

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

An investigation of the laws which influence their destiny, is, perhaps, the noblest pursuit which can engage the attention of the human race. For, if a successful analysis of the laws which govern nature, and if searching into the secret hiding places of the soul, are subjects which have rightly enlisted the labors of philosophers, surely an attempt to lift the veil which envelopes the dim future, and to lay open to those around us what will be the destiny of those who may come after us, is an attempt whose interest and value may well repay whatever of attention may be devoted to it.

But how shall we enquire into the future? With what line and rule shall we step beyond the bounds of the present and read with an intelligent eye the “fate of men and empires?”

The rule is announced in the simple proposition “What hath been, will be,” or like causes under like circumstances will produce like effects. This proposition is the very basis of all our belief, all our hope—it is the very essence of that *Faith* in the stability of things, without which life would be made up of dismal, because uncertain anticipation. Reposing on the belief that because our planet, for thousands of years *hath* described its orbit round the sun, and that because day and night, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter *have* run their successive course, therefore they *will* continue in the same, we live on free from apprehensions which would turn life into a curse; nay, more, confiding in the same proposition, the same reason for the stability of things, the mariner boldly launches forth on the deep; and the man of science with the same rule, questions nature in her minute recesses and carries his enquiries to the very barriers of creation.

May we not, then, guided by a proposition so universal in its application, the basis at once of our faith and of our knowledge—may we not venture upon the investigation of the probable destiny of those with whom we are more immediately linked? What hath been will be. What has befallen men placed under similar circumstances, will also be the destiny of those who come after us.

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What hath been will be. What has befallen men placed under similar circumstances, will also be the destiny of those who come after us.

But where shall we find a parallel? We may not find on record, the annals of a people circumstanced in all respects like ourselves, but we may, by a careful scrutiny of human events, select a part from the history of one people, a part from the history of another people, and of a third and fourth, such as will by a combination of all of the parts, form one case very nearly parallel with our own.

It has been asserted, by intelligent men,* that the day will come when the colored population of these United States, shall have entirely disappeared, and when the various nations of men that now make up our “chequered Union,”† shall in the words of our national motto, “of many nations make one:” the statistical reports seems to announce the slow but certain approach of such a time; for, the census of the United States, from 1790 to 1840 show, that whilst the white population has maintained the same ratio of increase, the increase of the colored population has been by a gradually diminishing ratio. In other words the whites are increasing more rapidly, relatively, than the colored people.

But, notwithstanding a time may come, when the descendants of our people shall no longer be distinguished by any physical peculiarity, yet it is clear, that a destiny awaits them which they must fulfil, and which will greatly affect whoever may live during and after its fulfilment.

In order to investigate that destiny, it is necessary, first to examine into our present position, by which our fate must necessarily be governed.

First. We are a minority held in servitude by a majority.

Secondly. That majority simulate a Republican form of Government.

Thirdly. We, the minority, held in servitude, are distinguished

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by a different complexion, from the majority who hold us in thrall.

Such is our position. Men have been held in servitude in other times and places, under one or two of the above conditions, and the destiny of such men has been recorded; but, until now, and in our case, there has not happened a concurrence of all these conditions in the position of any people upon the earth.

For example, on the coast of Barbary, the masters are the majority and the slaves (white) of a different complexion. But the masters are not Republicans. Among the Spartans the masters simulated a Republican form of Government, but they were fewer in number, and of the same complexion with their slaves. The Israelites, however, were held in slavery in Egypt, by masters who differed from them in complexion.

Let us now take up the propositions which describe our condition. And FIRST, let us enquire into the probable destiny of men enslaved, and who differ in complexion from their masters.

