

SPEECH OF MISS FRANCIS ELLEN WATKINS.

I have heard it related of Napoleon Bonaparte that during the latter part of his life, he had a dream, in which before him rose an army worn to skin and bones, and they raised their bloodless hands and pointed at him, and said, "You are the cause!" There is an army in our land, an army which has been gathering for long and weary years. If it was an army whose bloodless lips and pallid cheeks a tale of want and suffering told, I could have held my peace. If it was an army only blighted by starvation and wasted by hunger and suffering, even then I could have held my peace. But this is an army so poor that even the American bondman who reaps down his master's field does not own the humblest joint that does the [fee...] service; so poor that the slave mother who clasps her child to her heaving breast does not own it by right of possession. That army raise their manacled hands, they [lift] their imploring eyes, they point to men in this republic, and say, "You are the cause!" Amid the din of conflicting interests, the cries of "Lecompton" and "anti-Lecompton," I hear the shrieks of the slave-mother, as her child is torn from her bosom and sold to the highest bidder. Amid your declamations about liberty, your Fourth of July speeches, amid the darkness of the Dred Scott decision, I see the mournful light that flashes from the eye of the fugitive as he steps cautiously through your boasted Republic, to gain his personal freedom in a Monarchical land.

[I] remember the first time I ever saw free land. It was not when I was in Maryland, where God first permitted me to see the light. The shadow of slavery hung dark over the home of my childhood. It was not when I was in Virginia, when I was at Harper's Ferry, in the presence of God's own masonry; even then the foot of a

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Remember the first time I ever saw free land. It was not when I was in Maryland, where God first permitted me to see the light. The shadow of slavery hung dark over the home of my childhood. It was not when I was in Virginia, when I was at Harper's Ferry, in the presence of God's own masonry; even then the foot of a

slave might have been painfully pressing the soil, and the air of Virginia was heavy with American slavery. I went to Pennsylvania. There were the memories of William Penn, the reminiscences of the Revolution, and Independence Hall; but there was no free soil. From beneath the shadow of that hall the slave mother had gone forth to bondage. I myself had seen a young man on trial to prove whether he had a right to be a free man or was a chattel, and he had gone forth to chattel slavery and human debasement. I went to New Jersey. There the ocean sung its wild chorus of sounding waves, and ebbed and flowed in tameless freedom, but there was no free soil there. The hunter might track and trail his prey beneath the eaves of their churches, and the shadow of their homes. I came to New York, and there was Niagara chanting the choral hymn of Omnipotence; there she stood, crowned with a rainbow, and robed with crested spray; but from the "lordly Hudson" to the Northern Lakes, unless we except Syracuse, there was no free soil. I went to Massachusetts, and there was Bunker Hill, bathing its granite brow in the pure light of heaven. There was Concord and Lexington, the classic grounds of America. Plymouth Rock told its tale of early struggle and sacrifice, of the thinned ranks and thickening graves of the Mayflower's little company; but there was no free soil there. Sims had been hurled again to bondage; Anthony Burns had been thrust back to chattel slavery, and there was no free soil in Massachusetts. I went to Vermont, and surely, if "Freedom loves a mountain home," her habitation should be there; and while there, some of them told me they had an anti-slavery Supreme Court, they had a Personal Liberty Bill; but suppose I had been a slave. Some, perhaps, would have

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said, "Give her a fair trial; the right of trial by jury, and the benefit of the writ of habeas corpus." Well, bring me to trial, to prove—what? Whether I have a right to breathe heaven's pure air? The structure of my lungs has long since proved that. Whether I have a right to gaze of the glorious creation of God, and feast my eyes on the bounties of our universal Father? The formation of my eye has proved that. What then? To prove whether I have a right to be a free woman or am rightfully the chattel of another; whether I have the right to possess all the faculties that God has given, or whether another has the right to buy and sell, exchange and barter that temple in which God enshrined my human soul (applause). Then let me tell you the first time I ever saw at least what I may call truly free soil. It was when, from Lake Ontario, I gazed for the first time upon Canada's shore. Oh! we may thank God that there is some land on this continent so free. The master may hunt the slave to the very borders of the Niagara, the minions of the Slave Power may trail the fugitive to the very margin of the St. Lawrence, but the moment he treads the soil of Canada, he springs into the glorious light of freedom.

I want to see the North just so free; when she shall have no Personal Liberty Bills, for every rood and acre of her soil shall be a passport to freedom, and every breath of her air possess so little affinity with slavery that it shall melt every fetter and dissolve every chain (loud applause). We are living in a day when each one of us may try to make "our lives sublime." It is a privilege to live in this day, when we can throw our lives into this struggle for human rights—not merely freedom for one race, but "liberty for all and chains for none." What do you find? You find the slave a chattel. Restore to him

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the rights of a man! You find him with the mildew of slavery upon his soul, and the blight of oppression upon his heart, and will you not resolve that you will not cease your labours till you have sent the vital fluid of liberty through every nerve and the life-blood of freedom through every vein (loud applause). What if this reform is persecuted? what if men cast obloquy upon it? Other reforms have been persecuted. The men who murdered Jesus Christ now sleep in forgotten graves. He lives enshrined in the hearts of all who accept him as the true and living Christ. Men tried to crush out the Reformation, when Luther shook the slumbering mind of Europe and jarred the papal throne to its centre. For this the Inquisition devised its tortures, the *auto de fé* claimed its victims. Yet it lives on, lived till the Inquisition became a thing of the past, and the *auto de fé* ceased to claim its victims, and Protestant kings sat on the very thrones from which bloody edicts had been issued against the children of the reformation? Who says this reform has not a glorious future? Who says, in the infidelity of his heart, that this cause will not triumph? Oh! we may hope that what we have seen are only the first steps of a mighty advancement, the faintest corruscations of a day which may yet dawn with unclouded splendor upon our sin-cursed and slavery-darkened republic (loud and prolonged cheering.)

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