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The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race (1848)

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Abstract

Henry Highland Garnet's 1848 address to the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, New York, published that year, is an eloquent survey and reclaiming for the race of its share in the Western intellectual tradition. That the ancient Egyptians were Africans, that the Song of Solomon was addressed to an African woman, that the Ethiopians warriors were celebrated by Homer, that Moses' wife was Ethiopian, that Hannibal, Terence, Euclid, Cyprian, Origen, and Augustine all were of African ancestry—these facts are adduced by Garnet to suggest both the heritage and the potential achievements of the Africans in America. Garnet surveys the origin and history of the slave trade, and especially the late events surrounding its abolition and the end of slavery in the British empire, Mexico, Haiti, and the possessions of France and Sweden. He describes the horrors of slavery in America, the heroism of Cinque and the *Armistad* affair, and the martyrdom of the Cuban poet Placido. He challenges his own people to eschew the debates over whether to call themselves "Africans," "colored," "African-American," or "black"; and to pursue education instead of showy and expensive pageants and demonstrations. He reviews the late annexation of Texas, and the increase in slave territory produced by the Mexican War. He describes a destiny in which the so-called *races* are blended—*"This western world is destined to be filled with a mixed race."*—and he opposes colonization, out of patriotic attachment—"America is my home, my country, and I have no other. I love whatever of good there may be in her institutions. I hate her sins. I loathe her slavery, and I pray Heaven that ere long she may wash away her guilt in tears of repentance."

Garnet's was an important early and radical voice in the black antislavery movement, and this address was made at an especially critical moment both in his career and in the nation's careening slide towards secession and war.

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THE
PAST AND THE PRESENT
CONDITION, AND THE DESTINY,
OF
THE COLORED RACE:
A DISCOURSE
DELIVERED AT THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
FEMALE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY
OF TROY, N. Y., FEB. 14, 1848,
BY
HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET.

Troy, N.Y.
Steam press of J. C. Kneeland and Co.
1848.

TROY, FEB. 22, 1848.

REV. HENRY H. GARNET—

DEAR SIR :—The members of F. B. S., having listened to your discourse with great pleasure, and being desirous to present it to the Public, have requested us to solicit a copy for publication, and we trust, sir, that nothing will prevent you from granting our request,

Most respectfully, &c.,

HANNAH B. RICH, *President*;

CHARLOTTE PUTMAN, *Rec. Sec.*;

LOUISA A. GIDEONS, *Cor. Sec.*

TROY, FEB. 26, 1848.

LADIES :—I have received your polite note of the 22d inst., and, while I consider myself fortunate in serving you acceptably, I deem it my duty to comply with your request.

I am, Ladies, and ever hope to be, your friend and servant,

H. H. GARNET.

MRS. H. B. RICH,

MISS CHARLOTTE PUTMAN,

MISS L. A. GIDEONS.

ADDRESS.



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

My theme is the Past and the Present condition, and the Destiny of the Colored race. The path of thought which you are invited to travel, has not as I am aware, been pursued heretofore to any considerable extent. The Present, is the midway between the Past and the Future. Let us ascend that sublime eminence, that we may view the vast empire of ruin that is scarcely discernable through the mists of former ages; and if, while we are dwelling upon the desolations that meet our eyes, we shall mourn over them, I entreat you to look upward and behold the bright scenery of the future. There we have a clear sky, and from thence are refreshing breezes. The airy plains are radiant with prophetic brightness, and truth, love, and liberty are descending the heavens, bearing the charter of man's destiny to a waiting world.

All the various forms of truth that are presented to the minds of men, are in perfect harmony with the government of God. Many things that appear to be discordant are not really so; for when they are understood, and the mind becomes illuminated and informed, the imagined deformities disappear as spectres depart from the vision of one who had been a maniac, when his

reason returns. "God is the rock, his work is perfect—a God of truth, and without iniquity. Justice and judgment are the habitations of his throne, and mercy and truth go before his face. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and his law is the truth."

The truth will profit us nothing if we suffer it not to clothe us in our right minds—it returns without accomplishing its high mission to us, if we refuse to let her lead us to the delectable mountain, from whence we can behold the pure stream of the law of Jehovah, flowing from his throne, hailed by angel voices and the music of the spheres.

In order to pursue my subject I must, for the sake of distinction, use some of the improper terms of our times. I shall, therefore, speak of *races*, when in fact there is but one race, as there was but one Adam.

By an almost common consent, the modern world seems determined to pilfer Africa of her glory. It were not enough that her children have been scattered over the globe, clothed in the garments of shame—humiliated and oppressed—but her merciless foes weary themselves in plundering the tombs of our renowned sires, and in obliterating their worthy deeds, which were inscribed by fame upon the pages of ancient history.

The three grand divisions of the earth that were known to the ancients, were colonized by the three sons of Noah. Shem was the father of the Asiatics—the Africans descended from Ham, and Japheth was the progenitor of the Europeans. These men being the children of one father, they were originally of the same complexion—for we cannot through the medium of any law of nature or reason, come to the conclusion, that one was black, another was copper-colored, and the other was white. Adam was a red man, and by what law of nature his descendants became dissimilar to him, is a problem which is yet to be clearly solved. The fact that the universal Father has varied the complexions of his children, does not detract from his mercy, or give us reason to question his wisdom.

Moses is the patriarch of sacred history. The same eminent station is occupied by Herodotus in profane history. To the chronicles of these two great men we are indebted for all the information we have in relation to the early condition of man. If they are incorrect, to what higher authority shall we appeal—and if they are true, then we may acquaint ourselves with the history of our race from that period,

"When yonder spheres sublime,
Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of time."

