

ORATION BY WM. HOWARD DAY, M. A.

Mr. Wm. Howard Day, of New York, a young colored man, was the first speaker, and delivered an address, of which we give a curtailed report below, revised by the author.

Mr. Day delivered his address in an easy and unrestrained manner, which lent an additional interest to his subject. While there was apparent the dignity of a *man* addressing his fellow-men upon vital questions of interest, there was an entire absence of declamation for *mere* effect. We feel convinced that we shall hear more of this gentleman hereafter. He is a fine specimen of what a colored man can be made by culture and education. He commenced by expressing the natural diffidence he felt in attempting to address an audience composed, as he declared it to be, of gentlemen among the first in the list of honor and fame of America; and in this connection he paid a graceful tribute to some of the gentlemen present; the ladies also received *en passant* grateful and heartfelt acknowledgment of their devotion and earnestness in behalf of an oppressed and persecuted people, in defiance of the obloquy and scorn which had confronted but not confounded them.

He said they had met to-day, inspired by the noble sentiments they had heard enunciated in the glorious Declaration of Independence, viz: "That all men were created free and equal, and with inalienable rights common to all." They were also inspired with the glorious sentiments in that noble motto, that "Right is of no sect, truth is of no color, God is the Father of us all." This is what we are here for to-day—to recognize those principles; and (continued he) while we are here united, not to do homage to each other, but to the liberty which, in the providence of God, has been accorded to us after eighty-nine years of travel through the wilderness. We meet under new and ominous circumstances to-day. We come to the National Capital—our Capital—with

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new hopes, new prospects, new joys, in view of the future and part of the people; and yet with that joy fringed, tinged, permeated by a sorrow unlike any, nationally, we have ever known. A few weeks since all that was mortal of Abraham Lincoln was laid away to rest. And to-day, after the funeral cortege has passed, weeping thoughts march through our hearts—when the muffled drum has ceased to beat in a procession five hundred, ay, two thousand miles long, the chambers of your souls are still echoing the murmur—and though the coffin has been lowered into its place, “dust to dust,” there ever falls across our way the coffin’s shadow, and, standing in it, we come to-day to rear a monument to his blessed memory, and again to pledge our untiring resistance to the tyranny by which he fell, whether it be in the iron manacles of the slave, or in the unjust written manacles for the free.

I know not how better, in your name, I can lay my humble tribute upon his grave—I know not better how I can weave my wreath around his memory, than by dedicating to him what I wrote in England on the death of Prince Albert, the husband of England’s Queen. They were each a peer of the other—both princes here, and both, to-day, princes in the Home Eternal.

The *Times* said: “Quietly and without suffering he continued slowly to sink, so slowly that the wrists were pulseless long before the last hour had arrived, when, at a few minutes before eleven, he ceased to breathe—and all was over. An hour later, and the solemn tones of the great bell of St. Paul’s—a bell of evil omen—told all citizens how irreparable has been the loss of their beloved Queen—how great the loss to the country.”

Toll! toll the solemn bell! The air
Is heavy with the sighs of death;
The spirits of the dead are there
And bear a brother spirit where
Amid the heavenly glories rare,
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Then toll the bell! in answer to
The "Death-Bell" ringing I our ears,
Until the spirit which we knew
Shall enter through the ether blue
And don its dress for service new,
Invisible for earth in tears.

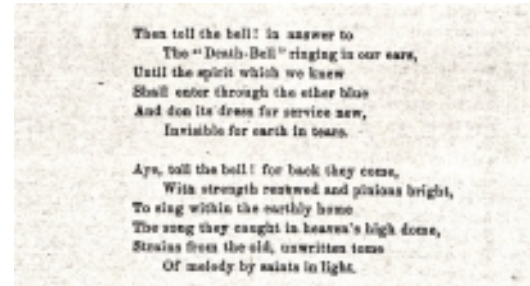
Aye, toll the bell! for back they come,
With strength renewed and pinions bright,
To sing within the earthly home
The song they caught in heaven's high dome,
Strains from the old, unwritten tome
Of melody by saints in light.

