

TWO SPEECHES BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS — 1857



FREDERICK STRECKER

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BY

FREDERICK DOUGLASS;

ONE ON

WEST INDIA EMANCIPATION,

DELIVERED AT CANANDAIGUA, AUG. 4TH,
AND THE OTHER ON THE

DRED SCOTT DECISION,

DELIVERED IN NEW YORK, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN ABOLITION
SOCIETY, MAY, 1857.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.:
O. P. DEWEY, PRINTER, AMERICAN OFFICE.
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MR. CHAIRMAN, FRIENDS, AND FELLOW CITIZENS :

In coming before you to speak a few words, bearing on the great question of human freedom, and having some relation to the sublime event which has brought us together, I am cheered by your numbers, and deeply gratified by the cordial, generous, and earnest reception with which you have been pleased to greet me. I sincerely thank you for this manifestation of your kindly feeling, and if I had as many voices and hearts as you have, I would give as many evidences of my pleasure in meeting you as you have given me, of your pleasure at my appearance before you to-day. As it is I can only say, I sincerely rejoice to be here, and am exceedingly glad to meet you. No man who loves the cause of human freedom, can be other than happy when beholding a multitude of freedom-loving, human faces like that I now see before me.

Sir, it is just ten years and three days ago, when it was my high privilege to address a vast concourse of the friends of Liberty in this same beautiful town, on an occasion similar to the one which now brings us here. I look back to that meeting—I may say, that great meeting—with most grateful emotions. That meeting was great in its numbers, great in the spirit that pervaded it, and great in the truths enunciated by some of the speakers on that occasion.

Sir, that meeting seems to me a thing of yesterday. The time between then and now seems but a speck, and it is hard to realize that ten long years, crowded with striking events, have rolled away: yet such is the solemn fact. Mighty changes, great transactions, have taken place since the first of August, 1847. Territory has been acquired from Mexico; political parties in the country have assumed a more open and shameless subserviency to slavery; the fugitive slave

bill has been passed; ancient landmarks of freedom have been overthrown; the government has entered upon a new and dreadful career in favor of slavery; the slave power has become more aggressive; freedom of speech has been beaten down by ruffian and murderous blows; innocent and freedom-loving men have been murdered by scores on the soil of Kansas, and the end is not yet. Of these things, however, I will not speak now; indeed I may leave them entirely to others who are to follow me.

Mr. President, I am deeply affected by the thought that many who were with us ten years ago, and who bore an honorable part in the joyous exercises of that occasion, are now numbered with the silent dead. Sir, I miss one such from this platform. Soon after that memorable meeting, our well beloved friend, Chas. Van Loon, was cut down, in the midst of his years and his usefulness, and transferred to that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns. Many who now hear me, will remember how nobly he bore himself on the occasion of our celebration. You remember how he despised, disregarded and trampled upon the mean spirit of color caste, which was then so rampant and bitter in the country, and his cordial and practical recognition of the great truths of human brotherhood. Some of you will never forget, as I shall never forget, his glorious, towering, spontaneous, copious, truthful, and fountain-like out-gushing eloquence. I never think of that meeting without thinking of Chas. Van Loon. He was a true man, a genuine friend of liberty, and of liberty for all men, without the least regard for any of the wicked distinctions, arbitrarily set up by the pride and depravity of the wealthy and strong, against the rights of the humble and weak. My friends, we should cherish the memory of Chas. Van Loon as a precious treasure, for it is not often that a people like ours, has such a memory to cherish. The poor have but few friends, and we, the colored people, are emphatically and peculiarly, the poor of this land.

Sir, I believe Chas. Van Loon is the only one of those who addressed us at that time, who has been removed from us by the hand of death. Many of the five thousand of the rank and file, have doubtless gone the way of all the earth. We shall see their faces and hear their voices no more, save as we recall them to the mind's eye and ear, by the aid of memory. Some of the marshalls who ordered our

procession on that occasion, are no more, and very few of the glorious choir, which filled your grove with songs of joyous freedom, are with us to-day. What death, the common destroyer of all, has not done towards thinning our ranks, the fugitive slave bill has done, and done with terrible effect. It came upon us like a wolf upon the fold, and left our ranks thinned and trembling. The first six months after this whirlwind and pestilence set in, were six of the gloomiest months I ever experienced. It did seem that the infernal regions were broken up, and that devils, not men, had taken possession of our government and our church. The most shocking feature of those times was, that the infernal business of hunting men and women went on under the sanction of heaven as well as earth. Kidnapping proclamations, and kidnapping sermons, the one backed up by the terrors of the gallows, and the others by the terrors of hell, were promulgated at the same time. Our leading divines, had no higher law for the poor, the needy, the hunted, and helpless; their God was with the slaveholder, and the brutal and savage man hunter, carried his warrant from Millard Fillmore, in one pocket, and a sermon from Doctor Lord in the other. I say, sir, these were gloomy days for me. Our people fled in darkening trains from this country, to Canada. There seemed no place for the free black man, in this Republic. It appeared that we were to be driven out of the country by a system of cruelty and violence as murderous and as hellish as that which snatched us from our homes in our fatherland, and planted us here, as the white man's slaves.

Sir, the many changes, vicissitudes, and deaths, which have occurred within the range of our knowledge, during this decade, afford matter for serious thought. I cannot now dwell upon them. Perhaps the occasion does not require that I should dwell upon them, yet I must say, what we all more or less feel, and that is that the flight of the last ten years, with its experience of trial and death, admonish us that we are all hastening down the tide of time, and that our places in the world's activities are soon to be occupied by other generations. They remind us that the present only is ours, and that what our hands now find to do, we should do quickly, and with all our might.

Sir, I have thought much on this subject of the present, and the future, the seen, and the unseen, and about what things should en-

gage our thoughts, and energies while here, and I have come to the conclusion that from no work would I rather go to meet my Eternal Father, than from the work of breaking the fetters from the limbs of his suffering children.

Mr. President, [Austin Steward] I am happy to see here to-day many faces that were here ten years ago. I am especially glad to see you here, and to hear your voice. Sir, you have grown venerable in the service of your enslaved people, and I am glad to find that you are not weary in this department of well doing. Time has dealt gently with you this last ten years, and you seem as vigorous now as when I saw you then. You presided on that occasion, you preside now; and notwithstanding the gloomy aspect of the times, I am not without hope, that you will live to preside over a grander celebration than this; a celebration of the American jubilee, in which four millions of our countrymen shall rejoice in freedom. That jubilee will come. You and I may, or we may not live to see it; but whether we do, or do not, God reigns, and Slavery must yet fall; unless the devil is more potent than the Almighty; unless sin is stronger than righteousness, Slavery must perish, and that not very long hence.

Here, too, I am most happy to meet again my loved, and honored and much respected friend, HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET. He was here with us, and spoke to us ten years ago. He has traveled much and labored much since that time. England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, have listened to his eloquent advocacy of our cause since then. While in the old world, it was his privilege to associate with refined and cultivated people; and I venture to say that no man from among us, visiting the old country, has left in his pathway a better impression for himself and people than H. H. GARNET. We need a thousand such representative men at home and abroad, to meet and repel the floods of slander of our race, which two thousand millions of dollars invested in our people, as property, constantly provoke. The American government does not need a minister at the court of St. James to look after American interests, more than we need in England a representative of our people against whom all manner of lies are told.

Happy am I too, to meet here to-day, as ten years ago, J. W. LOGUEN, the interpid and faithful conductor of the Underground Rail-

road, who has, during the interval of our former celebrations, conveyed from Republican slavery to Monarchical Liberty, not fewer than a thousand souls.

Mr. President, you miss, and we all miss, our old friend, SAML. R. WARD. He was with us ten years ago, and if he were now in the country, he would doubtless be with us here to-day. I will say for Mr. WARD what he can not say for himself. Though absent in body he is with us in spirit. Mr. WARD is now in Jamaica, and I am told is soon to be joined in his new home by his dear family, of whom we have often heard him lovingly speak. They are now in Canada, and he has sent for them to come out to him. I will say another word of Mr. WARD, and that is, he was, in many respects, a head and shoulders above us all. No colored man who has yet attracted public observation in this country, was ever capable of rendering his people greater service than he. And while we all deeply regret that he has seen fit to leave us for other fields of usefulness, we will here and now tender him our best wishes while he may remain abroad, and pledge him an earnest welcome should he ever return to the Empire State.

My friends, you will also miss, as I do, the eloquent CHAS. L. REMOND. He was on this platform ten years ago. I should have been glad to have met him here to-day, for though he differs from us in his mode of serving our cause, he doubtless fully sympathises with us in the sentiment which brings us together on this occasion.

Mr. President, you will pardon those homely but grateful references to individuals. The great poet has told us that one touch of nature makes all the world akin, and the cause of freedom, I think, makes friends of all its friends. At any rate, I can say that I can love an enemy, if he loves the slave, for I know that if he loves the slave, he loves him intilligently, and if he hates me, he does it ignorantly. I can easily forgive such. Sir, there are other names I might well refer to, as worthy as those already mentioned, but the time would fail. I hasten, therefore, to the consideration of those topics naturally suggested by this occasion.

