*Frederick Douglass: Speeches & Writings*

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**ELIZABETH W. SMITH**
I Have Come to Tell You Something About Slavery: An Address
Lynn, Massachusetts, October 1841

I feel greatly embarrassed when I attempt to address an audience of white people. I am not used to speak to them, and it makes me tremble when I do so, because I have always looked up to them with fear. My friends, I have come to tell you something about slavery—what I know of it, as I have felt it. When I came North, I was astonished to find that the abolitionists knew so much about it, that they were acquainted with its deadly effects as well as if they had lived in its midst. But though they can give you its history—though they can depict its horrors, they cannot speak as I can from experience; they cannot refer you to a back covered with scars, as I can; for I have felt these wounds; I have suffered under the lash without the power of resisting. Yes, my blood has sprung out as the lash embedded itself in my flesh. And yet my master has the reputation of being a pious man and a good Christian. He was a class leader in the Methodist church. I have seen this pious class leader cross and tie the hands of one of his young female slaves, and lash her on the bare skin and justify the deed by the quotation from the Bible, “he who knoweth his master’s will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.”

Our masters do not hesitate to prove from the Bible that slavery is right, and ministers of the Gospel tell us that we were born to be slaves:—to look at our hard hands, and see how wisely Providence has adapted them to do the labor; and then tell us, holding up their delicate white hands, that theirs are not fit to work. Some of us know very well that we have not time to cease from labor, or ours would get soft too; but I have heard the superstitious ones exclaim—and ignorant people are always superstitious—that “if ever a man told the truth, that one did.”

A large portion of the slaves know that they have a right to their liberty.—It is often talked about and read of, for some of us know how to read, although all our knowledge is gained in secret.

I well remember getting possession of a speech by John Quincy Adams, made in Congress about slavery and freedom, and reading it to my fellow slaves. Oh! what joy and gladness it produced to
know that so great, so good a man was pleading for us, and further, to know that there was a large and growing class of people in the north called abolitionists, who were moving for our freedom. This is known all through the south, and cherished with gratitude. It has increased the slaves’ hope for liberty. Without it his heart would faint within him; his patience would be exhausted. On the agitation of this subject he has built his highest hopes. My friends let it not be quieted, for upon you the slaves look for help. There will be no outbreaks, no insurrections, whilst you continue this excitement: let it cease, and the crimes that would follow cannot be told.

Emancipation, my friends, is that cure for slavery and its evils. It alone will give to the south peace and quietness. It will blot out the insults we have borne, will heal the wounds we have endured, and are even now groaning under, will pacify the resentment which would kindle to a blaze were it not for your exertions and, though it may never unite the many kindred and dear friends which slavery has torn asunder, it will be received with gratitude and a forgiving spirit. Ah! how the slave yearns for it, that he may be secure from the lash, that he may enjoy his family, and no more be tortured with the worst feature of slavery, the separation of friends and families. The whip we can bear without a murmur, compared to the idea of separation. Oh, my friends, you cannot feel the slave’s misery, when he is separated from his kindred. The agony of the mother when parting from her children cannot be told. There is nothing we so much dread as to be sold farther south. My friends, we are not taught from books; there is a law against teaching us, although I have heard some folks say we could not learn if we had a chance. The northern people say so, but the south do not believe it, or they would not have laws with heavy penalties to prevent it. The northern people think that if slavery were abolished, we would all come north. They may be more afraid of the free colored people and the runaway slaves going South. We would all seek our home and our friends, but, more than all, to escape from northern prejudice, would we go to the south. Prejudice against color is stronger north than south; it hangs around my neck like a heavy weight. It presses me out from among my fellow men, and, although I have met it at every step the three years I have been out of southern slavery, I have been able, in spite of its influence, “to take good care of myself.”
Country, Conscience, and the Anti-Slavery Cause: An Address
New York, New York, May 11, 1847

I am very glad to be here. I am very glad to be present at this Anniversary, glad again to mingle my voice with those with whom I have stood identified, with those with whom I have labored, for the last seven years, for the purpose of undoing the burdens of my brethren and hastening the day of their emancipation.

I do not doubt but that a large portion of this audience will be disappointed, both by the manner and the matter of what I shall this day set forth. The extraordinary and unmerited eulogies which have been showered upon me, here and elsewhere, have done much to create expectations which, I am well aware, I can never hope to gratify. I am here, a simple man, knowing what I have experienced in Slavery, knowing it to be a bad system, and desiring, by all Christian means, to seek its overthrow. I am not here to please you with an eloquent speech, with a refined and logical address, but to speak to you the sober truths of a heart overborne with gratitude to God that we have in this land, cursed as it is with Slavery, so noble a band to second my efforts and the efforts of others in the noble work of undoing the Yoke of Bondage, with which the majority of the States of this Union are now unfortunately cursed.

Since the last time I had the pleasure of mingling my voice with the voices of my friends on this platform, many interesting and even trying events have occurred to me. I have experienced, within the last eighteen or twenty months, many incidents, all of which it would be interesting to communicate to you; but many of these I shall be compelled to pass over at this time, and confine my remarks to giving a general outline of the manner and spirit with which I have been hailed abroad, and welcomed at the different places which I have visited during my absence of twenty months.

You are aware, doubtless, that my object in going from this country was to get beyond the reach of the clutch of the man
who claimed to own me as his property. I had written a book giving a history of that portion of my life spent in the gall and bitterness and degradation of Slavery, and in which I also identified my oppressors as the perpetrators of some of the most atrocious crimes. This had deeply incensed them against me and stirred up within them the purpose of revenge, and, my whereabouts being known, I believed it necessary for me, if I would preserve my liberty, to leave the shores of America and take up my abode in some other land, at least until the excitement occasioned by the publication of my Narrative had subsided. I went to England, Monarchical England, to get rid of Democratic Slavery, and I must confess that, at the very threshold, I was satisfied that I had gone to the right place. Say what you will of England—of the degradation—of the poverty—and there is much of it there—say what you will of the oppression and suffering going on in England at this time, there is Liberty there, there is Freedom there, not only for the white man but for the black man also. The instant that I stepped upon the shore and looked into the faces of the crowd around me, I saw in every man a recognition of my manhood, and an absence, a perfect absence, of everything like that disgusting hate with which we are pursued in this country. [Cheers.] I looked around in vain to see in any man’s face a token of the slightest aversion to me on account of my complexion. Even the cabmen demeaned themselves to me as they did to other men, and the very dogs and pigs of old England treated me as a man! I cannot, however, my friends, dwell upon this anti-Prejudice, or rather, the many illustrations of the absence of Prejudice against Color in England, but will proceed, at once, to defend the Right and Duty of invoking English aid and English sympathy for the overthrow of American Slavery, for the education of Colored Americans, and to forward, in every way, the interests of humanity; inasmuch as the right of appealing to England for aid in overthrowing Slavery in this country has been called in question, in public meetings and by the press, in this City.

I cannot agree with my friend Mr. Garrison in relation to my love and attachment to this land. I have no love for America, as such; I have no patriotism. I have no country. What country have I? The Institutions of this Country do not know me—do not recognize me as a man. I am not thought of, spoken of, in
any direction, out of the Anti-Slavery ranks, as a man. I am not thought of or spoken of, except as a piece of property belonging to some *Christian* Slaveholder, and all the Religious and Political Institutions of this Country alike pronounce me a Slave and a chattel. Now, in such a country as this I cannot have patriotism. The only thing that links me to this land is my family, and the painful consciousness that here there are 3,000,000 of my fellow creatures groaning beneath the iron rod of the worst despotism that could be devised even in Pandemonium,—that here are men and brethren who are identified with me by their complexion, identified with me by their hatred of Slavery, identified with me by their love and aspirations for Liberty, identified with me by the stripes upon their backs, their inhuman wrongs and cruel sufferings. This, and this only, attaches me to this land, and brings me here to plead with you, and with this country at large, for the disenthrallment of my oppressed countrymen, and to overthrow this system of Slavery which is crushing them to the earth. How can I love a country that dooms 3,000,000 of my brethren, some of them my own kindred, my own brothers, my own sisters, who are now clanking the chains of Slavery upon the plains of the South, whose warm blood is now making fat the soil of Maryland and of Alabama, and over whose crushed spirits rolls the dark shadow of Oppression, shutting out and extinguishing forever the cheering rays of that bright Sun of Liberty, lighted in the souls of all God’s children by the omnipotent hand of Deity itself? How can I, I say, love a country thus cursed, thus bedewed with the blood of my brethren? A Country, the Church of which, and the Government of which, and the Constitution of which are in favor of supporting and perpetuating this monstrous system of injustice and blood? I have not, I cannot have, any love for this country, as such, or for its Constitution. I desire to see it overthrown as speedily as possible and its Constitution shivered in a thousand fragments, rather than that this foul curse should continue to remain as now. [Hisses and cheers.]

In all this, my friends, let me make myself understood. I do not hate America as against England, or against any other country or land. I love Humanity all over the globe. I am anxious to see Righteousness prevail in all directions. I am anxious to see Slavery overthrown here; but, I never appealed to Englishmen
in a manner calculated to awaken feelings of hatred or disgust, or to inflame their prejudices toward America as a nation, or in a manner provocative of national jealousy or ill-will; but I always appealed to their conscience—to the higher and nobler feelings of the people of that country, to enlist them in this cause. I always appealed to their manhood, that which preceded their being Englishmen, (to quote an expression of my friend Phillips), I appealed to them as men, and I had a right to do so. They are men, and the Slave is a man, and we have a right to call upon all men to assist in breaking his bonds, let them be born when and live where they may.

But it is asked, “What good will this do?” or “What good has it done?” “Have you not irritated, have you not annoyed your American friends and the American people rather than done them good?” I admit that we have irritated them. They deserve to be irritated. I am anxious to irritate the American people on this question. As it is in physics, so in morals, there are cases which demand irritation and counter-irritation. The conscience of the American public needs this irritation, and I would blister it all over from center to circumference, until it gives signs of a purer and a better life than it is now manifesting to the world.

But why expose the sins of one nation in the eyes of another? Why attempt to bring one people under the odium of another people? There is much force in this question. I admit that there are sins in almost every country which can be best removed by means confined exclusively to their immediate locality. But such evils and such sins pre-suppose the existence of a moral power in their immediate locality sufficient to accomplish the work of renovation. But, where, pray, can we go to find moral power in this nation sufficient to overthrow Slavery? To what institution, to what party shall we apply for aid? I say we admit that there are evils which can be best removed by influences confined to their immediate locality. But in regard to American Slavery it is not so. It is such a giant crime, so darkening to the soul, so blinding in its moral influence, so well calculated to blast and corrupt all the humane principles of our nature, so well adapted to infuse its own accursed spirit into all around it, that the people among whom it exists have not the moral power to abolish it. Shall we go to the Church for this influence? We have heard its character described. Shall we go to Politicians or Political Parties? Have
they the moral power necessary to accomplish this mighty task? They have not. What are they doing at this moment? Voting supplies for Slavery—voting supplies for the extension, the stability, the perpetuation of Slavery in this land. What is the press doing? The same. The pulpit? Almost the same. I do not flatter myself that there is moral power in the land sufficient to overthrow Slavery, and I welcome the aid of England. And that aid will come. The growing intercourse between England and this country, by means of steam navigation, the relaxation of the protective system in various countries in Europe, gives us an opportunity to bring in the aid, the moral and Christian aid, of those living on the other side of the Atlantic. We welcome it in the language of the resolution. We entreat our British friends to continue to send their remonstrances across the deep against Slavery in this land. And these remonstrances will have a powerful effect here. Sir, the Americans may tell of their ability, and I have no doubt they have it, to keep back the invader’s hosts, to repulse the strongest force that its enemies may send against this country. It may boast, and rightly boast of its capacity to build its ramparts so high that no foe can hope to scale them—to render them so impregnable as to defy the assaults of the world. But, Sir, there is one thing it cannot resist, come from what quarter it may. It cannot resist truth. You cannot build your forts so strong, nor your ramparts so high, nor arm yourselves so powerfully, as to be able to withstand the overwhelming moral sentiment against Slavery now flowing into this land. For example: Prejudice against Color is continually becoming weaker in this land; and why? Because the whole European Continent denounces this sentiment as unworthy a lodgment in the breast of an enlightened community. And the American abroad dares not now, even in a public conveyance, to lift his voice in defence of this disgusting prejudice.

I do not mean to say that there are no practices abroad which deserve to receive an influence, favorable to their extermination, from America. I am most glad to know that Democratic Freedom—not the bastard Democracy which, while loud in its protestations of regard for Liberty and Equality, builds up Slavery, and, in the name of Freedom fights the battles of Despotism—is making great strides in Europe. We see, abroad, in England especially, happy indications of the progress of
American principles. A little while ago England was cursed by a Corn monopoly—by that giant monopoly which snatched from the mouths of the famishing Poor the bread which you sent from this land. The community—the people of England demanded its destruction, and they have triumphed! We have aided them, and they aid us, and the mission of the two nations, henceforth, is to serve each other.

Sir, it is said that, when abroad, I misrepresented my country on this question. I am not aware of any misrepresentation. I stated facts and facts only. A gentleman of your own City, Rev. Dr. Cox, has taken particular pains to stigmatize me as having introduced the subject of Slavery illegitimately into the World’s Temperance Convention. But what was the fact? I went to that Convention, not as a Delegate—I went into it by the invitation of a Committee of the Convention. I suppose most of you know the circumstances, but I wish to say one word in relation to the spirit and the principle which animated me at that meeting. I went into it at the invitation of the Committee, and spoke not only at their urgent request, but by public announcement. I stood on the platform on the evening referred to, and heard some eight or ten Americans address the 7,000 people assembled in that vast Hall. I heard them speak of the Temperance movement in this land. I heard them eulogize the Temperance Societies in the highest terms, calling on England to follow their example (and England may follow them with advantage to herself); but I heard no reference made to the 3,000,000 of people in this country who are denied the privilege, not only of Temperance, but of all other Societies. I heard not a word of the American Slaves, who, if seven of them were found together at a Temperance meeting or any other place, would be scourged and beaten by their cruel tyrants. Yes, nine-and-thirty lashes is the penalty required to be inflicted by the law if any of the Slaves get together in a number exceeding seven, for any purpose, however peaceable or laudable. And while these American gentlemen were extending their hands to me, and saying, “How do you do, Mr. Douglass? I am most happy to meet you here;” &c., &c., I knew that, in America, they would not have touched me with a pair of tongs. I felt, therefore, that that was the place and the time to call to remembrance the 3,000,000 of Slaves, whom I aspired to represent on that occasion. I did so, not maliciously,
but with a desire, only, to subserve the best interests of my race. I besought the American Delegates who had at first responded to my speech with shouts of applause, when they should arrive at home, to extend the borders of their Temperance Societies, so as to include the 500,000 Colored People in the Northern States of the Union. I also called to mind the facts in relation to the mob that occurred in the City of Philadelphia in the year 1842. I stated these facts to show to the British public how difficult it is for a colored man in this country to do anything to elevate himself or his race from the state of degradation in which they are plunged; how difficult it is for him to be virtuous or temperate, or anything but a menial, an outcast. You all remember the circumstances of the mob to which I have alluded. A number of intelligent, philanthropic, manly colored men, desirous of snatching their colored brethren from the fangs of intemperance, formed themselves into a procession and walked through the streets of Philadelphia with appropriate banners, and badges, and mottoes. I stated the fact that that procession was not allowed to proceed far, in the City of Philadelphia—The American City of Brotherly Love, the city of all others loudest in its boasts of freedom and liberty—before these noble-minded men were assaulted by the citizens, their banners torn in shreds and themselves trampled in the dust, and inhumanly beaten, and all their bright and fond hopes and anticipations in behalf of their friends and their race blasted by the wanton cruelty of their white fellow citizens. And all this was done for no other reason than that they had presumed to walk through the streets with Temperance banners and badges, like human beings.

The statement of this fact caused the whole Convention to break forth in one general expression of intense disgust at such atrocious and inhuman conduct. This disturbed the composure of some of our American representatives, who, in serious alarm, caught hold of the skirts of my coat, and attempted to make me desist from my exposition of the situation of the colored race in this country. There was one Doctor of Divinity there—the ugliest man that I ever saw in my life—who almost tore the skirts of my coat off, so vehement was he in his friendly attempts to induce me to yield the floor. But fortunately the audience came to my rescue, and demanded that I should go on, and I did go on, and, I trust, discharged my duty to my brethren in bonds
and the cause of Human Liberty, in a manner not altogether
unworthy the occasion.

