

My Friends:

To delineate the character of any good man is no ordinary task. But how much more difficult is it to unfold the life of a *great* good man. We would shrink from the undertaking, were we not perfectly sensible to the fact that the exhaustless virtues of him to whose memory we have this night assembled to pay tribute, are in “full and just estimation held” by the community in which his long and eventful life, marked and studded with the brightest gems of Christian benevolence and virtue, was spent. We would indeed, yield to our misgivings, did we not feel that the impress of his character, like a page of unsullied purity, a record of unfading worth, is upon the heart of the community. No proof more tangible and conclusive, than the last sad offices which his mortal remains received ere they were deposited in the cold bosom of the grave. We speak of the signal triumph which, in the death of that good and great man, was achieved for the cause of our common humanity, the principles of *justice* and eternal right. Suffice, however, at this time to say, that there is a resistless power, which a virtuous man can wield in his death, to the overthrow of feelings the most foul, unnatural, and detestable. Prejudice, soul-crushing, man-despising, God-hating prejudice, was victimized on the 6th of March, 1842.* And had no act of the deceased, during his long and illustrious career, obtained a single acknowledgement for the benefit of his enslaved and peeled countrymen—had his sainted spirit, now in the bosom of its God, been unconscious while here of any good effect which his spotless character had produced upon the minds of the community for his suffering and oppressed people—it is *enough*, it is enough that

* It was reckoned that between three and four thousand persons attended the funeral of Mr. Forten, one-half of whom were whites!

MY FRIENDS:

To delineate the character of any good man is no ordinary task. But how much more difficult is it to unfold the life of a *great* good man. We would shrink from the undertaking, were we not perfectly sensible to the fact that the exhaustless virtues of him to whose memory we have this night assembled to pay tribute, are in “full and just estimation held” by the community in which his long and eventful life, marked and studded with the brightest gems of Christian benevolence and virtue, was spent. We would, indeed, yield to our misgivings, did we not feel that the impress of his character, like a page of unsullied purity, a record of unfading worth, is upon the heart of the community. No proof more tangible and conclusive, than the last sad offices which his mortal remains received ere they were deposited in the cold bosom of the grave. We speak of the signal triumph which, in the death of that good and great man, was achieved for the cause of our common humanity, the principles of *justice* and eternal right. Suffice, however, at this time to say, that there is a resistless power, which a virtuous man can wield in his death, to the overthrow of feelings the most foul, unnatural, and detestable. Prejudice, soul-crushing, man-despising,

God-hating prejudice, was victimized on the 6th of March, 1842.* And had no act of the deceased, during his long and illustrious career, obtained a single acknowledgement for the benefit of his enslaved and peeled countrymen—had his sainted spirit, now in the bosom of its God, been unconscious while here of any good effect which his spotless character had produced upon the minds of the community for his suffering and oppressed people—it is *enough*, it is enough that

* It was reckoned that between three and four thousand persons attended the funeral of Mr. Forten, one-half of whom were whites.

in his death he accomplished a victory so glorious over the ghastly and hideous features of a skin-hating aristocracy. We attempt not in this discourse any display of language; we profess no acquaintance with tropes and figures; we possess no wings for the imagination to lead, deceive, and flatter. Our duty is a plain one; we give but the recollection of treasured facts. The mind will make its own comments. Truth never fails, however unadorned with the drapery of language, in exercising its own rightful influence.

JAMES FORTEN, the subject of our discourse, was born on the 2^d day of September, 1766, and died on the Ides of March, 1842. He was the son of Thomas Forten, who died when he was but seven years old. His mother survived long after he had reached the years of maturity. In early life he was marked for great sprightliness and energy of character, a generous disposition, and indomitable courage, always frank, kind, courteous, and disinterested. In the year 1775 he left school, being then about nine years of age, having received a very limited education (and he never went to school afterwards,) from that early, devoted, and world-wide known philanthropist, *Anthony Benezet*. He was then employed at a grocery store and at home, when his mother, yielding to the earnest and unceasing solicitations of her son, whose young heart, fired with the enthusiasm and feeling of the patriots and revolutionists of that day, with a firmness and devotion of a Roman matron, but with a heart *then* truly deemed American, she gave the boy of her promise, the child of her heart and her hopes, to his country; upon the altar of its liberties she laid the apple of her eye, the jewel of her soul.

in his death he accomplished a victory so glorious over the ghastly and hideous features of a skin-hating aristocracy. We attempt not in this discourse any display of language; we profess no acquaintance with tropes and figures; we possess no wings for the imagination to lead, deceive, and flatter. Our duty is a plain one; we give but the recollection of treasured facts. The mind will make its own comments. Truth never fails, however unadorned with the drapery of language, in exercising its own rightful influence.

JAMES FORTEN, the subject of our discourse, was born on the 2d day of September, 1766, and died on the Ides of March, 1842. He was the son of Thomas Forten, who died when he was but seven years old. His mother survived long after he had reached the years of maturity. In early life he was marked for great sprightliness and energy of character, a generous disposition, and indomitable courage, always frank, kind, courteous, and disinterested. In the year 1775 he left school, being then about nine years of age, having received a very limited education (and he never went to school afterwards,) from that early, devoted, and world-wide known philanthropist, *Anthony Benezet*. He was then employed at a grocery store and at home, when his mother, yielding to the earnest and unceasing solicitations of her son, whose young heart, fired with the enthusiasm and feeling of the patriots and revolutionists of that day, with a firmness and devotion of a Roman matron, but with a heart *then* truly

deemed American, she gave the boy of her promise, the child of her heart and her hopes, to his country; upon the altar of its liberties she laid the apple of her eye, the jewel of her soul.

