

Mr. CHARLES LENOX REMOND,—I scarcely need intimate sir, that I take great pleasure in giving my second to the series of resolutions which have been presented to the consideration of this large and intelligent assembly through my friend Mr. Downing, and in saying so much sir, I could have wished to have been allowed to take my seat, for there are others present to whom I should have preferred to listen. But sir, I feel that the present meeting called for the purpose of discussing the subject which has been introduced for our consideration, is one in which we, as a people, are deeply interested. This thought alone moves me more than any other to take this platform. It is not my purpose to recapitulate here, either the history or the origin of the American Colonization Society, or its subsequent acts. These things are before the American people, they are acquainted with them; and if there is one object more than another to be gained by the holding of this meeting, I apprehend it is to deepen the detestation already entertained toward that infamous scene.

But sir, we fail in one essential particular here this evening; we have not the persons before us who are mainly the supporters of the American Colonization Society. If there were present I should have no difficulty whatever in saying the few things I have to express. But if they hear me at all it must be through my audience, and of course it can only go to them at second-hand.

That the entire people of colour are opposed to the Colonization Society I do not believe. And I apprehend that there are those present this evening who are not prepared to subscribe to the resolutions which have just been introduced. To such I have a few thoughts to suggest, and whilst I shall do so, I shall endeavor to make a distinction between the spirit which prompted the American

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Colonization Society into being, and the spirit which prompts many coloured persons to go to the colony of Liberia, in the spirit of enterprise, and adventure. With this class I have no war, so to express myself. And I wish to be distinctly understood, that I believe in the largest exercise of individual opinions, individual ambitions for elevation and wealth. And I also recognize the fullest right in coloured persons, as well as in white, to go where they shall choose to go, for the purpose of bettering their condition either morally, socially, politically or religiously. I say sir, I am here, not to oppose, but to give my countenance to action of this kind. But I feel that the spirit of the American Colonization Society, from its origin to the present moment, has been to break up that exercise of our individuality. I hate it sir, not so much that I believe it ever can remove the people of colour from these United States, but because I believe that so long as it shall exist, its tendency is to make more rabid the spirit of caste and prejudice against the coloured people in this country. And I think sir, that it is honest in this expression, that it comes honestly by this spirit. I have, however, felt that the Colonization Society originated in American Slavery, and coming from such a source I do not believe that any good can come out of it. Therefore I have ever warred against it and must be permitted to do so now. Why, sir, there are those at the present moment who can blink the charges which the American Colonization Society have from time to time preferred against the people of colour, and in the face of these charges can insist that there is nevertheless, charity and even Christianity in the movement. Well, if the charges have not been sanctioned and subscribed to by the parent Society, I could allow my charity to go out

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to that extent; but as long as I can remember having heard the speeches of the leaders of the Colonization Society, I have either found those charges directly or indirectly made, or subscribed to by the different members of that Society. And what have those charges been?-- Have they conveyed the idea that the free people of colour should be recognized on an equal footing with other citizens, in any part of our country, under any circumstances? On no occasion have I seen it. On the contrary the endeavor has been from beginning to end to prejudice the American mind more deeply than it was before through the efforts of American Slavery itself.— Now I need not intimate, Mr. Chairman, the grossness of these charges, the untruthfulness of them, nor their bitterness, hatred, enmity and jealousy. But sir, how are they to be met? I hold that the present meeting is the place to put again the seal of condemnation upon all such charges, by the adoption of such resolutions as have been offered.

Now I know that the American Colonization Society through its auxiliary in my native State, (Massachusetts,) has been blazing forth these charges. Some of the most influential of our statesmen as well as clergymen have subscribed to them by their countenance, by their support, by their contributions, by their appeals, and by their prayers in behalf of the parent Society. And hence it has ever been my endeavor to meet the Society as found at its birth in 1817. And I can no more welcome the advocate of Colonization that stands forth in Park street Church in Boston, than I can Henry Clay when he delivers an anniversary oration in the city of Washington. I hold the two to be identical in this matter, be their position what they may in my native State or elsewhere.

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Why sir, I remember well when the question was being discussed concerning the abolition of the remnant of that old slave law, the inter-marriage law, in the city of Boston, that when we, as a people, found fault that we were not at liberty to exercise one of the first prerogatives conferred upon us by our God and Creator, we were told in public as well as in private, that if we did not like the customs, usages, and laws of our native State, we could go to our fatherland in Africa, under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. I asked them to repeat the charges [...] the Legislature of that State, when it was my privilege to stand [before...] if we had ever sacrificed our rights by our vices, or whether we [had...] acquired them by our virtues; and that Legislature remained silent, and has remained silent from that time to this. And, sir, I hope the day is not far distant when upon that question being put in other parts of our country, the only answer that shall be made, shall be one of silence. Silence in many instances, is ominous, and in this it is ominous in view of the infernal machinations of the American Colonization Society from the very moment of its inception to the present time. Hence, whether in the abstract or in the concrete, it is ever to be detested by us, as a people, it is ever to be opposed, and if necessary, to be resisted even to the shedding of the blood that necessity will find a place in our hearts. (Applause.)

