

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

The first day of August has, in the course of events, taken its place on the annual docket as one of the appropriate business days of the christian philanthropist. By a christian philanthropist, I intend one whose sympathies can disinterestedly embrace the whole human family.

Such will always be in their own element, and at their own appropriate business, when they are engaged in the act of celebrating some great event, as we are to-day, or when their sympathetic emotions are excited and drawn forth by the occurrence of some great event.

If the fame of Augustus Caesar has given any importance to the month of August, surely the event which we are celebrating, must give high, very high importance to this first day among the days of the year.

We may congratulate ourselves that the day-star of universal emancipation which, under God, is destined to illumine the world with its resistless light, has risen. It is far up in yonder heaven, and like a "strong man rejoicing to run a race," it moves on majestically.

Possibly we shall meet the charge of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm may run riot. It may tell a piteous tale on which truth may be compelled to "frown and turn aside her face," it may bend the pillow of truth, and for a time, unhinge from its proper centre, the common sense of the moral world.

But the tale of joy which we rehearse to-day, is no fiction. It is attested by the records of the British Parliament. It is attested by the proceedings of the Colonial Legislatures. It is attested by the joy of the Colonial freeman. It is an item of intelligence which has past into a universal fact, **THAT BRITAIN'S BONDMEN ARE FREE!!**

But still it will be demanded, why we should celebrate an event which belongs to the British nation?

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But still it will be demanded, why we should celebrate an event which belongs to the British nation?

The answer is easy. True philanthropy is not selfish. It is founded upon the truly Bible principle, "rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Hence it claims every such event as its own theme, but not exclusively. It finds an accent in chorus with those who rejoice in all lands, and a tear to mingle with those of suffering humanity every where.

While, then, as christian philanthropists, we are bound to weep with the weeping slave of our land, we may, to-day take a respite. We may turn our eyes from the dark to the brighter side of the picture: we may rejoice with the West India freemen.

In the case before us, Britain stands the author of a proposition which is destined to become the law of the world. Those 800,000 newly made freemen are now talked of by politicians and people of all ranks in all lands, the slaves of America not excepted; and they are not talked of for nought: they are the subject of an action which is beginning to shake every empire of blood.

The history of the West India matter I have, for my present purpose, divided into three eras.

The first era comprises the last few years just preceding the action of Parliament. During this period the feelings of the whole nation, by the efforts of the friends of the slaves, were drawn up to the subject of emancipation. These feelings being ripened to a focus of moral power, broke in a tremendous demand upon the Parliament, that the oppressed should go free. Meanwhile the slaveholders in the Colonies and the pro-slavery party at home, were clamorous and threatening. But Parliament, perceiving on which side the balance of power was, prepared to approach the subject, though with great caution.

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The stout opposition of the slave faction, together with the reluctance of Parliament to touch the subject, drew the friends of the slave into a compromise. This consisted in granting the slaveholders an indemnity of twenty millions of pounds sterling, and an apprenticeship system of six years. With these as its leading features, the “Abolition Act” passed Parliament; and it was considered a tremendous measure of that great power in a desperate case. The passage of this bill ends the first era, and commences the second which extends to the first of August, 1834, when the bill became a law.

This may be called the period of suspense on the one hand, and of anxious, and joyous anticipation on the other hand. The government with all its experience, was unable to foresee how much of an effort it would require to give the Abolition Act the authority of law in the Colonies. Judging from the clamorous tone of the Colonies, apprehensions of a coalition were not without foundation.

But on the other hand, there was the slave and his friends waiting with tip-toe anticipation, for the arrival of the day on which they were to taste the first fruits of their triumph.

A new importance was given to this period by the spontaneous determination of Antigua and Bermuda to dispense with the apprenticeship system, and to give their slaves unconditional freedom. The wise conduct of the two islands brought the other islands to their senses, who had been mad with rage, and at the same time it strengthened the slave and his friends.

The day – the first of August, 1834, dawned with its ponderous weight of interest and responsibility. The Abolition Act sprang into being with all the vigor and authority of law, a great law indeed; without the noise of a gun or the staining of a sword. The experiment was complete – it was triumphant.