The white slaves on the coast of Barbary, have as yet wrought out no general fact in history: as if slavery was natural to them, they have tamely remained in bondage, occasionally escaping by flight or ransom. But the Jews,* held in slavery by the Egyptians, after suffering dreadful oppression, at length gathered themselves under a leader raised up by God, and migrated from the House of Bondage. A remarkable characteristic of this slavery was, that there was no amalgamation between the masters and their slaves. Escape from slavery, by migration, was in this instance the law obeyed by the minority (the Jews) who differed in complexion from their masters. Can this law be applied to our destiny? To a certain extent, we do escape from slavery in this manner. But, thirty thousand, which is, in full, the number of our people who have migrated to Canada, Liberia, and the West Indies,

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is too small a number from which to draw a general inference; it is only one eighty-third portion of our population. No! we are not a migrating people. The soil of our birth is dear to our hearts, and we cling to it with a tenacity which no force can unhinge, no contumely sever. In the eloquent language of a brother Philomathean,[†] there “are chords which bid us to our home, the soil of our birth, which has been wet by the tears, and fertilized by the blood of our ancestors; and from which, while life lasts, in spite of the oppressor’s wrong, we will neither be seduced nor driven, but, abiding by principle, and placing our trusts in the Lord of Hosts; we will tell the white Americans that their country shall be our country, we will be governed by the same laws and worship at the same altar, where they live, we will live, where they die, there will we be buried.”

Alike in servitude, and in being distinguished by complexion from our task-masters, we act differently from the Israelites. Why? It must be for the accomplishment of some end different from what they effected. They emigrated from the scene of their slavery, and in the search for Liberty. “*Ubi libertas, ibi patria*,” is an expression of their rule of conduct; and from the time of their escape from the House of Bondage, until now, the persecuted, or oppressed few have for the most part fled from their homes in search of Liberty.

By remaining upon the scene of our oppressions we are acting out the converse of their rule of conduct. We proclaim to the oppressed few, “*Ubi patri, ibi libertas*,” “Where our country is, there shall Liberty dwell!” For, come when or how it may—whether long after we have passed into the cold and silent tomb, or whilst the tide of life yet courses through our veins—whether by the red right arm of sturdy rebellion, or by the quick necessity of foreign invasion, or by the slower but more certain influence of public opinion—the time must come when from the Aroostook to the gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to where the Pacific calmly laves the shores of Oregon, there shall go forth a blast from the trumpet of Freedom, at which our chains shall be broken, our fetters

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fall, and the American people swelling beyond the links in which Pride and Prejudice have bound them, shall become the free and equal participants of one government, one destiny.

One law then, at least, we are by our position, destined to exhibit; and that is, that the enslaved should remain upon the soil, and amid the institutions which enthrall them, in order to bring liberty the one, by purifying the other.

By remaining in this country, the scene of our enslavement, we shall overcome slavery, and consequently confute, by the resistless evidence of facts, the doctrines upon which slavery rests. This will do more for human Liberty than could be accomplished by emigration. By the latter course we might escape from, but would leave untouched an evil institution, which, by our present course we are destined to overthrow.

But in overcoming the Institution of Slavery, we must by our conduct confute the doctrines on which it is based. One of these doctrines are, that “*Might* makes Right*,” because men have the *power*, therefore they have the *right* to keep other men enslaved. This doctrine has also been the basis of several modern revolutions. For when the dogma of the Divine right of Kings, and when the reign of superstition lost their influence upon the minds of the masses, these masses arose in their *might*, and relying upon their (physical) might, endeavored to obtain those rights which had been so long withheld from them. Their success has been only partial, because, perchance their efforts were based upon an unstable foundation—mere might.

* This doctrine, at present holds almost universal sway, if by “*might*” we understand either physical power, superior (acquired) intelligence in arts and arms, the perpetuation of superstition, the authority of Ancient Usage, &c., &c. Aristotle says, “Men of little genius and great bodily strength, are by nature destined to serve, and those of better capacity, to command, wherefore the nations of Greece and some other countries, being naturally superior in genius, have a natural right to empire; and the rest of mankind being naturally stupid, are *destined* to labor and slavery.” — De Repub. Lib. 1. Cap. 5, 6. When Aristotle wrote this, the Ancestors, on either side of the Anglo-Saxon race, were dwellers in caves and hollow trees.” — C. Stuart

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We are not in possession of physical superiority: yet we must overturn the doctrine “might makes right,” and we can only do so by demonstrating that “right makes right.” This very doctrine is contained in the American Declaration of Independence, which declares “all men to have certain inalienable rights.” But the Constitution of these United States, professedly constructed on the above principles, hold that there are some “other persons”—besides all men—who are not entitled to these rights. We are those “other persons”—we are the exception. It is our destiny to prove that even this exception is wrong, and therefore contrary to the highest interests of the whole people, and to eradicate from the constitution this exception, so contrary to its general principles.