Ham was the first African. Egypt was settled by an immediate descendant of Ham, who, in sacred history, is called Mesraim, and in uninspired history he is known by the name of Menes. Yet in the face of this historical evidence, there are those who affirm that the ancient Egyptians were not of the pure African stock. The gigantic stature of the Phynx has the peculiar features of the children of Ham—one of the most celebrated queens of Egypt was Nitocris, an Ethiopian woman; yet these intellectual resurrectionists dig through a mountain of such evidence, and declare that these people were not negroes.

We learn from Herodotus, that the ancient Egyptians were black, and had woolly hair. These people astonished the world with their arts and sciences, in which they reveled with unbounded prodigality. They became the masters of the East, and the lords of the Hebrews. No arm less powerful than Jehovah's, could pluck the children of Abraham from their hands. The plagues were marshalled against them, and the pillars of cloud and of fire, and at last the resistless sea. "Then the horse and the rider, sank like lead in the mighty waters." But the kingdom of Ptolemy was still great. The most exalted mortal eulogium that could be spoken of Moses, was that he was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. It was from them that he gathered the materials with which he reared that grand superstructure, partaking of law, poetry, and history, which has filled the world with wonder and praise. Mournful reverses of fortune have passed over that illustrious peo-

ple. The star that arose in such matchless splendor above the eastern horizon has had its setting. But Egypt, Africa's dark browed queen, still lives. Her pyramid tombs—her sculptured columns dug from the sands to adorn modern architecture—the remnants of her once impregnable walls—the remains of her hundred gated city, rising over the wide-spread ruins, as if to guard the fame of the race that gave them existence, all proclaim what she once was.

Whatever may be the extent of prejudice against color, as it is falsely called, and is so generally practiced in this country, Solomon, the most renowned of kings, possessed none of it. Among the seven hundred wives, and the three hundred concubines, who filled his houses, the most favored queen was a beautiful sable daughter of one of the Pharaohs of Egypt. In order to take her to his bosom, he trampled upon the laws of his nation, and incurred the divine displeasure—for a Jew might not espouse any heathen or idolater who was not circumcised in heart. When he had secured her, he bowed his great intellect before her, that he might do her that homage which he paid to no other woman. Solomon was a poet, and pure love awakened the sweetest melody in his soul. To her honor and praise he composed that beautiful poem called the CANTICLES, or SOLOMON'S SONG. For her he wove that gorgeous wreath which is unsurpassed in its kind, and with his own royal hand placed it upon her dark brow. Several persons are represented in the poem, and it is composed of an interesting colloquy. The reader is introduced to "the watchmen that went about the streets," and to "the daughters of Jerusalem," and to the bride and the groom, which are the king and the beautiful Egyptian. It is not at all surprising that she who received such distinguished marks of kingly favors, should encounter the jealousy of the daughters of Jerusalem. They saw that the Egyptian woman had monopolised the heart of the son of David, and the royal poet represents his queen to say to her fairer but supplanted rivals:—

"I am black but comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar,
As the curtains of Solomon.
Look not upon me, because I am black,
Because the sun has looked upon me."

Thus she speaks of the superiority which nature had given her over the women of Jerusalem. She was handsome, and like all handsome women, she knew it.

The bride again speaks, and says to the bride-groom:—

"I have compared thee, O my love,
To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot."

How inappropriate were this allusion if it had been placed in the mouth of anyone else but an Egyptian. To give the passage any other interpretation is virtually accusing Solomon of grosser ignorance than my reverence will allow me to attribute to him.

Professor STOWE and President MAHAN, and others, agree in giving the following translation to another verse in the first chapter of the song,

"Ere I was aware
My soul was as the war-chariot
Of my noble people."

The whole poem, without doubt, is nothing more than a brilliant out-burst of Solomon's love for his bride.

Homer, the prince of epic poets, speaks of the Ethiopians, and presents them at the feast of the gods. These men of sun-burnt faces, as their name implies, he calls the excellent Ethiopians.

A distinguished scholar,* speaking of this passage in the Grecian's renowned poem, in the presence of an American pedant, the young upstart seriously inquired if the Ethiopians were black? "Most assuredly," answered the scholar. "Well," said the young republican, "had I been at that feast, and negroes had been placed at the table, I would have left it." "Had you been liv-

*Rev. Beriah Green.

ing at that time, returned the other, you would have been saved the trouble of leaving the table, for the gods would not have invited you.”

Such a man in such a banquet would have been as much out of place as an ass would be in a concert of sacred music.

The interior of Ethiopia has not been explored by modern adventurers. The antiquarian has made his way into almost every dominion where relics of former greatness have promised to reward him for his toil. But this country, as though she had concealed some precious treasure, meets the traveller on the outskirts of her dominions, with pestilence and death. Yet, in the Highlands which have been traversed, many unequivocal traces of former civilization have been discovered. Very lately, British enterprize has made some important researches in that region of Country, all of which go to prove that Homer did not misplace his regards for them, when he associated them with the Gods.

The wife of Moses was an Ethiopian woman, and when Miriam, his sister, murmured against her, the Almighty smote Miriam, and she became white. Whether the murmuring arose on account of the complexion of the great Lawgiver’s wife, or from some other cause, I will not attempt to determine. Whatever was the cause, we all see how Jehovah regarded it, how fierce was his indignation, and how terrible his punishment. He came down and stood in a cloudy pillar, and cursed the woman in whose bosom the unholy prejudice was harbored.*

Ethiopia is one of the few nations whose destiny is spoken of in prophecy. This is done in language so plain that we are not driven to dubious inferences.

It is said that “Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” It is thought by some that this divine declaration was fulfilled when Philip baptised the converted eunuch of the household of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians. In this transaction, a part of the prophecy may have been fulfilled, and only a part.

