

After acknowledging the compliment of the invitation in becoming terms, he said that if his Creator had destined him to any one work, it was to proclaim not a partial freedom for any one race, but for all men of whatever race or complexion. He planted himself on the Declaration of Independence, and advocated the freedom of every inhabitant of this republic. That noble document said that all men were born free, and among their inalienable rights were life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He planted himself also on the Constitution, which declared that no person should be deprived of life or liberty without due process of law. On these two documents, the Declaration and the Constitution, he would make his argument, and res[t] his cause. In admiration for the Declaration, in devotion to the Constitution and the laws, in reverence for our noble President, in love for our soldiers, love for the army and its heroic commander, love for the navy, he yielded to no man in the land. He claimed to be the friend of both the American and the African race, and labored for their common welfare. With one side of his descent Anglo-Saxon, and the other negro, how could he fail to be true to both? The first great gun which thundered at Fort Sumter overthrew a slavery which held the whole land in bondage. Prior to that time there was not a man, black or white, in all the land who was a freeman[.] The American people might be divided into four classes before the rebellion, not one of

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which could be called free. The first class was composed of the lords of the lash, the slaveholders, who said: "We own the negro, his bones and muscles, his wife and children." One might suppose that this class was free, for they seemed to lord it over every one. And yet the master was himself a slave. A law of Louisiana said if any man should use language tending to excite discontent and insurrection among slaves, he might be imprisoned not less than three nor more than twenty-one years, or might even suffer death[.] No man was excepted from this bloody statute. If a lawyer should quote the stirring sentiments of the Declaration, and give utterance to the passion for liberty which dwelt in his soul, and a slave fired by his eloquence should determine to be free, the lawyer would be a criminal in the eyes of the statute. Thus slaveholders themselves were muzzled, and forbidden to talk about freedom. If we went from the bar to the pulpit, the minister dared not read the grand sentiments of freedom which the Bible contained, lest slaves should be worked up to mutiny. In every department of life the slaveholders themselves dwelt in bondage while slavery continued.

The second great class was composed of non-slaveholders, that is the entire population of the North, with a large majority of the population of the South. And these men, having no interest in slavery, were not free. They, too, wore its chains, and were expected

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to do its bidding. A few years ago Massachusetts sent the Hon. Samuel Hoar, an eminent lawyer of that State to Charleston, S C, to inquire into the arrest and imprisonment of certain colored citizens of Massachusetts, who had ventured there on shipboard. Mr. Hoar went to the Mayor of the city and told him his mission. The excited Mayor and Councilmen told him to leave the city forthwith. The Legislature of the State passed a series of resolutions, claiming the right to expel all seditious persons, and specially instructing the Governor to expel Mr. Hoar without delay. This was the way in which South Carolina insulted and outraged the State of Massachusetts in the person of one of her most illustrious citizens.. When Mr. Hoar reached Philadelphia he made a speech, in which he said he had escaped "the bloody clutches of the slaveholders." And this was the language of a free white man! Where was the freedom of Mr. Hoar, or the sovereignty of Massachusetts? A few years subsequent to this event, Massachusetts sent an eminent Senator to Washington, who was brutally stricken down on the floor of the Senate Chamber because he dared to attack slavery. And when Abraham Lincoln, elected President of the United States, went to Washington to be inaugurated, he had to pass through slaveholding Baltimore in disguise, because the minions of slavery had actually threatened him with assassina-

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tion. Thus white men, occupying the highest stations, were continually threatened with violence if they dared to speak or work against slavery. There was therefore not a man in all the land free while that system existed. We have cause to rejoice, to-night, for the anniversary which we celebrate is national, and every man, white or black, should exult that slavery is dead, and that the bodies and souls of all Americans are redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled, by the genius of universal emancipation. There was a third class who should rejoice. The slave had nothing which resembled freedom, no gift among the bounties of God which he could call his own. With him the phrases "my person;" "my wife;" "my children;" were all mere figures of speech. He owned nothing; neither wife, nor son, nor daughter; no, not even himself. He could acquire nothing, by years of toil, for his master could come and say "all you have made and earned is mine." The slave was now a free man, for the first gun fired at Fort Sumter, and the Emancipation Proclamation had proclaimed his freedom forever.