Friends and fellow-citizens: We have met here to-day to celebrate with all fitting demonstrations of joy and gladness, this the twenty-third anniversary of the inauguration of freedom as the ruling law of the British West Indies. The day and the deed are both greatly

distinguished. They are as a city set upon a hill. All civilized men at least, have looked with wonder and admiration upon the great deed of justice and humanity which has made the first of August illustrious among all the days of the year. But to no people on the globe, leaving out the emancipated men and women of the West Indies themselves, does this day address itself with so much force and significance, as to the people of the United States. It has made the name of England known and loved in every Slave Cabin, from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, and has spread alarm, hatred, and dread in all the accursed slave markets of our boasted Republic from Baltimore to New Orleans.

Slavery in America, and slavery every where, never received a more stunning and killing condemnation.

The event we celebrate is the finding and the restoration to the broken ranks of human brotherhood eight hundred thousand lost members of the human family. It is the resurrection of a mighty multitude, from the grave of moral, mental, social, and spiritual death, where ages of slavery and oppression, and lust and pride, and cruelty had bound them. Here they were instantly clothed with all the rights, responsibilities, powers, and duties, of free men and women.

Up to the morning of the first of August, 1834, these people were slaves, numbered with the beasts of the field, marked, branded, priced, valued, and ranged as articles of property. The gates of human brotherhood were bolted and barred against them. They were outside of both law and gospel. The love taught in the Bible, and the justice recorded in the Statute Book did not embrace them: they were outside. Their fellow men had written their names with horses, sheep, and swine, and with horned cattle. They were not governed by the law, but the lash, they were not paid for their work, but whipped on to toil as the American slave now is. Their degradation was complete. They were slaves; and when I have said that, I have said all. The essence of wickedness, the intensified sum of all iniquity, the realization of the idea of a burning hell upon the earth, in which every passion is an unchained devil, let loose to deal out ten thousand pains, and horrors start up to view at the very mention of slavery!—It comprehends all that is foul, shocking, and dreadful. Human nature shudders, and turns pale at its presence, and flies from it as from a

den of lions, a nest of scorpions, or an army of rattlesnakes. The very soul sickens, and the mind revolts at the thought of slavery, and he true man welcomes instant death in preference to being reduced to its degradation and ruin.

Yet such was the condition of our brothers and sisters in the British West Indies, up to the morning of the first of August, 1834. The wicked love of dominion by man over man, had made strong their fetters and multiplied their chains. But on the memorable morning which we are met to celebrate, one bolt from the moral sky of Britain left these blood stained lions all scattered and broken throughout the West Indies, and the limbs they had bruised, out-streched in praise and thanksgiving to God for deliverance. No man of any sensibility can read the account of that great transaction without emotions too great for utterance. There was something Godlike in this decree of the British nation. It was the spirit of the Son of God commanding the devil of slavery to go out of the British West Indies.

It said tyrant slave-driver, fling away your blood-stained whip, and bury out of sight your broken fetters and chains. Your accursed occupation is gone. It said to the slave, with wounds, bruises, and scars yet fresh upon him, you are emancipated—set free—enfranchised—no longer slaves, but British subjects, and henceforth equal before the British law!

Such my friends, was the change—the revolution—the wonderous transformation which took place in the condition of the colored people in the British West Indies, twenty-three years ago. With the history of the causes, which led to this great consummation, you are perhaps already sufficiently acquainted. I do not intend in my present remarks to enter into the tedious details of this history, although it might prove quite instructive to some in this assembly. It might prove especially interesting to point out various steps in the progress of the British Anti-Slavery movement, and to dwell upon some of the more striking analogies between that and our movement in this country. The materials at this point are ample, did the limits of the hour permit me to bring them forward.

One remark in this connection I will make. The abolition movement in America, like many other institutions of this country, was largely derived from England. The defenders of American slavery

often excuse their villainy on the ground that they inherited the system from England. Abolitionism may be traced to the same source, yet I don't see that it is any more popular on that account. Mr. Garrison applied British abolitionism to American slavery. He did that and nothing more. He found its principles here plainly stated and defined; its truths glowingly enunciated, and the whole subject illustrated, and elaborated in a masterly manner. The sin—the crime—the curse of slavery, were all demonstrated in the light of reason, religion, and morality, and by a startling array of facts. We owe Mr. Garrison our grateful homage in that he was among the first of his countrymen who zealously applied the British argument for abolition, against American slavery. Even the doctrine of immediate emancipation as against gradualism, is of English, not American origin. It was expounded and enforced by Elizabeth Herrick, and adopted by all the earnest abolitionists in England. It came upon the British nation like Uncle Tom's Cabin upon our land after the passing of the fugitive slave law, and it is remarkable that the highest services rendered the anti-slavery cause in both countries, were rendered by women. Elizabeth Herrick, who wrote only a pamphlet, will be remembered as long as the West India Emancipation is remembered, and the name of Harriet Beecher Stowe can never die while the love of freedom lives in the world.

But my friends, it is not with these analogies and minute references that I mean in my present talk, to deal.

I wish you to look at West India Emancipation as one complete transaction of vast and sublime significance, surpassing all power of exaggeration. We hear and read much of the achievements of this nineteenth century, and much can be said, and truthfully said of them. The world has literally shot forward with the speed of steam and lightning. It has probably made more progress during the last fifty years, than in any five hundred years to which we can refer in the history of the race. Knowledge has been greatly increased, and its blessing, widely diffused. Locomotion has been marveously improved, so that the very ends of the earth are being rapidly brought together. Time to the traveler has been annihilated.

Deep down beneath the stormy surface of the wide, wide waste of waters, a pathway has been formed for human thought. Machinery

of almost every conceivable description, and for almost every conceivable purpose, has been invented and applied; ten thousand discoveries and combinations have been made during these last fifty years, till the world has ceased to ask in astonishment "what next?" for there seems scarcely any margin left for a next. We have made hands of iron and brass, and copper and wood, and though we have not been able to endow them with life and soul, yet we have found the means of endowing them with intelligent motion, and of making them do our work, and to do it more easily, quickly and more abundantly than the hands in their palmiest days were able to perform it. I am not here to disparage or underrate this physical and intellectual progress of the race. I thank my God for every advance which is made in this direction.

I fully appreciate the beautiful sentiment which you farmers, now before me, so highly regard, "that he who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before," is a benefactor. I recognize and honor, as you do, all such benefactors. There is not the slightest danger that those who contribute directly to the world's wealth and ease will ever be forgotten by the world. The world loves its own. A hungry man will not forget the hand that feeds him, though he may forget that Providence which caused the bread to grow. Arkwright, Watt, Fulton, Franklin, Morse, and Daguerre, are names which will not fade from the memories of men. They are grand civilizers, but civilizers after their kind—and great as are their achievements, they sink to nothingness when compared with that great achievement which has given us the first day of August as a sacred day. "What shal it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We are to view this grand event in the light of this sublime enquiry.

"Men do not live by bread alone," said the great Redeemer. What is true of individual men, is also true of societies, and nations of men. Nations are not held in their spheres, and perpetuated in health by cunning machinery. Railroads, steamships, electric wires, tons of gold and silver, and precious stones cannot save them. A nation may perish in the midst of them all, or in the absence of them all. The true life principle is not in them.

Egypt died in the sight of all her imposing wealth and her everlast-

ing Pyramids. The polished stone is there, but Egypt is gone. Greece has vanished, her life disappeared as it were, in a trance of artistic beauty, and architectural splendor. Great Babylon, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth, fell in the midst of barbaric wealth and glory. The lesson taught by the history of nations is that the preservation or destruction of communities does not depend upon external prosperity. Men do not live by bread alone, so with nations. They are not saved by art, but by honesty. Not by the gilded splendors of wealth, but by the hidden treasure of manly virtue. Not by the multitudinous gratification of the flesh, but by the celestial guidance of the spirit.

It is in this view that West India Emancipation becomes the most interesting and sublime event of the nineteenth century. It was the triumph of a great moral principle, a decisive victory, after a severe and protracted struggle, of freedom over slavery; of justice and mercy against a grim and bloody system of devilish brutality. It was an acknowledgement by a great nation of the sacredness of humanity, as against the claims of power and cupidity.

As such, it stands out as a large and glorious contribution to the moral and spiritual growth of mankind, and just such a contribution as the world needed, and needs now to have repeated a thousand times over, in our own land especially. Look at New York city; beautiful without to be sure. She has great churches, great hotels, great wealth, great commerce, but you all know that she is the victim of a dreadful disease, and that her best friends regard her as a cage of unclean birds in danger at any moment of being swallowed up by a social earthquake. Look at Philadelphia, Baltimore, Louisville, New Orleans. Look where you will, and you will see that while all without is covered and studded with the evidences of prosperity, there is yet no real sense of that stability which conscious rectitude imparts. All the great acts of the nation of late have looked away from the right path. Our very Temple of Justice has inverted and outraged all the principles of justice which it was professedly established to maintain. The government at Washington is mostly exercised in schemes by which it can cheat one section of the country for the benefit of another, and yet, seem honest to all. Where this will end, Heaven only knows.