In 1780, then in his fourteenth year, he embarked on board the “*Royal Louis*, Stephen Decatur, Senr., Commander, in the capacity of “powder-boy.” Scarce wafted from his native shore, and perilled upon the dark blue sea, than he found himself amid the roar of cannon, the smoke of blood, the dying and the dead. Their ship was soon brought into action with an English vessel, the *Lawrence*, which, after a severe fight, sustaining great loss on both sides, and leaving every man wounded on board the “*Louis*” but himself, they succeeded in capturing her, and brought her into port amid the loud huzzas and acclamations of the crowds that assembled upon the occasion. Forten, sharing largely in the feeling which so brilliant a victory had inspired, with fresh courage, and an unquenchable devotedness to the interests of his native land, soon re-embarked in the same vessel. In this cruise, however, they were unfortunate; for, falling in with three of the enemy’s vessels, the *Amphyon*, *Nymph*, and *Pomona*, they were forced to strike their colors, and become prisoners of war. It was at this juncture that his mind was harassed with the most painful forebodings, from a knowledge of the fact that rarely, if ever, were prisoners of his complexion exchanged; they were sent to the West Indies, and there doomed to a life of slavery. But his destiny, by a kind Providence, was otherwise. He was placed on board the *Amphyon*, Captain Beasley, who, struck with his open and honest countenance, made him the companion of his son. During one of those dull and monotonous periods which frequently occur on ship-board, the son of Beasley and Forten were engaged in a game at marbles, when with signal dexterity and skill, the marbles were upon every trial successively displaced but the unerring hand of Forten. This excited

In 1780, then in his fourteenth year, he embarked on board the “*Royal Louis*, Stephen Decatur, Senr., Commander, in the capacity of “powder-boy.” Scarce wafted from his native shore, and perilled upon the dark blue sea, than he found himself amid the roar of cannon, the smoke of blood, the dying and the dead. Their ship was soon brought into action with an English vessel, the *Lawrence*, which, after a severe fight, sustaining great loss on both sides, and leaving every man wounded on board the “*Louis*” but himself, they succeeded in capturing her, and brought her into port amid the loud huzzas and acclamations of the crowds that assembled upon the occasion. Forten, sharing largely in the feeling which so brilliant a victory had inspired, with fresh courage, and an unquenchable devotedness to the interests of his native land, soon re-embarked in the same vessel. In this cruise, however, they were unfortunate; for, falling in with three of the enemy’s vessels, the *Amphyon*, *Nymph*, and *Pomona*, they were forced to strike their colors, and become prisoners of war. It was at this juncture that his mind was harassed with the most painful forebodings, from a knowledge of the fact that rarely, if ever, were prisoners of his complexion exchanged; they were sent to the West Indies, and there doomed to a life of slavery. But his destiny, by a kind Providence, was otherwise. He was placed on board the *Amphyon*, Captain Beasley, who, struck with his open and honest countenance, made him the companion of his son. During one of those dull and monotonous periods which frequently occur on ship-board, the son of Beasley and Forten were engaged in a game at marbles, when with signal dexterity and skill, the marbles were upon every trial successively displaced by the unerring hand of Forten. This excited

the surprise and admiration of his young companion, who, hastening to his father, called his attention to it. Upon being questioned as to the truth of the matter, and assuring the Captain that nothing was easier for him to accomplish, the marbles were again placed in the ring, and in rapid succession he redeemed his word.

A fresh and deeper interest was from that moment taken in his behalf. Captain Beasly proffered a voyage to England, tempted with him the allurements of wealth, under the patronage of his son, who was heir to a large estate there, the advantages of a good education, and freedom, equality and happiness, for ever. No, NO! invariably was the reply, "I AM HERE A PRISONER FOR THE LIBERTIES OF MY COUNTRY. *I never, NEVER, shall prove a traitor to her interests.*"

What sentiment more exalted? What patriotism more lofty, devoted, and self-sacrificing? Indeed with him, it was, "America, with all thy faults, I love the still." For with a full knowledge of the wrongs and outrages which she then was inflicting upon those of his brethren by the "ties of consanguinity, and of wrong," we see this persecuted and valiant son of hers, in the very darkest hour of his existence, when hope seemed to have departed from him; when the horrors of a hopeless West India slavery, with its whips for his shrinking flesh, and its chains for his free born soul, could only be dissipated, by severing that tie, which by the strongest cords of love bound him to his native land—we see him standing up in the spirit of martyrdom, with a constancy of affection, and an invincibility of purpose, for the honor of his country, that places him above the noblest of the Caesars, and entitles him to a monument, peering about that which, a Bonaparte erected at *Place Vendome*. Beasly, having

the surprise and admiration of his young companion, who, hastening to his father, called his attention to it. Upon be-

ing questioned as to the truth of the matter, and assuring the Captain that nothing was easier for him to accomplish, the marbles were again placed in the ring, and in rapid succession he redeemed his word.

A fresh and deeper interest was from that moment taken in his behalf. Captain Beasly proffered a voyage to England, tempted him with the allurements of wealth, under the patronage of his son, who was heir to a large estate there, the advantages of a good education, and freedom, equality and happiness, for ever. No, no! invariably was the reply, "I AM HERE A PRISONER FOR THE LIBERTIES OF MY COUNTRY. *I never, NEVER, shall prove a traitor to her interests.*" What sentiment more exalted? What patriotism more lofty, devoted, and self-sacrificing? Indeed with him, it was, "America, with all thy faults, I love the still." For with a full knowledge of the wrongs and outrages which she then was inflicting upon those of his brethren by the "ties of consanguinity, and of wrong," we see this persecuted and valiant son of hers, in the very darkest hour of his existence, when hope seemed to have departed from him; when the horrors of a hopeless West India slavery, with its whips for his shrinking flesh, and its chains for his free born soul, could only be dissipated, by severing that tie, which by the strongest cords of love bound him to his native land—we see him standing up in the spirit of martyrdom, with a constancy of affection, and an invincibility of purpose, for the honor of his country, that places him above the noblest of the Caesars, and entitles him to a monument, peering above that which, a Bonaparte erected at *Place Vendome*. Beasly, having

