

SPEECH OF C. L. REMOND,

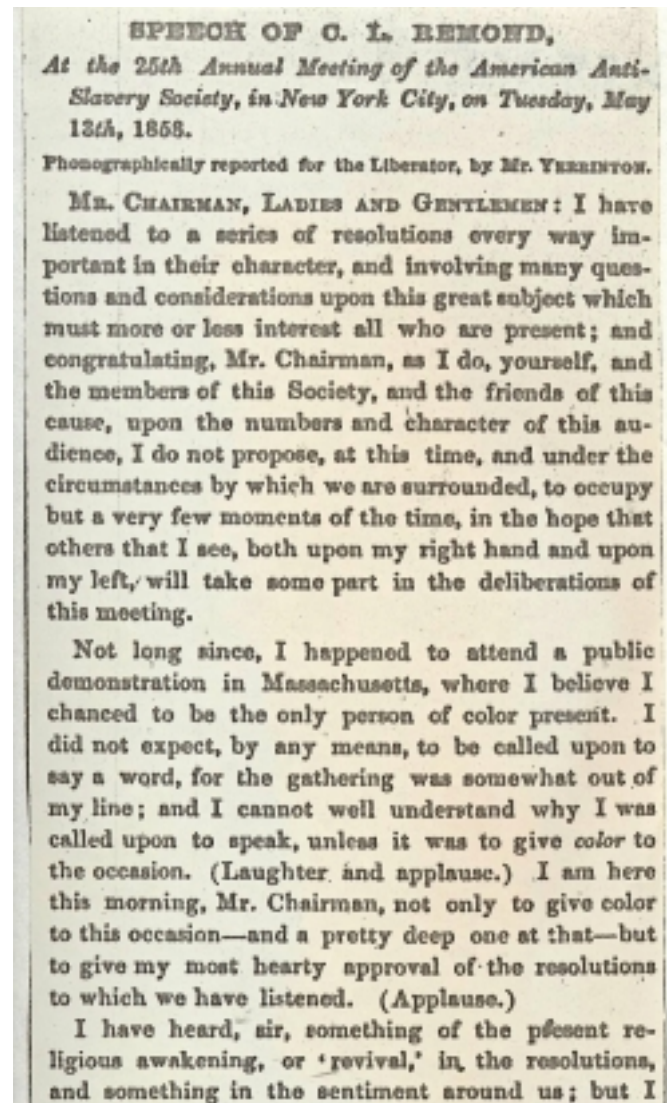
*[At the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, in New York City, on Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1858.]*

Phonographically reported for the *Liberator*, by Mr. Yarrington.]

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I have listened to a series of resolutions every way important in their character, and involving many questions and considerations upon this great subject which must more or less interest all who are present; and congratulating, Mr. Chairman, as I do, yourself, and the members of this Society, and the friends of this cause, upon the numbers and character of this audience, I do not propose, at this time, and under the circumstances by which we are surrounded, to occupy but a very few moments of the time, in the hope that others that I see, both upon my right hand and upon my left, will take some part in the deliberations of this meeting.

Not long since, I happened to attend a public demonstration in Massachusetts, where I believe I chanced to be the only person of color present. I did not expect, by any means, to be called upon to say a word, for the gathering was somewhat out of my line; and I cannot well understand why I was called upon to speak, unless it was to give *color* to the occasion. (Laughter and applause.) I am here this morning, Mr. Chairman, not only to give color to this occasion—and a pretty deep one at that—but to give my most hearty approval of the resolutions to which we have listened. (Applause.)

I have heard, sir, something of the present religious awakening, or 'revival,' in the resolutions, and something in the sentiment around us; but I



have discovered also the revival of a custom which I had hoped had become obsolete in our country—that no matter what was said, or where said, we could scarcely expect to call forth a hiss. Hence, sir, in witnessing the ‘revival’ of this particular American custom at this time, I am led to suppose that the work we have yet to do is greater than we had contemplated. But I propose to ask the attention of the audience for a few moments to that resolution of the series which looks to the overthrow of the American Government and of the American Union, in their present form, and character, and spirit.