But I was calling attention to this great example of British justice

not in anger, but in sorrow. Great Britain bowing down, confessing and forsaking her sins—her sins against the weak and despised—is a spectacle which nations present but seldom. No achievement in arts or arms, in letters or laws, can equal this. And the world owes Britain more for this example of humility and honest repentance than for all her other contributions to the world's progress.

I know, and you know, it is easy enough for a nation to assume the outward and hollow seemings of humility and repentance. The world is full of such tongue-wise demonstrations. Our own country can show a long list of them. We have thanksgivings and fasts, and are unrivalled in this department of religious observances. On our fast days and fourth of July, we seem unto men to fast, but the sequel shows that our confessions and prayers have only come from men whose hearts are crammed with arrogance, pride and hate.

We have bowed down our heads as a bulrush, and have spread sackcloth and ashes under us, and like the stiff-necked Jews, whose bad practices we imitate more closely than we do their religion, we have exacted all our labors,

I am not here to make invidious and insulting comparisons; but all must allow, that the example of England, in respect to the great act before us, differs widely from our manifestations of sorrow for great national sin. Here we have, indeed, a chosen fast of the Living God, an acceptable day unto the Lord, a day in which the bands of wickedness were loosed; the heavy burdens undone; the oppressed let go free; every yoke broken; the poor that were cast out of the house brought in; and men no longer hiding themselves from their own flesh.

It has been said that corporations have no souls, that with nations might is the standard of right, and that self interest governs the world.

The abolition of slavery in the West Indies is a shining evidence of the reverse of all this profanity. Nobler ideas and principles of action are here brought to view. The vital, animating, and all-controlling power of the British Abolition movement was religion. Its philosophy was not educated and enlightened selfishness, (such as some are relying upon now to do away with slavery in this country,) but the pure, single eyed spirit of benevolence. It was not impelled or

guided by the fine-spun reasonings of political expediency, but by the unmistakable and imperative demands of principle. It was not commerce, but conscience; not considerations of climate and productions of the earth, but the heavenly teachings of Christianity, which everywhere teaches that God is our Father, and man, however degraded, is our brother.

The men who were most distinguished in carrying forward the movement, from the great Willberforce downward, were eminent for genuine piety. They worked for the slave as if they had been working for the Son of God. They believed that righteousness exalteth a nation and that sin is a reproach to any people. Hence they united religion with patriotism, and pressed home the claims of both upon the national heart with the tremendous energy of truth and love, till all England cried out with one accord, through Exeter Hall, through the press, through the pulpit, through parliament, and through the very throne itself, *slavery must and shall be destroyed.*

Herein is the true significance of West India Emancipation. It stands out before all the world as a mighty, moral, and spiritual triumph. It is a product of the soul, not of the body. It is a contribution to common honesty without which nations as well as individuals sink to ruin. It is one of those words of life that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, by which nations are established, and kept alive and in moral health.

Now, my friends, how has this great act of freedom and benevolence been received in the United States. How has our American Christian Church and our American Democratic Government received this glorious new birth of National Righteousness.

From our professions as a nation, it might have been expected that a shout of joy and gladness would have shook the hollow sky, that loud hallelujahs would have rolled up to heaven from all our borders, saying, "Glory to God, in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward man. Let the earth be glad." "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Alas, no such responsive note of rejoicing has reached my ear, except from a part of the colored people and their few white friends. As a nation, we are deaf, dumb, and blind to the moral beauty, and transcendent sublimity of West India Emancipation. We have passed

it by with averted eyes, regarding it rather as a reflection to be resented than as an example to be imitated. First, we looked for means of impeaching England's motives for abolishing Slavery, and not being able to find any such, we have made ourselves hoarse in denouncing emancipation as a failure.

We have not viewed the great fact in the light of a liberal philosophy, but have applied to it rules of judgment which were not intended to reveal its true character and make known its actual worth. We have taken a microscope to view the stars, and a fish line to measure the ocean's depths.

We have approached it as though it were a railroad, a canal, a steamship, or a newly invented mowing machine, and out of the fullness of our dollar-loving hearts, we have asked with owl-like wisdom, WILL IT PAY? Will it increase the growth of sugar? Will it cheapen tobacco? Will it increase the imports and exports of the Islands? Will it enrich or ruin the planters? How will it effect Jamaica spirits? Can the West Indies be successfully cultivated by free labor? These and sundry other questions, springing out of the gross materialism of our age and nation, have been characteristically put respecting West India Emancipation. All our tests of the grand measure have been such as we might look for from slave-holders themselves. They all proceed from the slave-holders side, and never from the side, of the emancipated slaves.

The effect of freedom upon the emancipated people of the West Indies passes for nothing. It is nothing that the plundered slave is now a freeman; it is nothing with our sagacious, economical philosophers, that the family now takes the place of concubinage; it is nothing that marriage is now respected where before it was a mockery; it is nothing that moral purity has now a chance to spring up, where before pollution was only possible; it is nothing that education is now spreading among the emancipated men and women, bearing its precious fruits, where only ignorance, darkness, superstition and idolatry prevailed before; it is nothing that the whipping post has given way to the school house; it is nothing that the church stands now where the slave prison stood before; all these are nothing, I say, in the eyes of our slavery-cursed country.

But the first and last question, and the only question which we

Americans have to press in the premises, is the great American question (*viz.*) *will it pay?*

Sir, If such a people as ours had heard the beloved disciple of the Lord, exclaiming in the rapture of the apocalyptic vision. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people;" they, instead of answering, Amen Glory to God in the Highest, would have responded,—But brother John, *will it pay?* Can money be made out of it? Will it make the rich richer, and the strong stronger? How will it effect property? In the eyes of such people, there is no God but wealth; no right and wrong but profit and loss.

‡ Sir, our national morality and religion have reached a depth of baseness than which there is no lower deep. They both allow that if men can make money by stealing men and women, and by working them up into sugar, rice, and tobacco, they may innocently continue the practice, and that he who condemns it is an unworthy citizen, and a disturber of the church. Money is the measure of morality, and the success or failure of slavery, as a money-making system, determines with many whether the thing is virtuous, or villianous, and whether it should be maintained or abolished. They are for Slavery where climate and soil are said to be for it, and are really not opposed to it any where, though as a nation we have made a show of opposition to it where the system does not exist. With our geographical ethics, and climatic religion, we have naturally sided with the slave-holders and women-whippers of the West Indies, in denouncing the abolition of slavery in the West Indies a failure.

Sir: As to what has been the effect of West India freedom upon the material condition of the people of those Islands, I am happy that there is one on this platform, who can speak with the authority of positive knowledge. Henry Highland Garnet, has lived and labored among those emancipated people. He has enjoyed ample opportunity for forming an intelligent judgment in respect to all that pertains to the subject. I therefore most willingly leave this branch of the subject to him.

One remark, however, I will venture to make—and that is this: I take it that both the friends and the enemies of the emancipated have

been too impatient for results. They seem to forget that although a nation can be born in a day, it can mature only in centuries—that though the fetters on the limbs can be broken in an instant, the fetters on the soul can wear off only in the ages.

Degradation, mental, moral, and physical, ground into the very bones of a people by ages of unremitting bondage, will not depart from that people in the course, even of many generations.

West India freedom, though more than twenty-one years old, is yet but an infant. And to predicate its future on its present weakness, awkwardness, and improvidence now, is about as wise as to apply the same rule to your little toothless children. It has taken at least a thousand years to bring some of the leading nations of the earth from the point where the negroes of the West Indies started twenty-three years ago, to their present position. Let considerations like these be duly weighed, and black man though I am, I do not fear the world's judgment.

Now, sir, I like these annual celebrations. I like them because they call us to the contemplation of great interests, and afford an opportunity of presenting salutary truths before the American people. They bring our people together, and enable us to see and commune with each other to mutual profit. If these occasions are conducted wisely, decoriously, and orderly, they increase our respectability in the eyes of the world, and silence the slanders of prejudice. If they are otherwise conducted they cover us with shame and confusion. But, sir, these celebrations have been objected to by our slaveholding democracy; they do not think it in good taste. Slaveholders are models of taste. With them, propriety is every thing; honesty, nothing. For a long time they have taught our Congress, and Senate, and Pulpits, what subjects should be discussed, and what objects should command our attention. Senator SUMNER, fails to observe the proscribed rules and he falls upon the Senate floor, stunned and bleeding beneath the ruffian blows of one of our southern models of propriety. By such as these, and by their timid followers this is called a *British* celebration.

