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PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE  
AND HISTORY, INC., HELD IN PITTSBURGH,  
OCTOBER 24, 25, AND 26, 1927

This annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was a record-breaking convention. Such was the general opinion expressed by all who were present. The day sessions were well attended, and the evening sessions were so attractive that the people had to be turned away for lack of seating capacity in the large auditorium of the Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The first feature of the meeting was the Get-Acquainted Dinner at five o'clock on the 24th, given by the citizens of Pittsburgh. This served well the purpose for which it was intended. After the informal introduction of the visitors, the guests sat down to a delightful repast which all enjoyed. At this point Mr. A. H. Gordon, of the State College at Orangeburg, South Carolina, delivered a well-prepared discourse, "The Struggle of the Negroes of South Carolina for Physical Freedom." Mr. Garnett C. Wilkinson, First Assistant Superintendent of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, spoke of the interest of his teachers in the work of the Association and what they are now doing to aid it. Dr. J. C. Anderson, Dr. J. H. Robinson, Miss Rachel Taylor, Miss Jean Hamilton, and Mrs. Daisy E. Lampkin also made interesting after-dinner speeches. The

## HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET

Henry Highland Garnet represents a type of Negro leadership during the anti-slavery and reconstruction periods that has not received due consideration. Volumes have been written on these stormy days, but little attention has been given to the rôle of Garnet who deserves front rank as the radical forerunner of Frederick Douglass, the advocate of moral suasion rather than resistance. Beginning in the late thirties, Garnet truly blazed the way for the Negro abolitionists and kept the flame of freedom burning while the nation was absorbed with the problems of expansion and the contest over the extension of slavery in the Trans-Mississippi territories. On the platform and through the press Garnet's message was delivered in the defense of his oppressed fellow sufferers in bondage. With them he was able fully to sympathize in that he had escaped from that estate and knew the bitterness of slave life. Such experiences burned into his soul an ambition and determination to lead the way in protest and action for the liberation of his people. Like one crying in the wilderness, Garnet pointed out a way which was modified and finally adopted.

For the peculiar task of leading the slaves to freedom Garnet was especially fitted. There was something about his personality which few leaders possess—the commanding presence which inspires courage and the will to fight through difficulties. In his personality were reflected the fire and genius of African chieftains who had defied the slave catchers and later had rankled in Southern bondage. No disappointment could crush such a spirit as that which Garnet manifested in behalf of his people. His personality and his method of attack heartened alike the escaped fugitive and the abolitionist leader. In 1843 when

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 33 (Memorial Discourse).

weaker minds vacillated and quailed at the suggestion of using physical force to promote liberation, and Negro leaders branded his advice to the slaves as dangerous and incendiary, Garnet insisted that this was the only remedy.

Henry Highland Garnet was born December 23, 1815, at New Market, Kent County, Maryland.<sup>2</sup> He was the descendant of a kidnapped African chief from the Mandingo tribe.<sup>3</sup> In a tribal fight his grandfather had been captured and sold to the slave traders who brought him to America where he was resold in Virginia.<sup>4</sup> Landing on the James River, this ancestor of Garnet was transferred to Colonel William Spencer in Maryland.<sup>5</sup> The fact that he survived the horrors of the Middle Passage is evidence of the physical strength and endurance which were the inheritance of Henry Highland Garnet. The desire for liberty surged, therefore, in the blood which young Garnet inherited from his royal grandfather who, because of his moral and religious power<sup>6</sup> and his absolute integrity of character, had been made a trusty on the plantation at New Market, Maryland. There is serious doubt whether such blood could be successfully enslaved. Its superior quality would inevitably rise, at least, to a position of command. Such is the chief characteristic of innate leadership though it may happen to be in bondage for a time. Thus Henry Highland Garnet received from his African ancestry the qualities which were to distinguish him through a long career of leadership and usefulness.

From his father, George Garnet, Henry not only inherited the sterling traits and bearing which were so dominant in the celebrated grandfather, but he owed much to his mother,<sup>7</sup> a woman of extraordinary energy and industry. She was "tall and finely moulded with bright intellectual face, lighted up with lustrous, twinkling, laughing, eyes."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Smith, *Garnet's Life*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> C. G. Woodson, *Negro Church*, 275.

