

WM. WELLS BROWN was then introduced to the audience and spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentleman: The short time that I shall occupy your attention will be devoted more particularly to considering the condition and past treatment of the slaves and free people of colour in this country. With all the boasted philanthropy and Christianity of the people of this Republic, the coloured race has received at their hands treatment scarcely equalled by that of any people the world has ever known. Introduced into the colonies more than two centuries ago, brought and sold from generation to generation, they have indeed become the 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.' You have all heard of the horrors of the African slave trade. I do not know that I had a just idea of its horrors until I heard them depicted in the House of Commons in England, and I am sure that no countryman of mine would have been willing to have been identified on that occasion as a dealer in human beings. A great mistake was made by the fathers of this country when they incorporated the slave trade in the Constitution of the country, allowed the slave representation in Congress, and gave to the slaveholder the right to hunt his victims in the free States. It was believed that Christianity and Republicanism would wipe out the foul blot, but such has not been the result. On the contrary, the number of slaves has increased from a little more than half a million to three and a half millions. The African slave trade was abolished after a certain time, but a worse than the African slave trade continued to exist. The internal slave

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trade, it is true, has not the middle passage and the drowning of its victims; but the black race has, to some extent, become refined by intercourse and commingling of blood with the Anglo-Saxon, so that they feel more sensitively the separations of families, sundering of ties and other cruelties which are inseparable from the system. A hundred thousand slaves are taken from the slave-raising to the slave-consuming States every year. What a tale to tell future generations about the people of this country! Professors of Christianity, members of the popular religious denominations engaged in raising, selling, buying and whipping men and women on their plantations! Go into a southern market and see men and women sold in lots to suit purchasers, and then place yourselves in their condition, if you would feel for them as you ought. Place your wife, daughter or child in their position, to be struck off to the highest bidder, if you would realize their wrongs and sufferings. Indifference from our own friends and relations is sad; it is terrible indeed to the sensitive bosom. Then think of the slave mother who sees her child placed in the market and knows that that child is sold by its own father. This is no fancy picture; we know that such scenes do take place every day. Why do I stand before you, Mr. Chairman, to-night, not an African nor an Anglo-Saxon, but of mixed blood? It is attributable to the infernal system of American slavery. My father is a slave-owner, and at his instance was I sold on a southern plantation.

They tell us that the slave is contented and

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happy. I heard a gentleman travelling between New York and Philadelphia remark about his old slaves being cared for and watched over. It reminded me of what I saw in the Isle of Wight—a donkey enjoying a degree of liberty that no other animal was allowed to enjoy. For thirty years that donkey had drawn water from a very deep well and was now a pensioner. He was allowed his penny loaf of bread every day and full range of the premises, and he was strutting around like a duke; but, alas, his limbs were so stiff that he could scarcely move; his best days had been spent in a tread mill, drawing water, and he was hobbling about in his decrepitude. And so it is with the human donkeys in the South; if one [poor slave lives to be an old man...that he is] unfit to labor, he is pensioned off like this superannuated donkey. Should that fact weigh a single moment upon the minds of intelligent persons in favour of enslaving a race because they happen to have skins not coloured like your own?

We cannot tell the evils that exist in the southern States. Like the painter who stands idle by the side of his picture, waiting for the crowd to go out before lifting the screen from the canvas, for fear of frightening his visitors with the unfinished work, so we must wait and let the future historian complete the picture. I know that, after having spent twenty years as a slave, one would suppose that I might relate the evils that I witnessed. And so I might. I might stand here for hours and tell you what I saw, and felt, and know, but now is not the time. The

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time has passed for devoting ourselves to such a purpose. We need not go out of the free States to see its cruelties. They are all about us. Look at the colored people of the free States, thrown out of your schools, your churches and your social circles, deprived of their political rights and debarred from those avenues of employment that are necessary to a proper maintenance of themselves and family. We find the degrading influences of slavery all about us. Pennsylvania deprives the black man of the elective franchise, and so does New York, except with a property qualification. In most of the northern States, he is looked upon as something to be knocked and kicked about as they see fit. There were two passengers on board the Atlantic when I returned from Europe, who had rode with me on the same car from London to Liverpool, and we enjoyed the same privileges on board the steamer. They were foreigners and I an American; and when they landed in this country, they were boasting that they had arrived at a land of liberty where they could enjoy religious and political freedom. I, too, might have rejoiced had I not been a coloured man, at my return to my native land; but I knew what treatment to expect from my countrymen—that it would not be even such as was meted out to those foreigners, and I rejoiced only to meet my anti-slavery friends. We all started to walk up the streets of Philadelphia together; we hailed an omnibus; the two foreigners got in; I was told that “niggers” were not allowed to ride. Foreigners, mere adventurers, perhaps, in

