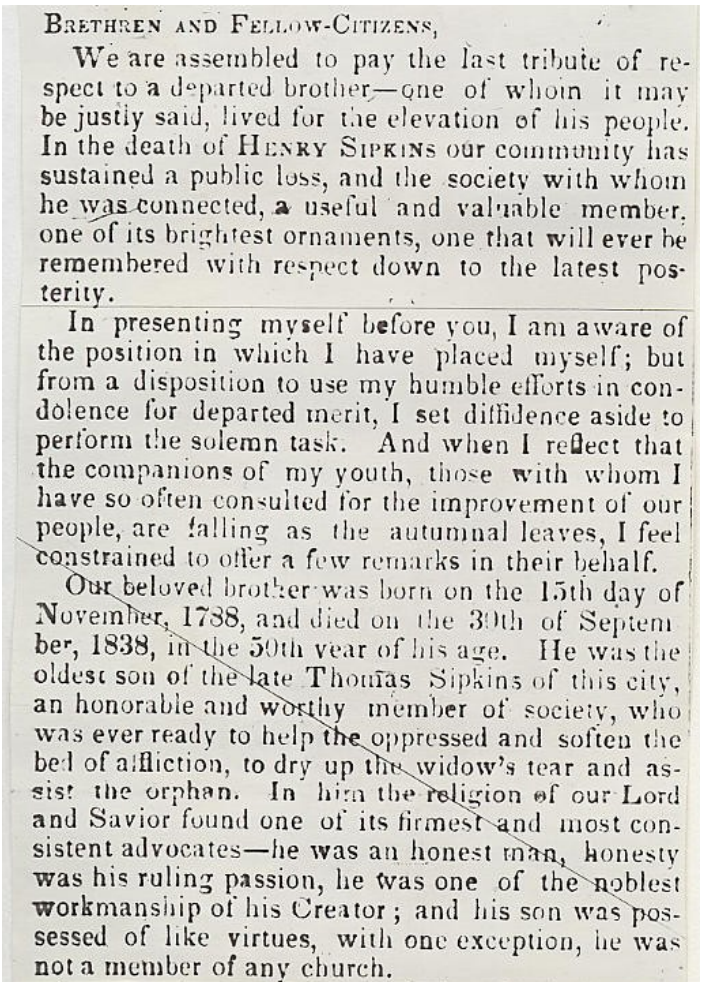
BRETHREN AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

We are assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to a departed brother – one of whom it may be justly said, lived for the elevation of his people. In the death of HENRY SIPKINS our community has sustained a public loss, and the society with whom he was connected, a useful and valuable member, one of its brightest ornaments, one that will ever be remembered with respect down to the latest posterity.

In presenting myself before you, I am aware of the position in which I have placed myself; but from a disposition to use my humble efforts in condolence for departed merit, I set diffidence aside to perform the solemn task. And when I reflect that the companions of my youth, those with whom I have so often consulted for the improvement of our people, are falling as the autumnal leaves, I feel constrained to offer a few remarks in their behalf.

Our beloved brother was born on the 15th day of November, 1788, and died on the 30th of September, 1838, in the 50th year of his age. He was the oldest son of the late Thomas Sipkins of this city, an honorable and worthy member of society, who was ever ready to help the oppressed and soften the bed of affliction, to dry up the widow's tear and assist the orphan. In him the religion of our Lord and Savior found one of its firmest and most consistent advocates – he was an honest man, honesty was his ruling passion, he was one of the noblest workmanship of his Creator; and his son was possessed of like virtues, with one exception, he was not a member of any church.



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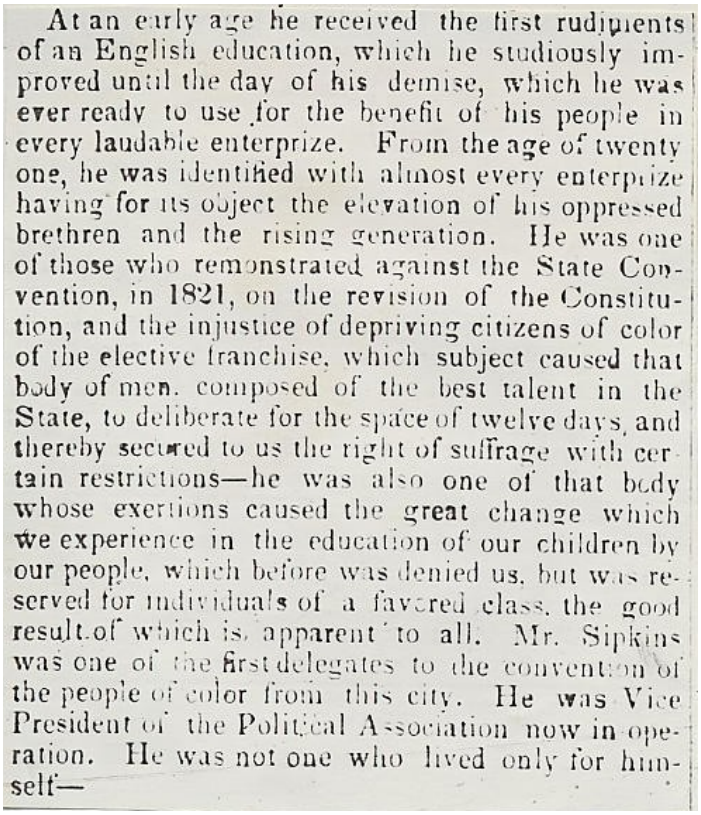
At an early age he received the first rudiments of an English education, which he studiously improved until the day of his demise, which he was ever ready to use for the benefit of his people in every laudable enterprize. From the age of twenty one, he was identified with almost every enterprize having for its object the elevation of his oppressed brethren and the rising generation. He was one of those who remonstrated against the State Convention, in 1821, on the revision of the Constitution, and the injustice of depriving citizens of color of the elective franchise, which subject caused that body of men, composed of the best talent in the State, to deliberate for the space of twelve days, and thereby secured to us the right of suffrage with certain restrictions – he was also one of that body whose exertions caused the great change which we experience in the education of our children by our people, which before was denied us, but was reserved for individuals of a favored class, the good result of which is apparent to all. Mr. Sipkins was one of the first delegates to the convention of the people of color from this city. He was Vice President of the Political Association now in operation. He was not one who lived only for himself –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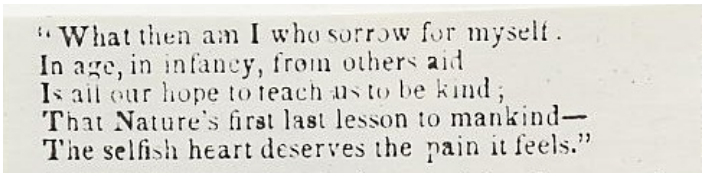
"What then am I who sorrow for myself.
In age, in infancy, from others aid
Is all our hope to teach us to be kind;
That Nature's first last lesson to mankind—
The selfish heart deserves the pain it feels."