And let us listen to the SONG.
The tolling bell its notes will hush
In the world's bustle; and the wrong
Of night and day will clamor long
For life, and falsity, its gong,
Will sound, the discords, chief among—
But o'er all still the sweet song rush.

Until the dead bell's sound
Shall come again re-ringing,
And Earth's lost song be found,
And she again come singing.

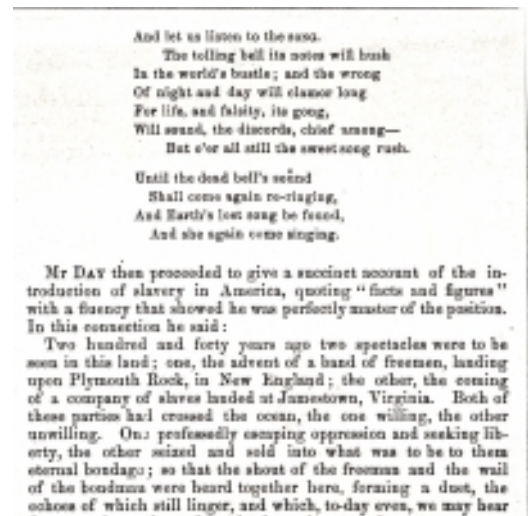
Mr. DAY then proceeded to give a succinct account of the introduction of slavery in America, quoting "facts and figures" with a fluency that showed he was perfectly master of the position. In this connection he said:

Two hundred and forty years ago two spectacles were to be seen in this land; one, the advent of a band of freemen, landing upon Plymouth Rock, in New England; the other, the coming of a company of slaves landed at Jamestown, Virginia. Both of these parties had crossed the ocean, the one willing, the other unwilling. One professedly escaping oppression and seeking liberty, the other seized and sold into what was to be to them eternal bondage; so that the shout of the freeman and the wail of the bondman were heard together here, forming a duet, the echoes of which still linger, and which, to-day even, we may hear



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from certain portions of our land, coming over the waters near us, asking, appealing, beseeching for sympathy. As the prow of the Mayflower, which bore the Pilgrim Fathers over, scraped upon the Rock of Plymouth, we heard from the deck of the vessel a shout of "Freedom to worship God," which comes to us to-day with the gathered strength of two hundred years, as the forerunner, the John the Baptist of "Freedom for Humanity." And therefore the fitness of that wail coming up from the old prison-house, freighted with miseries unutterable, and appealing to us by the humane ties linking us to each, and the golden tie binding us to the heart of God, that we listen to and aid, as we are able.

Nearly three hundred years then, slavery has been in existence upon American soil. A thing of convenience at first, it grew as convenience demanded. In the accidental whirling of this social world, servants became a necessity; these twelve slaves, thus brought, became permanent ones. Habit gave it character. It became honorable to import slaves for sale, so that from 1607, to 1776, the number, twenty, had become five hundred thousand.

It was then that there was sent forth upon the wings of the wind the Declaration of Independence, read to-day; one of the greatest documents the world has ever seen—great, with reference to the occasion which brought it forth—great, with respect to humanity, in all coming time. Not that the doctrine of Liberty or Equality has not been before proclaimed. It had been announced—it had been believed. It had been proclaimed from amidst the unapproachable darkness of Sinai, where the Deity, with his finger dipped in flame, wrote himself Anti-Slavery—"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And the sixteenth verse of the following chapter makes Him, who said—"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by

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man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man," also to say—"He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death;" thus making the right to life and the right to liberty paramount and inalienable. Passing to the New Testament Scripture, and spanning the Scripture like a rainbow, Jesus proclaimed it when he said, "Whatsoever ye would tat men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." St. Peter thundered it forth upon the ear of the haughty Jew—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;" and Paul attested the love he had for liberty, by saying—"I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds.*" And thus that voice has been going around the world as on a wave of fire, licking up the despotisms of the world; and yet, as in this land, stooping to whisper to the bleeding bond-man, Thou thyself art also a man—come upon the platform designed for thee by thy Creator.