I care but little, sir, about any other view of this subject at the present time, because, at the end of a quarter of a century, I discover that all efforts, of whatever kind, or in whatever spirit manifested, have proved complete failures, so far as the progress of the cause of universal liberty is concerned in our country, and the practical demonstration of genuine republicanism, to say nothing about the character of the religion of our country. Feeling, then, the pressure of this failure—that all attempts, from the old gradual Abolition Society, of which Benjamin Franklin was a member and an officer, down to the last phase of anti-slavery, have proved vain, and that in, or through, or over them all, American slavery has grown, and the number of its victims increased from one million to nearly four—of course, I have nothing to hope for in those directions; and having nothing to hope for in those directions, it seems to me that the only course left us to pursue is the one proposed by the Society with which I am

have discovered also the revival of a custom which I had hoped had become obsolete in our country—that no matter what was said, or where said, we could scarcely expect to call forth a hiss. Hence, sir, in witnessing the ‘revival’ of this particular American custom at this time, I am led to suppose

that the work we have yet to do is greater than we had contemplated. But I propose to ask the attention of the audience for a few moments to that resolution of the series which looks to the overthrow of the American Government and of the American Union, in their present form, and character, and spirit.

I care but little, sir, about any other view of this subject at the present time, because, at the end of a quarter of a century, I discover that all efforts, of whatever kind, or in whatever spirit manifested, have proved complete failures, so far as the progress of the cause of universal liberty is concerned in our country, and the practical demonstration of genuine republicanism, to say nothing about the character of the religion of our country. Feeling, then, the pressure of this failure—that all attempts, from the old gradual Abolition Society, of which Benjamin Franklin was a member and an officer, down to the last phase of anti-slavery, have proved vain, and that in, or through, or over them all, American slavery has grown, and the number of its victims increased from one million to nearly four—of course, I have nothing to hope for in those directions; and having nothing to hope for in those directions, it seems to me that the only course left us to pursue is the one proposed by the Society with which I am

happy to be identified. And so far from having my judgement swerved an iota, so far from having a single feeling or impulse changed by anything which has been said by professed or non-professed Abolitionists, in opposition to the proposition for a dissolution of the Union, I am, as I before remarked, more deeply strengthened and confirmed in the feasibility of the plan as it has been suggested.

I give, as my reasons, some facts which cannot have failed to come under the observation of all who are present, together with some historical facts which, perhaps, have not been so strikingly noticed as they deserve to be by every well-wisher of his country and the cause of universal freedom.

If, Mr. Chairman, I shall go back but fifty years, I shall mark—as every other man has done—where American slavery stood at that time, what part the leading men in our country were taking in it, where the press stood, where the pulpit stood, and where the public sentiment was to be found upon the subject. If I shall go back even no further than the time I have mentioned, I need not remain ignorant in regard to the sentiment which was then extant in the nation respecting this subject; and whether I take my stand upon the history of that day or at the present moment in the City of Washington, I am forced into a belief in the same truth, to wit, that the American people are destitute of feeling, and destitute of principle, in regard to this question. The scenes which have transpired on the soil of Kansas, as well as those which have transpired in the American Congress, go to prove this, if the doctrines held by many Doctors of Divinity do not prove it.

happy to be identified. And so far from having my judgment swerved an iota, so far from having a single feeling or impulse changed by anything which has been said by professed or non-professed Abolitionists, in opposition to the proposition for a dissolution of the Union, I am, as I before remarked, more deeply strengthened and confirmed in the feasibility of the plan as it has been suggested.

I give, as my reasons, some facts which cannot have failed to come under the observation of all who are present, together with some historical facts which, perhaps, have not been so strikingly noticed as they deserve to be by every well-wisher of his country and the cause of universal freedom.

If, Mr. Chairman, I shall go back but fifty years, I shall mark—as every other man has done—where American slavery stood at that time, what part the leading men in our country were taking in it, where the press stood, where the pulpit stood, and where the public sentiment was to be found upon the subject. If I shall go back even no further than the time I have mentioned, I need not remain ignorant in regard to the sentiment which was then extant in the nation respecting this subject; and whether I take my stand upon the history of that day or at the present moment in the City of Washington, I am forced into a belief in the same truth, to wit, that the American people are destitute of feeling, and destitute of principle, in regard to this question. The scenes which have transpired on the soil of Kansas, as well as those which have transpired in the American Congress, go to prove this, if the doctrines held by many Doctors of Divinity do not prove it.