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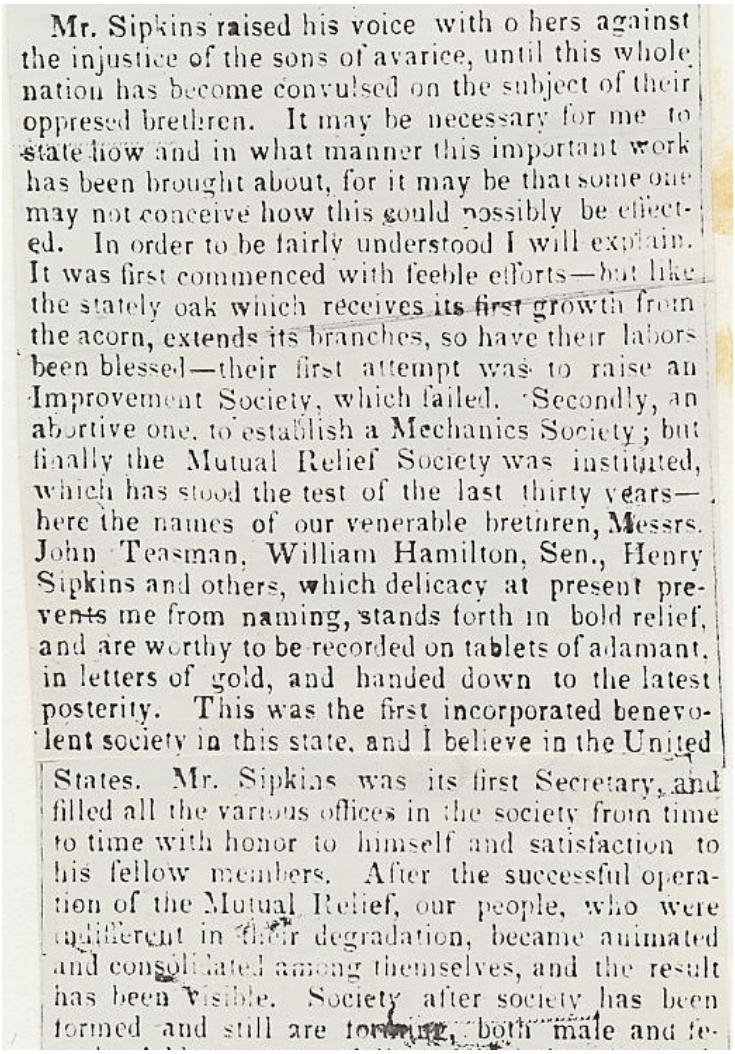
Mr. Sipkins raised his voice with others against the injustice of the sons of avarice, until this whole nation has become convulsed on the subject of their oppressed brethren. It may be necessary for me to state how and in what manner this important work has been brought about, for it may be that some one may not conceive how this could possibly be effected. In order to be fairly understood I will explain. It was first commenced with feeble efforts – but like the stately oak which receives its first growth from the acorn, extends its branches, so have their labors been blessed – their first attempt was to raise an Improvement Society, which failed. Secondly, an abortive one, to establish a Mechanics Society; but finally the Mutual Relief Society was instituted, which has stood the test of the last thirty years – here the names of our venerable brethren, Messrs. John Teasman, William Hamilton, Sen., Henry Sipkins and others, which delicacy at present prevents me from naming, stands forth in bold relief, and are worthy to be recorded on tablets of adamant, in letters of gold, and handed down to the latest posterity. This was the first incorporated benevolent society in this state, and I believe in the United States. Mr. Sipkins was its first Secretary, and Filled all the various offices in the society from time to time with honor to himself and satisfaction to His fellow members. After the successful operation of the Mutual Relief, our people, who were indifferent in their degradation, became animated and consolidated among themselves, and the result has been visible. Society after society has been formed and still are forming, both male and fe-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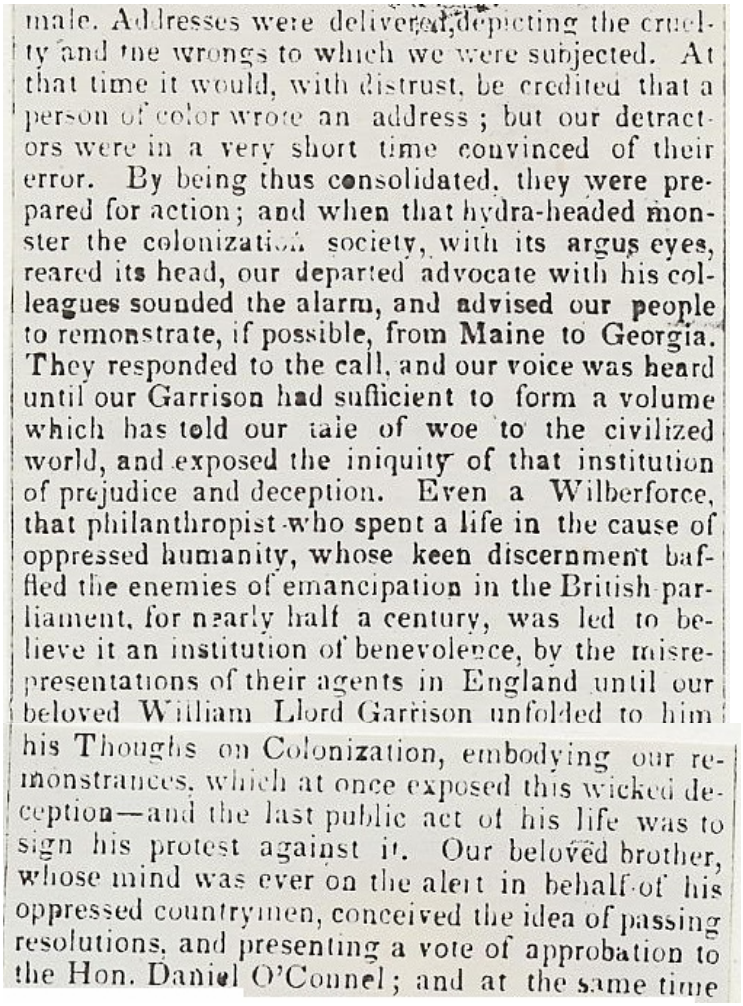
male. Addresses were delivered, depicting the cruelty and the wrongs to which we were subjected. At that time it would, with distrust, be credited that a person of color wrote an address; but our detractors were in a very short time convinced of their error. By being thus consolidated, they were prepared for action; and when that hydra-headed monster the colonization society, with its argus eyes, reared its head, our departed advocate with his colleagues sounded the alarm, and advised our people to remonstrate, it possible, from Maine to Georgia. They responded to the call, and our voice was heard until our Garrison had sufficient to form a volume which has told our tale of woe to the civilized world, and exposed the iniquity of that institution of prejudice and deception. Even a Wilberforce, that philanthropist who spent a life in the cause of oppressed humanity, whose keen discernment baffled the enemies of emancipation in the British parliament, for nearly half a century, was led to believe it an institution of benevolence, by the misrepresentations of their agents in England until our beloved William Llord Garrison unfolded to him his Thoughts on Colonization, embodying our remonstrances, which at once exposed this wicked deception – and the last public act of his life was to sign his protest against it. Our beloved brother, whose mind was ever on the alert in behalf of his oppressed countrymen, conceived the idea of passing resolutions, and presenting a vote of approbation to the Hon. Daniel O'Connel; and at the same time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"Brethren and Fellow Citizens – It is a matter of high congratulation that, through the providence of Almighty God, we have been enabled to convene, for the fourth time, as the representatives of the free people of color of eight of the States of the Union, for the purpose of devising plans for the mutual and common improvement, in this, the land of our nativity.