The Declaration of Independence was not, therefore, a new enunciation. Yesterday, the *New York World* was discussing the Declaration, and attributed it, I understand, to Locke and Bacon, the English philosophers. I reply, Locke and Sydney and Bacon were defenders of the principle, but that principle lived and breathed and burned in the hearts of individuals and nations long before Locke and Sydney and Bacon were born. They were, therefore, only the voices of the men of their age, who thought. The principle was God-breathed, and was, therefore, merely God's voice, wrought into fundamental law. The same principle thrilled through the heart of many nations before us, and was by some of them pronounced even more decidedly than by us.

Mr. DAY then glanced at the struggles for the principles of freedom in the Old World, and presented an interesting epitome of the Anglo-Saxon, Italian, and Swiss history, alluding, inci-

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dentally to Martin Luther and the Reformed Church party in England, and returned to the principles of the Pilgrim Fathers, and their effects on the destiny of this country. He showed how, in a republican government, the elective franchise is a necessary outgrowth of this civil liberty.

This religious and civil liberty laid the foundations of this nation.

It was the right of each individual man to worship his God as his conscience might dictate.

It was the right of each native-born, individual man to be included in the nation's interest, except that right had been forfeited by crime.

Up to now our nation, following England's example, has been ploughing with an ox and an ass together. The shout of the freeman and the wail of the bondman here, I repeat, always been heard together, making "harsh discords." Hitherto a damning crime has run riot over the whole land. North and South alike were inoculated with its virus. It has lain like a gangrene upon the national life, until the nation, mortified, broke in twain. The hand of slavery ever moulded the Christianity of the nation, and wrote the national songs. What hand wrote the laws of the nation and marked this National District all over with scars? What hand went into the Capitol and half murdered Charles Sumner, nature's nobleman? What hand fought its way into the sick chamber and attempted the lingering life of our Secretary of State? What hand murdered the

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as President, we ever knew?

It did not grow strong all at once, but grew with the nation's growth, and then attempted the nation's life.

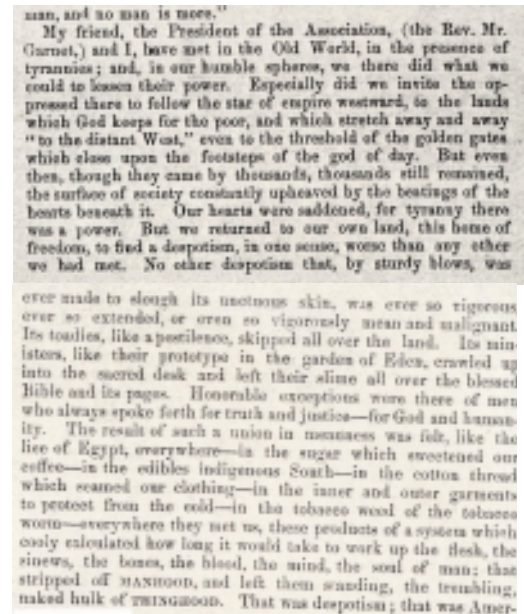
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man, and no man is more.”