Where, sir, are the colored people of the United States?—and I refer to them only as an illustration: Where do they stand? Why, sir, so far as the masses of the American people are concerned, they have no place in their regard, they have no place in their esteem. And when I make this remark, I want to say that it applies strictly to every other man and every other woman in our country, be their complexions what they may, if they have a regard for the principles which underlie our glorious movement. Then, I repeat, that the friends of universal freedom in this country have no hope for the emancipation of the slave, or for the rescue of the cause of liberty, but by the adoption of this plan, and that at the speediest moment.

In the District of Columbia, we know there exist a large number of laws, all for the purpose of recognizing slavery. If they were confined to Washington, I should not have a word to say on this occasion; if they were confined to the State of Virginia, I might not; but when I am made to feel that the same class of laws does really exist, in spirit, in every State of this Union, I do insist, now as before, that our question or cause comes before and into the hands of every man within the limits of this and of every other State in the country, and as direct as it comes before and into the hands of every colored man.

This, Mr. Chairman, leads me to remark that the question of anti-slavery and pro-slavery in the United States is not the black man's question; that the question of slavery and anti-slavery is practically an American question—all the way American, from beginning to end—and especially with every *decent*

Where, sir, are the colored people of the United States?—and I refer to them only as an illustration: Where do they stand? Why, sir, so far as the masses of the American people are concerned, they have no place in their regard, they have no place in their esteem. And when I make this remark, I want to say that it applies strictly to every other man and every other woman in our country, be their complexions what they may, if they have a regard for the principles which underlie our glorious movement. Then, I repeat, that the friends of universal freedom in this country have no hope for the emancipation of the slave, or for the rescue of the cause of liberty, but by the adoption of this plan, and that at the speediest moment.

In the District of Columbia, we know there exist a large number of laws, all for the purpose of recognizing slavery. If they were confined to Washington, I should not have a word to say on this occasion;

if they were confined to the State of Virginia, I might not; but when I am made to feel that the same class of laws does really exist, in spirit, in every State of this Union, I do insist, now as before, that our question or cause comes before and into the hands of every man within the limits of this and of every other State in the country, and as direct as it comes before and into the hands of every colored man.

This, Mr. Chairman, leads me to remark that the question of anti-slavery and pro-slavery in the United States is not the black man's question; that the question of slavery and anti-slavery is practically an American question—all the way American, from beginning to end—and especially with every *decent*

American. It strikes me that if justice was done in this country upon this subject, we should have a class of criminals arraigned before the gaze of the world such as few of us have presumed to anticipate; and I long for the time when men shall be driven from their present hiding-places, in the excuses, in the concessions, in the compromises which they make, in the reasons which they are giving, from time to time, upon this subject. Dr. Cheever has very recently, in his allusion to scenes in Kansas, and to the conduct of American Congressmen, made the remark that this Kansas controversy has been carried on, from beginning to end, in reference to the white men in that Territory, (as the resolution implies,) and that the sin of American Slavery has not been touched.

Sir, I am glad that Dr. Cheever has so expressed himself—for many will believe the remark coming from that source who, it seems to me, have not cared to notice the same truth when uttered from this platform. All that I can make out of this last effort, of Dr. Cheever is, that he adopts the platform of the American Anti-Slavery Society, without identifying himself personally with our movement.

Now, what I want to call attention to is this: that men who have gone the entire round of social reforms, who have been conversant with everything written, published or spoken on this subject, have not felt themselves called upon until so recently to utter those truths which have been uttered by other voices so long, but have ignored them, so far as their presence at our meetings, their influence and their testimony are concerned.

American. It strikes me that if justice was done in this country upon this subject, we should have a class of criminals arraigned before the gaze of the world such as few of us have presumed to anticipate; and I long for the time when men shall be driven from their present hiding-places, in the excuses, in the concessions, in the compromises which they make, in the reasons which they are giving, from time to time, upon this subject. Dr. Cheever has very recently, in his allusion to scenes in Kansas, and to the conduct of American Congressmen, made the remark that this Kansas controversy has been carried on, from beginning to end, in reference to the white men in that Territory, (as the resolution implies,) and that the sin of American Slavery has not been touched.