failed in inducing him to go to England, soon had him consigned to that floating and pestilential hell, the frigate "Old Jersey,"—receiving, however, from the generous Captain, as a token of his regard and friendship, a letter to the Commander of the prison ship, highly commendatory of him, and also requesting that Forten should not be forgotten on the list of exchanges. Thus (as he frequently referred to it in after life) did a game of marbles save him from a life of West India servitude. In the mean while his mother, at home, was in a state of mind bordering upon distraction, having learned that her son had been shot from the foretop of the Royal Louis; but her mind was relieved after an absence of nearly eight months, by his appearing in person. To return. While on board the "Old Jersey," amid the privations and horrors incident to that receiving ship of disease and death, no less than three thousand five hundred persons died. And according to a statement of Edwards, eleven thousand in all, perished, while she remained the receptacle of the American prisoners. And here we have an instance to record of the most thrilling and stupendous exhibition of his generous and benevolent heart. Amid all that would make escape from his confinement desirable; when disease the most loathsome; death, the most horrible was around him, he was willing, and did endure all. He stifled the pantings of his heart, in its long wished for enjoyments of home, and the embraces of his widowed and adored mother. Yes, at a time when, if ever self would lay in contribution every feeling of the heart, and every avenue of a generous out-going spirit be smothered; when the instincts and impulses of nature would unerringly covet in the closest scrutiny and watchfulness its own interests, *James Forten*, in the ardor of his own high toned

failed in inducing him to go to England, soon had him consigned to that floating and pestilential hell, the frigate "Old Jersey,"—receiving, however, from the generous Captain, as a token of his regard and friendship, a letter to the Commander of the prison ship, highly commendatory of him, and also requesting that Forten should not be forgotten on the list of exchanges. Thus (as he frequently referred to it in after life) did a game of marbles save him from a life of West

India servitude. In the mean while his mother, at home, was in a state of mind bordering upon distraction, having learned that her son had been shot from the foretop of the Royal Louis; but her mind was relieved after an absence of nearly eight months, by his appearing in person. To return. While on board the "Old Jersey," amid the privations and horrors incident to that receiving ship of disease and death, no less than three thousand five hundred persons died. And according to a statement of Edwards, eleven thousand in all, perished, while she remained the receptacle of the American prisoners. And here we have an instance to record of the most thrilling and stupendous exhibition of his generous and benevolent heart. Amid all that would make escape from his confinement desirable; when disease the most loathsome; death, the most horrible was around him, he was willing, and did endure all. He stifled the pantings of his heart, in its long wished for enjoyments of home, and the embraces of his widowed and adored mother. Yes, at a time when, if ever self would lay in contribution every feeling of the heart, and every avenue of a generous out-going spirit be smothered; when the instincts and impulses of nature would unerringly covet in the closest scrutiny and watchfulness its own interests, *James Forten*, in the ardor of his own high toned

beneficence performed an act, which, in my humble opinion, is unexcelled, perhaps without a parallel in the annals of history. It was this: an officer of the American Navy was about to be exchanged for a British prisoner, when the thoughtful mind of Forten conceived the idea of an easy escape for himself in the officer's chest—but, when about to avail himself of this opportunity, a fellow prisoner, a youth, his junior in years, his companion and associate in suffering, was thought of. He immediately urged upon him the chances of an escape so easy. The offer was accepted, and Forten had the satisfaction of assisting in taking down the "chest of old clothes," as it was then called, from the sides of the prison ship. The individual thus fortunately rescued, is Captain Daniel Brewton—the present incumbent in the Stewardship at the Lazaretto. I will read the certificate of Mr. Brewton, in regard to this matter.

"I do hereby certify, that James Forten was one who participated in the Revolution in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, and was a *prisoner* on board of the Prison ship 'Old Jersey,' in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty, with me."

(Signed) DANIEL BREWTON.

Phila., March 15th, 1837. Acknowledged before Alderman.
J. W. PALMER.

It was my great privilege to see, but a short time ago, this venerable and grateful friend of James Forten; to hear from his own lips a strict confirmation of the facts stated, as well as to witness the solemn scene which ensued, in his taking for the last time the dying hand of his benefactor. The old

beneficence performed an act, which, in my humble opinion, is unexcelled, perhaps without a parallel in the annals of history. It was this: an officer of the American Navy was about to be exchanged for a British prisoner, when the thoughtful mind of Forten conceived the idea of an easy escape for himself in the officer's chest—but, when about to avail himself of this opportunity, a fellow-prisoner, a youth, his junior in years, his companion and associate in suffering, was thought of. He immediately urged upon him the chances of an escape so easy. The offer was accepted, and Forten had the satisfaction of assisting in taking down the "chest of old clothes," as it was then called, from the sides of the prison ship. The individual thus fortunately rescued, is Captain Daniel Brewton—the present incumbent in the

Stewardship at the Lazaretto. I will read the certificate of Mr. Brewton, in regard to this matter.

"I do hereby certify, that James Forten was one who participated in the Revolution in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, and was a *prisoner* on board of the Prison ship 'Old Jersey,' in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty, with me."

(Signed) DANIEL BREWTON.

Phila., March 15th, 1837. Acknowledged before Alderman J. W. PALMER.

It was my great privilege to see, but a short time ago, this venerable and grateful friend of James Forten; to hear from his own lips a strict confirmation of the facts stated, as well as to witness the solemn scene which ensued, in his taking for the last time the dying hand of his benefactor. The old

man's tears fell like rain; his stifled utterance marked the deep emotions of his almost bursting heart. Sad and dejected, with feelings more ready to die than live, he silently retired, stayed with the hope that they soon would meet in a happier and better world. After remaining seven months a prisoner on board this ship he obtained his release, and without a shoe upon his feet, until he reached Trenton, where he was generously supplied, reached home in a wretchedly bad condition, having, among other evidences of great hardships endured, his hair nearly entirely worn from his head. He remained but a short time at home, when in company with his brother-in-law, he sailed in the ship Commerce, for London. He arrived there at a period of the greatest excitement. The great struggle between liberty and slavery had already been settled, by the decision in the noted case of Somerset. When it was decreed that the moment the slave trod the soil of Britain, "No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced—no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him—no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down—no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery, the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the God sink together in the dust; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains that burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of Universal Emancipation."

