went to Canterbury on the afternoon of that day. On entering the village we were warned that we should be in personal danger if we appeared there as Miss Crandall's friends; and when arrived at her house we learnt that the excitement against her had become furious. She had been grossly insulted, and threatened with various kinds of violence, if she persisted in her purpose, and the most egregious falsehoods had been put in circulation respecting her intentions, the characters of her expected pupils, and of the future supporters of her school. Moreover, we were informed that a town-meeting was to be held on the 9th instant, to devise and adopt such measures as "would effectually avert the nuisance, or speedily abate it, if it should be brought into the village."

Though beat upon by such a storm, we found Miss Crandall resolved and tranquil. The effect of her Quaker discipline appeared in every word she spoke, and in every expression of her countenance. But, as she said, it would not do for her to go into the town-meeting; and there was not a man in Canterbury who would dare, if he were disposed, to appear there in her behalf. "Will not you, Friend May, be my attorney?" "Certainly," I replied, "come what will." We then agreed that I should explain to the people how unexpectedly she had been led to take the step which had given so much offence, and show them how she could not have consented to the demand made by her former patrons without wounding deeply the feelings of an excellent girl, known to most of them, and adding to the mountain load of injuries and insults already heaped upon the colored people of our country. With this arrangement, we left her, to await the coming of the ominous meeting of the town.

On the 9th of March I repaired again to Miss Crandall's house, accompanied by my faithful friend, Mr. Benson. There, to our surprise and joy, we found Friend Arnold Buffum, a most worthy man, an able speaker, and then the principal lecturing agent of the New England Antislavery Society. Miss Crandall gave to each of us a respectful letter of introduction to the Moderator of the meeting, in which she requested that we might be heard as her attorneys, and promised to be bound by any agreement we might see fit to make with the citizens of Canterbury. Miss Crandall concurred with us in the opinion that, as her house was one of the most conspicuous in the village, and not wholly paid for, if her opponents would take it off her hands, repaying what she had given for it, cease from molesting her, and allow her time to procure another house for her school, it would be better that she should move to some more retired part of the town or neighborhood.

Thus commissioned and instructed, Friend Buffum and I proceeded to the town-meeting. It was held in the "Meeting-House," one of the old New England pattern, — galleries on three sides, with room below and above for a thousand persons, sitting and standing. We found it nearly filled to its utmost capacity; and, not without difficulty, we passed up the side aisle into the wall-pew next to the deacon's seat, in which sat the Moderator. Very soon the business commenced. After the "Warning" had been read a series of Resolutions were laid before the meeting, in which were set forth the disgrace and damage that would be brought upon the town if a school for colored girls should be set up there, protesting emphatically against the impending evil, and appointing the civil authority and selectmen a committee to wait upon "the person contemplating the establishment of said school,.... point out to her the injurious effects, the incalculable evils, resulting from such an establishment within this town, and persuade her, if possible, to abandon the project." The mover of the resolutions, Rufus Adams, Esq., labored to enforce them by a speech, in which he grossly misrepresented what Miss Crandall had done, her sentiments and purposes, and threw out several mean and low insinuations against the motives of those who were encouraging her enterprise.

As soon as he sat down the Hon. Andrew T. Judson rose. This gentleman was undoubtedly the chief of Miss Crandall's persecutors. He was the great man of the town, a leading politician in the State, much talked of by the Democrats as soon to be governor, and a few years afterwards was appointed Judge of the United States District Court. His house on Canterbury Green stood next to Miss Crandall's. The idea of having "a school of nigger girls so near him was insupportable." He vented himself in a strain of reckless hostility to his neighbor, her benevolent, self-sacrificing undertaking, and its patrons, and declared his determination to thwart the enterprise. He twanged every chord that could stir the coarser passions of the human heart, and with such sad success that his hearers seemed to be filled with the apprehension that a dire calamity was impending over them, that Miss Crandall was the author or

instrument of it, that there were powerful conspirators engaged with her in the plot, and that the people of Canterbury should be roused, by every consideration of self-preservation, as well as self-respect, to prevent the accomplishment of the design, defying the wealth and influence of all who were abetting it.

When he had ended his philippic Mr. Buffum and I silently presented to the Moderator Miss Crandall's letters, requesting that we might be heard on her behalf. He handed them over to Mr. Judson, who instantly broke forth with greater violence than before; accused us of insulting the town by coming there to interfere with its local concerns. Other gentlemen sprang to their feet in hot displeasure; poured out their tirades upon Miss Crandall and her accomplices, and, with fists doubled in our faces, roughly admonished us that, if we opened our lips there, they would inflict upon us the utmost penalty of the law, if not a more immediate vengeance.

Thus forbidden to speak, we of course sat in silence, and let the waves of invective and abuse dash over us. But we sat thus only until we heard from the Moderator the words, "This meeting is adjourned!" Knowing that now we should violate no law by speaking, I sprang to the seat on which I had been sitting, and cried out, "Men of Canterbury, I have a word for you! Hear me!" More than half the crowd turned to listen. I went rapidly over my replies to the misstatements that had been made as to the purposes of Miss Crandall and her friends, the characters of her expected pupils, and the spirit in which the enterprise had been conceived and would be carried on. As soon as possible I gave place to Friend Buffum. But he had spoken in his impressive manner hardly five minutes, before the trustees of the church to which the house belonged came in and ordered all out, that the doors might be shut. Here again the hand of the law constrained us. So we obeyed with the rest, and having lingered awhile upon the Green to answer questions and explain to those who were willing "to understand the matter," we departed to our homes, musing in our own hearts " what would come of this day's uproar."

