

FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN:—

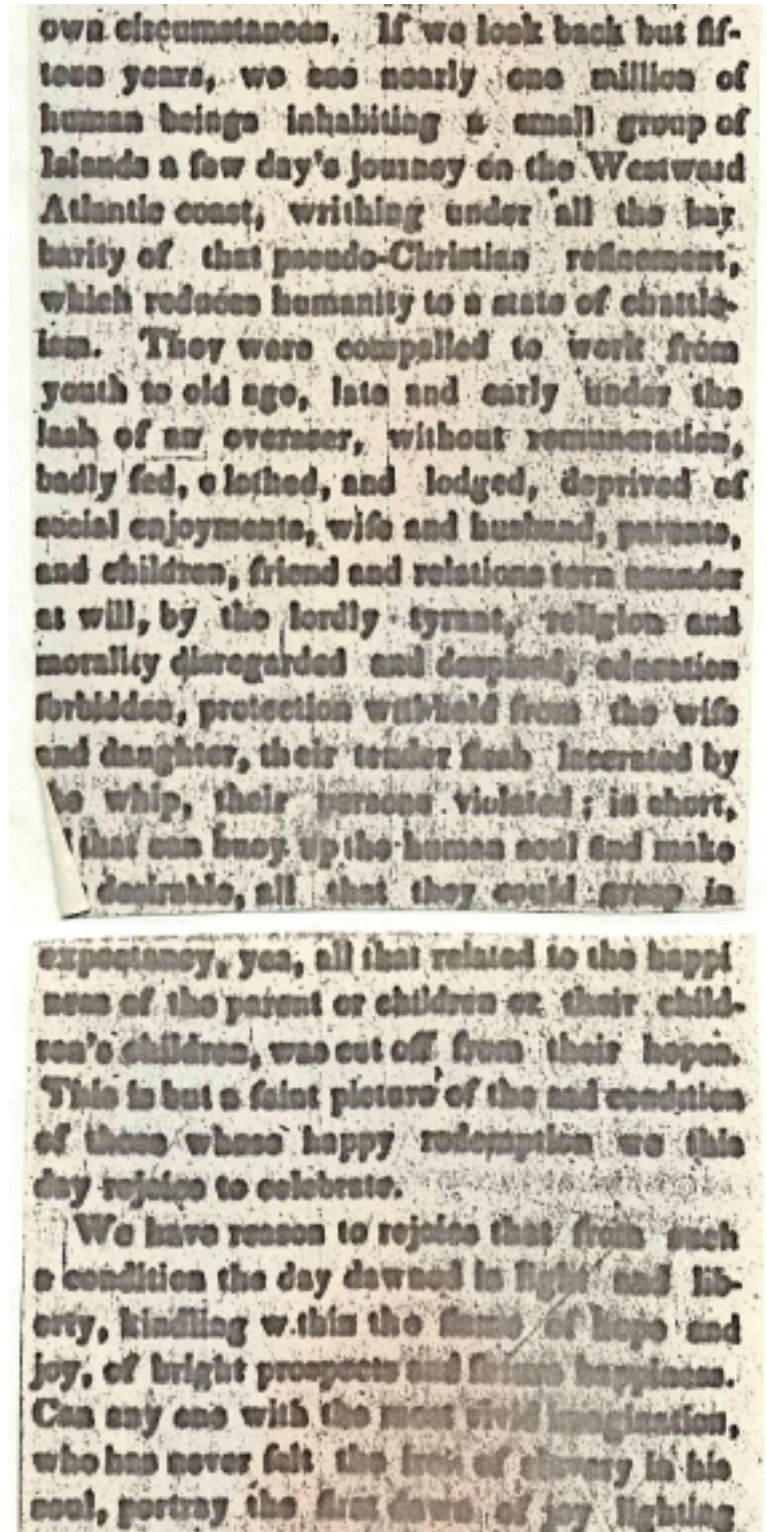
When I look into the multitude of faces before me, the question comes, For what purpose are we here assembled? And I venture to assert, that I speak your sentiments, negatively, when I say, that we did not come here to make an ostentatious show, or to give countenances to any new theory or doctrine derogatory to our interest, or the well being of the human race. Neither did we come here to plant the seed of discord, nor to injure or excite bitterness in hearts already too deeply wronged. Not to lay violent hands upon long cherished customs or usages, let them be clothed in ever so black a garb of injustice and villainy. Not to malign the errors—analyse the design—or ask for retributive justice for the conduct of others, and for which our hearts bleed. But to celebrate an event, lightly as it may now be esteemed by millions of the human race, unequalled in its accomplishments and succeeding results, by any other recorded in ancient or modern history—the immediate and unconditional emancipation of 800,000 human beings from the most deplorable state of abject servitude to freedom. This event has filled the souls of every philanthropist with joy and gladness, and every lover of music has sung it in glad strains of the finest melody.

