

Nineteenth-Century
African American
Narratives in
Britain and Ireland

Edited by
Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah-Rose Murray

Nineteenth-Century African American Narratives
in Britain and Ireland

NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AFRICAN AMERICAN
NARRATIVES IN BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER AND HANNAH-ROSE MURRAY

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Celeste-Marie Bernier: I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Leverhulme Trust for the Major Research Fellowship which made it possible for me to complete this project. My heartfelt thanks go to all my friends and family who have been an unending source of generosity, support, and kindness during this period: I love you all.

Both anthologies are dedicated to all the members of the Frederick Douglass Honor Society and in loving memory of my 'whole-souled friends', Eric Lowery and Catherine Mary Nash.

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AUTHORS' NOTE

Nineteenth-Century African American Narratives in Britain and Ireland and *Nineteenth-Century African American Speeches in Britain and Ireland* is a two-volume collection. Across the pages of two anthologies, we have transcribed nearly one hundred autobiographies and speeches written and delivered by fifty-two nineteenth-century African American freedom fighters living and labouring in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and England. Nineteen narratives are published in *Narratives* and eighty speeches are printed in *Speeches*.

As these autobiographies and speeches include detailed traumatic descriptions of the experiences endured by Black people of all ages and genders while living in enslavement in white-owned and white-managed labour camps in the United States, listeners and readers of this book are advised to proceed with extreme caution. All the authors in this book bear witness to the utter impossibility of language to convey, describe, represent, reimagine, or even begin to do justice to their trauma. As freedom fighter and philosopher Frederick Douglass declared, 'language has no power to convey a just sense of its awful criminality'.

The majority of these white-owned, white-funded, white-authored, and white-edited sources, including newspaper reports and narratives transcribed and rewritten by white amanuenses, reflect, endorse, and perpetuate racist, discriminatory, and persecutory attitudes, practices, and behaviours towards Black people of all genders and ages across the transatlantic world. It is a first urgent priority that we advise extreme caution when working with dehumanising white supremacist archives and sources that work to deny, obliterate, disrespect, and commit acts of violence that threaten to distort and destroy our understanding not only of Black freedom fighters' full names and birth dates but of their own and their families' lives lived in enslavement, as well as their lifelong fight for self-liberation in their daily struggles for survival in Britain and Ireland.

We have worked as closely as possible to follow the principles and practices of the guide written by P. Gabrielle Foreman and co-authors titled 'Writing About Slavery? Teaching About Slavery?' In this book we refer to 'enslaved people' and 'enslavers'. The words 'master/mistress' or 'slave' only appear when they are the words used by the authors themselves, where we quote their words and actions verbatim. We also employ the same practice with the 'N—' word.¹ We refer to 'plantations' as 'labour

camps' as per the terminology endorsed by Edward E. Baptist in his pioneering work, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*.

As far as possible, each autobiography and each speech is reproduced here as an accurate transcription of the original document. As per the conventions of Edinburgh University Press, we have changed double to single quotation marks. We have made silent amendments only in clear instances of printers' spelling errors. All other changes we summarise in detail in the footnotes for the benefit of the reader. Any word/s that we found impossible to transcribe in the original we have indicated as follows: [____?]. In the rare instances in which we have not reproduced the entire document, we have inserted ellipses followed by a footnote in which we provide a summary of the missing content.

To the best of our ability, all biographical details and dates are as accurate as possible, although as noted in the footnotes and headnotes, and as emphasised above, it is often impossible to know or identify key biographical information due to the dehumanising, violent, oppressive, and invisibilising practices perpetrated against enslaved people in what Frederick Douglass painfully memorialised as the 'chattel records' of white supremacist nations worldwide.

With regard to the narratives included in this book that are accompanied by frontispiece and/or interior illustrations, we have omitted them entirely in recognition of the very real and insurmountable difficulties regarding the impossibility of knowing whether these images met with the endorsement and/or approval of the authors.

While we have reproduced the narratives in this book chronologically (except Charles Freeman), in *Speeches* we have opted for an alphabetical approach in order to ensure that each orator's works are immediately accessible to the reader.

Finally, when we refer to the white racist and persecutory practices of 'invisibilising' Black lives, voices, testimonies, and histories over the centuries in the dehumanising and discriminatory processes of invisibilisation, we are forever gratefully indebted to Lubaina Himid's radical and revolutionary commitment to 'telling invisible stories'.²

Notes

1. For more information, see P. Gabrielle Foreman et al., 'Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help' community-sourced document, 20 February 2023: <https://naacpculpeper.org/resources/writing-about-slavery-this-might-help/>
2. See Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Philadelphia PA: Perseus Books, 2014), p.xxvi. See also Michael Todd Landis, 'These Are Words Scholars Should No Longer Use to Describe Slavery and the Civil War', *History News Network*, available online: <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/160266>. For further information on Lubaina Himid's practice of 'telling invisible stories' and her series *Inside the Invisible* (2001) see Celeste-Marie Bernier, Alan Rice, Lubaina Himid, and Hannah Durkin, *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), p.113ff.

FOREWORD TO *NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN NARRATIVES AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY AFRICAN AMERICAN SPEECHES*

Ernest J. Quarles, Esq.

Frederick Douglass' brilliant prose and soaring oratory pricked the conscience of a nation in the nineteenth century. Today that same nation may arguably have no soul, let alone a conscience.

Douglass was unequivocally the most influential Black man in nineteenth-century America. He wrote 1,200 pages of autobiography, one of the most impressive performances of memoir in the nation's history.

Yet for many, while the name Frederick Douglass rang in our ears, Douglass remained like an antique family photo relegated to a wall that you rarely, if ever, touch. We know that these figures are important, we memorialize them in placards, street signs, and statues recounting their histories, but ultimately, we shelve them because we cannot connect them to our present reality.

In some respects, one might not be far off point in suggesting that the myth-building around Douglass contributed to the notion that the institution of slavery, with all of its inhumanity, was a condition which could be overcome. Of course, such speculation would need to be both ignorant and blind to the true horrors of human bondage and the toll that it took on Douglass' life, as well as that of his family.

This two volume epic work and historical collective provides a rich and vibrant woven tapestry of the pain, suffering, blood, sweat, and tears of many transatlantic sojourners in the US and the UK, some known, some unknown. It seeks not, as many historians have done with Douglass, to atomize these individuals as lone heroes defending themselves from an amorphous and transhistorical force, such as White Supremacy, anti-Blackness, or racism. Rather, it provides a rare glimpse into a virtual treasure trove of voices and lived experiences that would otherwise have been erased from our historical archives and stands in protest to America's and the UK's original sin.

This thing called “Race”, for both countries is like the thing in mythology that you have to do for the kingdom to be well. And it’s always something you don’t want to do. And it’s always that thing about you confronting yourself, that it’s tailor-made for you to fail dealing with it. And the question of your heroism and of your courage and of your success in dealing with this trial, is can you confront it with honesty, and do you confront it and do you have the energy to sustain an attack on it.

The degree to which you’re willing to fight against it really . . . is based on your ability to accept the pain of fighting against it.

Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah-Rose Murray have in these two volumes provided us with a splendid look at what true love and commitment looks like. A desire for truth telling that challenges the heart and soul to find substance when no one before had even glimpsed possibilities. A belief system and understanding of how struggling people all over the world are interconnected spiritually and how that energy manifests in every oppressed person and in every insubordinate space.

These two volumes are revolution at its finest. A testament that those unnamed and unmentioned in historic annals remained adamant in their insistence to always revolt, regardless of the medium and of their enslavers attempts to reduce them to a state of complete abjection. These bold women and men, embodying the essence of the Black Radical tradition, embrace an international legacy of resistance that continues until the present.

In his 1924 essay, *Enter the Negro*, Alain LeRoy Locke states, “The old Negro had long become more of a myth than a man.”¹ The Old Negro, in addition to his persecution, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. He had been a stock figure perpetrated as an historical fiction, partly in innocent sentimentalism and partly in deliberate reactionism. So, for generations upon generations, in the minds of Americans and Great Britons, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being. He was something to be bandied about in argument, humiliated and kept in his place, condemned, helped up, worried over, patronized, and exterminated when necessary.

While Locke, Jean Toomer’s *Cane*, and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*,² are superb sources for understanding early twentieth-century Black America and its relationship to White America, these instant volumes provide a lens to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Blacks which is fresh, bold, and exciting. It links us to the freedom fighters that we never knew but whose deeds created a fear in supporters of the institution of slavery that is resonant today.

These voices and narrative stories in the two volumes are inextricably linked to earlier rebellion against oppressive forces worldwide. They were bound by blood and took inspiration from those who were condemned as “Black” and “unifiers.”

The case of Kimpa Vita and the Kingdom of Kongo in the 1600s informs us that European invaders/colonizers met with resistance on the African continent. Her story also underscores the leading role of women in resisting exploitation and colonization in Africa. Even though they tried to nail Kimpa Vita to the stake, her ghost haunted Europe for centuries to come.³

In fact, less than 50 years after Kimpa’s death by fire, Great Britain and Ireland were to have a queen whose origins on both sides of her family were deep in African ancestry – the Sousa and Vandal families. Queen Charlotte, who reigned from 1761 to 1818 as the wife of King George III, would have possessed a bloodline similar to Kimpa Vita’s by virtue of her Sousa and Angola origin. (In Africa, the name Sousa

is common in former Portuguese colonies, especially among people who have some Portuguese and Brazilian roots, in Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique.) Queen Charlotte and King George III ruled the colonies from October 1760 until the Declaration of Independence during the Revolutionary War. King George gave up his power and control of the colonies in 1783 at the end of the war.

But there is still more to this Black radical tradition that strongly suggests another motive for the attempt to erase the collective voices in these two volumes, namely fear of a Black uprising. While not part of compulsory history courses in the US or Great Britain, the republic of Haiti serves as a reminder that anti-Blackness has long been part of the oppressor's agenda. Haiti, the only self-made Black republic in the world, struggled from slavery to freedom and to statehood. Much of this activity occurred during the lives and rebellious acts of our protagonists in these volumes. Frederick Douglass, in a Lecture on Haiti in 1893, delivered at the Haitian Pavilion of the World's Fair in Chicago, put it this way:

Haiti is Black, and we have not yet forgiven Haiti for being Black or forgiven the Almighty for making her Black . . . In every other country on the globe a citizen of Haiti is sure of civil treatment. In every other nation his manhood is recognized and respected. Wherever any man can go, he can go. He is not repulsed, excluded or insulted because of his color. All places of amusement and instruction are open to him. Vastly different is the case with him when he ventures within the border of the United States. Besides, after Haiti had shaken off the fetters of bondage, and long after her freedom and independence had been recognized by all other civilized nations, we continued to refuse to acknowledge the fact and treated her as outside the sisterhood of nations.⁴

The Haitian Revolution ended in 1804 and the reign of Queen Charlotte in 1818, thus both the United States and Great Britain had the opportunity to select a different path than they did *vis a vis* the institution of slavery. If they had, the subjects of these two volumes would not have had to suffer the humiliations and abuses which they experienced.

It is also interesting to mention one distinct difference between Britain and the United States, despite their complicity in the slave enterprise, that was brought up in the *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave*. In Hart's description of American Slavery, he says, quoting largely from Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom*:

The bloodhound is regularly trained in the United States and advertisements are to be found in the Southern papers of the Union, from persons advertising themselves as bloodhound trainers, and offering to hunt down slaves at fifteen dollars apiece; recommending their hounds as the fastest in the neighbourhood, never known to fail. Advertisements are inserted stating that slaves have escaped with Iron collars about their necks, with bands of iron, about their feet, marked with the lash, branded with red hot irons – the initials of their master's name being burned in the flesh; the master advertises the fact of their being branded with their signature, thereby praying to the world, that however daring it may appear

to non-slave owners, such practices are not regarded as discreditable among them. Why, I believe if a man should happen to brand his horse in this country; or burn the initials of his name into any of his cattle, and publish the horrid deed, that the united execrations of the christians of Britain would descend upon him. Yet, in the United States, human beings are thus branded. So profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery are many persons, that they are stubbornly incredulous whenever they read or listen to any recital of the cruelties which are daily inflicted on its victim. They do not deny that the slaves are held as property; but that terrible fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure to outrage or savage barbarity. Tell them of cruel scourgings, of mutilations, and of branding; of scenes of pollution and blood; of the banishment of all light and knowledge; and they affect to be greatly indignant at such enormous exaggeration – such wholesale mis-statements – such abominable libels of the character of the Southern Planters; – as if these direful outrages were not the natural result of slavery; as if it was less cruel to reduce a human being to the condition of a thing than to give him a severe flagellation, or to deprive him of necessary food and clothing; – as if whips, chains, thumb screws, padlocks, bloodhounds, overseers, drivers, patrols, were not all indispensable to keep the slaves down, and to give protection to their ruthless oppressor: – as if, when the marriage institution is abolished, concubinage, adultery, and incest, must not necessarily abound; as if, when all the rights of humanity are annihilated, any barrier remains to protect the victim from the fury of the spoiler; – as if, when absolute power is assumed over life and liberty, it will not be wielded with destructive sway.⁵

In early November 1838, Samuel Cornish, editor of *The Colored American* newspaper, issued a blistering critique of the United States government. Keenly aware that slaveholders dictated the United States' decision to deny diplomatic recognition to Haiti, Cornish angrily denounced the power that racism and slavery wielded over US foreign policy. He said, "*Are the American people so weak and wicked, as to imagine they can counteract the economy of God, and trample on colored men forever and everywhere?*"⁶ Cornish resolved to bring the United States to its knees and exact justice.⁷

We must also remember that while white abolitionists in the United States were hearing calls for freedom and liberation from our protagonists in these two volumes, they were also hearing similar calls related to Haitian recognition. In 1837, Black activists initiated a campaign to force the US Congress to extend formal diplomatic recognition and acknowledge Haitian sovereignty. To achieve their goal they resorted to a time-honored strategy that had worked well during the colonial era, namely petitioning. The practice of Black petitioning stemmed from the colonial and revolutionary periods when enslaved people, particularly in the North, pleaded with state legislatures to abolish slavery. Such efforts proved especially effective during the American Revolution, as enslaved people exposed the contradiction between revolutionary ideals – liberty, justice, equality, and brotherhood – and the reality of slavery's rapid expansion. By 1804, largely due to this strategy, all the northern states had passed abolition acts.⁸ The two movements were indelibly linked and that reality weighed heavily on the politics and policy of the day, and more pointedly, to a harsher and more inhumane condition for the colored brethren who were the subjects of southern slaveowners.

Between 1824 and 1860, an evocative and beguiling tune floated along the United States' eastern seaboard, infectiously inspiring enslaved and free Black people alike. As the song sifted through various communities, the lyrics embodied the true spirit of American improvisation, dynamically shifting and morphing to fit the singers' moods and inner longings. Even so, a common theme remained: "*Let us leave this buckra land for Haiti,*" the song commenced, "*there we'll be received as grand as Lafayette*" – a Frenchman hailed in the United States as a hero of the American and French Revolutions, the song imagined the coming of a brighter day – a time when Black people could escape the land of slavery, make a beautiful new home in Haiti, and be celebrated as heroes. The lyrics romantically envisioned Haiti as a Black utopia – a land of milk and honey – where Black people could not only find freedom, but also enjoy decadent luxury, free of the menial, demeaning tasks that defined their lives as slaves.⁹

None of this Haitian activity was lost on anyone who was part of the abolitionist community, including William Lloyd Garrison, and others like Charles Lenox Remond, who were joined with Frederick Douglass and others in Massachusetts and were also involved abroad.

Charles Lenox Remond (February 1, 1810–December 22, 1873) was an American orator, activist and abolitionist based in Massachusetts, but he lectured against slavery across the Northeast, and in 1840 traveled to the British Isles on a tour with William Lloyd Garrison. During the American Civil War, he recruited Blacks for the United States Colored Troops, helping staff the first two units sent from Massachusetts. From a large family of African American entrepreneurs, he was the brother of Sarah Parker Remond, also a lecturer against slavery. Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass named one of their sons after him, Charles Remond Douglass.

Given the nineteenth-century life chronicles of our protagonists, the emergence of Haiti as a sovereign Black nation provided a beacon of hope for Black people throughout the African Diaspora. Both free and enslaved Black people in the US and abroad defended the young Caribbean nation from forces intent on maintaining slavery and white supremacy. Haitian's battle for independence influenced activists, and thereby impacted the way that Black people subject to this blasphemous condition thought about their condition and the actions needed to escape it. Haiti embodied what whites feared most – Black revolution and Black independence.

Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw alludes to the problem of this white fear today in what has become a universal problem for Black folk and other people of color:

How can we imagine a better future without first contending with the darkness that underlies the pervasive fear of Black people? In a white supremacist society, that fear is like muscle memory. When the baseline of the social order is slavery, when the freedom-seeking self-help behavior of running away was called theft, how can any policing be anything more than fundamentally racist – regardless of who is playing the role of the police?¹⁰

The picture below shows young Black students engaged in what many in the 1930 US South would have believed was a radical act – namely reading and education. Yet in this United States where the arc of justice is steadily bending to the right, this same scene would be punishable in at least thirty-three states if the books or topics discussed had anything to do with our racial history.¹¹



Untitled photo, possibly related to Primary class in new school, Prairie Farms, Montgomery, Alabama by Marion Post Wolcott 1910–1990 (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

In these golden volumes, we have an opportunity to do what America and Great Britain have never done – reckon with history and incorporate an element of Black humanity. They allow us to see, hear, and read about our truths and then challenge us to respeak, teach, and share them. Reflecting on the thought of historians Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz, if we truly focus on creativity and enlightenment in exercising our protest in the most insubordinate spaces, we may find ourselves elevating humanity to the highest of places.¹²

The famed poet, Robert Hayden, wrote a beautiful poem about Frederick Douglass in which he captures the freedom dream and Douglass' role in helping to conceptualize and frame it. He writes that it is only when "it is finally ours, this freedom," that Frederick Douglass, this former enslaved individual, "shall be remembered."¹³

These pages offer a new tribute and challenge us with a new urgency, to amplify our notion of what more we can add to the freedom dream in honoring the sacrifice and struggle of our newfound liberators. Sit back and allow yourself to experience a truly sensational collective that speaks to the souls of our nations. Say these names, share these stories, and become part of the enlightenment that transforms these critical voices into the joy, inspiration, and hope that we so desperately need in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. Alain Locke, "The New Negro," available online: <https://www.serialreader.org/preview/5fee0340c72bba7f7eef4374/the-new-negro/>
2. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (New York: University Place Press, 1923), available online: <https://archive.org/details/cane00toomer/page/n1/mode/2up>; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Intro. By Zadie Smith (London: Virago Press, 2020).
3. Rebecca Bayeck writes, "Situated in an area that covered part of what is now the Central region of Africa and the Southern part of the continent, the kingdom of Kongo included countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, part of Gabon, and Angola. The kingdom came into contact with the Portuguese in 1452 . . . Kongo's capital city was Mbanza Kongo, located in today's Angola. Hence, the Portuguese who arrived off the coast of Kongo found a powerful and organized kingdom. In an attempt to describe Kongo's architectural sophistication and development, "the Milanese ambassador in Lisbon compared the capital city Mbanza Kongo to the prestigious city of Évora, the royal residence in Portugal. Yet, the kingdom's splendor and wealth ignited the greed and appetite of Europeans (Portuguese, Dutch, Germans, and British), who through religion, wars, treaties, and trade, accelerated the kingdom's demise . . . It is in this political, social, and religious context that Kimpa Vita/Chimpa Vita was born . . . Kimpa's work to liberate and restore the kingdom was multidimensional. It was spiritual, political, and moral. According to records, Kimpa did not intend to become the King of the kingdom of Kongo. She created a new religion drawing from Catholicism and Kongo religion. Inspired by Saint Anthony in a vision, Kimpa set out to deliver her people. She created a new religion that was in tune with Bakongo culture, religion, and values. With her new religion, she aimed to liberate and restore the kingdom, and to awaken Bakongo to the challenges they faced and to the need to unite. She used religion to wake her people, and to bring them to realize that their deliverance was in their hands, and not in the hands of a foreign God, whose saints did not look like them . . . Kimpa had no intention to rule the kingdom even though many Bakongo believed in her. Acting as heir of Kongo kings, she was a peacemaker – reconciling and resolving conflicts – which allowed her to sit among leaders, and achieve recognition as ruler of Mbanza Kongo, the capital of the kingdom." She was in essence, the potential restorer, and lordess of the Congo. She was by all accounts, including her enemies, "esteemed and adored by all." Kimpa's "work was stopped with her arrest and condemnation to the stake . . . Catholic missionaries benefited from the disunity and destruction of the kingdom which made Kimpa an enemy. Hence, Catholic missionaries saw her as a threat to their interests . . . The story of Kimpa/Chimpa Vita shows that European invaders and/or colonizers met resistance on the African continent. Her story also underscores the leading role of women in resisting exploitation and colonization in Africa." See Rebecca Bayeck, "Kimpa Vita of the Kingdom of Kongo: Embodiment of Resistance," Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, October 4, 2021. Available online: <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2021/10/04/kimpa-vita-kingdom-kongo-embodiment-resistance>
4. Frederick Douglass, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover Publications 2013), 106.
5. Anon., *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* (Bradford: Joseph Bentley, n.d. [after 1855]). In Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah-Rose Murray, eds., *Nineteenth-Century African American Narratives in Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024), 158.
6. Leslie M. Alexander, "The U.S. Has Never Forgiven Haiti," a series commissioned by Marlene L. Daut, January 11, 2024. Available online: <https://www.publicbooks.org/the-us-has-never-forgiven-haiti/>

7. Leslie M. Alexander, *Fear of a Black Republic: Haiti and the Birth of Black Internationalism in the United States* (Urbana, I.L.: University of Illinois Press, 2023), 78.
8. Ibid, 106, 107.
9. Ibid, 133.
10. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Fear of a Black Uprising: Confronting the white pathologies that shape racist policing," August 13, 2020. Available online: <https://newrepublic.com/article/158725/fear-black-uprising-confronting-racist-policing>
11. Kasey Meehan, Jonathan Friedman, Sabrina Baêta, and Tasslyn Magnusson, "Banned in the USA: The Mounting Pressure to Censor," Pen America, New York. In the introduction to their report they write, "The freedom to read is under assault in the United States – particularly in public schools – curtailing students' freedom to explore words, ideas, and books. In the 2022–23 school year, from July 1, 2022, to June 31, 2023, PEN America recorded 3,362 instances of book bans in US public school classrooms and libraries. These bans removed student access to 1,557 unique book titles, the works of over 1,480 authors, illustrators, and translators. Authors whose books are targeted are most frequently female, people of color, and/or LGBTQ+ individuals. Amid a growing climate of censorship, school book bans continue to spread through coordinated campaigns by a vocal minority of groups and individual actors and, increasingly, as a result of pressure from state legislation." Available online: <https://pen.org/report/book-bans-pressure-to-censor/>
12. Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz, *Insubordinate Spaces: Improvisation and Accompaniment for Social Justice* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019). Further information available online: <https://tupress.temple.edu/books/insubordinate-spaces>
13. Robert Hayden, "Frederick Douglass," from Robert Hayden, *The Collected Poems of Robert Hayden*, edited by Frederick Glaysher (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1966). Available online at the Poetry Foundation: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46460/frederick-douglass>

INTRODUCTION

DURING A SPEECH she delivered condemning the murderous atrocities committed against Black people of all genders and ages by white US lynching mobs on British soil in 1893, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a world-renowned activist, author, orator, freedom-fighter, and social justice campaigner, declared that ‘the tyrant slavery had gone to work under a new name and a new guise’ (*Nineteenth-Century African American Speeches in Britain and Ireland* [hereafter *Speeches*], Speech No. 77). A human rights advocate who had experienced enslavement in Memphis, Tennessee, she not only placed herself in a long line of African American abolitionists and self-liberated campaigners who made radical journeys across the Atlantic Ocean to challenge enslavement, global racism, and white persecutory and prejudicial acts of oppression, she also informed her predominantly white UK audiences that the legal abolition of enslavement in the US was as yet an emancipation unfulfilled. As Bishop Walter Hawkins – an author, orator, and liberator who had been born into, in the words of Frederick Douglass, the ‘hell-black system of human bondage’ in Maryland – stated just two years earlier, ‘slavery had never been removed from the United States and existed there now’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 31).¹

Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Walter Hawkins are two of the fifty-two African American liberators we include across both anthologies. In *Nineteenth-Century African American Narratives in Britain and Ireland* (hereafter *Narratives*) we publish nineteen autobiographical narratives, and in *Speeches* we reproduce eighty speeches written and delivered in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England by Black authors and advocates living and working in the period between 1833–1902. All of their surviving works reproduced here reflect the varying modes of agency, autonomy, authority, and artistry employed by African American social justice and equal rights campaigners in their literary, oratorical, and performative activism on British and Irish soil. Whether fighting for survival in the face of brutal torture and the social death of enslavement, enduring the white persecutory violence of the US South no less than the discriminatory violence of the northern states, or subjected to the mind-body-and-soul-destroying reality of racism in their temporary or adopted home in a mythic Britannia that, as a white supremacist nation, in reality did little to protect or respect their lives, Black activists wrote, lectured, and performed themselves into history. Theirs was a lifelong determination to resist, defy, and defeat the wholesale eradication and annihilation of their lives and testimonies, and those of their repeatedly unnamed family members and comrades.

All too painfully and powerfully aware that Britain and Ireland were nations that had been profiting from the wealth of ‘traffickers in human flesh’ for centuries and

had also continued to endorse all forms of racism, persecution, and discrimination, nineteenth-century African American campaigners purposefully employed subversive, experimental, and radical tactics, devices, and methods as a hard-hitting means to galvanise widespread transatlantic support for their antislavery, anti-segregation, anti-lynch law, and antiracist campaigns.²

Across their life's work, all the African American freedom fighters included in both anthologies addressed an untold number of themes, subjects, and events. These include but are not limited to the following: untold histories of centuries of Black heroism; the legal system that was the 'hell-black system' of US chattel enslavement; the individual and collective traumas experienced by millions of enslaved people living 'a life of living death' on labour camps; the heroic resistance of indigenous communities working with Black liberators and white allies on the Underground Railroad; white abolitionist activism and white abolitionist discrimination; white supremacist ideologies; US and European imperialism and colonisation; war; global racism; white persecutory editorial power; legal disenfranchisement; sexual abuse; physical violence; psychological torture; family separation; ancestral legacies; political activism; lynch law; civil rights; mob rule; women's rights; community activism; temperance; suffrage; religion; transatlantic reformist networks; social justice campaigns; incarceration and the convict lease system, among much more.³ Across their autobiographical writings and lectures, they named and shamed the immorality, barbarity, cruelty, and murderous atrocities committed by white US enslavers, lynchers, murderers, abusers, and proslavery defenders in their millions, and exposed their torturous, brutal, traumatising, and sadistic deeds to international audiences, sometimes collaborating together on the Victorian stage to do so.

Living and working in Britain and Ireland for widely varying periods of time, all the African American radicals and reformers included in this anthology wielded their literary and oratorical powers to powerful effect and with politically and socially transformative results. Theirs was a shared determination not only to abolish enslavement but to combat the rise of white supremacist ideologies and practices in the persecutory stranglehold exerted by lynch law, segregation, and racist violence. Working not only to fight for the legal end of enslavement, they shared the determination of Frederick Douglass, a world-famous self-liberated author, orator, philosopher, and revolutionary activist, to combat the rise of 'the spirit of slavery' by any and every means necessary.⁴ For past, present, and future African American human rights campaigners and social justice activists the spoken and written word was and remains a life-changing weapon in the freedom struggle then and now.

As our map (Figure 1) indicates, no geographical location was off limits for nineteenth-century African American activists of all genders and ages travelling to Britain and Ireland, however small, rural, or seemingly impossible to travel to in an era where the railway did not reach every community. Braving the challenges of the road, the weather, the financial difficulties of travel, and the unknown reception they repeatedly received in each place from hostile and discriminatory whites, African American liberators travelled to far-flung locations from the Scottish Highlands to Penzance in Cornwall to inform their audiences about the realities and brutalities of enslavement and its persecutory white supremacist legacies. Across both anthologies, we map the 'acts and arts' of individual and collective liberation that were undertaken by African American revolutionary authors and radical activists – enslaved, self-liberated, emancipated, and legally free – in the decades before and after the



Figure 1. A map of Britain and Ireland highlighting the locations in this book where Black abolitionists spoke or published their autobiographical narratives. (Map by Hannah-Rose Murray, <https://carto.com>)

US Civil War.⁵ While this war finally resulted in the legal end of enslavement by the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution on 31 January 1865, this hard-fought government legislation was ultimately to no avail.⁶ As we have seen, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Walter Hawkins writing and speaking decades later in the 1890s all too painfully realised that the ‘tyrant slavery’ had neither been damaged nor destroyed but instead ‘existed there now’.

Working across print and digital collections over the last few years in Britain, Ireland, and the US, we have carefully and meticulously worked with regional and national archives, collections, and newspaper repositories to locate previously unexamined or neglected narratives and speeches published and delivered by African American liberators sojourning in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century. In uncovering, transcribing, and annotating the autobiographies and addresses produced

by both well-known and neglected freedom fighters in these anthologies for the first time, we work to build a broader picture of the revolutionary and transformative ways in which African American authors, orators, and activists wrote and lectured about enslavement, segregation, lynching, white racism, legal inequalities, human rights violations, incarceration, and the convict lease system in Britain and Ireland in the decades before, during, and after the Civil War.

Following in the footsteps and building on the trailblazing primary research and pioneering scholarship we gratefully list in our biography, we have divided these anthologies into two books.⁷ In *Narratives*, we reproduce nineteen narratives in chronological order. These literary works share the life stories of the following fundamentally significant, inspirationally pioneering, and yet vastly neglected African American authors in chronological order: Charles Freeman; Phebe Ann Jacobs; Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones; John Hart; John Williams; Henry (surname unknown); James Watkins; William Gustavus Allen; John Comber; Sarah Parker Remond; James Cheeney Thompson; Dinah Hope Browne; John Sella Martin; Lewis Smith; James Alfred Johnson; Ida B. Wells-Barnett; D. E. Tobias; Benjamin William Brown. In *Speeches*, we reprint eighty speeches in alphabetical order as delivered not only by Benjamin William Brown, John Sella Martin, Sarah Parker Remond, Lewis Smith, James Cheeney Thompson, D. E. Tobias, and James Watkins, but by the following little-known as well as world-famous freedom fighters: Hallie Quinn Brown; John Brown; William Wells Brown; Thomas Morris Chester; Nelson Countee; Ellen Craft; William Craft; Alexander Crummell; William Howard Day; Isaac Perry Dickerson; Frederick Douglass; Washington Duff; Francis Fedric; Henry Highland Garnet; Jacob D. Green; Walter Hawkins; Josiah Henson; J. Hughes; Edward Irving; John Andrew Jackson; Julia Jackson; William Andrew Jackson; Edmond Kelley; R. M. Johnson; William M. Mitchell; Nathaniel Paul; James William Charles Pennington; Joseph Charles Price; Charles Lenox Remond; Moses Roper; Amanda Berry Smith; William Troy; Samuel Ringgold Ward; Ida B. Wells-Barnett; Turner Williams.

For the benefit of current and future researchers and readers, in both books we include a detailed bibliography of digital and print resources which we have divided according to the following categories: selected narratives, writings, and literary works; anthologies, critical editions, and collections; archives, online resources, and digital humanities projects; literary criticism, biography, and historical studies. While our aim has been to compile a chronological list of all known narratives, writings, and literary works authored by African American writers, orators, activists, philosophers, and campaigners and published in Britain and Ireland across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we fully recognise that our list is necessarily incomplete. Ongoing discoveries of unattributed, unknown, miscatalogued, and neglected works by African American authors that are being made by researchers working today guarantee that any seemingly comprehensive list is only ever a work in progress.

For detailed and specialist reading lists in African American Studies, African Canadian Studies, African Caribbean Studies, African Diaspora Studies, Black British Studies, Visual Studies, Material Culture, Art History, and Print Cultures, and as directly related to each individual author and their works anthologised in these books, we advise our readers to consult the detailed biographies and suggestions for further primary and secondary reading we include at the end of the introductory sections for each writer and orator.



Figure 2 Harriet Tubman, by Benjamin F. Powelson, c.1868–1869. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

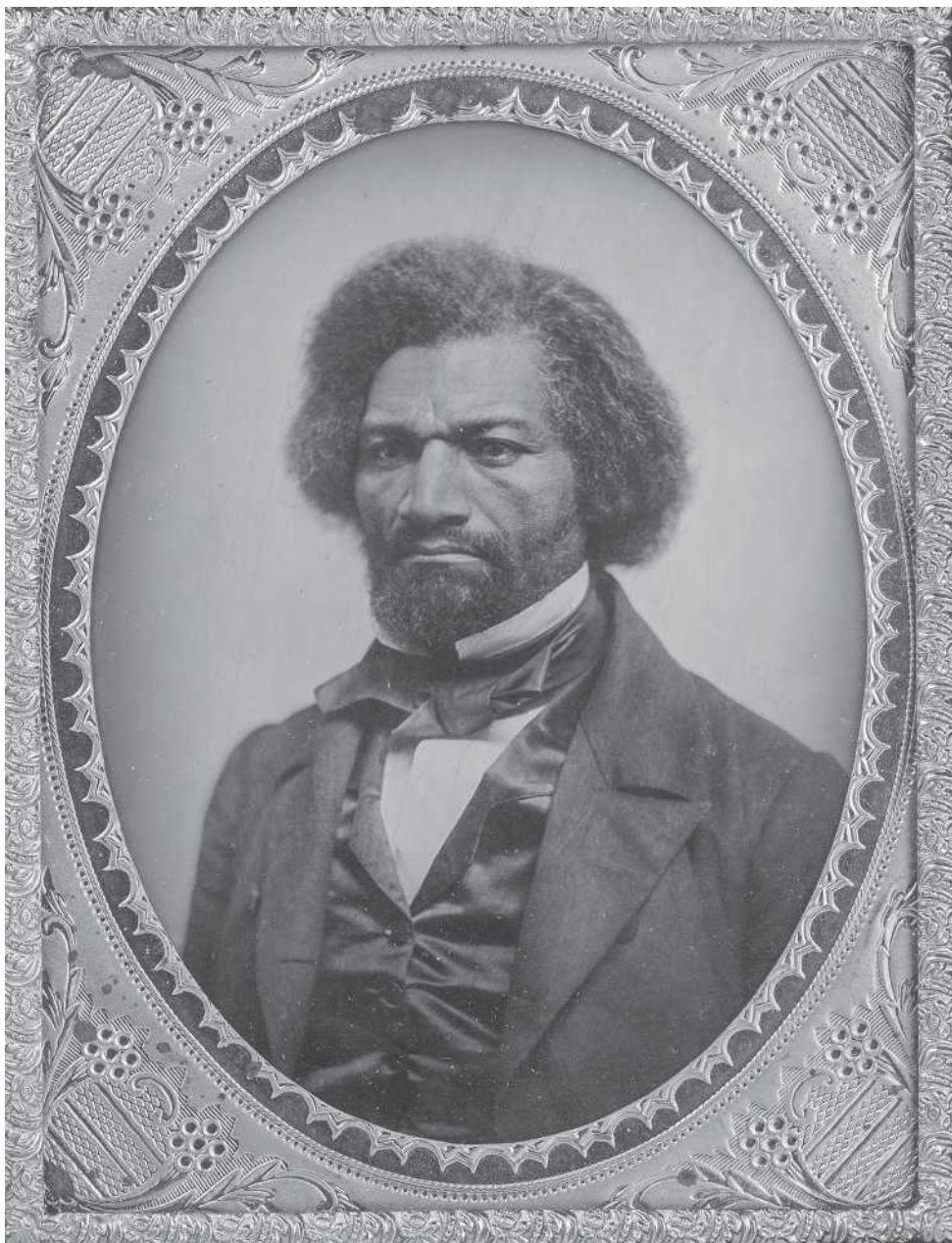


Figure 3 Frederick Douglass, c.1856 by unidentified photographer. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor.)

Weapons in the Past, Present, and Future ‘Fight for Freedom’

‘Paint is the only weapon I have with which to fight what I resent’, proclaimed Charles White, a twentieth-century African American artist, in 1965.⁸ A portraitist of breathtaking revolutionary power, Charles White dedicated his life to creating radical artworks that were inspired by the centuries-long histories of Black heroes and Black liberation movements. Working to do justice to the heroism of Black anti-slavery campaigners in the nineteenth-century, Civil Rights protests, and Black Power freedom fighters in his contemporary era, White laid bare his dedication to one all-encompassing subject: ‘the Negro fight for freedom’. As he readily conceded, ‘The Negro fight for freedom is the motivating impulse underlying all my works.’⁹

Nearly 100 years earlier in 1869, Harriet Tubman, a self-liberated freedom fighter, Underground Railroad conductor, military commander, medical expert, storyteller, and quiltmaker experienced a life-changing rite of passage. On beginning her journey of self-liberation from a life of enslavement in the US South, she later remembered, ‘I started with this idea in my head’ that there were ‘two things I’ve got a right to’: ‘Death or Liberty’. As a woman embarking on her journey of self-liberation from a life lived in enslavement in Maryland, she immediately reached the revolutionary decision: ‘No one will take me back alive; I shall fight for my liberty.’¹⁰

For Harriet Tubman, no less than for Charles White, a dedication to the ‘Negro fight for freedom’ remained the ‘motivating impulse’ undergirding their individual and collective acts and arts of artistry and activism. As for Tubman and White so for all the fifty-two writers and orators included in these anthologies: the ‘Negro fight for freedom’ was the ‘motivating impulse’ for their life’s work. While Charles White maintained that ‘paint’ was the ‘only weapon’ he had with which to ‘fight’, for the African American activists living and working in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century, and whose works we anthologise here, the written and spoken word was their first ‘weapon’ of choice in their individual and collective ‘fight for freedom’. Living their lives by Harriet Tubman’s death-defying commitment, ‘I shall fight for my liberty’, all the African American activists included here rely on the power of the written and spoken word in their united ‘fight for our liberty’.

And yet, for Frederick Douglass, a Maryland-born self-liberated author and orator who remains world-renowned to this day for his virtuosic skills as a writer and speaker of unrivalled and unparalleled power, language in all its forms came with a warning. Writing of the tortuous, terrifying, and traumatising violence experienced by Esther Bailey, one of his aunts, at the hands of her murderous white US enslaver and to which he was a traumatised child witness, Douglass remembered her white abuser’s horrifying ‘exhibition of his rage and cruelty’ only to be left with a heart-breaking realisation regarding the failures of any and all attempts to put such villainous acts of white male atrocity and barbaric persecution into words. Writing decades later, he confronted a terrible reality: ‘language has no power to convey a just sense of its awful criminality’.¹¹

While for Frederick Douglass, Charles White, and Harriet Tubman, no less than for all the African American writers and orators included in this anthology, an individual and intergenerational ‘fight for freedom’ defined their lives and their lifelong commitment to all acts and arts of Black liberation over the centuries, they were only too powerfully aware of the mind-body-and-soul-destroying reality that, as another

Maryland-born self-liberated author and orator, James Watkins, sorrowfully summarised, 'There are features in this great monstrosity that I cannot describe in language fit to be read' (Narrative No. 8).

For African American freedom fighters living and working in Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century, the fight was on to denounce, condemn, and expose the 'horrors' of US enslavement as a 'system' that it was impossible to 'describe in language fit to be read' let alone spoken. While they were all burdened by a traumatised realisation regarding the failures of language to do justice to the 'awful criminality' of their lives as lived in enslavement, against all the odds they relied on the written and spoken word in their hundreds in an individual and collective determination to fight for all freedoms, all equalities, and all rights for all people.

As Sojourner Truth, a woman who experienced enslavement in New York state and who dedicated her life to the radical use of language as a power for social, political, and moral revolution, urgently proclaimed, 'I don't read such small stuff as letters, I read men and nations.'¹² For all fifty-two author-activists included in these volumes, the act and art of sharing their life stories via written and spoken 'letters' operated as the revolutionary catalyst for their denunciation, condemnation, and critique of persecutory, discriminatory, and dehumanising 'men and nations'.