* Numbers, 12 chap. 10 v.

A vision seen by another prophet has become a matter of history. Hosea, foresaw that God would call his son out of Egypt, and when the infant Redeemer could find no shelter in the land of the Hebrews, he found an asylum in Egypt, where he remained until Herod was dead. He then returned to his native country, and in that event he fulfilled the declaration of the holy seer.

Numerous other instances might be mentioned that would indicate the ancient fame of our ancestors. A fame, which arose from every virtue, and talent, that render mortals pre-eminently great. From the conquests of love and beauty, from the prowess of their arms, and their architecture, poetry, mathematics, generosity, and piety. I will barely allude to the beautiful Cleopatra, who swayed and captivated the heart of Anthony. To Hannibal, the sworn enemy and the scourge of Rome—the mighty General who crossed the Alps to meet his foes—the Alps which had never before been crossed by an army, nor never since, if we except Napoleon, the ambitious Corsican. To Terence, Euclid, Cyprian, Origen, and Augustine.

At this time, when these representatives of our race were filling the world with amazement, the ancestors of the now proud and boasting Anglo Saxons were among the most degraded of the human family. They abode in caves under ground, either naked or covered with the skins of wild beasts. Night was made hideous by their wild shouts, and day was darkened by the smoke which arose from bloody alters, upon which they offered human sacrifice.

For a long series of years, immediately following her brilliant era, the history of Africa appears not to be animated by many stirring events. Somewhere about the year of 1511, Charles V, of Spain, procured slaves from the coast of Guinea, and sent them to Hispaniola. Bartholemew Las Casas, a Roman Catholic priest, and afterwards bishop Chioppa, came to this new world, which had just been called out of obscurity by the adventurous spirit of Christopher Columbus. He left Spain under the auspices of Charles. The Castillian Monarch had enslaved the Indi-

ans who inhabited his dominions, but soon found that they were unprofitable in such a relation. Encouraged by his Clerical confident, his evil genius, he introduced into South America a number of slaves from Africa, because one black man could do as much labor as four Indians. Las Cassas, in mercy to the aborigines, recommended to Cardinal Zimernes, to enslave the children of Africa. The Cardinal, to his honor be it said, objected to the project, but nevertheless the trade went on. The number was at first limited at four thousand, but as might be expected this numerical boundary was soon over-stepped. A trade that was found to be so lucrative, was ultimately taken up by almost every Christian nation, until that unhappy country was annually plundered of 300,000 of her children. Future generations will gaze upon the names of the guilty priest and King, in that contemptuous position where they have placed themselves. Shame will deepen the hatred of their memory, as men become enlightened and just, and clouds of infamy will thicken around them as the world moves on toward God.

In 1620, the very same year in which the Pilgrims landed on the cold and rocky shores of New England, a Dutch ship freighted with souls touched the banks of James river, where the wretched people were employed as slaves in the cultivation of that hateful weed, tobacco. Wonderful coincidence! The angel of liberty hovered over New England, and the Demon of slavery unfurled his black flag over the fields of the "sunny south."

But latterly the slave-trade has been pronounced to be piracy by most all of the civilized world. Great Britain has discarded the chattel principle throughout her dominions. In 1824 Mexico proclaimed freedom to her slaves. The Pope of Rome, and the sovereigns of Turkey, and Denmark, and other nations bow at the shrine of Liberty. But France has laid the richest offering upon the altar of freedom, that has been presented to God in these latter days. In achieving her almost bloodless revolution, she maintained an admirable degree of consistency. The same blast of the trumpet of Liberty that rang through the halls of

the Tulleries, and shattered the throne of the Bourbons, also reached the shores of her remotest colonies, and proclaimed the redemption of every slave that moved on French soil. Thus does France remember the paternal advice of La Fayette, and atone for the murder of Tousaint. Thanks be to God, the lilly is cleansed of the blood that stained it. The nations of the earth will gaze with delight upon its democratic purity, wherever it shall be seen. Whether in the grape-grown valleys where it first bloomed, or in the Isles of Bourbon, Guadaloupe, Martinique, or in Guinna.* The colored people of St. Bartholomews, who were emancipated by a decree of the King of Sweden last year, have lately sent an address to their Liberator. Hayti, by the heroism of her Oge, Tousaint La-Overture, Dessalines, Christophe, Petion, and Boyer, have driven the demon of slavery from that island, and have buried his carcass in the sea.

Briefly, and imperfectly have I noticed the former condition of the colored race. Let us turn for a moment to survey our present state. The woeful volume of our history as it now lies open to the world, is written with tears and bound in blood. As I trace it my eyes ache and my heart is filled with grief. No other people have suffered so much, and none have been more innocent. If I might apostrophize, that bleeding country I would say, O Africa! thou has bled, freely bled, at every pore! Thy sorrow has been mocked, and thy grief has not been heeded. Thy children are scattered over the whole earth, and the great nations have been enriched by them. The wild beasts of thy forests are treated with more mercy than they. The Lybian lion and the fierce tiger are caged to gratify the curiosity of men, and the keeper's hands are not laid heavily upon them. But thy children are tortured, taunted, and hurried out of life by unprecedented cruelty. Brave men formed in the divinest mould, are bartered, sold and mortgaged. Stripped of every sacred right, they are scourged if they affirm that they belong to God. Women sustaining the dear relation of mothers, are yoked with the horned cattle to till the

*The whole number of slaves in the French Colonies were almost 300,000.

soil, and their heart strings are torn to pieces by cruel separations from their children. Our sisters ever manifesting the purest kindness, whether in the wilderness of their father-land, or amid the sorrows of the middle passage, or in crowded cities, are unprotected from the lusts of tyrants. They have a regard for virtue, and they possess a sense of honor, but there is no respect paid to these jewels of noble character. Driven into unwilling concubinage, their offspring are sold by their Anglo Saxon fathers. To them the marriage institution is but a name, for their despoilers break down the hymenial alter and scatter its sacred ashes on the winds.