From the inmost core of my soul I pity the mean spirits, who can see in these celebrations nothing but British feeling. The man who limits his admiration of good actions to the country in which he happens to be born, (if he ever was born,) or to the nation or community of which he forms a small part, is a most pitiable object. With him

to be one of a nation is more than to be one of the human family. He don't live in the world, but he lives in the United States. Into his little soul the thought of God as our common Father, and of man our common Brother has never entered. To such a soul as that, this celebration cannot but be exceedingly distasteful.

But sarcasm aside, I hold it to be eminently fit that we keep up those celebrations from year to year, at least until we shall have an American celebration to take its place. That the event we thus commemorate transpired in another country, and was wrought out by the labors and sacrifices of the people of another nation, form no valid objection to its grateful, warm, hearty, and enthusiastic celebration by us. In a very high sense, we may claim that great deed as our own. It belongs not exclusively to England and the English people, but to the lovers of Liberty and of mankind the world over. It is one of those glorious emanations of Christianity, which, like the sun in the Heavens, takes no cognizance of national lines or geographical boundries, but pours its golden floods of living light upon all. In the great Drama of Emancipation, England was the theatre, but universal and every where applying principles of Righteousness, Liberty, and Justice were the actors. The great Ruler of the Universe, the God and Father of all men, to whom be honor, glory, and praise for evermore, roused the British conscience by his truth, moved the British heart, and West India Emancipation was the result. But if only Englishmen may properly celebrate this great concession to justice and liberty, then, sir, we may claim to be Englishmen, Englishmen in the love of Justice and Liberty, Englishmen in magnanimous efforts to protect the weak against the strong, and the slave against the slaveholder. Surely in this sense, it ought to be no disgrace to be an Englishman, even on the soil of the freest people on the globe.

But, Mr. Chairman, we celebrate this day on the broad platform of Philanthropy—whose country is the world, and whose countrymen are all mankind. On this platform we are neither Jews nor Greeks, strangers nor foreigners, but fellow citizens of the household of faith, We are the brothers and friends of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Granville, Sharpe, Richard Baxter, John Wesley, Thomas Day, Bishop Portius, and George Fox, and the glorious company of those who first wrought

to turn the moral sense of mankind in active opposition to slavery. They labored for freedom not as Englishmen, but as men, and as brothers to men—the world over—and it is meet and right to commemorate and imitate their noble example. So much for the Anti-British objection.

I will now notice a special objection. It is said that we, the colored people, should do something ourselves worthy of celebration, and not be everlastingly celebrating the deeds of a race by which we are despised.

This objection, strange as it may seem, comes from no enemy of our people, but from a friend. He is himself a colored man, a high spirited and patriotic man, eminent for learning and ability, and to my mind, he has few equals, and no superior among us. I thank Dr. J. M'Cune Smith for this objection, since in the answer I may make to it, I shall be able to give a few of my thoughts on the relation subsisting between the white and colored people of this country, a subject which it well becomes us to consider whenever and wherever we congregate.

In so far as this objection to our celebrating the first of August has a tendency to awaken in us a higher ambition than has hitherto distinguished us, and to raise our aims and activities above the dull level of our present physical wants, and so far as it shall tend to stimulate us to the execution of great deeds of heroism worthy to be held in admiration and perpetual remembrance, for one, sir, I say amen to the whole of it. I am free to say, that nothing is more humiliating than the insignificant part we, the colored people, are taking in the great contest now going on with the powers of oppression in this land. I can stand the insults, assaults, misrepresentations, and slanders of the known haters of my race, and brave them all. I look for such opposition. It is a natural incident of the war, and I trust I am to a certain degree prepared for it; but the stolid contentment, the listless indifference, the moral death which reigns over many of our people, we who should be all on fire, beats down my little flame of enthusiasm and leaves me to labor, half robbed of my natural force. This indifference, in us, is outrageous. It is giving aid and comfort to the men who are warring against our very manhood. The highest satisfaction of our oppressors, is to see the negro degraded, divested of public spirit, insensible to patriotism, and to all concern for the freedom, elevation, and respectability of the race.

Senator Toombs with a show of truth, lyingly said in Boston a year or two ago in defence of the slavery of the black race, they are mentally and morally inferior, and that if the whole colored population were swept from this country, there would be nothing in twenty years to tell that such a people had ever existed. He exulted over our assumed ignorance and over our destitution of valuable achievements. Of course the slaveholder uttered a falsehood, but to many it seemed to be a truth, and vast numbers of the American people receive it as a truth to-day, and shape their action accordingly.

The general sentiment of mankind is, that a man who will not fight for himself, when he has the means of doing so, is not worth being fought for by others, and this sentiment is just. For a man who does not value freedom for himself will never value it for others, nor put himself to any inconvenience to gain it for others. Such a man, the world says, may lay down until he has sense enough to stand up. It is useless and cruel to put a man on his legs, if the next moment his head is to be brought against a curb-stone.

A man of that type will never lay the world under any obligation to him, but will be a moral pauper, a drag on the wheels of society, and if he, too, be identified with a peculiar variety of the race he will entail disgrace upon his race as well as upon himself. The world in which we live is very accommodating to all sorts of people. It will co-operate with them in any measure which they propose; it will help those who earnestly help themselves, and will hinder those who hinder themselves. It is very polite, and never offers its services unasked.—Its favors to individuals are measured by an unerring principle in this: viz—respect those who respect themselves, and despise those who despise themselves. It is not within the power of unaided human nature to persevere in pitying a people who are insensible to their own wrongs, and indifferent to the attainment of their own rights. The poet was as true to common sense as to poetry when he said,

“Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.”

When O'Connell, with all Ireland at his back, was supposed to be contending for the just rights and liberties of Ireland, the sympathies of mankind were with him, and even his enemies were compelled to respect his patriotism. Kossuth, fighting for Hungary with his pen long after she had fallen by the sword, commanded the sympathy and

support of the liberal world till his own hopes died out. The Turks while they fought bravely for themselves and scouraged and drove back the invading legions of Russia, shared the admiration of mankind. They were standing up for their own rights against an arrogant and powerful enemy; but as soon as they let out their fighting to the Allies, admiration gave way to contempt. These are not the maxims and teachings of a cold-hearted world. Christianity itself teaches that a man shall provide for his own house. This covers the whole ground of nations as well as individuals. Nations no more than individuals can innocently be improvident. They should provide for all wants, mental, moral, and religious, and against all evils to which they are liable as nations. In the great struggle now progressing for the freedom and elevation of our people, we should be found at work with all our might, resolved that no man or set of men shall be more abundant in labors, according to the measure of our ability, than ourselves.

I know, my friends, that in some quarters the efforts of colored people meet with very little encouragement. We may fight, but we must fight like the Seapoys of India, under white officers. This class of Abolitionists don't like colored celebrations, they don't like colored conventions, they don't like colored Anti-Slavery fairs for the support of colored newspapers. They don't like any demonstrations whatever in which colored men take a leading part. They talk of the proud Anglo-Saxon blood, as flippantly as those who profess to believe in the natural inferiority of races. Your humble speaker has been branded as an ingrate, because he has ventured to stand up on his own right and to plead our common cause as a colored man, rather than as a Garrisonian. I hold it to be no part of gratitude to allow our white friends to do all the work, while we merely hold their coats. Opposition of the sort now referred to, is partizan opposition, and we need not mind it. The white people at large will not largely be influenced by it. They will see and appreciate all honest efforts on our part to improve our condition as a people.

Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims, have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does

nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North, and held and flogged at the South so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical. Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.

Hence, my friends, every mother who, like Margaret Garner, plunges a knife into the bosom of her infant to save it from the hell of our Christian Slavery, should be held and honored as a benefactress. Every fugitive from slavery who like the noble William Thomas at Wilksbarre, prefers to perish in a river made red by his own blood, to submission to the hell hounds who were hunting and shooting him, should be esteemed as a glorious martyr, worthy to be held in grateful memory by our people. The fugitive Horace, at Mechanicsburgh, Ohio, the other day, who taught the slave catchers from Kentucky that it was safer to arrest white men than to arrest him, did a most excellent service to our cause. Parker and his noble band of fifteen at Christiana, who defended themselves from the kidnappers with prayers and pistols, are entitled to the honor of making the first successful resistance to the Fugitive Slave Bill. But for that resistance, and the rescue of Jerry, and Shadrack, the man-hunters would have hunted our hills and valleys,

here with the same freedom with which they now hunt their own dismal swamps.

There was an important lesson in the conduct of that noble Krooman in New York, the other day, who, supposing that the American Christians were about to enslave him, betook himself to the mast head, and with knife in hand, said he would cut his throat before he would be made a slave. Joseph Cinque on the the deck of the *Amistad*, did that which should make his name dear to us. He bore nature's burning protest against slavery. Madison Washington who struck down his oppressor on the deck of the *Creole*, is more worthy to be remembered than the colored man who shot Pitcairn at Bunker Hill.

