

Mr. Chairman,

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The meeting of friends after a long separation is in most instances a source of joy and congratulation; but the meeting of friends after the long and eventful period that has parted us, and under such circumstances as we now meet, gives rise to emotions in my mind which it is less difficult for you to imagine, than for me to express. Once more upon my native soil, once more in my native city, and amid those scenes which are endeared to me by the thousand happy recollections of boyhood and of youth, this public reception by so many and the most reputable of my fellow-citizens, whilst it far exceeds any thing which I deserve, or can thank you for, renders my return home far more gratifying than any anticipations which I had formed. And yet, sir, I view this assembly less with the feelings of personal gratification at the honor conferred on me, than with pride and satisfaction at the state of mind which it evinces on the part of this large and highly respectable audience. I feel myself less the object of, than as one of the meeting which is called to pay a tribute of respect, less to any thing that I have done or can accomplish, than to the principles by which I have striven to guide my conduct. These principles are, to obtain education at every sacrifice and every hazard, and to apply such education to the good of our common country.

In following out these principles, I was forced to seek in another country, those opportunities of

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In following out these principles, I was forced to seek in another country, those opportunities of

improvement which were denied me here, and have been separated from you during the past five years. The cause of our separation, however much it pained me then and grieves me now, yet will ever give me reason to bless the effect which resulted from it. Sir, I bless the chance which threw me upon the sympathies of, and opened up to me an association with the Wardlaws and the Heughes, the Andersons and the Murrays, men whose names are the property neither of the city or the time in which they dwell, but will be held in grateful remembrance so long as civil and religious liberty shall be remembered. The privileges which I enjoyed in their society are greater than any value at which I can estimate them, and they were privileges, too, which no other circumstances could have obtained for me, except those which forced me to go amongst them. No other combination of circumstances, no other recommendatory introduction that I know of could have gained for me so immediately and entirely, the society and the sympathy of those noble-minded men, amongst whom I went a young and friendless exile, by whom I was received and treated as a brother and an equal. The distance at which youth, and obscurity, and humble abilities placed me from them, were entirely forgotten in the ardent and generous sympathy which they felt for a voluntary exile for the sake of learning. And I was further permitted, to the extent of my humble energies, to battle side by side with them in the cause of the immediate and universal emancipation of slaves.

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But I also enjoyed still greater advantages.—  
The temples of learning were shut against none who approached them. They were guarded by no surly sentinels, in whose learned yet studied minds the sight of glorious grace and the brilliancy of modern science, and even of christian truth itself are wasted, because they cannot expand them. No! the gates of learning were open to [me]; they are open to all on the same terms, and with equal privileges. And under the Thomsins, the Cummins, the Sandfords of the University of Glasgow, I enjoyed opportunities of improvement as ample as are afforded in any British Institution and far more ample than can be yielded by any Institution in America.

Sir, the time that I have spent from home seems rapidly to have passed away. And now that I am permitted to stand once more before my fellow-citizens, I perceive reasons to rejoice, and reason to mourn. When I look around this assembly, and recognize many old familiar faces, there are several for which I look in vain. The remorseless hand of Death has been busy amongst us, and there is one on whom it has been laid, to whose memory I cannot omit paying my humble tribute of respect and admiration. There is a great man fallen in Israel — William Hamilton is no more! The kind father, the benevolent man, the able and profound reasoner, the sterling patriot, who had at heart the good of the whole country, and who obtained and richly merited the title of a patriarch among the people, has passed away from earth. And whilst I would sympathize with you for his

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loss, I would also impress upon you the necessity of following the example which he set during life.

On the other hand, I have reason to rejoice in the changes which have occurred in our circumstances and prospects, since I last had the honor of addressing you. I rejoice in being able to say that I have now been three weeks in the land of prejudice, and have not yet been sensible of the fact. I rejoice in the visible desire of improvement, the devotion to the pursuit of knowledge which is everywhere apparent among our youth. There are many students amongst us now; young ardent, and persevering, they need all your sympathy, and all the support which you can yield them in their difficult path.

In conclusion, I most sincerely thank you, Mr. Chairman, and you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for this public manifestation of your feelings. I thank you for my own part, since it is a flattering proof that in the difficult and trying situation that I have occupied during the last five years, I have not entirely failed in the endeavor to do my duty; and since it also confirms me in my determination to remain in my native land, and to spare no effort, and withhold no sacrifice in the doing all that I can for the elevation of the American people – of the whole people, without regard to caste or condition. For the whole of these states and of their inhabitants are essentially one and the same in their interests. What is weal to one is weal to all, and what is woe to one is woe to all. I thank

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October 28, 1837  
Smith, James McCune  
*Colored American*

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