

Mr. Ward was then called upon to address the assembly, who received him with loud and repeated applause. He began by expressing the deep and sincere thanks which he felt to those excellent and honoured gentlemen who had given their relative influence and personal assistance on behalf of the fugitive slaves of Canada. When the Committee was formed, it was proposed to raise a sum of 1,200*l.* for the object which they had in view. The meeting had already heard that this sum had been almost realised. He saw no reason, however, why it should stop there, and proposed, amid general applause, that the present company should resolve to make it 1,500*l.* before they separated. Mr. Ward stated in a few words the character of the labours in which he had been engaged since his arrival in England, and expressed the satisfaction which he experienced, and which he was certain those also for whom he had been labouring would experience when he should return to tell them, in reflecting upon the fact that the effort which had been put forth had proved successful. He then proceeded to explain in detail the methods adopted by the fugitive slaves to effect their retreat from the house of bondage, and their condition when first landing in Canada. Those men did not escape merely from the United States, but from the dominion of one of the most oppressive and wicked systems of tyranny which could possibly exist. It was a most humiliating fact, that there was nothing so honourable in America as to be a slaveholder; and the larger the number of slaves a man possessed, the more highly was he respected by his fellow-citizens. The recent measures also of the Government but too plainly testified that they had no intention of abolishing the system. (Hear, hear.) On the other hand, they had enacted the infamous Slave-law, and extended the

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legalization of the traffic to California; and the news by the very last steamer intimated, that the abomination was to be yet further extended into new territory, thus sweeping away the old boundaries by which it was decreed that the slave system should be confined to one region of the country. (Hear, hear.) When reflecting upon the state of things in Yankeedom, he felt unspeakably thankful to God that Canada existed; and that if the poor oppressed people of the South could only set their feet upon its blessed shores, they could defy the power of their cruel masters, and be as free as the air of the heavens or the waves of the ocean. (Cheers.) The people of England could not fully enter into the feelings of those who had escaped from their bondage; because they had never been slaves, never known—and he thanked God for it—what it was grow up to the age of man and womanhood, to be fathers and mothers of families, without knowing anything whatever of the blessings and delights of freedom, and then perhaps to have their children torn from them and sold before their eyes, and themselves separated never to meet again. (Hear, hear.) A slave never knew what it was to be a real man, in the highest and Scriptural sense of the term. (Hear, hear.) Neither could he cherish any hope of being free. (Hear, hear.) To form the simple conception of it in his mind, and to cherish the desire to break his accursed chains was regarded as one of the greatest crimes of which a slave could be guilty, save only the putting of such a desire into actual execution. (Hear, hear.) And most painful of all to reflect, this was a state of things existing in the afternoon of the nineteenth century, so perseveringly upheld by a nation which is constantly affirming, in the plainest

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possible language, that perfect freedom is God's birth-right to his creatures. ("Hear," and cheers.) If a slave escaped from that land of freedom, he must do it by stealth. Having once formed the idea in his mind to be free, he must let no one know it; and, when the attempt should be made, he must skulk along in the night-time, hiding himself in the woods all the day for fear of detection, and the cruel punishment with which it never failed to be succeeded. (Hear, hear.) And when the escape was effected, it frequently happened that the injuries which the poor fugitive received by the course he was compelled to adopt remained with him through life. In illustration of these points, Mr. Ward adduced a number of striking and most painful cases, which excited lively emotion in the breasts of his auditory. He told the meeting of the fearful risks which the slaves were willing to encounter in order if possible to be free,—such as the being shut up in boxes like bales of goods; and crossing the Niagara River, when the water was in a freezing condition, with only a thin cotton blouse on; and the leaping from a Philadelphia prison, and running off again after having been once captured and horribly maimed in the scuffle which ensued in the attempt to take them back to Slavery. Men who could do all or any of these things, and encounter unspeakable hardships for the purpose of being free, deserved their freedom. (Loud cheers.) But, as might be readily supposed, when those poor creatures first arrived in the land of freedom they were wholly destitute, and needed some little temporary aid; and to secure the means of giving this was his chief object in appearing among the English people at the present time. (Hear, hear.) From three to four thousand persons escaped thus from Slavery

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every year; and there could not be a less number now in Canada than from thirty to thirty-five thousand fugitive slaves. (Cheers.) But too frequently, alas! the men who found their way to Canada had been compelled, not only to endure personal hardships by the way, but to leave their wives and children still in the hands of the slaveholder, which caused a pang to the heart the most acute of all,—to be robbed of these was surely the very bitterness of the grave. (Hear, hear.) He was rejoiced, however, to be able to say, that the escaped slaves, notwithstanding the unparalleled miseries which they were called upon to endure, when they reached Canada became good servants, diligent scholars, and, in the majority of instances, made their way up in society and obtained some little property for themselves. (Hear, hear.) Whatever might be said of Australia, he maintained that there was no country for the poor man to be compared to Canada, where 100 acres of land might be purchased for 65*l.*, and ten years given to pay it in. (Hear, hear.) Numbers of the negroes had managed to obtain plots for themselves, and had erected their own houses thereupon, and were thus taking a respectable position in the country, and in every respect setting an excellent example even to their white brethren around them. (Hear, hear.) In Canada itself the Blacks had for a long time to encounter much opposition, and even during the last few months an attempt was made by certain of the authorities of the town of St. Catharines, the most Yankee town in Canada, to exclude their children from the new school-house which had been erected; but on the appeal being made to a British court of law, the claim of the negro for his children was honourably sustained. (Cheers.) Why should not the children of the

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black man enjoy the blessings of education equally with those of the white? (Hear, hear.) In nothing, when free, did they show themselves inferior to their more favoured brethren. (Hear, hear.) Let them be assisted for a little on their first arrival in Canada, and it would be very speedily found, as experience proved, that they were not only quite able, but perfectly willing to help themselves; and that not merely to secure food for their bodies, but to obtain also education for their children, and the means of enjoying the blessed privileges of the religion of Jesus Christ. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Ward reiterated the thanks which he felt to all those gentlemen who had so nobly and so cheerfully come forward to assist in the promotion of the object which he had so closely at heart. The especial kindness which he had experienced from that peerless of Peers, the Earl of Shaftesbury, and the Rev. J. Sherman, of Surrey parsonage, he should never be able to forget to the last day of his life; and to those gentlemen, as well as to all the friends who had laboured in behalf of the emancipation and elevation of the slave, he would say may the blessings of those who are ready to perish ever be yours. (Loud cheers.)

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