<sup>4</sup> A. Crummell, *Africa and America*, 273.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of Garnet's Life*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 and 43.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Smith, *A Letter Written in 1833*.

Henry's eyes were bright and unclouded; above them was a massive forehead of a "finely shaped head which might have been taken as a model for an artist."<sup>9</sup> To this priceless gift may be added a disposition which was fascinating to all who came into contact with him. Garnet possessed the capacity to ingratiate himself into the esteem of hundreds whom he unconsciously influenced.

Garnet's escape from bondage is unique; doubtless it had much to do with the attitude toward slavery which he maintained in later years. He knew what oppression meant and his escape from it reflects ingenuity and courage. Late in 1824 his parents had secured permission to attend a funeral of a relative in Maryland, some distance from New Market. "Henry's father, mother, sister, and seven others, including himself, composed the company. . . . For several days they slept in the woods and swamps,<sup>10</sup> traveling all night long. Henry now nine years old, kept up with the fugitives until his little limbs gave out." Relatives carried him on their backs until the party reached the home of Thomas Garrett, a Quaker and sponsor of the Underground Railway, who lived at Wilmington, Delaware. At this station the party separated and Henry's family went to New Hope, Bucks County,<sup>11</sup> Pennsylvania, where he first entered a school house. From this point the pilgrims continued their journey to New York City, where some of the happiest and some of the bitterest experiences of Garnet's life were ahead.

The next step in the escape from slavery was to give thanks, which the father, George Garnet, did by calling the family together. This, however, was not sufficient cause for reassurance in those days. Foresight prompted the band to change their names in order to avoid capture and persecution by the slave hunters who were always busy on the trails of fleeing fugitives. The boy was told that his name was Henry. Thus, in the prime of youth, Garnet

<sup>9</sup> A. Crummell, *Africa and America*, 274.

<sup>10</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> W. J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 656.

learned the difficulties surrounding flight from bondage and oppression. In later years he was to speak out of this trying experience in appeal to the slaves and the abolitionists against the institution which had been responsible for his sufferings. It is not easy to visualize one hundred years later the conditions and circumstances which faced this future leader of the ante-bellum period. These circumstances, however, were the fiery crucible in which the metal of Garnet and other brave and courageous leaders was refined.

Garnet had endured quite enough in the subtle flight from Maryland, but this was not the end of his pilgrimage from the land of oppression. All had gone very well thus far. A sudden turn brought slave hunters, the nemesis of all fugitives. In 1829, while Henry was away cooking on a schooner which plied between New York City and <sup>12</sup> Washington, D. C., the slave catchers invaded the Garnet home. On his return he learned that "his father in escaping had leaped from the roof of a two-story house; his mother had barely eluded their grasp; his sister had been arrested and tried as a fugitive from labor before Richard Riker, Recorder of the City of New York."<sup>13</sup> This incident caused Henry's blood to surge for revenge upon those who had mistreated his relatives. With the meagre money which he had he purchased a <sup>14</sup> large clasp knife and boldly walked up Broadway in the hope that some slave hunter would approach him. Nothing could have possibly stung Garnet worse than an injury to his mother. He adored her with the most tender love and devotion and for her he would gladly have died. Realizing his danger, friends lured him away to the home of Thomas Willis,<sup>15</sup> in Jericho, Long Island. Here Henry Highland Garnet enjoyed himself much before departing for permanent employment, which was his next experience on Long Island.

<sup>12</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Garnet was given to "the care and keeping of Epenetus Smith under a certain form of indenture."<sup>16</sup> In this service Garnet remained two years before he returned to New York City and joined his family. During his indentured service, one of his legs was injured permanently. The revelations<sup>17</sup> of the cowardly attack upon his family had made an enduring impression upon Garnet's mind. This was a constant physical reminder of the slough of despond from which he had escaped. Slavery had produced in him one of the greatest foes which the crisis from 1830 to 1860 would ever face. To the liberation of fellow slaves Garnet's life was now firmly dedicated. Douglass and others had escaped from bondage, but few if any of them suffered in mind and body the agony of Henry Highland Garnet. Naturally he placed responsibility for his condition at the door of slavery, to the destruction of which he was resolved to lend his utmost of intellect and character. To this tremendous task he brought strength and courage which the stormiest difficulties of the conflict never daunted.