My friends, you will observe that I have taken a wide range, and you think it is about time that I should answer the special objection to this celebration. I think so too. This, then, is the truth concerning the inauguration of freedom in the British West Indies. Abolition was the act of the British Government. The motive which led the Government to act, no doubt was mainly a philanthropic one, entitled to our highest admiration and gratitude. The National Religion, the justice, and humanity, cried out in thunderous indignation against the foul abomination, and the government yielded to the storm. Nevertheless a share of the credit of the result falls justly to the slaves themselves. "Though slaves, they were rebellious slaves." They bore themselves well. They did not hug their chains, but according to their opportunities, swelled the general protest against oppression. What Wilberforce was endeavoring to win from the British Senate by his magic eloquence, the Slaves themselves were endeavoring to gain by outbreaks and violence. The combined action of one and the other wrought out the final result. While one showed that slavery was wrong, the other showed that it was dangerous as well as wrong. Mr. Wilberforce, peace man though he was, and a model of piety, availed himself of this element to strengthen his case before the British Parliament, and warned the British government of the danger of continuing slavery in the West Indies. There is no doubt that the fear of the consequences, acting with a sense of the moral evil of slavery led to its abolition. The spirit of freedom was abroad in the Islands. Insurrection for freedom kept the planters in a constant state of alarm and trepidation. A standing army was necessary to keep the slaves in their chains. This state of fact

could not be without weight in deciding the question of freedom in these countries.

I am aware that the rebellious disposition of the slaves was said to arise out of the discussions which the abolitionist were carrying on at home, and it is not necessary to refute this alleged explanation. All that I contend for is this: that the slaves of the West Indies did fight for their freedom, and that the fact of their discontent was known in England, and that it assisted in bringing about that state of public opinion which finally resulted in their emancipation. And if this be true, the objection is answered.

Again, I am aware that the insurrectionary movements of the slaves were held by many to be prejudicial to their cause. This is said now of such movements at the South. The answer is that abolition followed close on the heels of insurrection in the West Indies, and Virginia, was never nearer emancipation than when General Turner kindled the fires of insurrection at Southampton.

Sir, I have now more than filled up the measure of my time. I thank you for the patient attention given to what I have had to say. I have aimed, as I said at the beginning, to express a few thoughts having some relation to the great interests of freedom both in this country and in the British West Indies, and I have said all that I meant to say, and the time will not permit me to say more.

THE DRED SCOTT DECISION:
SPEECH,
DELIVERED, IN PART, AT THE
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
AMERICAN ABOLITION SOCIETY,
HELD IN NEW YORK, MAY 14th, 1857.

THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF ROCHESTER

BY

W. H. RAY

NEW YORK

1852

W. H. RAY

MR. CHAIRMAN, FRIENDS, AND FELLOW CITIZENS :

While four millions of our fellow countrymen are in chains—while men, women, and children are bought and sold on the auction-block with horses, sheep, and swine—while the remorseless slave-whip draws the warm blood of our common humanity—it is meet that we assemble as we have done to-day, and lift up our hearts and voices in earnest denunciation of the vile and shocking abomination. It is not for us to be governed by our hopes or our fears in this great work ; yet it is natural on occasions like this, to survey the position of the great struggle which is going on between slavery and freedom, and to dwell upon such signs of encouragement as may have been lately developed, and the state of feeling these signs or events have occasioned in us and among the people generally. It is a fitting time to take an observation to ascertain where we are, and what our prospects are.

To many, the prospects of the struggle against slavery seem far from cheering. Eminent men, North and South, in Church and State, tell us that the omens are all against us. Emancipation, they tell us, is a wild, delusive idea ; the price of human flesh was never higher than now ; slavery was never more closely entwined about the hearts and affections of the southern people than now ; that whatever of conscientious scruple, religious conviction, or public policy, which opposed the system of slavery forty or fifty years ago, has subsided ; and that slavery never reposed upon a firmer basis than now. Completing this picture of the happy and prosperous condition of this system of wickedness, they tell us that this state of things is to be set to our account. Abolition agitation has done it all. How deep is the misfortune of my poor, bleeding people, if this be so ! How lost their condition, if even the efforts of their friends but sink them deeper in ruin !

Without assenting to this strong representation of the increasing strength and stability of slavery, without denouncing what of untruth pervades it, I own myself not insensible to the many difficulties and discouragements that beset us on every hand. They fling their broad and gloomy shadows across the pathway of every thoughtful colored man in this country. For one, I see them clearly, and feel them sadly. With an earnest, aching heart, I have long looked for the realization of the hope of my people. Standing, as it were, barefoot, and treading upon the sharp and flinty rocks of the present, and looking out upon the boundless sea of the future, I have sought, in my humble way, to penetrate the intervening mists and clouds, and, perchance, to descry, in the dim and shadowy distance, the white flag of freedom, the precise speck of time at which the cruel bondage of my people should end, and the long entombed millions rise from the foul grave of slavery and death. But of that time I can know nothing, and you can know nothing. All is uncertain at that point. One thing, however, is certain; slaveholders are in earnest, and mean to cling to their slaves as long as they can, and to the bitter end. They show no sign of a wish to quit their iron grasp upon the sable throats of their victims. Their motto is, "a firmer hold and a tighter grip" for every new effort that is made to break their cruel power. The case is one of life or death with them, and they will give up only when they must do that or do worse.

In one view the slaveholders have a decided advantage over all opposition. It is well to notice this advantage—the advantage of complete organization. They are organized; and yet were not at the pains of creating their organizations. The State governments, where the system of slavery exists, are complete slavery organizations. The church organizations in those States are equally at the service of slavery; while the Federal Government, with its army and navy, from the chief magistracy in Washington, to the Supreme Court, and thence to the chief marshalship at New York, is pledged to support, defend, and propagate the crying curse of human bondage. The pen, the purse, and the sword, are united against the simple truth, preached by humble men in obscure places.

This is one view. It is, thank God, only one view; there is another, and a brighter view. David, you know, looked small and insigni-

nificant when going to meet Goliath, but looked larger when he had slain his foe. The Malakoff was, to the eye of the world, impregnable, till the hour it fell before the shot and shell of the allied army. Thus hath it ever been. Oppression, organized as ours is, will appear invincible up to the very hour of its fall. Sir, let us look at the other side, and see if there are not some things to cheer our heart and nerve us up anew in the good work of emancipation.

Take this fact—for it is a fact—the anti-slavery movement has, from first to last, suffered no abatement. It has gone forth in all directions, and is now felt in the remotest extremities of the Republic.

It started small, and was without capital either in men or money. The odds were all against it. It literally had nothing to lose, and every thing to gain. There was ignorance to be enlightened, error to be combatted, conscience to be awakened, prejudice to be overcome, apathy to be aroused, the right of speech to be secured, mob violence to be subdued, and a deep, radical change to be inwrought in the mind and heart of the whole nation. This great work, under God, has gone on, and gone on gloriously.

Amid all changes, fluctuations, assaults, and adverses of every kind, it has remained firm in its purpose, steady in its aim, onward and upward, defying all opposition, and never losing a single battle. Our strength is in the growth of anti-slavery conviction, and this has never halted.

There is a significant vitality about this abolition movement. It has taken a deeper, broader, and more lasting hold upon the national heart than ordinary reform movements. Other subjects of much interest come and go, expand and contract, blaze and vanish, but the huge question of American Slavery, comprehending, as it does, not merely the weal or the woe of four millions, and their countless posterity, but the weal or the woe of this entire nation, must increase in magnitude and in majesty with every hour of its history. From a cloud not bigger than a man's hand, it has overspread the heavens. It has risen from a grain not bigger than a mustard seed. Yet see the fowls of the air, how they crowd its branches.

Politicians who cursed it, now defend it; ministers, once dumb, now speak in its praise; and presses, which once flamed with hot de-

nunciations against it, now surround the sacred cause as by a wall of living fire. Politicians go with it as a pillar of cloud by day, and the press as a pillar of fire by night. With these ancient tokens of success, I, for one, will not despair of our cause.

Those who have undertaken to suppress and crush out this agitation for Liberty and humanity, have been most woefully disappointed. Many who have engaged to put it down, have found themselves put down. The agitation has pursued them in all their meanderings, broken in upon their seclusion, and, at the very moment of fancied security, it has settled down upon them like a mantle of unquenchable fire. Clay, Calhoun, and Webster each tried his hand at suppressing the agitation; and they went to their graves disappointed and defeated.

Loud and exultingly have we been told that the slavery question is settled, and settled forever. You remember it was settled thirty-seven years ago, when Missouri was admitted into the Union with a slaveholding constitution, and slavery prohibited in all territory north of thirty-six degrees of north latitude. Just fifteen years afterwards, it was settled again by voting down the right of petition, and gagging down free discussion in Congress. Ten years after this it was settled again by the annexation of Texas, and with it the war with Mexico. In 1850 it was again settled. This was called a final settlement. By it slavery was virtually declared to be the equal of Liberty, and should come into the Union on the same terms. By it the right and the power to hunt down men, women, and children, in every part of this country, was conceded to our southern brethren, in order to keep them in the Union. Four years after this settlement, the whole question was once more settled, and settled by a settlement which unsettled all the former settlements.