The Written Word is a Weapon in the Freedom Struggle

'The fact that Negroes are turning Book makers may possibly serve to remove the popular impression that they are fit only for Boot blackers & although they may not *shine* in the former profession as they have long done in the latter, I am not without hope that they will do themselves good by making the effort.' So writes Frederick Douglass from Rochester, New York, in a letter he addressed to his white US friend and supporter, Gerrit Smith, on 21 January 1851.¹³

Writing only four years following his return from a nearly two-year visit as a transatlantic antislavery campaigner living and working in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England between 1845–1847, Frederick Douglass was jubilant regarding the newly emerging tradition of Black-authored literary production. He celebrated this outpouring of works not solely as an antidote to white racist systems that remained intent on dehumanising and invisibilising Black people, enslaved, self-liberated and legally free, but as a source of psychological, intellectual, cultural, artistic, and imaginative liberation. While in his letter to Gerrit Smith, Frederick Douglass focused almost exclusively on African American drama, novels, poetry, and narratives published in the US, he was ever mindful of a wider transatlantic culture of African diaspora 'book-making' traditions.

An international author, philosopher, editor, publisher, activist, and reformer, Douglass played a leading role in African American transatlantic literary cultures by disseminating narratives, speeches, essays, and epistolary works in Britain and Ireland throughout the nineteenth century. During his many visits to Britain and Ireland – he not only undertook his antislavery and human rights lecturing tours in the years between 1845–1847 but he also lived and campaigned in the UK in 1859–1860 and again in 1886–1887 – he published Irish and English editions of his autobiographies, including *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845, 1846, 1847) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself* (1882).¹⁴



Figure 4 Sojourner Truth, seated with a portrait of her grandson, James Caldwell of Co. H, 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, c.1863 by unidentified photographer. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

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It is a work of intrinsic merit, and speaks volumes in praise of the man, his intellect and culture. The incidents of his life, woven up in the web of narrative by his polished and classical mind, and graceful pen, are full of interest.—*Buffalo Express*.

A MASTER AUTHOR AND ORATOR.

Frederick Douglass is a remarkable man. As a writer and speaker, he ranks with the most effective and natural—after our master authors and orators.—*Utica Herald*.

TRUE, AND OF ABSORBING INTEREST.

The story of Frederick Douglass' life as detailed in this volume, possesses an interest which is really absorbing. The truthfulness of the narrative which he gives of his bondage will be generally conceded, and certainly realises the truth of the old adage—"truth is strange—stranger than fiction."—*Boston Journal*.

EXPOSES THE BANE OF THE REPUBLIC.

It reveals the miseries of servile life with an intense vividness and impressiveness, that can but fasten its facts and arguments upon the reader's mind as with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond.—*Vt. Journal*.

NO ROMANCE MORE EXCITING.

No romance can be more exciting to the reader than this truthful narrative. The work is having a wide circulation.—*Fates Go, Whig*.

IT STIRS THE FEELINGS.

We have not read a work which has stirred our feelings to a greater extent for some years, and we are glad that Mr. Stow now intends to keep a good stock on hand. We think he will need it. The book is a powerful, vivid picture of a slave's life, and effectually removes the gloss which pro-slavery men attempt to throw over the beatitudes of this aid to the "highest state of human existence!"—*Osageo Times*.

A SELF-MADE MAN.

This volume, besides its many moving and thrilling details, affords evidence of a most remarkable man. Mr Douglass has emphatically made himself. As a writer and speaker, he has but few equals in the country. His book is readable and interesting.—*Christian Advocate*.

AN INTERESTING AND REMARKABLE WORK.

The book is one of the most interesting and remarkable ever published—a well written work on Slavery, by one who was born and bred a slave.—*Vt. Watchman*.

NERVOUS, CLEAR, AND TELLING.

It presents a clear and graphic picture of his slave-life from his earliest recollections: his escape and his life since, including his experiences in this country and Europe. No one will deny Mr Douglass the possession of genius and character of a high order. He writes in a nervous, clear and most telling manner, clothing his narrative with intense interest, and conveying his moral impressions with a vividness that leaves the reader scarcely any escape. The subject is deeply tragic, and, in his masterly handling possesses an engrossing interest.—*N. Y. Evangelist*.

WORTH A HUNDRED VOLUMES OF ROMANCE.

We recommend the book as worth a hundred volumes of the trashy literature of the day.—*Pittsburgh Herald*.

Glasgow: GEORGE GALLIE; Edinburgh: A. & C. BLACK;

HOW IT DIFFERS FROM OTHER WORKS.

We have before listened to the homely tale of the liberated slave, but it did not impress us as does this narrative of Douglass, for the reason that we were left to supply the commentary which is here pressed upon us by one who has both seen and felt what he relates. The story bears throughout the impress of truth, and the manner in which it is told stamps the writer as a man of genius, and a high order of talent.—*Ohio State Journal*.

CIRCULATE IT WIDELY.

The encroachments and usurpations of Slavery are becoming more flagrant every day, and a work animating the public mind enlightening it upon this bane of the American Republic, and from the high source whence this emanates, ought to be very extensively read in the Free States.—*Whitehall Chronicle*.

HOW WRITTEN—ITS CHARACTER.

The book is written with the happiest descriptive power, with nerve and vigour of expression, and with richness of style. It has an ample resource in phrase, great perspicuity, and a musical, resonating, and half rhythmic style, which reminds the reader of the author's origin, and of the native melodies of his race. The book manifests a high, and, to us, unexpected polish. The interest aroused and kept up by a perusal of this book is of a high order, and rarely degenerates.—*Detroit Daily Advertiser*.

IT IS PECULIARLY ATTRACTIVE.

We need not say that the volume possesses extraordinary attractions. The life of such a man cannot fail to excite an interest in the public mind seldom equalled, even in this book-making age.—*Christian Ambassador*.

THE AUTHOR POPULAR—HIS BOOK IN DEMAND.

This is a splendid work. The personal worth of the author, the deserved popularity he has secured throughout this nation, and the universal desire that prevails to have a memento of one of nature's noblemen, will conspire to create an unprecedented demand for this book.—*Wesleyan*.

THE EVILS OF SLAVERY CALMLY UNFOLDED.

There are no lines of ranting madness here. Calmly, dispassionately he unfolds to us all the evils of the bondage system in its various aspects, and must thus commend his disclosures to all true Americans, south as well as north. The entire work is of a high intellectual order, and intensely interesting from its beginning to its close.—*American Spectator*.

THOUGHT AND REASON IN WHAT HE SAYS.

Mr Douglass is a spirited and pointed writer, and his oratory will bear favourable comparison with any of our public speakers. There is thought and reason in all he says, and though his language is sometimes bitter, it is usually calm, dignified, and earnest.—*Buffalo Courier*.

WE WONDER HOW HE DID IT.

As an orator, the public here and elsewhere have had abundant opportunity to judge; and we suppose that none have ever listened to his graceful elocution, his cutting satire, and his frequent bursts of eloquence, without wonder that a man who emerged from the dense darkness of slavery, after reaching his manhood, who in fact learned his alphabet after coming to maturity, could so deservedly rank among the first orators of the day.—*Rock American*.

For sale by all Booksellers and News-Agents.

Single copies sent by mail post paid, on receipt of price.
MILLER, ORTON & MULLIGAN,
Publishers, 25 Park Row, New York, and 107 Genesee St., Auburn.

Figure 5 Advertisement for Frederick Douglass' second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1855. (The Copyright of The University of Manchester.)

At the same time, he wrote untold numbers of essays and letters and delivered untold numbers of speeches to standing room-only audiences in hundreds of towns, cities, and villages across Britain and Ireland. The subject of widespread and intensive scholarly attention, Douglass' now world-renowned transatlantic writings and speeches have been remembered, reprinted, and analysed in numerous critically acclaimed and pioneering anthologies, scholarly editions, monographs, and histories over the decades.¹⁵

Ever the ground-breaking visionary, Douglass' anticipation of the radical and revolutionary political, historical, and philosophical, let alone aesthetic and social justice, importance of pioneering Black-authored literary works provides an indispensable lens through which to not only revisit his trailblazing and world-renowned works but to recuperate and re-examine the nineteen stand-alone yet vastly neglected and under-researched narratives we reproduce in chronological order in *Narratives*. These narratives are as follows: Charles Freeman, *The Escaped Slave: An Autobiography of Charles Freeman, with a Preface by the Rev. J. Whitby, Ipswich* (London, 1853), placed alongside an edition written by an unknown white amanuensis, *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave* (London, 1850?), in a powerful declaration of radical acts and arts of Black authorship, Mrs Thomas C. Upham [Phebe Lord Upham], *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs* (London, 1850); Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones, *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley or William Jones* (Manchester, 1851); Anon., *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* (Bradford, after 1855); John Williams, *Narrative of John Williams, A Negro*

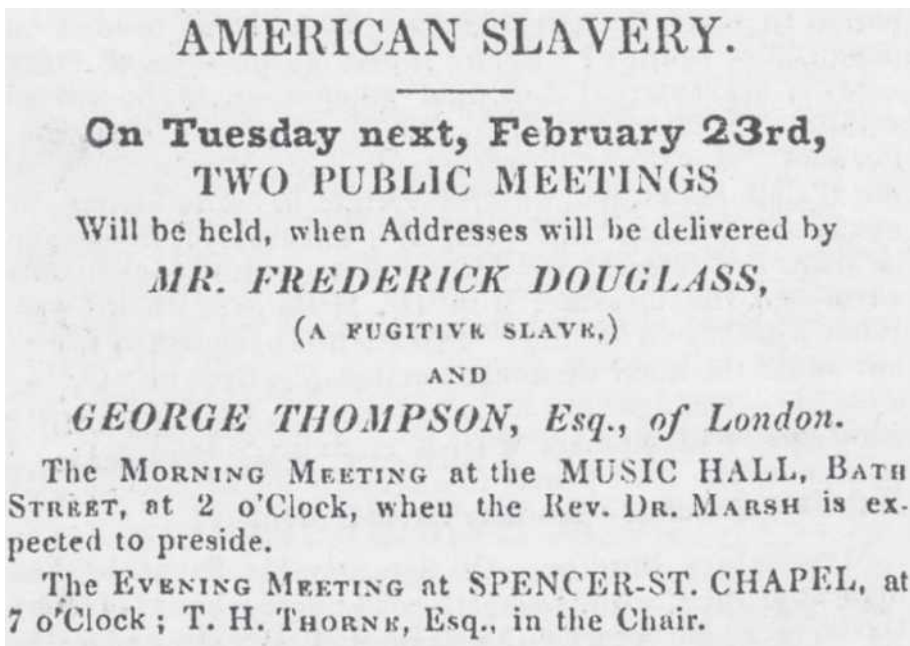


Figure 6 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Frederick Douglass. (The British Library Board, *Leamington Spa Courier*, England, 20 February 1847, p.2.)

(Chatham, Kent, 1855); the life of Henry (surname unknown), 'The Story of a Fugitive Slave' (1856–1857, edited by Frederick W. Chesson); James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* (Manchester, 1859); William Gustavus Allen, *A Short Personal Narrative* (Dublin, 1860); John Comber, *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children* (n.p., 1861); Sarah Parker Remond, 'Sarah P. Remond' (London, 1861); James Cheeney Thompson, 'Remarkable Escape from Slavery' (London, 1863); John Hawkins Simpson, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave* (London, 1863); Anon., *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin*, in Baptist Wriothlesley Noel, *Freedom and Slavery in the United States* (London, 1863); Jacob Odgers, *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith* (Redruth, Cornwall, 1871); James Alfred Johnson, *The Life of the Late James Johnson (Coloured Evangelist), an Escaped Slave From the Southern States of America, 40 Years Resident in Oldham, England* (Oldham, Greater Manchester, c.1877–1878), Ida B. Wells, *United States Atrocities* (London: 'Lux' Newspaper and Publishing Co., 1892), D. E. Tobias, *Freed . . . But Not Free. The Grievances of the Afro-American* (London, 1898); Benjamin William Brown, *Life in Slaveland* (Burnley, Lancashire, 1902).

As pioneering works sharing the life stories of four female and fourteen male African American writers who were born into varying regions and who were living their lives in differing yet overlapping time periods across the US, these nineteen narratives are equally wide-ranging with regard to authorship, literary genre, narrative form, and subject matter. Each of these works are widely divergent as concerns each individual's place of birth, gender, age, authorial identity, and autobiographical experience. While many of these African American liberators authored their autobiographical works themselves, some relied on an unknown or known, typically white, female or male, amanuensis. Complicating matters yet further, each of their works embraces a multitude of popular literary genres by drawing extensively not only from the 'slave narrative' tradition but from spiritual confessions, adventure stories, picaresque tales, sentimental fiction, political polemics, trial records, education tracts, historiographical writing, and epistolary conventions.¹⁶ Across each of these works in which African American campaigners testify to their lifelong 'fight for freedom', no topic is off limits. They warred against the 'hell-black system' of enslavement as a legal institution at the same time as they protested against the 'spirit of slavery' in the escalating rise of white supremacist ideologies, discriminations, and persecutions across US and transatlantic societies.

As experimental and eclectic works published in the decades before and after the US Civil War, these are only nineteen of the hundreds of narratives written and published by African American activist authors living and campaigning for equal rights and social justice in Britain and Ireland. These writings offer categorical confirmation of the powerful extent to which they were among the hundreds of African American activist-authors who were the architects of, as well as the participants within, radical and reformist print culture networks. Incontestably, and regardless of their formal and thematic differences, each of these authors pulls no punches regarding the inequalities of Black-white power dynamics not only within the legal history of inhumane bondage but also within a post-war emancipation era that was no liberation at all. Individually and collectively, they testified to the hard-hitting accuracy of D. E. Tobias' declaration in 1898 that 'slavery still exists in America' (Narrative No. 18). For all

the authors included in this anthology, the war was on regarding their lifelong determination to become ‘book-makers’ in their own right as a radical means not only to protest, condemn, and denounce centuries of US enslavement and its persecutory legacies in white racist acts of war, discrimination, murder, and persecution but also to resist any and all white attempts to script, edit, and censor Black acts and arts of imaginative production.

The astounding geographical reach of these nineteen narratives is staggering. These works were not only printed in the traditionally renowned publishing centres – as represented by the capital cities of London and Dublin and the major cities of Manchester and Bradford – but also in much smaller towns with far less well-known printing histories: including Chatham, Kent, Redruth, Cornwall, Oldham, Greater Manchester, and Burnley, Lancashire. The fact that many of these African American activists published their autobiographies in small and even geographically remote locations with little to no publishing histories is revealing. As a powerful testament not only to these activists’ inspirational success in writing themselves, their families, friends, and comrades into literary history, the very real trials, struggles, and difficulties they faced in the fight to publish their stories and make their voices heard within the powerful white-controlled centres of publishing is a searing indictment of the persecutory stranglehold exerted by white British and Irish racism when it came to including Black voices, testimonies, and experiences in national publishing lists in the nineteenth century and beyond.

On these grounds, for African American activists enduring the very real challenges presented by the limited distribution of their narratives across white dominant abolitionist networks, their decision to publish their autobiographies in these lesser-known places was a powerful declaration of resistance. Their very existence lays bare their undefeatable determination to rely on ‘book-making’ as a means to inform local as well as national and international communities about their lives as lived in the ‘hell-black system’ of human bondage and in the lifelong fight against ‘caste-slavery’.¹⁷ For many activists, their decision to publish their life stories was motivated by the very real necessity of securing an additional source of income and a practical means for financial survival for themselves and their families. Many of the activists we include here combined the publication of their narratives with a gruelling, emotionally traumatising and re-traumatising, and physically excruciating lecturing schedule with powerful results. Their collective delivery of thousands of lectures had a transformative impact by ensuring that, even if their narratives were printed in small presses in small places with small circulations, their political reach and social justice influence extended far beyond their immediate vicinities and succeeded in reaching national and international audiences. The fact that many of the narratives we include in *Narratives* were published in remote locations by unknown presses presents a call to scholarly arms for educators, historians, researchers, librarians, and archivists working today. It is a first intellectual, political, and social justice priority that we continue to explore all regions, cities, and towns in Britain and Ireland, however seemingly remote and unconnected, in the ongoing search for lost and previously undiscovered transatlantic histories, narratives, and materials authored by, and directly related to, the lives and testimonies of African American activists.

In *Narratives*, we publish each of these author’s works in complete and unabridged form and as accompanied by scholarly annotations and prefaced by explanatory

introductions. Across these introductory essays, we share our new research into each individual's biography and we include primary and secondary reading lists as suggestions for further research. At the outset, it is necessary to sound a key note of caution. Despite our extensive decades-long research, each of our introductions is necessarily unfinished, incomplete, and characterised by very real and ongoing gaps in biographical and archival knowledge. In many cases, we have as yet been unable to confirm birth and/or death dates for many of the fifty-two individuals we include in this volume. These omissions are a hard-hitting testament to the very real difficulties presented by any and all attempts to research African American histories of 'book-making' as created against all odds and within a white supremacist and white racist transatlantic publishing context in which white prejudicial and problematic editors, publishers, and audiences fought to retain all the power. Frederick Douglass despised, denounced, and condemned all white-owned and white-authored records, systems, and archives – all of which he collectively critiqued as 'chattel records' – for their nefarious role in disrespecting, dehumanising, and denying as well as eradicating and annihilating any and all trace of Black biographies, histories, narratives, and cultures.¹⁸ As he and the nineteen activists anthologised here understood only too well, the act no less than the art of African American 'book-making' traditions and practices in and of themselves offered a powerful means by which they were individually and collectively able to 'do themselves good' by creating detailed histories and individualised narratives of Black lives that were otherwise only 'marks, traces, possibles, and probabilities' in the white dominant archives.¹⁹

Narratives begins with *The Escaped Slave* (1853) by Charles Freeman, printed in London by Partridge & Oakey. It is a hard-hitting and powerful narration of his personal experiences of loss, sacrifice, trauma, and heroism as he made his escape to England and made a new life on British soil. To highlight Freeman's radical acts and arts of revolutionary human rights authorship, we also include the anonymously authored narrative, *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave* published by Crozier & Mullin Printers in London three years earlier. This literary work was not written by Charles Freeman himself, but was almost certainly penned by a white male amanuensis who no doubt had financial self-interest in mind in publishing this narrative while he toured England with an antislavery panorama. In reproducing the 1853 edition first and examining these works side by side, we work to expose, examine, and analyse the white racist structures and white supremacist agendas integral to narratives written by white amanuenses, particularly in works designed for and consumed by those who frequented entertainment venues. Our purpose is also to demonstrate the revolutionary and radical ways autobiographical narratives written, edited, and published by Black freedom fighters were a hard-hitting testament to the unrivalled power of their authorial voice in shaping their own experimental literary works according to their personal vision as they do justice to their own lives and the lives of their families at the same time that they narrate their traumas, experiences, and philosophies on enslavement. In examining these two works dedicated to Freeman's life and life's work, we gain a more in-depth understanding of his life before, during, and beyond his role within a panoramic show and of his independence, authority, and artistry as the creator of his own life and life story.

The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave (after 1855) (Narrative No. 5), another anonymously produced work, was published a few years later

by the printer Joseph Bentley in Bradford. While John Hart's story of enslavement and liberation follows a similar trajectory to Charles Freeman's first narrative, he or his anonymous, again most likely white and male, amanuensis makes the very different decision to reprint unacknowledged verbatim extracts from the best-selling narratives of Frederick Douglass. Much like William Wells Brown's narrative strategies across his ground-breaking literary and historical works – noted in Geoffrey Sanborn's pioneering scholarship – Hart's or his amanuensis's decision to reproduce the famous words of Frederick Douglass may well have offered them a way to tap into cultural and commercial transatlantic markets promoted by Black and white abolitionists and entertainers alike.²⁰ By borrowing from popular and famous narratives that had been tried and tested to best-selling success, Hart's story not only reveals his own struggles for survival in living his new life in an unfree, persecutory, and prejudicial white supremacist world order but also his brilliantly incisive understanding of the relationship between white abolitionists and their deliberate mass-market commercialisation, capitalisation, and appropriation of African American 'book-making' traditions.

Phebe Lord Upham, a white US author identified on the frontispiece as 'Mrs. T. C. Upham', published *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs* in London with the printers W. and F. G. Cash in 1850 (Narrative No. 3). A complex work in which white female abolitionist editorial control rather than Black authorial independence is inadmissibly to the fore, the debate over the extent to which Phebe Ann Jacobs exerted agency over this posthumously published text is an urgent area of discussion. As a narrative of Jacobs' life published after her death, this white woman's account of a Black woman's life was the antithesis of a collaborative process. Not only was Jacobs denied any opportunity to contribute to the history of her life, she was also prevented from reading the final work. As a result, Upham's interpretation of her life is an unauthorised record over which Jacobs had no say and so readers are advised to approach this text with extreme caution.

The mind-body-and-soul-destroying difficulties experienced by Black female authors when faced with the biases, prejudices, outright racisms, and white supremacist belief systems of a white literary amanuensis, female or male, are no less in evidence in white British author John Hawkins Simpson's narrative, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave* published in London by A. W. Bennett in 1863 (Narrative No. 13). Here, there are equally urgent issues with regard to the very real damage generated by white authorial silencings of Black female testimonies. A traumatised and traumatising narrative, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations* is a hard-hitting case in point regarding the psychological, physical, emotional, and personal abuses, persecutions, and tortures to which Black women were subjected not only in their enslaved lives as lived in the 'living death' of labour camps in the US South but in their seemingly self-liberated lives as narrators fighting for the right not only to tell but to exert control and authority over the printed narration of their experiences.

Here and elsewhere the social justice urgency and political importance of developing an equal human rights-centred and sensitive critical apparatus as well as a nuanced interpretative methodology according to which an appreciation for, understanding of, and respect for Black authorial strategies of 'book-making' are up, front,

and centre, and are the first considerations above all else, provides a vital means by which to begin to read against the dominant white supremacist grain in order to begin to tell the stories and share the histories of missing Black lives and their unexamined works across the African Atlantic world. On these grounds, the reinterpretation and re-examination of acts and arts of Black agency and authorship in the white-authored histories of Phebe Ann Jacobs' and Dinah Hope Browne's narratives is a first urgent priority as the sole way in which to begin to reconsider and re-examine the 'fight for freedom' to tell their story as endured not only by these neglected freedom fighters but also by world-famous and -renowned self-emancipated African American activists such as Harriet Ann Jacobs, Sojourner Truth, and Elizabeth Keckley.²¹ As self-liberated social justice campaigners and autobiographical narrators, world-renowned authors Jacobs, Truth, and Keckley also faced very real problems, serious difficulties, and prohibitive barriers in their never-ending fight for authorial and editorial control over their testimonies from white supremacist editors, publishers, and audiences.

In 1851, Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones published *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones* in Manchester with the printers Cathrall & Co. (Narrative No. 4). While the vast majority of the nineteen narratives included in *Narratives* have been digitised and/or survive in hard-to-find rare book collections, the sole surviving copy of this narrative exists only in Manchester Central Library, Manchester, England. As a work accompanied by many questions regarding the history of its narrative production, we currently have no way of ascertaining the identity of the anonymous, most likely white, author who arranged for this work's transcription and publication with any certainty. While research into this unknown individual is still ongoing, we learn from the title page that they are at pains to confirm Chisley/Jones' authorial agency from the outset. Writing on the front cover that this narrative was 'compiled from information supplied' by Chisley/Jones 'himself', a few pages in they reassure the reader they are providing the 'account' of 'his escape into one of the free states' in words as 'given by himself, (with some grammatical corrections)'.

Immediately, this author's statement lays bare the disrespectful demands and wilful tampering exerted by white prejudiced and prejudicial abolitionists who worked unceasingly to appropriate, package, and represent Black testimonies on their own terms and according to their own rules. First and foremost among their disrespectful behaviours was an overly prescriptive adherence to westernised grammar conventions that repeatedly committed violence against a formerly enslaved person's spoken language and textual expression and which were only ever a revelatory testament to the mind-body-soul-destroying consequences of white racist ignorance when it comes to Black literary narrative experimentation and literary expression. As the difficult history of Chisley/Jones' reveals, the 'Negro fight for freedom' was at a premium even in spaces and places purporting to respect Black autobiographies, Black authorship, and Black lives.

In 1855, John Williams, a man born into enslavement in Louisiana, authored and published his autobiography, *Narrative of John Williams, A Negro* in Chatham, Kent, with the printers R. Taylor Albion (Narrative No. 6). As per *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones*, this literary work survives only in the archives. This time the extant copy of this work is held in the special collections at the British Library, London. A hard-hitting and powerful autobiography, John Williams



Figure 7 Harriet Ann Jacobs, 1894, by C. M. Gilbert, Gilbert Studios, Washington DC. (Wikimedia Commons.)

stakes his claim not only to his rights as an author but to his complete authority over his narrative by informing his readers, 'The following is a true narrative of my escape from Slavery; a simple statement of events exactly as they occurred.'

Between 1856–1857, the white British abolitionist Frederick W. Chesson, son-in-law to the famed white antislavery activist and politician George Thompson, edited the autobiographical narrative of a man named Henry (surname unknown), published in serialised form in *The Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times*, a newspaper directed primarily towards a female audience. Born into enslavement in Nashville, Tennessee, we know only Henry's first name, since Chesson unforgivably does not provide his last name, nor even a name at all until Chapter 10, an immoral action that offers categorical confirmation of white violent practices of disrespect and dehumanisation when it comes to honouring African diaspora naming traditions and as wilfully endorsed by white abolitionists purporting to be committed to but outright failing to meet social justice priorities. While these persecutory and prejudicial white frameworks of abuse are very real and very painful in even beginning to attempt to understand let alone do justice to Henry's life and life experiences, his voice, his experiences, and his testimonies are dramatically to the fore in this work as a powerful declaration of Black authorial independence and a call to arms to the reader. After his perilous self-liberation journey to the northern United States and to Britain, Henry (surname unknown) resolves that his narrative 'may do something towards exciting attention, on this side of the Atlantic, to the appalling iniquities of American slavery, and towards swelling that omnipotent tide of public opinion which shall, sooner or later, sweep the accursed system from off the face of the earth for ever'.

A few years later in 1859, on the eve of the Civil War, Maryland-born freedom fighter James Watkins published a revised edition of his earlier autobiography titled, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* (Narrative No. 8). First printed in 1852, Watkins continually revised his autobiographical work to liberate himself from the oppressive tyranny of his white racist amanuensis, who helped publish his first autobiography, but also to reflect the changing antislavery landscape as he inserted, edited, and deleted various paragraphs and chapters. While he was forced to labour in Britain after fleeing the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law – an act of enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government – his family members and fellow enslaved brethren were living at that very moment in the enslaved labour camps of the US South. Distributing copies of his narrative while lecturing around Britain and Ireland, he relied on his autobiography as a space in which he meticulously recorded the numerous locations he visited as well as the abolitionist and religious networks he relied upon to maximise support for the antislavery cause. Watkins painfully described the torture he experienced during his enslavement, his heroic and death-defying self-liberation journey to Hartford, Connecticut, and then his quest to return to Maryland to find his mother. In these pages, he bears witness to the traumatising ways in which national systems of enslavement had poisoned every aspect of US society. Neglected by scholars, Watkins – a Marylander like his more famous comrades Frederick Douglass, Josiah Henson, and Harriet Tubman – relied on his narrative as a revolutionary means by which to cast new light not only on his

terrifying personal experiences of enslavement but on his relentless and courageous activism following his self-liberation on British and Irish soil.

A world-renowned African American author, scholar, orator, antislavery advocate, political activist, social justice campaigner, educator, political commentator, and transatlantic reformer, William Gustavus Allen published his autobiography, *A Short Personal Narrative*, with William Curry & Co. in Dublin, Ireland, in 1860 (Narrative No. 9). As an activist who was born into a legal freedom that was in name only in Virginia, Allen is at pains to inform his readers, 'In preparing this little narrative, I have not sought to make a book, but simply to tell my own experiences both in the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States of America, in as few words as possible.' For Allen, 'book-making' is urgent and necessary as a vital means to 'tell my own experiences'. Here he works to deny, if not outright eradicate, the literary possibilities of his narrative as a 'book' in order to ensure that nothing will distract his audiences from comprehending the enormity of his 'own' lived 'experiences'. In these pages, he shoulders the political burden of his self-appointed role as an author-activist by purposefully working with 'few words' and only with 'facts'. Laid bare in these pages is his heartfelt determination to bear witness to his 'own experiences', and in so doing 'add one more to the tens of thousands of illustrations of the terrible power with which slavery has spread its influences into the Northern States of the Union'. As it is for Allen, so it is for the African American writers and orators included in this anthology, books are useful as literary artefacts only insofar as they are usable weapons in the antislavery struggle.

Very little is known about the life and works of John Comber, an African-born social justice activist, author, and self-liberated freedom fighter who published his autobiography *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children* not as a stand-alone publication but as a poster a year later in 1861 (Narrative No. 10). As a text which circulated in broadside rather than book form, the production and dissemination of Comber's narrative raises important questions regarding British and Irish circulation networks and audience reception. In recognition of the fact that a broadside was a temporary artefact that was typically purchased only to be thrown away, the publication rationale for this narrative was likely very different to the autobiographies that were printed in bound volumes. Comber's narrative was almost certainly produced to appeal to a working rather than elite social class due to its brevity, use of visual imagery, and inclusion of accessible poetry. The as-yet untraced production history of Comber's narrative – we are so far still uncertain as to where it was published, printed, and circulated – introduces important questions regarding the ongoing moral, political, and social justice responsibility that is placed upon scholars to examine the power dynamics embedded in transatlantic publishing histories. It is only by undertaking an in-depth investigation into the power exerted by white-owned printers and publishing houses, as well as by white editors and amanuenses, for all the narratives published in Britain and Ireland by African American authors that we can even begin to understand the 'fight for freedom' of narration, expression, political philosophy, and creativity that Black 'book-makers' had on their hands. Widely varying in size, quality of paper, clarity of print, and retail price, each of these narratives' practical dimensions reveals the competing vision of their white publishers regarding their prejudicial biases and strategies of production, dissemination, and intended reception for their works.

In the same year, white Birmingham, England-born editor Matthew Davenport Hill included the autobiography, 'Sarah P. Remond', in his edited collection, *Our Exemplars, Poor and Rich; or, Biographical Sketches of Men and Women Who Have, By An Extraordinary Use of Their Opportunities, Benefited their Fellow-Creatures*, printed in London by the publishers, Cassell, Petter, and Galpin (Narrative No. 11). Living and working as a transatlantic social justice and equal rights campaigner in the US, Britain, and Ireland, legally free-born Sarah Parker Remond went on to become a renowned author, letter-writer, essayist, antislavery orator, radical reformer, scholar, and pioneering physician. At the heart of Remond's autobiography is her heartbreaking conviction that 'prejudice against colour has always been the one thing, above all others, which has cast its gigantic shadow over my whole life'. While she readily admits that the devastating impact of 'prejudice against colour' had the terrible power of 'almost overwhelming the soul constantly called to meet such a conflict', it ultimately failed to destroy her due to the 'discipline' instilled in her by her mother, Nancy Lenox Remond. An inspirational freedom fighter in her own right, as Sarah Parker Remond remembers, Nancy Lenox Remond was a woman who 'taught us to gather strength from our own souls'.

While Sarah Parker Remond was denied an official education due to white racist segregationist education systems, she thrived under a Black familial pedagogical tradition as undergirded by a philosophy of equal human rights and social justice activism. A powerful autobiography, Remond's first-person narrative fills in fundamental gaps by including vital information regarding her family, educational background, and radical reform work. Throughout her narrative, she testifies to her radicalised coming-to-consciousness of the necessity of using the printed and spoken word in the fight for civil rights. In so doing, she fully endorsed Frederick Douglass' insistence not only that African Americans become 'bookmakers' but that they transform Black people of all genders and ages from their non-existence in white official 'chattel records' into an irrefutable presence as 'living parchments' – living, breathing human beings and complex protagonists – within an African American defined literary and oratorical tradition.²² A world-renowned radical antislavery activist and woman's rights reformer whose prolific outpouring of speeches, essays, and writings are repeatedly given less scholarly attention in comparison to the works of her activist brother, Charles Lenox Remond, Sarah Parker Remond's never before reprinted autobiography enables researchers to begin to gain an insight into her personal experiences and history of radical activism.

Two years later, James Cheeney Thompson, a Virginian-born self-liberated freedom fighter, social justice campaigner, and religious missionary, published his narrative, 'Remarkable Escape from Slavery', not as a stand-alone publication or as part of an edited collection but as an entry in *The Harbinger: A Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion*, a London-based periodical (Narrative No. 12). As printed in the pages of *The Harbinger*, Thompson's narrative is a transcription, authored by an unknown and unnamed transcriber, of a lecture he originally delivered in the 'Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel' located in 'Great Malvern', Worcestershire, and which he 'illustrated by diagrams' that have not survived. The unforgivable reality that, if we rely solely on the dominant white supremacist US and UK archive for information, it is as if James Cheeney Thompson never existed, makes it a first urgent priority that not only his autobiography but the autobiographies of thousands of

Black authors and activists as included in periodicals, journals, and magazines are not only made widely accessible but are accorded their pre-eminent position as well as their due recognition in literary history and extant scholarship.

John Sella Martin, a man who had experienced enslavement in Charlotte, North Carolina, went on to become a world-renowned antislavery campaigner, social justice advocate, author, orator, journalist, essayist, political thinker, religious leader, and newspaper editor. A revolutionary activist-author, Martin repeatedly shared his personal experiences of enslavement in the US southern states across numerous narratives and speeches in which he demanded an immediate end to the centuries-long institution of inhumane bondage. While the vast majority of his spoken and written testimonies were authored and recorded in the first person over the decades, the unknown author of *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin*, a work published as chapter nine of white Scottish religious minister Baptist Wriothlesley Noel's volume, *Freedom and Slavery in the United States* in London by James Nisbet in 1863, chose to transform Martin's personal testimony into a third-person account (Narrative No. 14). An emotionally unequivocal, politically uncompromising, and conscience-raising work, Martin defies any potential control exerted by his, very likely white and male, amanuensis by voicing his own and his family's first-hand experiences of the atrocities, persecutions, and traumas of their lives lived in enslavement and, in so doing, inspiring his audiences to acts of antislavery radicalism.

Appearing a few years later in 1871, white British religious author Jacob Odgers self-published *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith* (Narrative No. 15), an autobiographical history of Lewis Smith, a powerful antislavery campaigner, inspirational educator, and important religious leader who had experienced enslavement in Mason County, Kentucky. Solely surviving in the special collections at the British Library, London, *The Self-Ransomed Slave* breaks new ground as a narrative accompanied by testimonials authored by world-renowned African American activist, author, and social justice campaigner, Henry Highland Garnet, and white British abolitionist, George Thompson.

Garnet's celebratory discourse is a powerful declaration of Black authorial independence and revolutionary intellectual and literary power. He honours Smith as 'a man of excellent character' in his 'letter of introduction' that is a damning indictment of the moral and religious frameworks that were imposed on Black authors by white abolitionists who sought to appropriate their experiences and script their voices to fit within their white dominant antislavery ideologies and white supremacist belief systems. Dramatically to the fore here is Garnet's powerful resistance to the mind-body-and-soul-destroying reality that African American subjects could not come to life on the printed page as fallible human subjects according to white racist and paternalist agendas. As per white abolitionist expectations that were antislavery but in every way pro-racist and pro-white supremacist, their lives were remembered not as per Frederick Douglass' powerful conviction that their autobiographical stories were 'living parchments' on which they could write their own memories, histories, and narratives. Instead, they were repeatedly subjected to a white supremacist and white racist gaze in a white publishing industry according to which they were dehumanised, and the fight was on to reduce their lives and testimonies to no more than 'chattel records'. As per a white racist schema, they were forced to function as flattened archetypes, dehumanised emblems, and objectified symbols of spiritual

perfection in order to be considered worthy of white mainstream audience sympathy and reformist aid. As a result, Black authors, activists, and artists fought by every means necessary as they engaged in centuries of revolutionary literary, cultural, and political activism and authorship.

A hard-hitting testament to the stranglehold exerted by white power, it is a white British abolitionist who has the last word in Lewis Smith's narrative. George Thompson concludes the text with a 'postscript' in which he endorses Smith's determination to assist in the 'education and religious improvement of the emancipated population of the United States'. In an unforgivable and immoral attempt to downplay the sufferings, sacrifices, and struggles of enslaved and self-liberated people of all ages and genders fighting for their freedoms over the generations and against centuries of white racist persecution, murder, and death, it is initiatives and campaigns not for white but for Black improvement and self-help that are lauded over and above the urgent need for the immediate re-education and urgent reform of barbaric murderous white populations living and profiting in western societies as built upon 'the flesh and blood' of untold millions of Black people.²³ Throughout this work, Lewis Smith has a 'fight' on his hands – a fight that he wins – not only to tell his own story but to share the liberation histories of his own family as an intergenerational family of freedom fighters. As he insisted, he was no isolated freedom fighter. Each of his family members living in enslavement and in a freedom that was no freedom at all endured untold struggles, sacrifices, and sufferings in their individual and collective 'Death or Liberty' fights for freedom.

James Alfred Johnson experienced enslavement in the town of Smithfield, near Wilmington, North Carolina. He secured his self-liberation and went on to live a new life fighting for all freedoms in the UK. In about 1877 or 1878 at approximately thirty years of age, he made the powerful decision to author his autobiography, *The Life of James Johnson An Escaped Slave, From the Southern States of America* (Narrative No. 16). Lying unpublished at the time it was first written, his personal narrative was printed decades later in 1914, shortly after his death, by Alice Johnson under the title, *The Life of the Late James Johnson (Coloured Evangelist), an Escaped Slave From the Southern States of America, 40 Years Resident in Oldham, England*. The sole surviving copy is held in the Oldham Local Studies and Archives collection located in Oldham, England. Across his autobiography, he experiments with an array of literary genres by drawing not only on the 'slave narrative' tradition but by riffing off conventions from the picaresque tale, the adventure story, this historical narrative, and even the travel log. Living many lives in one across the African diaspora, he was a formerly enslaved individual turned free labourer, performer, and devout preacher of the 'Lord of Life and Glory'. He was no passive martyr nor divine emblem. He narrates his life story as lived in enslavement no less than in a freedom that was no freedom at all by focusing upon Black acts of dissidence and resistance. In so doing, he experiments with the imaginative possibilities of language as a radical means by which to carve out a space for his individual expression of a trickster-like agency. For Johnson, the role of a Black 'bookmaker' is the role of a revolutionary, a radical, a dissident, a political commentator, a performer, and an artist.

Before travelling to Britain on her anti-lynching and social justice lecturing tours in 1893 and 1894, Ida B. Wells-Barnett – an inspirational freedom fighter, author, activist, orator, journalist, and newspaper editor – collaborated with Black British

activists and white British reformers to publish her revolutionary book *United States Atrocities* in 1892 (Narrative No. 17). Edited by Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards, a world-renowned Black British journalist, editor, author, and religious leader, her pioneering volume was a hard-hitting exposé of the violent and murderous acts committed by whites against people of all ages and genders on a daily basis across the United States. Bravely and heroically collating the horrifying statistics and traumatising information concerning the lynchings of untold numbers of Black people at the hands of white murderous, barbaric, torturing, racist mobs, Wells testified to her lifelong conviction that ‘the race and the public generally should have a statement of the facts as they exist. They will serve at the same time as a defence for the Afro-American Sampsons who suffer themselves to be betrayed by white Delilahs.’ Throwing down the gauntlet, Wells rhetorically asks whether Black people of all genders and ages will ever receive justice: ‘it is for Christian, liberty-loving civilisation to answer’.

In 1898, D. E. Tobias, an author and activist who had been born in South Carolina to a ‘mother and father’ who ‘were slaves’, published his powerful autobiography and social justice tract, *Freed . . . But Not Free. The Grievances of the Afro-American*, with the publishing company, S. H. Burrows, in London in 1898 (Narrative No. 18). For Tobias writing at the end of the nineteenth century, a hard-hitting narration of the struggles he and his family experienced in their lives as lived in the immediate aftermath of the legal end of enslavement is a first urgent priority. In these pages, he bears witness to the sacrifices he and his family personally endured as a means to lay bare his lifelong conviction that, decades after the legal end of bondage in 1865, Black people of all genders and ages were still ‘not free’. Dedicating his life to ‘prison reform work’, he remains unequivocal in his protest against one of the many new systems of enslavement: ‘The Convict Lease System.’ A nefarious and persecutory system which was ‘so prevalent in the Southern States’, Tobias is unequivocal in his damning indictment that it ‘is a true relic and consequence of the old system of slavery with ten times its severity’.