Without further preliminaries, I shall proceed to notice some of the prominent reasons why we should rejoice on an occasion like this, and make an application of it to our

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own circumstances. If we look back but fifteen years, we see nearly one million of human beings inhabiting a small group of Islands a few day's journey on the Westward Atlantic coast, writhing under all the barbarity of that pseudo-Christian refinement, which reduces humanity to a state of chattelism. They were compelled to work from youth to old age, late and early under the lash of an overseer, without remuneration, badly fed, clothed, and lodged, deprived of social enjoyments, wife and husband, parents, and children, friend and relations torn asunder at will, by the lordly tyrant, religion and morality disregarded and despised, education forbidden, protection withheld from the wife and daughter, the tender flesh lacerated by the whip, their persons violated; in short, all that can buoy up the human soul and make life desirable, all that they could grasp in expectancy, yea, all that related to the happiness of the parent or children or their children's children, was cut off from their hopes. This is but a faint picture of the sad condition of those whose happy redemption we this day rejoice to celebrate.

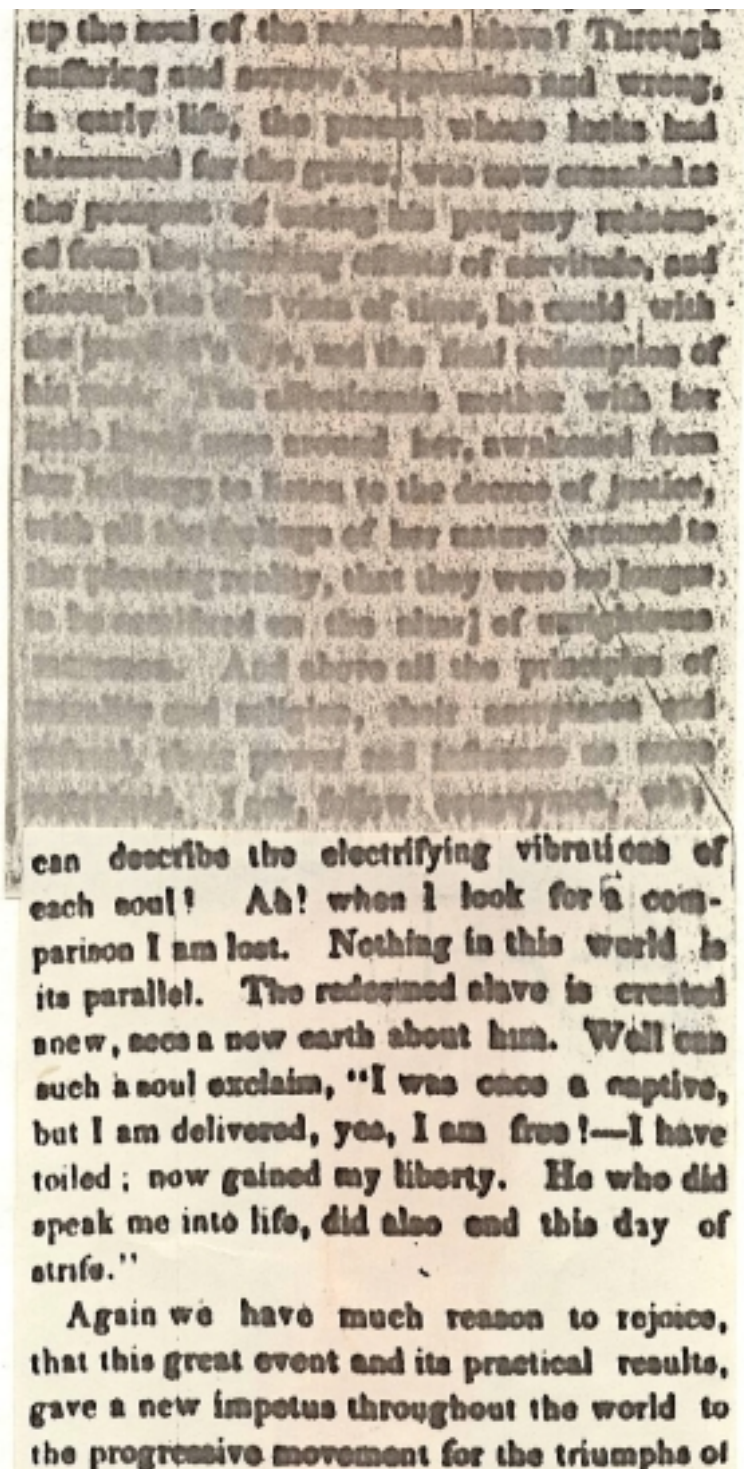
We have reason to rejoice that from such a condition the day dawned in light and liberty, kindling within the flame of hope and joy, of bright prospects and future happiness. Can any one with the most vivid imagination, who has never felt the iron of slavery in his soul, portray the first dawn of joy lighting