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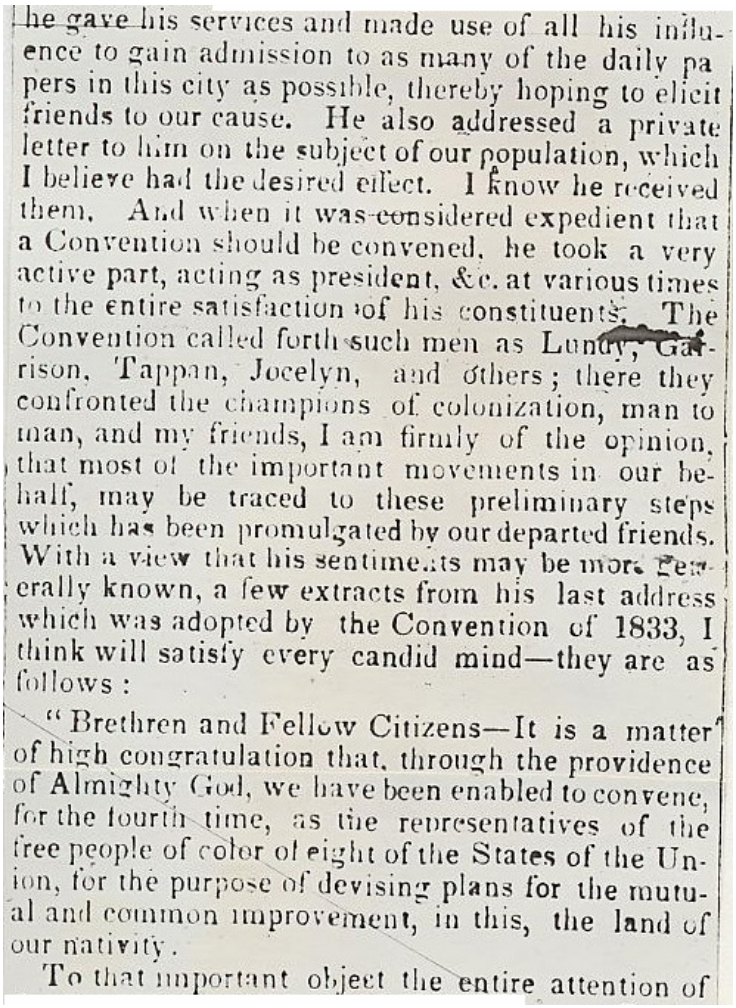
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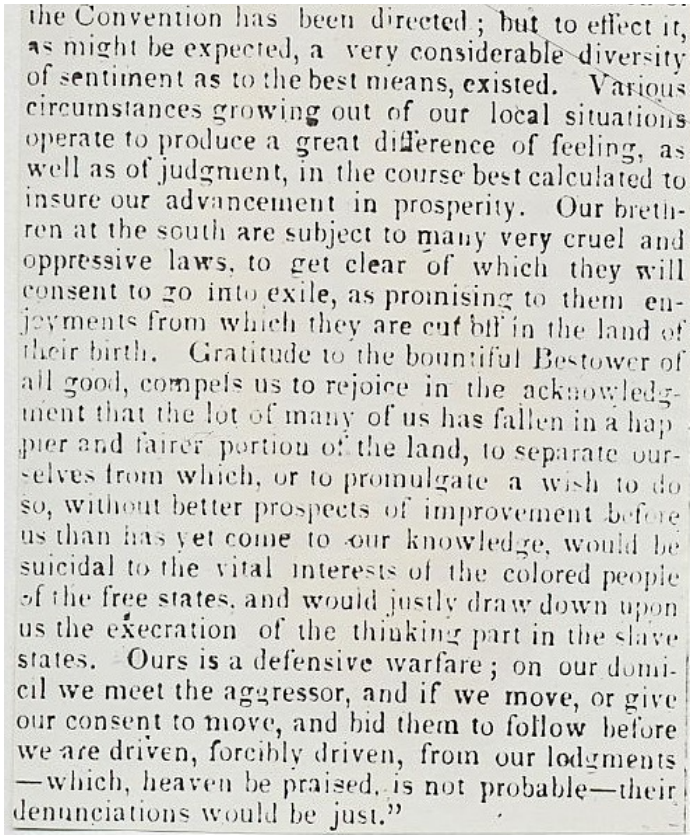
the convention has been directed; but to effect it, as might be expected, a very considerable diversity of sentiment as to the best means, existed. Various circumstances growing out of our local situations operate to produce a great difference of feeling, as well as of judgment, in the course best calculated to insure our advancement in prosperity. Our brethren at the south are subject to many very cruel and oppressive laws, to get clear of which they will consent to go into exile, as promising to them enjoyments from which they are cut off in the land of their birth. Gratitude to the bountiful Bestower of all good, compels us to rejoice in the acknowledgement that the lot of many of us has fallen in a happier and