But the accursed slave trade was still glutting in the blood and sinews of Afric's helpless children, and that mighty man, that prince of philanthropists, Granville Sharpe, was direct-

man's tears fell like rain; his stifled utterance marked the deep emotions of his almost bursting heart. Sad and dejected, with feelings more ready to die than live, he silently retired, stayed with the hope that they soon would meet in a happier and better world. After remaining seven months a prisoner on board this ship he obtained his release, and without a shoe upon his feet, until he reached Trenton, where he was generously supplied, reached home in a wretchedly bad condition, having, among other evidences of great hardships endured, his hair nearly entirely worn from his head. He remained but a short time at home, when in company with his brother-in-law, he sailed in the ship Commerce, for London. He arrived there at a period of the greatest excitement. The great struggle between liberty and slavery had already been settled, by the decision in the noted case of Somerset. When it was decreed that the moment the slave trod the soil of Britain, "No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced—no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon

him—no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down—no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery, the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the God sink together in the dust; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains that burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of Universal Emancipation."

But the accursed slave trade was still glutting in the blood and sinews of Afric's helpless children, and that mighty man, that prince of philanthropists, Granville Sharpe, was direct-

ing his benevolent efforts to its overthrow. At this time, the Christian feeling had awakened up an indignant nation to a determination for its destruction; and no small interest was taken in the discussion both in and out of Parliament, by our deceased friend. It was among the many pleasing reminiscences of his life to refer to those scenes so strikingly analogous to the trials and persecutions of the friends of freedom here, and the hypocritical sophisms of their opponents. After remaining in London about a year, he returned home, and was apprenticed, with his own consent, to Mr. Robert Bridges, sail-maker. He was not long at his trade, when his great skill, energy, diligence, and good conduct, commended him to his master, who, neither discriminating nor appreciating a man by the mere color of the skin in which he may be born, served his own interest in doing an act commensurate to the merits of young Forten in promoting him foreman in his business. This was in his twentieth year. He continued in this capacity until 1798, when upon the retiracy of Mr. Bridges, he assumed the entire control and responsibility of the establishment. Having formed for himself a reputation for capability and industry, he found it no difficult task to secure the friendship of those, who, perceiving qualities in him which ever adorn and beautify the human character, gave him their countenance and patronage; for although it was by the force of his own unassisted genius

ing his benevolent efforts to its overthrow. At this time, the Christian feeling had awakened up an indignant nation to a determination for its destruction; and no small interest was taken in the discussions both in and out of Parliament, by our deceased friend. It was among the many pleasing reminiscences of his life to refer to those scenes so strikingly analogous to the trials and persecutions of the friends of freedom here, and the hypocritical sophisms of their opponents. After remaining in London about a year, he returned home, and was apprenticed, with his own consent, to Mr. Robert Bridges, sail-maker. He was not long at his trade, when his great skill, energy, diligence, and good conduct, commended him to his master, who, neither discriminating nor appreciating a man by the mere color of the skin in which he may be born, served his own interest in doing an act commensurate to the merits of young Forten in promoting him foreman in his business. This was in his twentieth year. He continued in this capacity until 1798, when upon the retiracy of Mr. Bridges, he assumed the entire control and responsibility of the establishment. Having formed for himself a reputation for capability and industry, he found it no difficult task to secure the friendship of those, who, perceiving qualities in him which ever adorn and beautify the human character, gave him their countenance and patronage; for although it was by the force of his own unassisted genius

and energy of character, that he arose above those depressing influences which have ever operated against those
"Whose hue makes a brother hate
A brother mortal here;"
Yet he was indebted to some few staunch friends, for whose encouragement and kindness he was ever wont to speak in

"Whose hue makes a brother hate
A brother mortal here;"

Yet he was indebted to some few staunch friends, for whose encouragement and kindness he was ever wont to speak in

terms of gratitude. He continued, with great consistency of conduct, in prosecuting his business, offering up, on the altar of filial and fraternal regard, the first fruits of his labor in purchasing a house for his mother and widowed sister, which sheltered the one until the period of her death, and now affords protection and support to the other in her declining years. With undiminished vigor of mind and body, enjoying the very best of health, he continued to give personal attention to his business until confined to his house from that disease, which, in a few months, proved fatal to him. It was during the long period of his active business life that that reputation which ever remained unclouded, shedding abroad in its own clear sky the brightest and noblest qualities of the human heart—so courteous, polished, and gentlemanly in his manners; so intelligent, social, and interesting; so honest, just, and true in his dealings; so kind and benevolent in his actions; so noble and lofty in his bearing—that none knew him but to admire; to speak of him but in praise. He lived but to cherish those noble properties of his soul, and those exalted principles of action which ever prompted him to deeds of benevolence, patriotism, and honor. Perhaps one of the strongest traits in his character was that of benevolence.—With him it was no occasional or fitful impulse, but a living principle of action. Wherever suffering humanity presented itself, a glow of generous and brotherly sympathy was excited in his heart. And not bestowing nor graduating his gifts by the mere color of the skin, his open hand was ever ready to administer to the wants of all. Nor was this feeling confined to the giving of his worldly substance. No danger could appeal, no hindrance prevent, even at the greatest personal risk, in relieving from danger and death his fellow man.

terms of gratitude. He continued, with great consistency of conduct, in prosecuting his business, offering up, on the altar of filial and fraternal regard, the first fruits of his labor in purchasing a house for his mother and widowed sister, which sheltered the one until the period of her death, and now affords protection and support to the other in her declining years. With undiminished vigor of mind and body, enjoying the very best of health, he continued to give personal attention to his business until confined to his house from that disease, which, in a few months, proved fatal to him. It was during the long period of his active business life that that reputation which ever remained unclouded, shedding abroad in its own clear sky the brightest and noblest qualities of the human heart—so courteous, polished, and gentlemanly in his manners; so intelligent, social, and interesting; so honest, just, and true in his dealings; so kind and benevolent in his actions; so noble and lofty in his bearing—that none knew him but to admire; to speak of him but in praise. He lived but to cherish those noble properties of his soul, and those exalted principles of action which ever prompted him to deeds of benevolence, patriotism, and honor. Perhaps one of the strongest traits in his character was that of benevolence.—With him it was no occasional or fitful impulse, but a living principle of action. Wherever suffering humanity presented itself, a glow of generous and brotherly sympathy was excited in his heart. And not bestowing nor graduating his gifts by the mere color of the skin, his open hand was ever ready to administer to the wants of all. Nor was this feeling confined to the giving of his worldly substance. No danger could appeal, no hindrance prevent, even at the greatest personal risk, in relieving from danger and death his fellow man.