I have been accused of dragging the question of Slavery
into the Convention. I had a right to do so. It was the World’s
Convention—not the Convention of any sect or number of
sects—not the Convention of any particular Nation—not a
man’s nor a woman’s Convention, not a black man’s nor a white
man’s Convention, but the World’s Convention, the convention
of all, black as well as white, bond as well as free. And I stood
there, as I thought, a representative of the 3,000,000 of men
whom I had left in rags and wretchedness to be devoured by
the accursed Institution which stands by them, as with a drawn
sword, ever ready to fall upon their devoted and defenceless
heads. I felt, as I said to Dr. Cox, that it was demanded of me
by Conscience, to speak out boldly in behalf of those whom
I had left behind. [Cheers.] And, sir, (I think I may say this,
without subjecting myself to the charge of egotism) I deem it
very fortunate for the friends of the Slave, that Mr. Garrison
and myself were there just at that time. Sir, the Churches in
this country have long repined at the position of the Churches
in England on the subject of Slavery. They have sought many
opportunities to do away the prejudice of the English Churches
against American Slavery. Why, sir, at this time there were not
far from Seventy Ministers of the Gospel from Christian Amer-
ica, in England, pouring their leprous pro-Slavery distilment
into the ears of the people of that country, and by their prayers,
their conversation and their public speeches, seeking to darken
the British mind on the subject of Slavery, and to create in the
English public the same cruel and heartless apathy that prev-
vails in this country in relation to the Slave, his wrongs and his
rights. I knew them by their continuous slandering of my race,
and at this time, and under these circumstances, I deemed it
a happy interposition of God, in behalf of my oppressed, and
misrepresented, and slandered people, that one of their number
should be able to break his chains and burst up through the
dark incubations of malice and hate and degradation which
had been thrown over them, and stand before the British pub-
lic to open to them the secrets of the prison-house of bondage
in America. [Cheers.] Sir, the Slave sends no Delegates to the
Evangelical Alliance. [Cheers.] The Slave sends no Delegates to
the World’s Temperance Convention. Why? Because chains are upon his arms, and fetters fast bind his limbs. He must be driven out to be sold at auction by some Christian Slaveholder, and the money for which his soul is bartered must be appropriated to spread the Gospel among the Heathen.

Sir, I feel it is good to be here. There is always work to be done. Slavery is everywhere. Slavery goes out in the Cambria and comes back in the Cambria. Slavery was in the Evangelical Alliance, looking saintly in the person of Rev. Doctor Smythe; it was in the World’s Temperance Convention, in the person of Rev. Mr. Kirk. Dr. Marsh went about saying, in so many words, that the unfortunate Slaveholders in America were so peculiarly situated, so environed by uncontrollable circumstances that they could not liberate their slaves; that if they were to emancipate them they would be, in many instances, cast into prison. Sir, it did me good to go around on the heels of this gentleman. I was glad to follow him around for the sake of my country, for the country is not, after all, so bad as Rev. Dr. Marsh represented it to be. My fellow countrymen, what think ye he said of you, on the other side of the Atlantic? He said you were not only pro-Slavery, but that you actually aided the Slaveholder in holding his Slaves securely in his grasp; that, in fact, you compelled him to be a Slaveholder. This I deny. You are not so bad as that. You do not compel the Slaveholder to be a Slaveholder.

And Rev. Doctor Cox, too, talked a great deal over there; and among other things he said that “many Slaveholders— dear Christian men!—were sincerely anxious to get rid of their Slaves”; and to show how difficult it is for them to get rid of their human chattels, he put the following case. A man living in a State, the laws of which compel all persons emancipating their slaves to remove them beyond its limits, wishes to liberate his slaves, but he is too poor to transport them beyond the confines of the State in which he resides; therefore he cannot emancipate them—he is necessarily a Slaveholder. But, sir, there was one fact, which I happened, fortunately, to have on hand just at that time, which completely neutralized this very affecting statement of the Doctor’s. It so happens that Messrs. Gerrit Smith and Arthur Tappan have advertised for the especial benefit of this afflicted class of Slaveholders, that they have set apart the sum of $10,000 to be appropriated in aiding them to remove their
emancipated Slaves beyond the jurisdiction of the State, and that the money would be forthcoming on application being made for it; but no such application was ever made. This shows that, however truthful the statements of these gentlemen may be concerning the things of the world to come, they are lamentably reckless in their statements concerning things appertaining to this world. I do not mean to say that they would designedly tell that which is false, but they did make the statements which I have ascribed to them.

And Doct. Cox and others charge me with having stirred up warlike feeling while abroad. This charge, also, I deny. The whole of my arguments and the whole of my appeals, while I was abroad, were in favor of anything else than war. I embraced every opportunity to propagate the principles of Peace while I was in Great Britain. I confess, honestly, that were I not a Peace man, were I a believer in fighting at all, I should have gone through England, saying to Englishmen, as Englishmen, “There are 3,000,000 of men across the Atlantic who are whipped, scourged, robbed of themselves, denied every privilege, denied the right to read the Word of the God who made them, trampled under foot, denied all the rights of human beings; go to their rescue; shoulder your muskets, buckle on your knapsacks, and in the invincible cause of Human Rights and Universal Liberty, go forth, and the laurels which you shall win will be as fadeless and as imperishable as the eternal aspirations of the human soul after that Freedom which every being made after God’s image instinctively feels is his birthright.” This would have been my course had I been a war man. That such was not my course, I appeal to my whole career while abroad to determine.

“Weapons of war we have cast from the battle:
     Truth is our armor—our watchword is Love;
   Hushed be the sword, and the musketry’s rattle,
     All our equipments are drawn from above.
   Praise then the God of Truth,
     Hoary age and ruddy youth.
   Long may our rally be
     Love, Light and Liberty;
   Ever our banner the banner of Peace.”
What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? An Address

Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852

Mr. President, Friends and Fellow Citizens: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me, quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaning. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country school houses, avails me nothing on the present occasion.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th of July oration. This certainly sounds large, and out of the common way, for me. It is true that I have often had the privilege to speak in this beautiful Hall, and to address many who now honor me with their presence. But neither their familiar faces, nor the perfect gage I think I have of Corinthian Hall, seems to free me from embarrassment.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable—and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight. That I am here to-day is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say, I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium. With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you.

166
This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time for individual men; but nations number their years by thousands. According to this fact, you are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressible stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot’s heart might be sadder, and the reformer’s brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in the thought that America is young. Great streams are not easily turned from channels, worn deep in the course of ages. They may sometimes rise in quiet and stately majesty, and inundate the land, refreshing and fertilizing the earth with their mysterious properties. They may also rise in wrath and fury, and bear away, on their angry waves, the accumulated wealth of years of toil and hardship. They, however, gradually flow back to the same old channel, and flow on as serenely as ever. But, while the river may not be turned aside, it may dry up, and leave nothing behind but the withered branch, and the unsightly rock, to howl in the abyss-sweeping wind, the sad tale of departed glory. As with rivers so with nations.

Fellow-citizens, I shall not presume to dwell at length on the associations that cluster about this day. The simple story of it is that, 76 years ago, the people of this country were British
subjects. The style and title of your “sovereign people” (in which you now glory) was not then born. You were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government; and England as the fatherland. This home government, you know, although a considerable distance from your home, did, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgement, it deemed wise, right and proper.

But, your fathers, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Such a declaration of agreement on my part would not be worth much to anybody. It would, certainly, prove nothing, as to what part I might have taken, had I lived during the great controversy of 1776. To say now that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discant on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men’s souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! here lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers. But, to proceed.

Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. Their conduct was wholly unexceptionable. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign
indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered. They were not the men to look back.

As the sheet anchor takes a firmer hold, when the ship is tossed by the storm, so did the cause of your fathers grow stronger, as it breasted the chilling blasts of kingly displeasure. The greatest and best of British statesmen admitted its justice, and the loftiest eloquence of the British Senate came to its support. But, with that blindness which seems to be the unvarying characteristic of tyrants, since Pharoah and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea, the British Government persisted in the exactions complained of.

The madness of this course, we believe, is admitted now, even by England; but we fear the lesson is wholly lost on our present rulers.

Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers were wise men, and if they did not go mad, they became restive under this treatment. They felt themselves the victims of grievous wrongs, wholly incurable in their colonial capacity. With brave men there is always a remedy for oppression. Just here, the idea of a total separation of the colonies from the crown was born! It was a startling idea, much more so, than we, at this distance of time, regard it. The timid and the prudent (as has been intimated) of that day, were, of course, shocked and alarmed by it.

Such people lived then, had lived before, and will, probably, ever have a place on this planet; and their course, in respect to any great change, (no matter how great the good to be attained, or the wrong to be redressed by it), may be calculated with as much precision as can be the course of the stars. They hate all changes, but silver, gold and copper change! Of this sort of change they are always strongly in favor.

These people were called tories in the days of your fathers; and the appellation, probably, conveyed the same idea that is meant by a more modern, though a somewhat less euphonious term, which we often find in our papers, applied to some of our old politicians.

Their opposition to the then dangerous thought was earnest and powerful; but, amid all their terror and affrighted vociferations against it, the alarming and revolutionary idea moved on, and the country with it.

On the 2d of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshippers of property,
clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution; and as we seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day, whose transparency is at all equal to this, it may refresh your minds and help my story if I read it.

“Resolved, That these united colonies are, and of right, ought to be free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, dissolved.”

Citizens, your fathers made good that resolution. They succeeded; and to-day you reap the fruits of their success. The freedom gained is yours; and you, therefore, may properly celebrate this anniversary. The 4th of July is the first great fact in your nation’s history—the very ring-bolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny.

Pride and patriotism, not less than gratitude, prompt you to celebrate and to hold it in perpetual remembrance. I have said that the Declaration of Independence is the ring-bolt to the chain of your nation’s destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.

From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen. Heavy billows, like mountains in the distance, disclose to the leeward huge forms of flinty rocks! That bolt drawn, that chain broken, and all is lost. Cling to this day—cling to it, and to its principles, with the grasp of a storm-tossed mariner to a spar at midnight.

The coming into being of a nation, in any circumstances, is an interesting event. But, besides general considerations, there were peculiar circumstances which make the advent of this republic an event of special attractiveness.

The whole scene, as I look back to it, was simple, dignified and sublime.

The population of the country, at the time, stood at the insignificant number of three millions. The country was poor in the munitions of war. The population was weak and scattered, and
the country a wilderness unsubdued. There were then no means of concert and combination, such as exist now. Neither steam nor lightning had then been reduced to order and discipline. From the Potomac to the Delaware was a journey of many days. Under these, and innumerable other disadvantages, your fathers declared for liberty and independence and triumphed.

Fellow Citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too—great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable; and yet I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory.

They loved their country better than their own private interests; and, though this is not the highest form of human excellence, all will concede that it is a rare virtue, and that when it is exhibited, it ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty, they lost sight of all other interests.

They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but that they knew its limits. They believed in order; but not in the order of tyranny. With them, nothing was “settled” that was not right. With them, justice, liberty and humanity were “final”; not slavery and oppression. You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times.

How circumspect, exact and proportionate were all their movements! How unlike the politicians of an hour! Their statesmanship looked beyond the passing moment, and stretched away in strength into the distant future. They seized upon
eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defence. Mark them!

Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause, honorably inviting the scrutiny of an on-looking world, reverently appealing to heaven to attest their sincerity, soundly comprehending the solemn responsibility they were about to assume, wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, did, most deliberately, under the inspiration of a glorious patriotism, and with a sublime faith in the great principles of justice and freedom, lay deep the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen and still rises in grandeur around you.

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze. The din of business, too, is hushed. Even Mammon seems to have quitted his grasp on this day. The ear-piercing fife and the stirring drum unite their accents with the ascending peal of a thousand church bells. Prayers are made, hymns are sung, and sermons are preached in honor of this day; while the quick martial tramp of a great and multitudinous nation, echoed back by all the hills, valleys and mountains of a vast continent, bespeak the occasion one of thrilling and universal interest—a nation’s jubilee.

Friends and citizens, I need not enter further into the causes which led to this anniversary. Many of you understand them better than I do. You could instruct me in regard to them. That is a branch of knowledge in which you feel, perhaps, a much deeper interest than your speaker. The causes which led to the separation of the colonies from the British crown have never lacked for a tongue. They have all been taught in your common schools, narrated at your firesides, unfolded from your pulpits, and thundered from your legislative halls, and are as familiar to you as household words. They form the staple of your national poetry and eloquence.

I remember, also, that, as a people, Americans are remarkably familiar with all facts which make in their own favor. This is esteemed by some as a national trait—perhaps a national weakness. It is a fact, that whatever makes for the wealth or for the reputation of Americans, and can be had cheap! will be found by Americans. I shall not be charged with slandering Americans,
if I say I think the American side of any question may be safely left in American hands.

I leave, therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other gentlemen whose claim to have been regularly descended will be less likely to be disputed than mine!

**THE PRESENT.**

My business, if I have any here to-day, is with the present. The accepted time with God and his cause is the ever-living now.

> "Trust no future, however pleasant,  
> Let the dead past bury its dead;  
> Act, act in the living present,  
> Heart within, and God overhead."

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome. But now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child’s share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. Sydney Smith tells us that men seldom eulogize the wisdom and virtues of their fathers, but to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own. This truth is not a doubtful one. There are illustrations of it near and remote, ancient and modern. It was fashionable, hundreds of years ago, for the children of Jacob to boast, we have “Abraham to our father,” when they had long lost Abraham’s faith and spirit. That people contented themselves under the shadow of Abraham’s great name, while they repudiated the deeds which made his name great. Need I remind you that a similar thing is being done all over this country to-day? Need I tell you that the Jews are not the only people who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous? Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in the
bodies and souls of men, shout—“We have Washington to our father.” Alas! that it should be so; yet so it is.

“The evil that men do, lives after them, The good is oft’ interred with their bones.”

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For who is there so cold, that a nation’s sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation’s jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the “lame man leap as an hart.”

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven,
were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that
country in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive
lament of a peeled and woé-smitten people!

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept
when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the
willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us
away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us
required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget
thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I
do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth.”

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear
the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous
yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee
shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully
remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, “may
my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave
to the roof of my mouth!” To forget them, to pass lightly over
their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would
be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make
me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then
fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see, this day, and
its popular characteristics, from the slave’s point of view. Stand-
ing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his
wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that
the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to
me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations
of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of
the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false
to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to
be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and
bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity
which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the
name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded
and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce,
with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves
to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! “I
will not equivocate; I will not excuse”; I will use the severest
language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me
that any man, whose judgement is not blinded by prejudice, or
who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right
and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in
this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail
to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you
argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more, and
rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed.
But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued.
What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue?
On what branch of the subject do the people of this country
need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man?
That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slave-
holders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws
for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish
disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two
crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black
man, (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the pun-
ishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will sub-
ject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the
acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and re-
sponsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is
admitted in the fact that Southern statute books are covered
with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the
teaching of the slave to read or to write. When you can point to
any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may
consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in
your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your
hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall
be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, then will I argue
with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of
the negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing,
planting and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erect-
ing houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in
metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are
reading, writing and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants and
secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets,
authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged
in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging
What to the Slave is the 4th of July?

What to the slave is the 4th of July? 177

gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively, and positively, negatively, and affirmatively. To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong for him.

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with blood, and stained with pollution, is wrong? No! I will not. I have better employments for my time and strength, than such arguments would imply.

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! Who can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it
is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

THE INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE.

Take the American slave-trade, which, we are told by the papers, is especially prosperous just now. Ex-Senator Benton tells us that the price of men was never higher than now. He mentions the fact to show that slavery is in no danger. This trade is one of the peculiarities of American institutions. It is carried on in all the large towns and cities in one-half of this confederacy; and millions are pocketed every year, by dealers in this horrid traffic. In several states, this trade is a chief source of wealth. It is called (in contradistinction to the foreign slave-trade) “the internal slave-trade.” It is, probably, called so, too, in order to
divert from it the horror with which the foreign slave-trade is contemplated. That trade has long since been denounced by this government, as piracy. It has been denounced with burning words, from the high places of the nation, as an execrable traffic. To arrest it, to put an end to it, this nation keeps a squadron, at immense cost, on the coast of Africa. Everywhere, in this country, it is safe to speak of this foreign slave-trade, as a most inhuman traffic, opposed alike to the laws of God and of man. The duty to extirpate and destroy it, is admitted even by our DOCTORS OF DIVINITY. In order to put an end to it, some of these last have consented that their colored brethren (nominally free) should leave this country, and establish themselves on the western coast of Africa! It is, however, a notable fact that, while so much execration is poured out by Americans upon those engaged in the foreign slave-trade, the men engaged in the slave-trade between the states pass without condemnation, and their business is deemed honorable.

Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and American religion. Here you will see men and women reared like swine for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human flesh-jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowie-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers. They are food for the cotton-field, and the deadly sugar-mill. Mark the sad procession, as it moves wearily along, and the inhuman wretch who drives them. Hear his savage yells and his blood-chilling oaths, as he hurries on his affrighted captives! There, see the old man, with locks thinned and gray. Cast one glance, if you please, upon that young mother, whose shoulders are bare to the scorching sun, her briny tears falling on the brow of the babe in her arms. See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, yes! weeping, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn! The drove moves tardily. Heat and sorrow have nearly consumed their strength; suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the
fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the centre of your soul! The crack you heard, was the sound of the slave-whip; the scream you heard, was from the woman you saw with the babe. Her speed had faltered under the weight of her child and her chains! that gash on her shoulder tells her to move on. Follow this drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, where, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

I was born amid such sights and scenes. To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell’s Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the Basin, anchored from the shore, with their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. There was, at that time, a grand slave mart kept at the head of Pratt Street, by Austin Woldfolk. His agents were sent into every town and county in Maryland, announcing their arrival, through the papers, and on flaming “hand-bills,” headed CASH FOR NEGROES. These men were generally well dressed men, and very captivating in their manners. Ever ready to drink, to treat, and to gamble. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness.

The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number have been collected here, a ship is chartered, for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night; for since the anti-slavery agitation, a certain caution is observed.

In the deep still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the
chained gangs that passed our door. The anguish of my boyish heart was intense; and I was often consoled, when speaking to my mistress in the morning, to hear her say that the custom was very wicked; that she hated to hear the rattle of the chains, and the heart-rending cries. I was glad to find one who sympathised with me in my horror.