A human rights campaigner, radical reformer, and social justice author, Benjamin William Brown first published his autobiography, *Life in Slaveland*, with the printer Henry Hughes, in London in 1890. In this anthology, we publish a later edition printed by Nuttall & Company, in Burnley, Lancashire, England, in 1902 (Narrative No. 19). Brown’s narrative begins with an opening ‘address’ in which he informs his reader of his early life of suffering during his enslavement in Maryland. As he painfully summarises, ‘I fought my way up from Maryland, where, with hundreds of other live stock’, he poignantly confides, ‘I have shivered and suffered with hunger and cold.’ Living all his life with the traumatised and traumatising memories not only of his own experiences but of the experiences endured by ‘hundreds of other live stock’ who fought to survive their enslavement, he issues a powerful appeal to ‘every man or woman’ who ‘struck a stroke in our late great struggle’. Following his self-liberation from enslavement, he lived a new life burdened with the personal tragedies he experienced and to which he bore painful witness as a ‘slave man’.

A survivor of the Civil War, Brown was all too powerfully aware that the injustices and inequalities facing the ‘sons of Africa’ living in the US in a post-war era were the direct result of centuries of inhumane bondage. ‘The difficulties of the situation in the South are manifestly due to slavery’, he declares. In these pages, Brown draws

attention to the traumatising reality that ‘the inability of the coloured people to bear the expense of schools, either public or private, are all results of slavery, and stand like a wall in the way of educational progress’. Writing of the plight of the ‘colored people who now eagerly and with uplifted hands implore the nation for that light which education alone can give’, he is categorical in his conviction that it is only by gaining access to an education that all ‘colored people’ can become ‘American citizens’. For Benjamin William Brown, as it was for his fellow Marylander, Frederick Douglass, ‘education . . . means emancipation’.²⁴

No isolated campaigner, as we see in the group photograph reproduced on the cover of this book and in his surviving narratives and speeches included in *Narratives*, Benjamin William Brown travelled to Britain not on his own but with his young family as consisting of his wife, Jane, and their children. As of our writing, research is ongoing to identify the names and learn more about the individual lives of their twelve children. To date, we only know the names of six of their children, which are as follows: Joe Hamma Zimm Begga Wiggoa, Bertie, Fanny, Ernest, Stanley, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon Brown. Across his published writings, speeches, and activist performances, Benjamin William Brown and his family members protested against the centuries-long history of US enslavement and its nefarious legacies while spreading the gospel of temperance and raising support for religious missionaries on the African continent. Travelling and lecturing for nearly three decades, Brown worked alongside his activist wife Jane and their children: each of whom regularly sang beside him and repeatedly took a leading role in their family’s shared activist performances.

For all members of the Brown family, the ‘fight for freedom’ was no individual endeavour but an intergenerational liberation struggle. As an African American activist family whose financial survival depended not only on the sale of Benjamin William Brown’s individually authored narrative but on their collective musical and oratorical performances, they were all too aware that the right to become ‘bookmakers’ was just one among many weapons in their ‘fight for freedom’. As the Brown family and the hundreds of African American families of authors turned orators, singers, musicians, playwrights, and poets were all too painfully aware, it was the word in all its forms – written, spoken, sung, and performed – that was a power, a life force, and a weapon in the war for liberty.

The Spoken Word is a Weapon in the Freedom Struggle

‘The very word “lecture” had many times made me tremble when I had heard it mentioned as a thing I ought to engage. This, to me very important event took place in the Rev. F. Tucker’s school-room, Manchester, on the 5th of June, 1851.’ So writes James Watkins in his 1859 self-published edition of the *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* printed in Manchester, England (Narrative No. 8). For Watkins, his debut on the oratorical platform was a catalyst to his new life of activism and a transformative personal experience that was second in importance only to his self-liberation from enslavement a few years earlier in 1845. As Watkins notes in the pages of his writings, his new life in Britain and Ireland took a dramatic and powerful turn from this moment onwards. The numerous testimonials from white abolitionists and ministers he chose to place throughout his 1859 autobiography notwithstanding, Watkins was very careful to emphasise, ‘there are none I value more highly than this *first* one’ by

Rev. F. Tucker. Undoubtedly the prominence Watkins awards to Tucker is due to his life-changing role in organising his first public lecture in England. As Watkins informs his readers, the lecture he gave at this meeting marked the start of his transatlantic speaking career as the date from which he ‘continued to deliver addresses to audiences of various descriptions, most generally in school rooms or chapels, gratuitously allowed for the occasion’ (Narrative No. 8). Over the decades, he went on to deliver hundreds of lectures across Britain and Ireland which he chose to record at the end of every edition of his numerous narratives.²⁵ His decision to place each speech on record in his printed writings provides his readers with an emotionally unequivocal testament to his transformative moral and social justice impact on regional and national communities. Laid bare in these pages is Watkins’ dedication and commitment to the antislavery cause by a repeated reliance on the spoken as well as the written word as a social justice power in the ‘fight for freedom’. He was not alone.

In *Speeches*, we reprint eighty speeches in alphabetical order as delivered not only by James Watkins, Benjamin William Brown, John Sella Martin, Sarah Parker Remond, Lewis Smith, James Cheeney Thompson, D. E. Tobias, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett – all African American activist-authors whose narratives we include in *Narratives* – but by the following world-famous as well as little-known freedom fighters: Hallie Quinn Brown; John Brown; William Wells Brown; T. Morris Chester; Nelson Countee; Ellen Craft; William Craft; Alexander Crummell; William Howard Day; Isaac Perry Dickerson; Frederick Douglass; Washington Duff; Francis Fedric; Henry Highland Garnet; Jacob D. Green; Walter Hawkins; Josiah Henson; J. Hughes;

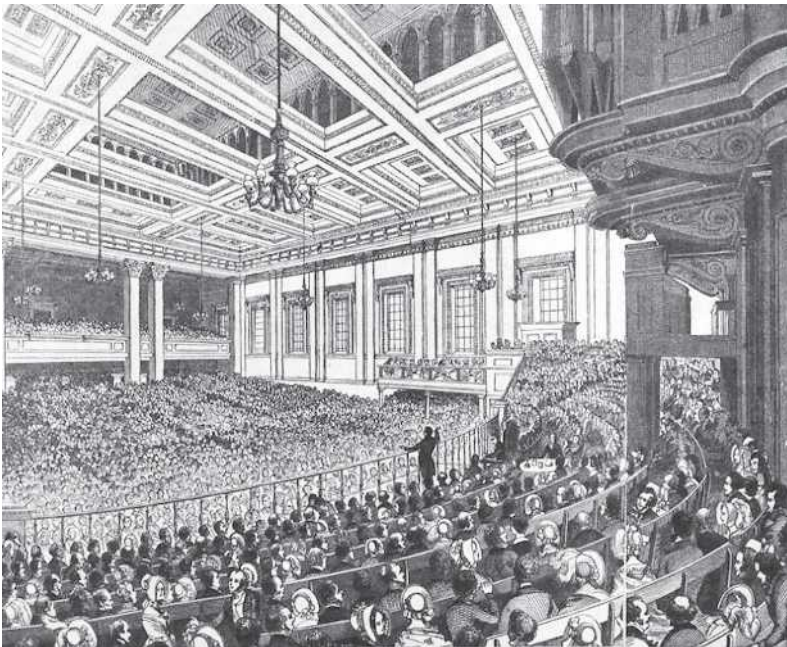


Figure 8 Anti-Corn Law League meeting at Exeter Hall, the famous venue on the Strand, London, where many abolitionist meetings were held, 1846. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Edward Irving; John Andrew Jackson; Julia Jackson; William Andrew Jackson; R. M. Johnson; Edmond Kelly; William M. Mitchell; Nathaniel Paul; James William Charles Pennington; Joseph Charles Price; Charles Lenox Remond; Moses Roper; Amanda Berry Smith; William Troy; Samuel Ringgold Ward; Turner Williams. We begin the individual entries for each orator with a short biographical sketch as accompanied by detailed suggestions for further primary and secondary reading. While some of these speeches are readily accessible by searching through digital archival collections and online repositories, none has been transcribed, annotated, or published in an accessible scholarly edition according to our research findings to date.

In their radical and politicised antislavery lecturing tours and social justice and human rights campaign journeys taken across Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century, African American freedom fighters spoke to millions of people from all geographical areas including small and large populations living in rural communities and in large industrial cities. As all the speeches delivered by these activists and reproduced in this anthology reveal, they each relied on a vast array of self-reflexively experimental oratorical tactics and techniques. In their lifelong fights against enslavement, racism, all systems of white supremacy, and all acts of white domestic terrorism, their strategies on the lecturing stage encompassed but were by no means restricted to a reliance on blistering rhetoric, powerful imagery, hard-hitting storytelling, satirical critique, uncompromising polemic, and subversive language. Yet more revealingly, for hundreds of African American orators, including the activists we include across both books, the spoken word was not enough. Across their oratorical performances, the vast majority of activists chose to accompany their speeches with a performance of their own poetry; an exhibition of large paintings on canvas which took the form of antislavery panoramas; a display of maps, drawings, and props; a performance of antislavery songs; and an exhibition of weapons of torture as irrefutable 'iron arguments' against white US enslaving murderous atrocities as perpetuated under the 'hell-black system' of enslavement.²⁶

Across the nineteenth century, African American liberators of all genders and ages lectured, sang, and performed their experiences, stories, political protests, antislavery denunciations, and human rights manifestos to audiences from all working, middle, and upper classes (including members of the aristocracy and royalty) living in Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and English societies. In the vast majority of cases these lecturing tours were arranged through established antislavery or reformist networks in hubs such as London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, and Sheffield, but they also veered off traditional pathways and lectured in remote and hard-to-reach locations. These include the Orkney Islands in the Scottish Highlands; Llanberis, a community settled at the foot of Snowdon in Wales; Cullercoats, a fishing village in the north-east of England; and Ventnor, a small town on the Isle of Wight. While some speakers like James Watkins relied on a series of interconnected networks established by white religious transatlantic abolitionists working along Wesleyan or Methodist lines, many, including Frederick Douglass, often stayed with Unitarian abolitionists, while reformers such as Henry Highland Garnet found accommodation with supporters of the Free Produce Movement. As of our writing, research is ongoing regarding the identification and mapping of the specific networks used by the vast majority of the activists we anthologise here. For so many of the orators whose speeches we include in *Speeches*,

BY PERMISSION OF THE
RIGHT WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR.
AMERICAN SLAVERY,
Comprising Three Millions of Human Beings.

This Evening, Tuesday, Dec. 13th, 1842,
MOSES ROPER,
 Who made his escape from Slavery, (and has since been pursuing
 his studies in London,) will deliver an ADDRESS, at the
GUILD-HALL, BEVERLEY,
When he will give an Account of his Personal Experience of
SLAVERY,
As it now exists in the United States of America.
 TO COMMENCE AT HALF-PAST SIX O'CLOCK.

During the Lecture he will exhibit several Instruments of Torture, fac-similes of those mentioned in his Narrative.
No Children admitted unless accompanied by their Parents.

After the Address, "A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of MOSES ROPER, from American Slavery," Fourth Edition, Price 2s. may be had at the Meeting, and of the Printer.

W. B. JOHNSON, PRINTER, MARKET-PLACE, BEVERLEY.

Figure 9 Handbill for a lecture by Moses Roper, held in Beverley, Yorkshire, England, 1842. (East Riding Archives Service, Yorkshire.)

their networks remain untraced as yet. As a result, they demand the ongoing attention of scholars in order to safeguard the prominent inclusion of the transformative contributions of African American reformers and radicals to all histories of transatlantic activism and social justice campaigns.

Working to reach transatlantic communities from all backgrounds, African American orators organised exhaustive and radical speaking tours. Just as they visited every geographical location in Britain and Ireland, so they used every available building and every available space as run by every type of secular and religious organisation. Over the decades, Black people of all gender and ages spoke from the pulpits of churches and chapels, as well as in Friends' Meeting Houses and Young Men's Christian Association venues. In a determination to spread their antislavery message to young audiences of all ages, as we have seen in the case of James Watkins' social justice lecturing campaigns, they lectured in school rooms,

Sunday schools, and to children's groups. As key sites of civic, social, and political engagement and debate, they delivered addresses in town halls, trade halls, temperance halls, guildhalls, lecture halls, and corn exchange buildings. Working to reach British and Irish labourers, they spoke in working men's institutes, mechanics' institutions, collieries, and factories. They also spoke in public places that were typically associated with the elite, as well as everyday entertainment and leisure activities including concert halls, theatres, taverns, pubs, inns, hotels, literary institutions, private clubs, and restaurants. Many African American activists addressed members of the aristocracy and royalty in the private parlour rooms of their country houses and in their palaces. When no building could be found, and also as a practical means to reach audiences in bigger numbers, they regularly spoke in parks or open spaces. Working to safeguard accessibility for all when it came to attending their public programmes, while African American campaigners sometimes charged a fee for their lectures – and from which the proceeds went to their humanitarian causes – they often discounted and even waived these charges depending upon the economic needs of their audiences.

Some of the buildings in which these African American orators spoke still exist today and so for the benefit of the readers of *Speeches*, we not only reprint the individual portraits of each of the freedom fighters, where available, but we also reproduce a number of these locations in accompanying illustrations. As sacred and consecrated sites in the history of Black liberation, these spaces and places of activism serve as monuments to the histories, lives, and words belonging to these radical warriors for social justice and human rights. Day after day, night after night, hour after hour, African American orators pushed not only their voices but their minds, bodies, and souls to breaking point. Across their thousands of speeches, they laid bare their lifelong determination to inform transatlantic audiences of the murderous atrocities and brutalities of white US enslavers and of white supremacist violence, terrorism, and global oppression. In all their surviving works, they testify to a shared commitment to galvanising each of their listeners to personal acts of political change and social justice reform.

While many of the physical sites survive to testify to hidden histories of African American heroism in Britain and Ireland, we urge our readers to treat the official printed records of the speeches that have been left behind and which we reproduce and annotate in *Speeches* with extreme caution. Just as the African American activists included in *Narratives* faced serious difficulties and seemingly impossible challenges in navigating white publishing houses, white amanuenses, and white editors in order to safeguard the survival of their life story in print, so the orators we include in *Speeches* faced unimaginable barriers in their fight to preserve their spoken testimonies with any accuracy in the white dominant, prejudicial, and discriminatory printed archives: Frederick Douglass' 'chattel records'. For every orator we include in *Speeches*, each of their speeches was originally published in white-owned newspapers and transcribed by white, typically male, journalists and editors. As a result, each of these printed records of African American activists' voices has already been fractured through, subjected to, disrespected, and wilfully distorted by white newspaper reporters and correspondents living their daily lives according to the white racist biases, prejudices, and persecutions endorsed by mainstream Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and English societies.

**WESLEYAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,
DRIFFIELD.**

A LECTURE
Will be given in the **TEMPERANCE HALL**, on
WEDNESDAY, NOV. 15th, 1899, by
MISS HALLIE Q. BROWN,
The famous Afro-American Lecturer and Reciter
(Of Wilberforce College, Ohio, U.S.A.). Subject—
"NEGRO SONGS AND FOLK LORE."
Illustrated by Melodies and Recitations.

Chair will be taken at 7.30 by **Mrs FRANK DRY.**
TICKETS—Front Seats, 1s; Second Seats, 6d.

Figure 10 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Hallie Quinn Brown. (The British Library Board, *Driffield Times*, 11 November 1899, p.2.)



Figure 11 Photograph of the Philosophical Hall, Leeds, England, where antislavery and reform meetings were held. (Leeds Libraries, Leodis.net.)

No less damagingly, in practical terms, although many of these white newspaper reporters were often adept at shorthand, key words, phrases, and even whole sections of the speeches delivered by African American orators and which we include here were repeatedly misreported, misquoted, and even ignored. Yet more revealingly regarding the collateral damage generated by white ignorance let alone white racism, a vast array of self-reflexively experimental Black performative techniques and tactics as exhibited on the lecturing stage were often entirely missed by wilfully ignorant, deliberately disrespectful, and purposefully discriminatory white newspaper correspondents. For radical political purposes and in pursuit of their antislavery agenda, many activists sometimes deliberately played into white Victorian prejudices *and* the notion of oratory as entertainment by tapping into popular cultural narratives and singing antislavery songs and melodies and even entering into plantation dialect in order to encourage white racist audiences to attend and be morally transformed by their lectures and win support on the Victorian stage. Equally, many were extremely careful to shroud such techniques through a language of double meaning, masking, or signifying that disguised an activists' real intentions and feelings and worked to subvert, critique, and challenge white audiences' racist expectations. In the vast majority of cases these Black experimental and expressive traditions were not only misreported and mistranscribed but were omitted entirely by white reporters who were unable to understand or appreciate the complexities of their addresses.²⁷

Yet further caution is necessary when it comes to relying on the factual accuracy of each orator's biographical details as reported in these white 'chattel records' of Black testimonies. In many instances, white journalists showed no care or respect for Black orators by repeatedly misspelling names – Frederick Douglass is often 'Frederic Douglas' – while they repeatedly mis-recorded an individual orator's birth date and birthplace and/or date of self-liberation from enslavement and/or names of their family members. Adding insult to injury, for white racist newspapers that did not value or respect Black testimonies, their white reporters repeatedly chose to abridge and shorten their transcriptions of individual speeches. By way of offering an excuse for their nefarious actions, they claimed restrictions of column space as their reason. A hard-hitting case in point, an unnamed, almost certainly white and male, correspondent writes of their limited coverage of J. Hughes' speech, which he delivered in Bedford, England, in 1864, of their 'regret that our space will not allow a more lengthy notice of the lecture' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 37). Here we are left with more questions than answers. Was their regret 'real'? Who made the decision to withdraw the space that made an accurate recording of Black testimony impossible, and why? Regardless of their motivations, there can be no doubt that Hughes' powerful testimony was not only edited but purposefully erased by an unknown reporter with the devastating consequence that we are unable to gain access to his speech in its entirety.

Yet more difficulties emerge from white journalists' arbitrary decisions – as arising from their own discriminatory biases, prejudices, and motivations – to censor and/or edit Black voices to suit their own agenda. Listening to Francis Fedric's speech that he delivered in London in 1862, an unnamed reporter decided they were not going to transcribe his graphic account of a white US enslaver's violence. Unforgivably pandering to white racist sensibilities, they informed their readers, 'we omit the account of the horrible tortures to which the slaves are subjected, as his tale of woe will be repeated in various parts of the neighbourhood' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 25). For this reporter,

the burden of transcribing white violence as enacted against enslaved people was to fall elsewhere, with other correspondents whom he assumed would attend and cover his speech as delivered in other venues. As a result, this journalist was responsible for creating an irrecoverable gap regarding Fedric's denunciation of white atrocities in the records of his lecturing tour. Yet further devastating omissions were generated by white racist reporters who disrespectfully sought to call the authority of Black orators into question. For James Cheeney Thompson delivering a speech in Ulverston, England, in 1861, his transcriber chose to insert a comment in which he committed wilful violence against his speech. His dismissive statement – 'that he has gone through anything like what he describes in his narration we have heard a great many doubt' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 67) – had only one purpose: to discredit, deny, and cast doubt over the authority of Black testimonies and the realities of Black lived experiences.

Working to disparage, disrespect, and dehumanise African American voices and African American bodies in their white mainstream newspaper accounts, many white correspondents chose to preface their transcriptions of individual speeches with explicitly racist physical descriptions of Black freedom fighters. As a world-renowned orator who was repeatedly subjected to white racist stereotypes of his face and body in the international press, Frederick Douglass held white discriminatory reporters to powerful account for their prejudicial actions and white supremacist ignorance all his life. A revealing case in point, in a speech he delivered in Cork, Ireland, on 27 October 1845, he begins by readily admitting, 'there has been a little misunderstanding between myself and the Reporter of one of your papers'. As Douglass further clarifies, in his 'first meeting' held in the city 'the Reporter took occasion to speak of me as a fine young Negro', categorically informing his audiences, 'Well, that is the mode of advertising in our country a slave for sale.' Warring against any and all such white racist descriptions in the Irish press according to which he was described in the same language as 'a slave for sale', Douglass declares, 'I took occasion to allude to the apparent sweeping manner in which I was spoken of.' As a result of his protest, he tells his listeners, 'I find from information which I have received that the gentleman who wrote it had no intention to sneer or speak slightly of me or the Negro race at all.' Despite learning that this reporter's use of prejudicial language was seemingly rooted in an act of unconscious bias rather than a deliberate act of racism, Douglass' final declaration, 'I am glad to know it', makes it clear to his audiences that he and he alone will remain unceasingly and forever vigilant against all acts of white persecution.²⁸ As he knew all too well, the damage caused by white racist language was a real and an ongoing devastating reality.

Douglass' experiences of white transatlantic racism were no isolated incident. In every transcription of every speech by every orator we include in *Speeches*, categorical confirmation of each unnamed white reporter's racism is in evidence by way of their explicit reliance on direct and indirect discriminatory language. These persecutory biases within the white supremacist archive render it necessary that we do not analyse these printed records in isolation. Rather, it is a first urgent priority that we combine our investigation into the white-authored written records of African American speeches with an in-depth analysis of their autobiographical works, performances, and testimonies in order to foreground Black voices, Black testimonies, and Black narratives and to minimise, wherever possible, the damage caused by the nefarious influences of the white supremacist 'chattel record'.

For James Watkins, Benjamin William Brown, John Sella Martin, Sarah Parker Remond, Lewis Smith, James Cheeney Thompson, D. E. Tobias, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett – eight African American freedom fighters whose works are included in both *Narratives* and *Speeches* – we anthologise their written narratives and spoken addresses. In so doing, our aim has been to demonstrate the intimate and intertwined thematic and formal connections that exist between the subject matter and choice of language that is included in African American narratives and speeches published and delivered in Britain and Ireland during this period. Over the decades, many African American activists chose to relate or even recount stories directly from their printed narratives to their live audiences as a means to inspire their listeners to acts of anti-slavery activism and also buy their books at the end of their lectures. No less powerfully, many writers also chose to incorporate the content of their oratory into their literary works.

A revealing case in point, James Watkins writes in his self-published 1859 autobiography, ‘Happy England! what light and privileges are thine! Land of liberty and of might, – help, help to strike the death blow to that unmitigated iniquity, that accumulation and climax of woes and sorrows, American Slavery!’ The repeated use of the word ‘help’ is a powerful confirmation of his deliberate decision to immortalise the declaration that he had been making for years in his speeches and transferring it to print, in order to inspire his British and Irish readers to acts of antislavery activism. Self-reflexively keenly aware of both performance and printed pathways, Watkins makes declarations to specific members of his audience in his narrative that were no doubt inspired by his activism on stage, too. He writes: ‘Ye mothers of England, surrounded by your happy families, think what would be your feelings if your home was liable to be entered at any hour, by a man claiming to own you, your husband, and your family. A man who could sell you to one country, your husband to another, and your daughters for purposes which no mother can think of without horror’ (Narrative No. 8). A statement not made in earlier editions and indicative of years of honing his oratorical craft on stage and applying to it his literary work, Watkins inserts this emotional and hard-hitting appeal to force white women either listening to his speech or reading his work to recognise and admit their own white female privilege in the light of the devastating and brutal realities that women like Watkins’ own mother, Milcah Berry, faced on a daily basis.

Similarly, in Benjamin William Brown’s *Life in Slaveland* he writes painfully of the separation of mother and child on the auction block, an experience he had shared with his audience in Gravesend, Kent, over a decade earlier in 1890. For Ellen Craft and William Craft, a married couple who had experienced enslavement in Georgia, years of honing their death-defying story of liberation on the British lecturing stage repeatedly across their hundreds of speeches – four of which we include here (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 14, 15, 16, and 17) – arguably influenced the content of their autobiography, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* published by William Tweedie in London in 1860.²⁹ By this date, the Crafts had a decade-worth of experience and were seasoned performers and actors who transferred their deep knowledge and skill of stirring suspense, terror, danger, and pathos from live audiences to readers of their revolutionary and soul-stirring narrative.

An investigation into the history of African American speech-making traditions, practices, and networks in Britain and Ireland makes it possible to begin to gain a

fresh understanding of the purpose of Black ‘book-making’ traditions. In a speech he delivered in Leicester in 1838, Moses Roper, a man who experienced enslavement in Caswell County, North Carolina, informs his audiences of his radical decision to circulate his narrative to ‘every slave-holder whose name is there mentioned’ in the US, and on British soil. Within the same speech, he also mentions presenting a white British clerk with a copy of his book to shame him and prevent him from selling chains and manacles to white US enslavers for use in their labour camps (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60). For Roper and hundreds of African American activists, ‘book-making’ as an act of liberation was only one of the driving forces behind penning their works as his and their autographical narratives took on new lives via their powerful reuse across their speeches. Over the centuries, Black liberators chose to endorse the written and spoken word as dual weapons in the ‘fight for freedom’.

Starkly contrasting to *Narratives*, in which the majority of the written narratives are by neglected authors, many of the African American orators we include in *Speeches* are widely known and extensively researched political leaders and literary authors. As listeners and readers will see in the bibliography and further reading lists, the following renowned freedom fighters we include in these pages have all been the subject of scholarly essays, biographies, histories, and critical studies: Hallie Quinn Brown, John Brown, William Wells Brown, Thomas Morris Chester, Ellen Craft, William Craft, Alexander Crummell, Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, Josiah Henson, John Sella Martin, Nathaniel Paul, James William Charles Pennington, Charles Lenox Remond, Sarah Parker Remond, Moses Roper, Samuel Ringgold Ward, James Watkins, Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

Nothing could be further from the case, however, for the remaining liberators whose voices and testimonies we include in this collection. Despite their world-leading significance and transformative impact on the freedom struggle and on African American oratorical traditions, the following individuals have left the scantest trace on the official archive: Nelson Countee, William Howard Day, Isaac Perry Dickerson, Washington Duff, Francis Fedric, Jacob D. Green, Walter Hawkins, J. Hughes, Edward Irving, John Andrew Jackson, Julia Jackson, William Andrew Jackson, R. M. Johnson, Edmond Kelley, William M. Mitchell, Joseph Charles Price, Amanda Berry Smith, Lewis Smith, James Cheeney Thompson, D. E. Tobias, William Troy, Turner Williams. As of our writing, research is very much ongoing into their lives and works. For many of these freedom fighters we do not know their full names or dates of birth or death let alone any detailed biographical information. In the majority of cases, all we have is the information about their lives that they provide in their speeches. As a powerful result, were it not for their revolutionary speeches, as reproduced in the white mainstream periodical press by typically white racist reporters, it would be all but impossible to memorialise their lives and works. Their individual biographies have been all but eradicated in white ‘chattel records’ that continue to fail to do justice to Black transatlantic literary and cultural histories.

On these grounds, *Speeches* publishes the pioneering speeches of renowned activist-orators alongside those that were delivered by their lesser-known, yet seminally important, contemporaries. As we argue here, it is only by examining the works of iconic and lesser-known African American orators, writers, and activists in comparative rather than isolated perspective that it is possible to begin to do justice to the experimental literary techniques, eclectic thematic focus, and unequivocal political

power of their revolutionary and radical works that, read and analysed together, constitute a multifaceted rather than monolithic Black transatlantic literary tradition. At the same time as we include speeches by neglected African American speakers we expand the corpus of works produced by their renowned contemporaries by newly excavating their previously unknown speeches. During the nineteenth century and beyond, all of the orators in *Speeches* delivered hard-hitting speeches in which they converted British and Irish audiences of all genders and ages in their thousands by inspiring their transatlantic audiences to participate in a united fight against all forms of enslavement, racism, oppression, and inequality.

Born legally free in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Hallie Quinn Brown went onto become a renowned social justice advocate, civil rights campaigner, scholar, educator, elocutionist, performer, orator, and author. Across the many speeches she gave during her repeated visits to the UK, Brown protested against the atrocities committed by white racist lynch mobs. Warring against all white racist libels against Black humanity, she was categorical in her denunciation of white discriminatory abuses in a speech she delivered to audiences in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1896 (*Speeches*, Speech No. 4). As she informs her listeners, 'The fact that during the four long years of the Civil War the Southern whites left their women and children under the sole protection of their negroes, and that not one single case of breach of that trust can be cited, gives the lie to the malicious blackening of the negro character.'

John Brown experienced enslavement in Georgia and he was a freedom fighter who was a living witness to white southern enslaving barbarity and inhumanity. Across his speeches, he relied on traumatising imagery to recount the physical tortures that were inflicted not only upon members of his own family but upon enslaved people fighting to survive on nearby labour camps. Speaking to audiences in Bristol, England, decades earlier in 1852, he stated, 'His master, Charles Stevens, was a cruel man, and he one day saw him split a man's head open with a barrel stave. He also shot another man named Morgan, who fell dead in his (Mr. Brown's) arms' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 6). No less powerfully, William Wells Brown, a man who had experienced enslavement in Kentucky and who went onto become a world-renowned freedom fighter turned novelist, historian, essayist, and dramatist, endorsed an unflinching use of legal and political language to denounce the hypocrisy of the United States as a nation in which white freedoms were made possible solely by the enslavement of millions of Black people of all genders and ages. As a newspaper reporter confirms, in a speech he gave in Leeds, England, in 1850, Brown declared, 'So much had been said in favour of America by Americans who had visited this country, that it only seemed proper that some one should speak in favour of the slave, who could not, and who would not put confidence in the slaveholder or his apologists who might visit England' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 8).

Travelling throughout Britain during the US Civil War, activist, journalist, and soldier Thomas Morris Chester consistently challenged the nefarious practices of the southern Confederacy, the alliance of pro-enslaving states which seceded from the Union, as consisting of white enslavers and persecutors and its supporters across the transatlantic world. He powerfully stated that the white enslaving southern states stood for 'false Christianity, prostitution of the press, a shackled public sentiment, a total disregard of the rights and liberties of men, the desecration of the Western territories, the encouraging of that civilisation which justified the father in prostituting his own daughter, and

encouraged the son to endeavour to break down the virtuous instincts of his own sister, the lashing of the back of a woman because she dared to teach her sister to read the Bible, and the murdering of John Brown at Harper's Ferry' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 11). In his powerful speeches against the torture and violence committed by white enslavers in the South, Chester championed Black combat heroism and urged his audiences to support the federal government and the Union Army during the US Civil War.

For Nelson Countee, a man who experienced enslavement in Virginia, a determination to expose white enslaving violence as a catalyst to Black resistance was his first priority. Speaking to audiences in Portsmouth, England, in 1876, he remembers his time 'held in bondage' decades earlier. 'Being in the house as servant it was his duty to clean the silver and knives', recalling for his audiences that 'one day his mistress was about to beat him over the head with the handle of the carving knife'. While 'he put up his arm to evade the blow', he painfully informs his listeners of the terrible fact that, 'owing to his mistress declaring that he had struck her he was heavily flogged'. Dedication to a refusal to surrender to white barbarity, however, Countee made the powerful decision to secure his self-liberation. As he summarises, it was from this point onwards that, 'he made up his mind to run away' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 13).

As a world-renowned wife and husband team of freedom fighters whose sensationalised and death-defying acts of self-liberation from enslavement in Macon, Georgia, made history, Ellen Craft and William Craft used their speeches to testify to the psychological traumas and physical atrocities experienced by all enslaved people. Across their oratorical performances, including the address they gave with William Wells Brown in Nottingham, England, in 1851, William Craft sheds light on Ellen Craft's rationale for deciding to secure her self-liberation from enslavement by offering the following explanation: 'she reflected that though her master was better than hundreds of others, he had at anytime the power of separating them, placing her upon the auction-stand, and selling her to the highest bidder' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 15). For Ellen Craft, no less than for William Craft, the threat of family separation was an unimaginable tragedy and a catalyst to their heroic acts of self-liberation.

Born legally free in New York City, Alexander Crummell was a world-renowned minister, orator, scholar, author, antislavery campaigner, missionary, and political thinker. In a speech he gave in Preston, England, in 1849, he was candid regarding the persecutory consequences of white US racism. As he confides to his listeners, 'There was a great antipathy existing in the United States to the colour of the man; and this was exhibited particularly towards the Africans, who being poor and uncared for wandered up and down the country at their own will' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 18).

As an activist who was also born legally free in New York City, William Howard Day, a social justice and human rights campaigner, author, educator, and newspaper editor, made the powerful decision to express his protest against the mind-body-and-soul-destroying consequences of US racism by leaving the United States for a new life fighting for all freedoms in Canada. In Hull, England, in 1861 while on a fundraising tour of the UK in support of his school in Ontario, Canada, Day foregrounds hidden histories of centuries of Black acts and arts of self-liberation. The journalist records Day's response to any and all white racist detractors who claimed that 'the slave would not have liberty if it was offered to him', by recording his powerful question: 'why were there, then, 40,000 fugitives in Canada?' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 19).



Figure 12 Ellen Craft, author portrait from Ellen and William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery*. London: William Tweedie, 1860. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Isaac Perry Dickerson experienced enslavement in Virginia. He was a freedom fighter, educator, singer, performer, orator, and religious leader who delivered a speech in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, in 1897. In this small town in England, he gave an ‘impressive address’ to a packed audience in which he provided ‘vivid descriptions of incidents in his life proved both instructive and entertaining’. As one of many orators who refused to rely on the spoken word alone, the reporter further confirms, ‘additional interest was given to the proceedings on some occasions by the exhibition of a number of views’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 20).

Washington Duff experienced enslavement in Kentucky. He was a freedom fighter and social justice campaigner who spoke in Cambridge, England, decades earlier in 1865. And yet, while they were delivering their speeches decades apart, the unnamed reporter confirms, ‘A lecture was delivered at the Working Men’s Institute, on Monday last, on “Slavery,” by Washington Duff, a fugitive slave, who made his escape from the slave state of Kentucky’, which was ‘illustrated by Dissolving Views, showing the various cruelties practised on slaves by their owners, to which he himself was also a victim and martyr’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 24). For both Dickerson and Duff, a reliance on the visual image via the varying display of a ‘number of views’ and ‘Dissolving Views’ worked to underscore, reinforce, and call their audiences’ unequivocal attention to the hard-hitting emotional and political power of their spoken testimonies.

For Francis Fedric, a man who had experienced enslavement in Virginia, a determination to direct his transatlantic audiences’ attention to the plight of enslaved children was a first urgent priority. In a speech he delivered in London in 1862, he held nothing back by confiding that they not only faced near starvation but were treated like animals. His haunting description of meal times on a US southern labour camp makes for emotive and traumatising reading: ‘all the young’uns scrambled round the trough and sucked up its contents like pigs’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 25).

For Henry Highland Garnet, a world-renowned antislavery campaigner and religious minister who had secured his self-liberation from enslavement in Maryland, a commitment to exposing Black suffering and inspiring his transatlantic audiences to political action by boycotting goods produced by enslaved people lay at the heart of his campaign. As the reporter of Garnet’s speech he delivered in Hereford, England, in May 1851, confirms, ‘He trusted that the people of this country would never forget that, if Africa were to rise from her present position, if American slavery were to be abolished, these things must be accomplished to a great extent by British philanthropy and British Christianity, and the determination to consume only free-labour productions’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 28). In an address he delivered in Exeter, England, decades later, in 1891, Walter Hawkins relied on a powerful means by which to challenge white supremacist ideologies by focusing on Black political, intellectual, philosophical, and emotional power. As the reporter confirms, he jubilantly informed his audiences, ‘He was proud to be a black man. He would not whitewash his face for all the money in the country’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 31).

African American liberator and freedom fighter Jacob D. Green lectured across Britain throughout the 1860s and published an autobiographical work, *Narrative of the Life of J.D Green, a Runaway Slave, from Kentucky, Containing an Account of His Three Escapes, in 1839, 1846, and 1848* (Huddersfield, 1864). He gave numerous speeches across Manchester, Lancashire, and Kirklees during the US Civil War (1861–1865), in part to challenge the Confederacy, the alliance of pro-enslaving states

that seceded from the Union to protect and preserve US enslavement, and to directly target pro-Confederate support in Britain. Green worked alongside freedom fighters like Frederick Douglass, who wrote 'The Slave's Appeal to Great Britain' in 1862 to demand that transatlantic audiences denounce the Confederacy: 'their pretended government is but a foul, haggard and blighting conspiracy against the sacred rights of mankind . . . have no fellowship, I pray you, with these merciless men-stealers; but rather with whips of scorpions scourge them beyond the beneficent range of national brotherhood'.³⁰ Green, like Douglass, fought to counteract narratives promulgated by white racists in Britain who declared that the white enslaving South had seceded not in defence of their institution of enslavement but instead to preserve states' rights in the face of a tyrannical federal government; in his lectures, Green offered irrevocable proof that the nefarious and brutalising institution of enslavement in the US South was the backbone of the Confederacy and was ultimately the main cause of the war. To do this, he powerfully 'read statements to prove that slavery was the cause of the secession of Louisiana and South Carolina' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 29). Green continued to war against white supremacist ideologies in all areas of life: he boldly and bluntly rejected the racist and persecutory narratives written and promoted by white scientific racists that falsely, erroneously, and unjustly alleged that people of African descent were naturally and biologically inferior. He applied his anti-white supremacist resistance strategies to his religious teachings too. In a radical speech he challenged artistic and literary representations of Jesus Christ who 'was always pictured as white, whilst the people in the country in which he dwelt were either between a light or dark brown olive or jet black'. Green challenged commonly held racist perceptions and whitewashed western narratives that deliberately erased the true heritage of Jesus Christ, demonstrating how white supremacist thought operated in every aspect of western transatlantic society.

For Josiah Henson, the world-renowned self-liberated author, orator, activist, community organiser, political leader, and social justice advocate, a determination to do justice to his pride in one 'black man' in particular – his enslaved father and his hidden history of heroism – undergirds many of his speeches. In a speech he delivered in Sheffield, England, he powerfully narrates his father's death-defying courage in defence of his wife, Henson's mother. As he recalls, his father 'saw a man brutally assaulting my mother' with immediate results: 'He forgot there was no law to protect his manhood, but leaping over the fence he sprang like a tiger on my mother's assailant, threw him to the ground, and trampled on him as though he were a dog.' As Henson painfully remembers, his father's death-defying courage was met with terrible violence at the hands of his barbaric white enslaver. He relies on powerful language to provide a harrowing narration of the white man who 'pulled his clothes from his back' and 'took a cowhide and began to beat him, every blow making the flesh to fly and the blood to run'. At the same time that he provides a powerful condemnation of white murderous savagery, Henson is categorical in his exultation of his father's heroism. As he declares, 'If my father had died at the stake, with his ear cut off and the blood streaming from his shoulders, I should have thought he died one of the most honourable deaths that ever man died in the world' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 34). A determination to denounce white enslaving atrocities no less undergirds the speeches of William Andrew Jackson, a freedom fighter who had experienced enslavement in Virginia. In an address he delivered in Bury, England, in 1863, he

communicated to his audiences that there was ‘no law against a slaveholder whipping his slave to death if he liked’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 40).

For Maryland-born J. Hughes, an antislavery campaigner who secured his self-liberation from enslavement in Baltimore in 1860/1861 – as for Dickerson and Duff and many more activists included across these anthologies – words were not enough to condemn white US enslaver violence. As the journalist summarises, in a speech he delivered just one year later in 1864 in Bedford, England, Hughes, ‘exhibited a “flapper” with which female slaves are whipped, – and gave much instructive information respecting the employment of bloodhounds and other horrors of the slave trade’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 37).

In the same year, Edward Irving, a self-liberated abolitionist and activist from New Orleans, Louisiana, gave a speech in Cheltenham, England. Also delivering his address to English audiences against the backdrop of the US Civil War, he was at pains to name and shame the financial greed motivating the nation’s support of the white US enslaving South. As the reporter summarises, ‘The lecturer remarked that the real secret of England’s sympathy with the Southern States was found in the cotton trade.’ In his address, Irving had no qualms in directly confronting white Britain’s sins by categorically instructing his audiences regarding the errors of their ways. He brooked no dissent to argue, ‘it was wrong to pray for peace until the foundation-stone of liberty and right had been laid’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 38).