No less than seven persons were at different times rescued from drowning by his promptness, energy, and benevolence. From the Humane Society he obtained this certificate:

“The Managers of the Humane Society of Philadelphia, entertaining a grateful sense of the benevolent and successful exertions of James Forten in rescuing, at the imminent hazard of his life, *four* persons from drowning in the river Delaware at different times, to wit: one on the—day, 11th mo., 1805; a second on the —day of the 1st mo., 1807; a third on the —day of 4th mo., 1810; and on the —day of 4th mo., 1821, present this Honorary certificate as a testimony of their approbation of his meritorious conduct.

By order of the Managers,
JOSEPH CRUKESHANK, President.
Philadelphia, Fifth mo. 9th, 1821.”

Of his patriotism who doubts? He gave the best evidence of his love for his country, by consecrating his life in “those days that tried the souls of men,” for her liberties. And when urged by an honorable gentleman to petition his government for a pension, promptly declined, saying, “I was a volunteer, sir.” In the last war, when an invasion was threatened by the British upon our city, he was found, with twenty of his journeymen, and with hundreds of his persecuted and oppressed brethren, throwing up the redoubts on the west banks of the Schuylkill. Indeed, his interest was so strong in any matter connected with his country, that we would sometimes express our surprise at this. He would reply, “that he had drawn the spirit of her free institutions from his mother’s breast, and that he had fought for her independence.” With all this, however, his sensitive mind was

No less than seven persons were at different times rescued from drowning by his promptness, energy, and benevolence. From the Humane Society he obtained this certificate:

“The Managers of the Humane Society of Philadelphia, entertaining a grateful sense of the benevolent and successful exertions of James Forten in rescuing, at the imminent hazard of his life, *four* persons from drowning in the river Delaware at different times, to wit: one on the —day, 11th mo., 1805; a second on the —day of 1st mo., 1807; a third on the —day of 4th mo., 1810; and on the —day of 4th mo., 1821, present this Honorary certificate as a testimony of their approbation of his meritorious conduct.

By order of the Managers,
JOSEPH CRUKESHANK, President.
Philadelphia, Fifth mo. 9th, 1821.”

Of his patriotism who doubts? He gave the best evidence of his love for his country, by consecrating his life in “those days that tried the souls of men,” for her liberties. And when urged by an honorable gentleman to petition his government for a pension, promptly declined, saying, “I was a volunteer, sir.” In the last war, when an invasion was threatened by the British upon our city, he was found, with twenty of his journeymen, and with hundreds of his persecuted and oppressed brethren, throwing up the redoubts on the west banks of the Schuylkill. Indeed, his interest was so strong in any matter connected with his country, that we would sometimes express our surprise at this. He would reply, “that he had drawn the spirit of her free institutions from his mother’s breast, and that he had fought for her independence.” With all this, however, his sensitive mind was

but too truly paired at her ingratitude, in the wrongs she continued to inflict upon her unoffending and unfortunate children; believing, as he often expressed it, that she would bring down the vengeance of heaven upon her, and quoting the fearful lines of Jefferson, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that his justice will not sleep for ever." Perhaps no instance gave greater poignancy to his feeling, than the late atrocious act of the miscalled Reform Convention. For his State his attachments were peculiar and strong. Here he was born—his ancestors were residents for upwards of one hundred and seventy years. He had paid a large amount of taxes, and contributed to almost every institution which adorned and beautified this large city. Here had lived a Franklin, Rush, Rawle, Wistar, Vaux, Parrish, and Shipley—the very brightest ornaments of Christian love and philanthropy. Yet no recollection of their principles, no regard for the true policy of this State, or for *Justice, Humanity, or God*, could stay the ruthless arms of those marauders upon human liberty from striking down the rights of 40,000 of her tax-paying citizens. As a specimen of his intellectual powers, as well as of his early interest in behalf of the welfare of his people, I will read a letter which he addressed to the Hon. George Thatcher, in the year 1800. It is in reference to the law of Congress of '93, and which, by a very recent decision of the Supreme Court, is now in force, "which authorizes the claimant of any fugitive slave to seize his victim without a warrant from any magistrate, and allows him to drag him before any magistrate of a county, city, or town corporate, where such seizure has been made, and, upon proving by oral testimony or affidavits to the satisfaction of such magistrate that the man is his slave, gives him

but too truly paired at her ingratitude, in the wrongs she continued to inflict upon her unoffending and unfortunate children; believing, as he often expressed it, that she would bring down the vengeance of heaven upon her, and quoting the fearful lines of Jefferson, "I tremble for my country when

I reflect that God is just, and that his justice will not sleep for ever." ... Perhaps no instance gave greater poignancy to his feelings, than the late atrocious act of the miscalled Reform Convention. For this State his attachments were peculiar and strong. Here he was born—his ancestors were residents for upwards of one hundred and seventy years. He had paid a large amount of taxes, and contributed to almost every institution which adorned and beautified this large city. Here had lived a Franklin, Rush, Rawle, Wistar, Vaux, Parrish, and Shipley—the very brightest ornaments of Christian love and philanthropy. Yet no recollection of their principles, no regard for the true policy of this State, or for *Justice, Humanity, or God*, could stay the ruthless arms of those marauders upon human liberty from striking down the rights of 40,000 of her tax-paying citizens. As a specimen of his intellectual powers, as well as of his early interest in behalf of the welfare of his people, I will read a letter which he addressed to the Hon. George Thatcher, in the year 1800. It is in reference to the law of Congress of '93, and which, by a very recent decision of the Supreme Court, is now in force, "which authorizes the claimant of any fugitive slave to seize his victim without a warrant from any magistrate, and allows him to drag him before any magistrate of a county, city, or town corporate, where such seizure has been made, and, upon proving by oral testimony or affidavits to the satisfaction of such magistrate that the man is his slave, gives him

the right to take him to interminable bondage.” This letter was intended as an acknowledgement to Mr. Thatcher, for his advocacy of a petition, signed by Mr. Forten and others, remonstrating against that iniquitous law.