Sir, I am glad that Dr. Cheever has so expressed himself—for many will believe the remark coming from that source who, it seems to me, have not cared to notice the same truth when uttered from this platform. All that I can make out of the last effort, of Dr. Cheever is, that he adopts the platform of the American Anti-Slavery Society, without identifying himself personally with our movement.

Now, what I want to call attention to is this: that men who have gone the entire round of social reforms, who have been conversant with everything

written, published or spoken on this subject, have not felt themselves called upon until so recently to utter those truths which have been uttered by other voices so long, but have ignored them, so far as their presence at our meetings, their influence and their testimony are concerned.

One other remark in this connection. There are those who believe that that man is a good anti-slavery man who goes for freedom in Kansas, but does not recognize the existence of slavery in any of the slave States. I wish to take this opportunity to say that I ignore as heartily the sentiment or the feeling of any and all men who, looking at this subject from such a stand-point, profess the slightest interest in the colored men of this country. Our friend Mr. Garrison, in the resolutions he has read, had told us that, step by step, in everything that should entitle a man to his freedom, to citizenship, to the popular respect of a nation, in everything that should call forth the regard of a great and growing people, the colored people have demonstrated their capabilities; and yet there are reformers in this nation, who go for the non-extension of slavery into Kansas, who look with allowance upon the existence of slavery in the nation. Sir, this is temporizing—this is fragmentary—this is selfish; it is local, and I abhor it. It is in close affinity with the spirit of the American party, which I equally abhor; and I earnestly hope that, if, during the series of meetings on which we have just entered, no other impression shall be made upon those who are present, they shall at least be forced to the conviction that the friends of this Society are in earnest, solemn earnest, in their purpose to dissolve the American Union and break into a thousand pieces the American Government, for the emancipation of the black men of this country, as the greatest and best means for the emancipation of the cowardly whites in the same nation. (Applause and hisses.) I no longer limit my remarks to the black men when

One other remark in this connection. There are those who believe that that man is a good anti-slavery man who goes for freedom in Kansas, but does not recognize the existence of slavery in any of the slave States. I wish to take this opportunity to say that I ignore as heartily the sentiment or the feeling of any and of all men who, looking at this subject from such a stand-point, profess the slightest interest in the colored men of this country. Our friend Mr. Garrison, in the resolutions he has read, has told us that, step by step, in everything that should entitle a man to his freedom, to citizenship, to the popular respect of a nation, in everything that should call forth the regard of a great and growing people, the colored people have demonstrated their capabilities; and yet there are reformers in this nation, who go for the non-extension of slavery into Kansas, who look with allowance upon the existence of slavery in the nation. Sir, this is temporizing—this is fragmentary—this is selfish; it is local, and I abhor it. It is in close affinity with the spirit of the American party, which I equally abhor; and I earnestly hope that, if, during the series of meetings on which we have just entered, no other impression shall be made upon those who are present, they shall at least be forced to the conviction that the friends of this Society are in earnest, solemn earnest, in their purpose to dissolve the American Union and break into a thousand pieces the American Government, for the emancipation of the black men of this country, as the greatest and best means for the emancipation of the cowardly whites in the same nation. (Applause and hisses.) I no longer limit my remarks to the black men when



I speak of slaves in this nation; for if I should go south of Mason and Dixon's line to-morrow, I might, in my humble judgement, ransack society, day and night, and not be able to find a more veritable slave in the blackest bondman on the darkest Southern plantation, than I hold the Hon. Edward Everett to be in every particular which constitutes true manhood. (Loud applause, mingled with hisses.) Mr. Chairman, those who hiss in this audience pay me the highest possible compliment. (Laughter and applause.) I remarked, when I rose, that whether we search into the records of the past or look into the present, no man can fail to see that, as our country has grown in years, American slavery has grown in numbers, in cruelty, in everything calculated to degrade its victims, and outrage humanity at large; and when I bear in mind that into the American Union, since its formation, there have been some seven slave States admitted, and that in the Constitution of the State of Arkansas may be found a clause which declares that slavery shall never be abolished within its borders, I inquire whether the Union into which these States have been admitted, whether the Constitution that has recognized them, whether the Government that has endorsed them, are not, each and all of them, complete failures upon the great question of Republicanism, Democracy, and Liberty? I hold that they are; and that we want no stronger proof that our Union, and Government, and Constitution are failures, than that one fact alone. But when I bear in mind that this Union, as now constituted, of and by some thirty-one or thirty-two States, is a slaveholding Union, that the District of Columbia,