Just a few years earlier in 1860 and immediately prior to the Civil War, John Andrew Jackson and Julia Jackson, a wife-and-husband team who had variously secured their self-liberation from enslavement in South and North Carolina, gave a speech in Gravesend, England. While John Andrew Jackson provided ‘descriptions of the scenes he had witnessed’ during his enslavement which ‘were most heart-rending’, and which included the violence he had suffered in his own body in ‘stripes and blows innumerable’, Julia Jackson focused on appealing to their British audiences for ‘funds to get to free his father and the two children’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 39). For both Jacksons, the spoken word was useful only insofar as it was a tool to secure not only their white audience’s empathy but their practical support for the liberation of enslaved family members.

A few years later in 1865, R. M. Johnson, a man who had effected his self-liberation from enslavement in Lexington, Kentucky, delivered a speech in Colchester, Essex. Here he focused not on the physical but on the psychological tortures and abuses endured by enslaved people by confiding, ‘Among the evils of slavery the first rank must be given to its moral influence.’ As he explained, ‘It destroyed the proper feelings of a man by crushing his spirit, annihilating his self-respect, and rendering him unconscious of the duty owed by the creature to his Creator and Judge’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 41).

In 1853, the Reverend Edmond Kelley – a man who had experienced enslavement in Columbia, Tennessee – travelled to Britain in order to raise money to purchase the legal freedom of his family. He had originally agreed an amount with his former enslaver, but subjected to his nefarious lies and deceit, the enslaver reneged on his former promise and cheated him from purchasing his family members. Kelley lectured in Britain in 1853 to raise the new amount and combined his lecturing tour with a printed circular to appeal for funds to ‘secure me against the above iniquitous enactment’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 42).

In 1865, legally free-born William M. Mitchell delivered a speech in Bristol, England, in which he not only protested against white US enslaving acts of murder,

persecution, and violence, but he also celebrated hidden histories of Black resistance. For the education of his audiences, he shared stories of the history of the 'underground railroad in the United States of America' by explaining that it was a clandestine network that 'existed in different directions, from the shores of Canada, through the free States, to the borders of the slave States'. Speaking from personal experience, as the journalist confirms, Mitchell confided to his listeners, 'He was a conductor of that railroad for twelve years.' Shedding light on this organisation's secret operations, he provides a general summary as follows: 'A slave, for instance, would go to his (the lecturer's) house, and he would take him along a route to the house of another gentleman, who would pass him on to the next, and by that means he would arrive safely in the land of freedom.' 'That was the whole solution of that mysterious term, "underground railroad," by which they secured the freedom of 1,200 slaves a-year', he concludes. For Mitchell, as for thousands of African American campaigners during this period, the centuries-long existence of the Underground Railroad was irrefutable evidence that 'the slave panted for the living waters of freedom' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 48).

Decades earlier, Nathaniel Paul, a man who had been born legally free in Exeter, New Hampshire, and who went on to become a world-leading reformer, educator, and antislavery campaigner, delivered a speech in 1833 in Devizes, England. In this address, he spoke not only of the 'many heart rending accounts of cruelties practiced on the *unoffending slave*' but he also condemned the 'many instances of gross oppression' directed 'towards the *free coloured people* in different States' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 50).

Nearly twenty years later, in 1850, James William Charles Pennington, a man who had experienced enslavement in Maryland and who went on to become a renowned activist, scholar, philosopher, author, orator, and religious leader, undertook one of many of his social justice campaign tours to the UK. In this year, he gave a lecture in Newcastle, England, in which he chose to foreground the suffering not of enslaved adults but of enslaved children and mothers. Purposefully confiding that, 'he wished to make an appeal on behalf of the women and children of his country', the reporter summarises that Pennington 'remembered how many dreary and melancholy hours he passed when a child, for want of proper parental care'. According to Pennington's painful testimony, 'No child whose mother was in slavery, could enjoy anything like parental care, for when it was four weeks old, the mother was required to go forth, and all the care the child received from her was in the morning before she went to her work, and in the evening when she returned weary and exhausted' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 52).

Born legally free in North Carolina, social justice campaigner Joseph Charles Price delivered a speech in Hastings, England, decades later in 1881, in which he also shared stories of the experiences, lives, and persecutions endured by women as well as children. Summarising the 'habits of the youngsters of his race', and sharing 'descriptions of the women', Price informs his listeners that 'they all used to pray in a whisper, for if the slave drivers heard them they would be whipped', poignantly recalling, 'There was one woman now living who was so scared that she still prayed in a whisper' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 53).

For Charles Lenox Remond, a legally free-born world-renowned activist, author, and orator, a determination to denounce the atrocities experienced not only by

enslaved but by legally free Black populations living in a freedom that was no freedom at all defined his oratory. In a speech he gave in Manchester, England, in 1841, he was careful to inform his listeners, ‘Though he has never been a slave, yet, having suffered deeply from the influence of that unhallowed spirit of caste which leads the (technically) white class to outlaw and insult the descendants, in the remotest degree of the African race, he can speak, and does speak, as one into whose soul the iron has entered’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 56).

Across the hundreds of speeches he delivered in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England during the nineteenth-century, self-liberated social justice campaigner Moses Roper betrayed a categorical refusal to sanitise the physical, psychological, and sexual traumas that had not only been visited upon himself but upon Black people of all genders and ages living and dying in enslavement. As an eye-witness reporter of an early speech he gave in Leicester, England, in 1838 confirms, Roper – as per Dickerson, Duff, and Hughes, among many more activists – refused to rely on the spoken word alone. ‘This (exhibiting to the meeting a heavy club-like thing) is what is called the “*negro-paddle*”’, Roper informed his listeners as he was at pains to underscore his powerful descriptions of white racist brutality and murderous torture with irrefutable physical evidence. He, like thousands more, was all too aware that the only way to fight back against white racist audiences who sought to dismiss his testimony as exaggeration and propaganda was to provide them with real objects of torture that they could not excuse, sanitise, or explain away. ‘I have been flogged hundreds of times with the whip, but only twice with this’, he admits, powerfully communicating this object’s unimaginable horror by explaining, ‘I would as soon have 100 lashes with the whip as one stroke with this. One stroke makes a large weal, & the second breaks it’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60).

Immediately after speaking of the violence he experienced on his own body, Roper testifies to his lifelong strategies of resistance. ‘I was an unruly slave myself, having tried to escape twenty or thirty times’, he confides. Well aware of the widespread debates surrounding free versus enslaved labour, Roper was immovable in his conviction that the suffering of white factory workers in Britain bore no comparison to the suffering of enslaved people in the US. ‘I have often heard people here say, “Go to a manufactory, and you will see slaves worse off than those in America”’, Roper declares, only to confirm, ‘I have been to the factories in Manchester, but I never saw the chain, or the “flopper.”’ For anyone who doubted his word, he had another suggestion. ‘If they think they are worse off than the slaves, let them exchange with them’, he declared at the same time that he made a heartfelt promise, ‘I will find a slave for everyone who will go’ (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60).

In *Speeches* we reproduce the short report of a speech delivered by Amanda Berry Smith, a woman who experienced enslavement in Maryland and who went onto become a world-leading social justice activist, religious leader, author, and orator. A damning indictment of white persecutory racism and discrimination, despite her renown and importance, the unnamed journalist who decided to report on the speeches she delivered in Carlisle, England, in 1878, not only chose to include dismissive and disrespectful comments but failed to do justice to the content of her two addresses: for one we are given no sense of the content at all while for the other we are given only the title (*Speeches*, Speech No. 63). This terrible injustice reveals the very real difficulties presented by white supremacist archives in even beginning to

memorialise African American women's histories, lives, and works in anything other than 'chattel records'.

For William Troy, a man who had been born legally free in Virginia and who went on to become a leading Underground Railroad conductor, antislavery campaigner, and religious minister, a fight for the rights of self-liberated communities living in Canada was his life's mission. In a speech he delivered in Bristol, England, in 1860 he disabused his listeners of the myth of Canada as a utopia of freedom. 'There were about 45,000 fugitive slaves in Canada, who had escaped from the slave states, and were enjoying the privileges of freedom', he explains only to insist that, 'even in the town of Windsor, in Canada West, where he resided, the prejudice against Black people had so followed them from the States, that his children were not allowed to attend the schoolhouse, for which he, in company with others of the coloured population, paid annual taxes'. Regardless of these barriers, obstacles, and persecutions, however, Troy does hard-hitting justice to Black strategies of resistance. As he informs his listeners, these 'fugitive slaves' refused to surrender and instead fought on not only by having 'built schools and chapels of their own' but by having 'learnt trades and supported themselves and families shortly after their arrival'. As Troy confides, these accomplishments are all the more staggering given the realities not only of white Canadian oppression but of 'the destitute condition of the fugitives upon their arrival, some of them having come from a distance of 1500 miles'. Sharing untold histories of Black heroism, he relies on first-hand testimony to confide, 'He had seen men arrive with their legs frost-bitten by the severities of the weather, and women carrying their children in their arms who had travelled an incredible distance, during the depth of winter, and who wept tears of joy when first setting foot on free soil' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 71).

A few years earlier in Bury St Edmunds, England, in 1854, Samuel Ringgold Ward, a self-liberated orator, author, newspaper editor, journalist, antislavery campaigner, radical reformer, and social justice advocate, focused not on US nor Canadian but on British white enslaving sin. In his address, he informed his audiences of a traumatising reality: 'a cargo of negroes, starting from some point of the American coast, might be driven by tempest or stress of weather on a British island, and as touching British soil they became free at once; but the masters would apply for money to pay for these negroes, and as sure as they applied for it they got it'. As the reporter of this speech summarises, Ward was under no illusion that, 'This was our guilt', noting yet further, 'He knew half a dozen cases of ships being driven on British islands, and the slaves thus becoming free, but for whom the British Government paid their masters' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 72).

A radical activist and revolutionary reformer who visited Britain in 1893 and 1894, Ida B. Wells-Barnett sought to awaken her transatlantic audiences to a painful and powerful life-changing realisation regarding the murderous atrocities committed by white persecutory lynch mobs in the US. In a speech she delivered in Leeds, England, in 1894, she provides her audiences with harrowing statistics: 'Up to May 1st of this year fifty persons had been lynched.' She relies on traumatising language to provide a harrowing description of the white racist killing of two Black women by informing her audiences, 'Two of these were women, one of whom was burnt, whilst the other was fastened in a box that had a lot of protruding nails in it, and rolled down a hill. Taken out in a bleeding and lacerated condition, she was hanged to a

tree and bullets fired into her body' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 79). As Moses Roper had relied on unequivocal language to do justice to his conviction that, 'it is time for the slaves to speak' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60) decades earlier in 1838, so Ida B. Wells-Barnett delivered her anti-lynching lectures at the dawn of the twentieth century by relying on emotionally hard-hitting imagery in her determination 'to give to the world the black people's side of the story'. A call to revolutionary reform and political action, she concluded her speech by issuing her powerful declaration of purpose. As the reporter summarises, 'She had come to England to ask the people here to use their influence with the United States Government in these matters. All the negroes wanted was justice' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 79).

Turner Williams, the final orator in *Speeches*, experienced enslavement in North Carolina and dedicated his life to securing all freedoms for all. In the speech he gave in Sheffield, England, in 1853, over a decade before Ida B. Wells-Barnett was born, he informed his audiences 'he had been twenty years a slave'. Staking his claim as an authority who 'therefore ought to know something about slavery and slave owners', he condemned any and all white apologists for enslavement. 'Some people thought slavery was not so very intolerable a thing, and that slaves ought to be content, and patiently wait until Providence brought about their emancipation', he declares only to urge that, 'his experiences led him to a different conclusion'. As he informed his audiences, 'Five minutes in England and freedom, were worth an age in slavery. No merely physical comforts could be a balance to the degradation and wretchedness of slavery. Freedom was the birthright of man' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 80). As it was for Turner Williams, so it was for all the African American activist-author-orators included in this anthology, the 'Death or Liberty' 'fight for freedom' was the 'birthright' of all.

Written and Spoken Words are Weapons in the Freedom Struggle

It is only by reproducing African American autobiographical and oratorical works and by undertaking an investigation into each activist's use of the spoken and written word in a united 'fight for freedom' that we can begin to see the thematic parallels and formal similarities that are in evidence across their centuries of social justice campaigning and equal human rights advocacy. All the freedom fighters whose speeches and narratives we include in both anthologies testify to the physical, psychological, emotional, and mental scars that continued to haunt their memories. As John Williams writes, he was an 'unwilling witness' to white violence, the 'ferocious' bloodhounds kept and bred on labour camps, and the countless dying or dead children that were fed to alligators in the docks of New Orleans (Narrative No. 6). William Gustavus Allen speaks of the auction block and the 'unutterable misery and woe' of enslaved Black people of all genders and ages who faced 'innumerable scenes of cruelty' (Narrative No. 9). He recounts the brutal torture that awaited him of being forced into a barrel with nails or spikes, and then pushed down a hill, a barbaric form of cruelty that both Moses Roper and Ida B. Wells-Barnett painfully and harrowingly describe across their writings and speeches (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 60 and 79). James Watkins writes of the torture he experiences when incarcerated in

Baltimore, Maryland, particularly focusing on the graphic and gruesome effect of the 'paddle', of which 'the torture was such I never experienced either before or since' (Narrative No. 8). He is not alone in speaking of his scars from incarceration. James Cheeney Thompson tells of the scars that 'remain on my face to this day', together with the excruciating torture of branding from which he 'scarcely expected to live' (Narrative No. 12).

As part of a performative strategy to inform largely white transatlantic audiences about the brutalities and barbarities of enslavement, many of these activists exhibited weapons of torture accompanied by graphic descriptions of how such weapons had been used upon their bodies. In this volume, we reprint three speeches by Moses Roper who experienced sustained and brutal violence after his numerous escape attempts (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 60, 61, 62). Despite the intense and rigorous slander against his accounts by white newspaper correspondents and sometimes white abolitionists, he refused to acquiesce to white fragility or downplay his own experiences of violence. In one lecture, he includes a powerful statement, and one that is undoubtedly echoed by every freedom fighter in this book, by declaring, 'I had rather be turned out of this chapel than not tell the whole truth' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60).

What it cost Roper – and every liberator here – to talk about these traumatic memories is unimaginable and unspeakable. As Roper himself describes when exhibiting weapons of torture, 'I cannot bear to hear the rattling of these chains' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60). The sound of clanking fetters was a heavy burden but one he continued to bear night after night, speech after speech, and in every printing of his autobiographical narrative. Adding to his mental struggles was the devastating realisation for Roper that his enslaved family members had no life ahead of them: 'my mother, and my relations are held in bondage by these pretended sons of liberty, and I feel willing to sacrifice my life, if I could redeem them. But it is hopeless! they will die in slavery, in that pretended land of liberty!' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60).

It is unknown if Roper managed to secure the legal freedom of all his relations. Many activists joined Roper in his unceasing labours by resolving to make it their life's work, too. John Sella Martin mentions the legal purchase of his sister and two children with the help of British donations (Narrative No. 14). Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones notes his successful attempt at freeing his mother (Narrative No. 4). James Watkins makes the hazardous journey back to Maryland to find his enslaved mother and worked diligently to free his enslaved siblings (Narrative No. 8). Many activists barely knew their family. Charles Freeman, John Hart, John Williams, William Craft (Narrative Nos 1, 2, 5, 6; *Speeches*, Speech Nos 14, 17) and numerous writers speak of not knowing their family or parents at all, while many refer to painful partings with kinfolks who they are unable to trace. Indeed, John Williams writes of his sister who 'perhaps even now is toiling in the cotton fields, under the hot sun of Louisiana'. The depth of the survivors' guilt, together with the potential impossibility of recovering information or securing the liberation of family members, haunted African American freedom fighters and human rights campaigners while they lived and suffered on British and Irish soil. To reconcile this pain, Williams looks to his own family unit and in particular his children: 'unlike mine, their backs will never be scarred by the lash of the Slave-driver; unlike mine, their youthful days will not be spent in a state most akin to that of the brutes that perish' (Narrative No. 6).

The physical and mental torture of their own memories, together with the relentless nature of their activism, took a heavy toll. Sarah Parker Remond writes of the 'shadow' of prejudice and racism, which 'is engraven on my heart' (Narrative No. 11). Lewis Smith speaks of the 'withering privations and intense sufferings of one born a slave' (Narrative No. 15). His friend Theodore Gross, activist and survivor of US enslavement who accompanied Smith on his lecturing tour to Britain in order to raise money to legally purchase Smith's wife and children from enslavement, begins one speech by noting how the devastating memories of enslavement 'bore very deeply upon his heart' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 64).³¹ James Alfred Johnson writes of the 'double bondage' he experiences and how such violence 'can only be felt, it cannot be described' (*Speeches*, Narrative No. 16). Benjamin William Brown recounts the terrifying scenes at a 'slave market' where mother and child were torn away from each other: 'I shall never forget the scene . . . oh slavery is a terrible thing!' (Narrative No. 19). James Watkins shares his painful experiences by writing in his narrative: 'it would be a relief to my burdened heart if I could hear of the death of [my brothers and sisters], as I could then hold up both hands to Heaven and thank my God they were released from the accursed yoke of slavery' (Narrative No. 8). The unbearable pain of a 'burdened heart' could only be lifted if Watkins knew his family had died and experienced true freedom and peace at last. Countless activists in this book frame their battles for self-liberation between death and liberty. Moses Roper recounts the heartbreaking story of twenty-eight Black men who collectively decide to commit suicide (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60). James Alfred Johnson writes of his own attempt to die after witnessing the brutal torture of an enslaved woman named Rebecca (Narrative No. 16). As James Watkins. above, death also meant liberty itself.

Such heroic declarations of the fight for the right to liberty or death as Harriet Tubman proclaimed are often made by survivors of US enslavement during their terrifying tales of self and communal liberation. Nelson Countee tells harrowing stories of 'grovelling in the woods to obtain liberty' for eleven long weeks and conveys the inability of language to describe his extreme hunger for days on end (*Speeches*, Speech No. 13). Charles Freeman writes of his death-defying liberation on horseback through woods and ravines and across rivers. As per Francis Fedric's and John Williams' testimonies, Freeman mentions numerous beasts, including snakes, that would have ended his life almost immediately (Narrative Nos 1 and 2). Henry (surname unknown) writes how 'During the day, I hid myself in the trackless recesses of the forests, having snakes and reptiles for my companions; and during the night, I travelled in the darkness along barbarous roads, and across uncultivated fields, shunning the haunts of men, and following the pale light of that North star' (Narrative No. 7). Similarly, James Watkins recounts his suffering from a lack of food and water for days at the same time that he remembers his terror at resting or sleeping lest he was captured, for his imagination 'pictured the oppressors' steps after me, and I constantly thought that I heard the baying of the bloodhounds, the tramping of the men hunters' horses, and the horrid imprecations which were heaped on my poor devoted head' (Narrative No. 8). William Craft speaks of Ellen Craft's heroism as she crossed the intersecting boundaries of race, gender, and class to perform as a white male enslaver while William posed as her enslaved manservant. Due to the white racist persecutory laws and customs across the US South, Ellen Craft is forced

into a whites-only train carriage and has to avoid detection by white enslavers, white women, and, at one point, a white friend of her former enslaver who narrowly fails to recognise her (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 14, 15, 16, 17).³² Edward Irving recounts his perilous flight, too, from bloodhounds during his fight for self-liberation (*Speeches*, Speech No. 38).

Alongside such descriptions, numerous activists including William M. Mitchell and William Troy pay tribute to the heroes who worked on the Underground Railroad (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 48, 49, 71). Josiah Henson specifically mentions the heroism of indigenous communities who played an integral role in this clandestine network: 'We passed tribes of Indians and they helped us and gave us food to eat' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 34). Other activists such as Benjamin William Brown and Moses Roper champion their own indigenous heritage, and Henry (surname unknown) writes of the trade networks he establishes with indigenous nations and how they exchanged knowledge and philosophies of freedom and justice (Narrative No. 19; *Speeches*, Speech No. 61; Narrative No. 7). This vitally important yet vastly understudied area once again speaks to the violence of the white supremacist record that disrespects and denies the countless and untold number of indigenous people of all genders and ages who sheltered African American freedom seekers, provided food and traded with them, and even led false trails for white enslavers and oppressors to follow.³³

While fighting for their own liberation, Black activists by default point to the hypocrisy of a US nation that celebrates the 4th of July and Independence Day. The cry of 'Death or Liberty' has a completely different meaning for African Americans living, suffering, and dying within a white persecutory system. A hard-hitting case in point, with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones, Ellen Craft, William Craft, James Cheeney Thompson, and James Watkins were all in the words of Chisley/Jones 'compelled to make a speedy flight' to Britain for their own safety (Narrative No. 4). As William Wells Brown summarises, the Fugitive Slave Act 'was one of the most abominable laws ever enacted by any people under heaven' and demonstrated more than ever that 'slavery is interwoven into all the American institutions' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 8). Despite the huge cost to their physical and mental well-being, they bravely crossed the Atlantic to begin a new life of freedom in a land which, just like the northern United States, was a country of only nominal and imagined freedoms for Black people and of very real outright social, political, and national systems and practices of white racist violence, white supremacist persecution, disenfranchisement, disrespect, and dehumanisation against all Black people.

Activists directly attacked the inconsistent notion of US freedom and the symbols associated with it. James Watkins notes that the nation 'had been untruthfully denominated the land of freedom, while, at the same time, three millions and a half of human beings were kept in a state of degradation' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 74). Moses Roper blisteringly criticises Independence Day and rhetorically asks how millions of Americans could 'hoist the flag of *liberty* over 3,000,000 slaves' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 60). Roper, Frederick Douglass, and John Sella Martin target Bunker's Hill as a site associated with freedom during the American War of Independence (1775–1783) to illustrate that even on that spot of consecrated ground, they were liable to be dragged back into the fetters of enslavement (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 60, 21, 45).

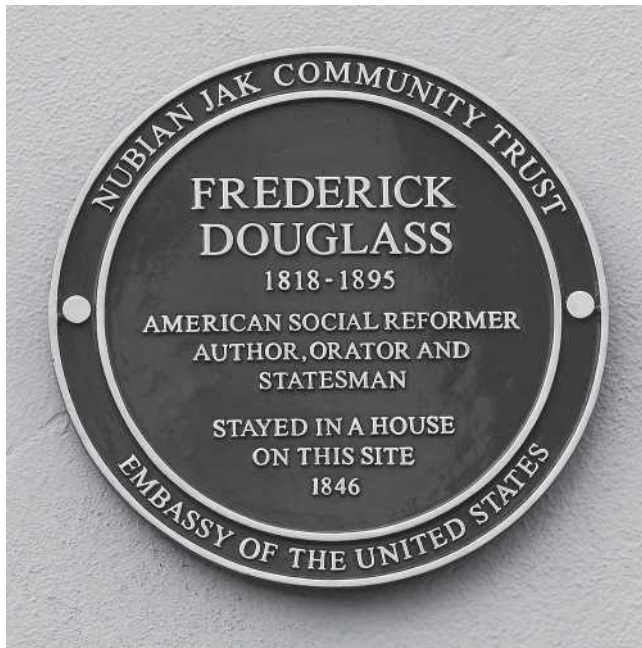


Figure 13 Heritage plaque to Frederick Douglass, 5 Whiteheads Grove, South Kensington, the former site of British abolitionist George Thompson's house, London, England. (Author copy.)

Attacking such symbols involved a complete reversal of what transatlantic audiences thought they knew about freedom, and about enslavement. As Douglass spoke powerfully in defence of white US freedom-fighter John Brown's revolution against white enslavers in 1859, he declares that unlike the white racist lies printed in British newspapers, Brown did not enter a 'peaceable neighbourhood' in Virginia but instead went into 'a state of war . . . slavery itself was an insurrection, and the slaveholders were a band of armed insurgents against the just rights and liberties of their fellow men' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 22). As a result, Douglass and many others described how national systems and practices of enslavement and racism had polluted the US landscape. William Howard Day notes there are 'portions' of the US where 'the very air was choked with the sighs of the millions dropping down in despair' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 19). In a powerful address, Sarah Parker Remond bears witness to the traumatising extent to which it was not only US enslavement but also US systemic and daily acts of racism that were 'crushing out the life and spirit of an entire people' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 57).

In an attempt to reverse such pollution and to tell honest and hard truths about the foundations of the US republic, Black abolitionists acted as radical and revisionist historians. In the 1890s, Hallie Quinn Brown 'traced the origin of slavery in America' to Virginia; 'there sprang from these 19 slaves [in Virginia] four millions of slaves who for 250 years were under the lash of the overseer and treated as mere

brutes held in subjection' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 5). The contemporary parallel to the 1619 project by *The New York Times* and its subsequent controversies demonstrate that the truths of US history continue to be denied by white supremacists, right-wing politicians, and fascist commentators alike. Conceived by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones in 2019, the project 'aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative'. The powerful and transformative essays authored by Hannah-Jones and social justice activists, including Bryan Stevenson, are deeply committed to reversing dominant white supremacist and white racist narratives that endorse the erroneous, unjust, and false view that US enslavement, racism, and segregation were not an integral part of the foundation and development of America. The project sparked debates, op-eds, TV spots, newspaper articles, and even a response from the White House, with the former President Donald Trump authorising 'The 1776 Report', an attempt to undermine this revolutionary, radical, and transformative project.³⁴ In the nineteenth century, Black people of all genders and ages fought against these prevailing white racist and white violent narratives regarding the origins of the US. They challenged the celebration of hypocritical holidays like the 4th of July that deliberately ignored the enslavement of millions of people, and how the worship of white Founding Fathers deliberately erased their identity as torturers and enslavers, and they worked to expose the racist fallacy of the Confederacy that fought to maintain national systems of enslavement and white supremacy. In our volume for example, despite the prevalence of pro-Confederate supporters in his own meetings, J. Hughes powerfully advocates against the white enslaving South and challenges the persecutory and prejudicial untruths regarding the Confederacy's real motives for secession as reported in the white British press (*Speeches*, Speech No. 37). John Sella Martin compares the South and Jefferson Davis – the white US President of the Confederacy – to 'Satan' himself and 'described the atrocities of the Confederates towards the coloured men who had fallen into their hands in various battles' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 45). As revisionists and revolutionaries, Black activists spoke out against the Confederacy and celebrated a Union that, irrespective of its racist biases, discriminations, abuses, and persecutory violences, represented the end of enslavement. As William M. Mitchell observes in one of his speeches, 'there had been a growing feeling in the North against slavery and in favour of freedom for the slaves of the South for more than a quarter of a century, until now it had burst forth like the subterranean fires of a volcano, and threatened the dissolution of that republic whose foundations were laid in the eternal principles of justice, and whose materials were carved from the quarry of truth' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 48).

Many African American freedom fighters focused their efforts on the traumatising, persecutory, and dehumanising legacies of enslavement after the Civil War. In his autobiographical work and speeches, D. E. Tobias declares 'that emancipation has not made the coloured race a free people in the U.S.A.'. The unjust incarceration of Black people of all genders and ages for menial sentences, together with the convict lease system, are 'a true relic and consequence of the old system of slavery with ten times its severity'. Tobias records the brutal whippings; poor food, clothing, and care; the ferocious bloodhounds that were sent to chase escaping prisoners; and murders that were commonplace in prisons across the southern states. Bravely

and powerfully, he is determined to 'speak out against this and other evils which are eating the life and manhood out of my race in the States' (Narrative No. 18). Similarly, Hallie Quinn Brown speaks of 'girls of 12 chained to hardened criminals' and the unsanitary, tortuous, and devastating 'living' conditions of incarcerated Black people of all genders and ages (*Speeches*, Speech No. 4).

Activists like Tobias and Brown were all too painfully aware that white supremacy, oppression, and racism towards Black people was not confined to the US. In their writings and speeches across the nineteenth century, Black freedom fighters took risks in attacking Britain and Ireland for their part in the slave trade, their economic reliance on goods produced by enslaved labour, and the racism all activists experienced on British and Irish soil. James Watkins and James Alfred Johnson speak candidly of the racism they suffer and which directly influences their activism, and in the case of Johnson, white persecutory systems nearly cause his death through poverty (Narrative Nos 8 and 16). John Sella Martin chastises Britain for the nation's deliberate amnesia regarding its role in the slave trade, and urges his audience to remember 'that their large towns such as Manchester, Liverpool and Bradford had been built upon the results of the cotton and other commerce with America', so as a result it was 'their duty to assist' Black people in the US. Even more damningly, Martin insists that British people should make 'some reparation to the negro race for the injustice they had done them in times past' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 47). Samuel Ringgold Ward also spoke bluntly about the mythic notion of Britain with its self-congratulatory liberties based on lies by condemning a nation that for centuries had been 'reddened in the blood of his race' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 73).

As a result, many freedom fighters including William Craft, Alexander Crummell, and Moses Roper urged that the British nation should import cotton, rice, tobacco, and other goods from India or the African continent instead of relying on products made by enslaved labour from the US South. John Brown ties the torture and brutalities of enslavement with the British economy and notes how the 'demand for cotton, rice, sugar, &c., in England had a great influence upon the slave trade in Georgia, and whenever prices ruled high for these articles in this country, the slave trade was very brisk, as an increased number of hands were required to assist on the plantations'. In a powerful declaration, Brown says 'he may be pardoned for speaking out; some allowance must be made for his feelings as he had relatives still in slavery . . . they well knew that the slaves were not paid for their labour, and it was therefore wrong for England to consume the produce of that labour' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 6). James Watkins argues that if his audience 'could hear the groans of the slaves, and witness for a moment their sufferings, you would never again touch Savannah rice – you would feel you were eating the blood and bones of the negroes' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 75). Henry Highland Garnet urgently demands that the British nation takes responsibility for its role in the slave trade, as 'there was a time when she led the band in stealing the people of Africa from her shores, and reducing them to slavery'. Therefore the nation 'owed a deep debt to Africa and this debt would never be paid until the last slave-ship should have left the coast of Africa, and that race which had long been the sport of unfeeling men should have received the protection of the British Government' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 28). Risking their popularity on the lecturing stage, Black

activists radically and forever challenged white Victorians to consider their own white privilege, the nation's reliance on goods produced by enslaved labour, and how the wealth of that nation was shaped by its histories of enslavement and centuries of colonialist practices.

Another revolutionary and ground-breaking theme across their narratives and speeches is the desire by Black activists and authors to memorialise and pay tribute to the countless acts of bravery and death-defying resistance by both named and unnamed Black women. Both volumes include the lives and testimonies of Phebe Ann Jacobs, Dinah Hope Browne, Ellen Craft, Sarah Parker Remond, Julia Jackson, Jane Brown, Amanda Berry Smith, Hallie Quinn Brown, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett who write or speak themselves into history. Dinah Hope Browne tells of the devastating realities and sufferings of enslaved mothers who experience sexual violence, as well as the legal sale and tragic deaths of their children at the hands of white US enslavers in a torturous, barbaric, and inhumane system. She braves bodily torture herself when she refuses to tell of the doctor who first talks to her about securing her self-liberation from enslavement, and when she tries to wrench her daughter Priscilla from the auction block (Narrative No. 13). Julia Jackson defies gender and racial stereotypes and speaks alongside her husband John Andrew Jackson. In a radical display of feminist politics, she was possibly the first African American woman and survivor of US enslavement to give sustained lectures on the British circuit, despite the fact that many of her speeches were erased from memory by white newspaper correspondents (*Speeches*, Speech No. 39). Ida B. Wells-Barnett champions her own heroism with regard to threats from white domestic terrorists and the lynch mob and meticulously records statistics of lynching while railing against the torture, incarceration, and murder of Black people of all genders and ages across the United States (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 77, 78, 79).

The violence of a white supremacist archive on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean dehumanises and denies the heroism of Black women who fought against enslavement, white persecutory violence, and racism on a daily basis. However, the freedom fighters represented here challenge such restrictions. James Watkins tells of the sacrifices of his activist wife, Mary Eliza Watkins, and her courage at crossing the Atlantic Ocean with her children alone (Narrative No. 8). Sarah Parker Remond champions her mother, Nancy Remond, who fought for her daughter's education on the grounds of equality (Narrative No. 11). James Cheeney Thompson memorialises the bravery of an unnamed and incarcerated Black woman who helps him escape the prison yard (Narrative No. 12). John Sella Martin recalls the heroism of his mother who refuses to say where her son was hiding and was brutally beaten for it – and also tells of his sister who instructs him to free her children first, and resolves to remain enslaved so that her children may live (Narrative No. 14). Lewis Smith tells of the bravery of his first wife who defies her white US enslaver to aid her husband's self-liberation (Narrative No. 15). James Alfred Johnson powerfully writes of Rebecca, an enslaved woman who makes repeated self-liberation attempts despite the incarceration and torture she experiences (Narrative No. 16). Benjamin William Brown writes of the sufferings of his mother, forced to endure the Middle Passage and then witness the torture of her children (Narrative No. 19). William Wells Brown mentions the heroism of his own mother who joins him in his self-liberation journey (*Speeches*, Speech No. 8). William M. Mitchell recounts the bravery of his wife who helped freedom seekers secure their self-liberation on the Underground Railroad (*Speeches*, Speech No. 48).

In his autobiography that we reproduce in *Narratives*, John Williams recounts the untold courage and ingenuity of two women: the first, ‘Old Nab’, was a pious Christian who dies under torture, while the second is unnamed and heretofore has been deliberately erased from history. During his incarceration in New Orleans, Williams writes of ‘an elderly black woman’ who risks torture and death to help those she does not know. While quietly watching as Williams and a group of young men try to scale a wall out of gaol, she comes forward to aid their liberation. Physically bearing the weight of the young men on her shoulders, she pushes Williams over the wall, and potentially all of his friends, too. Such a revolutionary act of social justice ensures Williams’ survival and demonstrates the solidarity, community, and kinship networks among Black people, many of whom chose to sacrifice their own lives to allow others to secure their liberation. Unnamed and thus impossible to trace, she almost certainly lived and died under an oppressive and tortuous system, but thanks to Williams’ narrative her heroism lives on (Narrative No. 6). These are just some of the countless stories either told by Black women themselves or related by Black male activists and authors that honour the death-defying courage of women, both young and old, both named and unnamed, who risked torture and their lives for their children, family members, friends, comrades, and perfect strangers. Such inspiring and revolutionary heroism is not confined to county, state, or region; north or south. Despite this self-evident reality, Black female resistance strategies have been deliberately erased, neglected, trivialised, or given too little attention in a devastating and unforgiveable illustration of the persecutory and prejudicial stranglehold exerted by all forms of white supremacy. Following in Douglass’ footsteps to spurn the violence of ‘chattel records’, the immeasurable and invaluable actions by Black women written and spoken of in both anthologies should act as a call to arms to piece together the courageous actions of Black women across the centuries and finally begin to do justice to their lives and testimonies, along with the unforgettable realisation and knowledge that thousands of such acts of resistance went unrecorded because of the very nature of those ‘chattel records’.

While our emphasis across both volumes concerns the transatlantic autobiographical writings and oratorical careers of fifty-two African American activists as we focus on their written and spoken words as weapons in the freedom struggle, we recognise that there were many more campaigners living on British and Irish soil. For example, Henry ‘Box’ Brown – the virtuoso of the Victorian stage whose death-defying liberation from enslavement in a box made him world-famous – performed with his visual panorama, sang antislavery songs, re-enacted his liberation attempt, acted in various dramas including plays based on his own life, and practised mesmerism and hypnotism.³⁵ Elizabeth Greenfield, nicknamed the ‘Black Swan’, had experienced enslavement and went on to entertain thousands with her powerful singing voice.³⁶ Mary Webb performed dramatic readings of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1852.³⁷ Ira Aldridge and Samuel Morgan Smith forever changed the Victorian theatrical world with their dramatic and ground-breaking performances.³⁸ Marie Selika Williams was a singer of phenomenal talent and performed in the opera in London.³⁹ John Henry Hector, nicknamed the ‘Black Knight’, preached on temperance.⁴⁰ H. E. Lewis performed as a mesmerist.⁴¹ Zilpha Elaw preached across Britain as early as the mid-1840s.⁴² Martha Ricks presented a beautifully crafted quilt to

Queen Victoria.⁴³ Finally, there are the untold histories of the numerous survivors of US enslavement who performed in *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* productions across Britain after the end of the US Civil War.⁴⁴

Although both anthologies reprint vital and ground-breaking oratorical and literary contributions, we celebrate, champion, and salute those who refused to participate in either and instead sought alternate visual and performative strategies to challenge enslavement, white persecutory violence, and white supremacy. As freedom fighters Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth worked relentlessly to challenge and undermine white, western, persecutory practices on US soil, the actions of those mentioned here – together with a countless number of their contemporaries – fought the same battles through skilful artistry and agency within the fields of, to name a few, photography, visual performance, drama, music, material culture, or religious teaching. Challenging, resisting, interrogating, and defeating white racist narratives that sought to erase and annihilate their lives from the records, Black activists employed a variety of literary, oratorical, visual, and performative mediums to make a transformative impact on the Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and English national and political landscapes. As we have noted in this volume, the erasures, silences, and unforgiveable inaccuracies of the violent white supremacist archive mean we have to incorporate multiple, nuanced, and in-depth approaches in order to recover and remember the lives, testimonies, and experiences of Black people and do justice to their agency, identity, and humanity, and their revolutionary and radical roles in the Black freedom struggle: past, present, and future.

Words and Images are Weapons in the Freedom Struggle Now

'A MAN WAS LYNCHED BY POLICE YESTERDAY', so read the white capitalised lettering inscribed on a black memorial flag displayed in public buildings in the US through 2016 and 2017 by African American artist and activist, Dread Scott.⁴⁵ A radical campaigner for social justice and equal rights, Scott dedicates his life to all 'fights for freedom' including his ongoing war against twenty-first-century white police lynchings of Black people of all genders and ages. In a radical act of protest, Scott takes his name from Dred Scott, a liberator and freedom fighter who fought for his own and his family's liberation from enslavement over a century earlier.

In March 1857, Dred Scott, an individual who experienced enslavement in Southampton County, Virginia, sued for his own legal liberty and the legal liberty of his wife, Harriet Robinson Scott, and their two children, Eliza and Lizzie Scott, from their white US enslaver, John F. A. Sandford. To no avail, however. As a result of Dred Scott's courageous actions, Robert B. Taney, a white US Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a lifelong racist, issued the white supremacist, discriminatory, and persecutory ruling that Black people 'had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect'.⁴⁶ Taney's nefarious actions were immediately met with Black revolutionary acts of resistance.