The free negroes who constituted the fourth class, were only nominally free heretofore. For example, even in the good State of Illinois, from which Abraham Lincoln comes, there is a law which says that a free negro coming into that State, shall be arrested, and if he do not leave within ten days after-

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ward, shall be sold at public outcry. Neither South Carolina, nor Alabama, nor Mississippi, equalled this in cold blood barbarism. The magistrates are to have no reason,, no conscience, but are to make slaves of free negroes if they dare to enter that State. The law goes on to p[r]ovide that half the proceeds arising from the sale of such negroes shall constitute a *charity fund for the relief of poor whites!* This statute still exists, and if a negro goes to Illinois and stays ten days, he is liable to be sold. Perhaps the law is a dead letter—it is so in Chicago; but its existence is a reproach to the State. Even in Ohio, which had produced such Generals as Sherman, Sheridan, and Grant, a negro pauper was not allowed to enter a poor house, which his taxes in former days had helped to erect. Thus slavery went abroad over the land an imperious master. It went to Illinois and said: “Enact this law for my benefit,” and it was enacted. It went to Ohio and said “Enact [this] law,” and it was enacted. It went over all the [N]orth, and was everywhere obeyed[.] Men and women everywhere were shorn of civil and religious liberty. A great man once said that a nation might lose its freedom in a day and be a century in finding it out. So it was with us. The thunder of that great gun at Fort Sumter broke the spell. We had forgotten that when the chain was bound upon the negro, it was bound also on the white man. Therefore

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he swore eternal eternity to slavery, and called on all to join [h]im in warring against it. Wendell Phillips once asked if liberty was doomed to die in this country—if the Almighty had scooped out the Mississippi valley for her grave, or reared the Rocky Mountains for her monument, or bid Niagara sing her eternal requiem? He would answer this question to-night with an emphatic No! One proof was that he, a black man dared to speak in the Capitol of Tennessee to-night. Another proof is that no slave to-day walks in the District of Columbia. He was there last winter and walked along Pennsylvania Avenue, and through the Capitol, and no overseer tapped him on the shoulder and [said]: “Boy, where is your pass?” Another proof[f] is, there is no slavery in the territories. The moment a slave reaches the limits of a territory his shackles fall to the ground, and he stands a freeman.

The speaker then read Lord Brougham’s eloquent invective against slavery, and quoted his annunciation of a higher law. This higher law was now written all over the national terries:

Hayti and Liberia, where independence was acknowledged many years ago by England and France, were at last recognized as nations by the United States.

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or be entitled to the benefit of their application. In reply to this cavil, he would read some extracts from the celebrated letter of Hon. Edward Bates, Attorney-General of the United States, to Hon. Salmon P. Chase, in which he explicitly declared that the question of complexion had nothing to do with citizenship. After reading at length from the letter of Mr. Bates, the speaker resumed: Some will say that these principles apply to white men only. The Attorney-General says no. They apply as well to him who has knotty hair, chalky eyes, long heels and flat nose, as to him who has flaxen hair and blue eyes. (Laughter and applause.) The Federal Constitution says not one word about color, says Mr. Bates. He would say, then, to the colored Americans around him to-night, the Government owes you protection, and you owe it allegiance. When Hood comes to threaten Nashville, it is the [duty] of the negro to go forth like a man to fight [for] the Union. He was proud to know that in [that] late fight before the city the negro was [not] wanting. If there was one thing for which he thanked God, it was that white men and negroes went forth side by side to fight the battles of the country. He rejoiced the more, because in his State there were some white men who skulked about, foreboding disaster to our arms. Hood will take no more cities, for the black element is in the army, and with the colored soldier a fight necessarily means vic-

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tory or death, as he must fight furiously; he cannot surrender. There was not a negro traitor in the land. The slaves might bow and scrape and hurrah for Jeff. Davis in the presence of rebels, but as one of them said in New Orleans, "it was only in fun." In Ohio the law said if a man had more white than negro blood in his veins, he could vote. These white negroes all came from the South, which has no great a horror of amalgamation. Some profess to oppose negro freedom because it fosters amalgamation; but the truth was, it was slavery which promoted amalgamation.

The speaker then recited the course of Gen. Jackson towards the negroes in the war of 1812, when he spoke to them as fellow citizens and soldiers.

Next we come to the grand document, whose publication we celebrate to-day, by which 3,000,000 of people were set free. He exhorted them to hang the Proclamation on the walls of their dwellings; let their children learn to read it, and thank God night and day for Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, the Moses who led us from a worse than Egyptian bondage. The nation has said to us, "Come forth!" and we have come forth, it may be with our old grave clothes bound about us, but resolved on progress. With freedom comes new and great responsibilities. Noble white men stand on every side to assist us. Let us be true to ourselves. Let us remember, too, that the colored man has

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been invited into the army. Our brethren fought nobly at Milliken's Bend, Port Hudson, and at Fort Wagner. Did they not fight like men before Nashville? In the Revolution of '76, colored soldiers fought side by side with the white. The first man who fell in the war was a colored man, Crispus Attuck. The colored soldier fought also in the war of 1812. Let us thank God he is in the Army of the Potomac with Grant, with Sherman, with Thomas. And at the last [g]rand assault on Richmond, the negro, thank God, will be in the ranks of the Union army, to fight, and if need be die on the spot.

In conclusion the speaker cordially thank[ed] the authorities who had been so courteous to him on this occasion, and also to his respectful and attentive audience. If he had displayed any ability he begged his white audience not to attribute it all to his white blood. Let them rather say as an Irishman is reported to have said on a like occasion: "If [half a] nager can do so well, what could a whole nager do!"