fairer portion of the land, to separate ourselves from which, or to promulgate a wish to do so, without better prospects of improvement before us than has yet come to our knowledge, would be suicidal to the vital interests of the colored people of the free states, and would justly draw down upon us the execration of the thinking part in the slave states. Ours is a defensive warfare; on our domicil we meet the aggressor, and if we move, or give our consent to move, and bid them to follow before we are driven, forcibly driven, from our lodgments – which, heaven be praised, is not probable – their denunciations would be just."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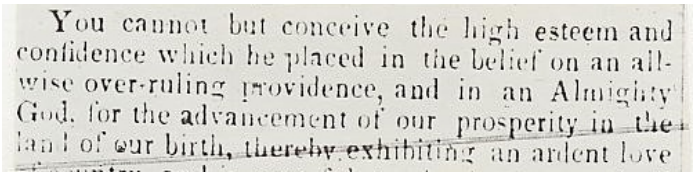
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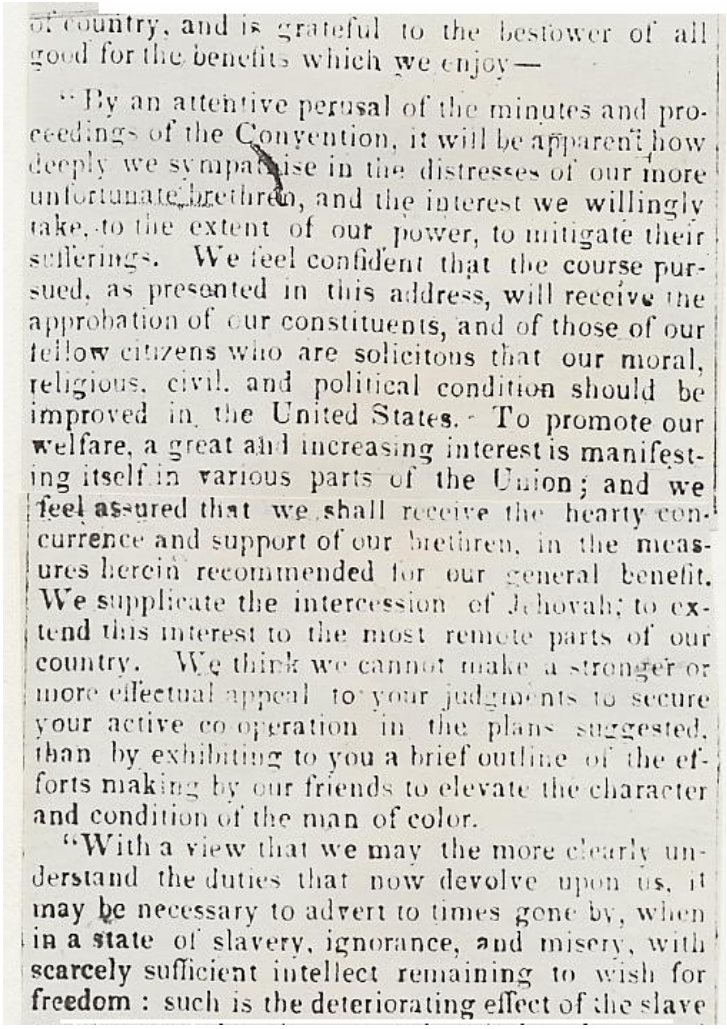
of country, and is grateful to the bestower of all good for the benefits which we enjoy –