There is another doctrine which we are destined, nay, that we are daily illustrating by our conduct. It has been the History of nearly all great Revolutions, that Reformers have followed out the doctrine of returning evil for evil. So soon as the oppressed have found the opportunity and the power, they have retaliated upon the oppressor with a similarity of oppression. They have returned evil for evil. We are destined to show the the infinite superiority of returning *Good for Evil*. Even at this hour, bound with bands of iron at the South, and the fetters of prejudice at the North, scorned, jeered at, tortured with the fangs of ferocious and malignant slanders, and with the merciless lash of the slave whip, we have refrained from deluging our country in blood. The beautiful edifices of our oppressors spring up on every side, gathering into villages, towns and cities, and the broad rivers run by them, swollen with the tears of the oppressed, but untinged with the blood of the oppressors. They drive us from the magnificent temples which they erect for the worship of the Most High,* as if He were a “respector of persons.” In our humble way, we raise humble tenements in which we approach the footstool of our common

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Father, and we pray, not for vengeance, but for mercy on our oppressors – and we throw open the doors that *all*, even those who exclude us, *all* who thirst may come in and drink, that all who are heavily laden may unburthen themselves before altars erected to the Living Lord; in a word, in our every act, and all our relations we are already rendering *Good for Evil*, and what can be more glorious in the destiny of any people!

It may be, that we, and even those who come immediately after us, shall not perceive the benefits, nor enjoy the good which our patience under long suffering and contumely must work out—but what then? Harmodius and Aristogiton lived not to see Athens free, those who fell at Marathon beheld not from mortal eyes their country safe from the relentless clutches of a foreign foe, Toussaint L'Overture saw not his own Haiti free from foreign rule—and yet all these glorious events were necessarily linked with the labors of those brave and virtuous men, and therefore as inseparable from their destinies as is the light of day from the rising of the sun.

There is a fourth doctrine which we are destined to impress upon the page of history, a doctrine which like some other sublime truths sprang from the very bitterness of slavery, and for which the world is indebted to an african slave

“Homo sum humani nil a me alienum puto” †

Glorious sentiment! How Godlike in its sympathies, how universal in its grasp! The common brotherhood of humanity is a doctrine inseparably linked with our fate. It is a necessary consequence of the equality of all the members of the human species. ‡ And we are destined to demonstrate that equality. This is a very remarkable circumstance. And we have already made rapid strides in the demonstration. Learned men, in their rage for classification, and from a reprehensible spirit to bend science to pamper

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popular prejudices, have brought the human species under the yoke of classification, and having shown to their own satisfaction a diversity in the races, have placed us in the very lowest rank.*

Now, if this were true, and we were in reality such inferior beings, we would of necessity fall into this low rank in the social scale without the aid of the laws. There is no law in these states to prevent dogs & monkeys from voting at the polls. And the laws which they enact in regard to us are proof positive that our oppressors are getting more & more convinced that we are *men* like themselves; for they enact just such laws as the experience of all History has shewn to be necessary in order to hold *men* in slavery. Their opinion of our *manhood* then may be measured by the severity of their laws. And yet how idle and child-like is their attempt to sink beneath the level what belongs to the common tide of humanity!

That it is better for the enslaved, to await liberty on the soil of their birth, to enforce the truth that right makes right, to return good for evil and to prove the common equality of the human family and common brotherhood of man, are the portions of our destiny which of necessity result from our sturdy maintenance of our foothold on the soil of our birth, notwithstanding that we are a minority and distinguished by a difference of complexion.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the second proposition viz: that we are held in servitude by a majority who pretend to be Republican in their form of Government. Demosthenes said "A government built on a fictitious foundation must fall." And such in most instances has been the fate of Republics. The dynasties of Kings have lasted through many centuries, gathering like the oak concentric rings of strength with each succeeding age, sending their strong roots deeply into the hearts of the people and spreading forth gorgeous branches gloriously into the relations of man. They are not built on fictitious foundations: staring forth on sentiments that may be questioned indeed, but on which, nevertheless, in good faith they build their government, they lay pile on pile

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and column beside column until they rear an edifice perishable indeed, and like all human things, passing away, but the durability of which is proof of the integrity of the foundation. Starting on the belief that Kings were made to rule and the people to be governed, Kings have continued to rule and the people have remained subordinate. The long line of Kings who governed Egypt, Persia, France and England, present a strong contrast to the short-lived duration of Republics; and the readiness with which the people of several of those countries, having wavered from, have gladly returned to the monarchical form of Government almost seems an argument for the Divine right of Kings.