I speak of slaves in this nation; for if I should go south of Mason and Dixon's line to-morrow, I might, in my humble judgment, ransack society, day and night, and not be able to find a more veritable slave in the blackest bondman on the darkest Southern plantation, than I hold the Hon. Edward Everett to be in every particular which constitutes true manhood. (Loud applause, mingled with hisses.) Mr. Chairman, those who hiss in this audience pay me the highest possible compliment. (Laughter and applause.) I remarked, when I rose, that whether we search into the records of the past or look into the present, no man can fail to see that, as our country has grown in years, American slavery has grown in numbers, in cruelty, in everything calculated to degrade its victims, and outrage humanity at large; and when I bear in mind that into the American Union, since its formation, there have been some seven slave States admitted, and that in the Constitution of the State of Arkansas may be found a clause which declares that slavery shall never be abolished within its borders, I inquire whether the Union into which these States have been admitted, whether the Constitution that has recognized them, whether the Government that has endorsed them, are not, each and all of them, complete failures upon the great question of Republicanism, Democracy, and Liberty? I hold that they are; and that we want no stronger proof that our Union, and Government, and Constitution are failures, than that one fact alone. But when I bear in mind that this Union, as now constituted, of and by some thirty-one or thirty-two States, is a slaveholding Union, that the District of Columbia,

which should constitute the heart of the nation, is a slaveholding district, and that no man before me, whether black or white, as a man, can exercise any other rights there than the blackest slave may exercise, I say I have here another proof of the total failure of this Republic, under its present institutions. And when I bear in mind that black men may be burnt in one State, and white men may be shot down in another, for their love of freedom, I assert this Union to be a failure. And when I remember, that, standing in Philadelphia, a few days ago, I saw a noble woman who obtained her freedom by allowing herself to be placed in a box scarcely larger than a coffin, and, secreted in that way, was brought from one of our Southern States into the State of Pennsylvania, the only breathing air she obtained coming through a small hole bored by a pair of scissors in her own hands, then I again declare, before God, that the American Union is a failure. (Applause.) And when I pass from the city of Philadelphia, the residence of a Rush and a Franklin, and go to the Queen City of the West, and am there told by the counsel of another woman that a more heroic effort for freedom was never made by mortal man than that of Robert Garner and his wife to secure their liberty, and remember that they were dragged out of that city at noonday and hurried back to bondage, I again make the declaration that the American Union is a failure. And then, when I go to Boston, in my own State of Massachusetts, and find such men as Edward Everett, Rufus Choate and Robert C. Winthrop as silent as a grave-stone in regard to this question of slavery, I assert that to

which should constitute the heart of the nation, is a slaveholding district, and that no man before me, whether black or white, as a man, can exercise any other rights there than the blackest slave may exercise, I say I have here another proof of the total failure of this Republic, under its present institutions. And when I bear in mind that black men

may be burnt in one State, and white men may be shot down in another, for their love of freedom, I assert this Union to be a failure. And when I remember, that, standing in Philadelphia, a few days ago, I saw a noble woman who obtained her freedom by allowing herself to be placed in a box scarcely larger than a coffin, and, secreted in that way, was brought from one of our Southern States into the State of Pennsylvania, the only breathing air she obtained coming through a small hole bored by a pair of scissors in her own hands, then I again declare, before God, that the American Union is a failure. (Applause.) And when I pass from the city of Philadelphia, the residence of a Rush and a Franklin, and go to the Queen City of the West, and am there told by the counsel of another woman that a more heroic effort for freedom was never made by mortal man than that of Robert Garner and his wife to secure their liberty, and remember that they were dragged out of that city at noonday and hurried back to bondage, I again make the declaration that the American Union is a failure. And then, when I go to Boston, in my own State of Massachusetts, and find such men as Edward Everett, Rufus Choate and Robert C. Winthrop as silent as a grave-stone in regard to this question of slavery, I assert that to



be even a stronger proof of the failure of this Union.