Our young men are brutalized in intellect, and their manly energies are chilled by the frosts of slavery. Sometimes they are called to witness the agonies of the mothers who bore them writing under the lash, and as if to fill up to overflowing the already full cup of demonism, they are sometimes compelled to apply the lash with their own hands. Hell itself cannot overmatch a deed like this,—and dark damnation shudders as it sinks into its bosom, and seeks to hide itself from the indignant eye of God.

“They till oppression’s soil where men,
 For liberty have bled,
 And the eagle wing of freedom waves,
 In mockery over head.
 The earth is filled with the triumph shouts
 Of men who have burst their chains,
 But theirs the heaviest of them all
 Still lay on their burning veins.

In the tyrants halls there are luxury,
 And wealth, and mental light,
 But the very book of the Christian law,
 Is hidden from their sight.
 In the tyrants halls there are wine, and mirth,
 And songs for the newly free,
 But their own low cabins are desolate,
 Of all but misery.

Spain, who gave the first impulse and royal sanction to the slave trade, still clings to her idolatry. It rests as a plague spot upon the faces of her people. A case lately ordered before the United States Supreme Court, by one of her subjects, and favored by President Van Buren, secured one of the most important decisions ever given in this Nation. I allude to the case of the *Armistad*, whose whole cargo of souls were emancipated on the high seas, by the heroism of the chieftain Joseph Cinque. He arose in the strength of his manhood, and slew the captain, and imprisoned the crew, as they were pursuing their course from Havanna to Matanzas. Being unacquainted with navigation, he commanded the seamen to steer towards the sun-rise, knowing that his native country was in the East. But the sky becoming cloudy, the traders directed the vessel towards the American coast, expecting to find favor and assistance from their fellow bandits and brother pirates in this country. But in this they were mistaken, for justice triumphed. When the woe-freighted bark neared our coast, and Cinque saw the star-spangled banner floating in the breeze, it was then that the hero addressed his despairing comrades, while a triumphant smile played upon his face, and said, “*Brothers, we would have conquered, but the sun was against us.*” A sentence more heroic was never uttered by an untutored savage.

It may be asked, why did he despair when he saw the flag of our country? Here is the answer, and be not surprised at it. Because he had seen it waving protectively from the masts of slavers, when freedom owned him as her child, and when he breathed her spirit on his native hills.

The slave trade is carried on briskly in the beautiful island of Cuba. A few years ago, I witnessed the landing of a cargo of slaves, fresh from the coast of Africa, in the port of Havanna, in the presence of the Governor, and under the shadow of the Moro Castle, one of the strongest fortifications of the world.

Recently, a great sacrifice has been made in that Island to the Spirit of despotism, in the death of the Patriot and Poet, Plac-

ido. Freedom mourns over his early tomb. The waves of the Atlantic, of whose vastness and sublimity he had sung, chaunted his dirge as the tyrants hid him in the grave! Placido was a mulatto, a true Poet, and of course a Patriot. His noble soul was moved with pity as he saw his fellow men in chains. Born to feel, and to act, he made a bold attempt to effect a revolution, and failing in it, he fell a martyr to his principles.

On the day previous to his death, he wrote the following lines, of which Coleridge or Montgomery would not have been ashamed. They present a blaze of poetic fire, intense and sublime:—

“O Liberty! I wait for thee,
To break this chain, and dungeon bar;
I hear thy voice calling me,
Deep in the frozen North, afar,
With voice like God’s, and vision like a star.

Long cradled in the mountain wind,
Thy mates, the eagle and the storm
Arise; and from thy brow unbind
The wreath that gives its starry form,
And smite the strength, that would thy strength deform.

Yet Liberty! thy dawning light,
Obscured by dungeon bars, shall cast
A splendor on the breaking night,
And tyrants flying thick and fast,
Shall tremble at thy gaze, and stand aghast,”

The next day they led Placido forth to execution, and from the mouths of bristling musketry a shower of lead was poured upon his quivering heart. That heart stood still,—and a truer, braver one, never beat in the breast of a mortal man!

The Brazillian Government holds three millions of the colored race in slavery. The United States have about the same number. The Spanish Colonies have one million.

But it is proper to turn the other side of the picture, and I rejoice that there is another side. Nine hundred thousand of these people are enjoying their freedom in the British West India Isles.

There are six hundred thousand free people in the United States, while in Hayti we have an independent population of nearly a million. Possessing a land of unsurpassed fertility, they have but to turn their attention manfully to Agricultural pursuits and it will shine forth the brightest Isle that slumbers in the arms of old ocean.

In regard to the enslavement of our race, this Country presents as mournful a picture as any other beneath the sun; but still it is not hopelessly enshrouded in darkness. The good institutions of the land are well adapted to the development of the mind. So far as the oppressed shall make their own way towards them, and shall escape the influence of those that are evil, so far shall they succeed in throwing off their bitter thralldom, and in wrenching the scourge from the hands of tyranny.

Slavery has done much to ruin us, and we ourselves have done some things which effect the same. Perhaps the evils of which I am about to speak arise from slavery, and are the things without which the system cannot exist. But nevertheless we must contribute largely towards their overthrow. If it is in our power to destroy these evils, and we do not, then much of our own blood will be found on us.