“*Philadelphia*, January, 1800.

Sir,—When the hand of sorrow presses heavy on us, and the generality of mankind turn unpitying from our complaints, if one appears who feels for and commiserates our situation, and endeavors all in his power to alleviate our condition, our bosoms swell with gratitude, and our tongues instinctively pronounce our thanks for the obligation. We, therefore, sir, Africans and descendants of that unhappy race, respectfully beg leave to thank you for the philanthropic zeal with which you defend our cause when it was brought before a part of the general government, by which only we can expect to be relieved from our deplorable state. Interested ourselves in the business, because we knew not but ere long we might be reduced to slavery, it might have been said that we viewed the subject through a perverted medium, if you, sir, had not adopted and nobly supported those sentiments which gave rise to our petition. Though our faces are black, yet *we are men*, and though many amongst us cannot write, because our rulers have thought proper to keep us in ignorance, yet we all have the feelings and passions of men, and are as anxious to enjoy the birth-right of the human race as those who, from our ignorance, draw an argument against our petition, when that petition has in view the diffusion of knowledge amongst the African race, by unfettering their thoughts and giving full scope of the energy of their minds. While some, sir, consider us as much property as a house or a ship,

the right to take him to interminable bondage.” This letter was intended as an acknowledgement to Mr. Thatcher, for his advocacy of a petition, signed by Mr. Forten and others, remonstrating against that iniquitous law.
“*Philadelphia*, January, 1800.
Sir,—When the hand of sorrow presses heavy on us, and the generality of mankind turn unpitying from our complaints, if one appears who feels for and commiserates our situation, and endeavors all in his power to alleviate our condition, our bosoms swell with gratitude, and our tongues instinctively

pronounce our thanks for the obligation. We, therefore, sir, Africans and descendants of that unhappy race, respectfully beg leave to thank you for the philanthropic zeal with which you defended our cause when it was brought before a part of the general government, by which only we can expect to be relieved from our deplorable state. Interested ourselves in the business, because we knew not but ere long we might be reduced to slavery, it might have been said that we viewed the subject through a perverted medium, if you, sir, had not adopted and nobly supported those sentiments which gave rise to our petition. Though our faces are black, yet *we are men*, and though many amongst us cannot write, because our rulers have thought proper to keep us in ignorance, yet we all have the feelings and passions of men, and are as anxious to enjoy the birth-right of the human race as those who, from our ignorance, draw an argument against our petition, when that petition has in view the diffusion of knowledge amongst the African race, by unfettering their thoughts and giving full scope to the energy of their minds. While some, sir, consider us as much property as a house or a ship,

and would seem to insinuate that it is as lawful to hew down the one as it is to dismantle the other, you, sir, more humane, consider us as a part of the human race, and, were we to go generally into the subject, would say, that by principles of natural law our thralldom is unjust. Judge what must be our feelings to find ourselves treated as a species of property, and levelled with the brute creation; and think how anxious we must be to raise ourselves from this degrading state. Unprejudiced persons, who read the documents in our possession, will acknowledge that we are miserable. Humane people will wish our situation alleviated. Just people will attempt the task, and powerful people ought to carry it into execution. Seven hundred thousand of the human race were concerned in our petition. Their thanks, their gratitude to you they now express. Their prayers for you will mount to Heaven; for God knows they are wretched, and He will hear their supplications! A deep gloom now envelopes us, but we derive some comfort from the thought that we are not quite destitute of friends; that there is one who will use his endeavors to free the slave from captivity: at least render his state more sufferable, and preserve the free black in the full enjoyment of his rights. This address cannot increase the satisfaction you derive from your laudable exertions in the cause of suffering humanity, but it serves to show the gratitude and respect of those whose cause you espouse.

JAMES FORTEN.

The Hon. Geo. Thatcher.”

In the year 1817, this good man’s principles were put to the test, having at this time an extended influence, and being prominent in the eyes of the community as a man of singular probity and worth, extorting even from the jaundiced

and would seem to insinuate that it is as lawful to hew down the one as it is to dismantle the other, you, sir, more humane, consider us as a part of the human race, and, were we to go generally into the subject, would say, that by principles of natural law our thralldom is unjust. Judge what must be our feelings to find ourselves treated as a species of property, and levelled with the brute creation; and think how anxious we must be to raise ourselves from this degrading state. Unprejudiced persons, who read the documents in our possession, will acknowledge that we are miserable. Humane people will wish our situation alleviated. Just people will attempt the task, and powerful people ought to carry it into execution. Seven hundred thousand of the human race were concerned in our petition. Their thanks, their gratitude to you they now express. Their prayers for you will mount to Heaven; for God knows they are wretched, and He will hear their supplications! A deep gloom now envelopes us,

but we derive some comfort from the thought that we are not quite destitute of friends; that there is one who will use his endeavors to free the slave from captivity: at least render his state more sufferable, and preserve the free black in the full enjoyment of his rights. This address cannot increase the satisfaction you derive from your laudable exertions in the cause of suffering humanity, but it serves to show the gratitude and respect of those whose cause you espouse.

JAMES FORTEN.

The Hon. Geo. Thatcher.”