up the soul of the redeemed slave? Through suffering and sorrow, [...] and wrong, in early life, the [...] whose looks had [...] for the [...] was now consoled as the [prospect] of [seeing] his progeny redeemed from the [...] [effects] of servitude, and through the [...] vista of [these] he could with the [...]’s [eye], and the [dual] redemption of his [...]. The [affectionate] mother with her little [...] [eyes] around her, awakened from her [lethargy] to listen to the decree of justice, with all the [...] of her [nature] aroused to the pleasing reality, that they were no longer to [be] [sacrificed] on the [alter ;] of [unrighteous] [...]. And above all the principles of [...] and religion, their [acceptance] and [...], their [power] and [influence] [no] [more] [...]. I [say], [fellow] [countrymen], who can describe the electrifying vibrations of each soul? Ah! when I look for a comparison I am lost. Nothing in this world is its parallel. The redeemed slave is created anew, sees a new earth about him. Well can such a soul exclaim, “I was once a captive, but I am delivered, yes, I am free!—I have toiled ; now gained my liberty. He who did speak me into life, did also end this day of strife.”

Again we have much reason to rejoice, that this great event and its practical results, gave a new impetus throughout the world to the progressive movement for the triumphs of



up the soul of the redeemed slave! Through suffering and sorrow, oppression and wrong, in early life, the parent whose looks had blossomed for the grave, was now consoled at the prospect of seeing his progeny redeemed from the crushing effects of servitude, and through the clear vista of time, he could with the parent's eye, see the final redemption of his race. The affectionate mother with her little head bent over her, awakened from her lethargy to listen to the decree of justice, with all the feelings of her nature aroused to the pleasing reality, that they were no longer to be sacrificed on the altar of unrighteousness. And above all the principles of morality and religion, their acceptance and refusal, their power and influence no more remained. I say, fellow countrymen, who can describe the electrifying vibrations of each soul! Ah! when I look for a comparison I am lost. Nothing in this world is its parallel. The redeemed slave is created anew, sees a new earth about him. Well can such a soul exclaim, "I was once a captive, but I am delivered, yes, I am free!—I have toiled ; now gained my liberty. He who did speak me into life, did also end this day of strife."