Now sir, a word with regard to these charges. I see before me this evening a large number of people of colour. What says the Society? That we are "low, vicious, idle, besotted:" in a word, that we are "nuisances, and consequently that we must be removed." But in the very next breath they tell the patrons of the Society and those whom they would convert to their cause; "remove

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these low, vicious, idle, besotted nuisances to Africa, and in an instant they stand up clothed in all the attributes [calculated] to make them missionaries and teachers in the work of civilization and Christianity. I have asked them to put this and that together, and reconciled them if they can. My audience, sir, gives the lie to the charges, and my audience will give the lie to them to night by endorsing these resolutions. And I hope sir, that when the proceedings of this meeting shall go over to England, and shall meet the eye of Mr. (agent) Miller, that they will have the desired effect upon him,—that they will teach him that if we are low and besotted in this country, it is American Slavery and the Colonization Society that have made us so; (Applause) that if we are vicious, American Slavery has made us vicious: that if we are idle, American prejudice has made us idle: in short that American Slavery and the American Colonization Society have been the instruments of making us just what we are in our vices. (Applause.)

If we are ignorant, I ask to whom it is attributable but to Slavery and the Colonization Society. The one has said, that if we wished to obtain a knowledge of the Arts and Sciences, we must be colonized; and the other, when we have knocked at the door of the college and academy, has said to us, go to your fatherland. We have been treated shamefully, aye shamefully! Here in your city not long since, was written over the door of one of your places of public exhibition. “No admission for dogs and negroes.” (laughter.) Sir, I believe that American Slavery instituted that notice in that place of exhibition. In Philadelphia a few weeks ago, I saw a notice intimating to “respectable coloured people” that they could gain admission to see the wax-figures on a certain day and

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hour, taking it for granted that this was to be felt by them as a privilege. What but American Slavery and the American Colonization Society prompted the notice in that paper?

Now sir, I call upon this audience to give their unanimous sanction to the most radical sentiments contained in this resolution. And why do I say it? Sir, a distinguished man long ago has said "eternal vigilance was the price of liberty." I wish to repeat that motto, by saying that *eternal vigilance is the price of our safety as a people in the United States*. (Applause.) How does it happen that in the State of New York there are thousands of coloured persons disenfranchised? How does it happen that the same is true of the State of Pennsylvania, of Connecticut and other States? Can we trace it to any other source than the one to which I have referred? I apprehend not. Sir, I believe that Henry Clay, with all his eloquence on one hand, and John C. Calhoun, with all his *devilism* (laughter) on the other, would not come before this meeting and attempt to sustain their charges. And why? Because as my friend, H. C. Wright said of another movement not long since in Philadelphia, "their movement carries upon its face a lie." And what is the lie? Why, that Africa is our fatherland. Now I apprehend that if we should note and count this audience we should be obliged to come to the conclusion that the fatherland of the coloured people was almost anywhere else than Africa (great laughter). I think sir, that their origin would be traceable to very nearly the same spot where are found your Clays, your Calhouns, your McDuffies, and your Wises. (renewed laughter.) I apprehend that it would be found in any other direction than Africa at least. But my remark is not directly applicable

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to my audience alone. A distinguished man said long ago, that "in the veins of many a slave is known to course the blood of the noblest of our Southern planters." Well sir, why does it happen that in the southern country we find a law unlike the law of any other country beneath the canopy of heaven? We find the law there to be that the child shall follow the condition of the mother. Why is this? Sir, if the people in the southern country were to follow the condition of the father, we know very well what that condition would be (laughter and applause). Now it seems to me that the patrons of the Colonization Society need to change their phraseology, and if they insist that we go to Africa at all, it should be on the score that Africa is our *mother* and not our fatherland (laughter). I do not, Mr. Chairman, wish to convey the idea that if Africa was my fatherland I should be ashamed of it; very far from it. For in view of the vices of the white American on the one hand, and the virtues of the coloured American on the other, I think we may be decidedly more proud of our ancestry than they can be of theirs, so far as the last one or two hundred years is concerned. We have everything else to be ashamed of on our part, and I am not here to deprecate the Colonization Society on the score of being ashamed of Africa as my fatherland.

One more word in this connection. We look around our country at the present time, and what do we behold? We find coming to our shores day after day, week after week, month after month, thousands and tens of thousands of those who have heretofore been a population of paupers, and they receive a hearty welcome as they pour in from every country and clime, from every tongue and kindred. Now, sir, it is strange that while the doors of

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the American people are thrown widely open, and all classes from every country are allowed to come, and are welcomed here, it is strange, I say, that there are not some other reasons than those given while a peculiar class of the American people should be transported out of the country. I believe, sir, that the scheme is unconstitutional as well as unchristian. I do not know a section or passage or word in the American Constitution recognizing the removal of any portion of the American people unstained by crime; and I have never been satisfied with the coolness with which, in too many instances, the propositions of the Colonization Society have been received by the coloured people. I think, sir, we should have shown more spirit in the matter. I can give you an illustration of the spirit which actuates some of the advocates of this Society.

