

*Friends and Fellow Countrymen:*—We are happy to meet you on the present occasion. Proud are we to see so many assembled. We see before us hoary-headed sires and aged matrons, upon whose heads have fallen the snows of fifty winters;—young men rejoicing in their strength and blooming Misses of sixteen bright summers; prattling children are here, on this glad day. We have met to celebrate, that is, to keep holy. As human rights and hopes are holy, so is the event that chronicles the struggling for the same, not only to keep holy, but also to praise, which is due—1<sup>st</sup>, to God, as being the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, by the agency of whose spirit, men of sagacious minds and extended influence have labored successfully in the cause of human freedom. 2d, Our praise is due to those noble men, who, only through benevolent motives have contributed so much to the great cause. We have not convened more to praise than to make famous—that those who live in our neighborhood, country and day, may read in our movements, our appreciation of the right.

We would not have it cease for the present, but rather that it should be known in future ages, that the heart of the black man was ever grateful.

Again, we say we have again met to celebrate, what? Some act of disinterested charity that rescued thousands of

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Again, we say we have again met to celebrate, what? Some act of disinterested charity that rescued thousands of

our brethren from the devouring jaws of famine? No, more than this. Is it, then, a discovery in the world of science by one of our race, that has revealed to the world hidden laws in nature hitherto unknown? It is not of this we would particularly speak. The smiles of your countenances and the throbbings of your hearts seem to say: We meet to celebrate the boon of Freedom. Rather let thousands die the unhappy death of starvation than live enslaved.

Yes, better let the hidden laws of nature remain concealed, her phenomena unexplained, than that millions should lay crushed and bleeding beneath the oppressor's [r]od.

We celebrate to-day the Emancipation of Slaves in the British West India islands on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1834.

The tyrant's rod was there broken; and yonder sun that had, in prior days, risen to give them light during their unrewarded labors, looked upon them as in times past. No! "the light of other days had faded" and sank in oblivion's turbid sea. The scene was changed. Not *things*, but men and women, were they now—not bond, but free—not only *called* husband or wife, but enabled to feel the power of the endearing tie. Not merely to *be* parent or child, but to enjoy the responsibility and affection arising from the relation. Never

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before to them did the orb of day shine so brightly. And as he rose that morning, from the chambers of the East, it seemed to betoken the gradual uprising of our race. The dawn of the day may indicate the "opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound." The tinselled clouds show the fame of these things, before they are noised abroad. The sun shining in his strength is typical of the prosperity of our people, and when at his meridian, also the greatness of our race in the sciences and arts, morality and religion. On that glad day, unbounded joy was the burthen of every heart.

I ask what shall be capable of erasing from the minds of the survivors or offspring of the 800,000 freed men, the recollections of that hallowed day? Will the turmoils of life, the opposition of enemies, or the barriers of prejudice do it? We answer, neither. Not all of these will be competent to the task. The trembling lips of age shall rehearse it into the the listening ears of youth, and they to their offspring. So it will be kept in remembrance even though the historian's page should crumble into dust. On this great day they meet. And from the first faint blush of the morning, till the deepening glooms of midnight, their rejoicings go forth upon the ocean's breeze. With prolonged thanksgiving they keep this festal day. Amidst

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these joys, music, heaven-born music, lends its power—and when their myriad voices raise the loftiest notes of the soul-stirring anthem, “God save the Queen,” a pathos almost unspeakable crowns the scene. The enchanting strains are borne upon the balmy breeze to the courts of heaven, where it rises as “a sweet smelling savor” in the nostrils of the Supreme Ruler.

We are also here to celebrate the Abolishing of Slavery in the District of Columbia: of this we shall speak farther, by-and-by. Years of mingled joy and sorrow, hope and despondency, have passed since we met upon a like occasion. Then clouds of thick darkness lowered upon us. Across the path of our destiny there streamed no unfading ray of refulgent light. The hands of Time has introduced new scenes into the Panorama of our country’s history. When last we met, Peace sat upon our country’s templed hills, and crowned her vallies with abundant harvests. Time, in order to reveal the present had to roll away the past. The canvas of the Panorama began to move and the National Flag is made to trail on Sumter’s bloody ramparts. The Dove of Peace winged her flight from the shores of our land, at the sight of which many a fond father’s pulse beat quick, doting mothers sighed, loving brothers pressed their lips together with stern determination, sisters wept over the coming future. Many