Before my espousal of Miss Crandall's cause I had had a pleasant acquaintance with Hon. Andrew T. Judson, which had led almost to a personal friendship. Unwilling, perhaps, to break our connection so abruptly, and conscious, no doubt, that he had treated me rudely, not to say abusively, at the town-meeting on the 9th, he called to see me two days afterwards. He assured me that he had not become unfriendly to me personally, and regretted that he had used some expressions and applied certain epithets to me, in the warmth of his feelings and the excitement of the public indignation of his neighbors and fellow-townsmen, roused as they were to the utmost in opposition to Miss Crandall's project, which he thought I was inconsiderately and unjustly promoting. He went on enlarging upon the disastrous effects the establishment of " a school for nigger girls" in the centre of their village would have upon its desirableness as a place of residence, the value of real estate there, and the general prosperity of the town.

I replied: "If, sir, you had permitted Mr. Buffum and myself to speak at your town-meeting, you would have found that we had come there, not in a contentious spirit, but that we were ready, with Miss Crandall's consent, to settle the difficulty with you and your neighbors peaceably. We should have agreed, if you would repay to Miss Crandall what you had advised her to give for her house, and allow her time quietly to find and purchase a suitable house for her school in some more retired part of the town or vicinity, that she should remove to that place." The honorable gentleman hardly gave me time to finish my sentences ere he said, with great emphasis: —

"Mr. May, we are not merely opposed to the establishment of that school in Canterbury; we mean there shall not be such a school set up anywhere in our State. The colored people never can rise from their

menial condition in our country; they ought not to be permitted to rise here. They are an inferior race of beings, and never call or ought to be recognized as the equals of the whites. Africa is the place for them. I am in favor of the Colonization scheme. Let the niggers and their descendants be sent back to their fatherland; and there improve themselves as much as they may, and civilize and Christianize the natives, if they can. I am a Colonizationist. You and your friend Garrison have undertaken what you cannot accomplish. The condition of the colored population of our country can never be essentially improved on this continent. You are fanatical about them. You are violating the Constitution of our Republic, which settled forever the status of the black men in this land. They belong to Africa. Let them be sent back there, or kept as they are here. The sooner you Abolitionists abandon your project the better for our country, for the niggers, and yourselves."

I replied: "Mr. Judson, there never will be fewer colored people in this country than there are now. Of the vast majority of them this is the native land, as much as it is ours. It will be unjust, inhuman, in us to drive them out, or to make them willing to go by our cruel treatment of them. And, if they should all become willing to depart, it would not be practicable to transport across the Atlantic Ocean and settle properly on the shores of Africa, from year to year, half so many of them as would be born here in the same time, according to the known rate of their natural increase. No, sir, there will never be fewer colored people in our country than there are this day; and the only question is, whether we will recognize the rights which God gave them as men, and encourage and assist them to become all he has made them capable of being, or whether we will continue wickedly to deny them the privileges we enjoy, condemn them to degradation, enslave and imbrute them; and so bring upon ourselves the condemnation of the Almighty Impartial Father of all men, and the terrible visitation of the God of the oppressed. I trust, sir, you will ere long come to see that we must accord to these men their rights, or incur justly the loss of our own. Education is one of the primal, fundamental rights of all the children of men. Connecticut is the last place where this should be denied. But as, in the providence of God, that right has been denied in a place so near me, I feel that I am summoned to its defence. If you and your neighbors in Canterbury had quietly consented that Sarah Harris, whom you knew to be a bright, good girl, should enjoy the privilege she so eagerly sought, this momentous conflict would not have arisen in your village. But as it has arisen there, we may as well meet it there as elsewhere."

"That nigger school," he rejoined with great warmth, "shall never be allowed in Canterbury, nor in any town of this State."

"How can you prevent it legally?" I inquired; "how but by Lynch law, by violence, which you surely will not countenance?"

"We can expel her pupils from abroad," he replied, "under the provisions of our old pauper and vagrant laws."

"But we will guard against them," I said, "by giving your town ample bonds."

"Then," said he, "we will get a law passed by our Legislature, now in session, forbidding the institution of such a school as Miss Crandall proposes, in any part of Connecticut."

"It would be an unconstitutional law, and I will contend against it as such to the last," I rejoined. "If you, sir, pursue the course you have now indicated, I will dispute every step you take, from the lowest court in Canterbury up to the highest court of the United States."

"You talk big," he cried; "it will cost more than you are aware of to do all that you threaten. Where will you get the means to carry on such a contest at law?"

This defiant question inspired me to say, "Mr. Judson, I had not foreseen all that this conversation has opened to my view. True, I do not possess the pecuniary ability to do what you have made me promise. I have not consulted any one. But I am sure the lovers of impartial liberty, the friends of humanity in our land, the enemies of slavery, will so justly appreciate the importance of sustaining Miss Crandall in her benevolent, pious undertaking, that I shall receive from one quarter and another all the funds I may need to withstand your attempt to crush, by legal means, the Canterbury school." The sequel of my story will show that I did not misjudge the significance of my case, nor put my confidence in those who were not worthy of it. Mr. Judson left me in high displeasure, and I never met him afterwards but as an opponent.