In the same year, Frederick Douglass launched a blistering protest against the 'Dred Scott Decision' in a powerful oration he delivered in New York City on 14 May 1857.⁴⁷ 'While four millions of our fellow countrymen are in chains – while men,

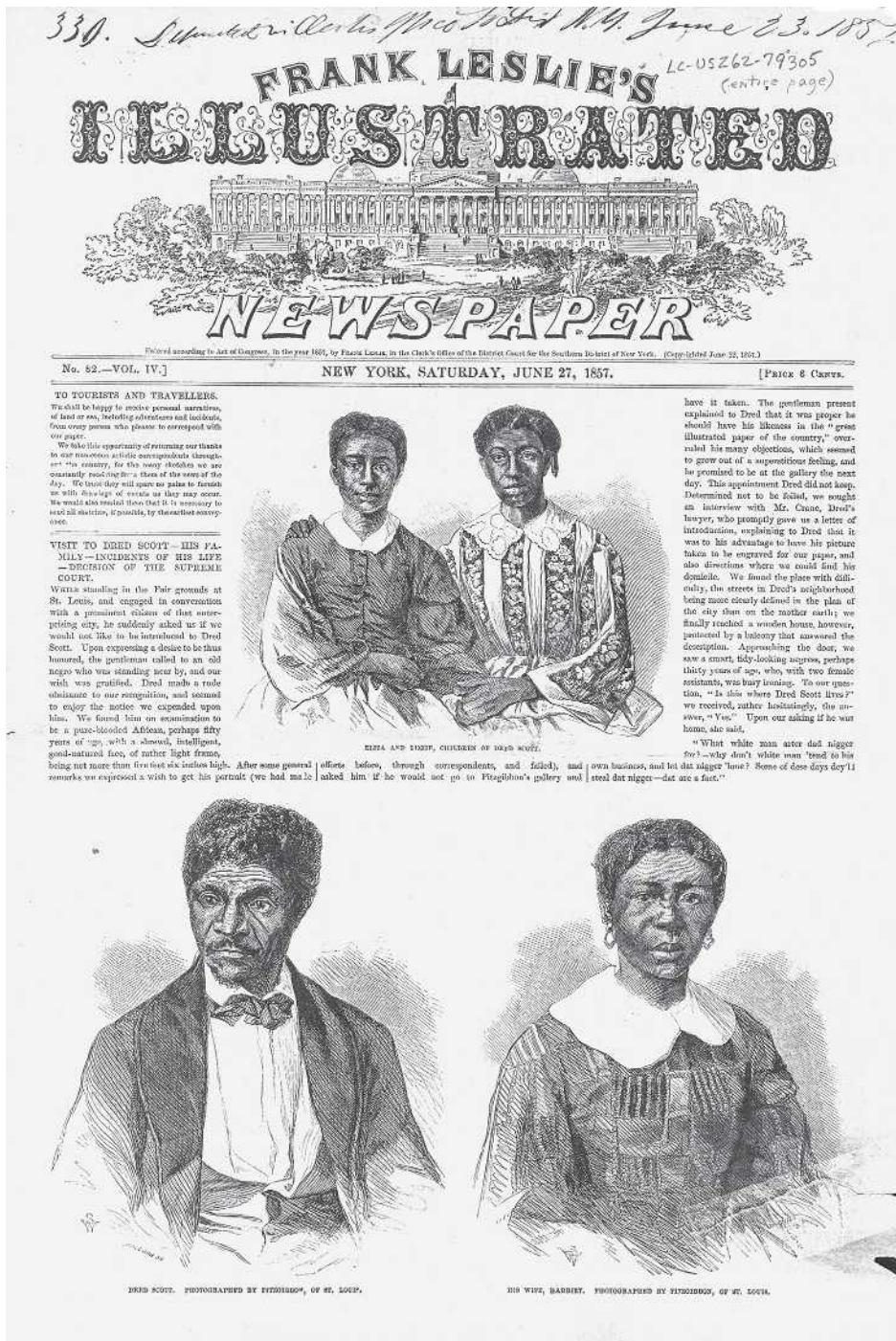


Figure 14 Dred and Harriet Scott, with their children Eliza and Lizzie, 1857. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

women, and children are bought and sold on the auction-block with horses, sheep, and swine – while the remorseless slave-whip draws the warm red blood of our common humanity’, Douglass proclaimed, ‘it is meet that we assemble as we have done to-day, and lift up our hearts and voices in earnest denunciation of the vile and shocking abomination’.⁴⁸ Warring against a ‘devilish decision’ he condemned as nothing less than a ‘vile and shocking abomination’, Douglass was adamant: ‘I have no fear that the National Conscience will be put to sleep by such an open, glaring, and scandalous tissue of lies as that decision is, and has been, over and over, shown to be.’⁴⁹

As contemporary artist Dread Scott’s twenty-first-century declaration, ‘A MAN WAS LYNCHED BY POLICE YESTERDAY’, no less than nineteenth-century enslaved activist Dred Scott’s defeat at the hands of a white supremacist reveals, the US ‘National Conscience’ may not have been ‘put to sleep’ but remains far from awake when it comes to the equal recognition, equal respect, and equal protection for all freedoms for all Black people over past, present, and future generations. Issued more than 150 years ago in this same speech, Douglass’ revolutionary demand, ‘all I ask of the American people is, that they live up to the Constitution, adopt its principles, imbibe its spirit and enforce its provisions’ – as he poignantly insists that it is only ‘when this is done’ that ‘the wounds of my bleeding people will be healed, the chain will no longer rust on their ankles, their backs will no longer be torn by the bloody lash, and liberty, the glorious birthright of our common humanity, will become the inheritance of all the inhabitants of this highly favored country’ – remains a call to arms that has lost nothing of its moral, political, and social justice urgency to this day.⁵⁰ As of 2024, Taney’s conviction that African Americans have ‘no rights which the white man was bound to respect’ shows no sign of abating in the modern day, with police brutality, state violence, and unjust incarceration visited upon Black people of all genders and ages at the hands of prison officials, government authorities, white supremacist hate groups, and prejudicial and persecutory whites living in US society. In self-evident ways, Douglass’ centuries-earlier prediction that the ‘wounds of my bleeding people will be healed’ is an as yet unfulfilled prophecy that remains the catalyst for present and future ‘fights for freedom’.⁵¹

For campaigners working for social justice and civil rights in the contemporary US nation, the rhetoric of resistance in the narratives and speeches by nineteenth-century African American activists provides a revolutionary blueprint that has lost nothing of its moral, social, and political power over 100 years later. Whether it is Sarah Parker Remond denouncing the mind-body-and-soul-destroying effects of a villainous and virulent ‘color prejudice’ that ensured Black lives and bodies were only ‘nominally free’ in 1860,⁵² or Dread Scott’s declaration as recently as 2014 that, ‘The form of racism has changed but the basic position of Black people in this society and the rationale for it have remained constant’, the ‘fight for freedom’ is a fight that depends, then and now, upon the power of language to bear witness to the lived experiences of Black people of all genders and ages for whom the reality of equal human rights still remains, in the words of Langston Hughes, ‘a dream deferred’.⁵³

During an address printed in the *Speeches* anthology from 1896, Hallie Quinn Brown – ‘a witness of the atrocities of a lynching mob’ – spoke candidly about white domestic terrorism and the institutionalised racism of the US state and federal governments. ‘When negroes were cruelly murdered’, she declares, ‘not in isolated cases, but by threes and fours at a time, the Executive would not meddle with the

liberties of particular States. But when property was in danger, as in the case of the Chicago riots, the Executive was ready enough to send in soldiers and militiamen' (*Speeches*, Speech No. 4). As countless Black Lives Matter protests have demonstrated, the US government – state or federal – refuses to hold white police officers to account and continues to commit persecutory and discriminatory acts of violence and violation against the lives, personhood, and memories of those killed.⁵⁴

Brown's explicit exposure of the white supremacist actions of a US 'Executive' has strong resonance in 2024: whenever 'property was in danger', the US government has repeatedly sent military police to protect buildings, violently crush peaceful gatherings, and attack Black protestors instead of seeking to preserve, defend, and protect communities of colour. Such devastating, militarised, and violent responses against Black people of all genders and ages stands in stark contrast to the immoral and unjust lack of immediate response to white supremacist groups storming the US Capitol in January 2021. Pro-Trump, white men and women bearing the Confederate flag walked nonchalantly through the corridors of government, ransacked offices and stole legal documents, threatened the lives of African American politicians, and were granted access to legislative rooms with no ensuing violence, action, or consequences to their unlawful and immoral actions. As proved by all fifty-two activists across both anthologies as well as untold millions of Black people across the centuries, the seat of the US government seeks to uphold white supremacy at the very centre of its echelons of power and testifies that the rallying cry of resistance by any means necessary is as relevant as ever. Whether in 1896 or 2024, Hallie Quinn Brown's words continue to resonate and remind us that contemporary social justice activists bear the torch once wielded by those who fought before them, and repeatedly gave their lives in the ongoing 'fight' for all freedoms.⁵⁵

In 1866, only a year after the end of the US Civil War, Sojourner Truth poignantly asked, 'Where's Frederick?' Here she expressed her heartfelt need to hear Frederick Douglass' 'voice' in this 'trying hour'.⁵⁶ Over a century later, we call upon the voices not only of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth but of everyone included in both these anthologies in recognition that the 'fight for freedom' is far from over in our 'trying hour' of 2024. As Douglass himself painfully and powerfully predicted, 'Oppression, organized as ours is, will appear invincible up to the very hour of its fall.'⁵⁷

For untold millions of past, present, and future African American liberators 'fighting for freedom' across the world, Frederick Douglass' 'death or liberty' conviction lives on as a revolutionary call to arms: 'nothing of justice, liberty, or humanity can come to us except through tears and blood'.⁵⁸

Notes

1. Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself* (Boston MA: De Wolfe & Fiske Co., 1892), p.507.
2. *Ibid.*, p.310.
3. *Ibid.*, p.217.
4. *Ibid.*, p.277.
5. For an in-depth investigation into 'acts and arts' of Black authorship over the centuries, see Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

6. The full text of the '13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery', 31 January 1865 is available online at: <https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/13th-amendment>
7. For further information regarding the leading researchers in this field, see the sections of the Bibliography of Digital and Print Resources titled, 'Anthologies, Critical Editions, and Collections' and 'Literary Criticism, Biography and Historical Studies' included in this volume.
8. Qtd in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Foundation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p.xxxii.
9. Qtd in Celeste-Marie Bernier, *African American Visual Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p.127.
10. Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn NY: W. J. Moses, 1869), p.21.
11. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Auburn NY: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), pp.87, 88.
12. Qtd in Bernier, *Characters of Blood*, p.227.
13. Qtd in Bernier and Taylor, *If I Survive*, p.xliv.
14. The transatlantic editions of Douglass' first autobiography include the following works: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Dublin: Webb and Chapman, 1845; Wortley, Leeds: J. Barker, 1846; London: R. Yorke Clarke, 1847). In 1882, he published *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: From 1817–1882* in London with the Christian Age Office as managed by the white British author and editor, John Lobb.
15. Among the many pioneering volumes, see the following works: Christine Kinealy, ed., *Frederick Douglass in Ireland: In His Own Words*, 2 vols (New York: Routledge, 2018); Mark P. Leone and Lee M. Jenkins, eds, *Atlantic Crossings in the Wake of Frederick Douglass: Archaeology, Literature, and Spatial Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Hannah-Rose Murray and John R. McKivigan, eds, *Frederick Douglass in Britain and Ireland, 1845–1895* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021); Alan J. Rice and Martin Crawford, eds, *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Fionnghuala Sweeney, *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
16. For further information on the pioneering scholarship on the eclectic and experimental array of African American literary genres during this period, see the section of the Bibliography of Digital and Print Resources titled, 'Literary Criticism, Biography and Historical Studies' included in this volume.
17. James McCune Smith, 'Introduction', in Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, p.xx.
18. Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*, in Anon. [Julia Griffiths], ed., *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston MA: John P. Jewett and Co., 1853), p.175.
19. *Ibid.*, p.176.
20. Geoffrey Sanborn, *Plagiarama! William Wells Brown and the Aesthetic of Attractions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).
21. For further information on their lives and works, see the following autobiographical works: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Boston MA: Published for the author, 1861); Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers, 1863); Sojourner Truth and Olive Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth, a Northern Slave, Emancipated From Bodily Servitude by the State of New York* (Boston MA: Published by the Author, 1850).
22. Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*, p.175; Douglass, *Life and Times*, p.119.
23. Douglass, *Life and Times*, p.534.

24. See Frederick Douglass, 'Blessings of Liberty and Education', 3 September 1894. Available online: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/blessings-of-liberty-and-education/>
25. See James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a 'Chattel' in Maryland, U.S.* (Bolton: Kenyon and Abbatt, 1852), p.48; *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a 'Chattel' in Maryland, U.S.* (Birmingham: Printed for James Watkins, 1856), pp.64–68; *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a 'Chattel' in Maryland, U.S.* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1859), pp.85–95; *Struggles for Freedom; or the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a Slave in Maryland, U.S.* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860), pp.91–103; *Struggles for Freedom; or the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a Slave in Maryland, U.S.* (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Printed for James Watkins, by John Bell, 1862), pp.103–120. In the 1862 edition, Watkins also records speaking in Dieppe, Rheims, and Paris, France.
26. For an analysis of 'iron arguments', see Celeste-Marie Bernier, "'Iron Arguments:" Spectacle, Rhetoric and the Slave Body in New England and British Antislavery Oratory'. *European Journal of American Culture*, 26.1 (2007): pp.57–78.
27. For further information on African American signifying traditions, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
28. Frederick Douglass, 'American Prejudice Against Color: An Address Delivered in Cork, Ireland', 23 October 1845, *Cork Examiner*, 27 October 1845. Reprinted in John Blassingame, ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1979). Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/support8.html>
29. William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, the Escape of William and Eliza Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860). Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/craft/menu.html>
30. See Hannah-Rose Murray and John R. McKivigan, *Frederick Douglass in Britain and Ireland 1845–1895* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp.242–248.
31. For further information on the life and activism of Theodore Gross, see Theodore Gross' speech dated 3 October 1860 and published in the *Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=2053&item_id=2402
32. William Craft recounted the story of Ellen Craft in disguise in nearly every single lecture: see, for example: Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Bristol Mercury*, Bristol, England, 12 April 1851, p.6; Anon., 'Slavery in America', *The Western Times*, Exeter, Devon, England, 10 May 1851, p.6; Anon., 'American Slavery: Lecture on Slavery,' *Leeds Mercury*, Leeds, Yorkshire, England, 25 October 1856, p.5.
33. For further information on histories of indigenous resistance, see Roy E. Finkenbine, 'The Underground Railroad in "Indian Country"', pp.71–89, in Damian Alan Pargas, ed., *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018); ed., James F. Brooks, *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Tiya Miles, 'Uncle Tom was an Indian: Tracing the Red in Black Slavery', in Natalia Molina, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, eds, *Relational Formations of Race: Theory, Method and Practice* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), pp.121–145. In a later edition of his autobiographical narrative, James Watkins is more explicit about the role of indigenous communities in his liberation. 'I fell in with an encampment of Red Indians, in Maryland and Pennsylvania', he writes, 'they gave me a place in their wigwams; they prepared for me a bed of skins, and did their utmost to render my short stay amongst them one of ease and comfort. Besides which, they assisted me in baffling

- the pursuit of my oppressors, by hiding me in caves, and by ferrying me in their canoes across the brooks, & c., which I had to traverse.' See Watkins, *Struggles for Freedom; or the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a Slave in Maryland, U.S* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860), p.31.
34. See the 1619 website at *The New York Times*, available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>. See also 'The 1776 Report', published from *The President's Advisory 1776 Commission*, January 2021, pp.1–36; 'Trump's 1776 Report Defends America's Founding on the Basis of Slavery and Blasts Progressivism', 18 January 2021, *The New York Times*, available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/18/us/trump-1776-commission-report.html>
 35. See Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself* (Manchester: Lee and Glynn, 1851); Hannah-Rose Murray, *Advocates of Freedom: African American Transatlantic Abolitionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom 1850–1910* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Martha J. Cutter, 'Will the Real Henry "Box" Brown Please Stand Up?' *Journal of Early American Life*, 16.1 (2015). Available online: <http://common-place.org/book/will-the-real-henry-box-brown-please-stand-up/>. See also Martha J. Cutter, *The Illustrated Slave: Empathy, Graphic Narrative, and the Visual Culture of the Transatlantic Abolition Movement 1800–1852* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2003).
 36. See Sara Lampert, 'Black Swan/White Raven: The Racial Politics of Elizabeth Greenfield's American Concert Career, 1851–1855'. *American Nineteenth Century History*, 17 (2016): pp.75–102; Julia J. Chybowski, 'Becoming the "Black Swan" in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 67.1 (2014): pp.125–165; and Alex W. Black, 'Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance'. *American Quarterly*, 63.3 (2011): pp.619–639.
 37. Alex W. Black, 'Abolitionism's Resonant Bodies: The Realization of African American Performance'. *American Quarterly*, 63.3 (2011): pp.619–639; Eric Gardner, 'Stowe Takes the Stage: Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Christian Slave"?' *Legacy*, 15.1 (1998): pp.78–84; Joseph R. D'Ambrosi, 'On the Stage, But Not of the Stage: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Christian Slave* and the Advent of Evangelical Theatre in Antebellum America'. *Ecumenica: Performance and Religion*, 13.2 (2020): pp.179–209.
 38. For Ira Aldridge, see Bernth Lindfors' multiple volumes including *Ira Aldridge: The Early Years 1807–1833*, *Ira Aldridge: The Vagabond Years 1833–1852*, and *Ira Aldridge: Performing Shakespeare in Europe 1852–1855* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), and Lindfors, ed., *Ira Aldridge: The African Roscius* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007). See also Theresa Saxon, 'Ira Aldridge in the North of England: Provincial Theatre and the Politics of Abolition', in Gretchen H. Gerzina, ed., *Britain's Black Past* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp.275–295. For Samuel Morgan Smith, see Errol Hill, 'S. Morgan Smith: Successor to Ira Aldridge'. *Black American Literature Forum*, 16.4 (1982): pp.132–135, and William Morris, 'Additional Light on S. Morgan Smith'. *Black American Literature Forum*, 20.1/2 (1986): pp.75–79.
 39. Eileen J. Southern, *Biographical Dictionary of African American and African Musicians* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1982); Elise K. Kirk, *Music at the White House: A History of the American Spirit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Julia J. Chybowski, 'Becoming the "Black Swan" in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 67.1 (2014): pp.125–165.
 40. See the Africans in Yorkshire Project: <https://www.africansinyorkshireproject.com/rev-john-henry-hector.html>; Jeffrey Green, 'Black Temperance Campaigners in Late Victorian Britain': [http://www.jeffreygreen.co.uk/129-black-temperance-campaigners-in-late-victorian-britain](http://www.jeffreygreen.co.uk/129-black-temperance-campaigners-in-late-victorian-britain;);

- and Hannah-Rose Murray, “I shall speak out against this and other evils”: African American Activism in the British Isles 1865–1903’. *Slavery and Abolition*, 41 (2020): pp.79–92.
41. See Jeffrey Green, ‘H. E. Lewis: “The Negro Mesmerist” 1850–1857’: <https://jeffreygreen.co.uk/141-h-e-lewis-the-negro-mesmerist-1851-1855/>; W. D. King, ““Shadow of a Mesmeriser”: The Female Body on the “Dark Stage””. *Theatre Journal*, 49.2 (1997): pp.189–206; Kathleen Chater, *Henry Box Brown: From Slavery to Show Business* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, 2020).
 42. Zilpha Elaw, *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, an America Female of Colour; Together with Some Account of The Great Religious Revivals in America [Written by Herself]* (London: Published by the authoress, 1846); Kimberly Blockett, ‘Disrupting Print: Emigration, the Press, and Narrative Subjectivity in the British Preaching and Writing of Zilpha Elaw 1840–1860s’. *MELUS*, 40.3 (2015): pp.94–109; William L. Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women’s Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Sallie M. Cuffee, ‘Reconstructing Subversive Moral Discourses in the Spiritual Autobiographies of Nineteenth-Century African American Preaching Women’. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 32.2 (2016): pp.45–62; Mitzi J. Smith, ““Unbossed and Unbought”: Zilpha Elaw and Old Elizabeth and a Political Discourse of Origins’. *Black Theology: An International Journal*, 9.3 (2011): pp.287–311; Kate Hanch, ““How Can These Things Be?”: Zilpha Elaw’s Foolish Ministry’. *Liturgy*, 35.1 (2020): n.p.
 43. See Stephanie Beck Cohen, ‘Stitched Networks: Liberian Quilters, Transatlantic Diplomacy, and Community’, in Keisha N. Blain and Tiffany M. Gill, eds, *To Turn the Whole World Over: Black Women and Internationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2019): pp.149–168; Jeffrey Green, ‘Martha Ricks Visits Queen Victoria, 1892’: <https://jeffreygreen.co.uk/158-martha-ricks-visits-queen-victoria-1892/>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DIGITAL AND PRINT RESOURCES

BELOW WE PROVIDE a list of further primary and secondary reading consisting of selected narratives, writings, printed speeches, and literary works; online archival resources; anthologies; critical editions; collections; and works of literary criticism, biography, and historical studies.

For detailed and specialist reading lists in African American Studies, African Canadian Studies, African Caribbean Studies, African Diaspora Studies, Black British Studies, Visual Studies, Material Culture, Art History, and Print Cultures, and as directly related to each individual author, their works, and their subject-matter, readers are advised to consult the primary and secondary bibliographies included at the end of the introductory sections for each individual writer and orator.

Selected Narratives, Writings, and Literary Works in Chronological Order

Here we have compiled a chronological list of narratives, writings, and literary works authored by Black authors, orators, activists, philosophers, and campaigners published in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In creating this list, we are gratefully indebted to the pioneering research of a vast array of world-leading scholars whose works we gratefully list and acknowledge in our bibliography. While our aim has been to be as comprehensive as possible, we fully recognise that our list is necessarily incomplete. Ongoing discoveries of unattributed, unknown, miscatalogued, and neglected works by Black authors that are being made by researchers working today guarantees that any seemingly comprehensive list is always only ever a work in progress. While we include works by a number of African-born authors, the vast majority of the autobiographies and speeches we include here are written by African American authors and activists.

While many of the works below went through multiple editions over the decades and across the centuries, we have only included the publication date for their first editions.

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- 1750 *The Royal Africa: or, Memoirs of the Young Prince of Annamaboe. Comprehending a Distinct Account of His Country and Family; His Elder Brother's Voyage to France, and Reception there; the Manner in Which Himself Was Confided by His Father to the Captain Who Sold Him; His Condition While a Slave in Barbadoes; the True Cause of His Being Redeemed; His Voyage from Thence; and Reception Here in England.* London: W. Reeve, G. Woodfall, and J. Barnes.
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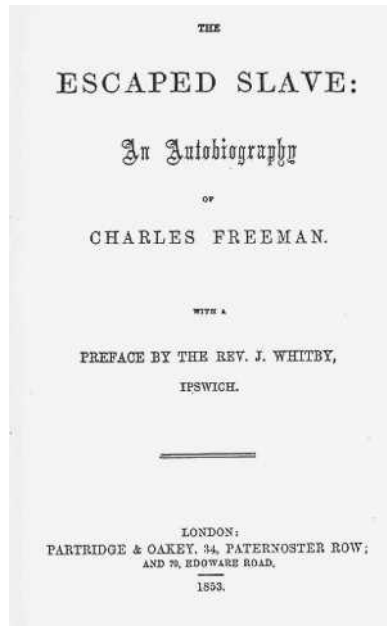


Figure 15 Title page from Charles Freeman, *The Escaped Slave: An Autobiography of Charles Freeman, with a Preface by the Rev. J. Whitby, Ipswich*. London: Partridge & Oakey, 1853. (Library of Virginia.)

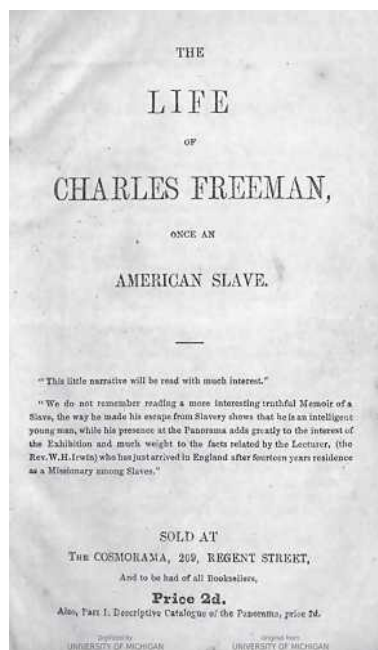


Figure 16 Title page from Anon., *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave*. London: Crozier & Mullin Printers [1850?]. (HathiTrust.)

CHARLES FREEMAN

(DATES UNKNOWN)

1 Charles Freeman, *The Escaped Slave: An Autobiography of Charles Freeman, with a Preface by the Rev. J. Whitby, Ipswich*. London: Partridge & Oakey [1853].¹

2 Anon., *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave*. London: Crozier & Mullin Printers [1850?].²

Biographical History

UPON SAILING TO ENGLAND in 1850 from New York, Charles Freeman writes in his autobiographical narrative *The Escaped Slave: An Autobiography of Charles Freeman* that he was ‘flying from the grasp of the tyrant’. Fighting the inhuman barbarities of a life lived in enslavement since he was a child, Freeman constantly defied the numerous white US enslaving tyrants in his life by repeatedly fighting to secure his self-liberation.

While *The Life of Charles Freeman* (1850), written by a white male amanuensis, has been digitised and is available online, *The Escaped Slave* (1853) written by Freeman himself remains an entirely unknown and forgotten work. We place both narratives side by side here in part to provide readers with access to the revolutionary and transformative ways Freeman’s authority, activism, and artistry shines through in both versions, while yet showing the incalculable differences between a work written, shaped, and structured by a Black freedom fighter and one written by a white antislavery sympathiser. Freeman’s decision to exert his authorial independence and expand upon the limited pages of the 1850 work demonstrates his desire to control his own narrative and pay tribute to his family and enslaved comrades: in writing a larger narrative for example, we learn more about Freeman himself, his loved ones, the bravery of family members such as a woman he identifies as Aunt Sarah, and his decision to pay tribute to numerous Black freedom fighters, both enslaved and free, who helped him journey to England as well as their revolutionary actions in the freedom struggle. Freeman’s own narrative gives us more information, too, on his relationship with W. H. Irwin, the white proprietor of the antislavery panorama, and his life after financial ruin caused Irwin to return to the US.

In powerful contrast to *The Escaped Slave: An Autobiography of Charles Freeman* (1853), *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave* (1850) published in London by Crozier & Mullin Printers was authored not by Charles Freeman himself but by an anonymous writer of unknown race, gender, and nationality. While research into the identity of the author is far from conclusive, the title page includes an unattributed endorsement that sheds light on this work's potential authorship: 'We do not remember reading a more interesting truthful Memoir of a Slave, the way he made his escape from Slavery shows that he is an intelligent young man, while his presence at the Panorama adds greatly to the interest of the Exhibition and much weight to the facts related by the Lecturer, (the Rev. W. H. Irwin) who has just arrived in England after fourteen years residence as a Missionary among Slaves.'

The 'Rev. W. H. Irwin', a white US author, religious minister, and 'missionary' on whom biographical research is still ongoing, is a likely contender for the authorship of Charles Freeman's narrative. In these pages, this author, potentially Irwin, writes that Freeman was working as 'assistant Cook on board one of the Liners' and he very likely refers to himself in the third person by confirming, 'after being at sea a week, the Rev. W. H. Irwin visited the galley, and speaking of his Panorama of the slave-trade, and stating his opinion of slavery, the cook informed him that his man was a runaway slave, Mr. Irwin wished to see him, and after putting many questions to him respecting his late master, &c. found that he correctly answered every enquiry'. In wilful violation of all equal human rights philosophies, the majority of white abolitionists valued enslaved individuals' testimonies, including the experiences of Charles Freeman, not as the lived realities experienced by 'a man and a brother' and 'a woman and a sister' but only insofar as they were verifiable, and therefore usable, as bodies of evidence in the propagandistic service of the antislavery cause.³

The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave was not published in isolation but in conjunction with 'Part 1. Descriptive Catalogue of the Panorama, price 2d' and available 'AT THE COSMORAMA', the London-based exhibition venue at '209, REGENT STREET'. As an unnamed reporter confirms in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* on 1 May 1850, Irwin's 'Panorama of the slave-trade' was the very same 'moving panorama of American slavery', that was 'now exhibiting at the Royal Victoria-hall, Leicester-square'. For the benefit of the journal's readers, the writer summarises, 'The panorama opens with a scene on the African coast, and then follows a series of paintings embracing the great outlines of slavery in the United States, and the escape of slaves into Canada.' Eulogising the 'Rev. Mr. Irwin, the proprietor' as a 'Christian and an abolitionist', the reporter confirms, 'He accompanies the panorama with illustrative remarks, having himself personally witnessed the events each department of the panorama is intended to represent, with the exception only of the African scene.' No mention is made in this journalist's report of the 'presence' of Charles Freeman, despite the unknown reviewer's conviction, included on the title page of the narrative, that it was 'his presence at the Panorama' that 'adds greatly to the interest of the Exhibition and much weight to the facts related by the Lecturer'.⁴

Stored in the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, lies a handbill for Irwin's 'GRAND-MOVING PANORAMA, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE GREAT AFRICAN AND AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE!' The

GRAND MOVING
PANORAMA,
 Illustrative of the Great
African and American
Slave Trade!

Family surprised and captured
 Sold and shipped on board a Slaver,
 A Slaver chased by a British Man of War,
 Slaves cast overboard in their chains,
 Burning of a Slaver,
 Manner of stowing away Slaves.
 Slave Auction. Grave in the Wilderness,
 Tomb of Washington,
 Mount Vernon. Picturesque Scenery,
 Under-ground Railroad to Canada, &c. &c.

With a highly interesting Lecture
 By the Rev. W. H. IRWIN.

Descriptive of the sufferings, sales, and various hardships to which
 Slaves are subject, being some of the scenes he witnessed during fourteen
 years resident as a Missionary among them, after which he introduces
 a *FUGITIVE SLAVE** describes his life, which is full of incident,
 and the manner in which he made his escape, &c.

WITH APPROPRIATE MUSIC!
 Open Daily at the
COSMORAMA ROO MS
 209, REGENT STREET,

Commencing at 3 and half-past 7. Doors open at half-past 2 and 7.
Admission, ONE SHILLING.
 Reserved Seats, 2s. Schools and Children under 12 years, Half-price,

* The Life of Charles Freeman, the Fugitive Slave, may be had at the Rooms price 2d.
 Also, Part I, Catalogue of the Panorama, price 2d.

Figure 17 Playbill, 'Grand-Moving Panorama, Illustrative of the Great African and American Slave Trade!', by Rev. W. H. Irwin. (John Johnson Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.)

handbill gives vital information about some of the scenes exhibited on the panorama, including an African family seized and sold into enslavement, 'slaves cast overboard in their chains', an auction of enslaved people on US soil, 'A Slaver chased by a British Man of War', and images of enslaver and first President of the United States George Washington's tomb, together with his home and labour camp, Mount Vernon. The panorama also included images of the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses or refuges where Black freedom fighters and their allies could travel to the northern states of the US or to Canada with the revolutionary and death-defying support from Black communities and white abolitionists. Freeman himself is not named in the main text: he is only referred to as 'a *Fugitive Slave*' with a footnote explaining that his narrative 'may be had at the Rooms', in part to act as advertisement for the performance and merchandise for those who wanted to remember or learn more about the exhibition and Freeman's life story. The playbill notes that Freeman will describe his life in enslavement, 'which is full of incident, and the manner in which he made his escape' alongside the panorama. Freeman's life and individuality is completely subsumed within his identity as a '*Fugitive Slave*' and, as yet, no coverage of his lecture accompanying the exhibition (giving us any context of how long he was able to speak for, or what was said) has been recovered.⁵

When we consult white-authored British newspaper reviews of the exhibition, several correspondents follow the coverage above and continue to erase Freeman's radical contributions.⁶ Others make Irwin the focal point for the panorama or describe the painted scenes in vivid detail. One correspondent notes that over forty images are used, based on Irwin's time as a missionary living in the US South, and relies on white supremacist discourse and paternalist language to highlight 'the life of the poor negro, from the moment he is captured in Africa till he finds an unhallowed and coffinless grave in the swamps of Georgia or Carolina.' According to another unnamed reporter, Irwin also depicts 'the march of the slaves in chains in droves to market; the examination and sale of the slaves by auction; heart-rending separation of kindred; scenes at the auction block; slaves labouring in the corn plantations, cotton fields, and rice swamps of the south . . . [and the] sufferings of fugitive slaves in their endeavours to reach Canada, &c', for all of which the claim is made that they are 'the result of his personal observation'.⁷ On the three rare occasions that Freeman is mentioned, two journalists completely violate and obliterate his identity by refusing to identify him by name. Instead, they rely on white racist, objectifying, and paternalist language to describe Freeman as a 'handsome young negro youth' and as a man who is 'exhibited to the audience along with the chains, manacles, whips, and other instruments of coercion or torture'. Betraying their racist biases, they make no attempt to learn about Freeman's life story but focus instead on providing a generalised statement according to which they solely denounce these 'instruments' in general terms and as 'applied in the plantations to these poor victims of the white man's avarice and cruelty'. For any and all such white discriminatory, disrespectful, and dismissive commentators, Charles Freeman is firmly fixed as a passive figure aligned with the white dominant abolitionist motif of 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' For these white observers, Freeman's role in relation to the panorama is simply to tell personal experiences of his trauma story and display instruments of torture not only to illustrate his own experiences but those of unnamed enslaved people exhibited behind him on canvas and without any member of the audience taking any

moral responsibility, expressing any empathy, or taking any political action. The one newspaper advertisement that names him is at pains to note how he will explain ‘the use of the irons, manacles, whips, and articles of torture; and will likewise have his Life for Sale.’ Even more damningly than the correspondents’ determination to repeatedly write Charles Freeman out of history is Irwin’s own assessment that he was ‘a living specimen of a Slave’. For white abolitionists such as Irwin, Charles Freeman’s individual personhood and complex subjectivity were not only entirely eradicated but were reduced solely to his political currency as a ‘living specimen of a Slave’.

And yet, Freeman defies all white abolitionist and white correspondents’ attempts to invisibilise or control him. He uses his restricted time on stage to offer a counterpoint to a panorama depicted entirely through a white man’s gaze. Instead, he sells his autobiographical narrative and provides both literary and oratorical testimony of the hard-hitting truths of enslavement that he had experienced. Unlike Irwin, he could discuss and handle such instruments of torture with authority as a living witness to the barbarity of enslavement. Warring against any and all such acts of white racist discrimination and disrespect, the call for an equal recognition of an equal humanity was a lifelong fight for past, present, and future Black abolitionists: enslaved, self-liberated, and free. During this period, world-famous African American activists including Henry Box Brown and William Wells Brown chose to create and commission their own antislavery panoramas, while James Cheeney Thompson, Washington Duff, and Turner Williams (see *Speeches*) exhibited their own drawings in their shared commitment to doing justice to Black experienced, Black imagined, and Black curated histories, memories, narratives, and experiences of enslavement.

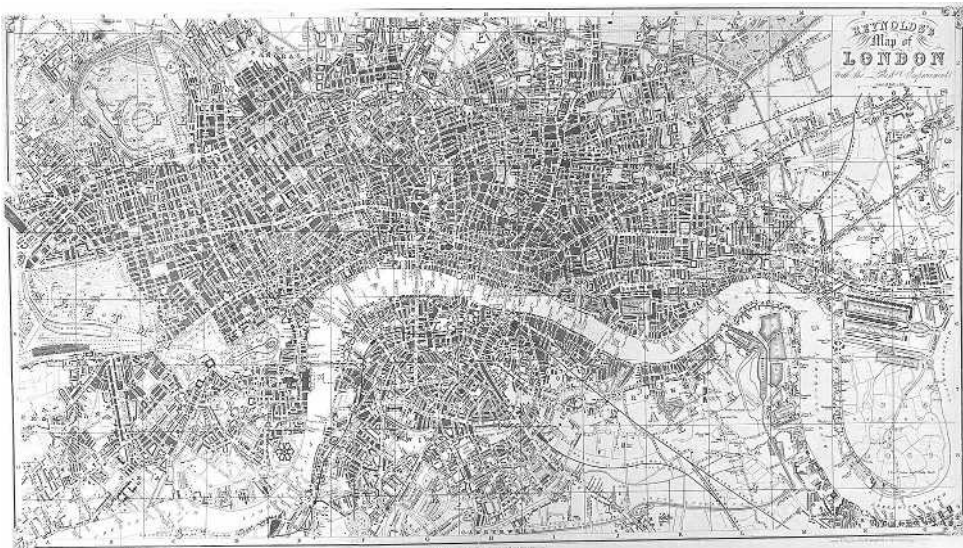


Figure 18 Map of Central London, published by J. Reynolds, England, 1851. (Author copy.)

Freeman builds upon this radical testimony and revolutionary history of Black acts and arts of 'book-making' three years later when he publishes *The Escaped Slave* in 1853 and finally tells his story in a powerfully detailed work in which he benefits from a revolutionary platform on which to pay tribute to his heroism. Printed by Partridge & Oakey, it is as yet unknown whether Freeman chose, or was directed towards, the publishers by an antislavery sympathiser who knew the press would look favourably upon his work: William Wells Brown's revolutionary novel, *Clotel: Or, the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* was in press that year with the same publisher. In this hard-hitting and powerful book, Brown exposes the hypocrisy surrounding Thomas Jefferson, a white racist enslaver who was revered as a Founding Father and author of the Declaration of Independence.⁸ Comparatively, however, Freeman's book received only minor advertisement in the white dominant transatlantic press: the *British Banner* remarked that it was 'a narrative of considerable length, well told, full of fact, and of feeling' and will be read 'with very deep interest' by 'the friends of the slave', but few newspapers devoted reviews or even a small paragraph towards it. It may have been thanks to local white abolitionists in Manchester and Leeds who recommended newspaper editors pass notice of the narrative there, but it appears to have had a very limited circulation.⁹

Freeman's book provides more clues on Irwin's panorama and its exhibition. Forced from London due to 'financial embarrassment', Irwin and Freeman exhibited the panorama in Colchester, Essex, and Ipswich, Suffolk, before mounting debts ended the tour. Friends in Ipswich provided funds for Freeman; he possibly remained in the city, studied there, and was a member of a church served by white British minister Rev. John Whitby, who provided the only testimonial to his narrative. Funds were also provided for Irwin and his young family, who returned to the US. At the time of writing his narrative in 1853, Freeman had not heard from Irwin: when it became no longer financially viable to exhibit the panorama in England, Irwin seemingly left Freeman and sought to recover his fortune in the US. Unlike Irwin, Freeman did not have the luxury of connections in America and could not settle permanently in safety while US enslavement existed, leaving him with few options.

We do know that he remained in Suffolk until at least 1851. The 1851 England and Wales Census places him in Ipswich, Suffolk, and identifies him as a 'student and assistant'. He is listed as a boarder with the Hirst family, more than likely friends of the church or the minister, Rev. John Whitby, who helped Freeman when he first arrived there. Forced by the confines of the census records to estimate his birth year, he painfully suggests here 1831, making him twenty years of age.

One other review may offer some clues on Freeman's whereabouts after 1853. The *Local Preachers' Magazine and Christian Family Record* wrote a short review of Freeman's work: 'an interesting narrative', the critic wrote, 'showing how Charles, the slave, after undergoing the privations consequent on his condition, escaped from the land of bondage to happy England, and became a freeman'. The review also notes how the publisher, Partridge & Oakey 'have agreed after paying the bare cost, to apply all the profit towards a fund for the benefit of the author' who 'is now filling a respectable situation in London'.¹⁰ Freeman evidently moved from Ipswich to London, possibly to ensure his narrative had a wider sale and to secure himself employment. The review does not

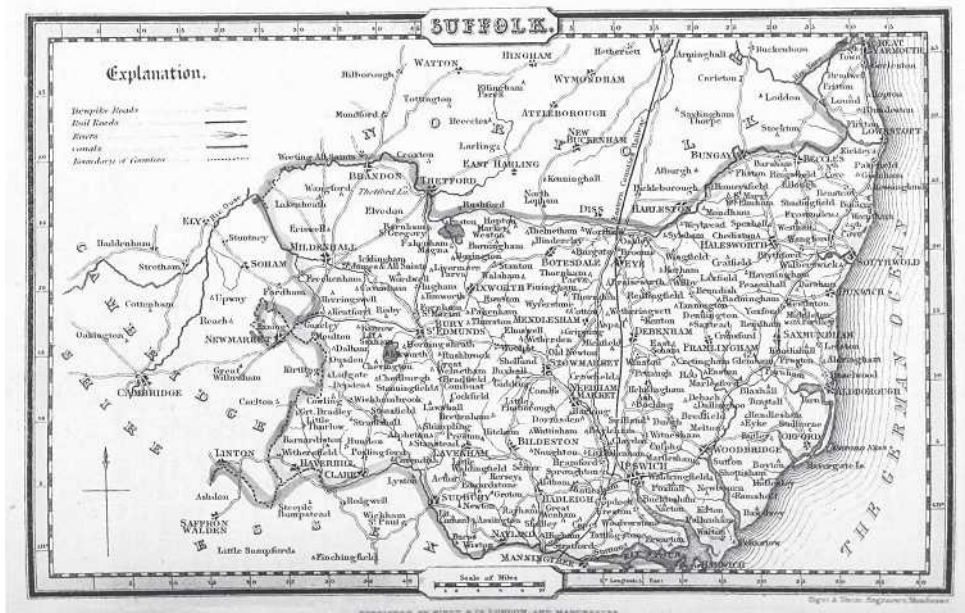


Figure 19 Map of Suffolk, from James Pigot, *A Pocket Topography and Gazetteer of England*, London, 1842. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

elaborate on the position Freeman holds, but Freeman – as with other freedom fighters such as Moses Roper – relied on the art and act of writing not only as a revolutionary literary form of self-expression but also for their financial survival. The publisher's decision to waive the majority of costs and to ensure that all subsequent funds went directly to Freeman would have been an instrumental and invaluable lifeline for him to start life anew in the capital.