"By an attentive perusal of the minutes and proceedings of the Convention, it will be apparent how deeply we sympathise in the distresses of our more unfortunate brethren, and the interest we willingly take, to the extent of our power, to mitigate their sufferings. We feel confident that the course pursued, as presented in this address, will receive the approbation of our constituents, and of those of our fellow citizens who are solicitous that our moral, religious, civil, and political condition should be improved in the United States. To promote our welfare, a great and increasing interest is manifesting itself in various parts of the Union; and we feel assured that we shall receive the hearty concurrence and support of our brethren, in the measures herein recommended for our general benefit. We supplicate the intercession of Jehovah; to extend this interest to the most remote parts of our country. We think we cannot make a stronger or more effectual appeal to your judgments to secure your active co-operation in the plans suggested, than by exhibiting to you a brief outline of the efforts making by our friends to elevate the character and condition of the man of color.

"With a view that we may the more clearly understand the duties that now devolve upon us, it may be necessary to advert to times gone by, when in a state of slavery, ignorance, and misery, with scarcely sufficient intellect remaining to wish for freedom: such is the deteriorating effect of the slave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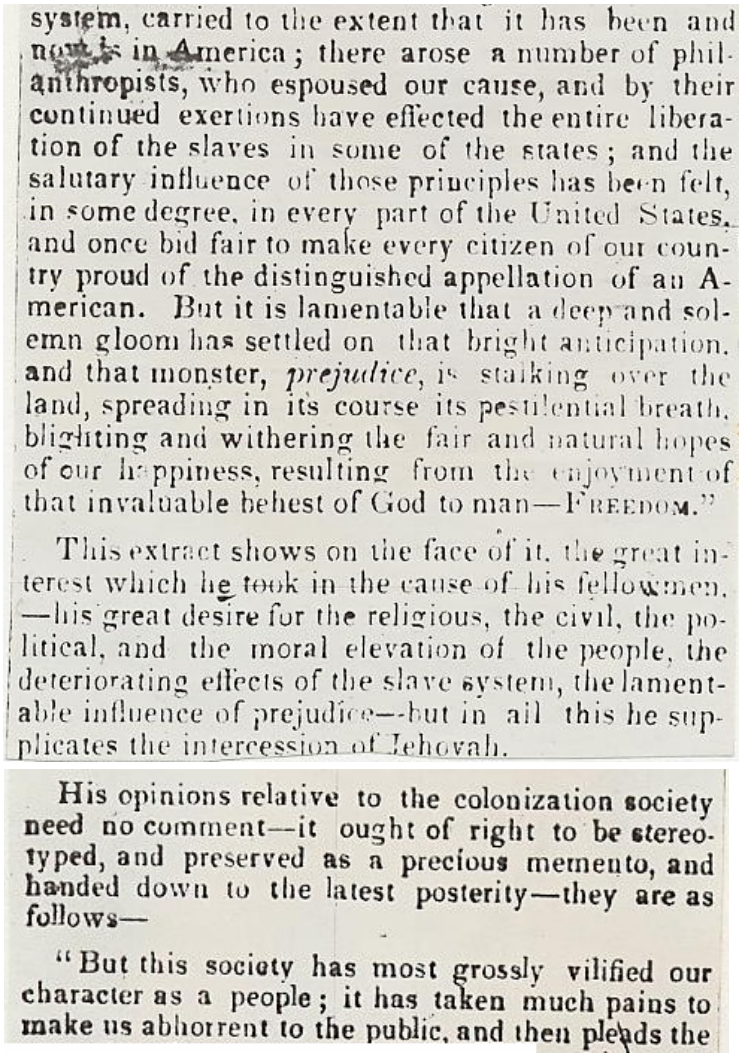
system, carried to the extent that it has been and now [is] in America; there arose a number of philanthropists, who espoused our cause, and by their continued exertions have effected the entire liberation of the slaves in some of the states; and the salutary influence of those principles has been felt, in some degree, in every part of the United States, and once bid fair to make every citizen of our country proud of the distinguished appellation of an American. But it is lamentable that a deep and solemn gloom has settled on that bright anticipation, and that monster, *prejudice*, is stalking over the land, spreading in its course its pestilential breath, blighting and withering the fair and natural hopes of our happiness, resulting from the enjoyment of that invaluable behest of God to man – FREEDOM."