The fact is, the more the question has been settled, the more it has needed settling. The space between the different settlements has been strikingly on the decrease. The first stood longer than any of its successors.

There is a lesson in these decreasing spaces. The first stood fifteen years—the second, ten years—the third, five years—the fourth stood four years—and the fifth has stood the brief space of two years.

This last settlement must be called the Taney settlement. We are

now told, in tones of lofty exultation, that the day is lost—all lost—and that we might as well give up the struggle. The highest authority has spoken. The voice of the Supreme Court has gone out over the troubled waves of the National Conscience, saying peace, be still.

This infamous decision of the Slaveholding wing of the Supreme Court maintains that slaves are within the contemplation of the Constitution of the United States, property; that slaves are property in the same sense that horses, sheep, and swine are property; that the old doctrine that slavery is a creature of local law is false; that the right of the slaveholder to his slave does not depend upon the local law, but is secured wherever the Constitution of the United States extends; that Congress has no right to prohibit slavery anywhere; that slavery may go in safety anywhere under the star-spangled banner; that colored persons of African descent have no rights that white men are bound to respect; that colored men of African descent are not and cannot be citizens of the United States.

You will readily ask me how I am affected by this devilish decision—this judicial incarnation of wolfishness? My answer is, and no thanks to the slaveholding wing of the Supreme Court, my hopes were never brighter than now.

I have no fear that the National Conscience will be put to sleep by such an open, glaring, and scandalous tissue of lies as that decision is, and has been, over and over, shown to be.

The Supreme Court of the United States is not the only power in this world. It is very great, but the Supreme Court of the Almighty is greater. Judge Taney can do many things, but he cannot perform impossibilities. He cannot bale out the ocean, annihilate this firm old earth, or pluck the silvery star of liberty from our Northern sky. He may decide, and decide again; but he cannot reverse the decision of the Most High. He cannot change the essential nature of things—making evil good, and good, evil.

Happily for the whole human family, their rights have been defined, declared, and decided in a court higher than the Supreme Court. "There is a law," says Brougham, "above all the enactments of human codes, and by that law, unchangeable and eternal, man cannot hold property in man."

Your fathers have said that man's right to liberty is self-evident. There is no need of argument to make it clear. The voices of nature, of conscience, of reason, and of revelation, proclaim it as the right of all rights, the foundation of all trust, and of all responsibility. Man was born with it. It was his before he comprehended it. The *deed* conveying it to him is written in the centre of his soul, and is recorded in Heaven. The sun in the sky is not more palpable to the sight than man's right to liberty is to the moral vision. To decide against this right in the person of Dred Scott, or the humblest and most whip-scarred bondman in the land, is to decide against God. It is an open rebellion against God's government. It is an attempt to undo what God done, to blot out the broad distinction instituted by the *Allwise* between men and things, and to change the image and superscription of the everliving God into a speechless piece of merchandise.

Such a decision cannot stand. God will be true though every man be a liar. We can appeal from this hell-black judgment of the Supreme Court, to the court of common sense and common humanity. We can appeal from man to God. If there is no justice on earth, there is yet justice in heaven. You may close your Supreme Court against the black man's cry for justice, but you cannot, thank God, close against him the ear of a sympathising world, nor shut up the Court of Heaven. All that is merciful and just, on earth and in Heaven, will execrate and despise this edict of Taney.

If it were at all likely that the people of these free States would tamely submit to this demonical judgment, I might feel gloomy and sad over it, and possibly it might be necessary for my people to look for a home in some other country. But as the case stands, we have nothing to fear.

In one point of view, we, the abolitionists and colored people, I'd meet this decision, unlooked for and monstrous as it appears, in a cheerful spirit. This very attempt to blot out forever the hopes of an enslaved people may be one necessary link in the chain of events preparatory to the downfall, and complete overthrow of the whole slave system.

The whole history of the anti-slavery movement is studded with proof that all measures devised and executed with a view to allay and diminish the anti-slavery agitation, have only served to increase

intensify, and embolden that agitation. This wisdom of the crafty has been confounded, and the counsels of the ungodly brought to nought. It was so with the Fugitive Slave Bill. It was so with the Kansas Nebraska Bill; and it will be so with this last and most shocking of all pro-slavery devices, this Taney decision.

When great transactions are involved, where the fate of millions is concerned, where a long enslaved and suffering people are to be delivered, I am superstitious enough to believe that the finger of the Almighty may be seen bringing good out of evil, and making the wrath of man redound to his honor, hastening the triumph of righteousness.

The American 'people have been called upon, in a most striking manner, to abolish and put away forever the system of slavery. The subject has been pressed upon their attention in all earnestness and sincerity. The cries of the slave have gone forth to the world, and up to the throne of God. This decision, in my view, is a means of keeping the nation awake on the subject. It is another proof that God does not mean that we shall go to sleep, and forget that we are a slaveholding nation.

Step by step we have seen the slave power advancing; poisoning, corrupting, and perverting the institutions of the country; growing more and more haughty, imperious, and exacting. The white man's liberty has been marked out for the same grave with the black man's,

The ballot box is desecrated, God's law set at nought, armed legislators stalk the halls of Congress, freedom of speech is beaten down in the Senate. The rivers and highways are infested by border ruffians, and white men are made to feel the iron heel of slavery. This ought to arouse us to kill off the hateful thing. They are solemn warnings to which the white people, as well as the black people, should take heed.

If these shall fail, judgment, more fierce or terrible, may come. The lightning, whirlwind, and earthquake may come. Jefferson said that he trembled for his country when he reflected that God is just, and his justice cannot sleep forever. The time may come when even the crushed worm may turn under the tyrant's feet. Goaded by cruelty, stung by a burning sense of wrong, in an awful moment of depression and desperation, the bondman and bondwoman at the south may rush

to one wild and deadly struggle for freedom. Already slaveholders go to bed with bowie knives, and apprehend death at their dinners. Those who enslave, rob, and torment their cooks, may well expect to find death in their dinner-pots.

The world is full of violence and fraud, and it would be strange if the slave, the constant victim of both fraud and violence, should escape the contagion. He, too, may learn to fight the devil with fire, and for one, I am in no frame of mind to pray that this may be long deferred.

Two remarkable occurrences have followed the presidential election, one was the unaccountable sickness traced to the National Hotel at Washington, and the other was the discovery of a plan among the slaves, in different localities, to slay their oppressors. Twenty or thirty of the suspected were put to death. Some were shot, some hanged, some burned, and some died under the lash. One brave man owned himself well acquainted with the conspiracy, but said he would rather die than disclose the facts. He received seven hundred and fifty lashes, and his noble spirit went away to the God who gave it. The name of this hero has been by the meanness of tyrants suppressed. Such a man redeems his race. He is worthy to be mentioned with the Hoffers and Tells, the noblest heroes of history. These insurrectionary movements have been put down, but they may break out at any time, under the guidance of higher intelligence, and with a more invincible spirit.

The fire thus kindled, may be revived again ;
 The flames are extinguished, but the embers remain ;
 One terrible blast may produce an ignition,
 Which shall wrap the whole South in wild conflagration.

The pathway of tyrants lies over volcanoes ;
 The very air they breathe is heavy with sorrows ;
 Agonizing heart-throbs convulse them while sleeping,
 And the wind whispers Death as over them sweeping.

By all the laws of nature, civilization, and of progress, slavery is a doomed system. Not all the skill of politicians, North and South, not all the sophistries of Judges, not all the fulminations of a corrupt press, not all the hypocritical prayers, or the hypocritical refusals to

pray of a hollow-hearted priesthood, not all the devices of sin and Satan, can save the vile thing from extermination.

Already a gleam of hope breaks upon us from the south-west. One Southern city has grieved and astonished the whole South by a preference for freedom. The wedge has entered. Dred Scott, of Missouri, goes into slavery, but St. Louis declares for freedom. The judgment of Taney is not the judgment of St. Louis.

It may be said that this demonstration in St. Louis is not to be taken as an evidence of sympathy with the slave; that it is purely a white man's victory. I admit it. Yet I am glad that white men, bad as they generally are, should gain a victory over slavery. I am willing to accept a judgment against slavery, whether supported by white or black reasons—though I would much rather have it supported by both. He that is not against us, is on our part.

Come what will, I hold it to be morally certain that, sooner or later, by fair means or foul means, in quiet or in tumult, in peace or in blood, in judgment or in mercy, slavery is doomed to cease out of this otherwise goodly land, and liberty is destined to become the settled law of this Republic.

I base my sense of the certain overthrow of slavery, in part, upon the nature of the American Government, the Constitution, the tendencies of the age, and the character of the American people; and this, notwithstanding the important decision of Judge Taney.

I know of no soil better adapted to the growth of reform than American soil. I know of no country where the conditions for affecting great changes in the settled order of things, for the development of right ideas of liberty and humanity, are more favorable than here in these United States.

The very groundwork of this government is a good repository of Christian civilization. The Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Independence, and the sentiments of the founders of the Republic, give us a platform broad enough, and strong enough, to support the most comprehensive plans for the freedom and elevation of all the people of this country, without regard to color, class, or clime.