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this country, are treated as equals, while I, an American born, whose grandfather fought in the revolution, am not permitted to ride in one of your fourth-rate omnibuses. The foreigner has a right, after five years' residence, to say who shall be President, as far as his vote goes, even though he cannot read your Constitution or write his name, while 600,000 free coloured people are disfranchised. And then you talk about equality and liberty, the land of the free and the home of the brave, the asylum of the oppressed, the cradle of liberty! You have the cradle, but you have rocked the child to death.

I think I have a right to speak of the shortcomings of the people of this country. I stand here as the representative of the slave to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and I stand here as the representative of the free coloured man who cannot come to this convention. I saw not long since in one of your papers a statement that a colored American had applied to an American Consul in a foreign land for a passport and it was denied him; the Consul would not admit that he was a citizen of the United States, and he was obliged to go without a passport. When I wished to leave this country, through the aid of my eloquent friend, Wendell Phillips, I secured a paper from the State of Massachusetts showing that I was a citizen of this country. I went to Mr. Davis, the Secretary

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of Abbott Lawrence, and asked for my passport. I was told that I was not an American citizen. I produced my paper and said that if he refused me a passport I would get one from the English government and would sail under foreign colours. I knew I could get one from the English government, because I had been offered it. The Secretary was ashamed and turned round and made out my passport. He was afraid I would go before the English public, where the anti-slavery feeling was so strong, and make the fact known that the American Minister in England refused to recognise my citizenship.

There is no parallel in history to the treatment of the coloured people in this country; certainly none in the present. Tell me of any nation treating any portion of their subjects as we are treated. We are told by the colonizationists that we must be sent out of the country—that we are not citizens of it. If I am not a citizen of the United States, pray, are you? Did your father not come from another country? We were brought here by force, it is true (I speak now as an Anglo-Saxon, as I have a right to speak but as an African), but the fact does not alter our birthright. And you are willing to acknowledge the citizenship of the foreigner no matter how ignorant or degraded; but because I am a shade darker than you, you disfranchise me. I am ashamed when I hear men talking about the national honour of this country being insulted by the Spaniards, or Cubans, just as if we had any national honour to be insulted! A nation that enslaves and scourges

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one-sixth part of its people talking about national honour! Go to the South and see Methodist carting Methodist to the market and selling him, Baptist whipping Baptist, and Presbyterian purchasing Presbyterian, and Episcopalian tying chains upon the limbs of Episcopalian, and then talk about the national character and honour! I know these are hard sayings, but they are true and must be told, and they are the best friends of their country who sound the alarm. You need not be startled at our motto, 'No Union with Slaveholders'; this nation has within it the elements of disunion. And are you not, after all, as much in favour of disunion as I am? Where are your rights, guaranteed by the Constitution to every citizen? Where is the right of free locomotion in the slave States? Go into the southern States an avowed enemy of slaveholding, and are you free? I point you to the murdered Lovejoy; to Burr, Work and Thompson spending four or five years in a Missouri prison; to Torrey pining away in a southern prison; to Fairbank now in a Kentucky penitentiary; to Delia Webster persecuted and imprisoned in the same State; to Mrs. Douglass shut up in a Virginia jail, and all because they did not think as slaveholders think. Can you be as free in South Carolina as the South Carolinian can be in Pennsylvania? He can walk the streets of Philadelphia or New York and say what he pleases, and he is protected, while a southern Senator threatens a northern man with hanging upon the tallest tree if he shows himself in Mississippi, simply because he speaks his

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thoughts on the subject of freedom. And when you send a man to the South to test by law this very right of the citizens of any State to all the immunities of the citizens of the several States under the Constitution, to bring it before one of the Courts of the United States in the South to be adjudicated, he is expelled from the State by mob violence.