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Liberty and Equality. Statesmen were blind to history. They had forgotten that man was a progressive being ; that as the mind improved, the field of action widened, and what satisfied the last generation falls far short of satisfying the next. They might have seen that the principles upon which they were acting had laid waste the fairest portion of God's ancient heritage. They seemed to look on the present as a type of the past and the future. What has been, is and always must be, say they? Because the African is now enslaved, they inferred he always has been, and always will be. To refute this we have but to take a glance at the past. All nations have been slaves in their turn, as [cupidity] got the advantage of honesty. But after long oppression has goaded them on to resistance, they have overthrown their oppressors, and continued on in the march of human progress. Every generation is different from its predecessors. Some new phase in humanity is seen in each; some one nation, may for the time retrograde, but the world is ever advancing in the scale of improvement. "What has been, always will be?" No! what has been, never will be again, simply because it has been once. Man is not moving in a circle. The event which we have assembled to commemorate this day proves the folly of this doctrine. The signs of progress are bold, prominent, and visible, to all but the bigoted conservative. Parties

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that have for years been imperturbable upon the subject of slavery, have by it been rent asunder; one portion have become so rabid in their tumultuous hurra, for freedom, that I fear they have forgotten the legitimate parents of their boasted Philanthropy. In the language of inspiration "nations shall be born in a day." [T.] ones tremble, totter and fall. That aristocratic and tyrannical minority, who have scourged with oppression, misrule, and suffering the enslaved and disheartened majority, now stand in the front rank of progressive reformers.

What has brought out from their long sleep of death those sterling principles of our puritan fathers, bringing them to bear upon the destiny of this country? Why are the holy principles of a Warren, Hancock or Jefferson after a lapse of more than 50 years, threatening to overturn the last remnant of despotism? It is but the rational development of that reformatory principle which civilization and religion always implant. Like California gold it is finding its way out from among the parapets and hiding places, bringing into action the pure principles of our ancestors, and applying them equally to all. It is to those who are imbued with this reformatory spirit, and have raised the clarion note of human progress, that we are indebted for the mighty influences which have been brought to bear to the furtherance of those great principles. And would it not, I

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ask, be highly creditable to the character of this people, in conformity with all the just principles of common brotherhood, to rid our country of the foul stain of oppression?

Again, I remarked in the outset that I desired to established no new theory, or attack long established usages or customs. If usage or custom were my theme, who in God's name has felt the iron heel of oppression and tyrannical custom, more than those now assembled? Could we interrogate the eight hundred thousand whose happy deliverance we have met to rejoice over to day ; what think you would be the opinion of the christian custom, which they inherited from their most gracious and puritanic white brethren? How gratefully and magnanimously they have repaid us for the light of science and letters which dawned upon their benighted visions from our Egyptian ancestors. Indeed are they not the very embodiment of chivalry and heroism ! Ah, my fellow countrymen, citizens of the United States, I am bold to assert it, and no historian will attempt to deny, that had not that day dawned upon our ancestors some three thousand years ago, before Greece and Rome awoke the night of ages,-- had some great physical catastrophe, swallowed up these primal men of letters and science, and blotted out forever all their stupendous works of art -- what, would a horde of naked savages have had to-day to boast of in their Anglo Saxon or Caucasian origin?