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The first day of August, 1834, ends the second period and

commences the third, which is yet extending. This is the [best] period.

Since 1834, much of interest has transpired. We have seen the British abolitionists assailing the apprenticeship system and calling for the abolition of the Abolition Act, or, if this be a contradiction of terms, the abolition of the Apprenticeship Act. We have seen the other islands dispensing with the apprenticeship and adopting unconditional emancipation. And, better still, we have seen the new sons of freedom conducting themselves as worthy possessors of the boon they hold.

This event comes to the relief of the truths on which the hope of the slaves in our land depends; and may be denominated a triumph of the great principles of human liberty, whose tendency is to sweep oppression from the earth.

I insist, then, that we are here furnished with evidence of the *duty and safety of immediate emancipation*, and the *susceptibility* of the slave to enjoy freedom. These are cardinal points. By the success of these, the oppressed in all lands will rise; but if these fail the cause of the slave must fail.

The arguments for the case I can only touch.

1. We have full evidence of the duty of immediate emancipation. It was a clear and high sense of this duty which had taken strong hold on the minds of the British nation, when they called for the emancipation of the slaves of the West India islands. This call was made, and persisted in with an earnestness which proved a sense of duty to be the working leaven.

The demand on Parliament for emancipation was the voice of the nation; and they did not suppose they were asking a mere favor for the bondmen which Parliament might grant or refuse at option, without *injustice*. In their petitions to Parliament they expressly held and urged, that they were asking what was the bondman's right, and the *duty* of Parliament to

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give. In support of their claims, they appealed nobly to the dreadful code of God; they appealed to the law of nature, sanctioned by the universal consent of mankind. And they appealed, too, with just pride to the great charter of British liberty. And these appeals were not fruitless. The Parliament was moved by a sense of duty powerfully urging it, to accede to the wish of the nation. The Parliament would not have proceeded to final action in the case, as critical as they thought it to be, could such action have been deferred without a breach of duty, when, at one period, every step threatened to rend the Colonies from the empire.

The form of the argument, then, is clearly and conclusively this: Britain, upon earnest inquiry, came to the conclusion (the nation leading, and Parliament following,) that she was bound to emancipate her slaves. Britain could not have been mistaken on a point where evidence was so clear. She was not mistaken, but has, to the satisfaction of her own generous mind, done her duty. She has done right in the opinion of the civilized world. Therefore what Britain has found to be her duty is the duty of all slaveholding nations, without exception.

This argument must still gain force, too, when we consider that the case to which it applies, is of universal interest. Every nation is interested in the subject of human rights. This is not only because they can either promote, or abuse the rights of other, but also because their own are to be saved or lost.

2. But, fellow-citizens, as to the practicability of immediate emancipation, we have satisfactory evidence. The world has not seen before so successful an experiment on so large a scale. And in the wisdom of God, the evidence has been so varied as to meet every feature of the case.

On the first of August, 1834, two of the islands, Antigua, with thirty thousand, and Bermuda, with four thousand slaves,

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took immediate emancipation in the stead of the Apprenticeship system. In all the other islands, the system went into as successful an operation as could *possibly* be expected.

But in 1838, most of the other islands followed the noble example of Antigua and Bermuda; thus fully showing that on the first of August, 1834, those two islands only had taken the full advantage of the case, while they had only gone half-way.

But, as a whole, the transaction on the first of August, 1834, has proved the point. By it the master was stripped of irresponsible power, and the slave's person and rights were put under the protection of law. This was done by a single Act, in a single day; no peace broken, no insurrection, no master's life taken; and with the trial of five years, it is proven to be far more impracticable to make slaveholders into free employees, than it is to make slaves into free men.

3. Our West India brethren are proven to be susceptible of liberty. On this point the evidence is not only conclusive, but it is happily in progress. The government is gratified with their loyalty. Their friends, who have labored for them, see nothing of which they complain. Their wishes are moderate, their pretensions are modest, their aims are noble, their claims are just, and their concessions are reasonable.

Their political condition has received an impulse, and this is seen in the improving state of the islands, and the multiplied and urgent demand for the means of improvement. They look up with an eager eye to the privileges of free men. And it is right they should. They have paid faithfully for the boon. They are not unfaithful in the discharge of duty, and the privileges of freemen are always perfectly compatible with duty.