We are divided by party feuds, and are torn in pieces by dissensions. Some men have prostituted good talents, for the base purpose of kindling the fires of discord. Some who officiated in the temples said to be dedicated to God, are idolaters to sectarianism. And some too would draw a line of blood distinction, and would form factions upon the shallow basis of complexion. But I am glad to know that the number of this class is small, and small as it is, I pray that we may soon be able to write a cypher in its place. Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren, and we must rise or fall together. How unprofitable it is for us to spend our golden moments in long and solemn debate upon the questions whether we shall be called “*Africans*” “*Colored Americans*,” or “*Africo Americans*,” or “*Blacks*.” The question should be, my friends, *shall we arise and act like men, and cast off this terrible*

yoke? Many are too apt to follow after shams, and to neglect that which is solid. Thousands are often expended for an hours' display of utter emptiness, which ought to be laid aside to increase our wealth, and for the acquirement of knowledge, and for the promotion of education. Societies, called benevolent, frequently squander more money for the purchase of banners and badges, and in feasting, than they use in acts of charity. What are regalia and other trappings worth, if they signify nothing but sham and parade? In 1846, \$5000 were paid by the oppressed Colored people at the Temperance Celebration held in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., and yet we do not adequately support a single Newspaper in the United States.

The first of August meeting, held in Canandaigua, in 1847, cost the same class not less than \$10,000; and yet we do not find a hundred of our young men and women in our high-schools and colleges. The gorgeous pageant of the Odd Fellows in October 1847, drew from the pockets of the people, at a very moderate calculation, the sum of \$8000, while many of their offspring who ought to be drinking at the fountain of learning, are mourning by the turbid and cold waters of servile employments. The FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS can boast nothing over other fraternities in regard to unnecessary expenditures. The Masons have led off in this course of wastefulness, and a majority of the other institutions are but children of the great ORIGINAL, and they resemble their parent more or less. Let no one say that I seek the destruction of these Institutions. I desire rather to remove the unfruitful branches of the trees, that it may be ascertained whether their trunks are capable of bearing good fruit. If they can produce good, if there is life in the stock, let them remain that they may be beautified by the dresser's hands. But if the roots are corrupt, and their branches cast a deadly shade, let them be cut down, for why should they cumber the ground?

May God grant, that we may betake ourselves to greater wisdom and frugality. I know that the oppressed above all other people need holidays, and pastimes, but in no case should we bid

adieu to our common sense. Let all be careful, lest in this age of ribbon, velvet and gold lace revival, that we do not fall into fanaticism. Fanatics sometimes have strange visions, and it would be strange, "passing strange," should any considerable portion of a whole race imagine themselves in a world of ribbons, painted sticks, and vanity without measure.

We ought to have our monster meetings, but we should assemble with the same spirit, that animated the Irish people, when they were led by that giant of freedom Daniel O'Connell, which should be, to use his own words, to "agitate, and agitate, and agitate until the chains of the three million's are broken." A half penny's worth of green ribbon and a sprig of shamrock signified to the Irishman more than all the gaudy trappings of a Grand Master, or a Prince of Jerusalem. These little things represented a grand principle to the minds of the unconquerable sons of Erin. *The principles of progress in the ways of truth, and resistance to tyranny should be the bases of all our public demonstrations, and numerical representations.*

We should have likewise, days of bitter bread, and tabernacle in the wilderness, in which to remember our grief-worn brothers and sisters. They are now pleading with million tongues against those who have despoiled them. They cry from gory fields—from pestilential rice swamps—from cane breaks, and forests—from plantations of cotton and tobacco—from the dark holds of slave ships, and from countless acres where the sugar cane nods to the sighing winds. They lift up their voices from all the land over which the flag of our country floats. From the banks of our silver streams, and broad rivers, from our valleys and sloping hills, and mountain tops!

The silence that reigns in the region where the pale nations of the earth slumber, is solemn, and awful. But what think ye, when you are told that every rood of land in this Union is the grave of a murdered man, and their epitaphs are written upon the monuments of the nation's wealth. Ye destroyers of my people draw near, and read the mournful inscription; aye! read it,

until it is daguerotyped on your souls. "You have slain us all the day long—you have had no mercy." Legions of haggard ghosts stalk through the land. Behold! see, they come: Oh what myriads! Hark! hear their broken bones as they clatter together! With deep unearthly voices they cry "We come, we come! for vengeance we come! Tremble, guilty nation, for the God of Justice lives and reigns." The screaming of the eagle as he darts through lightning and storm is unheard because of these voices. The tocsin of the sabbath, and the solemn organ are mocked by them. They drown the preacher's voice, and produce discord in the sacred choirs. Sworn senators and perjured demagogues, as they officiate around the alter of Moloch in the national capitol, they hear the wailings of the victims of base born democracy, and they are ill at ease in their unexampled hypocrisy. The father of waters, may roar in his progress to the ocean—the Niagara may thunder, but these voices from the living and the dead, rise above them all.

Such, ladies and gentlemen, are the outlines of the picture of the Colored Race throughout the world. Behind us and on either side are waste places, and deserts, but before us are green spots and living springs.

The genius of slavery in this country has taken his course southward. It has passed its Rubicon, the far distant Sabine. Infatuated with its victories, it has pressed forward to the sandy shores of the Neuces, where it paused but for a moment. It has Texas and moves on beyond the Rio Del Norte.

"Six slave states added at a breath! one flourish of a pen,
And fetters are riveted on millions more of men,
How all the damned leap up, and half forget their fire,
To think men take such pains to claim the notice of God's ire."