Fellow-citizens, this murderous traffic is, to-day, in active operation in this boasted republic. In the solitude of my spirit, I see clouds of dust raised on the highways of the South; I see the bleeding footsteps; I hear the doleful wail of fettered humanity, on the way to the slave-markets, where the victims are to be sold like horses, sheep, and swine, knocked off to the highest bidder. There I see the tenderest ties ruthlessly broken, to gratify the lust, caprice and rapacity of the buyers and sellers of men. My soul sickens at the sight.

"Is this the land your Fathers loved,
The freedom which they toiled to win?
Is this the earth whereon they moved?
Are these the graves they slumber in?"

But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented.

By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form. By that act, Mason & Dixon’s line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the star-spangled banner and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman’s gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for men. Not for thieves and robbers, enemies of society, merely, but for men guilty of no crime. Your law-makers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your Secretary of State, your lords, nobles, and ecclesiastics, enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious
country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing. Not fewer than forty Americans have, within the past two years, been hunted down and, without a moment’s warning, hurried away in chains, and consigned to slavery and excruciating torture. Some of these have had wives and children, dependent on them for bread; but of this, no account was made. The right of the hunter to his prey stands superior to the right of marriage, and to all rights in this republic, the rights of God included! For black men there are neither law, justice, humanity, nor religion. The Fugitive Slave Law makes mercy to them, a crime; and bribes the judge who tries them. An American Judge gets ten dollars for every victim he consigns to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so. The oath of any two villains is sufficient, under this hell-black enactment, to send the most pious and exemplary black man into the remorseless jaws of slavery! His own testimony is nothing. He can bring no witnesses for himself. The minister of American justice is bound by the law to hear but one side; and that side, is the side of the oppressor. Let this damning fact be perpetually told. Let it be thundered around the world, that, in tyrant-killing, king-hating, people-loving, democratic, Christian America, the seats of justice are filled with judges, who hold their offices under an open and palpable bribe, and are bound, in deciding in the case of a man’s liberty, to hear only his accusers!

In glaring violation of justice, in shameless disregard of the forms of administering law, in cunning arrangement to entrap the defenceless, and in diabolical intent, this Fugitive Slave Law stands alone in the annals of tyrannical legislation. I doubt if there be another nation on the globe, having the brass and the baseness to put such a law on the statute-book. If any man in this assembly thinks differently from me in this matter, and feels able to disprove my statements, I will gladly confront him at any suitable time and place he may select.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

I take this law to be one of the grossest infringements of Christian Liberty, and, if the churches and ministers of our country were not stupidly blind, or most wickedly indifferent, they, too, would so regard it.
At the very moment that they are thanking God for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, they are utterly silent in respect to a law which robs religion of its chief significance, and makes it utterly worthless to a world lying in wickedness. Did this law concern the “mint, anise and cummin”—abridge the right to sing psalms, to partake of the sacrament, or to engage in any of the ceremonies of religion, it would be smitten by the thunder of a thousand pulpits. A general shout would go up from the church, demanding repeal, repeal, instant repeal! And it would go hard with that politician who presumed to solicit the votes of the people without inscribing this motto on his banner. Further, if this demand were not complied with, another Scotland would be added to the history of religious liberty, and the stern old Covenanters would be thrown into the shade. A John Knox would be seen at every church door, and heard from every pulpit, and Fillmore would have no more quarter than was shown by Knox, to the beautiful, but treacherous Queen Mary of Scotland. The fact that the church of our country, (with fractional exceptions), does not esteem “the Fugitive Slave Law” as a declaration of war against religious liberty, implies that that church regards religion simply as a form of worship, an empty ceremony, and not a vital principle, requiring active benevolence, justice, love and good will towards man. It esteems sacrifice above mercy; psalm-singing above right doing; solemn meetings above practical righteousness. A worship that can be conducted by persons who refuse to give shelter to the houseless, to give bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and who enjoin obedience to a law forbidding these acts of mercy, is a curse, not a blessing to mankind. The Bible addresses all such persons as “scribes, pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith.”

THE CHURCH RESPONSIBLE.

But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who
stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given
the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system.
They have taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the
relation of master and slave is ordained of God; that to send back
an escaped bondman to his master is clearly the duty of all the
followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this horrible blasphemy
is palmed off upon the world for Christianity.

For my part, I would say, welcome infidelity! welcome athe-
ism! welcome anything! in preference to the gospel, as preached
by those Divines! They convert the very name of religion into
an engine of tyranny, and barbarous cruelty, and serve to con-
firm more infidels, in this age, than all the infidel writings of
Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, put together, have
done! These ministers make religion a cold and flinty-hearted
thing, having neither principles of right action, nor bowels of
compassion. They strip the love of God of its beauty, and leave
the throne of religion a huge, horrible, repulsive form. It is a
religion for oppressors, tyrants, man-stealers, and thugs. It is
not that “pure and undefiled religion” which is from above,
and which is “first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated,
full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and with-
out hypocrisy.” But a religion which favors the rich against the
poor; which exalts the proud above the humble; which divides
mankind into two classes, tyrants and slaves; which says to the
man in chains, stay there; and to the oppressor, oppress on; it is a
religion which may be professed and enjoyed by all the robbers
and enslavers of mankind; it makes God a respecter of persons,
denies his fatherhood of the race, and tramples in the dust the
great truth of the brotherhood of man. All this we affirm to
be true of the popular church, and the popular worship of our
land and nation—a religion, a church, and a worship which,
on the authority of inspired wisdom, we pronounce to be an
abomination in the sight of God. In the language of Isaiah,
the American church might be well addressed, “Bring no more
vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new
moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away
with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons
and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble
to me; I am weary to bear them; and when ye spread forth
your hands I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea! when ye make
many prayers, I will not hear. YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgement; relieve the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead for the widow.”

The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in connection with its ability to abolish slavery.

The sin of which it is guilty is one of omission as well as of commission. Albert Barnes but uttered what the common sense of every man at all observant of the actual state of the case will receive as truth, when he declared that “There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it.”

Let the religious press, the pulpit, the Sunday school, the conference meeting, the great ecclesiastical, missionary, Bible and tract associations of the land array their immense powers against slavery and slave-holding; and the whole system of crime and blood would be scattered to the winds; and that they do not do this involves them in the most awful responsibility of which the mind can conceive.

In prosecuting the anti-slavery enterprise, we have been asked to spare the church, to spare the ministry; but how, we ask, could such a thing be done? We are met on the threshold of our efforts for the redemption of the slave, by the church and ministry of the country, in battle arrayed against us; and we are compelled to fight or flee. From what quarter, I beg to know, has proceeded a fire so deadly upon our ranks, during the last two years, as from the Northern pulpit? As the champions of oppressors, the chosen men of American theology have appeared—men, honored for their so-called piety, and their real learning. The LORDS of Buffalo, the SPRINGS of New York, the LATHROPS of Auburn, the COXES and SPENCERS of Brooklyn, the GANNETS and SHARPS of Boston, the DEWEYS of Washington, and other great religious lights of the land, have, in utter denial of the authority of Him, by whom they professed to be called to the ministry, deliberately taught us, against the example of the Hebrews and against the remonstrance of the Apostles, they teach “that we ought to obey man’s law before the law of God.”
My spirit wearies of such blasphemy; and how such men can be supported, as the “standing types and representatives of Jesus Christ,” is a mystery which I leave others to penetrate. In speaking of the American church, however, let it be distinctly understood that I mean the great mass of the religious organizations of our land. There are exceptions, and I thank God that there are. Noble men may be found, scattered all over these Northern States, of whom Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, Samuel J. May of Syracuse, and my esteemed friend* on the platform, are shining examples; and let me say further, that upon these men lies the duty to inspire our ranks with high religious faith and zeal, and to cheer us on in the great mission of the slave’s redemption from his chains.

RELIGION IN ENGLAND AND RELIGION IN AMERICA.

One is struck with the difference between the attitude of the American church towards the anti-slavery movement, and that occupied by the churches in England towards a similar movement in that country. There, the church, true to its mission of ameliorating, elevating, and improving the condition of mankind, came forward promptly, bound up the wounds of the West Indian slave, and restored him to his liberty. There, the question of emancipation was a highly religious question. It was demanded, in the name of humanity, and according to the law of the living God. The Sharps, the Clarksons, the Wilberforces, the Buxtons, and Burchells and the Knibbs, were alike famous for their piety, and for their philanthropy. The anti-slavery movement there was not an anti-church movement, for the reason that the church took its full share in prosecuting that movement: and the anti-slavery movement in this country will cease to be an anti-church movement, when the church of this country shall assume a favorable, instead of a hostile position towards that movement.

Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation

*Rev. R. R. Raymond
What to the Slave is the 4th of July?

(as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria, and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere tools and bodyguards of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence, and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard-earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe “that, of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth,” and hath commanded all men, everywhere to love one another; yet you notoriously hate, (and glory in your hatred), all men whose skins are not colored like your own. You declare, before the world, and are understood by the world to declare, that you “hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that, among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”; and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson,
“is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,” a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a byword to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your Union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation’s bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!

THE CONSTITUTION.

But it is answered in reply to all this, that precisely what I have now denounced is, in fact, guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States; that the right to hold and to hunt slaves is a part of that Constitution framed by the illustrious Fathers of this Republic.

Then, I dare to affirm, notwithstanding all I have said before, your fathers stooped, basely stooped

“To palter with us in a double sense:
And keep the word of promise to the ear,
But break it to the heart.”

And instead of being the honest men I have before declared them to be, they were the veriest imposters that ever practised on mankind. This is the inevitable conclusion, and from it there is no escape. But I differ from those who charge this baseness on the framers of the Constitution of the United States. It is a slander upon their memory, at least, so I believe. There is not time
now to argue the constitutional question at length; nor have I the ability to discuss it as it ought to be discussed. The subject has been handled with masterly power by Lysander Spooner, Esq., by William Goodell, by Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., and last, though not least, by Gerritt Smith, Esq. These gentlemen have, as I think, fully and clearly vindicated the Constitution from any design to support slavery for an hour.

Fellow-citizens! there is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. Is slavery among them? Is it at the gateway? or is it in the temple? It is neither. While I do not intend to argue this question on the present occasion, let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slave-holding instrument, why neither slavery, slaveholding, nor slave can anywhere be found in it. What would be thought of an instrument, drawn up, legally drawn up, for the purpose of entitling the city of Rochester to a track of land, in which no mention of land was made? Now, there are certain rules of interpretation, for the proper understanding of all legal instruments. These rules are well established. They are plain, common-sense rules, such as you and I, and all of us, can understand and apply, without having passed years in the study of law. I scout the idea that the question of the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of slavery is not a question for the people. I hold that every American citizen has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing one. Without this right, the liberty of an American citizen would be as insecure as that of a Frenchman. Ex-Vice-President Dallas tells us that the constitution is an object to which no American mind can be too attentive, and no American heart too devoted. He further says, the constitution, in its words, is plain and intelligible, and is meant for the home-bred, unsophisticated understandings of our fellow-citizens. Senator Berrien tells us that the Constitution is the fundamental law, that which controls all others.
The charter of our liberties, which every citizen has a personal interest in understanding thoroughly. The testimony of Senator Breese, Lewis Cass, and many others that might be named, who are everywhere esteemed as sound lawyers, so regard the constitution. I take it, therefore, that it is not presumption in a private citizen to form an opinion of that instrument.

Now, take the constitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.

I have detained my audience entirely too long already. At some future period I will gladly avail myself of an opportunity to give this subject a full and fair discussion.

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "The arm of the Lord is not shortened," and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference. The time was when such could be done. Long established customs of hurtful character could formerly fence themselves in, and do their evil work with social impunity. Knowledge was then confined and enjoyed by the privileged few, and the multitude walked on in mental darkness. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the earth. Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are distinctly heard on the other.
The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire, the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty, “Let there be Light,” has not yet spent its force. No abuse, no outrage whether in taste, sport or avarice, can now hide itself from the all-pervading light. The iron shoe, and crippled foot of China must be seen, in contrast with nature. Africa must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God.” In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying it:

God speed the year of jubilee
   The wide world o’er!
When from their galling chains set free,
   Th’ oppress’d shall vilely bend the knee,
And wear the yoke of tyranny
   Like brutes no more.
That year will come, and freedom’s reign,
To man his plundered rights again
   Restore.

God speed the day when human blood
   Shall cease to flow!
In every clime be understood,
   The claims of human brotherhood,
And each return for evil, good,
   Not blow for blow;
That day will come all feuds to end,
And change into a faithful friend
   Each foe.

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,
   When none on earth
Shall exercise a lordly power,
   Nor in a tyrant’s presence cower;
But all to manhood’s stature tower,
   By equal birth!
THAT HOUR WILL COME, to each, to all,
And from his prison-house, the thrall
   Go forth.

Until that year, day, hour, arrive,
With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,
To break the rod, and rend the gyve,
The spoiler of his prey deprive—
    So witness Heaven!
And never from my chosen post,
Whate'er the peril or the cost,
    Be driven.
The Proclamation and a Negro Army: An Address

New York, New York, February 6, 1863

I congratulate you, upon what may be called the greatest event of our nation’s history, if not the greatest event of the century. In the eye of the Constitution, the supreme law of the land, there is not now, and there has not been, since the first day of January, a single slave lawfully deprived of Liberty in any of the States now recognized as in Rebellion against the National Government. In all those States Slavery is now in law, as in fact, a system of lawless violence, against which the slave may lawfully defend himself. [Cheers.]

In the hurry and excitement of the moment, it is difficult to grasp the full and complete significance of President Lincoln’s proclamation. The change in the attitude of the Government is vast and startling. For more than sixty years the Federal Government has been little better than a stupendous engine of Slavery and oppression, through which Slavery has ruled us, as with a rod of iron. The boast that Cotton is King was no empty boast. Assuming that our Government and people will sustain the President and his Proclamation, we can scarcely conceive of a more complete revolution in the position of a nation. England, no longer ruled by a king, the Pope turned Protestant, Austria—a Republic, would not present a greater revolution.

I hail it as the doom of Slavery in all the States. I hail it as the end of all that miserable statesmanship, which has for sixty years jiggled and deceived the people, by professing to reconcile what is irreconcilable. No politician need now hope to rise to power, by crooking the pregnant hinges of the knee to Slavery. We part company forever with that amphibious animal called a Northern man with Southern principles. Color is no longer a crime or a badge of bondage. At last the out-spread wings of the American Eagle afford shelter and protection to men of all colors, all countries, and all climes, and the long oppressed black man may honorably fall or gloriously flourish under the star-spangled banner. [Applause.]
I stand here to-night not only as a colored man and an American, but, by the express decision of the Attorney-General of the United States, as a colored citizen, having, in common with all other citizens, a stake in the safety, prosperity, honor, and glory of a common country. [Cheering.] We are all liberated by this proclamation. Everybody is liberated. The white man is liberated, the black man is liberated, the brave men now fighting the battles of their country against rebels and traitors are now liberated, and may strike with all their might, even if they do thereby manfully striking hurt the Rebels, at their most sensitive point. [Applause.]

I congratulate you upon this amazing change—this amazing approximation toward the sacred truth of human liberty. All the space between man’s mind and God’s mind, says Parker, is crowded with truths that wait to be discovered and organized into law for the better government of society. Mr. Lincoln has not exactly discovered a new truth, but he has dared, in this dark hour of national peril, to apply an old truth, long ago acknowledged in theory by the nation—a truth which carried the American people safely through the war for independence, and one which will carry us, as I believe, safely through the present terrible and sanguinary conflict for national life, if we shall but faithfully live up to that great truth. [Cheers.]

Born and reared as a slave, as I was, and wearing on my back the marks of the slavedriver’s lash, as I do, it is natural that I should value the Emancipation Proclamation for what it is destined to do for the slaves. I do value it for that. It is a mighty event for the bondman, but it is a still mightier event for the nation at large, and mighty as it is for both, the slave and the nation, it is still mightier when viewed in its relation to the cause of truth and justice throughout the world. It is in this last character that I prefer to consider it. There are certain great national acts, which by their relation to universal principles, properly belong to the whole human family, and Abraham Lincoln’s Proclamation of the 1st of January, 1863, is one of these acts. Henceforth that day shall take rank with the Fourth of July. [Applause.] Henceforth it becomes the date of a new and glorious era in the history of American liberty. Henceforth it shall stand associated in the minds of men, with all those stately steps of mankind, from the regions of error and oppression,
which have lifted them from the trial by poison and fire to the trial by Jury—from the arbitrary will of a despot to the sacred writ of habeas corpus—from abject serfdom to absolute citizenship. It will stand in the history of civilization with Catholic Emancipation, with the British Reform Bill, with the repeal of Corn Laws and with that noble act of Russian liberty, by which twenty millions of serfs, against the clamors of haughty tyrants, have been released from servitude. [Loud cheering.] Aye! It will stand with every distinguished event which marks any advance made by mankind from the thraldom and darkness of error to the glorious liberty of truth.

I believe in the millenium—the final perfection of the race, and hail this Proclamation, though wrung out under the goading lash of a stern military necessity, as one reason of the hope that is in me. Men may see in it only a military necessity. To me it has a higher significance. It is a grand moral necessity.

“Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though wrapped up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.”

The conscience of the North has been troubled during all this war. It has seen the inconsistency of fighting for Slavery. It has seen the absurdity of killing the Rebel, while asserting the Rebel’s right to his slave. It has seen the folly of fighting the Rebels with our soft white hands, and keeping back our iron black hands. [Cheers.]

