AN ORATION
ON THE
ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE,
DELIVERED
ON THE
First Day of January, 1813,
IN THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

By GEORGE LAWRENCE.

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1813.
ORDER OF THE DAY.

1. The service began with a piece of appropriate Sacred Music, sung under the direction of Mr. William Hamilton.
3. A Hymn.
4. An Introductory Address, delivered by Mr. Peter Malachi Eagan, who also read the Law Abolishing the Slave Trade.
5. The Oration, by Mr. George Lawrence.
7. A Solemn Address to Almighty God, by the Rev. William Miller.

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

Samuel Reed, Chairman, Daniel Auldridge, John Goff,
Peter Williams, jun. Sec. William Hamilton, Nicholas Bartow,
John Marander, Robert Williams, George Collins,
William Miller, Thomas A. Francis, Francis Williams.
AN ADDRESS

By PETER MALACHIR EAGANS.

January 1st, 1813.

Citizens,

I rise to address the venerable appearance of this crowded audience, the dignity which I behold in the countenances of so many in this general assembly, the solemnity of the occasion upon which we have met together, joined to a consideration of the part I am to take in the important business of this day, fills me with an awe hitherto unknown, and heightens the sense which I have ever had of my unworthiness to fill this sacred stage.

But allure by the call of some of our respected committee with whose request it is always my greatest pleasure to comply. I almost forgot my want of ability to perform what they required; in this situation I find my only support in assuring myself that a generous people will not severely censure what they know was well intended, though its want of merit should prevent them from applauding it.

And I pray that my sincere attachment to the interest of Africa and the descendants of Africans, and my hearty detestation of every design formed against her liberty and justice, may be admitted as some apology for my appearance in this place.

I have always from my earliest youth rejoiced in the felicity of my fellow men, and have ever
considered it as the indispensable duty of every member of society to promote as far as in him lies the prosperity of every individual, but more especially of the community to which he belongs; and also as a faithful subject to the abolition of the slave trade, to use our utmost endeavours to detect, and having detected, strenuously to oppose every traitorous plot which its enemies may devise for its destruction.
Respected Audience,

We have again assembled with warm and grateful hearts, to celebrate our annual anniversary. It presents a period rendered venerable by the wise and humane fathers of our liberties, who laid the foundation of the happiness we now enjoy, and plucked from the very jaws of destruction, our devoted mother country. Gratitude then towards that veteran band of patriots, whose patriotism was crowned with justice, and shod with humanity, calls aloud. And shall we be backward in showing it? No, God forbid! the name of a Sharp, a Pitt, and a Fox, as the strong tower of our defence, cemented and made still stronger by the aid of many others, shall ever dwell with delight on our memories, and be treasured up in our hearts as the choicest gifts of heaven; for heaven gave them, and heaven again shall receive them.

In our behalf they struggled long against a host of powerful and malignant enemies, who being supplied with the wisdom of Satan, and bound by the impulse of avarice, made an almost impenetrable defence: but that great and alwise being who holds the reigns of justice and destiny of nations, using them as arrows of his divine will, they passed the brazen walls of their opponents, and brought to light the august era of this thrice blessed and ever memorable day. Animated by the reverse of our hard fortunes, my brethren, and beholding the many blessings incident to our present situations; anticipating,
the advantages necessarily arising from the good work already begun, as we verge towards the summit of our happiness, it becomes us to make public our joy, for which purpose we are convened. We now celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and a partial restoration of one of those rights most congenial to the human heart, it becomes the grand epoch of our boast; a day joyous to every bosom through whose veins our noble blood does flow, we hail it as the birth day of justice and triumph over atrocious vice; we rejoice for a nation rising from the dark and dreary gulph of desponding servitude and shining forth conspicuously as she ascends the lofty mount of arts and sciences, giving presages of future greatness; and should we not rejoice when we consider that we make a part of this nation, although we were never exposed to all the piercing blasts of adversity that they were, yet does the resplendent beams of prosperity, delate our hearts with joy. We rejoice for the abolition of the slave trade; and our joy overflows when we reflect that this heaven born plant shall bring forth the full fruits of emancipation, and divulge that bright genius so long smothered in slavery.