Nor has it been satisfied when all this was done. It has laid its hands upon the nation's standard, and has urged its way through flood, and field, until that blood-stained banner waves on the halls of the Montazumas. It claims its victories on the ensanguined plains of Monterey, Cero Gordo, Chepultepec, Churubusco, and Buena Vista, and hangs out its stiffened and gory garments from

the old grey walls of Vera Cruz. These are but a part of slavery's conquests on this continent. It is among the things that are possible that these triumphs are defeats in disguise. "God taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the ungodly carries headlong." I would not despair of the triumph of freedom in the hemisphere, were Mexico to be annexed to this union. For one I would welcome my dark-browed and liberty-loving brethren to our embrace. Aye! let them come with the population of seven and a half millions. One fifth of that number are white, and they are ultra Abolitionists. Two fifths are Indians, and the other two fifths are of the black, and mixed races. I repeat it, I should not despair if they should come.

The dominions of slavery are directly between Northern and Southern freedom—between Eastern and Western Democracy. In the East the sons of New England are waking up at freedom's call, among the tombs of their fathers.

"Grey Plymouth's Rock hath yet a tongue, and Concord is not dumb."

The men of the North begin to appreciate the doctrine which has been long inculcated, that in order to be free themselves, they must emancipate the bondmen. The young lion of the West has torn the net of voluntary servitude, and gives signs of his latent strength. "The peculiar Institution" is doomed. President Polk sees this, and he spares neither blood, nor treasure to save it. Mr. John C. Calhoun is aware of it, and like some mighty Colossus, he stands astride the dark and troubled waters of his darling system, and like a frightened girl, appeals piteously to his brethren of the North and the South, to come to the rescue, and save him from a humiliating downfall. His predicament is pictured, very correctly by the gifted and devoted Bard of Liberty,
JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

"Where's now the boast, which even thy guarded tongue,
Cold, calm, and proud, in the teeth o' the senate flung,
O'er the fulfillment of thy baleful plan,
Like Satan's triumph, at the fall of man
How stood'st thou then, thy foot on Freedom planting,
And pointing to the lurid heaven afar,

Whence all could see through the south window's slanting,
 Crimson as blood, the beams of the Lone star:
 The Fates are just; they give us but our own;
 Nemesis ripens what our hands have sown.
 There is an eastern story, not unknown,
 Doubtless to thee, of one whose magic skill,
 Call'd demons up his water jars to fill;
 Deftly, and silently they did his will,
 But when the task was done kept pouring still.
 In vain with spell, and charm the wizard wrought,
 Faster and faster were the buckets brought,
 Higher, and higher rose the flood around,
 Till the fiends clapped their hands above their master drowned.

New and startling scenes are passing before us continually. No man of common sense, will declare to-day, that he will not be on the side of freedom to-morrow. All the while the Colored race, are increasing in a ratio unprecedented in the history of any oppressed people.

"The Spaniard conquered Mexico three hundred years ago. His impress is scarcely perceptible upon it. Many of the chiefs of the country are mixed blood, some of them pure Indian, while the population, as a whole, is altogether mongrel.

"But there is another race (the negro) parallel, co-relative, and inter-mixed with the Anglo-American. Include Texas, and go from the East boundary of the Louisiana purchase, to the Rio Grande, thus:

COLORED RACE,	1820.	1830.	1845.
Louisiana.	79,500	124,000	245,000
Missouri,	10,550	27,000	71,851
Arkansas,	1,677	5,000	40,000
Texas,	0,000	5,000	50,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total,	91,727	161,000	406,851

The slaves keep pace with the whites! If carried into Mexico, their masters bring a colored race, and find one there! The oppressive burdens of slavery, therefore, will keep down Anglo-American progress in that direction!"

Cincinnati Chronicle.

Who is there, after looking at these facts, will question the probability of the assumption, that this republic, and this continent, are to be the theatre in which the grand drama of our triumphant Destiny is to be enacted.

The Red men of North America are retreating from the approach of the white man. They have fallen like trees on the ground in which they first took root, and on the soil which their foliage once shaded. But the Colored race, although they have been transplanted in a foreign land, have clung to and grown with their oppressors, as the wild ivy entwines around the trees of the forest, nor can they be torn thence. At this moment when so much feigned hatred is manifested toward us, our blood is mixed with every tribe from Cape Horn to the Frozen Ocean. Skillful men have set themselves to work at analyzation, and yet in many cases they are perplexed in deciding where to draw the line between the Negro and the Anglo-Saxon. Whatever our colorless brethren say of themselves, so far do they proclaim our future position. Do they say in proud exultation,

"No pent up Utica contracts our powers,
 The whole boundless continent is ours,"

in this they bespeak our destiny.

There are those who, either from good or evil motives, plead for the utopian plan of the Colonization of a whole race to the shores of Africa. We are now colonized. We are planted here; and we cannot as a whole people, be re-colonized back to our fatherland. It is too late to make a successful attempt to separate the black and white people in the New World. They love one another too much to endure a separation. Where one is, there will the other be also. Ruth, of the Old Testament, puts the resolve of our destiny in our mouths, which we will repeat to those who would expatriate us: "Entreat me not to leave thee nor return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God. Where thou diest there will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more: if aught but death part thee and me."