This whole subject of the war and the President’s proclamation naturally brings us to the consideration of first principles, the nature of truth and error, and their respective powers and prospects, in the Government of mankind. I attempt no scientific definition either of truth or of error. The occasion does not require it. Truth is that view or theory of things which describes them as they really are. It describes a man as a man, a horse as a horse, and never confounds the distinction between men and horses. Error is any and every contradiction of truth, in much or in little. The one is in its nature a unit. The other is in its nature multitudinous. The devil gave his name correctly when he called himself legion—for there are a thousand wrong ways to but one right way.
Nevertheless, truth as one, shall be more than a match for error as a thousand—and all nations shall yet be brought into harmony with its absolute requirements. Either in the truth, or man himself, there is a compensating force, which renders him, in a high sense superior to the numerical advantages of error. By some means or other, whatever may be said of innate depravity, men do and will in the end prefer truth to error, and the right way to the wrong one.

When we meet with facts in our experience of the world, which seem to contradict this, the explanation can always be found in considerations entirely apart from the qualities of truth on the one hand, and of error on the other. Men never prefer the crooked to the straight road, because the one is crooked and the other is straight. It is always done because of some fancied advantage gained, or some disadvantage avoided—and done in the name of expediency, as choosing the least between two evils.

But little hope would there be for this world covered with error as with a cloud of thick darkness, and studded with all abounding injustice, wrong, oppression, intemperance, and monopolies, bigotry, superstition, King-craft, priest-craft, pride of race, prejudice of color, chattel-slavery—the grand sum of all human woes, and villanies—if there were not in man, deep down, and it may be very deep down, in his soul or in the truth itself, an elective power, or an attractive force, call it by what name you will, which makes truth in her simple beauty and excellence, ever preferred to the grim and ghastly powers of error.

Hence, though this life voyage of ours offers a thousand opportunities to drown, to only one of being saved; hence, though the sea is broad, and the ship is narrow; hence, though the billows are mighty, and the bark frail, there is a power on board, a captain at the helm whose presence forbids despair even in the darkest hours.

The hope of the world—the progress of nations—the triumph of the truth and the reign of reason and righteousness among men are conditioned on free discussion. Good old John Brown [loud applause] was a madman at Harper’s Ferry. Two years pass away, and the nation is as mad as he. [Great cheering.] Every General and every soldier that now goes in good faith to Old
Virginia, goes there for the very purpose that sent honest John Brown to Harper’s Ferry. [Renewed cheers.]

After discussing the momentous power of Free Speech, he continued: One of the peculiarities of our times compels notice here. Parties have to some extent changed sides on the subject of free speech. The men who would a few years ago mob and hang Abolitionists for exercising the sacred right of free thought and speech, have all at once become the most urgent for the largest liberty of speech. And I must say, detestable as are the motives that have brought them to the defense of free speech, I think they have the right in the controversy. I do not know where I would limit the right of simple utterance of opinion. If any one is base enough to spit upon the grave of his mother, or to shout for Jefferson Davis, let him, and do not lock him up for it. [Cheering.] After that almost inspired announcement of equal rights contained in the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson has left us nothing more worthy of his profound mind than his saying that error may be safely tolerated where truth is left free to combat it. Equally true, though not always equally manifest, is it that error can never be safely tolerated when truth is not left free to combat it. Whence came the terrible conflict which now rocks our land with the thundering tramp of hostile armies? Why does the cold and greedy earth now drink up the warm red blood of our patriot sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers—carrying sorrow and agony into every household? Many answers have been returned to these questions. This, however, is the true one. A stupendous error, long tolerated, and protected even from discussion, held too sacred to be called in question, has at last become belligerent and snatched the sword of treason for permanent dominion.

Nothing strange has happened unto us; the result has been reached naturally. Our trouble is a logical part of the conflict of ages, past, present, and future. It will go on. It cannot be stopped. Here, as elsewhere, the fire will go out only when the fuel is exhausted. The moral chemistry of the universe makes peace between Liberty and Slavery impossible. Moral necessity is upon the slaveholders to stand up for Slavery. The dream and delusion of the hour is the thought of restoring the country to the condition it occupied previous to the war. What good would come of such restoration? What is the tremendous war but the
ripened fruit of that past condition? Our present, horrible as it is, is the legitimate child of our previous; and to go back to what we were is simply to ask us to come back again to what we are. The conflict has changed its form from words to blows, and it may change again from blows to words; but the conflict itself, in one form or the other, will go on till truth is slain or error is driven from the field. [Cheers.]

Much as I hate Slavery, and glad as I should be to see it instantly abolished, I would consent gladly to any peace if but the right of speech, and the liberty of peaceably assembling could be secured in every part of the Union. [Applause.] When error consents to reason, truth may also consent to reason. But when error takes the sword, truth must also take the sword. Not to do this, and to cry out “peace at any price,” is to desert the truth, and give up the world to the powers of darkness. The man who now preaches peace, preaches treason to his country and to the paramount claims of truth and justice.

The slaveholders are fighting for Slavery. The boldness with which they avow this object would astonish the world, but that the world knows that cunning, not courage, is the cause of their making it. They know that all attempt at concealment would be absurd and fruitless. They are fighting for Slavery—and the slave system being against nature—they are fighting against the eternal laws of nature, and though they should for a time succeed—to dissolve the Union, capture a part of our territory, compel the North to sue for peace, and obtain peace upon the usual terms of compromise by which the South gets all and the North nothing, [Laughter and cheers] Nature with the aid of free discussion would set herself right in the end. Great is truth, great is humanity, and they must prevail. [Cheering.] A great man once said it was useless to re-enact the laws of God, meaning thereby the laws of Nature. But a greater man than he will yet teach the world that it is useless to re-enact any other laws with any hope of their permanence.

There are said to be some towns in this country which are finished, nothing more will or can be done for them, and that they might be fenced in without detriment. There are individuals of the same description whose greatest alarm seems to be that things may change after they are dead. [Cheers.] As the nerves of one of your dwellers in a finished town would be shocked by
the sound of a hammer, those of our respectable Hunkers are
shocked by the sound of a newly discovered truth. [Laughter
and applause.] They recognize it as a disturber of the world’s
peace. But the world, like the fish preached to in the stream,
moves on in obedience to the laws of its being, bearing away all
excreences and imperfections in its progress. It has its periods
of illumination as well as of darkness, and often bounds forward
a greater distance in a single year than in an age before. The rosy
morning light of a great truth breaks upon the vision of some
early riser—and straightway he wakes up the drowsy world with
the announcement of the day and the work. Sleepy people don’t
like to be disturbed. They hate the troubler, call him names,
draw their curtains, close their blinds, turn their backs to the
light—but the sun rises nevertheless, and the most conservative
Hunker of them all is compelled in time to acknowledge it.
[Cheers.]

Less than one hundred years ago it is said that the people of
the West Coast of Ireland thought that the proper way to attach
a horse to a plow was by the tail. [Laughter.] It seemed to them
that that was what the tail was made for. [Laughter.] Only two
hundred years ago, we are told by the pious Godwin, that the
Christian people of the British West Indies thought it a sin to
baptize persons of color who were slaves. The argument against
such baptism was quite logical. They said that negroes are prop-
erty, and it is not right to baptize property; and a learned divine
thought it necessary to write a book to prove that it was not a
sin to baptize a negro. [Laughter.]

At a time less remote than that, even in New England, now
so remarkable for its enlightenment and its liberality, if any
aged woman were in any wise distinguished for talent, and a
little eccentric withal, as most gifted women are supposed to
be, she stood a smart chance of being hanged as a witch. New
England has outgrown this folly, and is condemned by some
who reproach her, for refusing now to fall in with the barbarism
of Slavery. At one time to hate and despise a Jew, simply for
being a Jew, was almost a Christian virtue. The Jews were treated
with every species of indignity, and not allowed to learn trades,
nor to live in the same part of the city with other people. Now
kings cannot go to war without the consent of a Jew. The Jew
has come up, and the negro will come up by and by.
The world is not much older than it was when to torture and burn men for a difference of speculative religious belief was deemed simple fidelity to the Christian faith. All the wisdom of Boston could devise no better way a hundred years ago to cure a woman of Quakerism than by the cart-whip. Roger Williams found more toleration among the Indians of Rhode Island than among the Puritans of Massachusetts. It is only thirty years ago when gentlemen of property and standing in the very Athens of America felt it a patriotic duty to mob Wm. L. Garrison and break up a woman’s Anti-Slavery prayer-meeting. Only two years ago there remained enough of this brutality and barbarism in Boston to block the streets of that city with a mob of 10,000 men clamoring for the blood of an eminent Boston citizen, for simply daring to speak against Slavery.

These facts are notorious and oft repeated. I mention them here not to cast reproach but as a part of the struggle between truth and error, and as a proof of progress. Fortunately for mankind, error is a bad reasoner. It can fight better than it can reason. It can make mouths, call names, and fling brickbats, but cannot reason except to damage itself. All the powers of the universe fight steadily against it. Brooks could knock down the Senator, but the whole South in arms could not knock down the Senator’s argument. Such is my confidence in the potency of truth, in the power of reason, I hold that had the right of free discussion been preserved during the last thirty years, had the Northern parties and politicians been half so diligent in protecting this high constitutional right, from the first ruthlessly struck down all over the South, as they have been in framing laws for the recapture of poor, toil-worn and foot-sore slaves, we should now have no Slavery to breed Rebellion, nor war, black with dismal terror, to drench our land with blood, and fill our dwellings with sorrow and mourning. Slavery would have fallen as it fell in the West Indies, as it has fallen in the Free States, as it has fallen in Russia, and elsewhere, and as it will fall everywhere, when men can assail it with the weapons of reason and the facts of experience. [Applause.]

No men better understand the moral weakness of Slavery than the slaveholders themselves. The simple ones among them may think the system strong in reason; but the leading minds at the South know and confess the contrary. The Columbia (S.C.)
Telegraph only echoed the sentiment of the whole South when it said thirty years ago:

“Let us declare through the public journals of the country that the question of Slavery is not and shall not be open to discussion, that the moment any private individual shall attempt to lecture upon its evils and immorality, and the necessity of putting means in operation to secure us from them, in that same moment, his tongue shall be cut out and cast upon a dung hill.”

The Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle, of the same period, speaking of one who had attempted thus to lecture, says:

“He should have been hanged up as high as Haman, to rot till the wind whistled through his bones. The cry of the whole South should be death to the Abolitionists, wherever found.”

The Lords of the Lash have often boasted of late that discussion has convinced them that Slavery is right. That in this respect they are wiser than Washington, who desired to see Slavery abolished, and would gladly give his vote for such abolition; wiser than Jefferson, who said he trembled for his country when he reflected that God was just, and that his justice would not sleep forever; wiser than Franklin, who was President of the first Abolition Society in America; wiser than Madison, who did not wish to have it seen in the Constitution that there could be any such thing as property in man; wiser than the Congress of 1807, which abolished the Slave Trade, and wiser than the men of 1787, who abolished Slavery in all the Territory then belonging to the United States.

They tell us that discussion has made them thus wise. Discussion indeed! Discussion which only permits one side to be heard, and compels the other to remain silent, would be likely to produce just such a result. The slaveholder has spoken but the slave has remained dumb. On the side of the oppressor is power, on the side of the slave weakness. The whole array of Southern lawyers, priests, and politicians—the whole power of the Southern press, pulpit, and platform have for 30 years stifled the very groans of the millions in bondage. Valuing itself at twenty hundred millions of dollars—a mountain of gold—it has bribed and bought up all the subtle machinery of religion, science, and law, in favor of Slavery. While denouncing rails, tar and feathers, faggots and fire against any who should dare call in question the accursed system of Slavery, and this they call
discussion. Thus the moral eyes of Southern society were put out. They banished from among them every moral antidote for the dreadful evil of Slavery and have chosen to walk blindfolded in to the very jaws of death.

I confess that when I consider the common people of the South, especially helpless women and children, who are often startled at midnight, and made to leave their beds and homes, half clad, to find their way to the woods through darkness, rain, mud, and snow, I feel something like pity for these people, while I feel a burning indignation, for those who have blinded and deceived them. Under the whole heavens there never was a people more completely given over to believe a lie that they might be destroyed. They are suffering all the horrors of war at this moment because deluded by their moral teachers, both at the North and at the South. Look at it! If they went to the church where men profess to speak by the authority of God, what did they hear on the subject of Slavery? Why, this: That Jesus Christ and his Apostles, though they walked in the presence of Roman Slavery—which was far more severe than ours—nowhere condemned the system; that the New Testament prescribed and enjoined obedience from slaves to their masters; that even to catch and return runaway slaves was in accordance with apostolic example, and that the main feature of the Fugitive Slave bill was in harmony with Paul’s Epistle to Philemon. [Laughter.] They learned from their moral teachers that they might whip, hold, buy, and sell men and women, innocently, for Slavery was of Divine appointment, established by the law of Christ. Slaveholders are the modern Abrahams, Isaacs and Jacobs in the Church of God. [Renewed laughter.]

Such was the teaching at the South. Was the case much better at the North? You know and I know that even here, the black mantle of Slavery was everywhere flaunted in our faces from Northern pulpits. If at any time during the last thirty years preceding the firing upon Fort Sumter any slaveholder had consulted the leading divines of the North as to the sinfulness of Slavery, he would have found that the teachings of the Northern pulpit differed very little from that of the South. A few heterodox, and still fewer orthodox ministers, filling humble pulpits and living upon small salaries, have espoused the cause of the slave; but the ministers of high standing—the $5,000
divines—were almost to a man on the side of Slavery, and did their best to defend the system from the assaults of the Abolitionists. They steadily denied the inherent sinfulness of Slavery and so far from being rebuked as an offender, the slaveholder was received and welcomed as a saint.

Every influential pulpit of Rochester, where I live, was open to slaveholders so lately as two or three years ago. The old school General Assembly met there—the city survived it—at that time. [Laughter and applause.] The late Dr. Thornwall, a champion, alike of Secession and of Slavery, was there. He was courted and welcomed by every prominent pulpit of the city, while that faithful champion of the rights of human nature, Dr. George B. Cheever, was coldly repulsed from all such pulpits. What was true of Rochester three years ago, and true of the whole North, would become true again if this war were settled on the basis of compromise. Nay, I should expect that the Press would be fettered at the North nearly as heavily as it is at the South. Slavery would be welcomed and honored in Northern pulpits, with a servility more disgusting and shocking than ever before.

Why do I make these remarks? I will tell you. Much as I value the present apparent hostility to Slavery at the North, I plainly see that it is less the outgrowth of high and intelligent moral conviction against Slavery, as such, than because of the trouble its friends have brought upon the country. I would have Slavery hated for that and more. A man that hates Slavery only for what it does to the white man, stands ready to embrace it the moment its injuries are confined to the black man, and he ceases to feel those injuries in his own person. [Cheers.] I confess, if I could possibly doubt the salvation of this nation, it would not be because the traitors and Rebels are strong, but because we are weak at this vital point. There is yet among us a cowardly shrinking from a full and frank acknowledgment of the manhood of the negro, and a whole-souled recognition of his power to help in the great struggle through which we are passing. [Cheers.]

But to proceed: The saying that the children of this world are in their day and generation wiser than the children of light, is verified in the history of the conflict between Slavery and Freedom. History will accord to the Abolitionists a large measure of wisdom, and heroic courage and fortitude in assailing Slavery in its strongholds of Church and State; but it cannot award to
them that prophetic vision that sees the end from the beginning. It is fortunate, I think, that they did not see it—fortunate that they walked by faith and not by sight. Could they have foreseen their country torn and rent by the giant footsteps of this terrible rebellion—could they have seen a million of men, confronting each other, discussing the question of Slavery with cannon—could they have seen the rivers red with blood, and the fields whitened with human bones, they might have shrunk back from the moral contest, and thus only have postponed this physical contest to a future day, and upon a more dreadful scale than the one now going on.

From the very first the enemies of Abolitionism comprehended one feature in the nature of the contest between Freedom and Slavery. They saw at least the evils attendant on that conflict. Merchants saw their trade with the South embarrassed and ruined. Churches saw their denominations divided. The old political parties saw their organizations broken up. Statesmen saw the Union dissolved and terrible border wars inaugurated. Worshiping at mammon’s altar themselves they knew the mighty hold which mammon held upon its Southern worshipers. They said that the slaveholders would strike down the Government before they would give up Slavery. They predicted that the South would secede if we did not stop talking and voting against Slavery. By their very predictions, they helped on the fulfillment. The South was flattered and encouraged by what was thus expected of her by leading men at the North. She doubtless expected that those who said she would dissolve her connection with the Union without once denouncing her doing so as a crime, recognized her right to do so, and would rather think her wanting in spirit if she did not do so. Foreseeing the evils thus predicted, these men cried with one accord: “Give us the Union; give us Slavery and prosperity; give us Slavery and peace; give us error, if Slavery be an error; and as for what you call truth and human liberty, crucify them.”