Undismayed by the opposition of her neighbors and the violence of their threats, Miss Crandall received early in April fifteen or twenty colored young ladies and misses from Philadelphia, New York, Providence, and Boston. At once her persecutors commenced operations. All accommodations at the stores in Canterbury were denied her; so that she was obliged to send to neighboring villages for her needful supplies. She and her pupils were insulted whenever they appeared in the streets. The doors and door-steps of her house were besmeared, and her well was filled with filth. Had it not been for the assistance of her father and another Quaker friend who lived in the town, she might have been compelled to abandon "her castle" for the want of water and food. But she was enabled to "hold out," and Miss Crandall and her little band behaved somewhat like the besieged in the immortal Fort Sumter. The spirit that is in the children of men is usually roused by persecution. I visited them repeatedly, and always found teacher and pupils calm and resolute. They evidently felt that it was given them to maintain one of the fundamental, inalienable rights of man.

Before the close of the month, an attempt was made to frighten and drive away these innocent girls, by a process under the obsolete vagrant law, which provided that the selectmen of any town might warn any person, not an inhabitant of the State, to depart forthwith from said town; demand of him or her *one dollar and sixty-seven cents* for every week he or she remained in said town after having received such warning, and in case such fine should not be paid, and the person so warned should not have departed before the expiration -of ten days after being sentenced, then he or she should *be whipped on the naked body not exceeding ten stripes*.

A warrant to this effect was actually served upon Eliza Ann Hammond, a fine girl from Providence, aged seventeen years. Although I had protected Miss Crandall's pupils against the operation of this old law, by giving to the treasurer of Canterbury a bond in the sum of \$10,000, signed by responsible gentlemen of Brooklyn, to save the town from the vagrancy of any of these pupils, I feared they would be intimidated by the actual appearance of the constable, and the imposition of a writ. So, on hearing of the above transaction, I went down to Canterbury to explain the matter if necessary; to assure Miss Hammond that the persecutors would hardly dare proceed to such an extremity, and strengthen her to bear meekly the punishment, if they should in their madness inflict it; knowing that every blow they should strike her would resound throughout the land, if not over the whole civilized world, and call out an expression of indignation before which Mr. Judson and his associates would quail. But I found her ready for the emergency, animated by the spirit of a martyr.

Of course this process was abandoned. But another was resorted to, most disgraceful to the State as well as the town. That shall be the subject of my next.

THE BLACK LAW OF CONNECTICUT.

Foiled in their attempts to frighten away Miss Crandall's pupils by their proceedings under the provisions of the obsolete "Pauper and Vagrant Law," Mr. Judson and his fellow-persecutors urgently pressed upon the Legislature of Connecticut, then in session, a demand for the enactment of a law, by which they should be enabled to effect their purpose. To the lasting shame of the State, be it said, they succeeded. On the 24th of May, 1833, the *Black Law* was enacted as follows: —

"SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Assembly convened, that no person shall set up or establish in this State any school, academy, or literary institution for the instruction or education of colored persons who are not inhabitants of this State; nor instruct or teach in any school, or other literary institution whatsoever, in this State; nor harbor or board, for the purpose of attending or being taught or instructed in any such school, academy, or literary institution, any colored person who is not an inhabitant of any town in this State, without the consent in writing, first obtained, of a majority of the civil authority, and also of the Selectmen of the town, in which such school, academy, or literary institution is situated," &c.

I need not copy any more of this infamous Act. The penalties denounced against the violation of it, you may be sure, were severe enough. That the persecutors of Miss Crandall were determined to visit them upon her, if they might, the sequel of my story will show.

On the receipt of the tidings that the Legislature had passed the law, joy and exultation ran wild in Canterbury. The bells were rung and a cannon fired, until all the inhabitants for miles around were informed of the triumph. So soon as was practicable, on the 27th of June, Miss Crandall was arrested by the sheriff of the county, or the constable of the town, and arraigned before Justices Adams and Bacon, two of the leaders of the conspiracy against her and her humane enterprise. The trial of course was a brief one; the result was predetermined. Before noon of that day a messenger came to let me know that Miss Crandall had been "committed" by the above-named justices, to take her trial at the next session of the Superior Court at Brooklyn in August; that she was in the hands of the sheriff and would be put into jail, unless I or some of her friends would come and "give bonds" for her in the sum of \$ 300 or \$ 500, I forget which. I calmly told the messenger that there were gentlemen enough in Canterbury whose bond for that amount would be as good or better than mine; and I should leave it for them to do Miss Crandall that favor. "But," said the young man, "are you not her friend?" "Certainly," I replied, "too sincerely her friend to give relief to her enemies in their present embarrassment; and I trust you will not find any one of her friends, or the patrons of her school, who will step forward to help them any more than myself." "But, sir," he cried, "do you mean to allow her to be put into jail?" "Most certainly," was my answer, "if her persecutors are unwise enough to let such an outrage be committed." He turned from me in blank surprise, and hurried back to tell Mr. Judson and the justices of his ill success.