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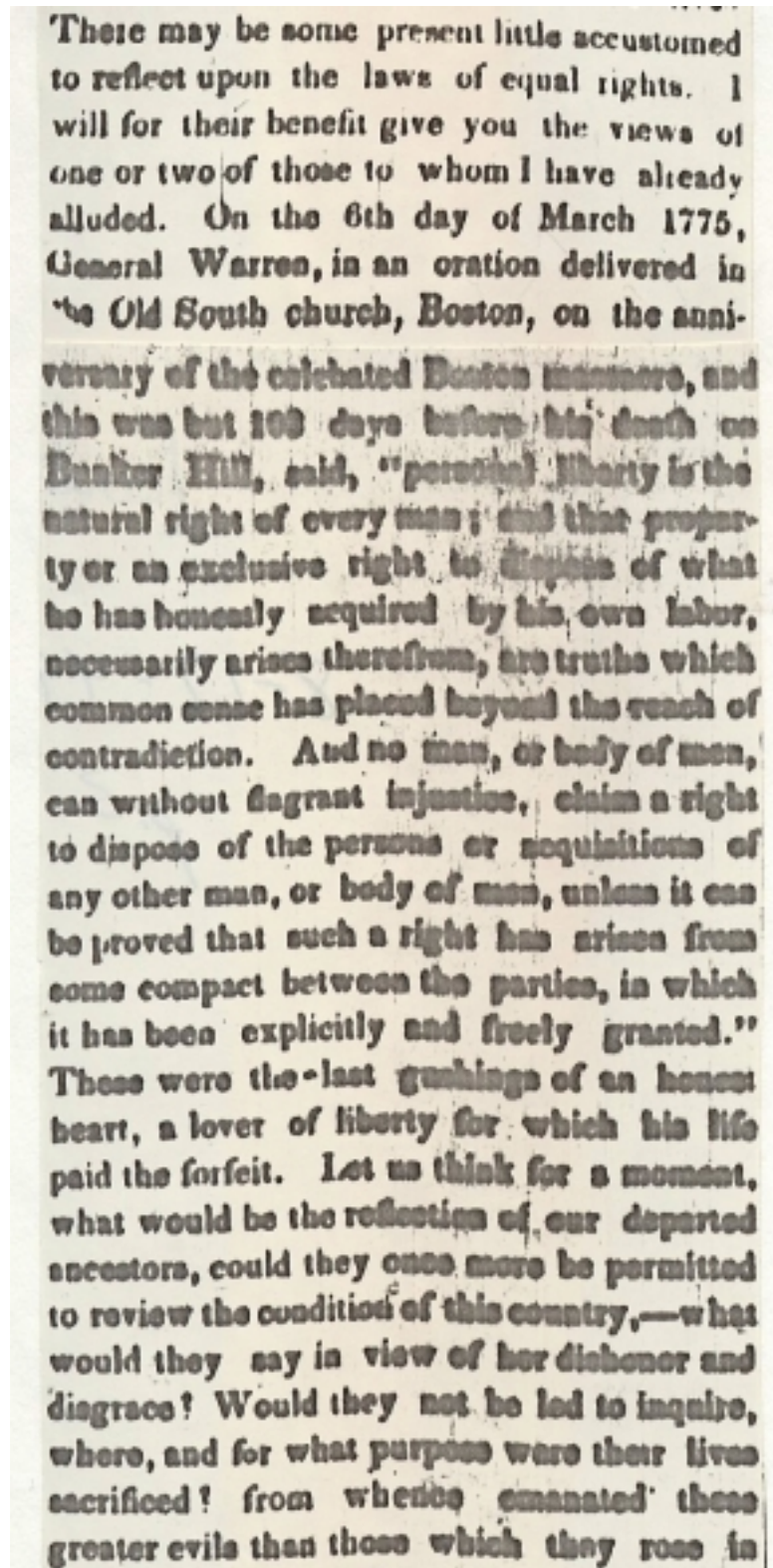
I stand here to-day a representative of those who were the benefactors of that noble blood of which you love to contemplate. The pure [...] of science, from which you my white fellow countrymen now drink had their origin in Egypt and Ethiopia, and in their wanderings have fertilized all succeeding generations. I know efforts have been made to throw discredit upon these precious relics of history, but it has now become an almost universally admitted truth. Those who desire information only need to trace back civilization and knowledge through their European ancestors, and from them through the Greeks, the Romans and the Jews directly to Africa, and they will find their benefactors to be Egyptians and Ethiopians. The founders of many of the early Grecian cities were Egyptian colonists—colored men. It was to Egypt that Grecian historians and philosophers resorted to obtain wisdom and refinement nowhere else to be found.