This extract shows on the face of it, the great interest which he took in the cause of his fellowmen, – his great desire for the religious, the civil, the political, and the moral elevation of the people, the deteriorating effects of the slave system, the lamentable influence of prejudice – but in all this he supplicates the intercession of Jehovah.

His opinions relative to the colonization society need no comment – it ought of right to be stereotyped, and preserved as a precious memento, and handed down to the latest posterity – they are as follows –

"But this society has most grossly vilified our character as a people; it has taken much pains to make us abhorrent to the public, and then pleads the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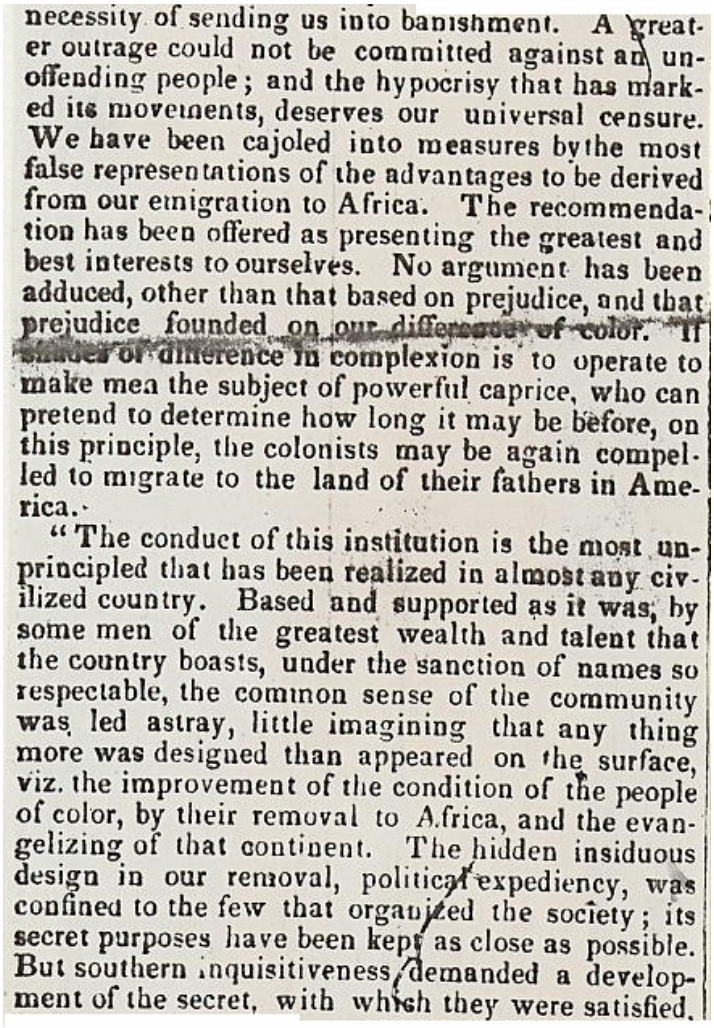
necessity of sending us into banishment. A greater outrage could not be committed against an unoffending people; and the hypocrisy that has marked its movements, deserves our universal censure. We have been cajoled into measures by the most false representations of the advantages to be derived from our emigration to Africa. The recommendation has been offered as presenting the greatest and best interests to ourselves. No argument has been adduced, other than that based on prejudice, and that prejudice founded on our difference of color. If [shades] of differences in complexion is to operate to make men the subject of powerful caprice, who can pretend to determine how long it may be before, on this principle, the colonists may be again compelled to migrate to the land of their fathers in America.