The subject of this day calls for our serious attention; at the recurrence of this season we rejoice, not because we have gained a victory over our enemies by the arts of war, or that we have become rich and opulent, no, but it is the epoch that has restored to us our long lost rights. It is a subject congenial with my heart, and I cannot but regret my inability to do it justice, although confident, that was my talents equal to the most eloquent and profound orator that ever graced the world. I could not fully
expound it. The task is arduous—even experience might shrink before its magnitude. The
field is very extensive, presenting to view various objects of infinite magnitude; such as past
sufferings, present mitigation, and future happiness.

All buoyed up to sigh on the sea of reflection, the first forms a melancholy spectacle; a scene
fraught with misery and horror. We behold Asia, Europe and America, claiming an author-
ity, as far distant from moral rectitude, or the laws of nature, as heaven is from hell. They
usurp the throne of justice, and she takes her flight from off the face of the earth. They com-
mence their traffic in the innocent sons and daughters of Africa. View them divide their
spoils dragged from our mother country, a country once rich in the enjoyments of liberty and
all the glory nature could afford. Nature there caused the wild desert to be more fruitful and
fragrant than the best cultivated gardens, the inven-
tions of men, ever could produce. Her inhab-
itants were happy seated in the very temples of
bliss and with nature for their guide, their em-
ployments were innocent, neither did they seek
evil, contented in the enjoyments of their na-
tive sports; they sued not for the blood of their
fellow men; they arose in the morning with
cheerfulness before their God, and bowed down
their heads at night, fully sensible of his good-
ness. But ah, my friends! the scene changes:
Alas! the rose was nipt in the bud, and too
soon did the canker worm enter the trunk of its
support. Africa! thou was once free, and en-
joyed all the blessings a land and people could.
Once held up as the ornament of the world, on
thy golden shores strayed Liberty, Peace and

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Equality; but the usurping power of accursed demagogues, brought desolation within thy borders, thy populous cities are laid waste, thy mourning millions loaded with chains, are driven from their native homes, and far and wide does the ravages of merciless power, extend like the besom of destruction, sweeping off thy inhabitants without regard to age or sex. Thus did the baseful deed of avaricious power pierce the hearts of our ancestors, separated and dashed asunder the most sacred ties of nature, and hurled them, my brethren, not only from their native country, but to enhance their misery, separated them from their dearest relatives; the aged parent from the tender child; the loving husband from the affectionate wife. We cast the eye of retrospection, and behold the field crimsoned with the blood of those slain; and the earth drinks deeply of the tears of those that yet live, but to meet a worse fate,* while the heavens reverberate with their shrieks, and nature stands amazed! Yet the scene does not end here; misery is still pouring in like a deluge; we view them hurried on board some floating dungeons, whose rulers, more like fiends, were never in the shape of men. Yes, that noble name is much degraded when they are called men. Tis here our ancestors drank the wormwood and the gall!—Tis here they even died for lack of that care, which is due to the most inferior of the brute creation!—Tis here some noble spirits fired with indignation, and disdaining to submit to savage rules, sought an asylum in the bosom of the sea!—Tis here death that grim monster, so dreaded by the na-

* Slavery
ons of the earth, at whose approach crowned thrones quake and tremble; at whose sight a countenance once flushed with the crimson
ignorance of health, turns pale, the vivid eye that ashed with cheerfulness, sinks dimly back in its sockets, not willing to meet this ghastly vis-
ge. But view the contrast: Here injured innocence leaps to meet him, and receives him as bosom friend. Yes, death is their only alter-
ative and rescue, from a set of beings, who through vicious customs, and the impulse of base, had trampled under foot, the most sac-
dred rights of their nature. They who commended and supported a trade begun in savage wars, prosecuted with unheard of barbarity, and ended perpetual exile and slavery. But to harangue on the sufferings of our ancestors I know is crutiatingly painful, yet bear with me a little, though it rends the tender heart, or forces the eye to teat, it is expedient. In reflecting on their situation, our celebration demonstrates itself, to fully sensible of ours; we need but view theirs. They were pressed down beneath the surface nature; we soar aloft as the towering eagle.

An eminence commanding a view of the world, and three fourths we behold drenched in human gore, and the cloud clarion of war is boding their total destruction; thus while dark clouds of strife and contention are en-
compassing them in, we enjoy the perpetual sunshine of peace and happiness. Then let us united, the glory of a people is union; uni-
l in the bonds of social love, they become strong and vigorous, wise and discerning; they press undauntedly forward, and are sure of success; the sturdy oak falls before them; the stubborn rock yield to their force, and as
the sun bursting forth from behind some dark cloud, they disperse the icy mountains of adversity and soar up to the meridian of prosperity. They are not tossed on the tempestuous sea of contention, but sail gently down the course of life, on the silver current of friendship. Union is the foundation of liberty, and its perfection is social love.