My friend, the President of the Association, (the Rev. Mr. Garnet,) and I, have met in the Old World, in the presence of tyrannies; and, in our humble spheres, we there did what we could to lessen their power. Especially did we invite the oppressed there to follow the star of empire westward, to the lands which God keeps for the poor, and which stretch away and away “to the distant West,” even to the threshold of the golden gates which close upon the footsteps of the god of day. But even then, though they came by thousands, thousands still remained, the surfaces of society constantly upheaved by the beatings of the hearts beneath it. Our hearts were saddened, for tyranny there was a power. But we returned to our own land, this home of freedom, to find a despotism, in one sense, worse than any other we had met. No other despotism that, by sturdy blows, was ever made to slough its unctuous skin, was ever so vigorous, ever so extended, or even so vigorously mean and malignant. Its toadies, like a pestilence, skipped all over the land. Its ministers, like their prototype in the garden of Eden, crawled up into the sacred desk and left their slime all over the blessed Bible and its pages. Honorable exceptions were there of men who always spoke forth for truth and justice—for God and humanity. The result of such a union in meanness was felt, like the lice of Egypt, everywhere—in the sugar which sweetened our coffee—in the edibles indigenous South—in the cotton thread which seamed our clothing—in the inner and outer garments to protect from the cold—in the tobacco weed of the tobacco worm—everywhere they met us, these products of a system which coolly calculated how long it would take to work up the flesh, the sinews, the bones, the blood, the mind, the soul of man; that stripped off MANHOOD, and left them standing, the trembling naked hulk of THINGHOOD. That was despotism; that was Amer-



ican despotism.

Four years ago this power drove you to seek protection of monarchy. This power forbade you a safe resting-place anywhere within the borders of this broad land. To-day you stand erect, and the system which oppressed you has, by the providence of God and the hand of war, been sent reeling to its grave. The wave of blood, which for two hundred years has been sweeping over you and your interests has, in the providence of God, been set backward, and for four years past it has been sweeping through the hearts and homes of the nation. Out of half a million hearts and homes those bloody waves have swept the brightest jewels God ever gave to poor human beings, swept and buried them out of sight forever, until He shall come to take them up and make them His jewels. On these successive waves of blood, rising higher and higher, year by year, the colored man has been borne on and up to freedom, and must be borne onward still, to full enfranchisement.

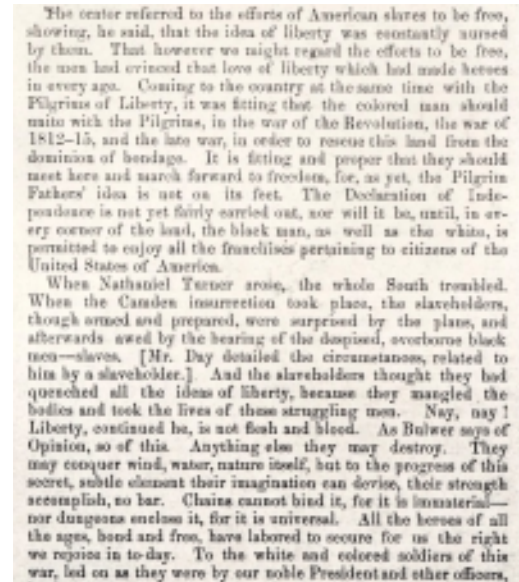
We have heard (said Mr. DAY) a great deal recently of the gallant bravery displayed by the colored man; but continued the speaker, the present time is not the first in which the prowess of the black man has been evinced. It was displayed in the Revolutionary war, in 1812 and 1815, on many memorable occasions, and he has ever been earnest and faithful to the country. My father, on the waters of Lake Champlain, mingled his blood in the mountain wave that has burst upon our coast on behalf of American liberty, and upon which our ship of state is being tossed to-day, but which, in the providence of God, I do not doubt its riding safety through. Even the slave-masters of the South were not backward in acknowledging the bravery of the "negro boys," in the war of 1812. "You know," he remarked humorously, "slavery has no eyes wherewith to recognize manhood in a slave."

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the war of 1812. "You know," he remarked humorously, "slavery has no eyes wherewith to recognize manhood in a slave."