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ceedings of these freemen in the use of their privileges, and in the exercise of their rights. Every reasonable procedure is made to labor under perverting opinions, as if a freeman could not regard the refinement of his wife and children, and as if he could not set a just value upon his own labors.

But, fellow citizens, we may truly and confidently rejoice in this event, because it has, in its tendency to destroy oppression, the advantage of the political, commercial and moral character of the British nation. These give it a hostile power and influence. In proportion as British influence prevails in this land, oppression will continue to feel the shock of this event until it is *dead!* DEAD!! DEAD!!!

America, our country, is afraid of British influence in politics; and for this reason we may expect the continuance of a desperate effort to avoid the political bearing of this event. But the breach is open, and the stream will flow. Yes, the breach is open, and it cannot be shut. The influence of the countries the one over the other, in a commercial and moral point of view, is insensibly prolific. The liberal portions of the British and American churches are united in heart and hand. There is a powerful class of the British nation, who being the avowed advocates of human liberty, have now turned their eye and their persevering hand against slavery throughout the world; and especially do these most earnestly sympathize with the slave in this land, and his friends. They are pledged to help us. They have pledged us their prayers. And are these a thing of nought? With the sympathy and prayers of such hearts and souls as those who achieved the conquest of the Indies, may not the slave and his friends in Columbia's empire lift up their head with dawning hope?

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the inflexible integrity with which Britain watches the slave-trade; her powerful navy with sleepless vigilance traversing all quarters of the highway of nations, with a view to chastise those who are found in this murderous traffic: her persevering endeavors to bring all nations to adopt a sound christian policy on this subject.

The political aspect of this event is carrying France. – Soon she will see the duty and justice of giving freedom to the slaves in her colonies, in imitation of Britain, and then she will take her stand side by side with Britain in the great matter, human liberty. And yet France, perhaps, has more political influence over America than Britain.

But again, the territory of the United States is bounded on the northeast and north by the British provinces, which serve as so many cities of refuge to which hundreds of southern pieces of property find their way; flying from the *claws of the decouring Eagle* to the JAWS OF THE PROTECTING LION!!

What a contrast. But the time is promised when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together.

But, to keep to the point, here again, are those newly emancipated Islands, sitting around, like so many floating magazines, trespassing, by their contiguousness and incidental influence, upon the peace of the south. A cargo of southern property of this disputed kind cannot leave the District of Columbia, and coast along to Louisiana, and encounter a storm, without falling into one of these dens of the British Lion!

But the day is also hastening, when we shall see a combination of all the great and generous powers of the earth against the bloody slave system of this land, by a proscription of slave produce. Portugal was brought into a professed union against the slave trade by a similar measure. The pride and presumption of America is not immovable. When the eyes of

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the civilized nations shall be turned with unanimous indignity upon the crying sin of this land, the south will feel and think differently about her system.

The fact is, that the history of the past year is made up of some events which, though small in themselves, are, taken as indications of a wise providence, full of meaning.

Among other things, the speech of Mr. Clay in the Senate, with the reply of Mr. Morris, is one of the most encouraging events, to my own mind, that has occurred in the history of slavery for the last quarter of a century in this land. The spirit of Mr. Morris shows that all northern politicians are not committed to do the bidding of slavery in high places.

Mr. Clay on that occasion appeared as a mouthpiece of the south, and his speech may be regarded as the grand pulse-feeler on the subject of compensation. It shows that the south is secretly trembling in view of the triumph of human rights in the West Indies, and she begins to think of begging the case.

The pure principles of Abolition are destined to encounter a new form of opposition. When Colonization shall have spent its force a little more, we shall see an organization to promulgate the doctrine of compensation. The tenor and design of Mr. Clay's speech is but another form of a motion, or suggestion, for such an organization. What else means his elaborate statement of the number of slaves? Has no one known this before? Yes; but every one did not think of the fact that slaves are to a great extent the basis of southern credit, not only in a commercial line, but endowments of presidencies and professorships of colleges, and the bread and living of widows and orphans. Nor, perhaps, did any one think of guessing at the sum which would probably satisfy the south.