Garnet's school days began in 1826, when he was sent to the African Free School No. 1<sup>18</sup> in Mulberry Street, New York City. He continued his education in School No. 2 in the same city. The curriculum in the latter included spelling, penmanship, grammar, geography, and astronomy. Mr. Charles C. Andrews, an Englishman, was the director. He held constantly before his students the highest ideals. In order to inspire<sup>19</sup> the pupils, Mr. Andrews inaugurated fairs for the exhibition of special talents and at his own expense hired additional instructors for the work.<sup>20</sup> Garnet remained in this school until 1828, when he made two trips to Cuba as a cabin attendant. On returning to America he resumed his studies with Mr. Andrews for a year, at the end of which the latter had to give up his work on account of his colonization views. He

<sup>16</sup> Samuel A. Smith, *Letter Written 1833*.

<sup>17</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

had kindled in the mind of Garnet, however, a desire for learning which would never be extinguished.

In 1831 Garnet continued his studies in the High School for Colored Youth which was organized in New York by Curtis and Leiboldt.<sup>21</sup> Having a background in the common branches, Garnet began the study of Latin and Greek in which he became an excellent student. While engaged in the study of the classics young Garnet met the Rev. Theodore S. Wright who, in 1833, was pastor of the first Negro Presbyterian Church in New York City. This acquaintance was far-reaching in its influence upon Garnet's life in that it was responsible for his choice of the ministry as his life work. Rev. Mr. Wright, an abolitionist, saw Garnet's fine possibilities for training not only for the ministry but for the cause of abolition.

The next step in Garnet's education was at Canaan, New Hampshire, where the Rev. William Scales was conducting a school. Garnet matriculated in 1835<sup>22</sup> and, with Alexander Crummell, a lifelong friend, and others, entered joyously upon his studies.<sup>23</sup> There was in this rural community, however, a race prejudice which was even more discomfoting than that in the cities. The inhabitants, who loathed the idea of having Negroes educated in their community, began to lay sinister designs upon the institution to which Garnet and his fellow pilgrims had journeyed. The feeling of hatred soon crystallized into mob action in August of 1835.<sup>24</sup> Ninety-five yoke of oxen were assembled for the purpose of moving the academy. The task, being difficult, required two days, after which the building was destroyed by fire. The mob further attacked Garnet in the home of one Mr. Kimball with whom Garnet was boarding. In this incident Henry showed the bravery and courage which were characteristic of his life. Although lame, suffering with a fever, and using a crutch, he fired at the

<sup>21</sup> J. M. Smith, *Garnet's Life*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 and 30.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson Armistead, *Tribute for the Negro*, 511.

<sup>24</sup> A. Crummell, *Africa and America*, 299.

mob which had shot up the house. The remainder of the time he spent molding bullets for the double-barrelled<sup>25</sup> shot gun which he used in defending himself against the further attacks of the rioters.

From Canaan, New Hampshire, Garnet went by stage and other means of travel across Vermont to Whitesboro, New York. There his study was to be resumed under the inspiration and encouragement of the Rev. Beriah Green,<sup>26</sup> President of Oneida Institute. This period of study is significant in that it supplied the finishing touches of Garnet's training. The rising tide of reform, based upon the principles of morality and religion as taught in the Institute, attracted Garnet to the life which he was to lead.<sup>27</sup> In 1840 he completed his course with honor at Oneida Institute and entered immediately upon a career of leadership. "In his school life he always led his mates, and through life he always desired to be in advance, notwithstanding the hindrances his feeble health caused, for he was a cripple at the age of fifteen as a result of white swelling."<sup>28</sup>

That Garnet should enter the gospel ministry was logical and inevitable after the tutelage which he had received chiefly from clergymen. Those who were interested in the elevation of Negroes thought first of their spiritual welfare. As long as slaves were singing, praying, and shouting they would think less of their degraded estate. The point of emphasis was essentially similar to that of the missionary teachers who founded numerous schools for the freedmen in the South after 1865. Until quite recently the attack on Negro education has been chiefly through religion. This explains the dominance of the minister in Negro leadership. They were the first leaders of the headless host in pointing the way of the spiritual life. The history and traditions of the Bible are reflected in the subtle arguments

<sup>25</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 30.