This western world is destined to be filled with a mixed race. Statesmen, distinguished for their forecast, have gravely said that the blacks must either be removed, or such as I have stated will be the result. It is a stubborn fact, that it is impossible to separate the pale man and the man of color, and therefore the result which to them is so fearful, is inevitable. All this the wiser portion of the Colonizationists see, and they labor to hinder it. It matters not whether we abhor or desire such a consummation, it is now too late to change the decree of nature and circumstances. As well might we attempt to shake the Alleghanies with our hands, or to burst the rock of Gibraltar with our fists. If the colored people should all consent to leave this country, on the day of their departure there would be sore lamentations, the like of which the world has not heard since Rachel wept for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. We would insist upon taking all who have our generous and prolific blood in their veins. In such an event, the American church and state would be bereaved. The Reverend Francis L. Hawks, D. D., of the Protestant Episcopal Church, a man who is receiving the largest salary of any divine in the country, would be called upon to make the sacrifice of leaving a good living, and to share the fate of his brethren according to the flesh. The Reverend Dr. Murphy, of Herkimer, N. Y., a Presbyterian, would be compelled to leave his beloved flock; and how could they endure the loss of a shepherd so eloquent, so faithful and so kind. We should be burdened with that *renegade negro* of the United States Senate, Mr. YULEE, of Florida. We should take *one* of the wives of Senator Samuel Houston. The consort,—the beautiful Cleopatra of his Excellency, R. M. Johnson, late Democratic Vice President of this great nation,—would be the foremost in the vast company of exiles. After we all should return to tread the golden sands of AFRICA, whether we would add to the morality of our kindred across the deep waters future generations would decide. One thing I am certain of, and that is, many of the slaveholders and lynchers of the South are

not very moral now. Our cousins of the tribe of Shem are welcome to our deserters. If they are enriched by them they may be assured that we are not impoverished.

On the other continent, the destiny of the colored people will be similar to that of the people among whom they are scattered. Colorphobia is confined almost entirely to the United States and the Canadas. We speak of prejudice against color, but in fact, nothing of the kind exists. The prejudice is against the condition alone. Were not this the case the American feeling would pervade the whole earth.

Many things that were intended for evil to us, will result, I trust, in good. The tyrants have debarred us from the wealth accruing from trade and commerce. This is an evil. But may it not be hoped that we are their juniors in the art of cheating? We have among us some arrant cheats, but it is presumed that but a few will doubt that our white brothers bear off the palm in this department of human depravity. The besetting sins of the Anglo-Saxon race are, the love of gain and the love of power. In many instances, while our services could be dispensed with, we have not been permitted to join the army, and of course have not been killed in the wars. We have been driven from the sanctuaries where our oppressors worship, and it may be that we are not quite as hypocritical as their practices have made them. When the great national account shall be rendered before the tribunal of Justice, the guilt of course must be borne by those who might have had, or who have used the power of the government. There may, therefore, be some good that may come out of this evil. But no thanks to the evil doers. Their works are evil still, the good comes in spite of them.

The old doctrine of the natural inferiority of the colored race, propagated in America by Mr. Thomas Jefferson, has long since been refuted by Dr. John Mason Goode, and numerous respectable witnesses from among the slandered, both living and dead: Pushkin in Russia, Dumas in France, Toussaint in Hayti, Banaker, Theodore Sedgwick Wright, and a host in America, and a brilliant galaxy in Ancient History.

There are blessings in store for our patient, suffering race,—there is light and glory. The star of our hope is slowly and steadily rising above the horizon. As a land that has long been covered by storm and clouds, and shaken by the thunder, when the storms and clouds had passed away, and the thunder was succeeded by a calm, like that which cheered the first glad morning, and flower and shrub smiled as they looked up to God, and the mountains, plains and valleys rung with joy,—so shall this race come forth and re-occupy their station of renown.

But how shall we hasten on that period? How shall we acquit ourselves on the field where the great battle is to be fought? By following after peace and temperance, industry and frugality, and love to God, and to all men, and by resisting tyranny in the name of Eternal Justice. We must also become acquainted with the arts and sciences, and agricultural pursuits. These will elevate any people and sever any chain.

We must also cherish and maintain a national and patriotic sentiment and attachment. Some people of color say that they have no home, no country. I am not among that number. It is empty declamation. It is unwise. It is not logical—it is false. Of all the people in this wide earth, among the countless hordes of misery, there is not one so poor as to be without a home and a country. America is my home, my country, and I have no other. I love whatever of good there may be in her institutions. I hate her sins. I loathe her slavery, and I pray Heaven that ere long she may wash away her guilt in tears of repentance. I love the green-hills which my eyes first beheld in my infancy. I love every inch of soil which my feet pressed in my youth, and I mourn because the accursed shade of slavery rests upon it. I love my country's flag, and I hope that soon it will be cleansed of its stains, and be hailed by all nations as the emblem of freedom and independence.



About the Author

Henry Highland Garnet (1815–1882) was born a slave near New Market, Maryland, and escaped with his family to Pennsylvania in 1824. After two years at sea as a cabin boy, cook, and steward, he joined his family in New York City in 1826, and attended the African Free School and the Phoenix Academy for Colored Youth until 1833. He enrolled at the Noyes Academy in Canaan, New Hampshire, but was forced to leave. He graduated from the Oneida Theological Institute in Whitesboro, New York, in 1839, and moved to Troy, New York, where he married Julia Ward Williams, with whom he eventually had three children. He was pastor of the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church in Troy 1842–1848, and became an active member of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In August 1843, he delivered an address to the National Negro Convention calling for slave rebellion and active resistance, which the Convention narrowly declined to endorse. In 1848, he published *Walker's Appeal, with a Brief Sketch of His Life*, a re-issue of *Appeal, ... to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829) by David Walker (1785–1830), and also containing Garnet's own "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America," the rejected speech from the 1843 convention. Garnet subsequently lent support to various colonization schemes, involving Mexico, Liberia, and the West Indies. He made a lecture tour of Great Britain 1850–1852, and served as a missionary in Jamaica 1852–1855. During the Civil War, he was instrumental in enlisting troops for black regiments. He was pastor of the Liberty (Fifteenth) Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, 1864–1866, and became the first black minister to address the U.S. House of Representatives. He was later president of Avery College in Pittsburgh, and in 1881 was appointed U.S. Minister to Liberia, where he died within two months of taking office. (The standard biography is Joel Schor's *Henry Highland Garnet* [Westport, Conn., 1977].)