But why have Republics been so short-lived? the same Epitaph is written over the graves of all of them—SLAVERY.* History, however, has falsely called Republics, what have been Polygarchies, or Tyrannies of many masters, Sparta, Athens, Rome under the commonwealth, and even these United States, are not Republics nor Democracies, They are Polygarchies. Slavery destroyed the Republics of Antiquity, shall it also destroy our Republic? Are there any distinctions in our commonwealth from which we may predict for it a different fate? There are. Among the Ancients, the slaves were more numerous than their masters, in these States, the masters are more numerous than the slaves. The mode in which the slavery of the ancients proved fatal to their Republics cannot therefore be the mode in which the same evil will affect this Republic. Too few in number to cope with our oppressors by physical force, and being by our nature obliged to resist slavery, we must resort to moral weapons: these whilst they will triumph over slavery will save the Republic. The slaves of the ancients struggled against the persons of their masters; our relative decrease is proof that we assimilate with the persons of ours, and

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we contend therefore only against their Prejudices and Errors.

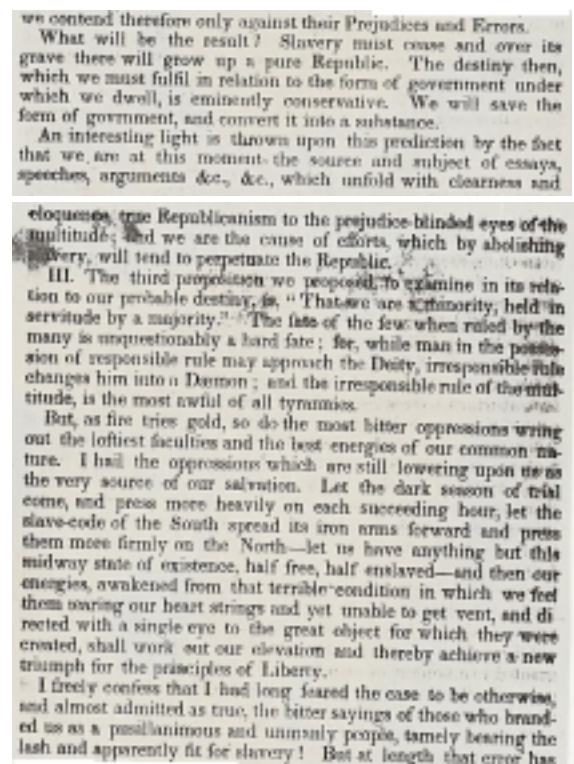
What will be the result? Slavery must cease and over its grave there will grow up a pure Republic. The destiny then, which we must fulfil in relation to the form of government under which we dwell, is eminently conservative. We will save the form of government, and convert it into a substance.

An interesting light is thrown upon this prediction by the fact that we are at this moment the source and subject of essays, speeches, arguments &c., &c., which unfold with clearness and eloquence, true Republicanism to the prejudice-blinded eyes of the multitude; and we are the cause of efforts, which by abolishing slavery, will tend to perpetuate the Republic.

III. The third proposition we proposed to examine in its relation to our probable destiny, is, "That we are a minority, held in servitude by a majority." The fate of the few when ruled by the many is unquestionably a hard fate; for, while man in the possession of responsible rule may approach the Deity, irresponsible rule changes him into a Daemon; and the irresponsible rule of the multitude, is the most awful of all tyrannies.