"The conduct of this institution is the most unprincipled that has been realized in almost any civilized country. Based and supported as it was, by some men of the greatest wealth and talent that the country boasts, under the sanction of names so respectable, the common sense of the community was led astray, little imagining that any thing more was designed than appeared on the surface, viz. the improvement of the condition of the people of color, by their removal to Africa, and the evangelizing of that continent. The hidden insidious design in our removal, political expediency, was confined to the few that organized the society; its secret purposes have been kept as close as possible. But southern inquisitiveness demanded a development of the secret, with which they were satisfied,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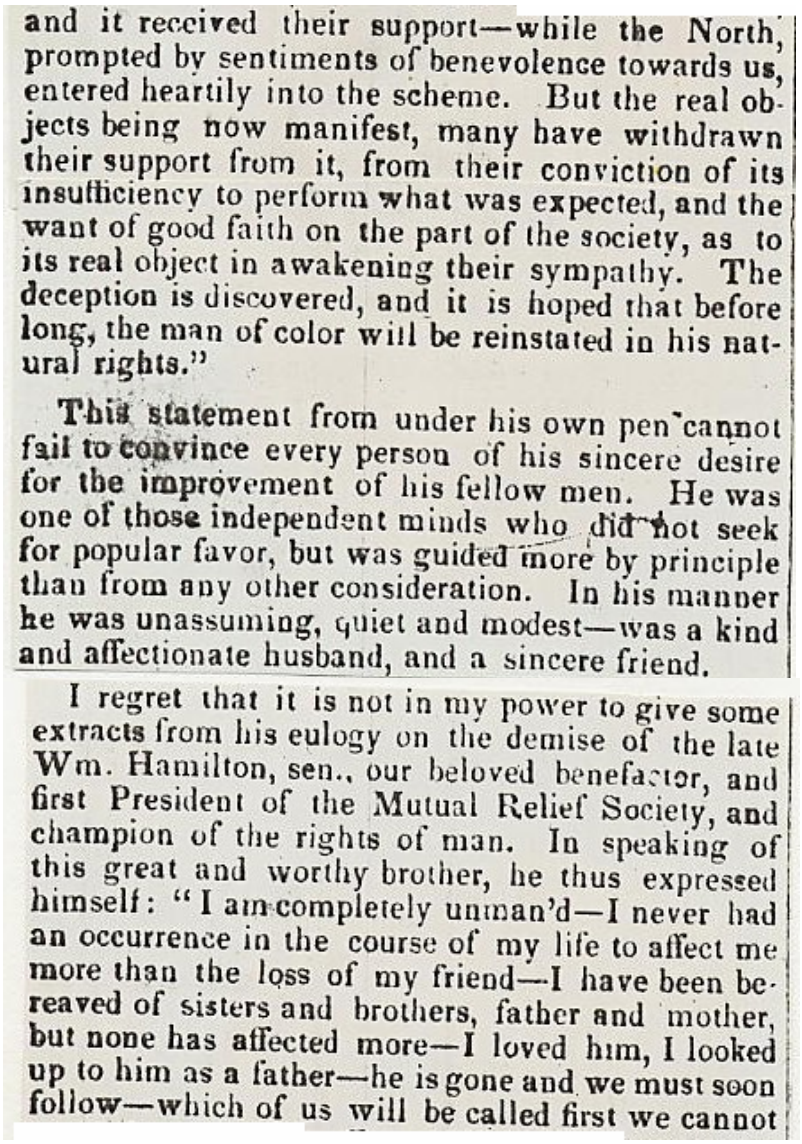
and it received their support – while the North, prompted by sentiments of benevolence towards us, entered heartily into the scheme. But the real objects being now manifest, many have withdrawn their support from it, from their conviction of its insufficiency to perform what was expected, and the want of good faith on the part of the society, as to its real object in awakening their sympathy. The deception is discovered, and it is hoped that before long, the man of color will be reinstated in his natural rights."

This statement from under his own pen cannot fail to convince every person of his sincere desire for the improvement of his fellow men. He was one of those independent minds who did not seek for popular favor, but was guided more by principle than from any other consideration. In his manner he was unassuming, quiet and modest – was a kind and affectionate husband, and a sincere friend.

I regret that it is not in my power to give some extracts from his eulogy on the demise of the late Wm. Hamilton, sen., our beloved benefactor, and first President of the Mutual Relief Society, and champion of the rights of man. In speaking of this great and worthy brother, he thus expressed himself: "I am completely unman'd – I never had an occurrence in the course of my life to affect me more than the loss of my friend – I have been bereaved of sisters and brothers, father and mother, but none has affected more – I loved him, I looked up to him as a father – he is gone and we must soon follow – which of us will be called first we cannot


and it received their support—while the North, prompted by sentiments of benevolence towards us, entered heartily into the scheme. But the real objects being now manifest, many have withdrawn their support from it, from their conviction of its insufficiency to perform what was expected, and the want of good faith on the part of the society, as to its real object in awakening their sympathy. The deception is discovered, and it is hoped that before long, the man of color will be reinstated in his natural rights."

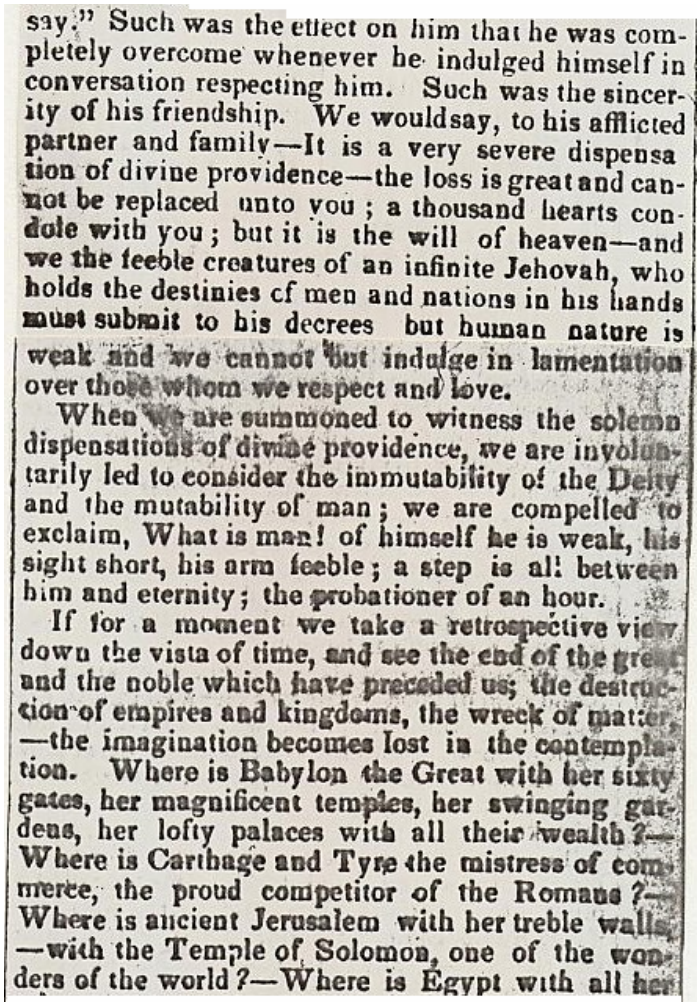
This statement from under his own pen cannot fail to convince every person of his sincere desire for the improvement of his fellow men. He was one of those independent minds who did not seek for popular favor, but was guided more by principle than from any other consideration. In his manner he was unassuming, quiet and modest—was a kind and affectionate husband, and a sincere friend.