The world has seen no greater example of patience and perseverance than that exhibited by the Abolitionists in meeting the objections of their opponents. Weapons of war they had cast from the battle. No Abolitionist ever drew sword against Slavery until Slavery drew its exterminating sword against Liberty on the soil of Kansas. It was only after he saw his brave sons hunted like
felons and shot down like wolves, that noble old John Brown
went to Harper’s Ferry. [Cheers.] Until this, Anti-Slavery men,
of all shades of opinion were eminently peaceful. The grand mis-
take of the Abolitionists was in supposing the American people
better than they were. They did not see that an evil so gigantic
as Slavery, so interwoven with the social arrangements, man-
ers, and morals of the country, could not be removed without
something like the social earthquake now upon us. They ought
to have known that the huge Leviathan would cause the deep to
boil—aye, to howl, and hiss, and foam in sevenfold agony. Great
however, as was our mistake, incomparably greater and vastly
more harmful was the mistake of those who flattered themselves
and the nation that all was peace and prosperity, and that the
nation had nothing to fear from anything but Abolitionists.
They thought that this nation could go on year after year and
century after century, outraging and trampling upon the sacred
rights of human nature, and that it could still enjoy peace, and
prosperity. To them the world was without a moral Government
and might was right. The war now on our hands is sometimes
described as a school for the moral education of the nation. I
like the designation. It certainly is a school, and a very severe
and costly one. But who will say that it will not be worth all it
costs if it shall correct our errors concerning Slavery and free us
from that barbarism. [Applause.]

Slavery from the first has not only been our great national
crime, but our great national scandal and mistake. The first
grand error of which this war is likely to cure us is: That a nation
can outlaw one part of its people without endangering the rights
and liberties of all the people. They will learn that they can-
not put a chain on the ankle of the bondmen without finding
the other end of it about their own necks. Hitherto the white
laborer has been deluded into the belief that to degrade the
black laborer is to elevate the white. We shall learn by-and-by
that labor will always be degraded where idleness is the badge of
respectability. Whence came the degrading phrases, fast growing
popular before the war, “hireling labor,” “greasy mechanics,”
“mudsills of society.” The laborer should be “owned by the cap-
talists.”—Poor “white trash”—and a dozen others of the same
class: They come from Slavery. I think I never saw anywhere
such contempt for poor white people as in the South. [Loud
cheers.] Gen. Butler has only made a discovery which any man
having two eyes could not fail to make in the South, that the
war of the Rebels—is a war of the rich against the poor. Let
Slavery go down with the war, and let labor cease to be fettered,
chained, flogged, and branded. Let it be paid honest wages for
honest work, and then we shall see as never before, the laborers
in all sections of this country rising to respectability and power.
[Cheers.]

That this war is to abolish Slavery I have no manner of doubt.
The process may be long and tedious, but the event will come
at last. It is among the undoubted certainties of the future.
[Cheering.] It is objected to the Proclamation of Freedom, that
it only abolishes Slavery in the Rebel States. To me it seems a
blunder that Slavery was not declared abolished everywhere in
the Republic. Slavery anywhere endangers the National cause,
and should perish everywhere. [Loud applause.] But even in this
omission of the Proclamation the evil is more seeming than real.
When Virginia is a free State, Maryland cannot be a slave State.
When Missouri is a free State, Kentucky cannot be a slave State.
[Cheers.] Slavery must stand or fall together. Strike it at either
extreme—either on the head or at the heel, and it dies. A brick
knocked down at either end of the row brings every brick in it to
the ground. [Applause.] You have heard the story of the Irishman
who paid the price of two spurs—but refused to carry away but
one; on the ground, as he said, that if he could make one side of
his horse go, he would risk the other. [Laughter and cheering.] So
I say, if we can strike down Slavery in the Rebel States, I will risk
the downfall of Slavery in the Border States. [Cheering.]

It is again objected to this Proclamation that it is only an ink
and paper proclamation. I admit it. The objector might go a step
further, and assert that there was a time when this Proclama-
tion was only a thought, a sentiment, an idea—a hope of some
radical Abolitionist—for such it truly was. But what of it? The
world has never advanced a single inch in the right direction,
when the movement could not be traced to some such small
beginning. The bill abolishing Slavery, and giving freedom to
eight hundred thousand people in the West Indies, was a paper
bill. The Reform bill, that broke up the rotten borough system
in England, was a paper bill. The act of Catholic Emancipation
was a paper act; and so was the bill repealing the Corn Laws.
Greater than all, our own Declaration of Independence was at one time but ink and paper. [Cheering.] The freedom of the American colonies dates from no particular battle during the war. No man can tell upon what particular day we won our national independence. But the birth of our freedom is fixed on the day of the going forth of the Declaration of Independence. In like manner aftercoming generations will celebrate the first of January as the day which brought liberty and manhood to the American slaves. [Loud cheers.] How shall this be done? I answer: That the paper Proclamation must now be made iron, lead and fire, by the prompt employment of the negro’s arm in this contest. [Great applause.] I hold that the Proclamation, good as it is, will be worthless—a miserable mockery—unless the nation shall so far conquer its prejudice as to welcome into the army full-grown black men to help fight the battles of the Republic. [Renewed applause.]

I know it is said that the negroes won’t fight. But I distrust the accuser. In one breath the Copperheads tell you that the slaves won’t fight, and in the next they tell you that the only effect of the Proclamation is to make the slaves cut their masters’ throats [laughter] and stir up insurrections all over the South. The same men tell you that the negroes are lazy and good for nothing, and in the next breath they tell you that they will all come North and take the labor away from the laboring white men here. [Laughter and cheers.] In one breath they tell you that the negro can never learn the military art, and in the next they tell you that there is danger that white men may be outranked by colored men. [Continued laughter.] I may be pardoned if I leave these objections to their own contradictions and absurdities. They are like the Kilkenny cats, and there is a fair probability of their reaching the same result. [Great laughter.]

But we are asked why have the negroes remained silent spectators of the dreadful struggle now going on? I am not annoyed by this question. The course pursued by them is creditable to their wisdom. The negro has proved that he is much like the white man. He will fight, but he must have a reasonable prospect of whipping somebody. Up to the first day of last month there was no earthly chance of success in a rising among the slaves. Both the Union and the Confederate armies were in the field against
the negro. Madness itself could not counsel the slaves to rise in such circumstances. Their not doing so should be charged not to their cowardice, but to their good sense.

But who are those who are now opposing the measure of putting arms in the hands of colored men? Who are those who are opposed to raising colored troops? They are the men who would gladly disarm every white soldier now fighting for their country, and hand the country over, bound hand and foot, into the hands of Jefferson Davis. You know the men, and ought to know how much weight should be given to the counsels of such men. Would these men rather drown than be saved by a black man? Would they prefer to see their dwellings burnt to ashes than to have the flames extinguished by colored men? If they would not, then are they traitors in disguise and very thin disguise at that, when they refuse to the country, now in its peril, what they would gladly claim for themselves. They exhibit their unmitigated hollowness by opposing the enrollment of colored troops. [Cheers.]

Do you ask me whether black men will freely enlist in the service of the country? I tell you that that depends upon the white men of the country. The Government must assure them of protection as soldiers, and give them a fair chance of winning distinction and glory in common with other soldiers. [Cheers.] They must not be made the mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the army. When a man leaves home, family, and security, to risk his limbs and life in the field of battle, for God’s sake let him have all the honor which he may achieve, let his color be what it may. If, by the fortunes of war he is flung into the hands of the Rebels, let him be assured that the loyal Government will not desert him, but will hold the Confederate Government strictly responsible, as much for a black as for a white soldier. [Applause.] Give us fair play, and open here your recruiting offices, and their doors shall be crowded with black recruits to fight the battles of the country. [Loud cheers.] Do your part, my white fellow-countrymen, and we will do ours.

Oh! where’s the slave so lowly,
Condemned to chains unholy,
Who, could he burst his chains at fight,
Would pine beneath them slowly?
The colored man only waits for honorable admission into the service of the country. They know that who would be free, themselves must strike the blow, and they long for the opportunity to strike that blow. Thus far, however, the colored men of the Free States, and for the most part, of the Slave States, have had their military ardor chilled by the contempt with which their offer to serve their country has been refused. We asked the Governor of New York if he would accept colored troops, and he said it would be impossible for him to receive them. We asked Gov. Curtin of Pennsylvania, and he would not receive colored soldiers at any rate. So that our ardor was chilled. But I know, colored men now in the army passing for white not much whiter than I, but by shaving their heads very closely they manage to get in. I know one from my own town who has been promoted recently. [Laughter and cheers.] If I could speak loud enough to be heard by the Government at Washington I should say, have a care, lest you let slip the last moment when your call for help can be answered. You have wronged us long and wronged us greatly, but it is not yet too late to retrieve the past. We still stand ready to serve you, and will do it with a will, at the first sound of your war-trumpet. [Cheers.]

I know the colored men of the North; I know the colored men of the South. They are ready to rally under the stars and stripes at the first tap of the drum. Give them a chance; stop calling them “niggers,” and call them soldiers. [Applause.] Give them a chance to seek the bubble reputation at the cannon’s mouth. Stop telling them they can’t fight, and tell them they can fight and shall fight, and they will fight, and fight with vengeance. Give them a chance. The most delicate lady in the city of New York can ride by the side of a black man, if he is there as a servant. Even the most fastidious of our Generals can be waited on by colored men. Why should they object to our fighting? We were with you on the banks of the Mobile, good enough to fight with you under Gen. Jackson. Why not let us fight by your side under Gen. Hooker? [Loud cheering.] We shall have a chance yet, and I tell you to whom I am looking for this. I have great faith, as I told you more than a year ago, in the virtue of the people of the North; I have more in the persistent villainy of the South. [Laughter and applause.] I tell you that under their tent we shall yet be able to accept the aid of the colored man. Away
with prejudice, away with folly, and in this death struggle for liberty, country, and permanent security, let the black, iron hand of the colored man fall heavily on the head of the slaveholding traitors and rebels and lay them low. Give them a chance! Give them a chance. I don’t say they are great fighters. I don’t say they will fight better than other men. All I say is, give them a chance. I feel that we are living in a glorious time. I felt so on the first of January, and have been feeling so ever since. I felt whiter, and I have combed my hair with less difficulty. [Cheers and laughter.] You had a grand time here, and we had a grand time at Boston, on the first of January.

We had two machines running—at Music Hall and Tremont Temple—more than three thousand at each. You want to know what the colored people think. I will tell you how joyfully they received the Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln. We were not all colored either; but we all seemed to be about of one color that day. We met in good spirits at 10 o’clock expecting before the adjournment to have the Proclamation. We had waited on each speaker keeping our eye on the door. No Proclamation. The President said we would meet again at two when he had no doubt we should have the Proclamation. We met again but no Proclamation. We did not know whether to shout or hold our peace but we adjourned again with the understanding that it was on the wires and we should certainly see it in the evening. But no Proclamation came. We went on until 11 o’clock and I said, we won’t go home till morning. By and by Judge Russell went to one of the newspaper offices and obtained a slip containing the Proclamation. I never saw enthusiasm before. I never saw joy before. Men, women, young and old, were up; hats and bonnets were in the air, and we gave three cheers for Abraham Lincoln and three cheers for almost everybody else. Some prayed and some sang, and finally we adjourned from that place to meet in the Rev. Mr. Grimes’ Church; that good old soul [laughter] and we continued greeting them till three o’clock. There was shouting and singing, “Glory, Hallelujah,” “Old John Brown,” “Marching On,” and “Blow Ye, the Trumpet Blow!”—till we got up such a state of enthusiasm that almost anything seemed to be witty—and entirely appropriate to the glorious occasion.

There was one black man who stood in a corner, and I thought I never saw a blacker man and I think I never saw whiter
teeth. Occasionally he would bound up like a fish out of water, and as he was standing in a dark place, you could see nothing going up but a little white streak. [Loud laughter.] About the last he said he must speak, and I will make you his speech. It was all in place. We were up to the point when everything was in order. “Brethren,” said he, “I was born in North Carolina, where my brother Douglass was born, thank God!” I didn’t happen to be born there, but I could not for the life of me interrupt him. Said he, “I was born there, and was born and held a slave there, thank God! [Laughter.] I grew up from childhood to manhood there, thank God!” And the audience shouted. And said he: “When I got to be grown up to man’s estate I wanted to marry a wife, thank God!” [Laughter.] And said he: “I courted no less than sixteen women, thank God!” [Great laughter.] And said he: “The woman I married is here to-night, thank God!” We all rose up to see this little woman, and she was told to get up, and we looked at her, and she was nothing extraordinary [laughter]; but still it was all in place. The feeling of the whole of this black Congregation—for it was mainly black—was that they were ready to offer their services at any moment this Government should call for them. And I want to assure you, and the Government, and everybody, that we are ready, and we only ask to be called into this service. What a glorious day when Slavery shall be no more in this country, when we have blotted out this system of wrong, and made this United States in fact and in truth what it is in theory—The land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. [Loud applause.]
Lessons of the Hour: An Address
Washington, D.C., January 9, 1894

Friends and Fellow Citizens:—No man should come before an audience like the one by whose presence I am now honored, without a noble object and a fixed and earnest purpose. I think that, in whatever else I may be deficient, I have the qualifications indicated, to speak to you this evening. I am here to speak for, and to defend, so far as I can do so within the bounds of truth, a long-suffering people, and one just now subject to much misrepresentation and persecution. Charges are at this time preferred against them, more damaging and distressing than any which they have been called upon to meet since their emancipation.

I propose to give you a colored man’s view of the unhappy relations at present existing between the white and colored people of the Southern States of our union. We have had the Southern white man’s view of the subject. It has been presented with abundant repetition and with startling emphasis, colored by his peculiar environments. We have also had the Northern white man’s view tempered by time, distance from the scene, and his higher civilization.

This kind of evidence may be considered by some as all-sufficient upon which to found an intelligent judgment of the whole matter in controversy, and that therefore my testimony is not needed. But experience has taught us that it is sometimes wise and necessary to have more than the testimony of two witnesses to bring out the whole truth, especially in this the case where one of the witnesses has a powerful motive for concealing or distorting the facts in any given case. You must not, therefore, be surprised if my version of the Southern question shall widely differ from both the North and the South, and yet I shall fearlessly submit my testimony to the candid judgment of all who hear me. I shall do so in the firm belief that my testimony is true.

There is one thing, however, in which I think we shall all agree at the start. It is that the so-called, but mis-called, negro problem is one of the most important and urgent subjects that can now engage public attention. It is worthy of the most earnest consideration of every patriotic American citizen. Its solution
involves the honor or dishonor, glory or shame, happiness or misery of the whole American people. It involves more. It touches deeply not only the good name and fame of the Republic, but its highest moral welfare and its permanent safety. Plainly enough the peril it involves is great, obvious and increasing, and should be removed without delay.

The presence of eight millions of people in any section of this country constituting an aggrieved class, smarting under terrible wrongs, denied the exercise of the commonest rights of humanity, and regarded by the ruling class in that section, as outside of the government, outside of the law, and outside of society; having nothing in common with the people with whom they live, the sport of mob violence and murder is not only a disgrace and scandal to that particular section but a menace to the peace and security of the people of the whole country.

I have waited patiently but anxiously to see the end of the epidemic of mob law and persecution now prevailing at the South. But the indications are not hopeful, great and terrible as have been its ravages in the past, it now seems to be increasing not only in the number of its victims, but in its frantic rage and savage extravagance. Lawless vengeance is beginning to be visited upon white men as well as black. Our newspapers are daily disfigured by its ghastly horrors. It is no longer local, but national; no longer confined to the South, but has invaded the North. The contagion is spreading, extending and over-leaping geographical lines and state boundaries, and if permitted to go on it threatens to destroy all respect for law and order not only in the South, but in all parts of our country—North as well as South. For certain it is, that crime allowed to go on unresisted and unarrested will breed crime. When the poison of anarchy is once in the air, like the pestilence that walketh in the darkness, the winds of heaven will take it up and favor its diffusion. Though it may strike down the weak to-day, it will strike down the strong to-morrow.

Not a breeze comes to us now from the late rebellious States that is not tainted and freighted with negro blood. In its thirst for blood and its rage for vengeance, the mob has blindly, boldly and defiantly supplanted sheriffs, constables and police. It has assumed all the functions of civil authority. It laughs at legal processes, courts and juries, and its red-handed murderers range abroad unchecked and unchallenged by law or by public
opinion. Prison walls and iron bars are no protection to the innocent or guilty, if the mob is in pursuit of negroes accused of crime. Jail doors are battered down in the presence of unresisting jailors, and the accused, awaiting trial in the courts of law are dragged out and hanged, shot, stabbed or burned to death as the blind and irresponsible mob may elect.

We claim to be a Christian country and a highly civilized nation, yet, I fearlessly affirm that there is nothing in the history of savages to surpass the blood chilling horrors and fiendish excesses perpetrated against the colored people by the so-called enlightened and Christian people of the South. It is commonly thought that only the lowest and most disgusting birds and beasts, such as buzzards, vultures and hyenas, will gloat over and prey upon dead bodies, but the Southern mob in its rage feeds its vengeance by shooting, stabbing and burning when their victims are dead.

Now the special charge against the negro by which this ferocity is justified, and by which mob law is defended by good men North and South, is alleged to be assaults by negroes upon white women. This charge once fairly started, no matter by whom or in what manner, whether well or ill-founded, whether true or false, is certain to subject the accused to immediate death. It is nothing, that in the case there may be a mistake as to identity. It is nothing that the victim pleads “not guilty.” It is nothing that he only asks for time to establish his innocence. It is nothing that the accused is of fair reputation and his accuser is of an abandoned character. It is nothing that the majesty of the law is defied and insulted; no time is allowed for defence or explanation; he is bound with cords, hurried off amid the frantic yells and cursing of the mob to the scaffold and under its shadow he is tortured till by pain or promises, he is made to think he can possibly gain time or save his life by confession, and then whether innocent or guilty, he is shot, hanged, stabbed or burned to death amid the wild shouts of the mob. When the will of the mob has been accomplished, when its thirst for blood has been quenched, when its victim is speechless, silent and dead, his mobocratic accusers and murderers of course have the ear of the world all to themselves, and the world generally approves their verdict.
Such then is the state of Southern civilization in its relation to the colored citizens of that section and though the picture is dark and terrible I venture to affirm that no man North or South can deny the essential truth of the picture.

