

Wendell Phillips  
1862

# A POEM:

DELIVERED AUGUST 1st, 1862.

— BY —

J. MADISON BELL,

— AT THE —

GRAND FESTIVAL

TO COMMEMORATE THE

EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES

IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

— AND THE —

EMANCIPATION OF THE SLAVES

IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIAN ISLES.

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SAN FRANCISCO:

B. F. STERETT, 533 CLAY STREET.

1862.

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*Wendal Phillips Esq.*  
*With respects of the Author.*

TO  
WM. HOWARD DAY, Esq.,  
THE FOLLOWING  
POEM  
IS INSCRIBED,  
BY ONE WHO HAS LONG ADMIRER HIS TALENTS,  
AND VALUED HIS FRIENDSHIP.

ARGUMENT.

The Poet laments the discord of his Harp, and its disuse, until answering Freedom's call he again essays its harmony. He portrays the conflict, and gives thanks to God for the dawning day of Freedom. He rejoices that Columbia is free; he eulogizes the moral heroes, and describes how America is "marching on" in the footsteps of the warlike "Hero John."

The cause of this fratricidal war is next given, and the challenge of Slavery to Liberty. He then invokes the spirits of our "sleeping sires" from their "beds of dust," and bids the nation listen to their warning voices. He concludes by prophecying that a glorious peace will be secured when Liberty is inscribed upon the banners of the Union.

P R O E M .

Harp of my soul, though thou hast hung  
Suspended from the willow bough  
Till much distorted, warped and sprung,  
And discord reigns within thee now,  
Yet glad I take thee thence again,  
Responsive to the joyous call  
Which comes from isles far o'er the main,  
And from this nation's stately hall.

Thy shattered chords I strive to mend,  
That they may no preventive be.  
And all thy latent powers I'll bend  
To chant one song to Liberty.  
O, Liberty! inspiring theme,  
Thou innate boon from God to man!  
Without thee joy were but a dream,  
And life—a drear and wretched span.

But with thee, every breeze that's given  
Seems wafted from some sunny isle;  
They swell the heart with joyous leaven,  
And paint the cheek with pleasure's smile.  
Oh! heavenly boon, destined to be  
This erring nation's honored guest,  
When shall the blessings of the free  
Pervade the millions now oppressed?

## P O E M .

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Hark, hark ! what sounds are those that sweep  
Thitherward o'er the vasty deep ?  
Louder by far than aught before—  
Terrible as the thunder's roar !  
Lo ! 'tis the clash of Freedom's stars  
Rushing on to the field of Mars ;  
Rushing on with a force unknown—  
Rushing on through the torrid zone ;  
Legion's their name, and in their wake  
The heavens veil and the mountains quake,  
And streamlets, long before run dry,  
Now flood the land with crimson dye,  
While 'long their banks, o'er field and plain,  
Are thickly strewn the recent slain.

Thank God ! a glorious dawn betides  
Oppression's long and rayless night  
And one that promise well provides  
With many a hoped for ray of light—  
A light that bids far to extend,  
E'en to the deepest, darkest vales,  
And from visual orbits rend  
All vile accumulated scales,

For Liberty, though long enthralled,  
 Is rending now each servile band,  
 And will, ere long, become installed  
 Proud monarch of this glorious land ;  
 The tiny cloud, the promise star,  
 Are now above the horizon—  
 Behold them, through the ranks of war,  
 In graceful triumph marching on.

Unfurl your banners to the breeze—  
 Let Freedom's tocsin sound amain !  
 Until the islands of the seas  
 Re-echo with the glad refrain :  
 Columbia's free ! Columbia's free !  
 Her teeming streets, her vine clad groves,  
 Are sacred now to Liberty,  
 And God, whom every right approves.

Thank God, the capital is free ;  
 The slaver's pen, the auction block,  
 The gory lash of cruelty  
 No more this nation's pride shall mock ;  
 No more within those ten miles square  
 Shall men be bought and women sold,  
 Or infants sable-hued and fair,  
 Exchanged again for paltry gold.

To-day the capital is free !  
 And free those halls where Adams stood  
 And plead for man's humanity,  
 And for a common brotherhood ;  
 Where Sumner stood, with massive frame,  
 Whose eloquent philosophy  
 Has clustered round his deathless name,  
 Bright laurels for eternity ;

Where Wilson, Lovejoy, Wade and Hale,  
 And other lights of equal power,  
 Have stood, like warriors clad in mail,  
 Before the giant of this hour,  
 Co-workers in a common cause,  
 Laboring for their country's weal  
 By just enactments, righteous laws,  
 And burning, eloquent appeal ;

To whom we owe, and gladly bring,  
 The grateful tributes of our hearts.  
 And while we live to muse and sing,  
 These in our songs, shall claim their parts.  
 To day America's air doth seem  
 Much purer than in days agoe,  
 And now her mighty heart, I deem,  
 Has lighter grown by marching on !

Marching on ! through blood and strife,  
 Marching on ! through wasted life,  
 Marching on ! to the glorious day  
 When the last foul brand is swept away.  
 Marching on ! o'er the graveless dead,  
 Marching on ! through streamlets red—  
 Red with the vain hearts ebbing tide  
 Of rebels slain in their vaunted pride.