Unlike the short 1850 narrative over which he had limited control, Freeman's 1853 work provides immense detail on his life in enslavement, his liberation journey northwards, and his family. The first book places great focus on his death-defying self-liberation, his life in the Dismal Swamp¹¹ and his journey to England, and in 1853 Freeman is also able to remember the lives and pay tribute to loved ones he has forever lost. While he confirms he has no knowledge of his parents, he immediately corrects an error in the first text by stating he was enslaved not by a 'Mr Tompson' but 'Thompson' and later gives clues as to the site of his enslavement, which was in 'the vicinity of Fredericksburg'. Freeman provides further context to Thompson's agricultural misfortunes, a 'blight' having fallen 'upon all the lands of the northern slave states' which had 'degenerated into complete wilderness'. Failing as a planter, Freeman notes how his enslaver acted as a trader in enslaved children, 'who can be purchased and raised at very little expense'.

For the first time, Freeman honours the only relatives he ever knew, three siblings named Jane, John, and Mary. In doing so, he painfully recounts the horrors and heart-breaking separation of family members: 'I looked round upon the desolation that had

been so abruptly wrought, and found to my consternation and sorrow that my brother and dear sisters were gone! Even as a young child, the iron of slavery first entered my soul; and even then excited feelings of rebellion against the accursed system from which I was afterwards to suffer so deeply.' Like many of the freedom fighters in this book, Freeman had no knowledge of their whereabouts: 'they may be still toiling in the sunny south, or they may have found their graves in the rice-swamp, or the cotton-field'. Freeman also documents the love of his life, Clara, who was sold away from him: in their last and brief parting moments, Clara bestows upon him a ring, which 'is all that remains to me of poor Clara' and was no doubt in his possession upon writing his book. Much like his siblings, Clara 'may be dead, crushed beneath the weight of her sufferings, or she may be still dragging out a miserable existence beneath the blows of the lash'.

While memorialising in literary form his memories of his family, Freeman also weaves in the story of Aunt Sarah: 'all those children [who] were purchased, or who had no parents living upon the estate, were consigned to her care'. As was the mind-body-soul-destroying experience of untold numbers of enslaved Black women, Aunt Sarah was forced to experience the unimaginable pain of family separation and violence: Freeman first introduces Sarah as a woman in constant pain. He notes that Jane, his sister, used to sing regularly and Sarah would turn away, 'as if the melody had brought a flood of tender recollections over her soul' and 'more than once, on such occasions, have I seen the tears trickling down her aged cheeks'. Upon writing his revolutionary autobiographical narrative in 1845, Frederick Douglass writes how songs 'told a tale of woe' and 'were tones loud, long and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery.' Unlike whitewashed or white supremacist ideologies that promoted the false and racist narrative that enslaved people were happy in their condition, the songs sung by Black people of all genders and ages illustrated quite the opposite: like Sarah, the 'anguish' of bearing witness to the sorrow songs brought tears to Douglass' eyes even in recollection years later.¹²

As Freeman later writes of her history, Sarah's husband and five children were all sold away from her, and in a further act of cruelty by her white US enslaver, she was tasked with taking care of the 'parentless children on the estate'. In writing of such horrors, Freeman philosophises how anyone could accept the fact that enslaved people were 'better off' than those who are free, questioning their sanity in a white supremacist culture and white enslaving nation that bred such hatred towards Black people.

From an early age, Freeman powerfully writes of his desire to learn to read and write; risking torture, incarceration, and death he describes how he painstakingly taught himself the alphabet from wooden blocks owned by his enslaver. 'The first book that I ever attempted to read', writes Freeman, was 'one of Peter Parley's works for children'. After 'a long struggle I mastered its contents; the dog's ears and soiled pages by this time showing that the volume had seen some hard service'. The danger he faced is revealed later in the narrative, when his enslaver, Mrs Thompson, beat him over the head after catching him reading. The numerous cruelties practised by white women such as Mrs Thompson are carefully and meticulously documented by Black freedom fighters, including Moses Roper. Freeman follows suit here, and records how one Black woman was 'disfigured for life' at her hands.

While being forced to work in the tobacco fields, Freeman records the immense cruelties of the white US overseer, Mr Carney, and is determined to secure his liberation. In order to do so, Freeman once again pays tribute to the heroism of Black women and mentions how in this task he is given immeasurable help by Aunt Sarah, who 'gave me much good advice' and food for the journey. Throughout his repeated liberation attempts, it is Sarah who gives him the inspiration, courage, and determination to leave; despite the knowledge she may never see him again and at the risk of bodily and mental torture from their white enslaver, she yet still urges him 'go, my boy . . . get your liberty if you can'. Tragically, Freeman's first and second attempts fail: he is subsequently watched by Carney and narrowly avoids being sold to New Orleans, though the heartbreaking and soul-stirring memory of families sold 'for the market I shall never forget'.

Freeman is once again inspired to secure his self-liberation by Sarah, who 'began to talk to me about trying my luck again'. Escaping to the woods, he befriends a fellow freedom fighter, Sam, who leads him to a small community in the Great Dismal Swamp. A vast region located across parts of Virginia and North Carolina, the Great Dismal Swamp was a wilderness area to which untold numbers of enslaved people had been journeying for centuries in a shared determination to leave the traumas of their enslaved labour camps and live new lives of liberty away from their white enslavers. In his narrative, we learn not only of Charles Freeman's individual freedom struggles but of the collective resistance strategies endorsed by generations of enslaved people, and how those on nearby labour camps not only knew of their whereabouts but actively traded intelligence and information, food, clothing, material goods, skills, music, and religious teachings with each other to ensure their collective survival. In *The Escaped Slave*, Freeman elaborates on the intense life and death dangers faced by this community, from snakes to malaria to white patrol men who constantly searched for them. He also pays tribute to Sam, a man who experienced enslavement in North Carolina, who cared for his community after he had rescued his wife from torture at the hands of a white overseer and fled to the swamp.

Freeman is captured after he ventures outside the safe confines of the swamp but instead of being tortured he is offered a proposition: marry an enslaved woman or be sold south. Suspecting his enslaver's nefarious, immoral, and abusive intentions, Freeman writes: 'My master dealt in slaves – was it not interest that prompted this proposal? When my betrothed [Clara] was torn from my arms, I made a resolution that I would never let any of my blood suffer under the vile system.' Risking further pain and torture, Freeman powerfully refuses and taking courage from Aunt Sarah's inspirational last words as she lay dying – 'get your liberty if you can' – Freeman leaves once more after violently resisting Carney in the fields. As he emotionally writes, 'it was now a struggle for life, as well as for liberty'. Using some money he had saved from 'a clandestine trade in corn and tobacco', and taking a horse from his enslaver, Freeman braved starvation and potential capture before being helped by Black abolitionists and indigenous communities and white allies on the Underground Railroad.

Unlike the 1850 narrative, Freeman expands on his struggles 'for life, as well as for liberty' in the northern states. Almost destitute and shocked to discover the insidious and entrenched nature of white supremacist culture in Philadelphia, Freeman is helped by Black freedom fighters in New York who give him shelter and food. Stunned by their

revelations that free Black people of all genders and ages could be seized and sold into enslavement in the southern states, and how racism in the north was so pervasive, Freeman is encouraged to leave the US and find work on a ship as he ‘had no inclination to remain in a country that treated me in so unjust a manner, even though that country claimed the honour of being my birth-place.’

Freeman found a vessel bound for London and upon telling the cook his story, was found by Irwin. Unlike his first narrative, we are able to hear Freeman’s own account of their meeting and of the disrespectful and dehumanising invasive questioning: ‘he began to ply me with questions about places and parties with whom I was somewhat acquainted. I could not help feeling considerable uneasiness under this examination.’ Irwin had no moral qualms in subjecting Charles Freeman to the disrespectful interrogations that were typical of white abolitionists’ prejudicial and persecutory treatments of self-liberated enslaved people. Irwin appears to offer Freeman this proposal in return for an education, and perhaps not a full wage nor even any wage as he makes no mention of receiving money. The ambiguity and the unequal and exploitative nature of this relationship is deliberately erased from the first narrative. Opening a week after Freeman arrived in England, it was at a private and first viewing of the panorama that a white religious minister suggested that he should name himself, ‘Freeman’.

While Freeman’s life and whereabouts in London after 1853 remain as yet unknown, his legacy as a self-liberated activist, author, orator, and freedom fighter in his own right are all too clear from the revolutionary pages of his literary work. He rejects the white racist agenda and narrow confines of the 1850 edition and challenges the patronising persecutory and discriminatory tropes that mar it. Instead, he honours his own life and the lives of family members, friends, and revolutionary freedom fighters all working collectively and courageously to dismantle white supremacist systems and secure their liberation.

Notes

1. The only extant copy of Charles Freeman, *The Escaped Slave* (London, 1853) appears to be in the Library of Virginia, United States. We thank the Library and the Inter-Library Loan Service at the University of Edinburgh for arranging digitisation of this material.
2. *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave* (London, 1850?). Digitised by Hathi Trust: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.69015000003869&view=1up&seq=7>
3. For an in-depth investigation into the political slogans ‘A man and a brother’ and ‘a woman and a sister’ that were circulated on white-produced ‘medallions created by employees of the eighteenth century English industrial and champion of antislavery reform, Josiah Wedgwood’ (p.107), see Carolyn Williams, “‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’” “Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?”: The trans Atlantic Crusade against the Slave Trade and Slavery’, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 56.1/2 (2010): pp.107–126.
4. Anon., ‘Panorama of Slavery and the Slave-Trade’, *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1 May 1850, p.73.
5. ‘Grand-Moving Panorama’. Playbill, Box 3, John Johnson Collection, Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. We thank the fantastic Special Collections team for bringing this playbill to our attention.
6. Anon., ‘Panorama of the African and American Slave Trade’, *Morning Post* (London), 22 April 1850, p.5; Anon., ‘Irwin’s Panorama of Slavery’, *London Evening Standard*, 21 May 1850, p.4.

7. Anon., 'Slavery', *Essex Standard*, 21 June 1850, p.3; Anon., 'Grand Moving Panorama of the Great African and American Slave Trade', *The Suffolk Chronicle, or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, 22 June 1850, p.1; 'Panorama of Slavery', *The Suffolk Chronicle, or Weekly General Advertiser & County Express*, 22 June 1850, p.4.
8. See William Wells Brown, *Clotel: Or, the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (London: Partridge & Oakey, 1853). Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/brown/menu.html>
9. *Supplement to the British Banner*, 26 October 1853, p.24. It was advertised in the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 20 August 1853; *Leeds Mercury*, 20 August 1853, p.7; *Nonconformist*, 24 August 1853, p.24 and 30 November 1853, p.22; and *Saint James's Chronicle*, 27 September 1853, p.1.
10. *Local Preachers' Magazine and Christian Family Record*, 1853 (London, 1853), p.448.
11. The Great Dismal Swamp is the name given to the extensive swamp lands located across parts of the states of Virginia and North Carolina. A historical site of Black liberation sacred to the memory of African diasporic 'fights for freedom', over the centuries enslaved people built new communities and new lives there as they took refuge from enslavement. See Daniel O. Sayers, *A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2016).
12. See Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, No. 25 Cornhill, 1845) for a longer description on 'sorrow songs', pp.14–15.

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THE ESCAPED SLAVE:
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES FREEMAN.
WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. J. WHITBY, IPSWICH.

LONDON: PARTRIDGE & OAKEY, 24, PATERNOSTER ROW; AND 70,
EDGWARE ROAD.
1853.

PARTRIDGE AND OAKEY, PRINTERS, PADDINGTON.

Dedication.

To	
W.D. SIMS, Esq.	Mr. Geo. Messent, and
Rev. J. Whitby,	Mr. Wm. Fraser

GENEROUS FRIENDS,

PERMIT me to inscribe to you this little narrative of my past history, as a slight proof of my gratitude for your unbounded kindness and liberality towards me during the past two or three years. Nameless, and a wanderer, I sought in your country that liberty which my own denied me. 'I was a stranger, and ye took me in.'¹ To your joint exertions I am mainly indebted for those educational acquirements, by means of a right use of which my usefulness and success in life may be so greatly facilitated. Unable adequately to express in words, or require by deeds, the obligations under which you have placed me, I beg your acceptance of the dedication of this little work, as a small indication of the grateful sentiments by which I am animated.

I am, Gentlemen,
Yours, with deep respect,
CHARLES FREEMAN.
London, APRIL, 1853.

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INTRODUCTION

CHARLES FREEMAN, formerly ‘Charles’ *the Slave*, the Author of the following narrative, has requested me to write a few lines by way of Introduction to the subsequent pages, which were placed in my hands for perusal in manuscript. This request was prompted, I believe, by grateful and affectionate feeling, arising out of the interest which I had taken in his welfare, in connection with other gentlemen of this town, who most generously took up his case at a period when the exercise of Christian philanthropy was urgently needed to save a promising young man from the temptations attendant on inexperience and extreme destitution. The colour of his skin so far from being any barrier to sympathetic regard, rather operated to deepen feelings of benevolence towards the child of oppression.

I make no pretension to superior kindness to ‘Charles Freeman’ in writing these few recommendatory lines, but I feel grateful to God for the opportunity afforded to me, of showing myself a man and a Christian towards one recently escaped from fetters of detestable Slavery, and who was cast upon the humane and Christian attention of the lovers of freedom in Ipswich. Arrangements having been completed for the maintenance and instruction of Charles, he became a worshipper in the congregation of which I was the minister. This circumstance brought me into a more intimate acquaintance with his mind and character, and it is probably mainly on this account, that he has earnestly requested me to preface his narrative by a few general observations.

As to the narrative itself, I have listened with intense interest to the greater portion of its contents, given in oral statement by the author, and to the truthfulness of which I have received collateral testimony from an American Minister, who, meeting with Charles in the vessel which brought him to England, had engaged him to assist in a Panoramic Exhibition of American Slavery, which, unhappily, terminated in Ipswich, in consequence of financial embarrassment, whereby that gentleman and the hapless fugitive from bondage were reduced to entire destitution. That unfortunate friend of the oppressed youth informed me, that he knew the locality and scenes of Charles’ life of Slavery, and that he believed his statements to be honest and veracious.

It may be a gratification to the reader of the following pages to be informed that, under a course of appropriate tuition in Ipswich, Charles Freeman made rapid improvement in various branches of education. I do not overstate the fact, when I affirm that his mental and literary progress, not only gave pleasure to his benefactors, but also excited their astonishment. In writing, in music, in figures, in languages, he

advanced with surprising ease and rapidity. The penmanship and composition of his letter of request, which lies before me, are such as a stranger would naturally suppose to be the result of ten years' instruction, and yet in the month of June, 1850, when I first saw him, he was an almost totally uneducated fugitive from the land of 'Uncle Tom.'² He is now, through the kindness of a noble-hearted gentleman in 'St. Paul's Church Yard,' whose generous deeds are widely known, creditably filling a situation in a large establishment.

I have great pleasure in reflecting upon any little effort I have made for the present welfare and eternal well-being of Charles; and I believe many other gentlemen in this town, experience a similar gratification.

The narrative is essentially his own production. When he had written it, he placed it in the hands of several of his benefactors, who advised him to print it, after submitting it to the opinion of a Christian publisher. A kind friend has revised it for the press, simply making a few trivial corrections; and the publishers have engaged to bring the work out at the cost of material and labour, reserving whatever profits may accrue from the sale of the author.

The narrative will speak for itself. It will be read with deep sympathy, as another sad and telling illustration of the cruelty and avarice of Slavery – of Slavery in the land of light, in Protestant and Bible-printing America – that land of anomalies and contradictions! Oh, America! thy Christianity and thy Slavery render thee one of the greatest wonders of Christendom! May the day of repentance speedily come. That day, when it arrives, will bring gladness and hope, and hasten the world's happy brotherhood and glorious redemption! The reader will find in these simply narrated *facts*, a confirmation (if confirmation be needed) of the irreconcilableness of Slavery with the Gospel of Christ.

With sincere sympathy and respect for the author, I commend his tale to the perusal of every lover of humanity and freedom.

In England he has found friends, and a home. May the God of Britain crown his liberty with His benediction and favour.

John Whitby.

Ipswich, July 22nd, 1853.

THE ESCAPED SLAVE

CHAPTER I

MY BIRTH – MY MASTER'S EMBARRASMENTS – SLAVERY AND THE SOIL – HOW I WAS BROUGHT UP

I was born – at least so I have been informed – on the estate of a Mr. Thompson, in one of the eastern counties of Virginia. The family had once been wealthy and influential, but slavery had entailed its retributive curse upon them, by depriving them, as it has done many a proud Virginian, of much of their wealth. The property which fell to my master consisted of a quantity of worn-out land, and some fifty or sixty slaves. The slaves constituted the most valuable portion of his inheritance, and to which he mainly trusted for his maintenance. The method of cultivation pursued in the slaveholding states in a short time exhausts the soil; and as it is contrary to

the agricultural economy of these states to restore to the soil, by means of manures, &c., those properties which it has lost, the land soon ceases to yield its accustomed crop, and is abandoned for some newer spot, which, in its turn, rapidly undergoes the same course of impoverishment. The land belonging to my master had got into so sterile a condition that scarcely sufficient could be forced from it to supply food to those residing upon it. Indeed, such a state of things prevailed very extensively; for a blight seems to have fallen upon all the lands of the northern slave states. I had often in my rambles observed the deserted estates of families who had once been wealthy and distinguished. Here and there were to be seen broken-down fences and dilapidated buildings; and what had once been beautiful fields and fertile plantations, had degenerated into complete wildernesses. Even the property formerly owned by America's greatest statesman has not escaped the stroke, and presents a wretched picture of desolation and neglect; and when I left Virginia, his tomb stood in a meadow, exposed to the irruptions of the various animals on the estate.

Mr. Thompson, like many of his neighbours whose estates were in the same condition as his own, had turned his attention to raising slaves for the southern markets; but this did not much suit his tastes. It had been the boast of the family that they were planters; and they professed to look with contempt upon the race of slave-traders who have sprung up in those states, though, as far as I could learn, they never hesitated to purchase of them when they needed some 'likely' hands. Slave-trading seems of late to have acquired much conventional respectability; formerly, even slaveholders themselves would scorn to associate with a man who made his money by trafficking in human chattels. Mr. Thompson inherited all the proud prejudices of his ancestors on this point, but the necessities of his false position compelled him to submit; and for the present his pride was laid aside, as a choice garment which might be soiled by the dirty work which he must henceforth perform. Yet he long strove against the irresistible force of circumstances. Considering it no very pleasant thing to descend to a station which he had hitherto regarded as so much beneath him, he had gone on, year after year, endeavouring to force crops from his exhausted lands, until he found himself considerably in debt and his treasury minus its last dollar. The question now was, What was to be done? The method usually pursued by slaveholders in his predicament is, to make a hasty retreat, with as much property as they can withhold from the clutches of the sheriff, to some of the newer states, and there begin life anew. What prevented my master from following these examples is more than I am able to tell. I have often heard him express his intention of going south, and again becoming a planter, when he should have realized a sufficient sum for that purpose.

One of the most profitable branches of the slave trade is that of buying up young children, who can be purchased and raised at very little expense. These are usually trained up as domestic servants, or as field hands, and then sent off to the principal slave markets for sale. My first recollection is of being in the companionship of a number of children of various ages, sizes, and complexions. Of my parents, I have no knowledge whatever; all my inquiries respecting them having proved quite fruitless. I and my young associates were under the care of an old woman by the name of Sarah, more generally known among the elder residents of the place as 'Sally,' and by the younger as 'Aunty,' or 'Aunt Sarah.' All those children who were purchased, or who had no parents living upon the estate, were consigned to her care. It was her business

to prepare their food, which consisted of sour milk, mush,* or sweet potatoes. The mode of feeding them was very similar to that employed in feeding a herd of pigs. The child-wash being placed in a large wooden trough, they would rush forward to reach it, tumbling one over another in their scrambling avidity; and many a fight have I witnessed at these times for a good place at the trough, the strongest, as is usual in such cases, of course coming in for the largest share. Thus passes the degraded and embruted childhood of hundreds of human beings; they know nothing of a mother's love or a father's care; they grow up ignorant of everything except that they are slaves, and that their business is to serve their master faithfully. There are but few slaves who can look back to their early days with pleasure, and it is seldom that they can refer to any circumstance of influence as being productive of subsequent good to them. I believe it would be a puzzle for many to tell how they had lived during that period, or what they did.

CHAPTER II

MY ONLY RELATIVES – AUNT SARAH – THE FIRST SHARP STING OF SLAVERY – MY EARLY DESOLATION

The only relatives of whom I have any recollection, were two sisters and a brother. Jane, the eldest, was a handsome, bright-eyed girl, between thirteen and fourteen years of age, at the time of which I am about to write. John was then a bold, active, and mischievous boy of about eleven; and Mary a little, timid girl of eight. I was the youngest of the group. We four children lived with aunt Sarah, who, for some cause or other, had taken us under her special care and fosterage, in consequence of which we fared better than many of the other children around us.

My sister Jane was my favourite, as indeed she was with all who knew her. I was her pet; she used to carry me about, and also took great pleasure in amusing me; and, moreover, was invariably my protectress from the rude attacks of our companions. This glad-hearted girl was the life of our humble dwelling, and the sound of her merry laugh would cheer our hearts and revive our spirits at any time. Even aunt Sarah, who was rarely seen to smile, would regard her with evident pleasure, when, as was her wont, she would be singing, in her clear, sweet voice, some song she had learned; and then the old woman, as if the melody had brought a flood of tender recollections over her soul, would suddenly avert her head; and more than once, on such occasions, have I seen the tears trickling down her aged cheeks. Perhaps she thought of her own childhood, or mayhap she was reminded of some of her children, who had been torn from her arms and sold far south. At that period, however, I knew nothing of her history. I had yet to learn the tale of the misfortunes which had befallen her.

As regards myself, these days were the happiest of my early history; and nothing that I have since undergone has been able to efface the traces of them from my memory. But, alas! these happy days, these bright spots of my childhood, soon fled. The ruthless dealer in human flesh entered, like a wolf, our comparatively happy

* Mush is the meal of Indian corn, simply stirred in boiling water till it becomes thick.
[Author note]

family fold, and tore away many of my dearest companions from me. After the first hours of bewilderment were over, I looked round upon the desolation that had been so abruptly wrought, and found to my consternation and sorrow that my brother and dear sisters were gone! Whither they were borne I knew not, and could gain no intelligence of their destiny. In those hours of bitter anguish, the iron of slavery first entered my soul; and even then excited feelings of rebellion against the accursed system from which I was afterwards to suffer so deeply. Sixteen years have since passed over my head, and I have heard nothing of them. They may be still toiling in the sunny south, or they may have found their graves in the rice-swamp, or the cotton-field.

On the morning of our separation, my sister Jane came and aroused me from my slumbers; and, throwing her arms around my neck, told me, with tears in her eyes, that she was going to leave me. I did not then comprehend that she was leaving me for ever. She was evidently oppressed with some deep and inexplicable sorrow; but I was then too young to know the cause of her grief. My dear sister was very unhappy, and that was sufficient for me; and, in the sacred sympathy of sorrow, I mingled my tears with hers. We had not indulged ourselves long in this manner, when a rough-looking man appeared at the door of our little cabin, and demanded of Jane if she was ready. She pressed her lips hurriedly to my cheek, vanished from my sight, and was gone. This was her last kiss, and that was the last time my eyes ever beheld her! The other children I did not see at all when they left. I have often endeavoured to find out whither they had been taken, but I never succeeded.

I was now left alone with aunt Sarah, who became more moody and reserved than ever. Since that time I have witnessed many similar scenes. I have seen the babe snatched from its mother's breast, the husband and father taken from the midst of his family, and my own promised wife carried away from before my eyes, while I did not dare to raise my hand in her defence, and not a single word of remonstrance was allowed to escape my lips. But this is not all that America does to the slave. She, likewise –

‘Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps, when she sees inflicted on a beast.’³

The clanking of fetters, the resounding lash of the driver, and the deep wail of poor down-trodden humanity, are continually rising from the south. The rice-swamps, the cotton-fields, the tobacco and sugar plantations, are drinking up the life-blood of thousands. I have often heard it said, that slaves are better off than a great many persons who are free. As chattels, as articles of merchandize, in many instances, they *may* be – (though I question even that); but, as human beings, will any man in his sound senses presume to tell me, that I am better off as the property of another, than I am as a free-man? I should begin to have some apprehensions respecting the sanity of such a person.

CHAPTER III

I EXPERIENCE A CHANGE IN MY CONDITION – HOW I PICK UP MY READING BY STEALTH – THE CHARACTER OF MY MISTRESS

About a fortnight after the departure of my relatives, the overseer of our estate, of whom I shall presently speak more particularly, came to the quarters, and after

assembling all the children, he chose out some five or six of the cleanest, of whom I was one, and sent them to the 'Great House,' where one of our number was to be chosen as attendant to Master Harry, my master's little son. Fortunately I was selected for this purpose, which led to an improvement in my condition, for I was sure to be better fed and clothed than I had hitherto been. My master's family consisted of himself, his wife, and two children – the little boy upon whom it was my duty to wait, and Julia, a daughter, between fifteen and sixteen, who had passed the most of her childhood in the north, with some of her father's relatives. My principal business was to amuse Master Harry, and as he happened to be of a good disposition, I succeeded pretty well. When not in attendance upon him, it fell to my lot to clean knives and forks, to run of errands, and learn to wait at table, sometimes assisting the cook in the kitchen. In the art of waiting I succeeded so well that by the time I reached the age of sixteen I was principal waiter in the house – a post of no mean importance to one in my condition.

One thing used to please me very much. After Master Harry had learned to read, he used to bring a little book which he had, and during play would kindly read to me the stories it contained. As the result of this indulgence I became inflamed with the desire to read them for myself. I had already learned my letters, though at the time I was acquiring the knowledge I was not aware of its utility. We had constantly about us a number of little blocks of wood, with the alphabet pasted upon them, which were designed, I suppose, to assist my little master in learning his letters. It was by means of these that I was accidentally furnished with the elements of my own education. The mode in which these blocks were made serviceable to me was as follows: they were in almost daily use by us, for building houses, castles, &c.; and when my young master wanted some particular block, he would tell me to get it, at the same time calling it by its proper name. By this constant exercise I soon learned the small letters, but it was a long time before I was able to conquer the capitals. One day being alone in the room where we usually played, I found the book from which he had so often read to me lying upon the floor. I eagerly caught it up, and began turning over the leaves and looking at the pictures, earnestly wishing all the time that I was able to read it. But not content with wishing, I made up my mind to try. It was the first book that I ever attempted to read; it being one of Peter Parley's works for children. By various devices I obtained assistance from Master Harry, and after a long struggle I mastered its contents; the dog's ears and soiled pages by this time showing that the volume had seen some hard service.

My time while living in the house passed, on the whole, very pleasantly. My duties were light, and I had sufficient food and comfortable clothing. My master was an easy, good-tempered sort of man – one of those who do not like trouble of any kind, but would rather lie on his sofa, smoking his cigar and reading his newspaper, than attend to any kind of business. He very seldom got out of temper, though on some occasions he could storm in a manner quite terrifying to the household; but these tempestuous outbreaks were seldom, and were soon over. For Mrs. Thompson, my master's wife, I felt the utmost repugnance; and she soon gave me to understand that my feelings were reciprocated. The principal cause of my dislike for her was the cruelty to her attendants. She never hesitated to inflict corporal punishment for the slightest offence; and then she would have the effrontery to justify herself by some perverted quotation from Scripture. She was the only one of the family who made

any profession of religion, and if her conversation was any criterion, one might conclude that she was very devout; but her actions were so contrary to the spirit of her remarks, that, in my humble opinion, there was more of hypocrisy than anything else in her Christianity. She was a member of the Methodist church, of which she was a pretty regular attendant; and what with class meetings and camp meetings, her time was almost entirely occupied.

As an instance of her method of inflicting punishment for any offence, I might mention that her dressing-maid was one morning unfortunate enough to break a looking-glass, whereupon her mistress in a fury snatched the curling-tongs which she had been using from her hand, and beat her so unmercifully about the head and face, that the poor girl was disfigured for life. Hitherto I had managed to escape her, for during my young master's earlier days, he was almost entirely under the care of his sister, and we used to see but little of Mrs. Thompson, except at table. When not engaged in my duties in the house, I used to accompany Master Harry in his hunting and fishing excursions. This was the paradisaical state of my slavery; and I had not yet learned what it was truly to be a chattel. I was often troubled about my ignorance respecting my parents, and the fate of my brother and sisters; but the iron of oppression had not yet fully entered my soul. The time, however, when it should do so was coming swiftly enough.

CHAPTER IV

CLARA – OUR DEEP ATTACHMENT TO EACH OTHER – THE GREAT SORROW OF MY YOUTH – I AWAKE FULLY TO A SENSE OF MY CONDITION

About the time when I became attendant to my young master, Miss Julia chose a bright mulatto girl, about a year younger than myself, named Clara, intending to bring her up as a maid-servant for herself. Being thrown much into each other's society, we grew up together and became attached. Miss Julia, who, notwithstanding some peculiarities of disposition, was a very amiable young lady, had taken some pains with Clara, who grew a beautiful girl, and was possessed of more accomplishments than usually fall to the lot of the slave. But, alas! this beauty and these accomplishments which render the female so attractive in society, what were they to the slave? So many additions to her market price. The slightly darkened hue of her cheek alone betrayed her affinity to the African, while her features presented all the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon. We loved with all the ardour of youth; and oftentimes, seated on some mossy bank with Clara's arm around my neck, I would gaze into her beautiful dark eyes and dream of happiness. On such delicious occasions, I thought nothing of the contingencies to which we were exposed. Our young mistress encouraged our attachment, and promised to obtain her father's consent to our union. We discussed our plans for the future, knowing nothing of the terrible disappointment that awaited us. Sometimes, when alone, a kind of foreboding of impending evil would haunt me; but when in the presence of Clara, her merry laugh or sweet song chased these gloomy thoughts away. But the catastrophe came, and the bright dream of my youth was suddenly dispelled. She was sold, sold! torn from my arms without a moment's warning. At first I could not believe it; it seemed a thing incredible; for I had heard from the lips of my young mistress that her father had consented to our union. Yet the dreadful truth was soon forced

upon me that he had sold *her*, the wife of my heart, far away into the south. A few moments before her forced departure, the dear girl came running into the room where I was, and throwing her arms around my neck, wept bitterly. My grief found vent in low muttered imprecations against the perpetrators of the deed. I even conceived the idea of running away with her, but almost immediately abandoned it as impracticable. Hope fled; I became silent and moody; and despair settled in my bosom. I now knew what it was to be a slave.

This calamity happened in this wise. Miss Julia had been suddenly called away to the north, to see a relative who was ill, and she left Clara at home. About a week after her departure there came from Georgia, I think, a gentleman on a visit to my master. Some days after his arrival he saw Clara, and was apparently struck by her beauty; for though he bestowed on her no particular attention, he did not conceal his admiration of her, and at the conclusion of his visit, actually made my master such an offer for her as I suppose was too tempting to be resisted.

Clara, poor girl, was kept in ignorance of her fate; she only understood that we were to be separated, without the slightest chance of our ever meeting again on earth. She clung to me as if I could shelter her from harm, but alas! what could I do? I could not defend her. I was unable to protect myself. She took from her finger a ring, the gift of her mistress, and placed it upon mine. It is all that remains to me of poor Clara. After taking one long and tender embrace, we parted for ever. She may be dead, crushed beneath the weight of her sufferings, or she may be still dragging out a miserable existence beneath the blows of the lash.

It is said 'misfortunes never come singly,' and my ease was to be no exception. After this terrible stroke Master Harry left home for one of the northern institutions of learning, and I thus lost my best friend. He had not been gone long before my mistress began to cast an evil eye upon me. Hitherto I had escaped her malignity, but now not having my young master to attend, I was more in the house than formerly, and consequently came more in contact with her. If there was one thing that Mrs. Thompson hated more than anything else, it was what she called insolence in a slave, by which she meant, any remonstrance or excuse they might offer to any harsh or unjust remark of hers. Now this was something I was very apt to do, and as it had never before subjected me to any inconvenience, I did not imagine that it would now; but my mistress soon made me understand that this would not be endured, and she forthwith began advising my master to put me under the care of Mr. Carney, the overseer, to learn better manners. I had, fortunately, become something of a favourite with my master; but after the sale of Clara, and the breach of his promise to me, he perhaps thought it would be better for me to leave the house. On being thus ejected from the dwelling that had so long sheltered me, he made me many promises that I should be comfortable; but I did not believe them; my eyes were now open. I understood my position thoroughly, and I formed a resolution that I would better it. I was sent away to the 'quarter,' to live. These quarters consisted of a number of ruinous huts, about a mile from the house, which had been built many years before, and they were now as dilapidated and uncomfortable as could be well conceived; their earthen floors bearing, in wet weather, a strong resemblance to a pig-stye. To one accustomed, as I had been, to a comfortable room, and bed, this was a sore humiliation and trouble; and I did not see how I should again become reconciled to this mode of living, though Aunt

Sarah's hut, which I once more shared with her, was in a somewhat better condition than the others.

CHAPTER V

I TAKE REFUGE WITH AUNT SARAH – CHARACTER AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MR. CARNEY, OUR OVERSEER – I MEDITATE AN ESCAPE FROM HIS CRUELTY – AUNT SARAH'S HISTORY

Aunt Sarah was by this time getting old and was scarcely able to help herself. She was now the only friend to whom I could unburden myself; and as I had not neglected her in my prosperous days, she welcomed me to her dwelling, though she was sorry I had lost my post at the house.

My course of life was now very different from what it had been in the house, and by no means so pleasant to me. Mr. Carney, our overseer, I well knew, was no friend to me; for on more than one occasion, when protected by my young master's presence, I had expressed my contempt for him, and I now expected that my intercourse with him would not be altogether agreeable.

There was no really hard work to be done on the estate, for, as I have already said, we raised but little on the place; but Mr. Carney prided himself on his skill in training field-hands, and he conducted matters as if it were a regular plantation. He was what might be called a humane overseer by those who had seen others. But I had very slight acquaintance with his class, and therefore considered him a very hard and austere man. Perhaps on a more cultivated plantation than ours he would have shown more of his bad qualities, but here it was his interest to punish as little as possible. He was about five feet six inches in height, thick-set, and possessed of a little round bullet head; he was immoderately fond of whiskey, and his face had acquired that purple hue peculiar to hard drinkers; his conversation, too, was commonly graced or *disgraced* with oaths of the worst kind. He was well skilled in human flesh, and could tell off the points of a man or woman as readily as a jockey could those of a horse.

This *gentleman* had been informed that I was henceforth to be considered under his charge; and after cursing me to his heart's content, he put a hoe into my hand with strict orders to be in the field every morning by sunrise. I was then placed with a gang who were at work on a small field of tobacco. This was terrible work to me; in a short time my hands were so sore and blistered that I could scarcely hold the hoe. When dinner-time came, my appetite being rather sharpened by my unusual morning's work, I expected to make a hearty meal; but, alas! my stomach refused the scalded meal and salted bacon placed before me; I could not swallow it, and at length I gave up the attempt in despair. I was, then a novice, however; for urged by the pangs of hunger, I soon learned to devour eagerly whatever was provided, and even to wish the quantity were greater. Mr. Carney seemed to enjoy my discomfort amazingly, and was very fond of joking about my improved condition under his care. Sometimes he would give me a cut or two across the shoulders with a long cowhide whip with which he was armed, just, as he said, 'to take the dust out of my jacket;' and once he gave me a blow across the right eye, the mark of which I still carry, though it is partially concealed by the eyebrow. It was his intention, he said, 'to bring me down; I had been ruined in the house; but he determined to make

something of me.' His cruelty continued to increase to such an extent that at length I resolved to run away, and seek refuge in some of the free states, of which I had heard something. It is true, my ideas respecting these asylums for the fugitive were vague and confused; but I thought that if I could only get to some place where no one could claim me as their property, I should be happy. I, at that time, knew nothing of the dangers which stood in the way of escape, but felt that it was better to incur any risk than submit to the degradation and sufferings of my present condition.

One evening, on returning from work, I communicated my intention to Aunt Sarah, who seemed much surprised, and at first said nothing; but at last she entered into my plans, and gave me much good advice. Still I fancied, though she endeavoured to conceal it, that she did not really approve the step contemplated by me, and more than once I thought of giving up my resolution on her account. I knew her to be cross and ill-tempered; but as she had always been kind to me, and, indeed, was now my only friend, I could not help loving her; and having been recently acquainted with her early history, I had almost ceased to wonder at her bad temper.

Aunt Sarah, or Sally, as she was generally called, had been the property of my master's father. She had been a favourite servant, and had long held the post of housekeeper. In her youth she was remarkable for her cheerful disposition and good temper. She had married one of the hands on the estate, by whom she had had five children. This slave-family seemed to have lived happily, and met with every indulgence from their master. When his father died, my master, whose property she became, retained her as housekeeper until he married, when, to satisfy his wife, she was degraded from her position. Now, having been for so many years chief-servant in the house, and having a good deal of pride, Sally by no means relished the change; and expressed her opinion of it rather freely, which so exasperated her new mistress that she expelled her from the house. Sally took herself to her cottage in great anger; but here a new calamity awaited her, for her young master being pressed for money, had sold her husband and two of her children, and she only arrived in time to bid them farewell. Subsequently the remaining children were likewise sold. This cruel treatment was more than she could bear, and for a long time she wandered about the place a perfect maniac. After her recovery, she was, as I have already said, appointed to take care of the parentless children on the estate. She used often to tell me that I reminded her of her youngest son, who had been away from her, when just about my age; and now when I came to consider how kind she had been to me, I felt that I should be doing wrong to leave her as she was getting old and feeble, and more than ever needed some one to protect and assist her. I accordingly told her that I would stay with her, and not run away; but she had made up her mind that I should go. 'Go, my boy,' said she; 'get your liberty if you can; never mind me; I shall soon be gone.' She held out such inducements in favour of the attempt that selfishness prevailed, and I determined on seizing the first favourable opportunity. Having thus made up my mind, and being of an ardent temperament, I resolved that I would make an effort to start the next night. I knew nothing of the direction in which I ought to proceed, and did not much like the idea of travelling by night; but the apparition of the vengeful and tyrannical Carney rising before my mind, banished all indecision and faint-heartedness, and confirmed me in my determination to brave the worst. Aunt Sarah promised to provide me with some provisions to start with, and having thus settled matters, I threw myself upon the floor and slept.

CHAPTER VI

HOW I EFFECT MY ESCAPE – A FELLOW FUGITIVE – GOADED BY HUNGER,
I AM TEMPTED TO STEAL – MY AIMLESS RAMBLES BRING ME BACK TO
MR. CARNEY, AND TO SLAVERY AGAIN.

My mind was so unhinged and excited by the thoughts of going away, that I could scarcely keep at work during the next day. How anxiously I longed for night! The day seemed most wearisomely long, and the shadows of the trees lengthened more slowly than I ever remembered them to have done; but at last night came, upon which I hastened home full of trepidation. Aunt Sarah had prepared a small bundle of provisions for me, which I gratefully received, and then hastily took what I then supposed was my last leave of her, and received her blessing. The night was dark, and being then very superstitious, all the stories of ghosts and hobgoblins that I had ever heard seemed to come rushing into my mind; so much so, that the rustling of a leaf, or the falling of a branch, sufficed to fill me with terror. But nerving myself to the task, I kept on until I had gained a wood which skirted the estate, in attempting to thread the intricacies of which, after receiving some heavy knocks against the trees, I at length stumbled over a fallen tree and hurt myself severely. Rendered incapable of proceeding further, I lay here until daylight; but cannot say whether I slept or not. I was at last aroused by a hissing noise, which, as I soon ascertained, proceeded from a nest of black snakes, from whose neighbourhood I deemed it advisable to beat a hasty retreat. I wandered about for several days without meeting any one, and began to wonder what was to become of me.