But, as fire tries gold, so do the most bitter oppressions wring out the loftiest faculties and the best energies of our common nature. I hail the oppressions which are still lowering upon us as the very source of our salvation. Let the dark season of trial come, and press more heavily on each succeeding hour, let the slave-code of the South spread its iron arms forward and press them more firmly on the North—let us have anything but this midway state of existence, half free, half enslaved—and then our energies, awakened from that terrible condition in which we feel them tearing our heart strings and yet unable to get vent, and directed with a single eye to the great object for which they were created, shall work out our elevation and thereby achieve a new triumph for the principles of Liberty.

I freely confess that I had long feared the case to be otherwise, and almost admitted as true, the bitter sayings of those who branded us as a pusillanimous and unmanly people, tamely bearing the lash and apparently fit for slavery! But at length that error has



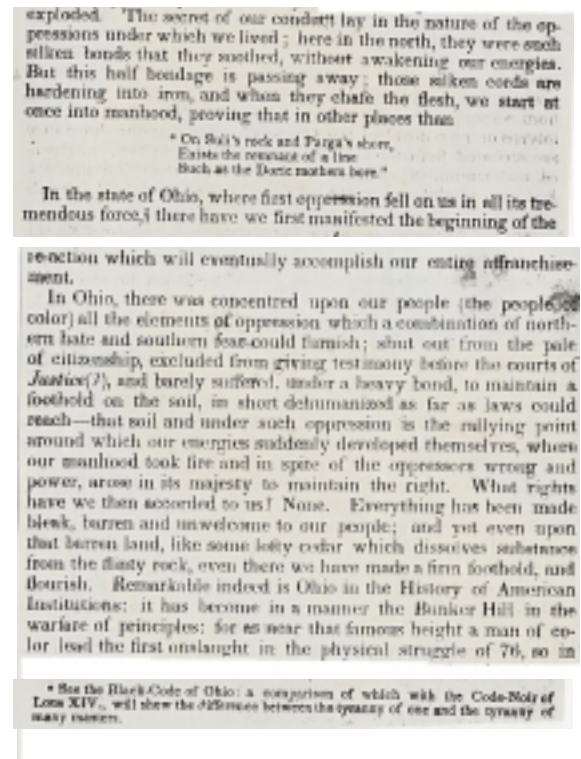
exploded. The secret of our conduct lay in the nature of the oppressions under which we lived; here in the north, they were such silken bonds that they soothed, without awakening our energies. But this half bondage is passing away; those silken cords are hardening into iron, and when they chafe the flesh, we start at once into manhood, proving that in other places than

“On Suli’s rock and Parga’s shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore.”

In the state of Ohio, where first oppression fell on us in all its tremendous force, § there have we first manifested the beginning of the (re)-action which will eventually accomplish our entire enfranchisement.

In Ohio, there was concentrated upon our people (the people of color) all the elements of oppression which a combination of northern hate and southern fear could furnish; shut out from the pale of citizenship, excluded from giving testimony before the courts of *Justice* (?), and barely suffered, under a heavy bond, to maintain a foothold on the soil, in short dehumanized as far as laws could reach – that soil and under such oppression is the rallying point around which our energies suddenly developed themselves, where our manhood took fire and in spite of the oppressors wrong and power, arose in its majesty to maintain the right. What rights have we then accorded to us? None. Everything has been made bleak, barren and unwelcome to our people; and yet even upon that barren land, like some lofty cedar which dissolves substance from the flinty rock, even there we have made a firm foothold, and flourish. Remarkable indeed is Ohio in the History of American Institutions: it has become in a manner the Bunker Hill in the warfare of principles: for as near that famous height a man of color led the first onslaught in the physical struggle of 76, so in

§ See the Black-Code of Ohio: a comparison of which with the Code-Noir of Louis XIV., will shew the difference between the tyranny of one and the tyranny of many masters.



Ohio have colored men first unfolded the glorious fact that the republican form of government is such in its nature, that having granted to a portion of men living under it, the mere right of locomotion, it cannot be perverted to prevent their advancement, and destroy their energies.*

We are an oppressed minority, then, and are men of kindred power with those who oppress us. What has been the fate of oppressed minorities who have resisted oppression? History is full of evidence on this subject. The Jews, for example, in comparatively modern times have been persecuted and oppressed very much in almost every European kingdom. The Inquisition of Spain was specially instituted against them. They were expelled from country after country by a series of laws which are the prototypes or precedents of the Ohio-code. Even at this hour they are excluded from the privileges of citizenship in free, enlightened and philanthropic Great Britain. And yet we find that the Jews, the so pitilessly oppressed minority, *now* hold in their hands the rule, the very fate of some of the kingdoms which were formerly foremost in persecuting them. The very persecutions which they suffered drove them to amass that influence—MONEY—which enables them to rule their former oppressors.