Now it is important to know how this state of affairs is viewed by the better classes of the Southern States. I will tell you, and I venture to say if our hearts were not already hardened by familiarity with such crimes against the negro, we should be shocked and astonished by the attitude of these so-called better classes of the Southern people and their lawmakers. With a few noble exceptions the upper classes of the South are in full sympathy with the mob and its deeds. There are few earnest words uttered against the mob or its deeds. Press, platform and pulpit are either generally silent or they openly apologize for the mob. The mobocratic murderers are not only permitted to go free, untried and unpunished, but are lauded and applauded as honorable men and good citizens, the guardians of Southern women. If lynch law is in any case condemned, it is only condemned in one breath, and excused in another.

The great trouble with the negro in the South is, that all presumptions are against him. A white man has but to blacken his face and commit a crime, to have some negro lynched in his stead. An abandoned woman has only to start the cry that she has been insulted by a black man, to have him arrested and summarily murdered by the mob. Frightened and tortured by his captors, confused into telling crooked stories about his whereabouts at the time when the alleged crime was committed and the death penalty is at once inflicted, though his story may be but the incoherency of ignorance or distraction caused by terror.

Now in confirmation of what I have said of the better classes of the South, I have before me the utterances of some of the best people of that section, and also the testimony of one from the North, a lady, from whom, considering her antecedents, we should have expected a more considerate, just and humane utterance.

In a late number of the “Forum” Bishop Haygood, author of the “Brother in Black,” says that “The most alarming fact is, that execution by lynching has ceased to surprise us. The burning of a human being for any crime, it is thought, is a horror that does not occur outside of the Southern States of the American Union,
yet unless assaults by negroes come to an end, there will most probably be still further display of vengeance that will shock the world, and men who are just will consider the provocation.”

In an open letter addressed to me by ex-Governor Chamberlain, of South Carolina, and published in the “Charleston News and Courier,” a letter which I have but lately seen, in reply to an article of mine on the subject published in the “North American Review,” the ex-Governor says: “Your denunciation of the South on this point is directed exclusively, or nearly so, against the application of lynch law for the punishment of one crime, or one sort of crime, the existence, I suppose, I might say the prevalence of this crime at the South is undeniable. But I read your article in vain for any special denunciation of the crime itself. As you say your people are lynched, tortured and burned for assault on white women. As you value your own good fame and safety as a race, stamp out the infamous crime.” He further says, the way to stop lynching is to stamp out the crime.

And now comes the sweet voice of a Northern woman, of Southern principles, in the same tone and the same accusation, the good Miss Frances Willard, of the W. C. T. U. She says in a letter now before me, “I pity the Southerner. The problem on their hands is immeasurable. The colored race,” she says, “multiplies like the locusts of Egypt. The safety of woman, of childhood, of the home, is menaced in a thousand localities at this moment, so that men dare not go beyond the sight of their own roof tree.” Such then is the crushing indictment drawn up against the Southern negroes, drawn up, too, by persons who are perhaps the fairest and most humane of the negro’s accusers. But even they paint him as a moral monster ferociously invading the sacred rights of women and endangering the homes of the whites.

The crime they allege against the negro, is the most revolting which men can commit. It is a crime that awakens the intensest abhorrence and invites mankind to kill the criminal on sight. This charge thus brought against the negro, and as constantly reiterated by his enemies, is not merely against the individual culprit, as would be in the case with an individual culprit of any other race, but it is in a large measure a charge against the colored race as such. It throws over every colored man a mantle of odium and sets upon him a mark for popular hate, more
distressing than the mark set upon the first murderer. It points
him out as an object of suspicion and avoidance. Now it is in this
form that you and I, and all of us, are required to meet it and
refute it, if that can be done. In the opinion of some of us, it is
thought that it were well to say nothing about it, that the least
said about it the better. In this opinion I do not concur. Taking
this charge in its broad and comprehensive sense in which it is
presented, and as now stated, I feel that it ought to be met, and
as a colored man, I am grateful for the opportunity now afforded
me to meet it. For I believe it can be met and successfully met. I
am of opinion that a people too spiritless to defend themselves
are not worth defending.

Without boasting, on this broad issue as now presented, I am
ready to confront ex-Governor Chamberlain, Bishop Fitzgerald,
Bishop Haygood, and Miss Frances Willard and all others, singly
or altogether, without any doubt of the result.

But I want to be understood at the outset. I do not pretend
that negroes are saints or angels. I do not deny that they are
capable of committing the crime imputed to them, but I utterly
deny that they are any more addicted to the commission of that
crime than is true of any other variety of the human family. In
entering upon my argument, I may be allowed to say, that I
appear here this evening not as the defender of any man guilty
of this atrocious crime, but as the defender of the colored people
as a class.

In answer to the terrible indictment, thus read, and speaking
for the colored people as a class, I, in their stead, here and now
plead not guilty and shall submit my case with confidence of
acquittal by good men and women North and South.

It is the misfortune of the colored people in this country that
the sins of the few are visited upon the many, and I am here
to speak for the many whose reputation is put in peril by the
sweeping charge in question. With General Grant and every
other honest man, my motto is, “Let no guilty man escape.” But
while I am here to say this, I am here also to say, let no innocent
man be condemned and killed by the mob, or crushed under
the weight of a charge of which he is not guilty.

You will readily see that the cause I have undertaken to sup-
port, is not to be maintained by any mere confident assertions
or general denials. If I had no better ground to stand upon
than this I would leave the field of controversy and give up the
colored man’s cause at once to his able accusers. I am aware,
however, that I am here to do in some measure what the masters
of logic say cannot be done—prove a negative.

Of course, I shall not be able to succeed in doing the imposi-
ble, but this one thing I can and will do. I can and will show that
there are sound reasons for doubting and denying this horrible
and hell-black charge of rape as the peculiar crime of the colored
people of the South. My doubt and denial are based upon two
fundamental and invincible grounds.

The first is, the well established and well tested character of
the negro on the very point upon which he is now violently
and persistently accused. The second ground for my doubt and
denial is based upon what I know of the character and anteced-
ents of the men and women who bring this charge against him.
I undertake to say that the strength of this position will become
more manifest as I proceed with my argument.

At the outset I deny that a fierce and frenzied mob is or
ought to be deemed a competent witness against any man
accused of any crime whatever. The ease with which a mob
can be collected and the slight causes by which it may be set in
motion, and the elements of which it is composed, deprives its
testimony of the qualities that should inspire confidence and
command belief. It is moved by impulses utterly unfavorable to
an impartial statement of the truth. At the outset, therefore, I
challenge the credibility of the mob, and as the mob is the main
witness in the case against the negro, I appeal to the common
sense of mankind in support of my challenge. It is the mob that
brings this charge, and it is the mob that arraigns, condemns
and executes, and it is the mob that the country has accepted
as its witness.

Again, I impeach and discredit the veracity of southern men
generally, whether mobocrats or otherwise, who now openly and
deliberately nullify and violate the provisions of the constitution
of their country, a constitution, which they have solemnly sworn
to support and execute. I apply to them the legal maxim, “False
in one, false in all.”

Again I arraign the negro’s accuser on another ground, I have
no confidence in the truthfulness of men who justify themselves
in cheating the negro out of his constitutional right to vote. The
men, who either by false returns, or by taking advantage of his illiteracy or surrounding the ballot-box with obstacles and sinuosities intended to bewilder him and defeat his rightful exercise of the elective franchise, are men who are not to be believed on oath. That this is done in the Southern States is not only admitted, but openly defended and justified by so-called honorable men inside and outside of Congress.

Just this kind of fraud in the South is notorious. I have met it face to face. It was boldly defended and advocated a few weeks ago in a solemn paper by Prof. Weeks, a learned North Carolinian, in my hearing. His paper was one of the able papers read before one of the World’s Auxiliary Congresses at Chicago.

Now men who openly defraud the negro by all manner of artifice and boast of it in the face of the world’s civilization, as was done at Chicago, I affirm that they are not to be depended upon for truth in any case whatever, where the rights of the negro are involved. Their testimony in the case of any other people than the negro, against whom they should thus commit fraud would be instantly and utterly discredited, and why not the same in this case? Every honest man will see that this point is well taken, and I defy any argument that would drive me from this just contention. It has for its support common sense, common justice, common honesty, and the best sentiment of mankind, and has nothing to oppose it but a vulgar popular prejudice against the colored people of our country, which prejudice strikes men with moral blindness and renders them incapable of seeing any distinction between right and wrong.

But I come to a stronger position. I rest my conclusion not merely upon general principles, but upon well known facts. I reject the charge brought against the negro as a class, because all through the late war, while the slave masters of the South were absent from their homes in the field of rebellion, with bullets in their pockets, treason in their hearts, broad blades in their blood stained hands, seeking the life of the nation, with the vile purpose of perpetuating the enslavement of the negro, their wives, their daughters, their sisters and their mothers were left in the absolute custody of these same negroes, and during all those long four years of terrible conflict, when the negro had every opportunity to commit the abominable crime now alleged against him, there was never a single instance of such
crime reported or charged against him. He was never accused of assault, insult, or an attempt to commit an assault upon any white woman in the whole South. A fact like this, although negative, speaks volumes and ought to have some weight with the American people.

Then, again on general principles, I do not believe the charge because it implies an improbable, if not impossible, change in the mental and moral character and composition of the negro. It implies a change wholly inconsistent with well known facts of human nature. It is a contradiction to well known human experience. History does not present an example of such a transformation in the character of any class of men so extreme, so unnatural and so complete as is implied in this charge. The change is too great and the period too brief. Instances may be cited where men fall like stars from heaven, but such is not the usual experience. Decline in the moral character of a people is not sudden, but gradual. The downward steps are marked at first by degrees and by increasing momentum from bad to worse. Time is an element in such changes, and I contend that the negroes of the South have not had time to experience this great change and reach this lower depth of infamy. On the contrary, in point of fact, they have been and still are, improving and ascending to higher levels of moral and social worth.

Again, I do not believe it and utterly deny it, because those who bring the charge do not, and dare not, give the negro a chance to be heard in his own defence. He is not allowed to explain any part of his alleged offense. He is not allowed to vindicate his own character or to criminate the character and motives of his accusers. Even the mobocrats themselves admit that it would be fatal to their purpose to have the character of his accusers brought into court. They pretend to a delicate regard for the feelings of the parties assaulted, and therefore object to giving a fair trial to the accused. The excuse in this case is contemptible. It is not only mock modesty but mob modesty. Men who can collect hundreds and thousands, if we may believe them, and can spread before them in the tempest and whirlwind of vulgar passion, the most disgusting details of crime with the names of women, with the alleged offense, should not be allowed to shelter themselves under any pretense of modesty. Such a pretense is absurd and shameless. Who does not know
that the modesty of womanhood is always an object for protection in a court of law? Who does not know that a lawless mob composed in part of the basest of men can have no such respect for the modesty of women as a court of law. No woman need be ashamed to confront one who has insulted or assaulted her in a court of law. Besides innocence does not hesitate to come to the rescue of justice.

Again, I do not believe it, and deny it because if the evidence were deemed sufficient to bring the accused to the scaffold, through the action of an impartial jury, there could be, and would be, no objection to having the alleged offender tried in conformity to due process of law.

Any pretence that a guilty negro, especially one guilty of the crime now charged, would in any case be permitted to escape condign punishment, is an insult to common sense. Nobody believes or can believe such a thing as escape possible, in a country like the South, where public opinion, the laws, the courts, the juries, and the advocates are all known to be against him, he could hardly escape if innocent. I repeat, therefore, I do not believe it, because I know, and you know, that a passionate and violent mob bent upon taking life, from the nature of the case, is not a more competent and trustworthy body to determine the guilt or innocence of a negro accused in such a case, than is a court of law. I would not, and you would not, convict a dog on such testimony.

But I come to another fact, and an all-important fact, bearing upon this case. You will remember that during all the first years of re-construction and long after the war when the Southern press and people found it necessary to invent, adopt, and propagate almost every species of falsehood to create sympathy for themselves and to formulate an excuse for gratifying their brutal instincts, there was never a charge then made against a negro involving an assault upon any white woman or upon any little white child. During all this time the white women and children were absolutely safe. During all this time there was no call for Miss Willard’s pity, or Bishop Haygood’s defense of burning negroes to death.

You will remember also that during this time the justification for the murder of negroes was said to be negro conspiracies, insurrections, schemes to murder all the white people, to burn
the town, and commit violence generally. These were the excuses then depended upon, but never a word was then said or whispered about negro outrages upon white women and children. So far as the history of that time is concerned, white women and children were absolutely safe, and husbands and fathers could leave home without the slightest anxiety on account of their families.

But when events proved that no such conspiracies; no such insurrections as were then pretended to exist and were paraded before the world in glaring head-lines, had ever existed or were even meditated; when these excuses had run their course and served their wicked purpose; when the huts of negroes had been searched, and searched in vain, for guns and ammunition to prove these charges, and no evidence was found, when there was no way open thereafter to prove these charges against the negro and no way to make the North believe in these excuses for murder, they did not even then bring forward the present allegation against the negro. They, however, went on harassing and killing just the same. But this time they based the right thus to kill on the ground that it was necessary to check the domination and supremacy of the negro and to secure the absolute rule of the Anglo-Saxon race.

It is important to notice that there has been three distinct periods of persecution of negroes in the South, and three distinct sets of excuses for persecution. They have come along precisely in the order in which they were most needed. First you remember it was insurrection. When that was worn out, negro supremacy became the excuse. When that is worn out, now it is assault upon defenseless women. I undertake to say, that this order and periodicity is significant and means something and should not be overlooked. And now that negro supremacy and negro domination are no longer defensible as an excuse for negro persecutions, there has come in due course, this heart-rending cry about the white women and little white children of the South.

Now, my friends, I ask what is the rational explanation of this singular omission of this charge in the two periods preceding the present? Why was not the charge made at that time as now? The negro was the same then as to-day. White women and children were the same then as to-day. Temptations to wrong doing were the same then as to-day. Why then was not this dreadful charge
brought forward against the negro in war times and why was it not brought forward in reconstruction times?

I will tell you; or you, yourselves, have already answered the question. The only rational answer is that there was no foundation for such a charge or that the charge itself was either not thought of or was not deemed necessary to excuse the lawless violence with which the negro was then pursued and killed. The old charges already enumerated were deemed all sufficient. This new charge has now swallowed up all the old ones and the reason is obvious.

Things have changed since then, old excuses were not available and the negro’s accusers have found it necessary to change with them. The old charges are no longer valid. Upon them the good opinion of the North and of mankind cannot be secured. Honest men no longer believe in the worn-out stories of insurrection. They no longer believe that there is just ground to apprehend negro supremacy. Time and events have swept away these old refuges of lies. They did their work in their day, and did it with terrible energy and effect, but they are now cast aside as useless. The altered times and circumstances have made necessary a sterner, stronger, and more effective justification of Southern barbarism, and hence, according to my theory, we now have to look into the face of a more shocking and blasting charge than either negro supremacy or insurrection or that of murder itself.

This new charge has come at the call of new conditions, and nothing could have been hit upon better calculated to accomplish its purpose. It clouds the character of the negro with a crime the most revolting, and is fitted to drive from him all sympathy and all fair play and all mercy. It is a crime that places him outside of the pale of the law, and settles upon his shoulders a mantle of wrath and fire that blisters and burns into his very soul.

It is for this purpose, as I believe, that this new charge unthought of in the times to which I have referred, has been largely invited, if not entirely trumped up. It is for this purpose that it has been constantly reiterated and adopted. It was to blast and ruin the negro’s character as a man and a citizen.

I need not tell you how thoroughly it has already done its wonted work. You may feel its malign influence in the very air. You may read it in the faces of men. It has cooled our friends.
It has heated our enemies, and arrested in some measure the efforts that good men were wont to make for the colored man’s improvement and elevation. It has deceived our friends at the North and many good friends at the South, for nearly all have in some measure accepted the charge as true. Its perpetual reiteration in our newspapers and magazines has led men and women to regard us with averted eyes, increasing hate and dark suspicion.

Some of the Southern papers have denounced me for my unbelief, in their new departure, but I repeat I do not believe it and firmly deny it. I reject it because I see in it, evidence of an invention, called into being by a well defined motive, a motive sufficient to stamp it as a gross expedient to justify murderous assault upon a long enslaved and hence a hated people.

I do not believe it because it bears on its face, the marks of being a makeshift for a malignant purpose. I reject it not only because it was sprung upon the country simultaneously with well-known efforts now being industriously made to degrade the negro by legislative enactments, and by repealing all laws for the protection of the ballot, and by drawing the color line in all railroad cars and stations and in all other public places in the South; but because I see in it a means of paving the way for our entire disfranchisement.

Again, I do not believe it, and deny it, because the charge is not so much against the crime itself, as against the color of the man alleged to be guilty of it. Slavery itself, you will remember, was a system of legalized outrage upon the black women of the South, and no white man was ever shot, burned, or hanged for availing himself of all the power that slavery gave him at this point.