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sound and vigorous abolition sentiment, and signing obligations to the south for *twelve hundred millions*!

We may look, fellow citizens, with confidence, for a tendency in this great event to destroy oppression, because it serves as a powerful means to *quicken and enlarge the political and moral sensibilities of Colored Americans*. Every cause which tends to place Colored Americans in the light of worthy patriots, tends to destroy slavery. Such a cause we have in this glorious event of West India emancipation.

I have a long time since looked upon it as a most desperate calamity that we had no great event to excite and draw out our patriotic emotions, since history does not record an instance of a people who have been remarkable for their moral energy, who have not had some great event to celebrate.

The Egyptians celebrated the overflowing of their river Nile. Their country being wholly dependent upon this annual event for its vegetable fertility: every eye watched with intense anxiety the advance of these waters; they began to advance about the first of June, and continued till the last of September, at which time they usually reached their necessary height – fifteen cubits, or thirty-five feet. During the advance of the waters, a daily and accurate account is kept of their increase. If the waters rise to fifteen cubits above its banks, they are sure of a fruitful season. If they fall short of this, the country is in danger of a drought. As soon, therefore, as the waters reached their wonted standard, every year, the time of public *celebration* was come in all Egypt. The same event is observed to the present day in the city of Grand Cairo.

The Jews had their “feasts of in gathering.” The Carthaginians and the Romans commemorated the founding of their renowned cities; and the Greeks had seasons for hearing the

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The Jews had their “feasts of in gathering.” The Carthaginians and the Romans commemorated the founding of their renowned cities; and the Greeks had seasons for hearing the

efforts of their orators and their poets.

And among all the people of modern times, none are without at least some one great event to celebrate. Among the events of British history, none are remembered by Englishmen with more interest than the establishment of their great Charter of Rights. This charter was granted first by Henry I; it was confirmed by Stephen, and renewed by Henry II. It was desperately assailed by John, the brother and successor of Edward I. This produced a resolute confederacy of the barons and people. The barons assembled in London on a certain day, and demanded of the king the reestablishment of the Charter. The king desired and received time to consider; but he spent it in appealing to the Pope of Rome. The pope interposed, and forbade the confederacy as rebellious. But this only made the barons more resolute. They [first] to arms, and reduced the king to such an extremity that he was compelled, on the 19th day of June, 1215, after a conference of several days, to grant, sign and ratify the Charter. From that date the British government has remained a limited monarchy, to the pride of every thinking Englishman. Since 1815 the 18th of June has been a day of no small note with the English, and indeed with most of the nations of Europe. On that day one of the noblest of Britain's noblemen led the allied hosts in "the fray of wonder and horror which fixed so decisively the destinies of Europe." A portion of the French nation regard this as a day on which the high chancellor of fate, in his decisions, dealt desperately with their pride.

The Irish have their St. Patrick's day; and in our own country, the Indians have their season to meet for talk, and for the recitation of their war songs. The New-Englanders celebrate the landing of their pilgrim fathers. And the whole nation celebrate the 4th day of July as the birth-day of their

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independence.

I need not say, however, fellow citizens, that this boasted day brings no real joy to us. We cannot rejoice in an event in which our case is made an exception; we cannot exult in what is termed the blessing of the nation, when this blessing is positively denied to one sixth of the community.

The venerable John Q. Adams in his 4th of July oration at Quincy 1831, said, “the declaration of independence was not a declaration of rights newly acquired, nor was it a form of government.”

The first part of this sentence is as self-evident as the truths which the declaration announces; and both parts of the sentence are equally important to us, Colored Americans, for as the declaration neither created or announced any new rights, it cannot, simply as a document, *essentially* effect any rights.

The declaration is no more, on this point, than a recitation of certain truths concerning the rights of mankind universally, which in its own sense are as old as creation, and consequently do not depend upon this, or any other declaration, pro or con, for their existence. Man was endowed by his Creator, when created, with “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

And, again, had the declaration been a form of government, slavery must have ceased long since; but it was because the constitution did not exist for twelve years after the declaration was made, and because when it was formed, it embraced not the grand features of the declaration, that slavery burthens the land.