A few days before, when I first heard of the passage of the law, I had visited Miss Crandall with my friend Mr. George W. Benson, and advised with her as to the course she and her friends ought to pursue, when she should be brought to trial. She appreciated at once and fully the importance of leaving her persecutors to show to the world how base they were, and how atrocious was the law they had induced the Legislature to enact, — a law, by the force of which a woman might be fined and imprisoned as a felon, in the State of Connecticut, for giving instruction to colored girls. She agreed that

it would be best for us to leave her in the hands of those with whom the law originated, hoping that, in their madness, they would show forth all its hideous features.

Mr. Benson and I therefore went diligently around to all whom we knew were friendly to Miss Crandall and her school, and counselled them by no means to give bonds to keep her from imprisonment, because nothing would expose so fully to the public the egregious wickedness of the law, and the virulence of her persecutors, as the fact that they had thrust her into jail.

When I found that her resolution was equal to the trial which seemed to be impending, that she was ready to brave and to bear meekly the worst treatment that her enemies would venture to subject her to, I made all the arrangements for her comfort that were practicable in our prison. It fortunately so happened that the most suitable room, not occupied, was the one in which a man named Watkins had recently been confined for the murder of his wife, and out of which he had been taken and executed. This circumstance, we foresaw, would add not a little to the public detestation of the *Black Law*.

The jailer, at my request, readily put the room in as nice order as was possible, and permitted me to substitute, for the bedstead and mattress on which the murderer had slept, fresh and clean ones from my own house and Mr. Benson's.

About two o'clock P.M. another messenger came to inform me that the sheriff was on the way from Canterbury to the jail with Miss Crandall, and would imprison her, unless her friends would give him the required bail.

Although in sympathy with Miss Crandall's persecutors, he clearly saw the disgrace that was about to be brought upon the State, and begged me and Mr. Benson to avert it. Of course we refused. I went to the jailer's house and met Miss Crandall on her arrival. We stepped aside. I said: —

"If now you hesitate, if you dread the gloomy place so much as to wish to be saved from it, I will give bonds for you even now."

"O no," she promptly replied; "I am only afraid they will not put me into jail. Their evident hesitation and embarrassment show plainly how much they deprecate the effect of this part of their folly; and therefore I am the more anxious that they should be exposed, if not caught in their own wicked devices."

We therefore returned with her to the sheriff and the company that surrounded him to await his final act. He was ashamed to do it. He knew it would cover the persecutors of Miss Crandall and the State of Connecticut with disgrace. He conferred with several about him, and delayed yet longer. Two gentlemen came and remonstrated with me in not very seemly terms: —

"It would be a — shame, an eternal disgrace to the State, to have her put into jail, — into the very room that Watkins had last occupied."

"Certainly, gentlemen," I replied, "and you may prevent this if you please."

"O," they cried, "we are not her friends; we are not in favor of her school; we don't want any more — niggers coming among us. It is your place to stand by Miss Crandall and help her now. You and your — abolition brethren have encouraged her to bring this nuisance into Canterbury, and it is — mean in you to desert her now."

I rejoined: "She knows we have not deserted her, and do not intend to desert her. The law which her - persecutors have persuaded our legislators to enact is an ~. infamous one, worthy of the Dark Ages. It

would be just as bad as it is, whether we should give bonds for ~, Q her or not. But the people generally will not so soon realize how bad, how wicked, how cruel a law it is, unless we suffer her persecutors to inflict upon her all the penalties it prescribes. She is willing to bear them for the sake of the cause she has so nobly espoused. And it is easy to foresee that Miss Crandall will be glorified, as much as her persecutors and our State will be disgraced, by the transactions of this day and this hour. If you see fit to keep her from imprisonment in the cell of a murderer for having proffered the blessing of a good education to those who, in our country, need it most, you may do so; *we shall not.*"

They turned from us in great wrath, words falling from their lips which I shall not repeat.

The sun had descended nearly to the horizon; the shadows of night were beginning to fall around us. The sheriff could defer the dark deed no longer. With no little emotion, and with words of earnest deprecation, he gave that excellent, heroic, Christian young lady into the hands of the jailer, and she was led into the cell of Watkins. So soon as I had heard the bolts of her prison door turned in the lock, and saw the key taken out, I bowed and said, "The deed is done, completely done. It cannot be recalled. It has passed into the history of our nation and our age." I went away with my steadfast friend, George W. Benson, assured that the legislators of the State had been guilty of a most unrighteous act; and that Miss Crandall's persecutors had also committed a great blunder; that they all would have much more reason to be ashamed of her imprisonment than she or her friends could ever have. The next day we gave the required bonds. Miss Crandall was released from the cell of the murderer, returned home, and quietly resumed the duties of her school, until she should be summoned as a culprit into court, there to be tried by the infamous "Black Law of Connecticut." And, as we expected, so soon as the evil tidings could be carried in that day, before Professor Morse had given to Rumor her telegraphic wings, it was known all over the country and the civilized world that an excellent young lady had been imprisoned as a criminal, — yes, put into a murderer's cell, — in the State of Connecticut, for opening a school for the instruction of colored girls. The comments that were made upon the deed in almost all the newspapers were far from grateful to the feelings of her persecutors. Even many who, under the same circumstances, would probably have acted as badly as Messrs. A. T. Judson and Company, denounced their procedure as unchristian, inhuman, antidemocratic, base, mean.

