

Remarks by Henry Clinton.

I am not going to wear your patience, for all the good things, I think, have been said. I am proud and not ashamed to say, tonight, that I was a slave. Got free the second day after the war. I was born at Harper's Ferry, where John Brown made the attack, and where the first gun for the freedom of the slave was fired. My master went to Harper's Ferry to help kill old John Brown. I have heard lots of good things said by the slaves about their masters, but I want to tell you that education does not do it all, and that we sometimes have among us much better than those of good education. I know how to conduct myself, and by the help of God, will. You who do not know anything about it, do not sympathize, but I want to say to you young people that it would be a terrible thing for you to see your mother who brought you into the world, her feet and her hands tied; I cannot tell you like I want to. I could have shown you how they whip the ladies and how they whip the men and I tell you I have something that any of you never saw, and just look at my back and see the lashes that were put on with the rod, and you would know that I was a slave. And when they whip little children where I came from, they had a great high post and tied their hands together and would draw them up until their toes would just touch the ground, and whip them so that the blood trickled to the ground. Slavery, yes Brother Lewis said it was the most damnable thing on God's earth.

I struck my master while the war was going on. Mother was getting wood to get the meals with, and she was not getting it fast enough, and when she was not looking, he struck her again and again. I want to say to you that I have a warm place in my heart for John Brown and I have a warm place in my heart for all good Yankee people.

I am sorry that I cannot read, because if I could, I would lead some of these young men who have not the courage to come and help us who cannot help ourselves. I cannot read, could not read my own name if it was put up in front of me, but I can tell you, it is nothing to laugh at. You who were born with books in your mouth, what are you? Some of you hang around pool rooms and other damnable homes. I want to tell you that I did not come prepared tonight, and I am sorry that I did not know it in time and I would have brought the whipping where my mother and cousins were whipped until blisters came through and we negroes stood around waiting until our turn came. I have not time to tell you of my hoe. Colored women were not allowed to go out, and if caught, they were put in chains and made to wear them around. This was in Harper's Ferry where I was born. I have seen men lashed until you could not put your hands on them and their garments were fastened to them and the only way they could get them off was to soak them in hot water.