The Irish Catholics have borne nearly the same relation to the British Government. Even so recently as 1828, one of them says of his brethren, "*We are worse than aliens in our native land*;" inasmuch as that an alien is under the protection of an equal law, which we are not. If an alien be a delinquent, or a presumed delinquent, he is entitled to a trial by his peers; and half those peers are his own countrymen, and of his own religion; whereas *our* delinquency, imaginary as it is, is tried by men who have no fellow feelings with us, and who convict us upon evidence

* The remarks in relation to Ohio, refer, 1st, to the manly resistance of the people of color to mob violence at Cincinnati, and 2d, to the fact, that in spite of the odious Black-code, the colored people of Ohio has advanced more rapidly and energetically than the same population in any other State.

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collected, produced, and attested by *themselves*. We are compelled to endure the stings of insult and calumny, frequently without either the opportunity of reply, or the hope of redress by law. *We are denied the privilege of the meanest malefactor*; that of being confronted with our accusers. We are excluded from the places in which the most galling and most influential of the calumnies pronounced against us are uttered.” * But notwithstanding such, and greater persecutions, the Irish Catholics, an oppressed minority, have not only obtained Emancipation from such oppression, but are actually through the *Political* influence of their position, almost at the helm of state in Great Britain. The impersonation of their grievances and their spirit—Daniel O. Connell, without a sword in his hand, wields more potent sway over Britain, it is said, than did Oliver Cromwell.

It is the law, then, that an oppressed minority shall ultimately obtain a ruling influence over their oppressors. This is a startling proposition to apply to the case of our people, yet it is not discordant with probability. It is not probable that, like the Jews, we will wield power by the influence of money, for our efforts do not bend that way. Nor is it likely that, like the Irish Catholics, we shall gain paramount political influence, because, even granting that our political rights shall be restored to us, our relative decrease in numbers will be attended with a proportional diminution of power at the ballot box. But there are other influences which can wield strong power in these United States—other influences than wealth or political weight. There may be such influences as will make political power the mere expression of themselves, and therefore subordinate. For example, how great is the influence of the clergy, who are almost entirely excluded from accumulating wealth and from the direct exercise of political power. It is a curious fact, that the laws and the times have placed us in circumstances very analagous, indeed almost identical with those of the clergy.

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They exclude us from a direct participation in politics, from the facilities for accumulating wealth, from militia training and from jury duty. Being thus excluded from the bustle of practical every day life, it is most likely that our energies will seek employment in the more abstract studies, and it may be, that through them we shall attain the influence* which it shall be our destiny to possess.

It is true, that at present our people pay very little attention to such studies. Our efforts are now, for the most part, devoted to the preliminary movement of supplying personal necessities, or in obtaining a livelihood. To attain this (a living) requires an amount of energy on our part greater than is put forth by the white population; for all their efforts are favored by the laws and by customs which, are both of them, barriers in our way. That we are overcoming these barriers, is proven by the evidence of figures, which cannot lie. It is said by political economists, that the best evidence of improvement in the social condition of a people, is furnished by their bills of mortality. That is to say, the fewer the proportion of deaths, the higher the standard of social comforts.

If we apply this rule to our people, we have improved nearly 18 per cent. during the last ten years; for, in 1830, Emerson's medical statistics shew the deaths among the people of color to have been one in every twenty-one per annum; whilst the city inspector's report for the past year shows, that among our people the deaths have been one in every thirty-four persons. (NOTE, this fact is a sufficient answer to those calumniators who have asserted that the free colored inhabitants of the northern cities are plunged into hopeless degradation; that their constitutions cannot endure