Again in view of these rejoicing facts, what application ought we to make of them to our circumstances? When the shackles are falling from hundreds of thousands of our race, when the great principles of human liberty and equality are reanimating the nations of the earth, shall we remain satisfied, in the valley of poverty and ignorance, or shall we avail ourselves of every means within our reach that may render us worthy of those principles and the age in which we live?

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There may be some present little accustomed to reflect upon the laws of equal rights. I will for their benefit give you the views of one or two of those to whom I have already alluded. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of March 1775, General Warren, in an oration delivered in the Old South church, Boston, on the anniversary of the celebrated Boston [massacre], and this was but 100 days before his death on Bunker Hill, said, "personal liberty is the natural right of every man ; and that property or an exclusive right to dispose of what he has honestly acquired by his own labor, necessarily arises therefrom, are truths which common sense has placed beyond the reach of contradiction. And no man, or body of men, can without flagrant injustice, claim a right to dispose of the persons or acquisitions of any other man, or body of men, unless it can be proved that such a right has arisen from some compact between the parties, in which it has been explicitly and freely granted." Those were the last gushings of an honest heart, a lover of liberty for which his life paid the forfeit. Let us think for a moment, what would be the reflection of our departed ancestors, could they once more be permitted to review the condition of this country, -- what would they say in view of her dishonor and disgrace? Would they not be led to inquire, where, and for what purpose were their lives sacrificed? from whence emanated these greater evils than those which they rose in



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rebellion to oppose? Ah, methinks they would be ashamed of their country, that they would say, Far better that she should have retained her former position, rather than hold the one she now occupies, and be guilty of so flagrant an act of injustice to one sixth portion of her citizens. If on that subsequent Monday to August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1492 when the Pinta connected with the fleet of Columbus broke her rudder, a tornado had passed over them, and consigned the whole fleet to a watery grave,—it might have averted not only the calamities which befel the aborigines of the newly discovered continent, but those which have befallen our race, for two centuries, the history of which the man who has a heart to feel for human suffering would shrink from with horror and disgust. One fact alone will give you some idea. Sixty thousand Indian families were reduced in less than six years to fourteen thousand. Entertaining as they did so noble and just a sense of their manhood, that rather than be enslaved and compelled to work in the mines, those who did not die from brutal treatment and suffering, preferred death to slavery. Thousands ended their earthly career by taking poison. It might also have averted the damning curse of three fourths of a century of the most spurious republicanism, and we might have been exempted from celebrating the birth day of freedom to eight hundred thousand of the human race

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from abject servitude. Better had the discoveries of the Spanish and Portuguese never been made, and all efforts ceased at the death of Isabella, rather than the disastrous consequences which have ensued. From that hour when the Pinta touched at St. Salvador, and those daring mariners of Columbus' fleet fell prostrate and kissed the newly discovered continent, a portentous cloud of slavery and death has hung over the new world. And from the fatal battle of Vega Real, Spanish rapacity and thirst for conquest have propagated this ungodly system. Not satisfied with laying waste this garden of the new world, and by oppressive treatment and cruelty exterminating these nations by forced labor, but this easy conquest led them to ravage other countries and drag into hopeless servitude millions of our race. This discovery nursed and brought into being all the worst depravity of the human heart, which arose among the natives to such a height of insolent and heaven daring outrage, that nothing short of the vengeance from the throne of the Eternal could arrest its progress. But West India Emancipation has rolled back the tide. It was a death blow to Mock Republicanism ; it applied the antidote and wrought out a change in the public mind which will sweep away the last vestige of servitude, and place all men upon the equality which the Creator intended.