While in London, in 1849, my good friend, Thomas Sturge, informed me that on the evening Mr. Cresson was to deliver a lecture on the colonization scheme at a public place, nineteen miles from the city. It was then four o'clock and I immediately took the cars and went out to the place where the lecture was to be given. I was an entire stranger in that town, and I enquired for the place of the meeting. On reaching it and going in, I saw that it was held in a sort of Amphitheatre, which was then occupied by a literary society in that town before which Mr. Cresson was lecturing. I stood near the door and before me was a bulwark by looking over which I could see and hear what was going on. The audience was an intelligent one, and Mr. Cresson was making out an excellent story in behalf of the Colonization Society. As he was about finishing his remarks, I asked the door-keeper if he thought I would be permitted to ask the

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lecturer a question. He said he did not know how it would be; and while conversing with him, a friend came out who happened to know me, having seen me at a meeting of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and he spoke to me. I made known my wish, and he said at once that he would secure to me a hearing. When Mr. Cresson was about closing his remarks I rose, and in as polite a manner as I was able, asked him if he would permit me to ask or suggest a question. He looked at me and recognized me, and after pausing a moment, he said no; and then turned to the audience giving them to understand why he would not allow me to ask a single question. He said that I was one of the number who subscribed to Garrison's views, who went against the American Constitution and the American Union, who called slaveholders thieves and robbers, &c.; in a word, that I was in cooperation with the men who would be happy to see our Southern country drenched in blood. His remark, although brief, was forcible, and the audience responded to them. Of course I was to understand the response as a sort of rebuke to myself. However, when he had finished I asked the audience to bear with me for a moment—that I came from the country from which Mr. Cresson came, that I was one of the number which the Colonization Society proposed to remove, and that I thought I had a right to ask a question, if I should couch it in respectful terms. Well, the cry went round the building "hear him, hear him!" [Applause.] I then took occasion to change my first purpose, and instead of asking Mr. Cresson the question I had proposed, I took the opportunity to give the Colonization Society a sort of sidewise thrust, or as the Yankee boys would call it, "a side winder," (laughter) and I found

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before I had proceeded far that the responses in my behalf were much more numerous than the previous ...]. And now I thought I would be safe in making a short speech. I did so, and took my seat. On sitting down I was at once invited to lecture in that place on the subject, but before I accepted the invitation I gave Mr. Cresson a polite invitation to discuss the subject with me, one, two, three, or four evenings. He said no; he would not condescend to discuss with one coming from the United States, and exhibiting such a spirit as I had done on that evening. Well, I thought I had already achieved a slight victory. I accepted the invitation, went to the place at the appointed time, delivered my lecture, and received a unanimous vote of thanks from the audience, who made up a comfortable little purse for my lecture, and I went back to London feeling pretty well. [Applause.] I merely call your attention to this matter to show you that among the agents in England, whenever and wherever they find sympathy, you can see the same spirit manifested as that to which I have referred. It is to be seen in the treatment which Mr. Cresson gave me on that occasion. I ask my audience now, if it does not prove that, in view of the circumstances which surround them at the present time, in view of the efforts which the Colonization Society have been making for the last ten years, while our Anti-Slavery friends have been quarrelling, in view of the efforts which have been making at the South in consequence of the starting into being of the Free Soil movement, in view of Mr. Clay's speech, in view of the recent mission to England, if, in view of all these, we are not called upon in the language of these resolutions to act, and to act resolutely? God grant that we may be moved to do so here this evening; and if the

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resolutions do not already express our every feeling upon this matter, let us have additional ones, and let the people of England learn that coloured though we be, we know our rights, and God helping us, we mean to have them in the land of our nativity, and in common with the American people. [Applause.] And if we chose to go to Africa we will do so voluntarily without the help or countenance of the American Colonization Society. We will take the responsibility ourselves, as General Jackson said. We will go with the spirit that the white American goes to California, or the Brazos. Tell me not of my fatherland or my motherland: that is my fatherland where I happen to be born, and I claim an equal right to remain here with the white inhabitants. Why, sir, my grandfather was among the first that repaired to the plains of Lexington, and there bared his bosom,—not, sir, in defence of the coloured population exclusively, but he bared his bosom to British bullets for the liberty and independence of the American people and the freedom of American soil. [Great applause.] And, sir, I should indeed be ashamed of my ancestry if I did not now assert, and give not only the American people, but the world, to understand, that here I was born, and here I am to defend my right, to live and die. [Applause.]

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