The text of Garnet's book, *Walker's Appeal, with a Brief Sketch of His Life*, is available online from Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16516/16516-h/16516-h.htm>

Garnet's 1843 "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" is available online at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/8/>

Notes

- 6.1–4 “God is ... the truth.”] Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalms 89:14, and Psalms 119:142.
- 7.8–9 “When yonder ... march of time.”] Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799).
- 9.17 Professor STOWE and President MAHAN] Calvin Ellis Stowe (1802–1886), professor of Hebrew studies at Bowdoin College and Lane Theological Seminary (and husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe); Asa Mahan (1800–1889), first president of Oberlin College.
- 9.34 Rev. Beriah Green] (1795–1874) A graduate of Middlebury College, pastor of the Congregational church at Brandon, Vermont, principal of the Oneida Institute at Whitesboro, New York, and the first secretary of the American Anti-Slavery Society.
- 11.18 Cyprian] Saint Cyprian (Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus) (d. 258) was bishop of Carthage and an important early Christian writer.
- 13.13 Oge] Vincent Ogé (1750–1791), a wealthy, Parisian-educated mulatto, instigated a revolt in French Saint-Domingue October–December 1790 that preceded the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution the next year. He was captured, tortured, and executed.
- 13.13 Dessalines] Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758–1806) was Toussaint L’Ouverture’s principal lieutenant, and, following Toussaint’s capture, the first Governor-General and later Emperor of Haiti until his assassination in 1806.
- 13.13 Christophe] Henri Christophe (1767–1820), Haitian general; President of Haiti from 1807, and King of Haiti from 1811 until his suicide in 1820.

- 13.14 Petion] Alexandre Sabès Pétion (1770–1818) was President of the southern Republic of Haiti from 1806 until his death.
- 13.14 Boyer] Jean-Pierre Boyer (1776–1850), Haitian soldier and President of Haiti (1818–1843); he was deposed and fled to France, where he died.
- 14.21–36 “They till ... misery.”] *unidentified*
- 15.35–16.1 Placido] Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (“Plácido”; 1809–1845).
- 20.27–30 “Six slave states ... God’s ire.”] From “Rouse Up, New England,” [“Words by a Yankee”] in *The Liberty Minstrel*, ed. George W. Clark (New York, 1844), pp. 70–72. Later published as “An Antislavery Poem” (*Harper’s Weekly*, 1892) by James Russell Lowell.
- 21.17 “Grey Plymouth’s ... not dumb.”] From “Rouse Up, New England,” in *The Liberty Minstrel*; also quoted by Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison in “Address of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society to the Friends of Freedom and Emancipation in the U. States,” May 20, 1844.
- 21.31–22.13 “Where’s now ... drowned.”] Whittier’s “To a Southern Statesman” (1846).
- 23.19–20 “No pent up Utica ... ours,”] Jonathan M. Sewall (1748–1808), “Epilogue” to *Cato*; with the original “you” and “yours” changed to “our” and “ours.”
- 24.18 Reverend Francis L. Hawks, D. D.] (1798–1866) Popular preacher and author of New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, Mississippi, and New Orleans; first president of Tulane University and professor at University of North Carolina. His career was dogged by financial scandals and allegations of sexual affairs.
- 24.27 Mr. YULEE, of Florida] David Levy Yulee (1810–1886),

U.S. Senator 1845–1851 and 1855–1861, was born in St. Thomas, West Indies. He was the first Jew to serve in the Senate.

- 24.29 R. M. Johnson] Richard Mentor Johnson, Democrat of Kentucky, served as Vice President under Martin Van Buren, 1837–1841.
- 25.31 Dr. John Mason Goode] John Mason Good (1764–1827), British author of *Pantologia. A New Cyclopaedia, Comprehending a Complete Series of Essays, Treatises, and Systems* (London, 1813), *The Study of Medicine* (London, 1822), and *The Book of Nature* (London, 1826).
- 25.34 Banaker] Benjamin Banneker of Maryland (1731–1806) was a mathematician, astronomer, surveyor, and almanac maker. He wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1791, challenging the latter’s views on the inferiority of blacks expressed in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
- 25.34 Theodore Sedgwick Wright] Wright (1797–1847) graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1828, and was pastor of the Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York for 20 years. He was a founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society and was active in the temperance movement and African mission endeavors.

About the Text

The text of this electronic edition is based on the original published at Troy, New York, in 1848. It was transcribed from a facsimile edition—issued on 1969 by Mnemosyne Publishing Inc., Miami, Florida—which was photo-offset from a copy in the Fisk University Library. Except as noted below, the spelling, punctuation, italics, and capitalization of the original have been preserved. Variant nineteenth-century spellings (such as “carcase” or “develope”) have been retained. Some typographical errors have been corrected and are listed below, keyed to page and line of the present edition:

<i>Page.line</i>	<i>1848 edition</i>	<i>emended to</i>
11.17	corsican	Corsican
11.29	stiring	stirring
12.10	boundry	boundary
12.10	over-stepped	over-stepped
13.9	Gaudaloupe	Guadaloupe
13.13	Tousaint, La-Overture	Tousaint La-Overture
13.15	burried	buried
13.22	apostsophize	apostrophize
14.21	ompression’s	oppression’s
16.9	Coolridge	Coleridge
19.17	<i>resistence</i>	<i>resistance</i>
19.22	dispoiled	despoiled
19.25	cane, nods	cane nods
20.36	Beuna Vista	Buena Vista
21.5	dispair	despair
21.12	dispair	despair
22.23	But there	“But there
22.23	“parallel	parallel

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