At length, one morning, I met a coloured man, who, like myself, appeared to be a fugitive. I accosted him, and entered into conversation with him, in the course of which I learned that he came from near the city of Richmond, that he had taken to flight in the hope of finding his wife and three children, who, some two or three weeks before had been sold to a man residing somewhere in Tennessee. I shared with him what provisions remained in my wallet, and tried to induce him to accompany me; but he refused, declaring that he would, on no account, leave his family in slavery. Poor fellow! his attempt was almost hopeless. We parted, and I have never heard any tidings of him.

Shortly after leaving this man, I came to the end of the wood, which brought me out upon a public road. Being one with which I was wholly unacquainted, I feared to venture out upon it during the day; so I concealed myself in a thicket as near to it as possible, hoping to learn from the passers-by what road it was; but in this expectation I was disappointed, for although a number of wagons passed by, I failed to distinguish the conversation of any of their occupants. Soon as it was dark, I determined I would commit myself to it, taking that direction in which I had seen most of the passengers go; but I had not gone very far when I heard footsteps behind me. Suspecting it to be the patrol,* whose business it is to see that no coloured persons

* This patrol is formed of the overseers and poorer whites. Slaveholders live in such constant dread of insurrections among their slaves, that if a number of coloured persons happen to be seen together, they are at once suspected of plotting the destruction of the whites. Hence any coloured person found by the patrol after dark, whether free or not, is flogged. A black face seen at night is sufficient to alarm almost the whole country, for they think that there is some secret meeting which bodes them no good. [Author note]

are out of their houses after dark, I immediately ran back towards the wood I had just left. A loud voice commanded me to stop, but this only served to accelerate my speed. Fortunately, I was not very closely pursued, but having become bewildered, I lost my track, and was unable to find it again. My provisions, too, were exhausted, so that I began to feel the gnawings of hunger. After having wandered about all night in the vain endeavour to get out of the wood, I found myself at daylight not far from a plantation. I did not know to whom it belonged, being in a part of the country that was quite strange to me. I saw the slaves going from their cabins to their toil, and my first impulse was to go to them for some food; but I was deterred by the fear of falling into the hands of the overseer. I could see a large mansion near by, which I concluded was the residence of the owner of the place; and, rendered almost desperate by hunger, I determined to go there and solicit some food. Plucking up my courage, I went boldly to the kitchen-door and knocked. No one answering my knock, I peeped in. I could see no human being there; but, casting my eyes around the room, they fell upon a plate at the fire containing some corn-cakes. These were irresistibly tempting to a famished man; and so first looking this way and then that, to make sure that no one was about, I rushed in, and snatching them up, made off for the woods, which I safely reached without meeting a single person. I very much enjoyed my stolen prize then, though I have often since imagined the consternation of the poor cook, on finding that her cakes had so mysteriously vanished.

After this adventure, I struck upon a bridle-path through the wood, which brought me to the banks of the Rappahanock,⁴ which I immediately recognised, and following the course of which I knew would bring me near to my master's estate. This was not very pleasant, as I had begun to hope that I was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Free States; but I now discovered, from the direction of my return, that I had been going south. My first impulse was to set off in the opposite direction; but being near home, I was seized with the desire of seeing aunt Sarah again, and I knew it would be useless to start without some fresh supply of provisions.

As soon as darkness favoured my stealthy approach, I crept up to the old hut, and slightly knocked at the door. Aunt Sarah asked who was there; and, on hearing my voice in reply, the poor old woman hastened to the door and opened it. She was so much surprised at seeing me, that for some moments she was unable to speak. At last she exclaimed: 'Charles, you here! I had hoped you were clear off. Master and the overseer came here, and were exceedingly angry to find you gone. Mr. Carney even threatened to tie me up, for having helped you away; and he swore if he ever laid hands on you again, he would make you remember running away.' She ended this communication by advising me to get away as quickly as possible. This was not very pleasant news, certainly; and it rendered me anxious, after having eaten such food as she could give me, to be off again. She promised to provide me some food for my journey by the next night, and I was to keep myself concealed in the woods until then. In leaving the place, however, I encountered one of the slaves, who recognised and called to me; but I refused to stop, and he did not pursue me.

The next morning I climbed a tree in order to see what was going on at the plantation. As soon as I had got high enough to command a view of the place, I saw a party, headed by the overseer, approaching the wood. My heart leaped to my mouth, for I suspected that I had been betrayed, and that they were in search of me. The tree in which I was concealed was a black walnut, the foliage of which was very dense, so

that I could see what was going on without a chance of being detected. I was too high up in the tree to distinguish what was said, but I had no doubt about my being the object of their search. The tree in which I was, being near the edge of the wood, they evidently did not expect to find me there, for without making a very close examination near my refuge, they at once penetrated into the wood. One man, however, to my great terror, came and looked up into the tree where I was. I gazed steadfastly into his face, but whether he saw me or not it is impossible to say; to my great relief, however, he went away without saying a word. The party soon gave up the search, and returned to their labour. As soon as it became dark I descended from my hiding-place, and went to the hut and knocked; the door was immediately opened by Aunt Sarah, who said in a short quick whisper, 'Run for your life – you are betrayed.' I returned to fly, but almost at the same moment was seized and thrown down, and before I was well aware of what had happened, found myself securely bound, Mr. Carney at the same time shouting out, 'Ha, ha! my fine fellow, so we have caught you.' My tormenter seemed to enjoy my distress amazingly. By his directions I was taken to an old barn and there secured for the night; my hands being tied behind me and my feet fastened together, my position was exceedingly uncomfortable. The next morning my master came out to see me, and after talking to me some time about my bad conduct, he ordered me to be released and sent into the house, where I was greeted by my young master who had come home during my absence to spend his vacation. I once more became his attendant, and having given him some account of Mr. Carney's brutal conduct, he took that gentleman to task in a manner which by no means tended to increase his good-will towards me. On the whole, this summer passed away very pleasantly; but as the time for Master Harry's departure drew near, I began to fear that I should be again consigned to the tender mercies of the overseer.

CHAPTER VII

MY MISTRESS'S HABITUAL ILL-HUMOUR – I INCUR HER DISPLEASURE – I AM FLOGGED – I NARROWLY ESCAPE BEING SOLD – THE RELIGION OF SLAVES AND SLAVEHOLDERS – JAMES, THE BLACK EVANGELIST

As soon as my young master left home, I began to have a painful consciousness that my business in the house was finished. There was nothing I could do that would please my capricious mistress, and I began seriously to consider whether she or the overseer were the worse – a question which I was never able satisfactorily to solve. She had a fashion of calling every one 'idle' who was not engaged in their regular duties, and she would lie upon her couch, or sit in her easy chair, and indulge her scolding propensities almost all day. I have also heard her coachman say that he never remembered driving her anywhere, but she was displeased with him for some thing or other; either the windows of the carriage were not half cleaned, or the cushions were improperly placed. She was seldom seen in a good humour, and when this was transiently the case, her immediate attendants dreaded a relapse, for she seemed to be worse than usual after such calm intervals.

I was so unfortunate as to be caught one day by her 'at the height of idleness.' After I had learned to read, I became fond of it; and many of my spare moments were employed in perusing any book or paper I could lay my hands on. Leading from the dining-room, there was a little room in which was kept the plate and liquors used

in the establishment. It was here that I usually performed the labour that devolved upon me; and being entrusted with the key, I used, when my work was done, to lock myself up, and read or sleep, as it suited my fancy. One afternoon, finding a magazine lying on the dining-room table, I began turning over its leaves, and at length something so struck my fancy that forgetting time and place, I began eagerly to devour its contents. While thus engaged Mrs. Thompson came into the room, and seeing how I was employed, spoke in a sharp tone of voice to me. I was so absorbed, however, in what was before me that I did not even raise my head to see who was addressing me, and I replied to the intruder in a pettish tone. This sufficed to put her in a terrible passion, and before I was well aware of the lady's fist about the head thoroughly aroused me. My fate was now sealed. I was immediately sent out to Mr. Carney, who received orders to give me a flogging. I had often received some pretty sharp blows from Mr. Carney's whip, but had at that period never undergone the ignominy of a regular flogging, though I had frequently witnessed the punishment of others. That gentleman, nothing loth, forthwith proceeded to put this order into execution. I was tied to a post, after having been first stripped to the waist; this exposure alone was almost sufficient to frighten me out of my senses, but I cannot describe the agony that I suffered during its infliction. I received twenty lashes, which was a very light punishment compared with what I had seen inflicted on others. I screamed so loudly at the first few cuts, that Mr. Carney thought it advisable to gag me, which he did with his handkerchief. Under the influence of the indignation excited by this cruelty, I made a vow that I would run away again the first opportunity I could secure.

Soon after this occurrence a trader, by the name of Williams, came to our plantation in search of some hands, as he was about making up a gang for the New Orleans market, and Mr. Carney received orders to show him all the best hands on the place. Among others I was shown to him, and the overseer tried his best to induce the man-dealer to purchase me. I was astonished to hear him give me such a good character. According to him, I was easily managed, very industrious, had never run away, and would be a bargain, either as house servant or field hand. During the time occupied by his harangue upon my excellences, the trader had been examining me attentively; he felt my limbs, looked at my teeth, and made me run; and then at the end of this scrutiny said, 'Likely fellow, but I do not like his looks; he has got the devil in his eye; I would not have him for a gift.' This saved me, but several others were sold. It was altogether a heart-rending sight. There were the most soul-moving partings between parents and children, and brothers and sisters. When I saw the gang of men and women chained together I felt perfectly horrified. This was a phase of the system I had never before witnessed; and this first sight of a gang prepared for the market I shall never forget.

Reflecting deeply on the wrongs and perils of my position, I soon began to think of running off again; but the overseer kept such a strict watch upon all my movements that I saw no opportunity until nearly a year had elapsed. It was at this period that I first turned my attention towards religion. During my term of service in the house, I had sometimes attended some of the religious meetings, which were held in the open air during the summer season, though I had never been much edified at them. These services are conducted by the whites, and though slaves are allowed to attend them, I do not believe they ever derive much benefit from them. There always seemed to me to be so much of cant and hypocrisy connected with them, that I soon lost all interest

in them, and ceased to attend. I have often stood and listened to what I considered an eloquent and excellent sermon, until towards the close, when the speaker would suddenly lose all his earnestness, and turning to those 'whom it had pleased God to place in a condition of servitude,'⁵ he would exhort them to be obedient to their masters, at the same time giving them to understand that they were not responsible for anything they might do wrong in the discharge of their duties towards them. Such sentiments as these I could not endure after all I had heard about religion, and of its necessity to the salvation of the soul. I had long come to the conclusion that I was a man, and had a soul as well as my master. Why then was I not as accountable as he? Who had shifted my sins to his shoulders? Suppose my skin was darker, was that a sufficient reason why he should stagger beneath the weight of my sins in addition to his own? which, according to my reckoning, were pretty numerous. I had then read but little of the Bible, and that little had been by stealth, and I attended these meetings with the hope of having some light thrown upon it; but the explanations and glosses to which I listened gave me a dislike both to the book and to the meetings, and henceforth my Sundays were misspent in the amusements of dancing, drinking, running races, wrestling, or fishing. In short, I gave up all thoughts of religion, and indeed, after the perverted specimens I had of it, I began seriously to doubt its reality. Such texts as, 'Servants, be subject to your masters,'⁶ were common enough; but I never heard, during my stay in the southern states of America, one allusion made to its counterpart, which says, 'Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.'⁷ No, anything that is likely to make the slave discontented with his condition is carefully concealed from him. Slaveholders well know that if the slave once imbibes the idea that he has higher claims than those recognised by his oppressors, their power over him ceases; hence it is obviously to their selfish interest to keep him immersed as deeply in ignorance as they can; and hence also it is that laws are passed to prevent slaves being taught to read, or to prevent them assembling together to hear preaching, unless some of the patrol are present.

But to return to myself: I should probably have become an infidel, could I have blinded myself to the fact that there was, even among some of the worst of my companions, an unaccountable change in their conduct for the better; and here let me record my firm conviction that vital religion is more frequently found among the huts of the poor, ignorant, down-trodden slaves, than in the lordly mansions of their masters, notwithstanding the ostentatious pretensions of the latter to its possession.

About this period, I became acquainted with a slave man called James, the property of a Mr. Arnold, one of my master's neighbour's; he was a valued servant, and bore a good character even among the whites. He was at this time about forty years of age. In his early days he had rendered himself somewhat notorious as the leader of an insubordination, and more than one overseer who had attempted to chastise him had fallen beneath the weight of his powerful arm. He had caused his master no little trouble and expense by the number of difficulties into which his propensities brought him; still nothing could induce his master to part with him, because James had once saved him from drowning. Incurable as he appeared to be, he on one occasion went to a camp meeting, where he was converted. There could be no mistake about the character of the change, for everybody who knew him noticed it. At last he thought it was his duty to preach to his fellow slaves. I attended his meetings sometimes in company with a great number of others, for he was considered by the slaves to be

a good preacher. His discourse were simple and sometimes rather rambling, but his earnestness made more impression upon his audience, and was, I believe, productive of greater good than many of the more learned discourses of his white brethren; he was, at least, sincere, and believed all that he said, which is more than I should like to say for the before-mentioned white preachers. This evangelist used sometimes to visit Aunt Sarah's hut, and he and I had many arguments about religion, in which he always came off the victor, though it was long before he convinced me that I was wrong. He endeavoured to persuade me to join the religious party, representing to me that I might be of some use to them. I could not do so, however, as it was of no use for me to try to feel like him. I told him that I hoped to be free one day, and then I might, perhaps, turn my attention to these things, but, as a slave, I could not. The feelings which I entertained towards the oppressor were such as to prevent my becoming like him. But although I could not share in all the feelings and experiences of James, I nevertheless used to like his company, and could not help listening with pleasure to his conversation; nor shall I ever forget his simple yet earnest prayers on my behalf.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GROWTH OF MY PASSION FOR FREEDOM – I ESCAPE AGAIN AND TAKE REFUGE IN THE WOODS, WHERE I FALL IN WITH A COMMUNITY OF NEGRO FUGITIVES – THE STORY OF SAM'S LIFE – I AM CAUGHT A SECOND TIME, AND BORNE BACK TO BONDAGE

I had resolved to be free. This was now the ruling thought in my mind. The only thing that induced me to postpone my starting off again was, that I did not like to leave Aunt Sarah. She suspected my thoughts, and began to talk to me about trying my luck again. She wished me to win my freedom if possible, and did not desire that I should remain in slavery for her sake. Freedom presented such charms to my imagination that I readily listened to her advice, and very soon began to make preparations for flight. The joyous and delicious thought of being my own master made me forget that I was about to desert my earliest and best friend.

One morning, on going to work, as usual, with my head full of this absorbing project, the overseer came up to me with an order for me to go to the house, but which was delivered with the accompaniment of such a string of oaths that I scarcely understood it. My young master having returned for a short time to make some preparations for a northern tour, had sent for me to become his servant. His earnest wish was to take me with him; but this proposition his father would not listen to, as he feared, and not without sufficient reason, that if I once got north, there was little probability of my returning to Virginia. I remained in the house about a month, during which time Miss Julia married and went to South Carolina. She also wished very much to take me with her, but Master Harry interfered, and refused to give me up – a decision for which I was very thankful, as I should have had the longer journey if I undertook my plan of escaping to the north. Soon afterwards Master Harry took his departure; he came and shook hands with me and bade me good-bye; this was the last time I ever saw him, for I began immediately to prepare for my next venture. He was going north; and it was my intention to try and follow him. Three days after he went away, I took my leave of Aunt Sarah, whose eyes filled with tears as she gave me her parting blessing. I fully expected we should never meet again. As regards provisions, I felt but little anxiety on

this occasion, as I knew that Indian corn was ripening, and that fruits were plentiful, especially peaches. So I started immediately for the woods, intending to conceal myself for a few days until the search for me was abandoned. The wood in which I concealed myself, and which was rather extensive, bordered on several estates, where I could go and procure food. I remained here about a week, during which time I committed some serious depredations on various orchards and corn-fields.

One day, while wandering about my wide asylum, I met with a man who seemed to be a runaway like myself. We soon became acquainted, and I learned that he had been living in the woods for several years. I was somewhat curious to know how he managed this, but found him in no hurry to gratify me. I told him my story, which seemed to impress him; and after considering some time, he asked me if I would go with him. Now, having once been betrayed by a slave, I did not like to put too much confidence in a man whom I had never seen before; still there was something so open and frank about his countenance that I took quite a liking to him, and gave my consent at once. 'Follow me, then,' said he. We kept up but little conversation during our walk, which led us through many a deserted plantation and over many little creeks. After a rapid journey of some two or three hours, we came upon a swamp, thickly covered with pines, cypresses, and other huge trees, through which ran wide and occasionally deep streams; these we had to wade. The banks of these streams were lined with large trees, which grew up out of the water like tall pillars; the leaves at their tops being so dense as almost to prevent the light of day penetrating into the swamp. I was continually sinking up to my middle in mud and water, and had every now and then, to call upon my companion, who seemed perfectly at home, for assistance. We travelled in this manner for about two miles, when we suddenly came upon a piece of thickly wooded land, considerably elevated about the swamp; it seemed like an island in the midst of a lake; the trees were smaller than those of the swamp and of a different kind, shrubs and wild flowers grew in abundance, and there was an air of security about the place that made me feel comfortable. On reaching this spot, my companion gave a low whistle, and immediately two men and a woman made their appearance and cordially greeted my conductor, at the same time making numerous inquiries respecting myself. I was at once led to a rude hut, built of branches and covered with leaves. Here I saw another woman, and three or four half-naked children. Here, then, was a little community, living in primitive rudeness amid the almost impenetrable thicket of the swamp. Yet there was, at least, liberty – sweet, sacred liberty! And though exposed to attacks from deadly reptiles, and to malaria from the vapours engendered by the stagnant waters surrounding us, yet we preferred even this to the tyranny and the lash of the overseer. This wild mode of life truly had its dangers; but its charms compensated for all.⁸

Here I remained some four or five weeks, and giving up my notion of going north, began to take quite a fancy to the half-savage life I was now leading. In the day time we usually remained in our retreat, but at night we sallied forth and slaughtered the cattle, or laid the neighbouring plantations and orchards under heavy contribution. Many were the hair-breadth escapes that we had; but I loved the excitement thus produced. Had I not been captured again I should probably have permanently remained there. I soon found out too that we were not the only fugitives who had sought for liberty amid the dangers of the swamp; for, occasionally in my rambles, I would stumble upon a little community similar to my own. My guide, who was called Sam

by his companions, was the acknowledged head of our band – a position to which he was, by his superior intelligence, entitled: all disputes were settled by him, and he planned most of our enterprises. We managed to carry on a little trade with the slaves on the contiguous estates, by means of which we could occasionally obtain a bottle of whiskey, or any other articles we might stand in need of. Sam was about thirty years of age, very dark, and powerfully built; in stature, he was very little over five feet, though possessed of gigantic strength. One day, while remaining at home, I begged him to tell me his history, which, as near as I can recollect, is as follows: –

He was born in the northern part of the State of North Carolina; his father was a free black man, but his mother was a slave; and, according to the laws of the State, her children were also slaves, being the property of their mother's master. Their owner, an eccentric man – at least so his neighbours considered him – had never claimed their services; and this boy grew to manhood and married before he became aware of his position. The master suddenly dying and leaving his affairs unsettled, his creditors seized upon the property, and among some of his papers found a bill of sale of the woman. In consequence of this discovery the mother and son were immediately taken up and sold with the rest of the property. They were purchased by different persons, and had never since seen or heard of each other. The husband of the poor woman had died some time before these events occurred. The young man's wife, who was a free coloured woman, followed him to the place where he had been taken, but his purchaser refused to allow her a residence on the estate, because he feared that she would be supported at his expense. The affectionate creature pleaded hard to remain with her husband, offering her services in any employment to be allowed the privilege of being near him. The owner of the husband at length consented, and placed her in a gang in a tobacco field with her husband under a very hard overseer. Both of them were wholly unused to this kind of employment, and the woman was seldom able to complete the allotted task. The man had been once or twice punished – an indignity which he had borne without murmuring; but one day his wife being ill and unable to work, the brutal overseer tied her up with the intention of flogging her. This barbarity was more than the slave-husband could bear; he accordingly knocked down the overseer, released his wife, and made off with her to the woods, the other slaves looking on the whole affair with perfect indifference. In the course of their wanderings they had fallen in with the secluded spot to which I had been conducted, and where they had lived for some time, being from time to time joined by other fugitives from some of the adjacent plantations. Besides this, however, they had other places of retreat, not deeming it safe to remain constantly in one place.

When I had been here some four or five weeks it was determined to change our residence. Before our departure, however, all the males of the company sallied out one fine moonlight night for the purpose of killing some of the half-wild swine that are to be found in the woods of the south. One of my companions and myself came suddenly upon a very fine opossum. We started in pursuit, and I became so eager in the chase, that I paid no attention to the course I was taking; so that before I was aware of it, I came out upon a public road. Still, being under the excitement of the recent chase, I thought nothing of the danger of being caught by the patrol. I heard a footstep, but thinking it might be my companion I paid no attention to it, until all at once it flashed across my mind where I was. On turning round to see who it was,

I was almost immediately tripped up, and as I fell upon the ground two men rushed upon me and tied me. They then began to interrogate me, but my answers to their questions not being very clear or satisfactory, they were for tying me still further, administering a severe flogging, and sending me home; but suddenly, as if struck by a new thought, one of them pulled a printed bill out of his pocket, and began reading or rather spelling it out to his companion. This bill, from what I could learn of it, proved to be an advertisement, containing a pretty accurate description of my person, and offering fifty dollars* reward for my apprehension.

CHAPTER IX

I NARROWLY ESCAPE FLOGGING THROUGH THE FORBEARANCE OF MY MASTER – DEATH OF AUNT SARAH – I AM OFFERED AN UNDER-OVERSEERSHIP, WHICH I DECLINED – FAILURE OF ALL ATTEMPTS TO SELL ME FOR THE SOUTHERN MARKET – A NEW CONSPIRACY TO COMPASS LIBERTY

Once more, then, I was in the clutches of the tyrant; but having tasted so much of the sweets of liberty, I cherished a secret determination on the first opportunity to try again, though for the present I was under some apprehensions respecting the impending interview with my master. My captors took me to a tavern, and secured me in an outhouse for the night. I was uncomfortable enough, as may be supposed; my thoughts ran on unpleasant things, and the prospect of receiving nine-and-thirty lashes by way of breaking my fast, by no means tended to improve my night's rest. The next morning my captors procured horses for themselves; and having adorned my wrists with a pair of handcuffs, they procured a rope, one end of which was put around my neck, while the other was secured to the saddle of one of the horses. Thus bound, I was obliged to walk or to run beside them as it suited their humour. After about two hours of as uncomfortable travelling as I ever had in my life, we reached my master's house. Being engaged on our arrival, he ordered me to be secured in an adjoining barn, where I remained all day and night. Having tasted no food since I left my hiding-place in the swamps, I began to feel sadly in want of some, but no one came near me.

During the morning of the next day I received a visit from Mr. Carney, accompanied by two of the slaves. He was by no means displeased to see me, and swore a terrible oath that he would 'make me remember running away the longest day I lived.' In fulfilment of his threat I was taken from the barn, and was stripped and secured to a post. I thought it useless to supplicate any favour; but I recorded a mental vow that if I survived the punishment I would be revenged. Just at that juncture, however, Mr. Thompson appeared, who regarded me steadily for a few moments, and then ordered me to be released. As soon as I had dressed myself, I received orders to accompany him. I quite expected that I should now be sold at any price, and thought that was the reason why I was not flogged; but my master took me into his library, and after telling me that Master Harry had been at home, and talking to me about my bad conduct, he ended by making a rather startling proposal, which was to get married

* About £10. [Author note]

to some one of the numerous girls on the place, and become an overseer under Mr. Carney. He would provide a nice cottage for us to live in, he said.

I was completely astounded at this proposal; and my master seemed to have forgotten that he had once blighted all my hopes of happiness. What! should I, after the heart-rending scenes I had witnessed, raise a family to undergo the same miseries? My master dealt in slaves – was it not interest that prompted this proposal? When my betrothed was torn from my arms, I made a resolution that I would never let any of my blood suffer under the vile system; and besides, suppose I accepted the office of under-overseer, then I must stand over my brothers and sisters in misfortune with the lash; and when it should please the fancy of the overseer, I must lift my hand to inflict tortures that can hardly be surpassed. No, I could not do this. I would much rather suffer it myself than inflict it upon others. Acting upon these considerations, I at once, to my master's astonishment, refused the offer. This he called the highest pitch of ingratitude; to gratify my young master, he said, he had thus tried to improve my condition; 'but,' he significantly added, 'kindness was thrown away upon niggers.'

Well, there was one of two things to be done, either to accept my master's proposal, or to go to New Orleans to be sold. New Orleans was a kind of bugbear to me. I used to think that to be there was to be almost in torment; its very name terrified me, and it made me hesitate. At last, I begged a few days to consider upon it; this was granted with a significant warning not to try my skill at running away again. I immediately proceeded to my old residence, where I encountered an afflicting scene. Aunt Sarah was dying; it was almost too much for me, to find my old friend at the point of death unattended. I reproached myself for having deserted her. She was taken ill about a fortnight after I went away, and she had had no physician, and only such little attendance as her fellow-slaves could afford her. She seemed to rejoice that her troubles were almost over. My old acquaintance, James, came in the course of the evening to see her, and to pray with her. He was glad to see me, though he wished that I had succeeded in making my escape. Three days after this, the spirit of the poor old woman fled to its home; her last words to me were, 'God Almighty bless you, my boy; get your liberty if you can.' By the light of our pine torches we buried her; few and simple were the words pronounced over her by James, and there were not many to mourn her departure.

The old cabin was henceforth exceedingly lonesome; for I was now its only inmate. My brothers and sisters had been first taken, and now my early friend and staunch protector was gone too. Whichever way I turned, there was something to revive early and painful recollections. It was a miserable place for a dwelling, yet I had spent some happy days in it; the reminiscences of which were like streaks of sunshine in my gloom. There was the old chest on which Clara and I had sat many an afternoon, when we paid a visit to Aunt Sarah; here, too, stood the old rickety table around which, when a child, I had seen my brother and sisters stand at their meals; in one corner stood the old broken chair in which Aunt Sarah used to sit and knit; in another lay my bed, consisting of a mixture of straw and moss. I could scarcely bear the sight of these things, and yet knew not how to tear myself from the place.

It was now time, however, to begin to think about my future prospects. I had seen nothing of my master since he had made his proposition to me, and I had been so occupied with my labour and Aunt Sarah's illness that hitherto I had not had time

to think of it; but now being somewhat disengaged, I began seriously to ponder the subject. I did not long hesitate, it is true. I did not relish the idea of being sold south, but better do that, thought I, than become a soul-driver.

Before long my master sent for me, to know my determination. When I told him, he seemed somewhat surprised; but only said, in a significant tone, 'Oh, very well!' and left me. I now lived in continual fear. Every person who came to the place I magnified into a trader. My master, I believe, did try his best to get rid of me, but for some reason or other nobody would buy me. I was young, healthy, and strong, and pronounced by many dealers to be a likely hand; but these parties always ended their examination by declaring that there was a devil in my eye, and they believed I was much addicted to running away. After this, I lived here two years longer, during which time I often thought of trying my skill at running away again; but Mr. Carney, who never seemed altogether satisfied about my having escaped him on the last occasion, kept such a strict watch upon all my movements, that I sometimes began to despair of success, more especially as he had procured a dog, which he was training for the purpose of assisting in the capture of fugitives; but he did not keep it long, for one morning he found that the animal had unaccountably departed this life. He suspected foul play on the part of the slaves; but as there was no means of getting at the bottom of the affair, he contented himself with using some of the worst oaths his vocabulary contained, and drinking an enormous quantity of whiskey.

I soon began making preparations for my travels; and, at this time, an event happened which was likely to give me some companions in the enterprise. The property of one of my master's neighbours had been seized for debt, and, among other articles, was a mulatto man, named George, with whom I was acquainted; he was the son of the owner, by whom he had been very well brought up, and from whom he had received a promise that he should have free papers; but having neglected to have them made out in time, George was seized with the others. The master contrived to buy off his creditors for a time, and immediately left home. George was indignant that his father should leave him exposed to such chances, and had he given way to the first burst of passion might have done his master some injury; but, upon reflection, he came to the conclusion that it would be better to leave than to trust any further to his father's promise.

I went to see him one night after these occurrences had taken place, and found him, with some half-dozen other young men, preparing to effect his escape. I, of course, wished to join them; and, on George's recommendation, was admitted, after some preliminaries, into the party. George being the most intelligent of the band, and having been to the north once, was appointed our leader; and we pledged ourselves to obey him in every respect. Our plan was to procure a boat, stored with provisions to last for several days, and try the river, as we stood less chance of meeting any one who would stop us, until we got clear of the slave-states. As it was near the Christmas-holidays, we thought it best to wait until they were over; for though we were to all appearances, under no restraint during that week, yet the patrol is unusually strict at that time. My Christmas holidays this year were spent very differently from what they had before been. Formerly I had indulged in drinking, dancing, and gambling; but now I occupied myself in preparing for my departure.

We succeeded in procuring a good-sized boat, and night after night met in the wood to put it in order for our journey. We had likewise procured a considerable quantity of provisions. At length, by the first week in January, everything was in

readiness for our attempt. Having appointed the night on which we should start, and likewise agreed upon signs by which we might recognise each other in the dark, we separated. Now that the excitement of preparation was over, I scarcely knew what to do with myself. Oh! how anxiously I waited for the shades of night, and fervently prayed that I might succeed this time. Every attempt to sell me had hitherto failed, but if I did not speedily decamp, there was a probability that I should go south before very long; for my master had succeeded in getting an estate somewhere in the State of Alabama; and among other slaves who were designed to go there as soon as the spring opened, I was one, and I thought if I did not get off this time, I should never be free. It pleased God to disappoint me then, but he opened another way for me.

CHAPTER X

MY ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE AGAIN FRUSTRATED – HOW I AT LENGTH GOT AWAY ON HORSEBACK – MY ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD

The day appointed for us to start at length arrived. I am unable to describe my feelings. My heart swelled in my bosom at the thought of being free. O how long the hours of that day seemed to my impatient mind. I laboured on scarcely conscious of what I did, and at last, when the sun began to sink behind the hills, I could scarcely restrain myself from the commission of all kinds of extravagant actions; and when I retired from work to my cabin, I was unable to keep myself still, but paced up and down its floor; and as I looked upon my bed in one corner, I thought of the time when my dear sister stood over me with tears in her eyes. There, too, stood the one on which Aunt Sarah had breathed her last. I was taking my last leave of every thing that reminded me of childhood; for though that childhood had few bright spots, yet I regretted that it had passed away. These recollections were fast unmanning me, and I rushed from the spot. It was a clear, cool night in the early part of January; there was no moon, but myriads of stars begemmed the heavens. I hoped that I should be able to reach the place of meeting unobserved; but in going across an open road, I unexpectedly fell in with two of the patrol. I turned to fly, but they were too quick for me, and caught me as I was about leaping over a hedge. At the same moment the sound of footsteps, as of some one running, attracted our attention, and one of the men, leaving me in his companion's charge, started in pursuit. My captor began to ask me some close and awkward questions, which I did not answer very satisfactorily. While thus walking along, he somewhat loosened his grasp upon my arm, whereupon I suddenly tore myself from him, and, stooping down, caught him by the legs and tumbled him over my head, and before he could recover his feet, I was running through the woods at the top of my speed. He made pretty shrewd guess where I came from, for I, concluding that it would be best to return home instantly, had scarcely arrived and thrown myself upon my bed before my pursuer came to the quarters, accompanied by the overseer. I pretended to be fast asleep, and sustained a pretty severe kick from Mr. Carney, with nothing more than a kind of grunt as if half aroused. Of course they went all round the place, and having satisfied themselves that nobody was missing, they retired, and all became quiet again. I would have started again, but I knew that it was too late, as the stars had begun to disappear from the sky; and we had made an agreement that if all were not at the rendezvous at or a few minutes past midnight,

the others were to conclude that something unforeseen prevented their coming, and they were to be left behind. I cried from sheer vexation; I could not help it; for the last fortnight or so I had been building all manner of air-castles; and to have them thus demolished at a single stroke, was too much for me. I almost gave myself up to feelings of despair.

The next morning the neighbourhood was roused by the startling discovery that seven men had robbed their masters of their bodies. Large rewards were offered for their apprehension, hunting parties scoured the country in every direction, and every means usually employed on such occasions was resorted to. But all their efforts were of no avail, for nobody struck upon the right track. I alone knew the secret, which of course I scrupulously kept, regretting very much that I was not with them. I remained till the latter part of February, and up to that time no clue had been obtained of the course they had taken. Whether they succeeded in getting away, or perished in the attempt, I am unable to say, as I have never heard of them since.

Some weeks after the flight of my companions, as I happened to be working alone one afternoon, on a small piece of land, and considering about my preparations for running away, the overseer came to the place where I was working, and began swearing at me. He had been drinking rather freely, and was quite inebriated. I merely raised my head to make some excuse, when he struck me across the shoulders with his whip. This aroused my anger. I had long ago formed an opinion that Mr. Carney's conduct was intolerable, and I immediately stood up and demanded his reason for striking me. He replied by calling me an 'impudent scoundrel,' at the same time raising his whip to give me another blow. I immediately lifted the hoe which I had been using, and struck him to the ground. Almost as soon as I had done so, the consequences likely to result from the act flashed upon me. Panic-stricken, I threw down the hoe and started for the woods. It was now a struggle for life, as well as for liberty. Had the overseer been in a condition to have done it, he could have shot me down for daring to raise my hand against him. Under these circumstances, I was compelled to go off without any preparation. I had, however, a little money, which I had made by a clandestine trade in corn and tobacco, with a poor white man in our vicinity, and also by holding the horses of my master's visitors. But as slaves are not allowed to have much money, I had buried mine near the stables, fearing that if found upon me it might find its way in the overseer's pockets for safe keeping. The perplexing question now was, how was I to get that money? As it was indispensable to my journey, I determined to go back for it; besides which I began to feel somewhat uneasy about the fate of Mr. Carney. I feared that I had given him too hard a blow. As soon as it was dark, therefore, I stole back to the plantation, and purposely went by the spot where I had left the overseer; the hoe still lay where I had thrown it, but Mr. Carney was gone. I felt some relief at this circumstance, for I now concluded that the greatest harm to him would be a severe headache. I snatched up the hoe and hastened to the spot where I had concealed my money, and soon dug it up.

In going by the stable door I saw it slightly open, and it struck me that a horse would materially assist me in my flight. I did not stop to consider the impropriety of the act, for my education up to that time had not been of a kind calculated to teach me to distinguish very accurately between right and wrong. I believe the lesson soonest learnt by the slave, and one which he does not fail to follow, is, that it is perfectly right to do his master all the injury in his power. Impelled by an irresistible desire for

freedom by any means, I pushed open the door, and went in. The poor fellow who had the care of the stables was sound asleep. I went softly to the stall of a young horse that I had often ridden, and putting a bridle upon him, and fastening a blanket upon his back, I led him out of sight of the place and sprang upon his back. I had not proceeded very far before I fell in with some of the patrol, who endeavoured to stop me. I, however, whipped my horse, and shouted out at the top of my lungs, 'that my master was very ill, and I was going for the doctor.' I did not stop to see what effect this produced, and being on foot they stood little chance in a pursuit. In prosecuting my journey I had many hair-breadth escapes, but a kind Providence watched over me, and even in the slave states, where I little expected it, I met with a helping hand. I had continued to travel by night, though I concluded that I must be out of the slave states by this time.

One morning, being sadly in want of some food, both for myself and horse, I ventured to go to a small cabin that stood at a little distance from the road-side, partly concealed in a thicket. I was soon surrounded by a multitude of dogs, who frightened me considerably by their clamour, and which caused the door of the hut to be opened, at which a powerfully-built man, about six feet high, appeared, and called off the dogs. He then began eyeing me in a manner not calculated to make me feel very comfortable. As soon as he had completed his survey of me and my horse, he asked in a rough tone who I was, and what I wanted. I had expected to find some coloured person living in this cabin, instead of this white man, and I was so much astonished that I did not at first answer his questions, which he continued to repeat. I then told him that I wanted some food for myself and horse, which I offered to pay for. He said he did not keep a public-house, but he thought he could spare me a meal. There was something about the man that inspired me with confidence; he seemed so open and frank, and notwithstanding his apparent roughness, I felt that was safe with him. He bade me dismount and enter the house, while he looked after my horse. The house, or rather cabin, consisted of two apartments; that in which I found myself seemed to be the one in which my host mostly spent his time; its walls were covered with the skins of various animals; over the fireplace (in which there was a huge fire) hung a rifle, together with a number of pistols, and a couple of bowie knives. I concluded from what I saw that he was a hunter. I drew a stool to the fire, and seating myself began to think of my situation, and the risk I was running; but my host coming in, soon reassured me, and put my fears to flight. As I saw no other human being about the place, I concluded that he lived alone. He forthwith provided me with some food and drink, and then seating himself, he began smoking a cigar, without saying a word. I did not much approve of this; I would rather have heard him talk, but somehow or other I dared not to break silence.

As soon as I had finished my meal, and had again drawn near to the fire, he pushed towards me a box of cigars, and broke silence by saying, 'Well, how about this running away?' On being thus pointedly interrogated, I began to feel somewhat alarmed; for how could he know that I had run away? I began to stammer out something about going to the north to see a friend; but my ignorance of places and the confusion I exhibited at some pointed questions betrayed me. He seemed to enjoy my alarm amazingly, and astonished me by his loud and frequent bursts of laughter. I knew I was thoroughly in his power, and began to entreat him not to send me

back to my master. At last he assured me I had nothing to fear, for he did not make a practice of 'catching niggers.' I took courage at this declaration, and disclosed to him my whole story, at the same time offering to sell him my horse; but he refused to purchase him. He told me that I was going in the wrong direction, and that I was in danger of being taken up in that neighbourhood. At his kind and earnest request, I remained with him two days for the purpose of recovering my strength, during which time he gave me directions how I should travel in order to avoid detection. On parting with him, I felt quite unable to thank him sufficiently for his kindness. May God reward him!

CHAPTER XI

FRESH ALARMS – I AM DRIVEN TO DISHONOURABLE MEASURES TO APPEASE MY HUNGER – AM BEFRIENDED BY A QUAKER – I REACH PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK – PREJUDICE AGAINST COLOUR IN THE NORTH

Recruited and cheered by the hospitality of this stranger I started again, and proceeded on my way with renewed hopes and a more definite aim. My travelling experiences were very diversified; sometimes finding myself in danger of being half starved, and at other times faring plenteously. One evening, I went to a little inn by the side of the road in order to purchase some food for myself and horse. I walked into the bar-room, and asked a woman, who appeared to be serving customers, for what I wished; there were several rough-looking men at a table playing cards who eyed me very closely. I was somewhat alarmed at the notice which they took of me, fearing that it foreboded no good to me, but thought it best to put a bold face on the matter. Having paid away my last coin for what I got, I started off at once. Scarcely had I reached the place where I had secured my horse, however, before I heard the sound as of some one approaching me. Conjecturing at once that I was pursued, I jumped upon my horse and rode off at pretty good speed, holding in one of my arms my hat containing the corn which I had purchased for his supper.