There is nothing in the present aspect of the anti-slavery question which should drive us into the extravagance and nonsense of advocating a dissolution of the American Union as a means of overthrow-

ing slavery, or freeing the North from the malign influence of slavery upon the morals of the Northern people. While the press is at liberty, and speech is free, and the ballot-box is open to the people of the sixteen free States; while the slaveholders are but four hundred thousand in number, and we are fourteen millions; while the mental and moral power of the nation is with us; while we are really the strong and they are the weak, it would look worse than cowardly to retreat from the Union.

If the people of the North have not the power to cope with these four hundred thousand slaveholders inside the Union, I see not how they could do so outside the Union; indeed, I see not how they could get out of the Union. The strength necessary to move the Union must ever be less than is required to break it up. If we have got to conquer the slave power to get out of the Union, I for one would much rather conquer, and stay in the Union. The latter, it strikes me, is the far more rational mode of action.

I make these remarks in no servile spirit, nor in any superstitious reverence for a mere human arrangement. If I felt the Union to be a curse, I should not be far behind the very chiefest of the disunion Abolitionists in denouncing it. But the evil to be met and abolished is not in the Union. The power arrayed against us is not a parchment.

It is not in changing the dead form of the Union, that slavery is to be abolished in this country. We have to do not with the dead, but the living; not with the past, but the living present.

Those who seek slavery in the Union, and who are everlastingly dealing blows upon the Union, in the belief that they are killing slavery, are most woefully mistaken. They are fighting a dead form instead of a living and powerful reality. It is clearly not because of the peculiar character of our Constitution that we have slavery, but the wicked pride, love of power, and selfish perverseness of the American people. Slavery lives in this country not because of any paper Constitution, but in the moral blindness of the American people, who persuade themselves that they are safe, though the rights of others may be struck down.

Besides, I think it would be difficult to hit upon any plan less likely

to abolish slavery than the dissolution of the Union. The most devoted advocates of slavery, those who make the interests of slavery their constant study, seek a dissolution of the Union as their final plan for preserving slavery from Abolition, and their ground is well taken. Slavery lives and flourishes best in the absence of civilization; a dissolution of the Union would shut up the system in its own congenial barbarism.

The dissolution of the Union would not give the North one single additional advantage over slavery to the people of the North, but would manifestly take from them many which they now certainly possess.

Within the Union we have a firm basis of anti-slavery operation. National welfare, national prosperity, national reputation and honor, and national scrutiny; common rights, common duties, and common country, are so many bridges over which we can march to the destruction of slavery. To fling away these advantages because James Buchanan is President, or Judge Taney gives a lying decision in favor of slavery, does not enter into my notion of common sense.

Mr. Garrison and his friends have been telling us that, while in the Union, we are responsible for slavery; and in so telling us, he and they have told us the truth. But in telling us that we shall cease to be responsible for slavery by dissolving the Union, he and they have not told us the truth.

There now, clearly, is no freedom from responsibility for slavery, but in the Abolition of slavery. We have gone too far in this business now to sum up our whole duty in the cant phrase of "no Union with slaveholders."

To desert the family hearth may place the recreant husband out of the sight of his hungry children, but it cannot free him from responsibility. Though he should roll the waters of three oceans, between him and them, he could not roll from his soul the burden of his responsibility to them; and, as with the private family, so in this instance with the national family. To leave the slave in his chains, in the hands of cruel masters, who are too strong for him, is not to free ourselves from responsibility. Again: If I were on board of a pirate ship, with a company of men and women whose lives and liberties I had put in jeopardy, I would not clear my soul of their blood by jumping in the long boat, and singing out no union with

pirates. My business would be to remain on board, and while I never would perform a single act of piracy again, I should exhaust every means given me by my position, to save the lives and liberties of those against whom I had committed piracy. In like manner, I hold it is our duty to remain inside this Union, and use all the power to restore enslaved millions their precious and God-given rights. The more we have done by our voice and our votes, in times past, to rivet their galling fetters, the more clearly and solemnly comes the sense of duty to remain, to undo what we have done. Where, I ask, could the slave look for release from slavery if the Union were dissolved? I have an abiding conviction founded upon long and careful study of the certain effects of slavery upon the moral sense of slaveholding communities, that if the slaves are ever delivered from bondage, the power will emanate from the free States. All hope that the slaveholders will be self-moved to this great act of justice, is groundless and delusive. Now, as of old, the Redeemer must come from above, not from beneath. To dissolve the Union would be to withdraw the emancipating power from the field.

But I am told this is the argument of expediency. I admit it, and am prepared to show that what is expedient in this instance is right. "Do justice, though the heavens fall." Yes, that is a good motto, but I deny that it would be doing justice to the slave to dissolve the Union and leave the slave in his chains to get out by the clemency of his master, or the strength of his arms. Justice to the slave is to break his chains, and going out of the union is to leave him in his chains, and without any probable chance of getting out of them.

But I come now to the great question as to the constitutionality of slavery. The recent slaveholding decision, as well as the teachings of anti-slavery men, make this a fit time to discuss the constitutional pretensions of slavery.

The people of the North are a law abiding people. They love order and respect the means to that end. This sentiment has sometimes led them to the folly and wickedness of trampling upon the very life of law, to uphold its dead form. This was so in the execution of that thrice accursed Fugitive Slave Bill. Burns and Simms, were sent back to the hell of slavery after they had looked upon

Bunker Hill, and heard liberty thunder in Faneuil Hall. The people permitted this outrage in obedience to the popular sentiment of reverence for law. While men thus respect law, it becomes a serious matter so to interpret the law as to make it operate against liberty. I have a quarrel with those who fling the Supreme Law of this land between the slave and freedom. It is a serious matter to fling the weight of the Constitution against the cause of human liberty, and those who do it, take upon them a heavy responsibility. Nothing but absolute necessity, shall, or ought to drive me to such a concession to slavery.

When I admit that slavery is constitutional, I must see slavery recognized in the Constitution. I must see that it is there plainly stated that one man of a certain description has a right of property in the body and soul of another man of a certain description. There must be no room for a doubt. In a matter so important as the loss of liberty, everything must be proved beyond all reasonable doubt.

The well known rules of legal interpretation bear me out in this stubborn refusal to see slavery where slavery is not, and only to see slavery where it is.

The Supreme Court has, in its day, done something better than make slaveholding decisions. It has laid down rules of interpretation which are in harmony with the true idea and object of law and liberty.

It has told us that the intention of legal instruments must prevail; and that this must be collected from its words. It has told us that language must be construed strictly in favor of liberty and justice.

It has told us where rights are infringed, where fundamental principles are overthrown, where the general system of the law is departed from, the Legislative intention must be expressed with irresistible clearness, to induce a court of justice to suppose a design to effect such objects.

These rules are as old as law. They rise out of the very elements of law. It is to protect human rights, and promote human welfare. Law is in its nature opposed to wrong, and must everywhere be presumed to be in favor of the right. The pound of flesh, but not one drop of blood, is a sound rule of legal interpretation.

Besides there is another rule of law as well of common sense,

which requires us to look to the ends for which a law is made, and to construe its details in harmony with the ends sought.

Now let us approach the Constitution from the stand point thus indicated, and instead of finding in it a warrant for the stupendous system of robbery, comprehended in the term slavery, we shall find it strongly against that system.

“We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.”

Such are the objects announced by the instrument itself, and they are in harmony with the Declaration of Independence, and the principles of human well-being.

Six objects are here declared, “Union,” “defence,” “welfare,” “tranquility,” and “justice,” and “liberty.”

Neither in the preamble nor in the body of the Constitution is there a single mention of the term *slave* or *slave holder*, *slave master* or *slave state*, neither is there any reference to the color, or the physical peculiarities of any part of the people of the United States. Neither is there anything in the Constitution standing alone, which would imply the existence of slavery in this country.

“We, the people”—not we, the white people—not we, the citizens, or the legal voters—not we, the privileged class, and excluding all other classes but we, the people; not we, the horses and cattle, but we the people—the men and women, the human inhabitants of the United States, do ordain and establish this Constitution, &c.

I ask, then, an many to read the Constitution, and tell me where if he can, in what particular that instrument affords the slightest sanction of slavery?

Where will he find a guarantee for slavery? Will he find it in the declaration that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law? Will he find it in the declaration that the Constitution was established to secure the blessing of liberty? Will he find it in the right of the people to be secure in their persons and papers, and houses, and effects? Will he find it in the clause prohibiting the enactment by any State of a bill of attainder?

These all strike at the root of slavery, and any one of them, but faithfully carried out, would put an end to slavery in every State in the American Union.

Take, for example, the prohibition of a bill of attainder. That is a law entailing on the child the misfortunes of the parent. This principle would destroy slavery in every State of the Union.

The law of slavery is a law of attainder. The child is property because its parent was property, and suffers as a slave because its parent suffered as a slave.