In the year 1817, this good man’s principles were put to the test, having at this time an extended influence, and being prominent in the eyes of the community as a man of singular probity and worth, extorting even from the jaundiced

heart of prejudice involuntary respect. He was marked by the enemies of freedom, and every device which the scheme of colonization could invent was attempted to blind and mislead him. It was about this time that this society of innate wickedness, mantled in the cloak of benevolence, came stalking over the land, so specious and whining in its tone, so soft and insinuating in its low breathings, that many were deceived. But the discriminating mind of James Forten penetrated the veil that covered its deformed and damning features. The clique of clerical wolves who had besieged him in tones of flattery, assuring him that he would become the Lord's Mansfield of their "Heaven born republic" on the western coast of Africa, was told in the simplicity of truth, but with sarcasm the more cutting because unaffected, "That he would rather remain as James Forten, sail maker, in Philadelphia, than enjoy the highest offices in the gift of their society." The matter, however, did not rest here with him. He saw what would be the evil tendencies and effects of this most infamous institution, and the necessity of frustrating the designs of the leagued spirits of this dark crusade against the rapidly improving condition of his people, and of incorporating at once and for ever the idea in the public mind that we were fixtures in this our native country. "That here we were born, here we would live, and here die." With this view, and having the co-operation of some of the most intelligent of his brethren, among whom was our sterling and inflexible friend to human rights, Robert Douglass, Sen'r.' the good hearted Absalom Jones; and last, though not least, the founder of your church, that extraordinary man, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Allen, a meeting was called in this church in the month of January, 1817. The house upon the occasion was

heart of prejudice involuntary respect. He was marked by the enemies of freedom, and every device which the scheme of colonization could invent was attempted to blind and mislead him. It was about this time that this society of innate wickedness, mantled in the cloak of benevolence, came stalking over the land, so specious and whining in its tone, so soft and insinuating in its low breathings, that many were deceived. But the discriminating mind of James Forten penetrated the veil that covered its deformed and damning features. The clique of clerical wolves who had besieged him in tones of flattery, assuring him that he would become the Lord's Mansfield of their "Heaven born republic" on the western coast of Africa, was told in the simplicity of truth, but with sarcasm the more cutting because unaffected, "That he would rather remain as James Forten, sail maker, in Philadelphia, than enjoy the highest offices in the gift of their society." The matter, however, did not rest here with him. He saw what would be the evil tendencies and effects of this most infamous institution, and the necessity of frustrating the designs of the leagued spirits of this dark crusade against the rapidly improving condition of his people, and of incorporating at once and for ever the idea in the public mind

that we were fixtures in this our native country. "That here we were born, here we would live, and here die." With this view, and having the co-operation of some of the most intelligent of his brethren, among whom was our sterling and inflexible friend to human rights, Robert Douglass, Sen'r.; the good hearted Absalom Jones; and last, though not least, the founder of your church, that extraordinary man, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Allen, a meeting was called in this church in the month of January, 1817: The house upon the occasion was

literally crammed. Mr. Forten presided as chairman, and a beautiful preamble and resolutions, which had been previously prepared, went down in an unanimous vote as the death-knell to colonization. Of those resolutions two were from the pen of Mr. Forten. I cannot forbear reading them; they are an exact transcript of his own thoughts.

“Resolved, That we view with deep abhorrence the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color by the promoters of this measure, ‘that they are a dangerous and useless part of the community,’ when in the state of disenfranchisement in which they live, in the hour of danger they ceased to remember their wrongs, and rallied around the standard of their country.

Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country. They are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them than fancied advantages for a season.”

Thus, owing to the timely efforts and zeal of James Forten, was the main head of this Hydra of oppression crushed; and, although they yet are to be seen some sprouts from its decayed and dying trunk putting forth their feeble and forked tongues of iniquity, its poisonous fangs have been extracted, and we fear not now its pestiferous breath. He was ever a firm friend of the abolitionists, being himself an open and fearless friend and advocate of the slave.

His hand was promptly extended to that pure Christian and exalted philanthropist, *William Lloyd Garrison*. He

literally crammed. Mr. Forten presided as chairman, and a beautiful preamble and resolutions, which had been previously prepared, went down in an unanimous vote as the death-knell to colonization. Of these resolutions two were from the pen of Mr. Forten. I cannot forbear reading them; they are an exact transcript of his own thoughts.

“Resolved, That we view with deep abhorrence the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color by the promoters of this measure, ‘that they are a dangerous and useless part of the community,’ when in the state of disenfranchisement in which they live, in the hour of danger they ceased to remember their wrongs, and rallied around the standard of their country.

Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country. They are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them than fancied advantages for a season.”

Thus, owing to the timely efforts and zeal of James Forten, was the main head of this Hydra of oppression crushed; and, although there yet are to be seen some sprouts from its decayed and dying trunk putting forth their feeble and forked tongues of iniquity, its poisonous fangs have been extracted, and we fear not now its pestiferous breath. He was ever a firm friend of the abolitionists, being himself an open and fearless friend and advocate of the slave.

His hand was promptly extended to that pure Christian and exalted philanthropist, *William Lloyd Garrison*. He

saw in him all those qualities necessary as a leader in the great enterprise; and in his own language, considered him as a chosen instrument in the Divine hand to accomplish the great work of the abolition of American slavery. Indeed such was his confidence (and justly so) in the principles of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and of the men and women who advocated them, that nothing was ever more painful to his feelings, nothing sooner excited his indignation, than the attempt of reproach upon them. The course pursued by Mr. Garrison he ever thought comfortable to the true anti-slavery principles; and those principles, founded upon the immutability of eternal truth, had thrown around him, and all others who acted with him, the influences of its divinity. Hence, no difficulties nor dangers have intimidated, but they have gone on conquering and to conquer. In no restricted sense, but in its proper signification and application, he was a friend to human rights. The doctrine of "Woman's Rights," as they are called, found in him a zealous friend. He believed that those doctrines would be acknowledged universally, because, as he would say, we live in an enlightened age—an age of reform—an age which tolerates a free expression of opinion, and leaves the mind to the guidance of its own inwardly revealing light, to the enjoyment of its own individuality; and, setting aside the dogmas and creeds of established usage and custom, unshackles the immortal mind, leaving it free and independent as it was designed by its bountiful Creator. Yet, while *truth*, bright, eternal *truth*, is rising in all the gorgeousness of her own transcendental supremacy, there are those who, not more egregiously than pertinaciously, cling to their blindness, their infatuation, meanness, and despotism. But woman is not a mere depen-