Upon these grounds then—grounds which I believe to be solid and immovable—I dare here and now in the capital of the nation and in the presence of Congress to reject it, and ask you and all just men to reject this horrible charge so frequently made and construed against the negro as a class.

To sum up my argument on this lynching business. It remains to be said that I have shown that the negro’s accusers in this case have violated their oaths and have cheated the negro out of his vote; that they have robbed and defrauded the negro systematically and persistently, and have boasted of it. I have
shown that when the negro had every opportunity to commit
the crime now charged against him he was never accused of
it by his bitterest enemies. I have shown that during all the
years of reconstruction, when he was being murdered at Ham-
burg, Yazoo, New Orleans, Copiah and elsewhere, he was never
accused of the crime now charged against him. I have shown
that in the nature of things no such change in the character
and composition of a people as this charge implies could have
taken place in the limited period allowed for it. I have shown
that those who accuse him dare not confront him in a court of
law and have their witnesses subjected to proper legal inquiry.
And in showing all this, and more, I have shown that they who
charge him with this foul crime may be justly doubted and
deemed unworthy of belief.

But I shall be told by many of my Northern friends that my
argument, though plausible, is not conclusive. It will be said that
the charges against the negro are specific and positive, and that
there must be some foundation for them, because as they allege
men in their normal condition do not shoot and hang their fel-
lowmen who are guiltless of crime. Well! This assumption is very
just, very charitable. I only ask something like the same justice
and charity could be shown to the negro as well as to the mob.
It is creditable to the justice and humanity of the good people
of the North by whom it is entertained. They rightly assume
that men do not shoot and hang their fellowmen without just
cause. But the vice of their argument is in their assumption that
the lynchers are like other men. The answer to that argument is
what may be truly predicated of human nature under one con-
dition is not what may be true of human nature under another.
Uncorrupted human nature may shudder at the commission of
such crimes as those of which the Southern mob is guilty.

But human nature uncorrupted is one thing and human
nature corrupted and perverted by long abuse of irresponsible
power, is quite another and different thing. No man can reason
correctly on this question who reasons on the assumption that
the lynchers are like ordinary men.

We are not, in this case, dealing with men in their natural
condition, but with men brought up in the exercise of arbitrary
power. We are dealing with men whose ideas, habits and customs
are entirely different from those of ordinary men. It is, therefore,
quite gratuitous to assume that the principles that apply to other men apply to the Southern murderers of the negro, and just here is the mistake of the Northern people. They do not see that the rules resting upon the justice and benevolence of human nature do not apply to the mobocrats, or to those who were educated in the habits and customs of a slave-holding community. What these habits are I have a right to know, both in theory and in practice.

I repeat: The mistake made by those who on this ground object to my theory of the charge against the negro, is that they overlook the natural effect and influence of the life, education and habits of the lynchers. We must remember that these people have not now and have never had any such respect for human life as is common to other men. They have had among them for centuries a peculiar institution, and that peculiar institution has stamped them as a peculiar people. They were not before the war, they were not during the war and have not been since the war in their spirit or in their civilization, a people in common with the people of the North. I will not here harrow up your feelings by detailing their treatment of Northern prisoners during the war. Their institutions have taught them no respect for human life and especially the life of the negro. It has in fact taught them absolute contempt for his life. The sacredness of life which ordinary men feel does not touch them anywhere. A dead negro is with them a common jest.

They care no more for a negro’s right to live than they care for his rights to liberty, or his rights to the ballot. Chief Justice Taney told the exact truth about these people when he said: “They did not consider that the black man had any rights which the white men were bound to respect.” No man of the South ever called in question that statement and they never will. They could always shoot, stab and burn the negro without any such remorse or shame as other men would feel after committing such a crime. Any Southern man who is honest and is frank enough to talk on the subject, will tell you that he has no such idea as we have of the sacredness of human life and especially, as I have said, of the life of the negro. Hence it is absurd to meet my arguments with the facts predicated on our common human nature.

I know I shall be charged with apologizing for criminals. Ex-Governor Chamberlain has already virtually done as much.
But there is no foundation for any such charge. I affirm that neither I nor any other colored man of like standing with myself, has ever raised a finger or uttered a word in defense of any one really guilty of the dreadful crime now in question.

But, what I contend for, and what every honest man, black or white should contend for, is that when any man is accused of this or any other crime, of whatever name, nature, or extent, he shall have the benefit of a legal investigation; that he shall be confronted by his accusers; and that he shall through proper counsel, be able to question his accusers in open court and in open day-light so that his guilt or his innocence may be duly proved and established.

If this is to make me liable to the charge of apologizing for crime, I am not ashamed to be so charged. I dare to contend for the colored people of the United States that they are a law-abiding people, and I dare to insist upon it that they or any man, black or white, accused of crime, shall have a fair trial before he is punished.

Again, I cannot dwell too much upon the fact that colored people are much damaged by this charge. As an injured class we have a right to appeal from the judgment of the mob to the judgment of the law and the American people. Our enemies have known well where to strike and how to stab us most fatally. Owing to popular prejudice it has become the misfortune of the colored people of the South and of the North as well, to have as I have said, the sins of the few visited upon the many. When a white man steals, robs or murders, his crime is visited upon his own head alone. But not so with the black man. When he commits a crime the whole race is made to suffer. The cause before us is an example. This unfairness confronts us not only here, but it confronts us everywhere else.

Even when American art undertakes to picture the types of the two races it invariably places in comparison not the best of both races as common fairness would dictate, but it puts side by side in glaring contrast the lowest type of the negro with the highest type of the white man and calls upon you to “look upon this picture then upon that.”

When a black man’s language is quoted, in order to belittle and degrade him, his ideas are put into the most grotesque and unreadable English, while the utterances of negro scholars and
authors are ignored. A hundred white men will attend a concert of white negro minstrels with faces blackened with burnt cork, to one who will attend a lecture by an intelligent negro.

On this ground I have a criticism to make, even of the late World’s Columbian Exposition. While I join with all other men in pronouncing the Exposition itself one of the grandest demonstrations of civilization that the world has ever seen, yet great and glorious as it was, it was made to show just this kind of unfairness and discrimination against the negro.

As nowhere else in the world it was hoped that here the idea of human brotherhood would have been fully recognized and most gloriously illustrated. It should have been, and would have been, had it been what it professed to be, a World’s Exposition. It was, however, in a marked degree an American Exposition. The spirit of American caste made itself conspicuously felt against the educated American negro, and to this extent, the Exposition was made simply an American Exposition and that in one of America’s most illiberal features.

Since the day of Pentecost, there has never assembled in any one place or on any one occasion, a larger variety of peoples of all forms, features and colors, and all degrees of civilization, than was assembled at this World’s Exposition. It was a grand ethnological lesson, a chance to study all likenesses and differences. Here were Japanese, Soudanese, Chinese, Cingalese, Syrians, Persians, Tunisians, Algerians, Egyptians, East Indians, Laplanders, Esquimaux, and as if to shame the educated negro of America, the Dahomeyans were there to exhibit their barbarism, and increase American contempt for the negro intellect. All classes and conditions were there save the educated American negro. He ought to have been there if only to show what American slavery and freedom have done for him. The fact that all other nations were there and there at their best, made his exclusion the more marked, and the more significant. People from abroad noticed the fact that while we have eight millions of colored people in the United States, many of them gentlemen and scholars, not one of them was deemed worthy to be appointed a Commissioner, or a member of an important committee, or a guide, or a guard on the Exposition grounds. What a commentary is this upon our boasted American liberty and American equality! It is a silence to be sure, but it is a
silence that speaks louder than words. It says to the world that the colored people of America are deemed by Americans not within the compass of American law and of American civilization. It says to the lynchers and mobocrats of the South, go on in your hellish work of negro persecution. What you do to their bodies, we do to their souls.

I come now to the question of negro suffrage. It has come to be fashionable of late to ascribe much of the trouble at the South to ignorant negro suffrage. The great measure according suffrage to the negro recommended by General Grant and adopted by the loyal nation is now denounced as a blunder and a failure. They would, therefore, in some way abridge and limit this right by imposing upon it an educational or some other qualification. Among those who take this view are Mr. John J. Ingalls, and Mr. John M. Langston. They are both eloquent, both able, and both wrong. Though they are both Johns neither of them is to my mind a “St. John” and not even a “John the Baptist.” They have taken up an idea which they seem to think quite new, but which in reality is as old as despotism and about as narrow and selfish. It has been heard and answered a thousand times over. It is the argument of the crowned heads and privileged classes of the world. It is as good against our Republican form of government as it is against the negro. The wonder is that its votaries do not see its consequences. It does away with that noble and just idea of Abraham Lincoln, that our government should be a government of the people, by the people, and for all the people.

These gentlemen are very learned, very eloquent and very able, but I cannot follow them. Much learning has made them mad. Education is great, but manhood is greater. The one is the principle, the other is the accident. Man was not made as an attribute to education, but education is an attribute to man. I say to these gentlemen, first protect the man and you will thereby protect education. I would not make illiteracy a bar to the ballot, but would make the ballot a bar to illiteracy. Take the ballot from the negro and you take from him the means and motives that make for education. Those who are already educated and are vested with political power and have thereby an advantage, will have a strong motive for refusing to divide that advantage with others, and least of all will they divide it with
the negro to whom they would deny all right to participate in the government.

I, therefore, cannot follow these gentlemen in their proposition to limit suffrage to the educated alone. I would not make suffrage more exclusive, but more inclusive. I would not have it embrace merely the elite, but would include the lowly. I would not only include the men, I would gladly include the women, and make our government in reality as in name a government of the people and of the whole people.

But manifestly suffrage to the colored people is not the cause of the failure of good government, or the cause of trouble in the Southern States, but it is the lawless limitations of suffrage that makes the trouble.

Much thoughtless speech is heard about the ignorance of the negro in the South. But plainly enough it is not the ignorance of the negro, but the malevolence of his accusers, which is the real cause of Southern disorder. The illiteracy of the negro has no part or lot in the disturbances there. They who contend for disfranchisement on this ground know, and know very well, that there is no truth whatever in their contention. To make out their case they must show that some oppressive and hurtful measure has been imposed upon the country by negro voters. But they cannot show any such thing.

The negro has never set up a separate party, never adopted a negro platform, never proclaimed or adopted a separate policy for himself or for the country. His assailants know that he has never acted apart from the whole American people. They know that he has never sought to lead, but has always been content to follow. They know that he has not made his ignorance the rule of his political conduct, but the intelligence of white people has always been his guide. They know that he has simply kept pace with the average intelligence of his age and country. They know that he has gone steadily along in the line of his politics with the most enlightened citizens of the country. They know that he has always voted with one or the other of the two great political parties. They know that if the votes of these parties have been guided by intelligence and patriotism, the same may be said for the vote of the negro. They ought to know, therefore, that it is a shame and an outrage upon common sense and common fairness to make the negro
responsible, or his ignorance responsible, for any disorder and confusion that may reign in the Southern States. Yet, while any lie may be safely told against the negro and be credited, this lie will find eloquent mouths bold enough to tell it, and pride themselves upon their superior wisdom in denouncing the ignorant negro voter.

It is true that the negro once voted solidly for the candidates of the Republican party, but what if he did? He then only voted with John Mercer Langston, John J. Ingalls, John Sherman, General Harrison, Senator Hoar, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Governor McKinley, and many of the most intelligent statesmen and patriots of whom this country can boast. The charge against him at this point is, therefore, utterly groundless. It is a mere pretense, a sham, an excuse for fraud and violence, for persecution and a cloak for popular prejudice.

The proposition to disfranchise the colored voter of the South in order to solve the race problem I hereby denounce as a mean and cowardly proposition, utterly unworthy of an honest, truthful and grateful nation. It is a proposition to sacrifice friends in order to conciliate enemies; to surrender the constitution to the late rebels for the lack of moral courage to execute its provisions. It says to the negro citizens, “The Southern nullifiers have robbed you of a part of your rights, and as we are powerless and cannot help you, and wish to live on good terms with our Southern brethren, we propose to join your oppressors so that our practice shall be consistent with their theories. Your suffrage has been practically rendered a failure by violence, we now propose to make it a failure by law. Instead of conforming our practice to the theory of our government and the genius of our institutions, we now propose, as means of conciliation, to conform our practice to the theory of your oppressors.”

Than this, was there ever a surrender more complete, more cowardly or more base? Upon the statesmen, black or white, who could dare to hint such a scheme of national debasement as a means of settling the race problem, I should inflict no punishment more severe than to keep him at home, and deprived of all legislative trusts forever.

Do not ask me what will be the final result of the so-called negro problem. I cannot tell you. I have sometimes thought that the American people are too great to be small, too just
and magnanimous to oppress the weak, too brave to yield up
the right to the strong, and too grateful for public services ever
to forget them or fail to reward them. I have fondly hoped
that this estimate of American character would soon cease to
be contradicted or put in doubt. But the favor with which this
cowardly proposition of disfranchisement has been received by
public men, white and black, by Republicans as well as Demo-
crats, has shaken my faith in the nobility of the nation. I hope
and trust all will come out right in the end, but the immediate
future looks dark and troubled. I cannot shut my eyes to the
ugly facts before me.

Strange things have happened of late and are still happening.
Some of these tend to dim the lustre of the American name,
and chill the hopes once entertained for the cause of American
liberty. He is a wiser man than I am, who can tell how low the
moral sentiment of this republic may yet fall. When the moral
sense of a nation begins to decline and the wheel of progress
to roll backward, there is no telling how low the one will fall
or where the other may stop. The downward tendency already
manifest has swept away some of the most important safe-
guards. The Supreme Court has surrendered. State sovereignty
is restored. It has destroyed the civil rights Bill, and converted
the Republican party into a party of money rather than a party
of morals, a party of things rather than a party of humanity and
justice. We may well ask what next?

The pit of hell is said to be bottomless. Principles which we all
thought to have been firmly and permanently settled by the late
war, have been boldly assaulted and overthrown by the defeated
party. Rebel rule is now nearly complete in many States and it is
gradually capturing the nation’s Congress. The cause lost in the
war, is the cause regained in peace, and the cause gained in war,
is the cause lost in peace.

There was a threat made long ago by an American statesman,
that the whole body of legislation enacted for the protection
of American liberty and to secure the results of the war for the
Union, should be blotted from the national statute book. That
threat is now being sternly pursued, and may yet be fully real-
ized. The repeal of the laws intended to protect the elective
franchise has heightened the suspicion that Southern rule may
yet become complete, though I trust, not permanent. There is
no denying that the trend is in the wrong way at present. The late election, however, gives us hope that the loyal Republican party may return to its first born.

But I come now to another proposition held up just now as a solution of the race problem, and this I consider equally unworthy with the one just disposed of. The two belong to the same low-bred family of ideas.

This proposition is to colonize the colored people of America in Africa, or somewhere else. Happily this scheme will be defeated, both by its impolicy and its impracticability. It is all nonsense to talk about the removal of eight millions of the American people from their homes in America to Africa. The expense and hardships, to say nothing of the cruelty of such a measure, would make success to such a measure impossible. The American people are wicked, but they are not fools, they will hardly be disposed to incur the expense, to say nothing of the injustice which this measure demands. Nevertheless, this colonizing scheme, unworthy as it is, of American statesmanship and American honor, and though full of mischief to the colored people, seems to have a strong hold on the public mind and at times has shown much life and vigor.

The bad thing about it is that it has now begun to be advocated by colored men of acknowledged ability and learning, and every little while some white statesman becomes its advocate. Those gentlemen will doubtless have their opinion of me; I certainly have mine of them. My opinion of them is that if they are sensible, they are insincere, and if they are sincere they are not sensible. They know, or they ought to know, that it would take more money than the cost of the late war, to transport even one-half of the colored people of the United States to Africa. Whether intentionally or not they are, as I think, simply trifling with an afflicted people. They urge them to look for relief, where they ought to know that relief is impossible. The only excuse they can make is that there is no hope for the negro here and that the colored people in America owe something to Africa.

This last sentimental idea makes colonization very fascinating to dreamers of both colors. But there is really for it no foundation.

They tell us that we owe something to our native land. But when the fact is brought to view, which should never be
forgotten, that a man can only have one native land, and that is
the land in which he was born, the bottom falls entirely out of
this sentimental argument.

Africa, according to her advocates, is by no means modest
in her demand upon us. She calls upon us to send her only our
best men. She does not want our riff raff, but our best men. But
these are just the men we want at home. It is true we have a few
preachers and laymen with a missionary turn of mind who might
be easily spared. Some who would possibly do as much good by
going there as by staying here. But this is not the only coloniza-
tion idea. Its advocates want not only the best, but millions of
the best. They want the money to be voted by the United States
Government to send them there.

Now I hold that the American negro owes no more to the
negroes in Africa than he owes to the negroes in America. There
are millions of needy people over there, but there are also millions
of needy people over here as well, and the millions here need intel-
ligent men of their numbers to help them, as much as intelligent
men are needed in Africa. We have a fight on our hands right
here, a fight for the whole race, and a blow struck for the negro
in America is a blow struck for the negro in Africa. For until the
negro is respected in America, he need not expect consideration
elsewhere. All this native land talk is nonsense. The native land of
the American negro is America. His bones, his muscles, his sinews,
are all American. His ancestors for two hundred and seventy years
have lived, and labored, and died on American soil, and millions
of his posterity have inherited Caucasian blood.

It is competent, therefore, to ask, in view of this admixture,
as well as in view of other facts, where the people of this mixed
race are to go, for their ancestors are white and black, and it
will be difficult to find their native land anywhere outside of the
United States.