The orator referred to the efforts of American slaves to be free, showing, he said, that the idea of liberty was constantly nursed by them. That however we might regard the efforts to be free, the men had evinced that love of liberty which had made heroes in every age. Coming to the country at the same time with the Pilgrims of Liberty, it was fitting that the colored man should unite with the Pilgrims, in the war of the Revolution, the war of 1812-15, and the late war, in order to rescue this land from the dominion of bondage. It is fitting and proper that they should meet here and march forward to freedom, for, as yet, the Pilgrim Fathers' idea is not on its feet. The Declaration of Independence is not yet fairly carried out, nor will it be, until, in every corner of the land, the black man, as well as the white, is permitted to enjoy all the franchises pertaining to citizens of the United States of America.

When Nathaniel Turner arose, the whole South trembled. When the Camden insurrection took place, the slaveholders, though armed and prepared, were surprised by the plans, and afterwards awed by the hearing of the despised, overborne black men—slaves. [Mr. Day detailed circumstances, related to him by a slaveholder.] And the slaveholders thought they had quenched all the ideas of liberty, because they mangled the bodies and took the lives of these struggling men. Nay, nay! Liberty, continued he, is not flesh and blood. As Bulwer says of Opinion, so of this. Anything else they may destroy. They may conquer wind, water, nature itself, but to the progress of this secret, subtle element their imagination can devise, their strength accomplish, no bar. Chains cannot bind it, for it is immaterial—nor dungeons enclose it, for it is universal. All the heroes of all the ages, bond and free, have labored to secure for us the right we rejoice in to-day. To the white and colored soldiers of this war, led on as they were by our noble President and other officers,



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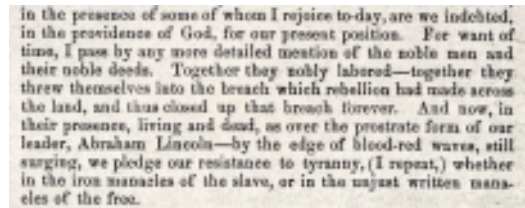
in the presence of some of whom I rejoice to-day, are we indebted, in the providence of God, for our present position. For want of time, I pass by any more detailed mention of the noble men and their noble deeds. Together they nobly labored—together they threw themselves into the breach which rebellion had made across the land, and thus closed up that breach forever. And now, in their presence, living and dead, as over the prostrate form of our leader, Abraham Lincoln—by the edge of blood-red waves, still surging, we pledge our resistance to tyranny, (I repeat, whether in the iron manacles of the slave, or in the unjust written manacles of the free.

How best can we evince our gratitude, and make good our pledge? By acquirements in knowledge. We remember the aphorism of a great writer, in the play of King Henry VI:

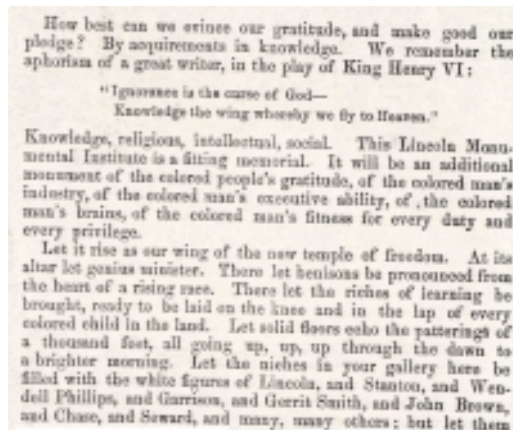
“Ignorance is the curse of God—
Knowledge the wing whereby we fly to Heaven.”

Knowledge, religious, intellectual, social. This Lincoln Monumental Institute is a fitting memorial. It will be an additional monument of the colored people's gratitude, of the colored man's industry, of the colored man's executive ability, of the colored man's brains, of the colored man's fitness for every duty and every privilege.

