Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: —I occupied considerable attention this morning, and I do not feel called upon to take up much of the time this evening. There are other gentlemen here from whom I desire to hear, and to whom, I doubt not, you wish to listen. This is a meeting to discuss the best method of abolishing slavery, and each speaker is expected to present what he regards as the best way of prosecuting the anti-slavery movement. From my heart of hearts I endorse the sentiment expressed by Mr. Phillips, of approval of all methods of proceeding against slavery, politics, religion, peace, war, Bible, Constitution, disunion, Union—[laughter]—every possible way known in opposition to slavery is my way. But the moral and social means of opposing slavery have had a greater prominence, during the last twenty five years, than the way indicated by the celebration of this day—I mean the John Brown way. That is a recent way of opposing slavery; and I think, since it is in consequence of this peculiar mode of advocating the abolition of slavery that we have had a mob in Boston today, it may be well for me to occupy the few moments I have in advocating John Brown's way of accomplishing our object. [Applause]

Sir, we have seen the number of slaves increase from half a million to four millions.—We have seen, for the last sixty years, more or less of resistance to slavery in the U.S. As early as the beginning of the U.S. Government, there were abolition societies in the land. There were abolition societies in Virginia, abolition in Maryland, abolition societies in South Carolina, abolition societies in Pennsylvania. These societies appealed to the sense of justice, appealed to humanity, in behalf of the slave. They appealed to the magnanimity of the slaveholders and the nation; they appealed to the Christianity of the South and of the nation, in behalf of the slave. Pictures of slavery were presented.—The ten thousand enormities daily occurring in the Southern States were held up—men sold on the auctionblock—women scourged with a heavy lash—men tied to the stake and deliberately burned, the blood gushing from their nose and eyes, asking rather to be shot than to be murdered by such slow torture. The facts of these charges have been flung before the public by ten thousand eloquent lips, and by more than ten thousand eloquent pens.—The humanity, the common human nature of the country has been again and again appealed to. Four millions have bowed before this nation, and with uplifted hands to Heaven and to you, have asked, in the name of God, and in the name of humanity, to break our chains! To this hour, however, the nation is dumb and indifferent to these cries for deliverance, coming up from the South; and instead of the slaveholders becoming softened, becoming more disposed to listen to the claims of justice and humanity—instead of being more and more disposed to listen to the suggestions of reason, they have become madder and madder, and with every attempt to rescue the bondman from the clutch of his enslaver, his grip has become tighter and tighter, his conscience more and more callous. He has become harder and harder, with every appeal made to his sense of justice, with every appeal made to his humanity, until at length he has come even to confront the world with the pretension that to rob a man of his liberty, to pocket his wages, or to pocket the fruits of his labor without giving him compensation for his work, is not only right according to the law of nature and the laws of the land, but that it is right and just in sight of the living God. Doctors of Divinity—the Stuarts and the Lords, the Springs, the Blagdens, the Adamses, and ten thousand others all over the country—have come out in open defense of the slave system. Not only is this the case, but the very submission of the slave to his chains is held as an
evidence of his fitness to be a slave; it is regarded as one of the strongest proofs of the divinity of slavery, that the Negro tamely submits to his fetters. His very nonresistance—what would be here regarded a Christian virtue—is quoted in proof of his cowardice, and his unwillingness to suffer and to sacrifice for his liberty.

Now what remains? What remains? Sir, it is possible for men to trample on justice and liberty so long as to become entirely oblivious of the principles of justice and liberty. It is possible for men so far to transgress the laws of justice as to cease to have any sense of justice. What is to be done in that case?—You meet a man on the sidewalk, in the morning, and you give him the way. He thanks you for it. You meet him again, and you give him the way, and he may thank you for it, but with a little less emphasis than at first. Meet him again, and give him the way, and he almost forgets to thank you for it. Meet him again, and give him the way, and he comes to think that you are conscious either of your inferiority or of his superiority; and he begins to claim the inside of the walk as his right.—This is human nature; this is the nature of the slaveholders. Now, something must be done to make these slaveholders feel the injustice of their course. We must, as John Brown, Jr.—thank God that he lives and is with us to-night! [applause]—we must, as John Brown, Jr., has taught us this evening, reach the slaveholder’s conscience through his fear of personal danger. We must make him feel that there is death in the air about him, that there is death in the pot before him, that there is death all around him. We must do this in some way. It can be done. When you have a good horse, a kind and gentle horse, a horse that your wife can drive, you are disposed to keep him—you wouldn’t take any money for that horse. But when you have one that at the first pull of the reins takes the bit in his teeth, kicks up behind, and knocks off the dasher-board, you generally want to get rid of that horse. [Laughter.]—The Negroes of the South must do this; they must make these slaveholders feel that there is something uncomfortable about slavery—must make them feel that it is not so pleasant, after all, to go to bed with bowie-knives, and revolvers, and pistols, as they must. This can be done, and will be done—[cheers]—yes, I say, will be done. Let not, however, these suggestions of mine be construed into the slightest disparagement of the various other efforts, political and moral.

I believe in agitation; and it was largely this belief which brought me five hundred miles from my home to attend this meeting. I am sorry—not for the part I humbly took in the meeting this morning—but I am sorry that Mr. Phillips was not there to look that Fay in the face. [“Hear!”] I believe that he, and a few Abolitionists like him in the city of Boston, well-known, honorable men, esteemed among their fellow-citizens—had they been there to help us take the initiatory steps in the organization of that meeting, we might, perhaps, have been broken up, but it would have been a greater struggle, certainly, than that which it cost to break up the meeting this morning. [Applause.]