The same worthy statesman, in the document to which we have already referred, says, that “declarations as copious, as full, as formal as our own have decorated the constitutions of

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Europe. These constitutions after a short and fitful existence, have passed into the memory of things beyond the flood, leaving the principles behind.”

What a warning is this to America! She is warned to *practice* the great principles of her declaration, since simply being decorated with a declaration of great principles will not save any constitution or form of government from oblivion.

The principles of the American declaration are not merely upon the parchment of '76, over which the palms of the fifty-six delegates successively trembled in affixing their signatures, but they are more sublimely engraven on the more durable parchment of the human mind; this is what makes these principles the living glory of every freeman on earth, and also the terror of tyrants.

The enemy of human liberty may take such a *paper* parchment and put it in his nethermost pocket and claim that he has disposed of the case. The despot, I say, may take a *paper* parchment, deposit it in a shrine of iron, place the whole beneath the broad base of his throne, and challenge his subjects that they have no rights, but at his option; yet after this is done, those declarations engraven upon the living parchment of the human mind, will speak to the no small discomfiture of the tyrant's mind. It was so with Nero of Rome. After he thought he had reduced the liberties of the Romans to a nut-shell, he still found such an opposition to his pretensions, that he could wish that the “Romans had but one neck,” so that he might despatch them at a blow.

The principles of our declaration, then, are as firm as the throne of the Ancient of Days, and this republic may be called to “pass into the memory of things beyond the flood,” and leave them behind, unless she adhere to them in spirit.

History is a school of politics. It is a faithful narrative of the experience of past ages. On its pages we behold the bloody

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and mournful pathway of tyrants who have met their dooms and gone. Let the powers that be read of the powers that have been, and be wise.

Fellow-citizens, I have said this has now become one of the appropriate business days of the Christian Philanthropists: and I may add, that we should be wanting in these feelings which assimilate man to man and make his hopes and his joys the same, if we did not tune every chord of our hearts to-day with sentiments of joy. Just as this sentiment entered my arrangement, my muse whispered me the following lines:

Sons of Cush, (and a noble sire was he,)
The first of August soon will be,
A day of interest, full indeed:
Go, sing with thy people of liberty.
Their patriot fire sure will burn,
When to this mighty theme they turn,
Which doth so much their rights concern,
Those rights to them so sweet and dear.

But I must hasten and be done. I have said that the West India emancipation is a triumph of the principles of human liberty. It is more. It is evidence that those principles are in the care of God, the Judge of all the earth. Yes, and he, as the faithful executor of his own will, shall ere long dispense the rich blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to every slave in our land. For this we should pray - for this we should labor. If this be rebellion against the powers of earth, we have only to say that it is loyalty to God. Heaven forbid that we, Colored Americans, should indignantly lay a finger upon the chord of harmony of this Union. But while we love our country, and love her prosperity, we dare not love her sins and abuses.

This day dawns upon the West Indian freemen, prosperous and happy. The interest of this day is thrilling alike to them, to us, and to the friends of liberty, the world over. It derives

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its interest from the tremendous event to which it has given birth. But when, O when shall a like event be furnished the philanthropists of the world from our own loved land!

Spirit of Liberty! thou legitimate princess of creation, spread thy wings and speed thy flight hither. Chastise the spirit of oppression; and heaven speed thee in thy way, and aid thee in thy conquest 'til this province be thine, and thy reign is complete! In conclusion, my muse teaches me to sing

All blessed be our God who rules,
And has the power and will to do,
That which is just, and good and wise;
Such work is done in Britain's isles.

Freedom shall triumph by his might,
The world around shall beam with light,
His eye shall search and find the place,
Where bleeds, and groans, and weeps the slave.

His ear did hear the piteous groan,
Of Britain's bondmen 'neath their load;
He heard, and turned his eye to see;
He spake, and lo! the bond are free.

This Judge of all the earth on high,
Now hears America's bondmen cry;
He'll not forbear to give the look,
Nor long delay to speak the word.

May faith inspire our feeble hope,
And hope sustain our hands to work,
'Till this great object is obtained,
And freedom reaches every slave.

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