

WM. C. NELL next addressed the assembly. He said — The event we have assembled here this day to commemorate, is to us one of sublime interest, and should be welcomed with enthusiastic joy. It should be hailed with the united plaudits of a free people, and consecrated with the incense of thanksgiving and praise from the altar of our hearts to the God of truth and freedom, as the anniversary of that period in the history of old England, when, in obedience to the sovereign mandate of the people, she severed at a blow the chains from 800,000 human beings, formerly the victims of oppression, and bade them stand erect—no longer to tremble under the tyrant's lash, and dread his harsh control; no longer to wear the servile badge of slavery, and bow at a despot's nod; but to be free men and free women, acknowledging no master but God, the Father of all. It is a deed that has immortalized the fame of Great Britain, and emblazoned with more glory her national escutcheon than the conquest of Waterloo. The event, in itself considered, is, indeed, justly a theme of pride to every lover of freedom, and is capable of furnishing abundant materials for a longer discourse than the time necessarily allotted to each speaker on the present occasion would permit me to take, did any ability of mine justify the attempt.

I shall therefore not undertake to treat particularly upon the history of the auspicious event now being commemorated, or to recapitulate the train of influences that operated, directly or indirectly, to the final passage of the Bill in the British Parliament; but would allude to the fact, that before emancipation was completed, great and mighty efforts had been put forth by the abolitionists of that country. At length, the

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time for emancipation had arrived. The mind of the whole country, peer, priest and peasant, was wrought up. The national heart seemed on fire, and as a writer has remarked, 'the people almost in a body had determined that slavery should be abolished; and had not their wishes been complied with, in all probability there would have been a revolution that would have overturned the throne.' The example thus held up to the world cannot fail to produce the happiest results upon those nations where man is yet permitted to reign over his fellow-man with despotic sway. We should, therefore, rejoice in the remembrance of

'That happy day, when, smiling like the morn,  
Fair Freedom rose, Britannia to adorn.'

It is recorded in the history of our country's independence, that on the memorable 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 1775, as the patriots Hancock and Adams were retiring from the dangers of the field, the latter, enraptured with joy, exclaimed, 'Oh! what an ever glorious morning is this!' considering the contest at Lexington as the prelude of events that were destined to secure the happiness of his country. So should the event now being commemorated be regarded by us as the harbinger of American Emancipation—a bright omen of the ultimate success of abolition principles in this country; —[as] indeed the rainbow of promise to our cause. The example will not, cannot be lost. France, Spain, and other European powers, will emulate the deed; and our own beloved, our native land, the last to perform her duty, though far from being the least in guilt, will yet emancipate her fettered millions. America, with all her pride and glory, dare not resist the moral power of the world; she cannot withstand the higher, that of eternal justice, before which all worlds bow,

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and to which the highest order of beings must give account.

In the language of Thompson—‘The day of triumph is certain. There is no human being who can prevent it,] or prescribe its limits. No impiety shall say to the bounding wave, “Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.” Yes, sir, we should rejoice in the belief, that the eloquent appeals of George Thompson,— who [has] traversed the land in its length and breadth, sounding a trumpet whose tones are heard in Britain’s farthest isle,— and the scorching rebukes of Daniel O’Connell, who, unlike the Daniel whom this nation delights to honor, [fails] not to bear an open and public testimony against oppression—and the remonstrances of the abolitionists of England, they too will be heeded by this country—and through the untiring zeal and perseverance of our faithful and beloved Garrison, with his noble band of coadjutors, aided by our own concentrated efforts, our best energies and a sincere devotion to the cause of bleeding humanity, with an eye single to [the] best means of promoting our elevation, will yet conquer the prejudices now existing in the hearts of a degenerate people. Then they in turn will become proselytes to the cause of equal rights—they will, with one voice, demand the entire emancipation of America’s oppressed sons and daughters. The slaveholder’s grasp shall be loosed, the chains will be consigned to the grave of oblivion, and those hitherto the victims of [its] unjust power shall be free—elevated to the broad platform of humanity, of God’s erection, a little lower than that of the angels. Yes, sir, we shall yet have [a national] jubilee. America will yet become in fact what she is now only on paper—

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Let us turn our attention, for a few moments, from [those] who have escaped physical bondage, and consider the means by which we shall become emancipated from the influences that prevent our elevation; for it is in vain that our friends exert themselves in our behalf—in vain that they sacrifice reputation and fortune—in vain that they contend with the wicked prejudices of the people—in vain that they toil, if we, for whom their efforts are made and their energies exerted, and for whom a Garrison has endured a persecution unparalleled in the annals of reformation—I [say,] Mr. President, all is in vain, unless we have the [spirit] to exert ourselves for our own advancement—unless we resolve to emancipate ourselves from the chains of moral slavery with which we are bound; for it is to be regretted, that, as an injured and proscribed people, we have not manifested the degree of interest naturally to be expected of those who have been unjustly deprived of the rights and immunities of citizens. Not but what there are many honorable and praiseworthy exceptions; yet the majority, by tacit indifference to the cause and their neglect to detect and profit by the signs of the times, do greatly [retard] the elevation of the people, and serve to arm our opponents with weapons which they use to stab our best friends and ablest advocates.

We should contend earnestly for our rights, and [not] consistently with our sentiments, promulgated to the world, that 'this is our home, we know no other,' We should contend as American citizens who know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain them. We have contributed to the support of the government—we have proved ourselves loyal citizens;—and by the blood of our forefathers, shed in the revolution for the liberty now enjoyed by this people, the nation owes

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us a debt which can never be liquidated by insult and persecution.

There are those, Mr. President, who sympathise with us—who, for their zeal in our behalf, have won our love and confidence—for whose labors a monument of gratitude should be erected on the heart of every colored American. They, Sir, are the abolitionists, who, with an eager desire for our elevation, point us to the Temple of Rights, and bid us enter. What wait we for? Why content ourselves with re[posing] at the base of the hill, when by an ascent to its summit we can obtain ingress to its marble halls, where none shall molest or us make afraid?

Mr. President, I feel that I should not conclude these imperfect remarks without alluding briefly to the juvenile part of this audience, who have contributed greatly to the interest of the occasion. It is appropriate that they should bear a conspicuous part in the observance of this day—that the exercises may [make] an indelible impression upon their memories, and teach them, not like Hannibal, to vow eternal vengeance to our oppressors, but to endeavor to seize upon every opportunity of improvement and elevation—that they, Sir, may indulge with their parents, in the anticipation of that day—

‘When a sound of jubilee,  
Like the bursting of the skies,  
Or the roaring of the chainless sea,  
From million tongues shall rise.

And soon shall we rejoice,  
As the ransomed ranks we see,  
And millions greet with heart and voice  
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