ARTHUR TAPPAN.

The words and manner of Mr. Judson in the interview I had with him on the 11th of March, of which I have given a pretty full report, convinced me that he would do all that could be done by legal and political devices, to *abolish* Miss Crandall's school. His success in obtaining from the Legislature the enactment of the infamous "Black Law" showed too plainly that the majority of the people of the State were on the side of the oppressor. But I felt sure that God and good men would be our helpers in the contest to which we were committed. Assurances of approval and of sympathy came from many; and ere long a proffer of all the pecuniary assistance we could need was made by one who was then himself a host. At that time Mr. Arthur Tappan was one of the wealthiest merchants in the country, and was wont to give to religious and philanthropic objects as much, in proportion to his means, as any benefactor who has lived in the land before or since his day. I was not then personally acquainted with him, but he had become deeply interested in the cause of the poor, despised, enslaved millions in our country, and alive to whatever affected them.

Much to my surprise, and much more to my joy, a few weeks after the commencement of the contest, and just after the enactment of the Black Law and the imprisonment of Miss Crandall, I received from

Mr. Tappan a most cordial letter. He expressed his entire approbation of the position I had taken in defence of Miss Crandall's benevolent enterprise, and his high appreciation of the importance of maintaining, in Connecticut especially, the right of colored people, not less than of white, to any amount of education they might wish to obtain, and the respect and encouragement due to any teacher who would devote himself or herself to their instruction. He added: "This contest, in which you have been providentially called to engage, will be a serious, perhaps a violent one. It may be prolonged and very expensive. Nevertheless, it ought to be persisted in to the last. I venture to presume, sir, that you cannot well afford what it may cost. You ought not to be left, even if you are willing, to bear alone the pecuniary burden. I shall be most happy to give you all the help of this sort that you may need. Consider me your banker. Spare no necessary expense. Command the services of the ablest lawyers. See to it that this great case shall be thoroughly tried, cost what it may. I will cheerfully honor your drafts to enable you to defray that cost." Thus upheld, you will not wonder that I was somewhat elated. At Mr. Tappan's suggestion I immediately "retained" the Hon. William W. Ellsworth, the Hon. Calvin Goddard, and the Hon. Henry Strong, the three most distinguished members of the Connecticut bar. They all confirmed me in the opinion that the "Black Law" was unconstitutional, and would probably be so pronounced, if we should carry it up to the United States Court. They moreover instructed me that, as the act for which Miss Crandall was to be tried was denounced as *criminal*, it would be within the province of the jury of our State court to decide upon the character of the law, as well as the conduct of the accused; and that therefore it would be allowable and proper for them to urge the *wickedness* of the law, in bar of Miss Crandall's condemnation under it. But, before we get to the trials of Miss Crandall under Mr. Judson's law, I have more to tell about Mr. Arthur Tappan.

He requested me to keep him fully informed of the doings of Miss Crandall's persecutors. And I assure you I had too many evil things to report of them. They insulted and annoyed her and her pupils in every way their malice could devise. The storekeepers, the butchers, the milk-pedlers of the town, all refused to supply their wants; and whenever her father, brother, or other relatives, who happily lived but a few miles off, were seen coming to bring her and her pupils the necessaries of life, they were insulted and threatened. Her well was defiled with the most offensive filth, and her neighbors refused her and the thirsty ones about her even a cup of cold water, leaving them to depend for that essential element upon the scanty supplies that could be brought from her father's farm. Nor was this all; the physician of the village refused to minister to any who were sick in Miss Crandall's family, and the trustees of the church forbade her to come, with any of her pupils, into the House of the Lord.

In addition to the insults and annoyances mentioned above, the newspapers of the county and other parts of the State frequently gave currency to the most egregious misrepresentations of the conduct of Miss Crandall and her pupils, and the basest insinuations against her friends and patrons. Yet our corrections and replies were persistently refused a place in their columns. The publisher of one of the county papers, who was personally friendly to me, and whom I had assisted to establish in business, confessed to me that he dared not admit into his paper an article in defence of the Canterbury school. It would be, he said, the destruction of his establishment. Thus situated, we were continually made to feel the great disadvantage at which we were contending with the hosts of our enemies.

In one of my letters to Mr. Tappan, when thus sorely pressed, I let fall from my pen, "O that I could only leave home long enough to visit you! For I could tell you in an hour more things, that I wish you to know, than I can write in a week."

A day or two afterwards, about as quickly as he could then get to me after the receipt of my letter, the door of my study was opened, and in walked Arthur Tappan. I sprang to my feet, and gave him a pressure of the hand which told him more emphatically than words could have done how overjoyed I was to see him. In his usual quiet manner and undertone he said, "Your last letter implied that you were in so much trouble I thought it best to come and see, and consider with you what it will be advisable for us to do." I soon spread before him the circumstances of the case, — the peculiar difficulties by which we were beset, the increased and increasing malignity of Miss Crandall's persecutors, provoked, and almost justified in the public opinion, by the false reports that were diligently circulated, and which we had no means of correcting. "Let me go," said he, "and see for myself Miss Crandall and her school, and learn more of the particulars of the sore trials to which her benevolence and her fortitude seem to be subjected." As soon as possible the horse and chaise were brought to the door, and the good man went to Canterbury. In a few hours he returned. He had been delighted, nay, deeply affected, by the calm determination which Miss Crandall evinced, and the quiet courage with which she had inspired her pupils. He had learned that the treatment to which they were subjected by their neighbors was in some respects worse even than I had represented it to him; and he said in a low, firm tone of voice, which showed how thoroughly in earnest he was, she must be protected and sustained. "The cause of the whole oppressed, despised colored population of our country is to be much affected by the decision of this question."