I say, sir, that I want the slaveholders to be made uncomfortable. Every slave that escapes helps to add to their discomfort. I rejoice in every uprising at the South. Although the men may be shot down, they may be butchered upon the spot, the blow tells, notwithstanding, and cannot but tell. Slaveholders sleep more uneasily than they used to. They are more careful to know that the doors are locked than they formerly were. They are more careful to know that their bowie-knives are sharp; they are more careful to know that their pistols are loaded. This element will play its part in the abolition of slavery. I know that all hope of a general insurrection is vain. We do not need a general insurrection to bring about this result. We only need the fact to be known in the Southern States generally, that there is liberty in yonder mountains, planted by John Brown. [Cheers.]—The slaveholders have but to know,
and they do now know, but will be made to know it even more certainly before long—that from the Alleghenies, from the State of Pennsylvania, there is a vast broken country extending clear down into the very heart of Alabama—mountains flung there by the hand and the providence of God for the protection of liberty—[cheers]—mountains where there are rocks, and ravines, and fastnesses, dens and caves, ten thousand Sebastopols piled up by the hand of the living God, where one man for defense will be as good as a hundred for attack. There let them learn that there are men hid in those fastnesses, who will sally out upon them and conduct their slaves from the chains and fetters in which they are now bound, to breathe the free air of liberty upon those mountains. Let, I say, only a thousand men be scattered in those hills, and slavery is dead. It cannot live in the presence of such a danger. Such a state of things would put an end to planting cotton; it would put an end not only to planting cotton, but to planting anything in that region.

Something is said about the dissolution of the Union under Mr. Lincoln or under Mr. Buchanan. I am for a dissolution of the Union—decidedly for a dissolution of the Union! Under an abolition President, who would wield the army and the navy of the Government for the abolition of slavery, I should be for the union of these States. If this Union is dissolved, I see many ways in which slavery may be attacked by force, but very few in which it could be attacked by moral means. I see that the moment you dissolve the union between the South and the North, the slave part going by itself and doing so peaceably—as the cry is from the Tribune and the Albany Evening Journal, and other such papers, that it shall do 4 — establishing an independent government—that very moment the feeling of responsibility for slavery in the North is at an end. But men will tell us to mind our own business. We shall care no more for slavery in the Carolinas or in Georgia than we care for kingcraft or priestcraft in Canada, or slavery in the Brazils or in Cuba. My opinion is that if we only had an anti-slavery President, if we only had an abolition President to hold these men in the Union, and execute the declared provisions of the Constitution, execute that part of the Constitution which is in favor of liberty, as well as put upon those passages which have been construed in favor of slavery, a construction different from that and more in harmony with the principles of eternal justice that lie at the foundation of the government—if we could have such a government, a government that would force the South to behave herself, under those circumstances I should be for the continuance of the Union. If, on the contrary—no if about it—we have what we have, I shall be glad of the news, come when it will, that the slave States are an independent government, and that you are no longer called upon to deliver fugitive slaves to their masters, and that you are no longer called upon to shoulder your arms and guard with your swords those States—no longer called to go into them to put down John Brown, or anybody else who may strike for liberty there.—[Applause.] In case of such a dissolution, I believe that men could be found at least as brave as Walker, and more skillful than any other filibusterer, who would venture into those States and raise the standard of liberty there, and have ten thousand and more hearts at the North beating in sympathy with them. I believe a Garibaldi would arise who would march into those States with a thousand men, and summon to his standard sixty thousand, if necessary, to accomplish the freedom of the slave. [Cheers.]

We need not only to appeal to the moral sense of these slaveholders; we have need, and a right, to appeal to their fears. Sir, moral means are good, but we need something else. Moral means were very little to poor John Thomas on the banks of the Wilkesbarre river, in Pennsylvania, when the slave-catchers called upon him to provide them with a breakfast at the hotel, that while in the act of serving them with their beef-steak they might fall upon him and return him to slavery.—They did fall
upon him; they struck him down; but, recovering himself, he ran and plunged into the Wilkesbarre. There he stood, up to his shoulders, and the slavecatchers gathered on the banks—and the moral suasion people of that vicinity gathered also on the banks—they looked indignantly on the slave-catchers. But the slave-catchers did not heed the cries of indignation and shame; they fired their revolvers until the river about that man was red with his blood, and no hand was lifted to strike down those assassins.—They went off, indeed, without their victim, but they supposed he was dead. Sir, what was wanted at that time was just what John Brown, Jr., has told us to-night—a few resolute men, determined to be free, and to free others, resolved, when men were being shot, to shoot again. Had a few balls there whistled, as at Christiana, about the heads of the slave-catchers, it would have been the end of this slave-catching business there. There is no necessity of permitting it. The only way to make the Fugitive Slave Law a dead letter is to make a few dead slave-catchers. [Laughter and applause.] There is no need to kill them either—shoot them in the legs, and send them to the South living epistles of the free gospel preached here at the North. [Renewed laughter.]

But, Sir, I am occupying too much time.—[“Go on!” Go on!”] I see a friend on my right, whose voice to-night I have not heard for many years. These troublous times in which we live, and have been living for a few years past, make that voice doubly dear to me on this occasion; and I seize this occasion, as the first that has happened to me in at least six to eight years, to say that I rejoice, most heartily rejoice, in the privilege—for a privilege I esteem it—not only of hearing Mr. Phillips’s voice, but of standing on a platform with him in vindication of free speech. [Applause.] But I hope to speak in Boston on Friday. I, therefore, will not prolong my remarks further. I thank you for this hearing. [Applause.]