<sup>26</sup> A. Crummell, *Africa and America*, 281.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>28</sup> W. J. Simmons, *Men of Mark*, 658.

of Garnet who based his appeals upon the rights of man as set forth in Holy Writ.

Garnet was first urged by the Rev. Theodore Wright of New York City to enter the ministry. By this minister Garnet was baptized and received into the Presbyterian Church. Upon graduation from Oneida Institute in 1840, however, Garnet began a school for Negro youth at Troy, New York, in the lecture room of the First Presbyterian Church.<sup>29</sup> Two years later he was ordained and installed as the first pastor of the Liberty Street Negro Presbyterian Church of Troy. There he remained until 1843.

This was a remarkable period in Garnet's life in that he was actively identified with the wave of self-assertion which was spreading among northern Negroes during the forties. The fact that many of the conventions met at Troy, New York,<sup>30</sup> is further testimony of Garnet's leadership in these movements. Not only was he prominent in the affairs of his own race, but he took an active part as a member of the Young Men's Literary Society of the city, in discussions of such topics of the day as temperance and abolition. On both questions Garnet was eminently prepared to speak with power and conviction. It was a time when oratory was in great demand<sup>31</sup> as a means of arousing public opinion for or against a cause.

Henry Highland Garnet's leadership in the anti-slavery crusade from 1840 to 1860 is a span of his life which is outstanding in spite of the fact that it has generally been overlooked except by those who have examined his address to the slaves of America in 1843. It is scarcely known that Garnet was the forerunner of Frederick Douglass who assumed, eventually, the leadership of the movement for which Garnet deserves credit. The beacon light held out by Garnet at Troy, New York, deserves more attention than students of the ante-bellum leadership have given it. The problem of seizing an issue which another has created is

<sup>29</sup> J. M. Smith, *Sketch of H. H. Garnet's Life*, 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>31</sup> Wilson Armistead, *Tribute for the Negro*, 512.

much less difficult than that of choosing a path which can be blazed only by the prophet or pioneer, though he is often looked upon as a dreamer or fanatic.

The address to the slaves at the Convention of Colored Citizens at Buffalo, New York, in 1843, was unquestionably a milestone in the abolition movement. Garrison and other abolitionists had previously spoken frankly and fearlessly concerning the institution of slavery. Certain Negroes had voiced such sentiments. Before this time, however, no Negro had dared express himself in the language which Garnet used in this appeal: "

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You can not be more oppressed than you have been.—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions.

It is in your power so to torment the God-cursed slaveholders that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale were turned, and black men were the masters and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. . . . In the name of God, we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency. Brethren, adieu! Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are four millions!

These citations are from the address which attracted more attention than any other appeal ever presented to the Negroes of America. It is probable that John Brown was inspired by this appeal to force; at least he was so much pleased with the sentiment that Garnet had expressed that he had the speech published at his own expense. The raid at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, sixteen years later was a con-

<sup>22</sup> C. G. Woodson, *Negro Orators*, 157.

crete attempt to test the possibilities of liberating the slaves.

The effect of Garnet's address upon the Buffalo Convention was like that of a thunderbolt. Free Negroes of the North stood aghast at the thought of action and force suggested by the speaker.<sup>23</sup> Frederick Douglass, not concurring with certain points in the address nor with the sentiments of Garnet, arose to advocate its reference to a committee and to reply. Garnet had aroused the fears of the delegates lest they should incur the disfavor of the northern communities to which they had fled from southern bondage.