"This only can the bliss bestow, Immortal souls should prove; From one short word all pleasures flow, That blessed word is love.

Love shall never fail: the man of love shall be held in everlasting remembrance, his memory shall be blessed; no spices can so embalm a man, no monument can so preserve his name, as works of love. Love gives worth to all its apparent virtues, insomuch that without it, no quality of the heart, no action of the life is valuable in itself, or pleasing to God. Without love, what is courage but the boldness of a lion, or the fierceness of a tyger? What is power but merciless oppression? What is union but jealous corruption? What is justice but passion or policy? What is wisdom but craft and subtlety? Without love what is riches but a barren shore or a congealed stream? And what is man, that noble structure, but the ravenous wolf, or more subtle viper? What is devotion but mockery of God? What is any practice, how auspicious soever in itself, or beneficial to others, but the effect of pride? For says one of the ancient worthies, though I had faith that I could remove mountains, and had not love, I am nothing. Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love is the crystal fountain from whence flows all human happi-
ness; its golden mines shall never be exhaust-
ed, its silver brooks shall never run dry. Let
this then be our rallying point, for this shall
ward against animosities and contentions—
this shall bring down the blessings of heaven
upon our heads—this shall slay our enemies,
and make alive our friends—this shall cause
our society to flourish, and this shall break the
chain that still holds thousands of our brethren
in bondage.

My brethren, the land in which we live gives
us the opportunity rapidly to advance the pros-
perity of liberty. This government founded on
the principles of liberty and equality, and de-
claring them to be the free gift of God, if not
ignorant of their declaration, must enforce it;
I am confident she wills it, and strong forbodings
of it is discernible. The northern sections of
the union is fast conceding, and the southern
must comply, although so biased by interest,
that they have become callous to the voice of
reason and justice; yet as the continual dropp-
ings of water has a tendency to wear away the
hardest and most flinty substance, so likewise
shall we, abounding in good works, and causing
our examples to shine forth as the sun at noon
day, melt their callous hearts, and render si-
newless the arm of sore oppression. My breth-
ren, you who are enroled and proudly march
under the banners of the Mutual Relief, and
Wilberforce Societies, consider your important
standings as incorporated bodies, and walk wor-
thy of the name you bear, cling closely to the
paths of virtue and morality, cherish the plants
of peace and temperance; by doing this you
shall not only shine as the first stars in the firm-
ament, and do honor to your worthy patrons, but
immortalize your names. Be zealous and vigilant, be always on the alert to promote the welfare of your injured brethren; then shall providence shower down her blessings upon your heads, and crown your labors with success. It has been said by your enemies, that your minds were not calculated to receive a sufficient store of knowledge, to fit you for beneficial or social societies; but your incorporation drowned that assertion in contempt; and now let shame cover their heads, and blushes crimson their countenances. In vain they fostered a hope that our unfavorable circumstances would bear them out in their profane insinuations. But is that hope yet alive? No; or do we know where to find it? If it is to be found, it must be in the dark abysses of ignorance and folly, too little, too trifling for our notice.

There could be many reasons given, to prove that the mind of an African is not inferior to that of an European; yet to do so would be superfluous. It would be like adding hardness to the diamond, or lustre to the sun. There was a time whilst shrouded in ignorance, the African was estimated no higher than beasts of burden, and while their minds were condensed within the narrow compass of slavery, and all their genius damped by the merciless power of cruel masters; they moved in no higher sphere. Their nature was cramped in infancy, and depraved in riper years, vice was showed them for virtue, and for their labor and industry, the scourge was their only reward. Then did they seem dead to a better state, but it was because they were subject to arbitrary power; and then did their proud oppressors assert, though against their better judgment, that they
were destined by nature to no better inheritance. But their most prominent arguments are lighter than vanity, for vacuous must the reasons of that man have been, who dared to assert that genius is confined to complexion, or that nature knows difference in the immortal soul of man: No! the noble mind of a Newton could find room, and to spare, within the tenement of many an injured African.