I thank God, Mr. Chairman, that this question of American slavery is no longer a question between the black man and the slave-owner, but a question between the people of the North and South. You have allowed them to enslave the black man, to extend the institution and to make the whole North a hunting ground for their slaves, until the people of the free States can endure it no longer, and the North is now fairly pitted against the South. Look at your political parties torn asunder by the slavery issue—and I am glad of it. Look at your religious denominations divided on the same question—and I am glad of it. The great issue is beginning to be between the North and South. The people of the South have always looked upon the people of the North as their pliant tools, and I am glad to see the North becoming aware of it. You welcome the fugitive from European oppression, and, after shaking hands with him and congratulating him for his escape, you turn to catch the fugitive from American oppression and return him to his chains. And when you could find no better man to welcome, you welcomed John Mitchel, who is ready to join in the chase with you. Four hundred

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thousand foreigners come here every year, and you welcome them, while you drive the coloured American from your very doors.

But the people of the North are beginning to be aroused, and the cry of 'disunion,' which they have heretofore hated so much to hear, is practically becoming their watchword. The North is arrayed against the South, and you know it, and you are become practically co-workers with us. If you do not go as far as we do, you follow in the wake, and are coming up. Men that were Democrats and Whigs ten years ago are disunionists to-day, and Democrats and Whigs of to-day will be disunionists before the next ten years roll round. You have fostered slavery until you find yourselves enslaved. It was the sentiment of a distinguished writer that no man could put a chain upon the limbs of another without fastening a chain upon his own. You have helped the slaveholder put chains upon his slave until he has fettered your own limbs, and you are now beginning to see it.

I stand here to-night a freeman only by the act of British philanthropists. I left this country a slave; I returned a freeman. I am not indebted to my birth, or to your Constitution, or to your Christianity, or to your philanthropy for it. Am I then indeed an American citizen, or am I a foreigner? Call me what you please, I am nevertheless a freeman; and yet I feel scarcely more free than I did twenty years ago when I was working on Price's plantation. I felt then that I had as good a right to my free-

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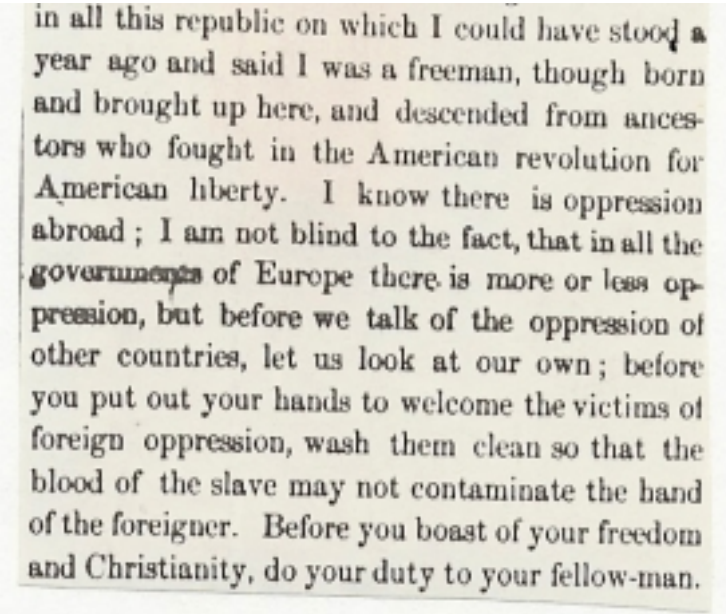
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dom as the man who claimed me as his property, and, acting under that conviction, I started for the North. I could not help thinking, while abroad, of the treatment I had received in this country at the hands of the American people, and I asked myself, why is it that I can put up at one of the best hotels in Liverpool, or London, or Paris, or Rotterdam, and not in Philadelphia? Why is it that I can ride in the coach, or omnibus, or rail-car, or steamboat, in Great Britain or on the continent, and enjoy the same privileges that any man enjoys, while I cannot do it here? It is not because of the colour of my skin, but because of the influence of slavery. My daughters were kept out of school in the State of New York, and would have been brought up in ignorance in this country, and so I resolved to take them away from this liberty-loving country and educate them under a monarchical government and institutions. They go abroad and they are received and treated according to their merits and not according to their colour, and to-day one of them, the daughter of an American slave, teaches a school of Anglo-Saxons, and the other is preparing herself, under another monarchical government, France, to follow the same employment. You talk about the despotism of Napoleon III. and yet your own countrymen escaping from American despotism can find protection under his throne. I could walk free and protected in any part of the Kingdom of Great Britain, but I dared not set foot on American soil until some southern scoundrel first received \$300 for me. You have not a single foot of soil

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