Thus the very essence of the whole slave code is in open violation of a fundamental provision of the Constitution, and is in open and flagrant violation of all the objects set forth in the Constitution.

While this and much more can be said, and has been said, and much better said, by Lysander Spooner, William Goodell, Beriah Green, and Gerrit Smith, in favor of the entire unconstitutionality of slavery, what have we on the other side?

How is the constitutionality of slavery made out, or attempted to be made out?

First, by discrediting and casting away as worthless the most beneficent rules of legal interpretation ; by disregarding the plain and common sense reading of the instrument itself; by showing that the Constitution does not mean what it says, and says what it does not mean, by assuming that the WRITTEN Constitution is to be interpreted in the light of a SECRET and UNWRITTEN understanding of its framers, which understanding is declared to be in favor of slavery. It is in this mean, contemptible, under-hand method that the Constitution is pressed into the service of slavery.

They do not point us to the Constitution itself, for the reason that there is nothing sufficiently explicit for their purpose ; but they delight in supposed intentions—intentions no where expressed in the Constitution, and every where contradicted in the Constitution.

Judge Taney lays down this system of interpreting in this wise :

“The general words above quoted would seem to embrace the whole human family, and, if they were used in a similar instrument at this day, would be so understood. But it is too clear for dispute that the enslaved African race were not intended to be included, and formed

no part of the people who framed and adopted this declaration; for if the language, as understood in that day, would embrace them, the conduct of the distinguished men who framed the Declaration of Independence would have been utterly and flagrantly inconsistent with the principles they asserted; and instead of the sympathy of mankind, to which they appealed, they would have deserved and received universal rebuke and reprobation.

“It is difficult, at this day, to realize the state of public opinion respecting that unfortunate class with the civilized and enlightened portion of the world at the time of the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution; but history shows they had, for more than a century, been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and unfit associates for the white race, either socially or politically, and had no rights which white men are bound to respect; and the black man might be reduced to slavery, bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise. This opinion, at that time, was fixed and universal with the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom of morals, which no one thought of disputing, and every one habitually acted upon it, without doubting, for a moment, the correctness of the opinion. And in no nation was this opinion more fixed, and generally acted upon, than in England; the subjects of which government not only seized them on the coast of Africa, but took them, as ordinary merchandise, to where they could make a profit on them. The opinion, thus entertained, was universally maintained on the colonies this side of the Atlantic; accordingly, negroes of the African race were regarded by them as property, and held and bought and sold, as such in every one of the thirteen colonies which united in the Declaration of Independence, and afterwards formed the Constitution.”

The argument here is, that the Constitution comes down to us from a slaveholding period and a slaveholding people; and that, therefore we are bound to suppose that the Constitution recognizes colored persons of African descent, the victims of slavery at that time, as debarred forever from all participation in the benefit of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, although the plain reading of both includes them in their benificent range.

As a man, an American, a citizen, a colored man of both Anglo-Saxon and African descent, I denounce this representation as a most scandalous and devilish perversion of the Constitution, and a brazen misstatement of the facts of history.

But I will not content myself with mere denunciation; I invite attention to the facts.

It is a fact, a great historic fact, that at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, the leading religious denominations in this land were anti-slavery, and were laboring for the emancipation of the colored people of African descent.

The church of a country is often a better index of the state of opinion and feeling than is even the government itself.

The Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and the denomination of Friends, were actively opposing slavery, denouncing the system of bondage, with language as burning and sweeping as we employ at this day.

Take the Methodists. In 1780, that denomination said: "The Conference acknowledges that slavery is contrary to the laws of God man, and nature, and hurtful to society—contrary to the dictates of conscience and true religion, and doing to others that we would not do unto us." In 1784, the same church declared, "that those who buy, sell, or give slaves away, except for the purpose to free them, shall be expelled immediately." In 1785, it spoke even more stringently on the subject. It then said: "We hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and proper means."

So much for the position of the Methodist Church in the early history of the Republic, in those days of darkness to which Judge Taney refers.

Let us now see how slavery was regarded by the Presbyterian Church at that early date.

In 1794, the General Assembly of that body pronounced the following judgment in respect to slavery, slaveholders, and slaveholding.

"1st Timothy, 1st chapter, 10th verse: 'The law was made for man-stealers.' 'This crime among the Jews exposed the perpetrators of it to capital punishment.' Exodus, xxi., 15.—And the apostle

here classes them with sinners of the first rank. The word he uses in its original import, comprehends all who are concerned in bringing any of the human race into slavery, or in retaining them in it. Stealers of men are all those who bring off slaves or freemen, and keep, sell, or buy them. 'To steal a freeman,' says Grotius, 'is the highest kind of theft.' In other instances, we only steal human property, but when we steal or retain men in slavery, we seize those who, in common with ourselves, are constituted, by the original grant, lord of the earth.'

I might quote, at length, from the sayings of the Baptist Church and the sayings of eminent divines at this early period, showing that Judge Taney has grossly falsified history, but will not detain you with these quotations.

The testimony of the church, and the testimony of the founders of this Republic, from the declaration downward, prove Judge Taney false; as false to history as he is to law.

Washington and Jefferson, and Adams, and Jay, and Franklin, and Rush, and Hamilton, and a host of others, held no such degrading views on the subject of slavery as are imputed by Judge Taney to the Fathers of the Republic.

All, at that time, looked for the gradual but certain abolition of slavery, and shaped the constitution with a view to this grand result.

George Washington can never be claimed as a fanatic, or as the representative of fanatics. The slaveholders impudently use his name for the base purpose of giving respectability to slavery. Yet, in a letter to Robert Morris, Washington uses this language—language which, at this day, would make him a terror of the slaveholders, and the natural representative of the Republican party.

"There is not a man living, who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see some plan adopted for the abolition of slavery; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by Legislative authority; and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall not be wanting."

Washington only spoke the sentiment of his times. There were, at that time, Abolition societies in the slave States—Abolition societies in Virginia, in North Carolina, in Maryland, in Pennsylvania, and in

Georgia—all slaveholding States. Slavery was so weak, and liberty so strong, that free speech could attack the monster to its teeth. Men were not mobbed and driven out of the presence of slavery, merely because they condemned the slave system. The system was then on its knees imploring to be spared, until it could get itself decently out of the world.

In the light of these facts, the Constitution was framed, and framed in conformity to it.

It may, however, be asked, if the Constitution were so framed that the rights of all the people were naturally protected by it, how happens it that a large part of the people have been held in slavery ever since its adoption? Have the people mistaken the requirements of their own Constitution?

The answer is ready. The Constitution is one thing, its administration is another, and, in this instance, a very different and opposite thing. I am here to vindicate the law, not the administration of the law. It is the written Constitution, not the unwritten Constitution, that is now before us. If, in the whole range of the Constitution, you can find no warrant for slavery, then we may properly claim it for liberty.

Good and wholesome laws are often found dead on the statute book. We may condemn the practice under them and against them, but never the law itself. To condemn the good law with the wicked practice, is to weaken, not to strengthen our testimony.

It is no evidence that the Bible is a bad book, because those who profess to believe the Bible are bad. The slaveholders of the South, and many of their wicked allies at the North, claim the Bible for slavery; shall we, therefore, fling the Bible away as a pro-slavery book? It would be as reasonable to do so as it would be to fling away the Constitution.

We are not the only people who have illustrated the truth, that a people may have excellent law, and detestable practices. Our Savior denounces the Jews, because they made void the law by their traditions. We have been guilty of the same sin.

The American people have made void our Constitution by just such traditions as Judge Taney and Mr. Garrison have been giving to the world of late, as the true light in which to view the Constitution of

the United States. I shall follow neither. It is not what Moses allowed for the hardness of heart, but what God requires, ought to be the rule.

It may be said that it is quite true that the Constitution was designed to secure the blessings of liberty and justice to the people who made it, and to the posterity of the people who made it, but was never designed to do any such thing for the colored people of African descent.

This is Judge Taney's argument, and it is Mr. Garrison's argument, but it is not the argument of the Constitution. The Constitution imposes no such mean and satanic limitations upon its own beneficent operation. And, if the Constitution makes none, I beg to know what right has any body, outside of the Constitution, for the special accommodation of slaveholding villainy, to impose such a construction upon the Constitution?

The Constitution knows all the human inhabitants of this country as "the people." It makes, as I have said before, no discrimination in favor of, or against, any class of the people, but is fitted to protect and preserve the rights of all, without reference to color, size, or any physical peculiarities. Besides, it has been shown by William Goodell and others, that in eleven out of the old thirteen States, colored men were legal voters at the time of the adoption of the Constitution.

In conclusion, let me say, all I ask of the American people is, that they live up to the Constitution, adopt its principles, imbibe its spirit: and enforce its provisions.

When this is done, the wounds of my bleeding people will be healed, the chain will no longer rust on their ankles, their backs will no longer be torn by the bloody lash, and liberty, the glorious birth-right of our common humanity, will become the inheritance of all the inhabitants of this highly favored country.