

called forth throughout the whole State, have already produced most salutary effects, in disabusing many persons who had inconsiderately concurred in the visionary schemes of the abolitionists."

And, he adds:

"Relying on the influence of a sound and enlightened public opinion, to restrain and control the misconduct of the citizens of a free government, especially when directed, as it has been in this case, with unexampled energy and unanimity to the particular evils under consideration, and perceiving that its operations have been thus far salutary, I entertain the best hopes that this remedy, of itself, will remove these evils, or render them comparatively harmless."

The result has demonstrated to every impartial observer, that this reliance upon the virtue, intelligence and patriotism of the people of this State, was founded upon a just estimation of their character.

Public opinion—"enlightened public opinion"—is the conservative principle of free government. Without its sustaining power, the proudest and purest constitution which the wisdom of man could devise, would be as indefinite and unstable as an oral compact; and the strongest and most rigid laws that could be framed in accordance with its restrictions and obligations, would be weak and fragile as spiders' webs. To this tribunal may be appropriately and safely referred all errors and differences of opinion—all mental agitations and discussions which involve religious creeds—abstract political rights, or measures of public policy.

But a just, a liberal and an enlightened condition of public opinion, cannot be produced or sustained, except where a free press is recognized and cherished in harmonious alliance with the constitution and the laws. The "liberty of speech and the press" is guaranteed by the Constitution of this State and that of the United States; and it is a most delicate and difficult task of discrimination for legislators to determine at what point this rational and constitutional liberty terminates, and venality and licentiousness begin. It is indeed more safe to tolerate the licentiousness of the press than to abridge its freedom; for a corrective of the evil will be generally found in the
 moral principles