CHAPTER I.

The rise and progress of Anti-Slavery agitation-The Higher Law-Anti-Slavery Societies-Their formation and proceedings-Their effect destructive of State Emancipation-The case in Virginia-Employment of the Post office to circulate incendiary publications and pictures among the slaves-Message of General Jackson to prohibit this bylaw-His recommendation defeated-The Pulpit, the Press, and other agencies-Abolition Petitions-The rise of an extreme Southern Pro-Slavery party-The Fugitive Slave Law of 1798, and the case of Prigg vs. Pennsylvania, and its pernicious effects-The South threaten Secession-The course of Mr. Buchanan as Senator-The Wilmot Proviso and its consequences-The Union in serious danger at the meeting of Congress in December, 1849.

THAT the Constitution does not confer upon Congress power to interfere with slavery in the States, has been admitted by all parties and confirmed by all judicial decisions ever since the origin of the Federal Government. This doctrine was emphatically recognized by the House of Representatives in the days of Washington, during the first session of the first Congress,* and has never since been seriously called in question. Hence, it became necessary for the abolitionists, in order to furnish a pretext for their assaults on Southern slavery, to appeal to a law higher than the Constitution.

Slavery, according to them, was a grievous sin against God, and therefore no human Constitution could rightfully shield it from destruction. It was sinful to live in a political confederacy which tolerated slavery in any of the States composing it; and if this could not be eradicated, it would become a sacred