After some further consultation he rose to his feet and said, "You are almost helpless without the press. You must issue a paper, publish it largely, send it to all the persons whom you know in the county and State, and to all the principal newspapers throughout the country. Many will subscribe for it and contribute otherwise to its support, and I will pay whatever more it may cost." No sooner said than done. We went without delay to the village, where fortunately there was a pretty-well-furnished printing-office that had been lately shut up for want of patronage. We found the proprietor, examined the premises, satisfied ourselves that there were materials enough to begin with, and Mr. Tappan engaged for my use for a year the office, press, types, and whatever else was necessary to commence at once the publication of a newspaper, to be devoted to the advocacy of all human rights in general, and to the defence of the Canterbury school, and its heroic teacher in particular.

We walked back to my house communing together about the great conflict for liberty to which we were committed, the spirit in which it ought to be conducted on our part, and especially the course to be pursued in the further defence of Miss Crandall. Soon after the stage-coach came along. Mr. Tappan, after renewed assurances of support, gave me a hearty farewell and stepped on board to return to New York. He left me the proprietor of a printing-office, and with ample means to maintain, as far as might be necessary, the defence of the Canterbury school against the unrighteous and unconstitutional law of the State of Connecticut. I need now only add that the trials at law were protracted until August, 1834, and that they, together with the conduct of the newspaper, cost me more than six hundred dollars, all of which amount was most promptly and kindly paid by that true philanthropist, — Arthur Tappan.

CHARLES C. BURLEIGH.

The excitement caused by Mr. Tappan's unexpected visit, the hearty encouragement he had given me, and the great addition he had made to my means of defence, altogether were so grateful to me that I did not at first fully realize how much I had undertaken to do. But a night's rest brought me to my senses, and I clearly saw that I must have some other help than even Mr. Tappan's pecuniary generosity could give me. I was at that time publishing a religious paper, — *The Christian Monitor*, —

which, together with my pulpit and parochial duties, filled quite full the measure of my ability. Unfortunately the prospectus of *The Monitor*, issued a year before the beginning of the Canterbury difficulty, precluded from its columns all articles relating to personal or neighborhood quarrels. Therefore, though the editor of a paper, I could not, in that paper, repel the most injurious attacks that were made upon my character. Had it been otherwise, there would have been no need of starting another paper. But, as Mr. Tappan promptly allowed another paper must be issued, and to edit two papers at the same time was wholly beyond my power. What should I do?

Soon after the enactment of the "Black Law" an admirable article, faithfully criticising it, had appeared in *The Genius of Temperance*, and been copied into *The Emancipator*. It was attributed to Mr. Charles C. Burleigh, living in the adjoining town of Plainfield. I had heard him commended as a young man of great promise, and had once listened to an able speech from him at a Colonization meeting. To him, therefore, in the need of help, my thoughts soon turned. And the morning after Mr. Tappan's visit I drove over to Plainfield. Mr. Burleigh was living with his parents, and helping them carry on their farm, while pursuing as he could his studies preparatory to the profession of a lawyer. It was Friday of the week, in the midst of haying time. I was told at the house that he was in the field as busy as he could be. Nevertheless, I insisted that my business with him was more important than haying. So he was sent for, and in due time appeared. Like other sensible men, at the hard, hot work of haying, he was not attired in his Sunday clothes, but in his shirtsleeves, with pants the worse for wear; and, although he then believed in shaving, no razor had touched his beard since the first day of the week. Nevertheless, I do not believe that Samuel of old saw, in the ruddy son of Jesse, as he came up from the sheepfold, the man whom the Lord would have him anoint, more clearly than I saw in C. C. Burleigh the man whom I should choose to be my assistant in that emergency. So soon as I had told him what I wanted of him his eye kindled as if eager for the conflict. We made an arrangement to supply his place on his father's farm, and he engaged to come to me early the following week. On Monday, the 14th of July, 1833, according to promise, he came to Brooklyn. He then put on the harness of a soldier in the good fight for equal, impartial liberty, and he has not yet laid it aside, nor are there many, if indeed any, of the antislavery warriors who have done more or better service than Mr. Burleigh.

On the 25th of July, 1833, appeared the first number of our paper, called *The Unionist*. After the first two or three numbers most of the articles were written or selected by Mr. Burleigh, and it was soon acknowledged by the public that the young editor wielded a powerful weapon. The paper was continued, if I remember correctly, about two years, and it helped us mightily in our controversy with the persecutors of Miss Crandall. After a few months C. C. Burleigh associated with him, in the management of *The Unionist*, his brother, Mr. William H. Burleigh, who also, at the same time, assisted Miss Crandall in the instruction of her school; and for so doing suffered not a little obloquy, insult, and abuse.