The contrast between Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet here is so outstanding that it merits more than passing notice. The sources previously used do not fully reveal the impassable gulf of difference between the philosophy of these two distinguished leaders. Douglass remarked that "there was too much physical force both in the address and remarks of Garnet; that the address, could it reach the slaves, and the advice, either of (Garnet) or the address be followed, while it might not lead the slaves to rise in insurrection for liberty, would nevertheless, and necessarily be the occasion for insurrection, and that was what he wished in no way to have any agency in hurrying about and what we were called upon to avoid."<sup>24</sup>

Then followed a debate which occupied the convention for several days. A. M. Sumner of Cincinnati, Ohio, supporting the position taken by Douglass, asserted that approval by the convention would be fatal to the safety of free people of color who lived on the borders of the slave states. He thought that he was fully prepared to anticipate very properly what might be the results thereabouts and he felt bound on behalf of himself and his constituents

<sup>23</sup> *Minutes of National Convention of Colored Citizens, Buffalo, New York, August, 1843*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Minutes of National Convention of Colored Citizens, Buffalo, New York, August, 1843*.

to oppose the passage.<sup>35</sup> The resulting vote showed 18 in favor of the measure and 19 against it.

Later in the convention, Douglass read a report on abolition in which he used the phrase "moral suasion," to which Garnet took keen exception. The time having expired, the convention voted an extension in which Garnet asked that the report containing {"moral suasion"} be amended and stricken out. The effect of his appeal was to divide the convention. Douglass resumed the floor at the final count and won a majority.

This episode represents the parting of ways between the radical course approved by Garnet and the more diplomatic or palliative policy of Douglass.<sup>36</sup> The fear of the conservatives won and Douglass ever afterwards assumed a more conspicuous rôle<sup>37</sup> in the abolition movement than Henry Highland Garnet, his forerunner. It required fifty years to convince the American Negroes that there was a place for radical thinking among them. Gradually they came to agree with the more conciliatory and compromising attitude of Douglass who feared, with the masses, that resistance was fatal. They probably recalled the fate of Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, whom Garnet lauded as worthy of emulation. The slave mind of the Negro in 1843 could not visualize the wisdom of such a course of action. While he yearned for freedom, physical resistance as a means towards its achievement was inconceivable then as now.

Some leaders of the abolition movement however were attracted to this daring new reformer who had appeared on the horizon. He was in great demand as a promoter of anti-slavery movements after 1843. The definite organization of the people of New York State owes much to this fearless and<sup>38</sup> courageous leader. From the time that he made his first appearance in New York City in 1837 he

<sup>35</sup> *Minutes of National Convention of Colored People and Friends, Troy, New York, 1847*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Crummell, *op. cit.*, 292.

secured standing among first class orators. Requests came from all parts of New York, Pennsylvania and sections farther West, where audiences were eager to hear the cause of abolition presented.<sup>39</sup> His voice was to be heard in Faneuil Hall and beyond the Atlantic in behalf of his people. During the subsequent forty years Garnet maintained the attitude of 1843 in presenting and championing the cause of the Negro.

To many Henry Highland Garnet appears as a statesman rather than as a minister. It is very probable that he possessed the ability which would have achieved distinction in politics if he had been given the opportunity. "He had great consciousness of power and love of authority which made him in all conditions and at every period of his life a leader of men."<sup>40</sup> He believed in the power of the press and recommended it as a means of promoting the cause of abolition when Frederick Douglass opposed such procedure. Garnet advocated, as early as 1847, the establishment of a national printing press which "would send terror into the ranks of our enemies and encourage all of our friends, whose friendship is greater than selfishness."<sup>41</sup> To this Frederick Douglass gave no encouragement, as he believed in 1847 that a press would develop cliques. He realized later, as the publisher of *The North Star*, the power of the press and the importance of the pen in the struggle for the freedom of the American slaves.

News of Garnet's prominence as an antislavery speaker reached England by 1850. There the friends of Free Labor and Mrs. H. Richardson invited him to speak on the abolition movement. For more than three years Garnet remained in England, presenting his cause constantly before gatherings<sup>42</sup> of people who were desirous of aiding the movement. Continuing his journey into Europe, Garnet represented the cause at the World's Peace Congress held at Frankfort. There he was one of the most forceful

<sup>39</sup> J. M. Smith, *op. cit.*, 47-54.

<sup>40</sup> A. Crummell, *op. cit.*, 300.

<sup>41</sup> *National Convention of Colored People, Troy, New York, 1847*, 6 and 7.