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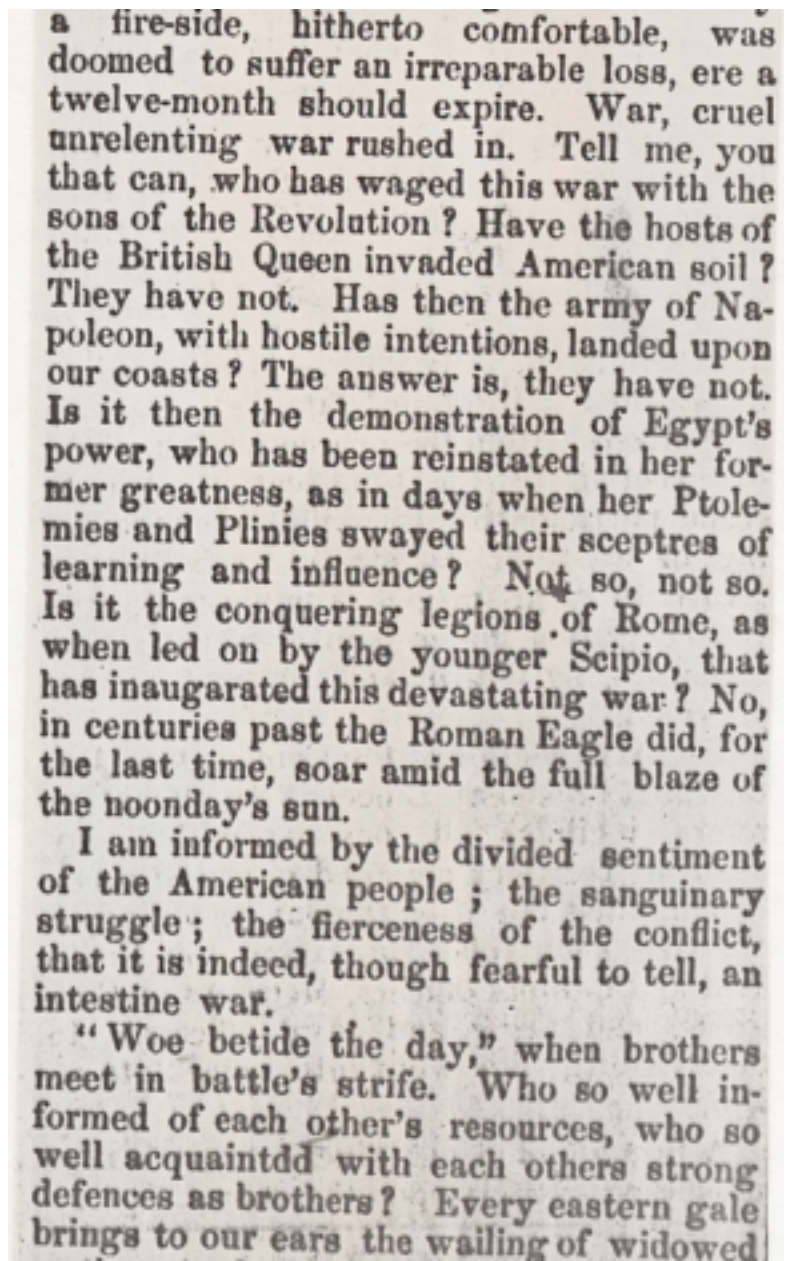
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a fire-side, hitherto comfortable, was doomed to suffer an irreparable loss, ere twelve-month should expire. War, cruel unrelenting war rushed in. Tell me, you that can, who has waged this war with the sons of the Revolution? Have the hosts of the British Queen invaded American soil? They have not. Has then the army of Napoleon, with hostile intentions, landed upon our coasts? The answer is, they have not. Is it then the demonstration of Egypt's power, who has been reinstated in her former greatness, as in days when her Ptolemies and Plinies swayed their sceptres of learning and influence? Not so, not so. Is it the conquering legions of Rome, as when led on by the younger Scipio, that has inaugurated this devastating war? No, in centuries past the Roman Eagle did, for the last time, soar amid the full blaze of the noonday's sun.

I am informed by the divided sentiment of the American people; the sanguinary struggle; the fierceness of the conflict, that it is indeed, though fearful to tell, an intestine war.

"Woe betide the day," when brothers meet in battle's strife. Who so well informed of each other's resources, who so well acquaintdd with each others strong defences as brothers? Every eastern gale brings to our ears the wailing of widowed



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mothers and the cries of fatherless children. What tongue can depict, in its true light, the horrors of war. The learned Chalmers, the eloquent Athenian, Rome's famed orator, and Webster, of undying memory, were each and all inadequate to the task.