I regret that it is not in my power to give some extracts from his eulogy on the demise of the late Wm. Hamilton, sen., our beloved benefactor, and first President of the Mutual Relief Society, and champion of the rights of man. In speaking of this great and worthy brother, he thus expressed himself: "I am completely unman'd—I never had an occurrence in the course of my life to affect me more than the loss of my friend—I have been bereaved of sisters and brothers, father and mother, but none has affected more—I loved him, I looked up to him as a father—he is gone and we must soon follow—which of us will be called first we cannot

say." Such was the effect on him that he was completely overcome whenever he indulged himself in conversation respecting him. Such was the sincerity of his friendship. We wouldsay, to his afflicted partner and family – It is a very severe dispensation of divine providence – the loss is great and cannot be replaced unto you; a thousand hearts condole with you; but it is the will of heaven – and we the feeble creatures of an infinite Jehovah, who holds the destinies of men and nations in his hands must submit to his decrees but human nature is weak and we cannot but indulge in lamentation over those whom we respect and love.

When we are summoned to witness the solemn dispensations of divine providence, we are involuntarily led to consider the immutability of the Deity and the mutability of man; we are compelled to exclaim, What is man! of himself he is weak, his sight short, his arm feeble; a step is all between him and eternity; the probationer of an hour.

If for a moment we take a retrospective view down the vista of time, and see the end of the great and the noble which have preceded us; the destructtion of empires and kingdoms, the wreck of matter, – the imagination becomes lost in the contemplation. Where is Babylon the Great with her sixty gates, her magnificent temples, her swinging gardens, her lofty palaces with all their wealth? – Where is Carthage and Tyne the mistress of commerce, the proud competitor of the Romans? – Where is ancient Jerusalem with her treble walls, – with the Temple of Solomon, one of the wonders of the world? – Where is Egypt with all her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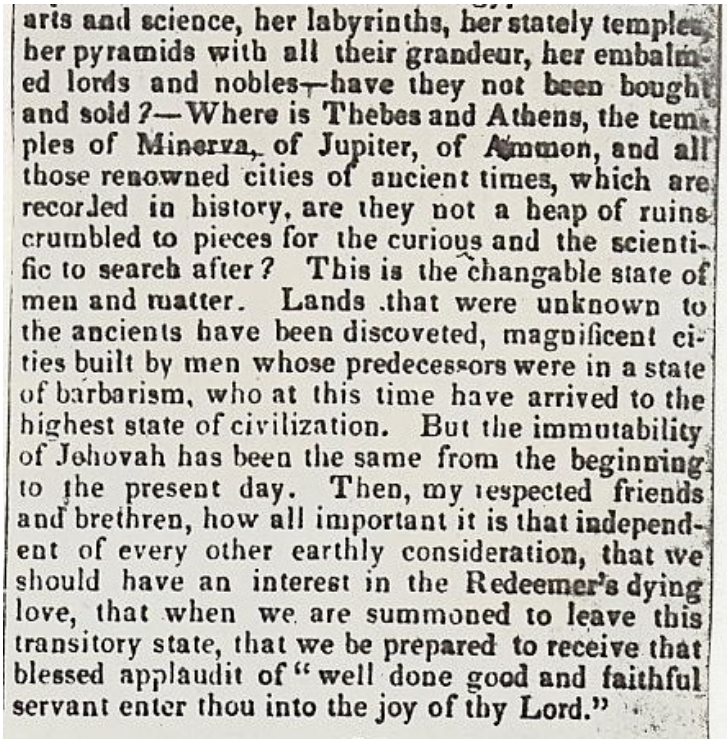
arts and science, her labyrinths, her stately temples, her pyramids with all their grandeur, her embalmed lords and nobles – have they not been bought and sold? – Where is Thebes and Athens, the temples of Minerva, of Jupiter, of Ammon, and all those renowned cities of ancient times, which are recorded in history, are they not a heap of ruins crumbled to pieces for the curious and the scientific to search after? This is the changeable state of men and matter. Lands that were unknown to the ancients have been discovered, magnificent cities built by men whose predecessors were in a state of barbarism, who at this time have arrived to the highest state of civilization. But the immutability of Jehovah has been the same from the beginning to the present day. Then, my respected friends and brethren, how all important it is that independent of every other earthly consideration, that we should have an interest in the Redeemer's dying love, that when we are summoned to leave this transitory state, that we be prepared to receive that blessed applaudit of "well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."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