<sup>42</sup> C. G. Woodson, *Negro in Our History*, 276.

and acceptable speakers. This occasion gave him the greatest opportunity of his life as he spoke from famous pulpits and, by his personality and the brilliancy of his intellect, discredited the alleged inferiority of the pure-blooded Negro.<sup>43</sup> While in London he served as the American delegate to the World's Anti-Slavery Convention. He spent three years in England, France, and Germany. His ability to converse in the native tongue of each country proved of value to him and his cause.

In 1852 Garnet joined the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland and accepted the call as a missionary to Jamaica, West Indies. In this field of service he gave his very best until he was attacked by a fever from which he recovered very slowly. His "physicians advised that he return North, which he did in 1855. On arriving at New York, he found that his former friend and adviser, the Rev. Theodore S. Wright, had deceased, and the Shiloh Church pulpit which he had filled was vacant. Garnet thereupon assumed the pastorate of this church. It had deteriorated, but he soon restored it to its former prosperity as a center of light and hope for the Negroes of New York City.<sup>44</sup> It was chiefly in this line of service that the remainder of his life was to be spent. He was, however, more than a minister. There was much of the vision of the statesman in his make-up and outlook. This may be said of many prominent Negro churchmen who have had to advise in things political as well as spiritual.

Garnet's efforts in the Civil War reveal the same distinguished traits as those characteristic of him in the anti-slavery crusade. While the riots were raging in New York City in 1863, Garnet's daughter removed the sign from his door—a precaution which possibly saved him from attack. He was, however, brave and fearless during this trying crisis of the rebellion when Lee<sup>45</sup> was invading the North

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Smith, *Letter 1883*, *op. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> A. Crummell, *op. cit.*, 296.

<sup>45</sup> J. M. Smith, *op. cit.*, 55.

<sup>46</sup> A. Crummell, *op. cit.*, 299.

to strike terror and bring the war to a successful conclusion. Throughout this time Garnet saw service in various forms of uplift work. The relief of the Negro sufferers placed upon him a task which he gladly assumed and performed creditably. Negro soldiers and other people of African blood were sorely in need of comfort, in the winter of 1863-1864. Relief committees were organized among the Negroes of New York City and much constructive work under Garnet's direction was done for the soldiers.

It deserves to be said that Garnet was a staunch advocate of the employment of Negro soldiers at a time when enlistment was bitterly opposed by the Union authorities.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently he served as a chaplain among the Negro troops. In this he was applying his principles of resistance which he urged so strenuously in the Buffalo Convention in 1843. Such action required courage during this period when Negroes were being pursued through the streets of New York City. Seeing that the Negro must have a part in the achievement of his freedom, Garnet devoted himself to the promotion of the scheme.

Garnet had a deep and abiding love for America, in spite of its record in the toleration and support of slavery. "I love every inch of soil which my feet pressed in my youth," said he, "and I mourn because the accursed shade of slavery rests upon it. I love my country's flag and hope that soon it will be cleansed of its stains, and be hailed by all nations as the emblem of freedom and independence."<sup>48</sup> It was such a spirit as this, after the dreadful riots of 1863, which inspired Garnet to throw his powerful influence into the recruiting of Negro troops. His was genuine patriotism which rose above personal ambition and refused to let discrimination and oppression dissuade him from his ideals. Then, as now, it required courage for Negroes to be patriotic. There are thousands who have never felt the love of one's country revealed by Garnet.

<sup>47</sup> J. M. Smith, *op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> H. H. Garnet, *Address Past, Present and Future of Colored People in America, Troy, New York, 1848*, 29.

On March 2, 1864, before the Civil War was over, Garnet was called to the pastorate of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church of Washington, D. C. He accepted the call and assumed his duties in July of 1864 and continued in charge of the church over two years. He was at the height of his fame as a pulpit<sup>49</sup> orator and antislavery lecturer. His ministry attracted, therefore, many of both races to hear him. While Garnet was in Washington he became acquainted with President Lincoln and frequently advised him concerning the welfare of Negroes.

The visits of notables in public life to hear Garnet preach at the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church recommended him to President Lincoln as an appropriate speaker for the Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary in the House of Representatives, 1865. His performance on this occasion won the admiration of all and the astonishment of many of the foreign ministers who said that if that is a specimen of the African race in this country it is time that they were free."<sup>50</sup> This eloquent address was so highly appreciated that a request for its publication with a sketch of Garnet's life has left the chief account of the career of this splendid leader, who represents so peculiarly a voice crying alone in the darkness of bondage.