* Mayor Morris (April, 1843) has recently announced that "suffering some form their opponents, for having acted rightly" is a sure claim on the political gratitude of the great Democracy. And, an appeal to their grievances is the source of the increasing influence of the Irish Catholics. In both cases the influences rest on *moral sympathy*, an influence which the people of color may be destined to wield. Even at this moment, how strong is the claim of the colored people on the sympathy and support of the Democratic party, on avowed Democratic principles. And although the Democracy are bitterly opposed to the rights of the people of color, they are not more so than the Tory ministry were to the Catholic Emancipation bill in 1828

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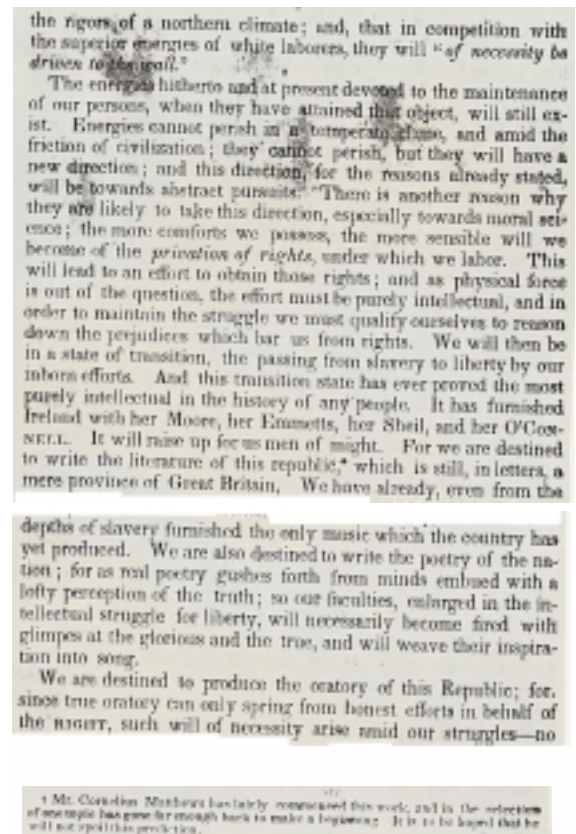
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the rigors of a northern climate; and, that in competition with the superior energies of white laborers, they will “*of necessity be driven to the wall.*”

The energies hitherto and at present devoted to the maintenance of our persons, when they have attained that object, will still exist. Energies cannot perish in a temperate clime, and amid the friction of civilization; they cannot perish, but they will have a new direction; and this direction, for the reasons already stated, will be towards abstract pursuits. There is another reason why they are likely to take this direction, especially towards moral science; the more comforts we possess, the more sensible will we become of the *privation of rights*, under which we labor. This will lead to an effort to obtain those rights; and as physical force is out of the question, the effort must be purely intellectual, and in order to maintain the struggle we must qualify ourselves to reason down the prejudices which bar us from rights. We will then be in a state of transition, the passing from slavery to liberty by our inborn efforts. And this transition state has ever proved the most purely intellectual in the history of any people. It has furnished Ireland with her Moore, her Emmetts, her Sheil, and her O’CONNELL. It will raise up for us men of might. For we are destined to write the literature of this republic,* which is still, in letters, a mere province of Great Britain. We have already, even from the depths of slavery furnished the only music which the country has yet produced. We are also destined to write the poetry of the nation; for as real poetry gushes forth from minds imbued with a lofty perception of the truth; so our faculties, enlarged in the intellectual struggle for liberty, will necessarily become fired with glimpses at the glorious and the true, and will weave their inspiration into song.

We are destined to produce the oratory of this Republic; for, since true oratory can only spring from honest efforts in behalf of the RIGHT, such will of necessity arise amid our struggles—no

† Mr. Cornelius Matthews has lately commenced this work, and in the selection of one topic has gone far enough back to make a beginning. It is to be hoped that he will not spoil this prediction.



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 exist only in the imagination; but, on the contrary we shall utter
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APPENDIX A

The views contained in this lecture are based upon the unity of
 the human race;* from this primary fact, it is inferred that the
 colored people will act just like any other men placed in their cir-
 cumstances, and *therefore* will attain high influence in the destiny
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It is in this point that the lecture differs from the views of those†
 who, since it was delivered, but without my knowledge of it, have
 arrived at the same conclusion, but on different premises. These
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