saw in him all those qualities necessary as a leader in the great enterprise; and in his own language, considered him as a chosen instrument in the Divine hand to accomplish the great work of the abolition of American slavery. Indeed such was his confidence (and justly so) in the principles of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and of the men and women who advocated them, that nothing was ever more painful to his feelings, nothing sooner excited his indignation, than the attempt of reproach upon them. The course pursued by Mr. Garrison he ever thought comfortable to the true anti-slavery principles; and those principles, founded upon the immutability of eternal truth, had thrown around him, and all others who acted with him, the influences of its divinity. Hence, no difficulties nor dangers have intimidated, but they have gone on conquering and to conquer. In no restricted sense, but in its proper signification and application, he was a friend to human rights. The doctrine of "Woman's Rights," as they are called, found in him a zealous friend. He believed that those doctrines would be acknowledged universally, because, as he would say, we live in an enlightened age—an age of reform—an age which tolerates a free expression of opinion, and leaves the mind to the guidance of its own inwardly revealing light, to the enjoyment of its own individuality; and, setting aside the dogmas and creeds of established usage and custom, unshackles the immortal mind, leaving it free and independent as it was designed by its bountiful Creator. Yet, while *truth*, bright, eternal *truth*, is rising in all the gorgeousness of her own transcendental supremacy, there are those who, not more egregiously than pertinaciously, cling to their blindness, their infatuation, meanness, and despotism. But woman is not a mere depen-

dant upon man. The relation is perfectly reciprocal. God has given both to man and woman the same intellectual capabilities, and made them subjects alike to the same moral government. He was a man of religion, but no bigot; the last survivor of the founders of St. Thomas' Episcopal church, its most liberal patron and friend; and though connected with this institution for more than fifty years—in close communion with its ordinances for many years back—he ever valued the spirit of Christianity, as exemplified in the characters of men, as being of infinitely more importance than a mere unity in doctrinal views and creeds. As a business man, none more honest and fair; no overreaching, misrepresenting, or deceiving; and, as a remarkable fact in his history, as well as a lesson to others, he never had, as I have often heard him declare, been guilty of that genteel kind of swindling, which all sorts of *professedly* good people practice under the gloss of the name of note-shaving.

Temperate in his habits, and more especially an enemy to all intoxicating drinks, having never taken a glass of ardent spirits in his life, nor permitted its introduction into the premises among those he employed, he was a ready advocate of the blessed cause of Temperance, and of all other great moral enterprises which are now so rife in our land. He was a member and the Presiding Officer of the American Moral Reform Society, from its origin to the time of his death. In a word, whatever was right, useful and patriotic, secured in him a friend, advocate and patron. In the social relation, the most affectionate of husbands, the most indulgent of parents; as a friend, unwavering and steadfast in his attachments.

dant upon man. The relation is perfectly reciprocal. God has given both to man and woman the same intellectual capabilities, and made them subjects alike to the same moral

government. He was a man of religion, but no bigot; the last survivor of the founders of St. Thomas' Episcopal church, its most liberal patron and friend; and though connected with this institution for more than fifty years—in close communion with its ordinances for many years back—he ever valued the spirit of Christianity, as exemplified in the characters of men, as being of infinitely more importance than a mere unity in doctrinal views and creeds. As a business man, none more honest and fair; no overreaching, misrepresenting, or deceiving; and, as a remarkable fact in his history, as well as a lesson to others, he never had, as I have often heard him declare, been guilty of that genteel kind of swindling, which all sorts of *professedly* good people practice under the gloss of the name of note-shaving.

Temperate in his habits, and more especially an enemy to all intoxicating drinks, having never taken a glass of ardent spirits in his life, nor permitted its introduction into the premises among those he employed, he was a ready advocate of the blessed cause of Temperance, and of all other great moral enterprises which are now so rife in our land. He was a member and the Presiding Officer of the American Moral Reform Society, from its origin to the time of his death. In a word, whatever was right, useful and patriotic, secured in him a friend, advocate and patron. In the social relation, the most affectionate of husbands, the most indulgent of parents; as a friend, unwavering and steadfast in his attachments.

He was a *model*, not as some flippant scribbler asserts, for what is called “colored men,” but for all men. His example will ever be worthy of emulation, his virtues never forgotten in the community in which he lived; and let us, while we enkindle a proper ardor of feeling in imitating his goodness and benevolence, while we deplore our great loss—for, “as a man, we ne’er shall look upon his like again”—be consoled in the thought that, though his body has returned to the dust from whence it came, his immortal spirit is where we all again can meet. For he is

“Gone to his Heavenly Father’s rest—
The flowers of Eden round him blowing!
And, on his ear, the murmurs blest
Of Shiloah’s waters softly flowing!
Beneath that Tree of Life which gives
To all the earth its healing leaves—
In the white robe of angels clad,
And wandering by that sacred river,
Whose streams of holiness make glad
The city of our God for ever!”

He was a *model*, not as some flippant scribbler asserts, for what is called “colored men,” but for all men. His example will ever be worthy of emulation, his virtues never forgotten in the community in which he lived; and let us, while we enkindle a proper ardor of feeling in imitating his goodness and benevolence, while we deplore our great loss—for, “as a man, we ne’er shall look upon his like again”—be consoled in the thought that, though his body has returned to

the dust from whence it came, his immortal spirit is where we all again can meet. For he is

“Gone to his Heavenly Father’s rest—
The flowers of Eden round him blowing!
And, on his ear, the murmurs blest
Of Shiloah’s waters softly flowing!
Beneath that Tree of Life which gives
To all the earth its healing leaves—
In the white robe of angels clad,
And wandering by that sacred river,
Whose streams of holiness make glad
The city of our God for ever!”