Leaving the pastorate at Washington, D. C., Garnet resumed his former charge at the Shiloh Church in New York City. His work there was a center of influence and inspiration to many young men who came to know him. Literary societies in which debating was prominent attracted many ambitious young men to the Shiloh Church. Dr. F. J. Grimké, while a student at Princeton, visited this church occasionally. Professor George W. Cook was a member of the Sunday School.

As Garnet approached the evening of life his attention was drawn to the land of his fathers. He longed to visit its shores and to see something of the empires and the type of leaders who, in Africa, were proving their metal.

<sup>49</sup> F. J. Grimké, *Sermon in 1916*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Smith, *Letter 1883*, *op. cit.*

This feeling was, no doubt, due in part to a failure of the Negro American to recognize and fully appreciate the sterling worth of this man who had given forty years of his life to their uplift and advancement. His decision to visit Africa was directly opposed, however, to the resolution of his young manhood. "We are planted here," said he, "and we can not as a whole be recolonized back to the fatherland. It is too late to make a successful attempt to separate the white and black people of the New World. They love one another too much to endure a separation."<sup>51</sup> This shows that he had not believed in the idea of colonization for the entire group. No doubt his motives were due to the deep love which he had for his race. At the last dinner which he attended in Washington, D. C., Garnet remarked: "If I can just reach the land of my forefathers and with my feet press her soil I shall be content to die."<sup>52</sup>

The opportunity came in 1881 for the realization of Garnet's last ambition. He was at that time appointed minister to Liberia. He journeyed by way of England and thence to Monrovia where he arrived in December of 1881. There he became ill and died the following February. The Presbytery of New York said of him: "His long service in the church, his ability and fidelity as a preacher and pastor, the dignity, purity, and usefulness of his life and courage with which he maintained the honor of his high calling in the church and community commanded our esteem and respect and render his departure a real loss to the Presbytery."<sup>53</sup>

The life of this distinguished herald of freedom in America has not yet appeared. His work can never be fully appreciated except through an understanding of the mind of the American Negro slave during the crisis from 1820 to 1860. It is obvious that such a spirit of self-assertion as that which Garnet announced in his message to the slaves in 1843 deserves more than passing notice. The

<sup>51</sup> H. H. Garnet, *Speech at Troy, New York, Feb. 14, 1848*, 25.

<sup>52</sup> J. W. Cromwell, *Negro in American History*, 129.

<sup>53</sup> A. Crummell, *op. cit.*, 298.

extent to which it inspired Douglass, Remond, and other Negroes of less courage than Garnet, will never be known. It is enough to say that Henry Highland Garnet created the idea which Frederick Douglass tempered and presented to the world in a more palliative and acceptable form. The truth of Garnet's message, however, was vindicated in the Civil War which emancipated the American Negro slaves to whom Garnet recommended force in 1843.

Frequently the prophet lives before his time. This may be said of Garnet, prior to 1850, when he was displaced by leaders who emphasized moral suasion. The possibilities of the latter course seem very dubious to the student of the ante-bellum period. The philosophy of Dew, Fitzhugh, Harper, and Calhoun had won the South to a moral justification of slavery. In such a slough of despond it took nothing less than the radical recommendation of a Garnet to shock the national consciousness with the wrongs of Negro slavery. It remained for John Brown, in 1859, to attempt to translate into action some of the suggestions which he undoubtedly received from Garnet.<sup>54</sup> While Negroes quailed at the idea of force and violence, the martyr of Harpers Ferry adopted it as a part of his mighty plan to lead slaves through the Appalachian ways to freedom. Slavery had destroyed the ancient semblance of African bravery; the masses to whom Garnet appealed could not see the achievements of their ancestors. Here we must keep in mind that very few of Garnet's type of African were ever enslaved. Only the weaker and more passive natives were captured for American slavery. The royal and warlike Comanches would fight until death rather than submit to capture. The degrading system of subserviency and brutality in this country left little of the erstwhile self-assertion in those who were brought here as slaves.

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<sup>54</sup> J. M. Smith, *op. cit.*, 52.