Sir, I might stand here and pile fact upon fact of the same character, until they should be higher than the hall, but I will not detain the audience longer than simply to refer to one other fact (as I will call it) which has come under the notice of many very recently. It is this: I do not know that I need to ask this audience whether they consider me a man or not. I do not care what people consider me. I think the American people are coming to one conclusion, and that is, that whether they call the black people men or not, they are fast proving it in this nation; and the last and the best proof of it is—and this is the fact to which I am now about to call attention—that when the decision of Judge Taney was made, silence, generally speaking, characterized the nation. The blow, of course, was one struck at everything near and dear to us as a people, and the impression generally prevailed that the colored people would hold meetings, from one end of the country to the other, to protest against that decision, thus signifying an anxiety on their part to know whether the doctrine there laid down was to be allowed or not. The significant fact to which I would call attention is, that no portion of the American people have evinced greater carelessness with regard to that decision than the colored people themselves. I look upon this as a good sign, if we may at all go by contraries in this country; and if they would be as careless about many other decisions to which I might refer, I believe the day of their redemption would come to them sooner than it otherwise will. Now, I do not wish to be

be even a stronger proof of the failure of this Union.

Sir, I might stand here and pile fact upon fact of the same character, until they should be higher than the hall, but I will not detain the audience longer than simply to refer to one other fact (as I will call it) which has come under the notice of many very recently. It is this: I do not know that I need to ask this audience whether they consider me a man or not. I do not care what people consider me. I think the American people are coming to one conclusion, and that is, that whether they call the black people men or not, they are fast proving it in this nation; and the last and the best proof of it is—and this is the

fact to which I am now about to call attention—that when the decision of Judge Taney was made, silence, generally speaking, characterized the nation. The blow, of course, was one struck at everything near and dear to us as a people, and the impression generally prevailed that the colored people would hold meetings, from one end of the country to the other, to protest against that decision, thus signifying an anxiety on their part to know whether the doctrine there laid down was to be allowed or not. The significant fact to which I would call attention is, that no portion of the American people have evinced greater carelessness with regard to that decision than the colored people themselves. I look upon this as a good sign, if we may at all go by contraries in this country; and if they would be as careless about many other decisions to which I might refer, I believe the day of their redemption would come to them sooner than it otherwise will. Now, I do not wish to be

misunderstood in this particular, and perhaps I shall make my meaning clearer if I say, there are certain decisions which have been given by judges in this country, there are certain acts which have been passed by certain Legislatures in this country, there have been some positions taken by the American Congress in regard to the colored people, which I am glad to know that colored persons are careless of; and I long for the time to come when the American slave shall be so careless of his master, south of Mason and Dixon's line, that he will wake up some morning and resolve to go about his business, as if there were not an oppressor in the wide world; and, if he shall be resisted in the step he shall then take, that he shall be ready to say to those who enslave him, 'I am a man! If you doubt it, we will measure arms. God and Freedom shall be my watch-word!' When that hour shall have come, the American people will be ready, if they are not now, to subscribe to the doctrine, at once and forever, 'NO UNION WITH SLAVE-HOLDERS!' (Applause.)

misunderstood in this particular, and perhaps I shall make my meaning clearer if I say, there are certain decisions which have been given by judges in this country, there are certain acts which have been passed by certain Legislatures in this country, there have been some positions taken by the American Congress in regard to the colored people, which I am glad to know that colored persons are careless of; and I long for the time to come when the American slave shall be so careless of his master, south of Mason and Dixon's line, that he will wake up some morning and resolve to go about his business, as if there were not an oppressor in the wide world; and, if he shall be resisted in the step he shall then take, that he shall be ready to say to those who would enslave him, 'I am a man! If you doubt it, we will measure arms. God and Freedom shall be my watch-word!' When that hour shall have come, the American people will be ready, if they are not now, to subscribe to the doctrine, at once and forever, 'NO UNION WITH SLAVE-HOLDERS!' (Applause.)