

The Rev. JOSIAH HENSON, a coloured minister, from America, then rose to second the resolution. He was received by the audience with tumultuous greetings, which having subsided, he proceeded to say that he felt very thankful for being called at a late hour to speak to the resolution, to which, however, a friend had whispered in his ear, he need not confine himself; indeed, he had leave to say “anything he had a mind to.” He therefore felt himself a free commoner in England, and he could not express how happy he felt to be present at a meeting of the Sunday-school Union—a Union for the promotion of the cause of religious education among the people. It had been his unhappy lot to have been deprived of the blessings of Sabbath-school instruction. Not that he would be understood as saying he had “escaped an education” altogether. No; he could not but remember his early instruction—his early education—and he dwelt upon its circumstances with peculiar emotion. He was educated in America, not under the blessed influence of Sabbath-school training, but in a great school of adversity, cruelty, and wrong. The book of his education had been printed in blood, the letters on his mind were engraved in crimson lines. He could not forget his early education; and he felt truly happy in having that opportunity to congratulate his friend Judge Darling, who had “stood up,” and taken so decided a stand on behalf of the coloured man, and he wanted language to express his joy when he found himself standing on her Britanic Majesty’s soil, on the platform in Exeter-hall—a free man. With reference to his actual learning, he was forty-six years of age before he conquered his A B C. But, now that he could read tolerably well, he anticipated with pleasure his walk on the Sabbath to the Sunday school, and he took pleasure in being there. Oh, the power of education! After his reverend friend had spoken of educating a stone,—and he supposed Dr. Beaumont meant to say, “Give the stone a polish,”—he went down and down, until at last he said, “Educate the black man.” “Aye,” thought he, “that means me.” Well, he had been educated, and at last he found himself upon a platform with those who loved God, and loved freedom too. He could not tell the deep emotions of his heart, when that good man, his friend (the Rev. John Burnet), turned round and took him by the hand, a stranger in a strange land. Why he felt, to use a term that might seem vulgar to some, that “his heart grew up like a great fat ox.” Then he

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wished he could make a speech. Another thing that made him feel very comfortable while sitting there, was because fresh indications of light broke in upon his soul. His mind reverted, as a telegraph, to times gone by. He was in America, as it were, a slave, chained and manacled for no crime at all, except it were a crime to have been born of a coloured woman—a circumstance over which he had no control. But he felt not his treatment the less. No; just as they would have suffered, did he suffer, had they been exposed to the same cruelty. He felt as they would have felt, had any one of them been forcibly separated from their friends, denied the privilege of education, had the powers of their intellect restrained, been deprived of their liberty, had their domestic hearth invaded, been beaten, and then shut up in a dark and gloomy dungeon. He thanked God that he saw the light once more; but he had been under the most painful inflictions, with no tender heart to pity, no gentle eye to weep, and no soothing voice to reach the ear. What, then, must have been his feelings when a cool-headed, warm-hearted, ruddy-cheeked Englishman, in Exeter-hall, stood up to grasp him by the hand, and say, “I will be your friend?” Well, then, to make a finish of it, they were engaged in a good, a glorious work! In this particular field of action, their interests were one and the same. All were bound for the same eternity, and all hearts must stand in the presence of a heart-searching God,—a judge whom no bribe could change, no temptation allure. Oh! who could face eternity with the dark clouds of human oppression hanging thick around his heart. John Randolph, of Virginia, formerly an advocate of slavery to the death, who had in his possession a number of coloured men, when the Almighty called for him, said, “I cannot go before the bar of God with these slaves,—let me be free of that crime!” Before that man died, as Judge Darling could bear witness, he clipped the bonds that confined to slavery about 300 men, and he suffered the oppressed to go free. The idea in America of British freedom was as absolute slavery compared with what it really proved itself to be. What did he see in the land of liberty, but her Sabbath-schools crowded, her Evening-schools crowded, her Ragged-schools crowded. What did he see only a few nights ago, but Lord Ashley filling the position of chairman at one of those very Ragged-school gatherings,—a full-grown man, and a

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Success to British liberty,  
And God bless Queen Victoria.

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