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You see from this, fellow countrymen, there is much depending upon the efforts of reformers. They have had much to do in all ages of the world in moulding the various elements of society. If they appear at the dawn of a nation's existence, they will blend an untold influence with her lesser light that will lead her unto future glory, strengthening and lightening the effulgence of preceding ages. But let them appear at the declining of her glory, when thick darkness has gathered around all her prospects, and like the character that John Stebbins Lee mentions, who filled the chief office of state under Theodoric the Gothic Emperor in the former part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, can only lengthen for a season the impending danger ere the night of sleep closes in upon her. He tells us after the devoted patriotism of Cincinnatus, Coelestes, and Virginia, gave way to the sensuality of her Caesars, and the land once made so sacred by human prowess gave way to effeminacy, debauchery and crime, Boethius arose and flourished for a short season. Calmly he contemplates, while all is desolation around. Like true reformers of the present age, he was looked upon as an enemy to the race, because he told the truth ; and like the philosopher of Athens, fell a victim to those whose welfare he would promote. Great and good men of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in this our native land, like Boethius of old have also filled a martyr's grave for defending the right and grappling with the tyrant oppressor.

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It is true, as I before remarked, that slavery had brought our country to the verge of ruin, but the star of her declination had not fully set. While the hand of retributive justice was upraised to smite her, signs of redeeming mercy appeared. Ever since we have heard of the well garrisoned host sending forth their liberty loving appeals to awake this guilty nation, visible signs also appeared that all was not lost – that there was sufficient virtue to stay its progress. While kingdoms, principalities and powers, in monarchical and priest ridden lands, are shaking off their burdens and rending asunder the chains of oppression, slow as may be our advance march, it will be accomplished. If Rome can be redeemed after more than twelve centuries of the most degraded, oppressive, and tyrannical misrule, by extending equal rights and privileges to all her subjects, what stronger evidence do we need that we are onward? Blame me, fellow countrymen, when I say that if I did not believe this, I would teach other doctrine, I would recommend other appliances. For our conduct and obedience as good citizens we have received only insult and abuse. I read in the countenance of my countrymen before me a sad story, which electrifies the blood in these veins. Yes, my more favored white countrymen, were proud, on the fourth day of last month, to talk of the purity of motive under which your forefathers achieved for you and us the

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liberty which you alone enjoy. And as justly as we may reverence the conduct of many of those noble spirits in that struggle for independence, what have their recreant sons done but to subvert their intentions? You may vauntingly boast about omnipotent [sanction] in that bloody contest, we daily witness [senes] and experience results profoundly based upon the principles of those revolutionary patriots, which are irreconcilable to, and estranged from all their general teachings. In short it is a system of injustice practised on [our] [class] to degrade, impoverish and enslave them, that the other may be elevated. Not only in these veins, but in those of colored man generally, flows an equal proportion of the boasted patriotic blood that achieved the liberty you possess. Were not the signs of the times ominous of good – were not individuals, states, and the nation, actively engaged in taking off the ponderous load which has for three fourths of a century crushed us as a race under the professed benignity of your laws ; soon like our fathers of old would the four millions in this land whose ears are unstopped to catch the sound of that soul stirring ode, of “hail Columbia,” reanimated by he principles of their three million predecessors, rush on with mightier odds to contend against, asserting in the power of their might, their manhood, till the last remnant were gathered home to their fathers, or liberty had crowned their efforts with success.

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Again, let me say to those who claim a large share in this reformatory work, (you may designate those to whom I refer by the strong claim they make to Jeffersonian principles,) although I grant them to be far in the advance of their stronger political opponents, yet need a more thorough study of his views in order that a more consistent course of action may follow them. Jefferson in his notes on Virginia speaks thus: "The whole commerce between master and slave, is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on one part, and degrading submission on the other --and with what execration should the statesmen be loaded, who permitting one half of the citizens thus to trample on the rights of the other, transforms those into despots, and these into enemies, destroys the morals of one part, and the patriotism of the other." He further adds, "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only base -- a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God -- that they are violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just, and that his justice will not always sleep -- that the Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in this contest." May I not ask, then, in the language of Leighton, "Why have you, O wretched mortals, condemned yourselves as it were to the mines, and the