It was still the cherished intention of C. C. Burleigh to devote himself to the law, and without neglecting his duties to *The Unionist* he so diligently and successfully pursued his preparatory studies, that in January, 1835, he was examined and admitted to the bar. The committee of examination were surprised at his proficiency. He was pronounced the best prepared candidate that had been admitted to the Windham County Bar within the memory of those who were then practising there; and confident predictions were uttered by the most knowing ones of his rapid rise to eminence in the profession. Scarcely did Wendell Phillips awaken higher expectations of success as a lawyer in Boston, than C. C. Burleigh had awakened in Brooklyn. But just at the time of his admission I received a letter from Dr.

Farnsworth, of Groton, Massachusetts, then President of the Middlesex Antislavery Society, inquiring urgently for some able lecturer, whose services could be obtained as the general agent of that Society. I knew of no one so able as C. C. Burleigh. So I called upon him, told him of the many high compliments I had heard bestowed upon his appearance on the examination, and then said, "Now I have already a most important case, in which to engage your services," and showed him Dr. Farnsworth's letter. For a few minutes he hesitated, and his countenance fell. The bright prospect of professional eminence was suddenly overcast. He more than suspected that, if he accepted the invitation, he should get so engaged in the antislavery cause as to be unable to leave the field until after its triumph. He would have to renounce all hope of wealth or political preferment, and lead a life of continual conflict with ungenerous opponents; be poorly requited for his labors, and suffer contumely, hatred, persecution. I saw what was passing in his mind, and that the struggle was severe. But it lasted only a little while, — less than an hour. A bright and beautiful expression illuminated his countenance when he replied, " This is not what I expected or intended, but it is what I ought to do. I will accept the invitation." He did so. Before the close of the week he departed for his field of labor. And I believe he ceased not a day to be the agent of one antislavery society or another, until after the lamented President Lincoln had proclaimed emancipation to all who were in bondage in our land.

When, in April, 1835, I became the General Agent of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society, I was brought into more intimate relations with Mr. Burleigh. We were indeed fellow-laborers. Repeatedly did we go forth together on lecturing excursions, and never was I better sustained. With him as my companion I felt sure our course would be successful. I always insisted upon speaking first; for, if I failed to do my best, he would make ample amends, covering the whole ground, exhausting the subject, leaving nothing essential unsaid. And if I did better than ever, Mr. Burleigh would come after me, and fill twelve baskets full of precious fragments. He is a single-minded, pure-hearted, conscientious, self-sacrificing man. He is not blessed with a fine voice nor a graceful manner. And the peculiar dress of his hair and beard has given offence to many, and may have lessened his usefulness. But he has a great command of language. He has a singularly acute and logical intellect. His reasoning, argumentative powers are remarkable. And he often has delighted and astonished his hearers by the brilliancy of his rhetoric, and the surpassing beauty of his imagery, and aptness of his illustrations. The millions of the emancipated in our country are indebted to the labors of few more than to those of Charles C. Burleigh. But to return.

MISS CRANDALL'S TRIAL.

On the 23d of August, 1833, the first trial of Prudence Crandall for the *crime* of keeping a boarding-school for colored girls in the State of Connecticut, and endeavoring to give them a good education, — the first trial for *this crime*, — was had in Brooklyn, the seat of the county of Windham, within a stone's throw of the house where lived and died General Israel Putnam, who, with his compatriots of 1776, perilled his life in defence of the self-evident truth that "all men were created *equal*, and endowed by their Creator with the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It was had at the County Court, Hon. Joseph Eaton presiding.

The prosecution was conducted by Hon. A. T. Judson, Jonathan A. Welch, Esq., and I. Bulkley, Esq. Miss Crandall's counsel were Hon. Calvin Goddard, Hon. W. W. Ellsworth, and Henry Strong, Esq.

The indictment of Miss Crandall consisted of two counts, which amounted to the same thing. The first set forth, in the technical terms of the law, that "with force and arms" she had received into her school;

and the second, that, "with force and arms," she had instructed certain colored girls, who were not inhabitants of the State, without having first obtained, in writing, permission to do so from the majority of the civil authority and selectmen of the town of Canterbury, as required by the law under which she was prosecuted.

Mr. Judson opened the case. He, of course, endeavored to keep out of sight the most odious features of the law which had been disobeyed by Miss Crandall. He insisted that it was only a wise precaution to keep out of the State an injurious kind of population. He urged that the public provisions for the education of all the children of the inhabitants of Connecticut were ample, generous, and that colored children belonging to the State, not less than others, might enjoy the advantages of the common schools, which were under the supervision and control of proper officials in every town. He argued that it was not fair nor safe to allow any person, without the permission of such officials, to come into the State and open a school for any class of pupils she might please to invite from other States. He alleged that other States of the Union, Northern as well as Southern, regarded colored persons as a kind of population respecting which there should be some special legislation. If it were not for such protection as the law in question had provided, the Southerners might free all their slaves, and send them to Connecticut instead of Liberia, which would be overwhelming. Mr. Judson denied that colored persons were citizens in those States, where they were not enfranchised. He claimed that the privilege of being a freeman was higher than the right of being educated, and asked this remarkable question: "Why should a man be educated who could not be a freeman?" He denied, however, that he was opposed to the improvement of any class of the inhabitants of the land, if their improvement could be effected without violating any of the provisions of our Constitution, or endangering the union of the States. His associates labored to maintain the same positions.