Marching on ! with a foot as firm  
 As that which careless treads the worm,  
 With sword unsheathed and power to wield,  
 And a dauntless heart that will not yield.  
 Thus Liberty goes marching on,  
 Step for step, with the "hero John !"  
 In whom oppression basely slew,  
 The bravest son e'er freedom knew.

He fell—but Freedom set her price,  
 Counting his silver threads o'er thrice ;  
 She pledged to each and every one  
 A heartless tyrant sire or son,  
 But while her lenient wrath delayed,  
 Still fiercer grew oppression's raid,  
 And when denied the Chair of State,  
 He boldly donned the guise of hate.

And forthwith armed his minions all,  
 With rifle, cannon, bomb and ball,  
 And in the frenzy of his ire,  
 On Sumpter rained a storm of fire.  
 Thus slavery threw the gauntlet down,  
 And stripped it bare of every guise,  
 Then rent a star from Freedom's crown  
 And closed the door of compromise.

Though Liberty indignant grew,  
 Yet with an all forbearing hand,  
 She strove to tame the ranting shrew,  
 And save the glory of her land.  
 But no ! a nation's cup of guilt  
 Was now preparing to run o'er—  
 The sheathless sword, from point to hilt,  
 Must revel in the purple gore.

From warnings oft they'd nothing learned,  
 In sin more sinful still had grown,  
 'Till Heaven's displeasure they have earned,  
 And lo ! their blood must now atone.  
 Warned by all their sleeping sires,  
 Whose lives were pledged 'gainst tyranny,  
 Who taught beside their homestead fires  
 The dread results of slavery,



Who drew from reason living facts,  
 Based on the ever present past,  
 To prove that sure destruction tracks  
 Oppression's train, however vast,  
 And floating down the lapse of years,  
 Their voice of warning calls to us,  
 In tones expressive of their fears—  
 Fears for their country's future—thus :

“ We find within the Book of Fate  
 This page of small uncertainty ;  
 At any risk, however great,  
 Ere long the bondmen will be free :  
 For when the measure of their grief  
 Will not contain another tear,  
 And bitter groanings call relief,  
 Then surely God will interfere.

“ Beware, lest what ye deal to those  
 At length upon yourselves recoil—  
 The arm of right will interpose,  
 And then the spoiled may reap the spoil.  
 For wrong doth execute with wrong,  
 And surely will he execute,  
 Though retributions tarry long—  
 Yet fail they never in their fruit.

‘ When we the future contemplate,  
 And then reflect that God is just,  
 We tremble for our country's fate.”  
 Thus speak they from their beds of dust.  
 Nor could they, even had the cloud  
 Which veils the future from our view  
 Been quite removed, and they allowed  
 To range beyond, spoke aught more true.

And if the dead, the noble dead  
 Keep watch above their former state,  
 What spirit tears must these have shed  
 O'er scenes enacted here of late?  
 Think you that shriek, and dying groan  
 Arising from the gory sward,  
 Could sweep athwart their spirit zone  
 And stir no sympathetic chord?

But wherefore this unmeaning strife,  
 And wherefore all this waste of life?  
 The richest blood of northern veins  
 Is pouring out like heaven's rains;  
 And still their braves are rallying round  
 The stripes and stars, at the bugle sound;  
 But still we press the question why,  
 Are all these brave ones called to die?

Why is the bristling bayonet  
 Upon the death charged rifle set?  
 Why does the deafening cannon's roar,  
 Reverberate from shore to shore?  
 And why, the question still is pressed,  
 Why is the nation sore distressed?

America! America!

Thine own undoing thou hast wrought,  
 For all thy wrongs to Africa,  
 This cup has fallen to thy lot,  
 Whose dregs of bitterness shall last,  
 'Till thou acknowledge God in man;  
 'Till thou undo thine iron grasp,  
 And free thy brother and his clan.

'Till thou restore again the pledge,  
 The garment, and the golden wedge ;  
 'Till Achin, and his latest kin,  
 Without the camp shall meet their sin.  
 'Till then, this fratricidal war,  
 Which all so justly should abhor,  
 Will neither change its wasting mood,  
 Nor with a shallow truce conclude.

No ! no ! there ne'er will come a peace,  
 Nor will this war of brothers cease,  
 While on Columbia's fair domain,  
 A single bondsman clanks his chain.  
 For God, who works through fire and sword,  
 And through the sprit of his word,  
 Has witnessed all their bitter grief,  
 And now has come to their relief.

To hasten freedom's glorious time,  
 And save in treasure and in life,  
 Count Hunter's policy no crime ;  
 Arm each and all to end the strife.  
 Upon your rallying banners write,  
 The magic words of liberty—  
 And thousands, panting for the fight,  
 Will press to war and victory.

Then will the northern loyal blacks,  
 Who anxious are to join the fray,  
 Soon buckle on their haversacks,  
 And shoulder arms, and hie away.  
 And then the war which bids to last  
 Through years to come, will soon be past ;  
 And rolling years shall but increase  
 In permanence, our glorious peace.

For the land shall bloom when the foe is slain,  
And peace long exiled shall return again ;  
And the door of Janus again shall close,  
And the crimson'd sword in its sheath repose ;  
And the galling chain, and yoke of the slave,  
Shall pollute no more the home of the brave.  
'Till then let us pray—'till then let us trust—  
Ever in God, who is faithful and just.