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very nature of your study and action ever preventing you with others from regaining your liberty? although sensibility to wrong has aroused you to take some of the incipient stages of action in behalf of the oppressed, your every act proves that sensibility is not necessarily true benevolence, for we may become alarmingly aroused to the condition of things around us, and yet through an effeminate selfishness all your efforts be inefficacious in producing the result intended." Would to God that the purity of principle and healthy state of public sentiment upon these great questions were not such as to compel me to hold views hostile to the majority of my fellow countrymen. I speak, because I feel that the hour has arrived when we must not only see right, but act right. Let action ! action now ! be the watchword.

One thought more and I have done. There are at the present day but few in the north or south but acknowledge the evil of slavery, and that it ought to be abolished. But the propriety of the course pursued in West India Emancipation thousands are ready to deny. What is the true history of these Islands since emancipation, but uninterrupted peace, contentment, and improvement? Out of the straw thatched cottage, and mud hovel, have arisen the neatly finished dwelling, and the large country mansions. Out of the degraded slaves, have arisen the free and industrious landholders, farmers and mechanics, the

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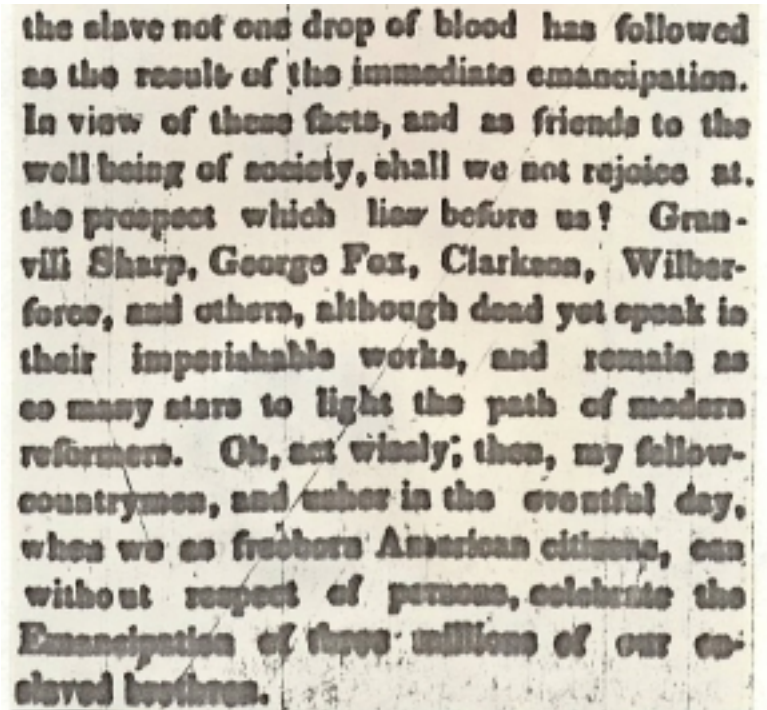
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protectors and guardians of all the virtues that can safely ensure the well being of society. I recently read some statistics from the pen of some demagogue aspirant after fame, showing as an argument against immediate emancipation that the exports from the West Indies had fallen off since the slaves were released. But to my mind this is a conclusive argument in its favor. Would it have been wonderful when those who constituted the great mass of the population came into full possession of all the natural and social advantages of the country, that their consumption had made a home market for even all their former exports? Had not the act of Emancipation been a stimulant for increased labor, and brought out a greater product from the soil, as also from various other channels, instead of falling off a small percentage, large importation would have been needed for home consumption in addition to their former exports. But the most significant fact in relation to it is, that instead of a falling off there was in some places a manifest increase. It appears by an official statement, that the quarter of the year after Emancipation exceeded the quarter of the three years preceding it, in Demarara, twenty per cent, Berbice 50 per cent of the great staple of her exports, and on the article of coffee alone 100 per cent. This has been the happy effect of Emancipation in the West Indies. In all the instances of tardy justice done to

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