The thundering cannon, the volleys of musketry, the fearful charge, the stifling smoke, the moanings of the wounded, the ghastly countenances of the dead, and the faint strugglings of the dying, with no mother's hand to smoothe their hard pillows, no bosom companion to cheer, with friendly voice the gloomy hours. The good and brave have fallen during this conflict.

Colonel Baker is no more; he died gloriously fighting the battles of his country. That erect form we shall no more see, nor shall we hear that stately step, nor listen to that unsurpassed eloquence, before which the mightiest in the land would quail. Thousands have fought and fell as he did, and no tomb-stones will mark their resting-place, no well-finished epitaph tell the virtues of the departed; but their graves have been noticed by the God of Nature and Liberty, and each returning spring shall bloom and breathe their fragrance over them. Feathered songsters of plumage fair will sing above them their matin lay to the God of the Free. Of these we may say, as did Halleck, the poet of the Grecian Warrior Chief—

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Come to the bridal-chamber, Death!  
Come to the mother, when she feels  
For the first time her first-born's breath;  
Come, when the blessed seals  
Which close the pestilence are broke,  
And crowded cities wail its stroke;—  
Come in Consumption's ghastly form,  
The earthquake's shock, the ocean's storm;—  
Come when the heart beats high and warm,  
With banquet song, and dance, and wine,  
And thou art terrible; the tear,  
The groan, the knell, the pall, the bier,  
And all we know, or dream, or fear  
Of agony, are thine.  
But to the hero, when his sword  
Has won the battle for the [f]ree,  
Thy voice sounds like a prophet's word,  
And in its hollow tones are heard  
The thanks of millions yet to be.

Slavery is said to have "arisen out of the selfishness of barbarism," It has existed, in some form, in all ages. It was known among the Patriarchs, and practiced among the Jews. It existed in Ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Phoenicia. Debtors were seized and sold for the liquidation of their debts. Gamblers, having lost all their money, staked their persons as a last chance, and, losing the game, became the property of the fortunate winner. Men were sold publicly for their crimes. In the time of famine, parents disposed of their children as a marketable commodity, to obtain sustenance for themselves and remaining offspring, and lastly came war, the scourge of mankind and the immediate cause of slavery.

Slavery was sustained in the states of antiquity on no well-spun plea that one man was radically inferior to another; but

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was sustained, then, by sagacity and force, as it is now. While some slaves plowed their masters' fields, other bondmen taught their masters the sciences; while some existed in abject misery, others lived in luxury. About the time of the Christian Era, you might see, in the house of a rich citizen, slaves from all parts of the earth, filling appropriate places in their establishments—dark-haired beauties from the East, golden haired beauties from the North, musicians and learned men from Egypt or Greece, cooks from the South of Italy, drudges and menials from the remotest parts of Scythia, the centre of Africa, or the remote Island of Britain. Eighteen centuries ago, when Britain was a distant colony of Rome, the peaceful inhabitants of Britain toiled, slaves, for Roman citizens, along with the native of Ethiopia.

What sane-minded man doubts our patriotism? Take us to the palace halls and royal courts of Europe, we would not be content; for in the land where the orange flower blooms and the myrtle grows we wish not to dwell. If we should live for a short period in either of the above mentioned countries, our minds would still linger around the scenes of America; our hearts would constantly recur to the land of our birth and the scenes of our youth. We now see the day of which our fathers

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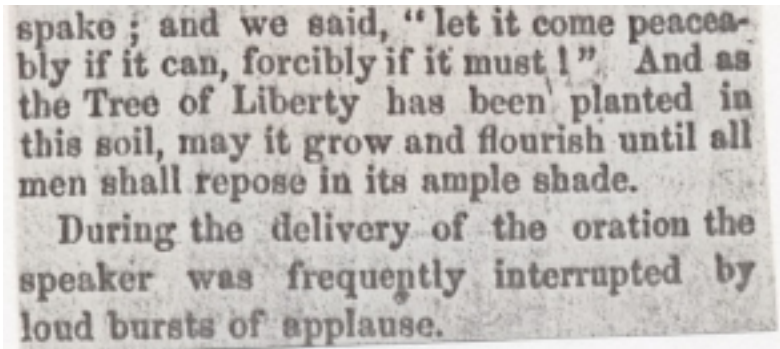
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spake; and we said, "let it come peaceably if it can, forcibly if it must!" And as the Tree of Liberty has been planed in this soil, may it grow and flourish until all men shall repose in its ample shade.

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