My brethren, the time is fast approaching when the iron hand of oppression must cease to tyrannize over injured innocence, and very different are the days that we see, from those that our ancestors did; yet I know that there are thousands of our enemies who had rather see us exterminated from off the earth, than partake of the blessings that they enjoy; but their malice shall not be gratified; they will, though it blind their eyes, still see us in prosperity. Our day star is arisen, and shall perform its diurnal revolutions, until nature herself shall change; and my heart glows with the idea, and kindles with joy, as my eye catches its radiant beams dispersing the dark clouds of ignorance and superstition. The spring is come, and the autumn night at hand, when the rich fruits of liberty shall be strewn in the paths of every African, or descendant, and the olive hedge of peace encompass them in from their enemies.

Some of the most profound historians inform us, that if there is any truth fully ascertained by reason or revelation, it is this; that man is but to be happy. Then it is evident that the human being never was formed for slavery; for between no two things in existence does there exist so irreconcilable opposition, as between the human mind and slavery. Water and oil, fire
and snow, may, by the powerful arts of chymistry, be taught to forget their natural antipathies, and rush together into friendly embraces; but by no arts can human nature, even in the earliest stage of action, be taught to salute slavery as a friend—no! Take the child of three days old, confine him in some obscure cell; and at once you behold anxiety and misery fixed on his countenance, square 'his life there agreeable to your own rule, with all the tenderness that state will afford, but teach him not to crave liberty if you can. No, there is a something within him, tells him liberty is his own, and to have it is all his study; his noble mind without the help of arts and sciences, soars aloft and beholds throughout creation, to liberty all lay claim, from the almost undiscernable plant to the stately oak their liberty, commands, the brute creation through their train enjoying all the liberty they are capable of and shall man who God created free and pronounced lord of his creation be enslaved by his fellow man, heaven forbid; man was made to be happy, therefore liberty is his undoubted right.

In all ages of the world, whether we take the present or retrospective view, we behold mankind worshipping at the shrine of liberty, and willingly sacrificing their all in pursuit of that fair goddess. We behold the rational man walk undauntedly in the very jaws of death to retain his liberty; he surmounts all difficulties; wades through all dangers; he industriously climbs the rough and craggy mount, and undauntedly leaps forth from its lofty and dangerous precipice if he but beholds the most distant glimmers of liberty; so attractive, so congenial is liberty with the human heart; from the crowned mon-
arch down to the lowest wretch the world affords, all sue for this; yes, that particle of creation cannot be found that either by words or actions does not lay strong claim to this celestial good, and it is evident that all creation, both animal and vegetable, were destined to liberty, for neither can thrive or come to perfection without it, and he who called this world to light from the dark and loathsome abodes of chaos, caused liberty to be the golden pillars on which alone can happiness dwell secure.

Then Fathers, Brethren and Friends, although depressed under many grievances, yet the strong fibres of that pressure must give way, and the time is not far distant when our tree of liberty shall reach the sun, and its branches spread from pool to pool. Then let us stand firm in union, let us transmit to ages yet to come, deeds that shall bear record with time and not find their rival; let us cultivate the minds of youth; let your examples clothe with wisdom be strewn in their paths; by you let their tender minds be impressed with humane principles; let your virtues shine conspicuously before them, as lamps that shall light them to a glorious victory over their enemies, and conduct them to the haven of immortal bliss; let malice and hatred be far from your doors; let your hearts be linked in the chain that bids defiance to the intrigues of your enemies; let not the cries of the widow and the orphan pass you unnoticed; although this happy land abounds with humane institutions, yet has your individual aid, opportunities to alleviate the miseries of thousands; many are the miseries of our exiled race in this land, and dark are the clouds that shroud them in woe. O! then, let us call forth our every power,
arrayed in wisdom and ornamented with virtue, such as shall gain the applause of men and be sanctioned by God; these shall alleviate their present miseries and finally burst with the refulgent beams of liberty on their devoted heads.

And, O! thou Father of the universe and disposer of events, thou that called from a dark and formless mass this fair system of nature, and created thy sons and daughters to bask in the golden streams and rivulets contained therein; this day we have convened under thy divine auspices, its not to celebrate a political festivity, or the achievement of arms by which the blood of thousands were spilt, contaminating thy pure fields with human gore! but to commemorate a period brought to light by thy wise counsel, who stayed the hand of merciless power, and with hearts expanded with gratitude for thy providences, inundated in the sea of thy mercies we farther crave thy fostering care. O! wilt thou crush that power that still holds thousands of our brethren in bondage, and let the sea of thy wisdom wash its very dust from off the face of the earth; let LIBERTY unfurl her banners, FREEDOM and JUSTICE reign triumphant in the world, universally.