These positions were vigorously assailed by Mr. Ellsworth and Mr. Strong, and shown to be untenable by a great array of facts adduced from the history of our own country, of the opinions of some of the most illustrious lawyers and civilians of England and America, and of arguments, the force of which was palpable.

Nevertheless, the Judge saw fit, though somewhat timidly, in his charge to the Jury, to give it as his opinion that "the law was constitutional and obligatory on the people of the State."

The Jury, after an absence of several hours, returned into court, not having agreed upon a verdict. They were instructed on some points, and sent out a second, and again a third time, but with no better success. They stated to the Court that there was no probability they should ever agree. Seven of them were for conviction, and five for acquittal. So they were discharged.

Supposing that this result operated as a continuance of the case to the next term of the County Court, to be held the following December, a few days after the trial I went with my family to spend several weeks with my friends in Boston and the neighborhood. But much to my surprise and discomfort, the last week in September, just as I was starting off to deliver an antislavery lecture, at a distance from Boston, I received the information that the persecutors of Miss Crandall, too impatient to wait until December for the regular course of law, had got up a new prosecution of her, to be tried on the 3d of October, before Judge Daggett of the Supreme Court, who was known to be hostile to the colored people, and a strenuous advocate of the Black Law. It was impossible for me so to dispose of my engagements that I could get back to Brooklyn in time to attend the trial. I could only write and instruct

the counsel of Miss Crandall, in case a verdict should be obtained against her, to carry the cause up to the Court of Errors.

The second trial was had on the 3d of October; the same defence as before was set up, and ably maintained. But Chief Justice Daggett's influence with the Jury was overpowering. He delivered an elaborate and able charge, insisting upon the constitutionality of the law; and, without much hesitation, the verdict was given against Miss Crandall. Her counsel at once filed a bill of exceptions, and an appeal to the Court of Errors, which was granted. Before that — the highest legal tribunal in the State — the cause was argued on the 22d of July, 1834. The Hon. W. W. Ellsworth and the Hon. Calvin Goddard argued against the constitutionality of the Black Law, with very great ability and eloquence. The Hon. A. T. Judson and the Hon. C. F. Cleaveland said all that perhaps could be said to prove such a law to be consistent with the Magna Charta of our Republic. All who attended the trial seemed to be deeply interested, and were made to acknowledge the vital importance of the question at issue. Most persons, I believe, were persuaded that the Court ought to and would decide against the law. But they reserved the decision until some future time. And that decision, I am sorry to say, was never given. The Court evaded it the next week by finding that the defects in the information prepared by the State's Attorney were such that it ought to be quashed; thus rendering it "unnecessary for the Court to come to any decision upon the question as to the constitutionality of the law."

Whether her persecutors were or were not in despair of breaking down Miss Crandall's school by legal process, I am unable to say, but they soon resorted to other means, which were effectual.

HOUSE SET ON FIRE.

Soon after their failure to get a decision from the Court of Errors, an attempt was made to set her house on fire. Fortunately the match was applied to combustibles tucked under a corner where the sills were somewhat decayed. They burnt like a slow match. Some time before daylight the inmates perceived the smell of fire, but not until nearly nine o'clock did any blaze appear. It was quickly quenched; and I was sent for to advise whether, if her enemies were so malignant as this attempt showed them to be, it was safe and right for her to expose her pupils' and her own life any longer to their wicked devices. It was concluded that she should hold on and bear yet a little longer. Perhaps the atrocity of this attempt to fire her house, and at the same time endanger the dwellings of her neighbors would frighten the leaders and instigators of the persecution to put more restraint upon "the baser sort." But a few nights afterwards it was made only too plain that the enemies of the school were bent upon its destruction. About twelve o'clock, on the night of the 9th of September, Miss Crandall's house was assaulted by a number of persons with heavy clubs and iron bars; five window sashes were demolished and ninety panes of glass dashed to pieces.

I was summoned next morning to the scene of destruction and the terror-stricken family. Never before had Miss Crandall seemed to quail, and her pupils had become afraid to remain another night under her roof. The front rooms of the house were hardly tenable; and it seemed foolish to repair them only to be destroyed again. After due consideration, therefore, it was determined that the school should be abandoned. The pupils were called together, and I was requested to announce to them our decision. Never before had I felt so deeply sensible of the cruelty of the persecution which had been carried on for eighteen months, in that New England village against a family of defenceless females. Twenty harmless, well-behaved girls, whose only offence against the peace of the Community was that they had come together there to obtain useful knowledge and moral culture, were to be told that they had

better go away, because, forsooth, the house in which they dwelt would not be protected by the guardians of the town, the conservators of the peace, the officers of justice, the men of influence in the village where it was situated. The words almost blistered my lips. My bosom glowed with indignation. I felt ashamed of Canterbury, ashamed of Connecticut, ashamed of my country, ashamed of my color. Thus ended the generous, disinterested, philanthropic, Christian enterprise of Prudence Crandall.

This was the second attempt made in Connecticut to establish a school for the education of colored youth. The other was in New Haven, two years before. So prevalent and malignant was our national prejudice against the most injured of our fellow-men!