Let it rise as our wing of the new temple of freedom. At its altar let genius minister. There let benisons be pronounced from the heart of a rising race. There let the riches of learning be brought, ready to be laid on the knee and in the lap of every colored child in the land. Let solid floors echo the patterings of a thousand feet, all going up, up, up through the dawn to a brighter morning. Let the niches in your gallery here be filled with the white figures of Lincoln, and Stanton, and Wendell Phillips, and Garrison, and Gerrit Smith, and John Brown, and Chase, and Seward, and many, many others; but let them



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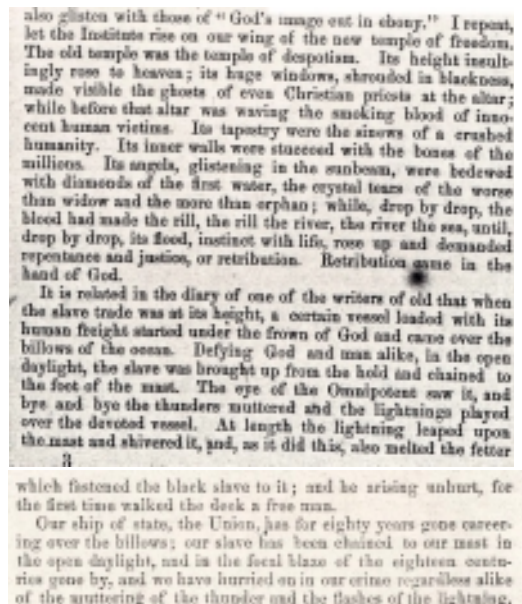
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also glisten with those of "God's image cut in ebony." I repeat, let the Institute rise on our wing of the new temple of freedom. The old temple was the temple of despotism. Its height insultingly rose to heaven; its huge windows, shrouded in blackness, made visible the ghosts of even Christian priests at the altar; while before that altar was waving the smoking blood of innocent human victims. Its tapestry were the sinews of a crushed humanity. Its inner walls were stuccoed with the bones of the millions. Its angels, glistening in the sunbeam, were bedewed with diamonds of the first water, the crystal tears of the worse than widow and them ore than orphan; while, drop by drop, the blood had made the rill, the rill the river, the river the sea, until, drop by drop, its flood, instinct with life, rose up and demanded repentance and justice, or retribution. Retribution came in the hand of God.

It is related in the diary of one of the writers of old that when the slave trade was at its height, a certain vessel loaded with its human freight started under the frown of God and came over the billows of the ocean. Defying God and man alike, in the open daylight, the slave was brought up from the hold and chained to the foot of the mast. The eye of the Omnipotent saw it, and bye and bye the thunders muttered and the lightnings played over the devoted vessel. At length the lightning leaped upon the mast and shivered it, and, as it did this, also melted the fetter which fastened the black slave to it; and he arising unhurt, for the first time walked the deck a free man.

Our ship of state, the Union, has for eighty years gone careering over the billows; our slave has been chained to our mast in the open daylight, and in the focal blaze of the eighteen centuries gone by, and we have hurried on in our crime regardless alike of the muttering of the thunder and the flashes of the lightning,



until in one devoted hour the thunderbolt was sped from the hand of God. The mast was shivered; the ship was saved; but, thank God, the slave was free. The monument we rear, therefore, to Abraham Lincoln is a monument to liberty. Here will it stand on the edge of fathomless waters, a beacon forever. Rising up against the dark sky behind, its burning light will cheer many a home now desolate; and, reflected across the dark waste around us, will be crystalized by hearts there into solid joy. Thus we shall gather in the youth, and thus, copying this Institution's effective example, we may each do duty for a race. We may not be a life-boat to go out upon the billows to save, but, in the language of my Scotch friend, Rev. Dr. Guthrie, we may each be a bell-rock tower, standing erect amid the stormy waters, where, during the day, the bell was rung, where during the night the fire was kindled, so that men are not saved from the wreck, but saved from being wrecked at all, and

“Your name and praise,
Which, in these slavish days,
So many vainly dream are soon to perish,
As in the coming age
They shine on history's page,
The proud shall envy and the good shall cherish.”