But the worse thing, perhaps, about this colonization non-
sense is, that it tends to throw over the negro a mantle of
despair. It leads him to doubt the possibility of his progress
as an American citizen. It also encourages popular prejudice
with the hope that by persecution or persuasion the negro can
finally be driven from his natural home, while in the nature of
the case, he must stay here, and will stay here and cannot well
get away.
It tends to weaken his hold on one country while it can give him no rational hope of another. Its tendency is to make him dis- ponsent and doubtful, where he should be made to feel assured and confident. It forces upon him the idea that he is forever doomed to be a stranger and sojourner in the land of his birth, and that he has no permanent abiding place here.

All this is hurtful, with such ideas constantly flaunted before him he cannot easily set himself to work to better his condition in such ways as are open to him here. It sets him to groping everlastingly after the impossible.

Every man who thinks at all must know that home is the foun- tain head, the inspiration, the foundation and main support not only of all social virtue, but of all motives to human progress and that no people can prosper or amount to much without a home. To have a home, the negro must have a country, and he is an enemy to the moral progress of the negro, whether he knows it or not, who calls upon him to break up his home in this country for an uncertain home in Africa.

But the agitation of this subject has a darker side still. It has already been given out that we may be forced to go at the point of the bayonet. I cannot say we shall not, but badly as I think of the tendency of our times, I do not think that American senti- ment will ever reach a condition which will make the expulsion of the negro from the United States by such means possible.

Colonization is no solution of the race problem. It is an eva- sion. It is not repenting of wrong but putting out of sight the people upon whom wrong has been inflicted. Its reiteration and agitation only serve to fan the flame of popular prejudice and encourage the hope that in some way or other, in time or in eternity, those who hate the negro will get rid of him.

If the American people could endure the negro’s presence while a slave, they certainly can and ought to endure his presence as a free-man. If they could tolerate him when he was a heathen, they might bear with him when he is a Christian, a gentleman and a scholar.

But woe to the South when it no longer has the strong arm of the negro to till its soil! And woe to the nation if it shall ever employ the sword to drive the negro from his native land!

Such a crime against justice, such a crime against gratitude, should it ever be attempted, would certainly bring a national
punishment which would cause the earth to shudder. It would bring a stain upon the nation’s honor, like the blood on Lady Macbeth’s hand. The waters of all the oceans would not suffice to wash out the infamy that such an act of ingratitude and cruelty would leave on the character of the American people.

Another mode of impeaching the wisdom of emancipation, and one that seems to give pleasure to our enemies, is, as they say, that the condition of the colored people of the South has been made worse; that freedom has made their condition worse.

The champions of this idea are the men who glory in the good old times when the slaves were under the lash and were bought and sold in the market with horses, sheep and swine. It is another way of saying that slavery is better than freedom; that darkness is better than light and that wrong is better than right. It is the American method of reasoning in all matters concerning the negro. It inverts everything; turns truth upside down and puts the case of the unfortunate negro wrong end foremost every time. There is, however, always some truth on their side.

When these false reasoners assert that the condition of the emancipated is wretched and deplorable, they tell in part the truth, and I agree with them. I even concur with them that the negro is in some respects, and in some localities, in a worse condition to-day than in the time of slavery, but I part with these gentlemen when they ascribe this condition to emancipation.

To my mind, the blame for this condition does not rest upon emancipation, but upon slavery. It is not the result of emancipation, but the defeat of emancipation. It is not the work of the spirit of liberty, but the work of the spirit of bondage, and of the determination of slavery to perpetuate itself, if not under one form, then under another. It is due to the folly of endeavoring to retain the new wine of liberty in the old bottles of slavery. I concede the evil but deny the alleged cause.

The land owners of the South want the labor of the negro on the hardest possible terms. They once had it for nothing. They now want it for next to nothing and they have contrived three ways of thus obtaining it. The first is to rent their land to the negro at an exorbitant price per annum, and compel him to mortgage his crop in advance. The laws under which this is
done are entirely in the interest of the landlord. He has a first claim upon everything produced on the land. The negro can have nothing, can keep nothing, can sell nothing, without the consent of the landlord. As the negro is at the start poor and empty handed, he has to draw on the landlord for meat and bread to feed himself and family while his crop is growing. The landlord keeps books; the negro does not; hence, no matter how hard he may work or how saving he may be, he is, in most cases, brought in debt at the end of the year, and once in debt, he is fastened to the land as by hooks of steel. If he attempts to leave he may be arrested under the law.

Another way, which is still more effective, is the payment of the labor with orders on stores instead of in lawful money. By this means money is kept entirely out of the hands of the negro. He cannot save money because he has no money to save. He cannot seek a better market for his labor because he has no money with which to pay his fare and because he is, by that vicious order system, already in debt, and therefore already in bondage. Thus he is riveted to one place and is, in some sense, a slave; for a man to whom it can be said, “You shall work for me for what I shall choose to pay you and how I shall choose to pay you,” is in fact a slave though he may be called a free man.

We denounce the landlord and tenant system of England, but it can be said of England as cannot be said of our free country, that by law no laborer can be paid for labor in any other than lawful money. England holds any other payment to be a penal offense and punishment by fine and imprisonments. The same should be the case in every State in the Union.

Under the mortgage system, no matter how industrious or economical the negro may be, he finds himself at the end of the year in debt to the landlord, and from year to year he toils on and is tempted to try again and again, seldom with any better result.

With this power over the negro, this possession of his labor, you may easily see why the South sometimes brags that it does not want slavery back. It had the negro’s labor heretofore for nothing, and now it has it for next to nothing, and at the same time is freed from the obligation to take care of the young and the aged, the sick and the decrepit.
I now come to the so-called, but mis-called “Negro Problem,” as a characterization of the relations existing in the Southern States.

I say at once, I do not like or admit the justice or propriety of this formula. Words are things. They certainly are such in this case, and I may say they are a very bad thing in this case, since they give us a misnomer and one that is misleading. It is a formula of Southern origin, and has a strong bias against the negro. It handicaps his cause with all the prejudice known to exist against him. It has been accepted by the good people of the North, as I think, without investigation. It is a crafty invention and is in every way, worthy of its inventors.

The natural effect and purpose on its face of this formula is to divert attention from the true issue now before the American people. It does this by holding up and preoccupying the public mind with an issue entirely different from the real one in question. That which really is a great national problem and which ought to be so considered, dwarfs into a “negro problem.”

The device is not new. It is an old trick. It has been oft repeated, and with a similar purpose and effect. For truth, it gives us falsehood. For innocence, it gives us guilt. It removes the burden of proof from the old master class, and imposes it upon the negro. It puts upon a race a work which belongs to the nation. It belongs to that craftiness often displayed by disputants, who aim to make the worse appear the better reason. It gives bad names to good things, and good names to bad things.

The negro has often been the victim of this kind of low cunning. You may remember that during the late war, when the South fought for the perpetuity of slavery, it called the slaves “domestic servants,” and slavery “a domestic institution.” Harmless names, indeed, but the things they stood for were far from harmless.

The South has always known how to have a dog hanged by giving him a bad name. When it prefixed “negro” to the national problem, it knew that the device would awaken and increase a deep-seated prejudice at once, and that it would repel fair and candid investigation. As it stands, it implies that the negro is the cause of whatever trouble there is in the South. In old slave times, when a little white child lost his temper, he was given
a little whip and told to go and whip “Jim” or “Sal” and thus regained his temper. The same is true, to-day on a larger scale.

I repeat, and my contention is, that this negro problem formula lays the fault at the door of the negro, and removes it from the door of the white man, shields the guilty, and blames the innocent. Makes the negro responsible and not the nation.

Now the real problem is, and ought to be regard by the American people, a great national problem. It involves the question, whether, after all, with our Declaration of Independence, with our glorious free constitution, whether with our sublime Christianity, there is enough of national virtue in this great nation to solve this problem, in accordance with wisdom and justice.

The marvel is that this old trick of misnaming things, so often played by Southern politicians, should have worked so well for the bad cause in which it is now employed—for the Northern people have fallen in with it. It is still more surprising that the colored press of the country, and some of the colored orators of the country, insist upon calling it a “negro problem,” or a Race problem, for by it they mean the negro Race. Now—there is nothing the matter with the negro. He is all right. Learned or ignorant, he is all right. He is neither a Lyncher, a Mobocrat, or an Anarchist. He is now, what he has ever been, a loyal, law-abiding, hard working, and peaceable man; so much so, that men have thought him cowardly and spiritless. They say that any other people would have found some violent way in which to resent their wrongs. If this problem depended upon his character and conduct, there would be no problem to solve; there would be no menace to the peace and good order of Southern society. He makes no unlawful fight between labor and capital. That problem which often makes the American people thoughtful, is not of his bringing—though he may some day be compelled to talk, and on this tremendous problem.

He has as little to do with the cause of Southern trouble as he has with its cure. There is no reason, therefore, in the world, why he should give a name to this problem, and this lie, like all other lies, must eventually come to naught. A lie is worth nothing when it has lost its ability to deceive, and if it is at all in my power, this lie shall lose its power to deceive.
I well remember that this same old falsehood was employed and used against the negro, during the late war. He was then charged and stigmatized with being the cause of the war, on the principle that there would be no highway robbers if there were nobody on the road to be robbed. But as absurd as this pretense was, the color prejudice of the country was stimulated by it and joined in the accusation, and the negro has to bear the brunt of it.

Even at the North, he was hated and hunted on account of it. In the great city of New York, his houses were burned, his children were hunted down like wild beasts, and his people were murdered in the streets, because “they were the cause of the war.” Even the noble and good Mr. Lincoln, one of the best men that ever lived, told a committee of negroes who waited upon him at Washington, that “they were the cause of the war.” Many were the men who accepted this theory, and wished the negro in Africa, or in a hotter climate, as some do now.

There is nothing to which prejudice is not equal in the way of perverting the truth and inflaming the passions of men.

But call this problem what you may, or will, the all important question is: How can it be solved? How can the peace and tranquility of the South, and of the country, be secured and established?

There is nothing occult or mysterious about the answer to this question. Some things are to be kept in mind when dealing with this subject and never be forgotten. It should be remembered that in the order of Divine Providence the man who puts one end of a chain around the ankle of his fellow man will find the other end around his own neck. And it is the same with a nation. Confirmation of this truth is as strong as thunder. “As we sow, we shall reap,” is a lesson to be learned here as elsewhere. We tolerated slavery, and it cost us a million graves, and it may be that lawless murder, if permitted to go on, may yet bring vengeance, not only on the reverend head of age and upon the heads of helpless women, but upon the innocent babe in the cradle.

But how can this problem be solved? I will tell you how it can not be solved. It cannot be solved by keeping the negro poor, degraded, ignorant, and half-starved, as I have shown is now being done in the Southern States.
It cannot be solved by keeping the wages of the laborer back by fraud, as is now being done by the landlords of the South. It cannot be done by ballot-box stuffing, by falsifying election returns, or by confusing the negro voter by cunning devices. It cannot be done by repealing all federal laws enacted to secure honest elections.

It can, however, be done, and very easily done, for where there’s a will, there’s a way!

Let the white people of the North and South conquer their prejudices.

Let the great Northern press and pulpit proclaim the gospel of truth and justice against war now being made upon the negro.

Let the American people cultivate kindness and humanity.

Let the South abandon the system of “mortgage” labor, and cease to make the negro a pauper, by paying him scrip for his labor.

Let them give up the idea that they can be free, while making the negro a slave. Let them give up the idea that to degrade the colored man, is to elevate the white man.

Let them cease putting new wine into old bottles, and mending old garments with new cloth.

They are not required to do much. They are only required to undo the evil that they have done, in order to solve this problem.

In old times when it was asked, “How can we abolish slavery?” the answer was “Quit stealing.”

The same is the solution of the Race problem to-day. The whole thing can be done by simply no longer violating the amendments of the Constitution of the United States, and no longer evading the claims of justice. If this were done, there would be no negro problem to vex the South, or to vex the nation.

Let the organic law of the land be honestly sustained and obeyed.

Let the political parties cease to palter in a double sense and live up to the noble declarations we find in their platforms.

Let the statesmen of the country live up to their convictions.

In the language of Senator Ingalls: “Let the nation try justice and the problem will be solved.”

Two hundred and twenty years ago, the negro was made the subject of a religious problem, one which gave our white
forefathers much perplexity and annoyance. At that time the problem was in respect of what relation a negro would sustain to the Christian Church, whether he was a fit subject for baptism, and Dr. Godwin, a celebrated divine of his time, and one far in advance of his brethren, was at the pains of writing a book of two hundred pages, or more, containing an elaborate argument to prove that it was not a sin in the sight of God to baptize a negro.

His argument was very able, very learned, very long. Plain as the truth may now seem, there were at that time very strong arguments against the position of the learned divine.

As usual, it was not merely the baptism of the negro that gave trouble, but it was what might follow his baptism. The sprinkling him with water was a very simple thing, but the slave holders of that day saw in the innovation something more dangerous than water. They said that to baptize the negro and make him a member of the Church of Christ, was to make him an important person—in fact, to make him an heir of God and a joint heir of Jesus Christ. It was to give him a place at the Lord’s supper. It was to take him out the category of heathenism, and make it inconsistent to hold him as a slave; for the Bible made only the heathen a proper subject for slavery.

These were formidable consequences, certainly, and it is not strange that the Christian slave holders of that day viewed these consequences with immeasurable horror. It was something more terrible and dangerous than the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to our Constitution. It was a difficult thing, therefore, at that day to get the negro in the water.

Nevertheless, our learned Doctor of Divinity, like many of the same class in our day, was quite equal to the emergency. He was able to satisfy all the important parties to the problem, except the negro, and him it did not seem necessary to satisfy.

The Doctor was a skilled dialectician. He did not only divide the word with skill, but he could divide the negro in two parts. He argued that the negro had a soul as well as a body, and insisted that while his body rightfully belonged to his master on earth, his soul belonged to his Master in heaven. By this convenient arrangement, somewhat metaphysical, to be sure, but entirely evangelical and logical, the problem of negro baptism was solved.

But with the negro in the case, as I have said, the argument was not entirely satisfactory. The operation was much like that by
which the white man got the turkey and the Indian got the crow. When the negro looked around for his body, that belonged to his earthly master. When he looked around for his soul, that had been appropriated by his Heavenly Master. And when he looked around for something that really belonged to himself, he found nothing but his shadow, and that vanished in the shade.

One thing, however, is to be noticed with satisfaction, it is this: Something was gained to the cause of righteousness by this argument. It was a contribution to the cause of liberty. It was largely in favor of the negro. It was recognition of his manhood, and was calculated to set men to thinking that the negro might have some other important rights, no less than the religious right to baptism.

Thus with all its faults, we are compelled to give the pulpit the credit of furnishing the first important argument in favor of the religious character and manhood rights of the negro. Dr. Godwin was undoubtedly a good man. He wrote at a time of much moral darkness, and property in man was nearly everywhere recognized as a rightful institution. He saw only a part of the truth. He saw that the negro had a right to be baptized, but he could not all at once see that he had a paramount right to himself.

But this was not the only problem slavery had in store for the negro. Time and events brought another and it was this very important one:

Can the negro sustain the legal relation of a husband to a wife? Can he make a valid marriage contract in this Christian country.

This problem was solved by the same slave holding authority, entirely against the negro. Such a contract, it was argued, could only be binding upon men providentially enjoying the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and, since the negro is a slave, and slavery a divine institution, legal marriage was wholly inconsistent with the institution of slavery.

When some of us at the North questioned the ethics of this conclusion, we were told to mind our business, and our Southern brethren asserted, as they assert now, that they alone are competent to manage this, and all other questions relating to the negro.

In fact, there has been no end to the problems of some sort or other, involving the negro in difficulty.
Can the negro be a citizen? was the question of the Dred Scott decision.

Can the negro be educated? Can the negro be induced to work for himself, without a master? Can the negro be a soldier? Time and events have answered these and all other like questions. We have amongst us, those who have taken the first prizes as scholars; those who have won distinction for courage and skill on the battlefield; those who have taken rank as lawyers, doctors and ministers of the gospel; those who shine among men in every useful calling; and yet we are called “a problem”; “a tremendous problem”; a mountain of difficulty; a constant source of apprehension; a disturbing force, threatening destruction to the holiest and best interests of society. I declare this statement concerning the negro, whether by Miss Willard, Bishop Haygood, Bishop Fitzgerald, Ex-Governor Chamberlain or by any and all others as false and deeply injurious to the colored citizen of the United States.

But, my friends, I must stop. Time and strength are not equal to the task before me. But could I be heard by this great nation, I would call to mind the sublime and glorious truths with which, at its birth, it saluted a listening world. Its voice then, was as the trump of an archangel, summoning hoary forms of oppression and time honored tyranny, to judgement. Crowned heads heard it and shrieked. Toiling millions heard it and clapped their hands for joy. It announced the advent of a nation, based upon human brotherhood and the self-evident truths of liberty and equality. Its mission was the redemption of the world from the bondage of ages. Apply these sublime and glorious truths to the situation now before you. Put away your race prejudice. Banish the idea that one class must rule over another. Recognize the fact that the rights of the humblest citizen are as worthy of protection as are those of the highest, and your problem will be solved; and, whatever may be in store for it in the future, whether prosperity, or adversity; whether it shall have foes without, or foes within, whether there shall be peace, or war; based upon the eternal principles of truth, justice and humanity, and with no class having any cause of complaint or grievance, your Republic will stand and flourish forever.