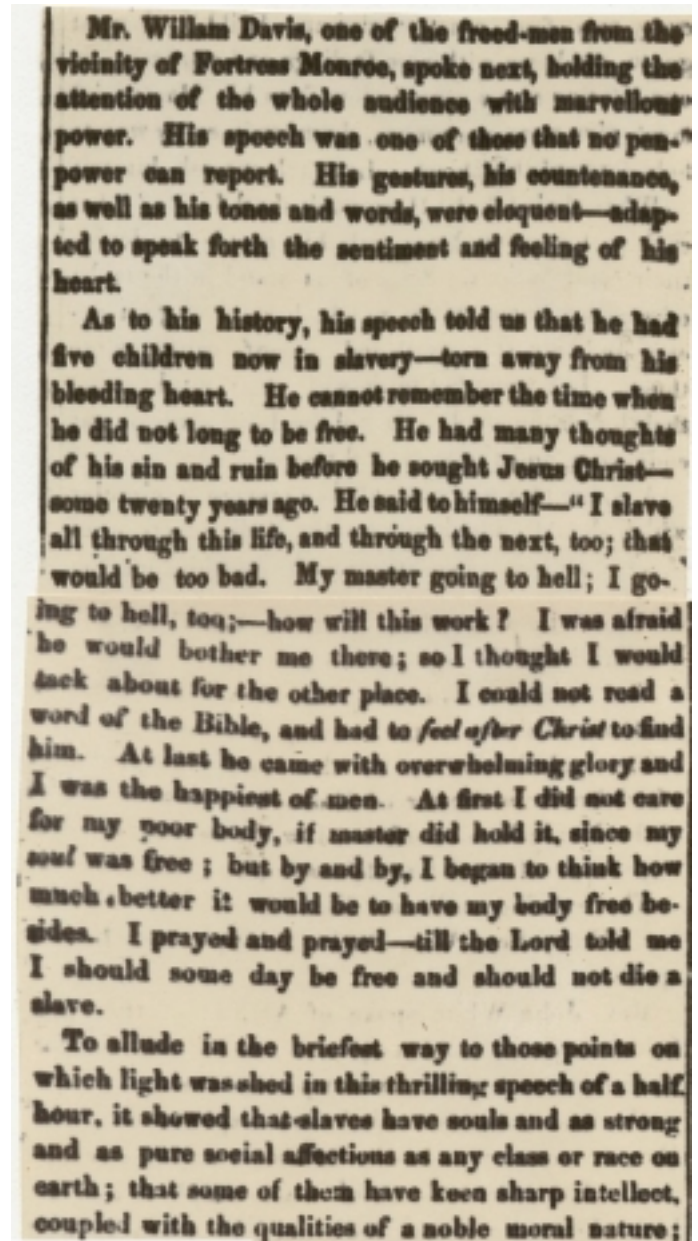


Mr. William Davis, one of the freed-men from the vicinity of Fortress Monroe, spoke next, holding the attention of the whole audience with marvellous power. His speech was one of those that no pen-power can report. His gestures, his countenance, as well as his tones and words, were eloquent—adapted to speak forth the sentiment and feeling of his heart.

As to his history, his speech told us that he had five children now in slavery—torn away from his bleeding heart. He cannot remember the time when he did not long to be free. He had many thoughts of his sin and ruin before he sought Jesus Christ—some twenty years ago. He said to himself—"I slave all through this life, and through the next, too; that would be too bad. My master going to hell; I going to hell, too;—how will this work? I was afraid he would bother me there; so I thought I would seek about for the other place. I could not read a word of the Bible, and had to *feel after Christ* to find him. At last he came with overwhelming glory and I was the happiest of men. At first I did not care for my poor body, if master did hold it, since my *soul* was free; but by and by, I began to think how much better it would be to have my body free besides. I prayed and prayed—till the Lord told me I should some day be free and should not die a slave.

To allude in the briefest way to those points on which light was shed in this thrilling speech of a half-hour, it showed that slaves have souls and as strong and as pure social affections as any class or race on earth; that some of them have keen sharp intellect, coupled with the qualities of a noble moral nature;

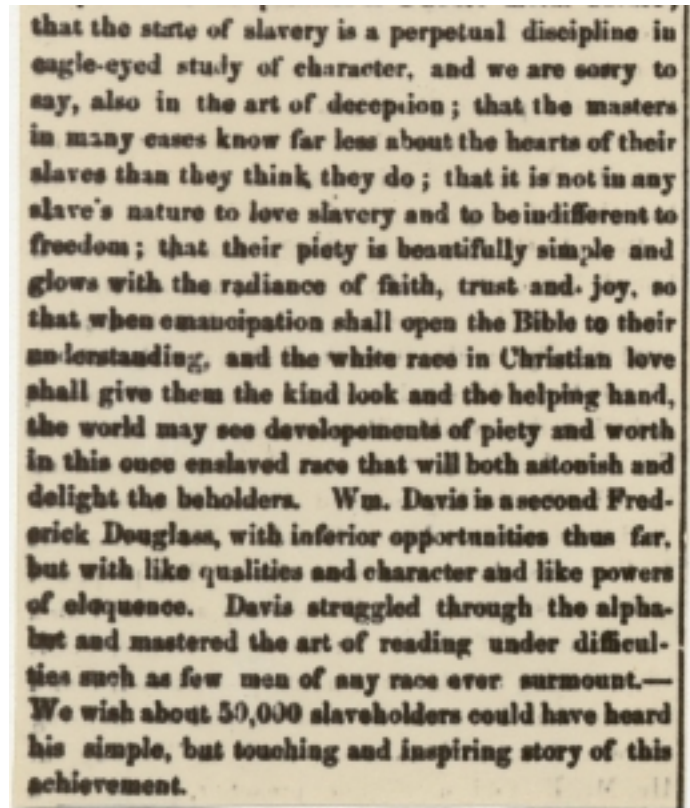


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that the state of slavery is a perpetual discipline in eagle-eyed study of character, and we are sorry to say, also in the art of deception; that the masters in many cases know far less about the hearts of their slaves than they think they do; that it is not in any slave's nature to love slavery and to be indifferent to freedom; that their piety is bountifully simple and glows with the radiance of faith, trust and joy, so that when emancipation shall open the Bible to their understanding, and the white race in Christian love shall give them the kind look and the helping hand, the world may see developments of piety and worth in this once enslaved race that will both astonish and delight the beholders. Wm. Davis is a second Frederick Douglass, with inferior opportunities thus far, but with like qualities and character and like powers of eloquence. Davis struggled through the alphabet and mastered the art of reading under difficulties such as few men of any race ever surmount.— We wish about 50,000 slaveholders could have heard his simple, but touching and inspiring story of this achievement.



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