One transaction that occurred during my journey, I often think of with deep regret. As I was riding slowly along one morning quite early, and looking about me to see what I could do towards getting a breakfast, which I stood greatly in need of, a woman came up to a bridge, which I was just crossing, bearing a basket full of tempting-looking cakes, the mere sight of which, however, did not by any means satisfy my appetite. How to transfer some of them into my possession became now an all-engrossing question with me; at last I thought I would try my credit, though my appearance was certainly not at all calculated to inspire much confidence; however, I went up to the woman and accosting her, said that I wished to purchase some of her cakes, if she would only trust me until I came back from the town where I was going on business. She evidently did not much like my appearance, and was not at all inclined to trust me. But the most I looked at the basket, the less inclined I felt to go away until I had partaken of its contents. At last, in desperation, I said, 'Can you give change for half-a-dollar?' At this inquiry, she opened her eyes, and looked at me with a little more respect; but she had no change, and I turned as if I was going away, at the same time saying something about buying elsewhere. She did not like this, and calling me back, began to express a wish to

know something about me. It was evident to me that she wished me to purchase, but it was equally evident that she did not like the risk of trusting. Whilst all the time regarding the basket with a wistful eye, I endeavoured to put on an air of indifference. She next asked how many I would like to have; I replied sixpenny worth; whereupon she gave me so many that I thought she would empty her basket. Her last words were, 'I will wait here till you come back.' Poor woman! I am afraid she will have to wait a long while.

A few mornings after this occurrence, I found myself in an almost starving condition, and my clothing was becoming very ragged. My poor horse, too, was fairly knocked up. From the appearance of the country, I concluded that I must be getting into the free states. Instead of dilapidated buildings, broken-down fences, and acres of worn-out land, which were again becoming the haunt of deer and other animals, I found neat farmhouses, and the fields enclosed with nice fences. I looked in vain for those dense thickets which are covering the slave states. Under these impressions I plucked up courage to go to a fine-looking house, standing in a garden a few feet from the roadside. Just as I reached the gate, a gentleman with a broad-brimmed hat and a very benevolent looking countenance, came out of the house. I asked him if he would be kind enough to give me something to eat, as I was near starving. He looked at me for a few moments, and then kindly asked me to dismount and walk in. I got down, but was so sore and stiff that I could scarcely walk. The gentleman took me by the arm and led me to the door, giving my horse to a man who was just crossing the yard. When I had reached the house I did not like to enter; everything looked so nice, that I did not consider myself fit to intrude into such a place, and besides, I was overcome by the kind manner in which I had been received. I begged to be put into a barn or stable, and told the gentleman that I should be uncomfortable in his house. At last a lady came to the door, and with a smile on her countenance, begged me to walk in. Welcomed with such a smile, I felt at home at once; the gentle tone of her voice was music to my ears. After having entered, my old sensations began to creep over me again, as they proceeded to set out provisions upon a table; so much so that I was more than once tempted to snatch up my old ragged hat and run out of the door. After I had managed to swallow some of the food which was placed before me, I was accommodated with a bed, in which I slept more soundly than I had done for some time past. I remained with these kind friends three days, during which time I gave them the particulars of my story. I could not help admiring the manners and habits of this family. Everything moved with the regularity of clockwork, nothing was out of place, and nobody got out of temper; all seemed alike kind and attentive. I looked in vain for the relation of master and servant; nobody seemed to be master, at least, according to my notion of mastership. I could not help noticing the peculiarity of the forms of expression employed, for at that time I knew but little about the Society of Friends, and I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the kind morning salutation, of 'How does thee do, this morning, friend Charles?'

On the fourth morning after my arrival, I prepared to take leave of these kind friends. The horse I left with them, my host saying that it was perilous for me to take him further, as I was liable any moment to be taken up and put in prison. He kindly undertook to advertise the animal, so that the owner might stand some

chance of getting him again. I was benevolently provided with some decent clothing and money, and taking my leave of them, I got into the little covered wagon which my kind host had brought up to the door, and we drove off to a railway station. I had made several endeavours to find out the name of this family, but had as frequently failed. The only names that I heard were John, or Polly, or William, but no surname transpired. During the ride I returned to the charge, but failing as before in all my attempts by indirect questions to extract it from him, I, at length, boldly asked him if he would be kind enough to tell me his name. Unfortunately, just at that moment we arrived at the station, when, calling to some person at hand, he sprang from the wagon and entered into conversation with him, which continued until the bell announced that the time had arrived for the starting of the train. He then hurried away and procured me a ticket, which he placed in my hand, and pointing to the carriage in which I must ride, he went away abruptly, before I had time even to thank him. It was the only time, since I had become acquainted with him, that I saw him in a hurry.

I arrived in the city of Philadelphia about nine o'clock in the morning. This was the first large city that I had ever seen. I had been cautioned not to remain here long, as I was in danger of being taken and thrust back into slavery; but, under the enchantment of the new scenes around me, I wholly forgot it. I wandered about nearly the whole day, admiring its fine buildings, its beautiful shops, and its clean wide streets. But a circumstance at length occurred which reminded me of the warning I had received. In walking along a very beautiful street, I had stopped before a large white marble building, and while gazing with admiration upon it, I found myself suddenly seized and thrust into the street, a voice at the same time exclaiming, 'What business have niggers upon the pavement?' I turned my head to see whence came the indignity, and beheld two very foppishly dressed young men, one of whom appeared to be enjoying the scene, while, at the same time, he was trying to prevent his companion from assaulting me. This incident cured me of sight-seeing; the beautiful city at once lost its charms for me; and I felt no inclination to remain longer in a place where the colour of my skin subjected me to such indignities. I inquired of a little boy the way to the station for New York, and arrived just time enough for a train on the point of leaving. And here I experienced another phase of the manner in which coloured Americans are treated by their white brethren. Having entered the office and procured a ticket, I was then shown on board a little steamer which was to carry us across a river to the station. Soon after the boat had left the landing, a man, whom, from his manners and accent, I took to be a foreigner, came up and entered into conversation with me, during which I found out that he was likewise going to New York. As we had both paid the same fare, we thought it would be pleasant to travel in each other's company. Accordingly, my companion, who appeared to know but little of *Republican* manners and customs, took his seat in a carriage, and I placed myself beside him. Just before the cars started, a man appeared at the door, and with an oath asked what business I had there, and requested me to 'tumble out.' My companion asked if we were in the wrong carriage; he was politely requested to keep his seat, while I was sent to an old dirty-looking apartment, partitioned off from the luggage-car. This I by no means relished. I had paid the same fare as the white man, our tickets were alike, but because my face was black, I could not be allowed to sit in the same carriage with a white man.

CHAPTER XII

I PICK UP A FRIEND, AND AM HOSPITABLY ENTERTAINED AT
NEW YORK – THE HISTORY OF THOMAS PETERS

New York I found to be very different from Philadelphia. Its streets were narrower and dirtier, and its buildings had not that neat appearance which characterized that city. I was completely bewildered by the noise and confusion. To escape these I turned down a narrow street, which brought me opposite a large park, through which a number of people were walking. I entered at one of its gates, and, coming to a number of seats opposite to the river, I sat down to consider what was to be done next. I was in a place where I was wholly unknown, and my little experience of the manners of the north made me somewhat afraid of those who were continually passing me, and I began to think that I should have to pass a cold night in the month of March in the streets; but while these thoughts were passing through my mind, I saw a coloured man, whom I accosted, and asked if he could tell me where I might be able to find lodgings for the night? I informed him that I was a perfect stranger, and knew no one there, and feared that I should have to pass the night in the streets, unless he would assist me. My manner seemed to make some impression upon him. He said he knew of no respectable place where I could get lodgings; but as I was a stranger he would give me a night's lodging, if I would go with him. This offer I eagerly accepted, though unable adequately to express my thanks. Had I been out of the streets, I could have knelt and poured out my heart to him.

As we proceeded towards our destination, he inquired where I came from. I told him from Philadelphia; but he seemed to know more about that city than I did, and asked me so many questions respecting it, that I confessed I had only been there a few hours, having merely stopped a short time to look at it. I stated that Virginia was my native place, and that I had left it to seek employment in some of the Northern States. He asked, I thought somewhat anxiously, if I knew anything of the city of Richmond. I answered that I had never been there, and only had heard of it through some acquaintances of mine who had lived there. I told him that I came from the vicinity of Fredericksburg.

During our walk I had noticed the brilliancy of the lamps, and asked my friend why it was that the shop windows looked so splendid, with a flame of fire running out of the tube, for at that time I had never seen any gas. Lamps, candle-sticks, and chandeliers of every shape and pattern that could be devised, I believed I had seen; but to see a beautiful flame coming out of an iron tube, with no oil or tallow to feed it, was incomprehensible to me. My companion smiled, and endeavoured to explain it to me, but I did not understand a single word of it; and I began to conceive that kind of respect for him which the countryman entertains for the minister who in preaching uses such language as his hearer cannot comprehend. I, however, listened without venturing to make any remark, as I did not wish to betray my ignorance any further than I had done.

We, at length, turned from the glare and noise of the streets into a quiet court, and my friend, stopping at the door of a small neatly built brick-house, opened the door, and bade me enter. We were met by his wife, a very good-looking mulatto woman. As soon as she heard from her husband the manner in which we had met, she gave me a welcome, and we were soon comfortably seated at the tea-table. I was surprised

at the appearance of the place. I had never before seen coloured people so well off as these persons appeared to be; indeed, the dwelling of many a white man in the southern states could not boast of half the comforts displayed here, and I began to imagine that they must be rich. After tea, at the request of my host, I gave them some information respecting myself, and they truly sympathised with me.

One thing I observed that, whenever I said any thing about Virginia, they seemed to be anxious to catch all I said about it. I at length ventured to ask if they knew any one there. My hostess then informed me that she had lost a brother there, and that he was living somewhere in the States as a slave. His occupation had been that of a sailor, and he had shipped against the wishes of his friends, in a vessel trading from New York to Richmond. When they arrived at Richmond, he was taken from the vessel, and lodged in jail, because coloured men from the north were apt to contaminate coloured men in the south; that is, they were likely to give them ideas incompatible with their condition. When the vessel was ready to sail, the captain refused to pay the jail-fees, which were very heavy, and accordingly left him, and when they heard from him last, he was about being sold to pay those fees.

Could I have afforded them any clue to his whereabouts, I should have been glad to have done it; but I knew nothing of Richmond, nor did I know that free coloured men were so treated in the slave-states. I knew that the condition of the few free coloured people I had seen in the south, was but little better than that of the slave, as indeed is also that of the poor white; but never having seen any from the north, I could not tell how they might be treated. This I consider one of the most pleasant nights that I ever spent while in America. My host was a constant source of wonder to me; he seemed to know almost every thing. I could have sat all night listening to his entertaining conversation. There were but few persons with whom I had come in contact even among my master's guests, possessing more intelligence. We sat up till a late hour, conversing upon the subject of slavery and the prejudice against the blacks in the north. He likewise gave me some of the particulars of his life, which, as it exhibits some of the workings of that prejudice against the coloured people in the United States, I will endeavour to relate it as accurately as I can recollect.

Thomas Peters, as I shall call him, was born in the city of Philadelphia, of poor but very respectable parents, and being their only child, they had given him all the advantages of education which were afforded to coloured children, which consisted of reading, writing, and the elements of arithmetic; but he being of a studious turn of mind, the little he had obtained at school did not satisfy him, and with the assistance of a kind friend he obtained a much better education than usually fell to the lot of the coloured America. But he had the misfortune to lose both his parents before arriving at the age of manhood, and having nothing to depend upon, he was obliged to look out for some means of gaining a subsistence. From his education he conceived that he was fitted for employment somewhat above the menial or the common labourer; he, therefore, made several attempts to obtain a clerkship in some of the mercantile establishments of his native city; but this was contrary to American notions of refinement. What, a man with a black face in a counting-house! Such a proposal was enough to make them consider that he had lost his senses. In despair he quitted the home of his childhood, to try his fortune in the 'Empire City;'⁹ but he found here also that the same antipathy existed towards the man of colour, so that to save himself from starving in the streets, he was obliged to accept the first thing that he could find

to do; and thus a fine, intelligent, well-educated young man, who would have done credit to good society, was obliged to become a common labourer in the docks. In America he was crushed, for there was no chance of his rising to any respectable position. Slavery in the south and prejudice in the north were barriers which he could not surmount. He said that he intended, as soon as he could, to emigrate to some country, where the colour of his skin was not considered a badge of inferiority, and he advised me to do the same.

This suggestion was something new to me, and something which I did not understand. I could see how Virginia might consider me an inferior, because I was born a slave, and the education which she awarded to me was one to fit me for that condition; but how, in the north, where slavery was not allowed, an intelligent and cultivated mind should be despised because it was encased in a dusky covering, I was puzzled to account for. Here was a man better educated and more gentlemanly in his manners than hundreds of whites I had seen, but who at the same time was considered to be inferior to those same whites. This by no means tended to increase my love for my native land. I had no inclination to remain in a country that treated me in so unjust a manner, even though that country claimed the honour of being my birth-place. My kind friend advised me to go to sea; not because he thought it the best occupation I could follow, but it was the easiest and readiest means of leaving the country, where I stood in danger of being taken and carried back into slavery. Now, as I had no disposition to pay 'Old Virginia' another visit, I followed this advice, which, through the blessing of Divine Providence, has been the means of making a man of me, and of teaching me how to use the freedom for which I struggled. This memorable night, which was the last but one of my sojourn in my native land, I shall never forget. Before retiring to rest, my host read a portion of that Word which I had begun to dislike; and though I then said nothing, I certainly felt some surprise, after what I had heard him say about slavery, that he tolerated a book which, as I had been taught, justified the system; but then I had only heard one side of the question, and that side not fairly represented. After reading, he put up such a simple and touching prayer, that I could not understand and feel every word of it, and though I have never made a public profession of religion, the impressions of that night have never been effaced from my mind. It was some time after I retired before I could sleep. The events of the day were passing in review before me. My thoughts, of course, were mostly of the kind friends to whose hospitality I was indebted for this night's lodging. I conceived an affection for them, and should have been willing to have remained with them; but I felt that there was no rest for me beneath the 'star-spangled banner.'¹⁰ I was flying from the grasp of the tyrant. I had committed no crime, but I was a slave, and at that moment could my master have placed his hand upon me, even in the city of New York, I should have been chained and carried back, to be made an example of to others in a condition of hopeless bondage.

CHAPTER XIII

DEPARTURE FROM NEW YORK – MY SEARCH FOR EMPLOYMENT IN OUTWARD-BOUND VESSELS – I AM APPOINTED ASSISTANT-COOK

The next morning I met my host and his wife at breakfast, but my heart being full, I did not feel much inclined for eating. I was about leaving kind friends, and it was not

probable that I should be always so fortunate in finding others. I was going forth, an ignorant, inexperienced boy, to seek a living where I could and how I could. From my own slender experience, and what I had learned from this kind man, I feared that I should have to endure a hard struggle. He bade me trust in God, however, and look to him for protection. When parting from my hospitable entertainers, I felt more like leaving some beloved relations than parting with strangers. They extracted from me a promise that if I did not succeed in getting a situation that day, I would return and spend another night with them. With a heavy heart I bade them farewell, being quite unable to express my gratitude to them. Should these pages ever fall under their observation, they may remember the poor fugitive boy whom they so noble befriended, unless it should happen that I am but one among many who may have received assistance and comfort from them. Be that as it may, however, I can never forget them and their kindness, for which, may God reward them!

On starting out, I bent my steps towards the docks and the shipping, in search of a berth. I was not at all particular where I went, so that I could but get beyond American jurisdiction. It is true there were then no Fugitive Slave Bills,¹¹ and no Slave-Catching Commissioners; but I had heard that coloured people had been kidnapped from New York, and I had no wish to run any such risks. Nothing but the breadth of the ocean could satisfy me that I was beyond the power of the man who called himself my master. The prospect of being again subjected to the tender mercies of Mr. Carney was not sufficiently agreeable to induce a desire to remain under the 'glorious stars and stripes.' I went from vessel to vessel without success, until I began to yield to despair. I offered myself for anything, but my never having been to sea seemed an insuperable objection. At last I stopped before a beautiful little schooner, which, from its appearance, I concluded was about to sail; and while considering whether I should apply for a berth on board her, I was accosted by a tall, rough-looking man, who, from his dress and his huge quid of tobacco in his cheek, I took to be a sailor.

'Looking for a berth?' said he; at the same time spurring a stream of tobacco-juice from his mouth.

I answered in the affirmative.

'What can you do?'

I scarcely knew what to reply, and seeing me hesitate, he asked me if I had ever been to sea.

'I have not,' said I.

After surveying me for a few moments quite steadily, keeping up all the while a continual stream of tobacco-juice, he again inquired; 'What can you do?'

'I can cook.'

'Just what we want,' said he; 'we have been waiting for a cook. What wages do you want?'

'I do not know,' replied I, hesitatingly; 'what will you give?'

'Fifteen dollars a month.'

This sounded an immense sum to me, and I was about striking a bargain with him, when I recollected that I had not yet ascertained where she was going. He told me that she was bound for New Orleans. Now, of all places, New Orleans was to be studiously avoided, not only because it was in the United States, but still more because it was the principal slave-market in the country. I accordingly declined the offer, for the prospect of getting good wages did not blind me to the danger I should

incur. I hinted to the man that I should be put in jail when I got there, because I was black. He said that it was a false idea, and promised, if I would go, to give me twenty dollars a month. The man's eagerness to ship me excited my surprise and suspicion, and dim perceptions of the kidnapper began to steal over me. On turning away I was followed by his execrations.

Having spent all the morning in the vain endeavour to get a berth, I began to entertain the notion of concealing myself on board some vessel until she got out to sea, and then show myself. I was told by a man whom I met with on one of the quays, that he thought I should stand a better chance on the other side of the city among the larger shipping. Having received the necessary instructions for finding my way, I started anew in my search. On reaching these quays, there rose to my view a forest of masts, and I was much astonished at the magnitude of the vessels. As I clambered the sides and looked up and down the neat decks, and peeped into the handsomely furnished cabins, my heart misgave me; I feared that they would never engage a new hand like me, and began to fear that I should be compelled to trespass for another night on the hospitality of the kind friends I had left in the morning.

At last, when on the point of giving up in despair, and while standing idly on one of the wharves considering what was to be done, my attention was arrested by a bustle at no great distance from me. I found myself opposite a large ship, which, from the confusion apparent on board, seemed to be ready for sailing. The thought of concealing myself on board flashed across me, and I was about to put it into execution, when I saw a black man standing on the deck, who seemed to be the only idle person on board, and concluded from his appearance that he was the cook. I went up to him and inquired whether he did not want somebody to help him. He said that he did not think he did, as the captain thought they could do without assistance on the present trip. I was eager for this chance, and feared that if I lost it, another might not occur again soon. So I told him that as I had never been to sea, I would willingly go half the voyage without asking any remuneration for my services, after which we might be able to make some kind of agreement. He told me to wait where I was standing, while he spoke to the captain. He was absent some time, and on his return pointed out to me a very gentlemanly-looking man, and told me to go to him. He was talking with some one as I went up, but almost immediately turned towards me and asked what I wished, and who I was. I told him that I was a poor boy from Philadelphia, seeking employment, and would be very glad if he could do anything for me. I told him that if I succeeded in pleasing him, we might then come to some arrangement about payment for my services. He asked me where my clothes were. I told him that all I possessed I was then wearing. 'How did I expect to get along without a change of garments?' This was a knotty point, which I saw no way of clearing up. At last, after some further conference, he told me to go forward, and promised to see what could be done on that point. I joyfully obeyed this order and hastened with alacrity to the gallery, where lay the scene of my future labours. I entered into conversation with the cook, and learned from him that the ship was bound for London, and that she was to sail early the next morning. As soon as it was dark, most of the hands having gone ashore, I was left somewhat alone, until the cabin boy, a very handsome creole, about fourteen years of age, came and endeavoured to persuade me to go on shore. I preferred,

however, going to bed. I was thoroughly tired with rambling about all the day; so, notwithstanding his entreaties, I turned into a little berth that the cook had told me was assigned for my use. My bed was none of the softest, but I cared not for that. It was enough for me in that moment that I was free, and I slept soundly, conscious that I had nothing to fear. Rather than be a slave, I would have earth for my couch and heaven for my canopy!

CHAPTER XIV

EFFECTS OF MY CURIOSITY – SUFFERINGS FROM SEA-SICKNESS – I PICK UP A FRIEND AND PATRON ON BOARD

The next morning I was aroused by the bustle and preparation for sailing. I often, when looking back to that period of my history, fancy I can trace the finger of Divine Providence throughout my whole journey. From the time I left my master's house I had passed through many dangers, and had experienced some almost miraculous escapes from hunger and recapture, and now I found myself an inmate of a noble ship which would in a few hours carry me out of sight of my native land, perhaps for ever. Three days before, when this same ship should have sailed, I was more than a hundred miles away, with not the slightest knowledge of its existence, much less had I then any thought of trying my fortune on the wide waters. But here, in about three weeks from the time I started, I was seeking on its bosom that rest which the home of my childhood denied me.

Under the cook's direction, I set about preparing the sailor's breakfast, and, while thus engaged, the steamer which was to tow us out came alongside, and so strongly was my curiosity excited by the novelty of the scene around me, that I was continually deserting my post to see what was going on, which put the cook into a terrible passion. About dinner time the steamer left us, and we sailed away into the broad Atlantic. I certainly did, after all, feel some emotion at quitting my country; for although she had but little claim upon my love or my gratitude, still I could not help feeling a slight pang at leaving her. But soon a new trouble arose, which extinguished all sense of regret, as the rolling motion of the vessel began to make me ill. I started off to my bed with the intention of lying down, but this the cook declared I should not do until all the work was completed. This decision I thought very cruel, but, being too weak to resist, I made a virtue of necessity and fell to my duties again. I began to wish most heartily that I was again on shore. Any one who has suffered from severe sea-sickness will be able fully to enter into my feelings at this time. The well-seasoned cook, however, laughed at and ridiculed me, saying that I did not know when I was well off. How I got through my duties I never could tell, for what with the sickness and the continual swearing of the cook, I was too confused to be conscious of what I did, and was heartily glad when tea-time brought a release from my duties and enabled me to retire to bed.

The experiences of the second day were very little better than the first, but on the third I began to recover my appetite, and soon had my *sea-boots* on, and I could then hold up my head with the best of them. The cook, notwithstanding his roughness, I soon found to be a kind-hearted man, but he was an old sailor and rather too fond of his grog, and this was a way he had of treating all fresh hands committed to his care. He used to say that the best cure he knew for sea-sickness was not to mind it,

but to go on with your work and it would speedily leave you. I could not, however, altogether relish this method of treatment while under its influence.

I soon became acquainted with the duties devolving upon me, and by activity I used to get all my work finished by four o'clock in the afternoon, so that from that time until four o'clock next morning I could employ myself as I pleased. Much of this leisure I spent in reading whatever books I could obtain, and with the assistance of the cabin-boy; who was a pretty fair scholar, I made some little progress.

Some hints that I had once or twice casually dropped about the South excited the curiosity of the cook, which I had to satisfy by relating some of my adventures; whereupon passengers and sailors soon crowded around to know something concerning me. One morning one of the cabin passengers came to the galley where I was at work, and expressed a wish to speak to me. On complying with his wish and informing him whence I came, he began to ply me with questions about places and parties with whom I was somewhat acquainted. I could not help feeling considerable uneasiness under this examination, and began to suspect that I was in the presence of some Southerner who was taking a trip across the Atlantic, either on business or pleasure, and accordingly became more guarded in my replies. He soon reassured me, however, and told me that I had no reason to fear him, for although well acquainted with the South, he was not a slaveholder. Indeed, his object in coming to England was to endeavour to enlist the sympathies of the English in behalf of the slave, by means of a series of views of slavery as he had seen it. Thus encouraged, I gave him a sketch of my history; and expressing a desire to see me again, we parted. On reflection, I reproached myself for having been somewhat imprudent in some of my remarks concerning matters and things in the 'model republic,' for an American generally, however philanthropic he may be, does not like to hear his beloved country spoken ill of.

Having gradually become inured to my new avocation, I passed what seemed to me a very pleasant life. I had the good fortune to be somewhat of a favourite with both passengers and sailors. Sometimes the rolling of the vessel, or the presence of a heavy wave, would somewhat disarrange my affairs, but I soon got used to it, and fancied that a sea life was the happiest I should ever find.

After I had been at sea a little more than a fortnight, Mr. J. ---, the gentleman before referred to, came to me again, and proposed that on reaching England, I should assist him in his preparations for exhibiting his picture of American Slavery, to which exhibition he thought my presence would add a special interest. In return for my services I was to receive such educational advantages as it was in his power to afford. My first impulse was to reject this kind offer, but it occurred to me that before giving a decided answer, I would consult with my friend the cook, though I told him I had a strong prepossession in favour of the sea, and besides, I had not yet seen sufficient of the gentleman to warrant me in placing too implicit confidence in him. The cook pointed out in a forcible manner the dangers of a sailor's life, and the little chance I should have of rising in it; he thought I possessed abilities which, if properly cultivated, would fit me for a better position in society. After this consultation with the cook I concluded it best to accept the offer, for we thought if he had any evil designs toward me, the worst he could do would be to leave me alone and uncared-for in London; but happily my suspicions proved to be unjust, for I had found a real friend, and one whose kindness I can never forget.

CHAPTER XV
MY FEELINGS ON NEARING ENGLAND – I REACH LONDON, AND
TURN EXHIBITOR OF A PANORAMA – ITS FAILURE; AND
MY SUBSEQUENT HISTORY

We had now been at sea about three weeks, and I could not refrain from sometimes comparing them with the corresponding period previous to my arrival in New York. Now, I was free, and my heart swelled with the thought that I was a man and my own master; then, I lived in constant dread of the slave-catcher; for every day that I remained in the country, I was in danger of being seized and dragged back into the bondage from which I had fled.

One night, while lying in my little bunk, with such thoughts as these flitting through my brain, the cry of ‘land, ho!’ caused me to spring up, and run on deck. It was a beautiful night, and although there was no moon, the stars shone like millions of diamonds. I could not see the land, but one of the sailors pointed out to me a distant light, which he said was on the shore. Oh! how I longed for the light of the morning, that I might feast my eyes with a sight of the land, where my shackles would fall off for ever. It was impossible to think of sleep any more that night; so I paced the deck until daylight, and then the cliffs of Old England began to reveal themselves to my longing eyes. In my first ardent impulses, I wished that I could leap upon the shore from the spot, where I then stood. Such was my excitement that my duties for this day were not so well attended to as usual, for at every opportunity I was on deck, gazing with my whole soul on the beautiful and ever-varying landscape, as we passed along the coasts. One of the deck-passengers, an Englishman, with whom I was somewhat acquainted, very kindly pointed out the most remarkable places, and told me many stories respecting them, which, being unacquainted with history, were very interesting to me. The voyage now began to be tedious, and I felt momentarily an increasing impatience to see London, and was continually asking when we should reach it. ‘Tomorrow or next day,’ was the reply. At last, we reached Gravesend about sunset, where we cast anchor. Here I excited the merriment of my English acquaintance by asking, in a tone of disappointment, if that was London? My grave looks at his immoderate laughter by no means repressed it; he begged pardon, however, for his rudeness, but said he really could not help it; and again went off into another fit of cachinnation, which I began to fear would be attended with some injury. As soon as he had sufficiently amused himself at my expense, he explained the cause of his excessive merriment, after which so great seemed the absurdity of my blunder that I could not help joining him. The joke was too good to be lost, and I had to undergo a good deal of bantering upon it for some hours.

Most of the passengers debarked at Gravesend, and went up to London by railway. The ship, however, remained here two nights and a day, and then a steamer came down for the purpose of towing her up to the city. In the afternoon we reached the metropolis, and on catching a glimpse of its vastness and magnificence, I ceased to wonder at the laughter of my companion, at my simple question a day or two before. The shipping which had bewildered me in New York was nothing compared with what I now saw; in fact, every way that I turned I found something to surprise. I have often been asking how I felt when I first went on shore; but this question I have never been able to answer.

In a week after we came up to London, Mr. J--- came down to the vessel to learn my determination; and it was arranged that I should leave the vessel that afternoon. The captain did not seem, at first, to like the idea of my departure, though I cannot tell why. I had made up my mind to keep away from America, so long as slavery existed there; and not even to gratify the captain, to whom I am none the less grateful for his kindness, could I be persuaded to put myself again within the reach of its power.

The exhibition of the panorama¹² before referred to, was opened in a week after I left the ship. The first exhibition was a private one, and it was on this occasion that I received the name I now bear. In America, until the period of my escape, I had only borne the name of Charles; but after that event, as is customary among slaves, I adopted my master's. On quitting my country, however, I left the name behind. Noble England gave me a new name and a home. The Rev. J. Sherman, who was present at the first exhibition, moved that I should henceforth be called Charles Freeman – a suggestion which was adopted by acclamation. I could not on that occasion, nor can I now, express my grateful feelings; but long as I live I shall endeavour to make myself worthy of the name, remembering that –

'He is a freeman whom the truth makes free.'¹³

Notwithstanding the flattering prospects with which Mr. J--- began the exhibition of his picture, the expenses necessarily incurred in starting it, and placing it fairly before the public, involved him, insomuch that he was obliged to borrow money, and mortgage the picture for the amount. The lender of the money soon began to assume the direction of the affair, and from various causes the undertaking proved a failure. Under these circumstances it was resolved to try its chance in some of the provincial towns.

In accordance with this determination, we left London for Colchester, and notwithstanding some drawbacks, the exhibition was pretty well attended, and we experienced at the hands of some of its inhabitants much kindness and hospitality. We left this town for Ipswich, with sanguine hopes of success. In the latter town we were more successful than we had ever been, and were on the point of leaving for the city of Norwich, when the man who held Mr. J---'s note came down from London, and seized the picture, leaving him with wife and child almost destitute. In this emergency I had no anxious thoughts for myself. I did not despair of being able to get some employment, or, failing in that, I could try the sea again; thought I certainly did not care so much about it after the kind of life I had been leading since I came to England. Still, as I knew no trade, and had but little education, I thought the sea would be the best place for me. If I could only see my patron provided for, or some means devised for enabling him to return to his home, I felt that I should then be content. Our case being made known to some kind friends, they promptly came to our assistance, and enabled Mr. J---, with his wife and child, to return to their native land. I remained behind, though not uncared for, as the same generous friends provided for me also. I feel deeply that I can never repay the heavy debt of gratitude which I owe them, for I have indeed found a home among those who acknowledge the principle, that 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men.'¹⁴

Of Mr. J--- I have never heard since he left England. Sometimes I fear that he is dead. I shall ever remember him with respect and gratitude, for to him, as well as to the rest of my friends, I feel that I owe everything. But for the overruling of a kind

Providence I might have fallen into evil hands, and become an outcast from society. By their interposition and disinterested generosity, however, I have been placed in a position far exceeding my sanguine hopes.

Since I left America, she has added to the list of her iniquities the infamous Fugitive Slave Bill, intending thereby to cut off the last hope of the poor flying fugitive. I think that this wicked measure will prove a failure, for I do not believe that the citizens of the free states, servile as they have shown themselves to be to slaveholding power, will allow their territory to become the hunting-ground for the slave-catchers. At all events, the necessity for the measure shows that the tide of public opinion is turning in favour of emancipation; and, prop up their beloved system as they will, the good time is coming when slaveholders will find that they must yield to the might of right.

Courteous reader, I have done. In telling my sad and simple story, I have endeavoured to interest you; and if I have succeeded in enlisting your sympathies in behalf of the oppressed, I shall be abundantly satisfied.

Partridge and Oakey, Printers, Paddington.

Notes

1. Matthew 25:43.
2. 'Uncle Tom' is the name of the enslaved hero who is the main character of the antislavery novel published by white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) titled *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life Among the Lowly*, in Boston with the printer, John P. Jewett, in 1852. Available online: <https://archive.org/details/uncletomscabin01stowgoog/page/n5/mode/2up>
3. This is an excerpt from *The Task: A Poem, in Six Books* by white English poet William Cowper (1731–1800), first published in 1785. Available online: <https://poets.org/poem/task-book-ii-time-piece-excerpt>
4. Rappahannock River is located in eastern Virginia.
5. Isaiah 53:10.
6. 1 Peter 2:18.
7. Colossians 4:1.
8. The Great Dismal Swamp is the name given to the extensive swamp lands located across parts of the states of Virginia and North Carolina. A historical site of Black liberation sacred to the memory of African diasporic 'fights for freedom', over the centuries enslaved people built new communities and new lives there as they took refuge from enslavement. See Daniel O. Sayers, *A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016).
9. New York City.
10. 'The Star-Spangled Banner' is the US flag that inspired the national anthem authored by white US author and lawyer, Francis Scott Key (1779–1843). Further information and access to the lyrics can be found online at: <https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/the-lyrics.aspx>
11. The 'Fugitive Slave Bills' include the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, 'An Act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their masters', for further information see the following link: <https://web.archive.org/web/20090923082639/http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/slaveact1793.htm>, and The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the

non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied by financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp

12. See the following narrative included in this book for more information. According to a report in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* dated 1 May 1850, under the heading 'Panorama of Slavery and the Slave-Trade', the author writes: 'we earnestly invite those unacquainted with its [slavery's] details, or anxious to have their feelings of detestation deepened against the horrid institution, to an inspection of the moving panorama of American slavery, now exhibiting at the Royal Victoria-hall, Leicester-square . . . The panorama opens with a scene on the African coast, and then follows a series of paintings embracing the great outlines of slavery in the United States, and the escape of slaves into Canada' (p.73).
13. This is a line from *The Task: A Poem, in Six Books* by white English poet William Cowper (1731–1800), first published in 1785. Available online: <https://poets.org/poem/task-book-ii-time-piece-excerpt>
14. Acts 17:26.



2 Anon., *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave*.
London: Crozier & Mullin Printers [1850?].¹

THE
LIFE
OF
CHARLES FREEMAN,
ONCE AN AMERICAN SLAVE.

‘This little narrative will be read with much interest.’

‘We do not remember reading a more interesting truthful Memoir of a Slave, the way he made his escape from Slavery shows that he is an intelligent young man, while his presence at the Panorama² adds greatly to the interest of the Exhibition and much weight to the facts related by the Lecturer, (the Rev. W. H. Irwin)³ who has just arrived in England after fourteen years residence as a Missionary among Slaves.’

SOLD AT
THE COSMORAMA,⁴ 209, REGENT STREET,
And to be had of all Booksellers,
Price 2d.
Also, Part 1. Descriptive Catalogue of the Panorama, price 2d.

THE LIFE
OF
CHARLES FREEMAN.

(so named at the first meeting and private exhibition of the African and American Slave Panorama,⁵ April 1850.)

CHARLES, as he was previously called, (Slaves having only one name,) was a House Slave to a Mr. Tompson, a Slave-owner; at six years old his business was to amuse and take care of his Master’s children, how he came there he does not know, nor any thing of his Father or Mother, but has been told by his Master that he was born on one of his plantations, and this must therefore suffice for his early history.

With Mr. Tompson he lived nine years, and had learned to cook and wait at table but hearing so frequently other countries spoken of by the many visitors who came to see his master, and often of the flourishing condition of certain parts, he felt a great desire to leave, and determined to run away.

After many days and nights of anxious thought, and forming many plans for his escape, he would wait no longer and determined to leave that night, all the while carefully avoiding everything that might lead to suspicion, it being no uncommon thing for slaves to run away the slightest sign of discontent would have been sufficient to have frustrated all his plans; this day seemed the longest Charles ever recollected, the night appeared reluctant to come, but at length it arrived and he felt renewed courage under its sable hue, he now waited for the family to retire, soon all was quiet, and he was left

alone, when with trembling steps he ventured to open the door, then greatly closing it stole to the woods, where he thought to remain until he could provide himself with what he might want on the journey, never having left the boundaries of his master's plantation he could form little or no idea of the country through which he must pass, but knowing the North Star⁶ would have this for his guide, for he had determined to go Far North and always to travel at night, taking rest and secreting himself during the day.

Having saved a little money, about two dollars, which had been given to him by visitors, this he secreted; remaining in the woods the first night and day, the following night he thought to return to his companions to obtain more food and better stock himself for the journey, accordingly when it was quite dark he started and soon found his way to them, but one of his fellow slaves hoping to gain favour with his master betrayed him and after a long struggle succeeded in binding him and locked him in an adjacent barn at day-break the slave informed his master of what he had done and where Charles was, this greatly pleased him, and as soon as he could he went to the barn and ordered Charles to be flogged, but for some reason the order was not obeyed, though he was kept in most fearful suspense for a long time; he was now no longer allowed to be a household slave, but as a lasting punishment, was sent to labour in the corn fields with about thirty others, and made to work under an overseer who remained with them whip in hand, and by the fearful lash made of dried cow-hide, urged them with constant stripes to perform their task; he remained as a field slave about a year, and again attempted to make his escape, and took refuge in a swamp, called the 'Dismal Swamp,'⁷ from the fact of its being so unhealthy and full of the most venomous and deadly snakes, that few white men would venture there to pursue a runaway slave.

The snakes are, the Hoop Snake, the Water Mockinson, the Cotton Mouthed, the Copper Head and the Crokus Adder and many others, from the bite of which death generally follows in a few minutes.

He lived here about six weeks with other slaves who had made their escape, and had built log cabins, and lived on wild Pigs, Racoons, Oppossums and other animals that they could catch. On venturing out of the Swamp in search of game, about 10 at night, he was suddenly captured by two white men, and being made to tell where he had come from, they carried him back to his master to receive the reward which had been offered for his capture, (as is always the case, amounting to from 100 to 200 dollars according to the value of the slave;) he was immediately put in chains and kept the night and day without food or water, when he was released, and again escaped flogging as he was to be sold when the Slave-dealer, or as the slaves call them 'Nigger Buyer' came for his rounds, for if flogged the scars would greatly reduce his value.

He was then sent to labor in the corn fields from which he had run away, and was closely watched lest he should again escape. As the time drew near for the Slave trader to come he daily grew more impatient, well knowing that he should be sold, to go south and to work in the swamps of Louisiana, he preferred to risk his life by again running away rather than go, as in these swamps few slaves live seven years, and more than half do not exceed three years; from the time he was told of his fate he had determined again to attempt his escape, and having saved a little money, about five dollars, by selling skins, tobacco, or anything he could to strangers, and a good quantity of provisions; he only waited an opportunity to steal away.

Soon after this the Overseer came into the field, his walk showed he had been drinking freely of whisky, (his favourite beverage,) and was much excited, flourishing the whip in his hand dispensed to all he thought proper the cruel lash; as soon as he reached Charles he drew the whip as hard as he could across his naked back, Charles spoke hastily to him and asked him why he did so, when he replied 'dare you speak insolently to me, Sir, the trader will be here next month and you shall go to New Orleans,' raising his whip to strike another lacerating blow, Charles defended himself with a hoe that he had in his hand, and striking the Overseer on the side of his head felled him to the ground, leaving him to recover he ran to the nearest plantation, and as it was evening kept close until night, when he ventured to a barn, by the side of which he had hid his money, on obtaining this it struck him that he would see if the stable-door was locked, finding it open he selected the best horse, *having assisted to rear the stud he thought he was entitled to a ride* he then put on a bridle and a cloth instead of a saddle, to avoid suspicion, all being quiet he jumped on his horse and again started North, taking this time the telegraph wire for a guide; after riding at full speed a few miles on the road, he was stopped by the patrol⁸ who asked where he was going at that time of the night, he replied pray do not stop me, my master is ill and I am going for the Doctor, this did not satisfy them, they asked him for his pass, he said his master was too ill to write it, and putting the whip to his horse, galloped away as fast as the horse could carry him, after riding nearly thirty miles the thought struck him that his master would telegraph him, he then climbed up a tree which served as a telegraph post, and pulling his knife out of his pocket, after some time he succeeded in dividing the wire; he then proceeded on his journey, and as daylight began to dawn he rode into the woods to secret himself and feed his horse, seeing a barn close at hand and finding it deserted, took some corn that had been left and gave it to his horse, after which he retreated further into the woods for the day; at night he again started on his journey, and having to cross a river nearly ½-a-mile wide, made his horse swim through with him on his back, thus travelling for nearly a week over the most dangerous ravines and boroughs, his provisions being exhausted as well as his money, having bought refreshment on the road, when he came near a store he made another desperate push hoping to reach a free state, and indeed he did think from the appearance of the fields and the habitations he passed, that he was already in a free state; still wishing to ensure his safety he rode until hunger compelled him to run all risks of being again taken and to beg for food.

The first person he saw was an elderly gentleman coming out of his house, he went up to him asked for something to eat, the gentleman looked hard at him and asked if he was not a fugitive, he answered yes, the gentleman replied to Charles' great joy that he was in a free state, and that he would do all he could to help him, and kindly giving him food and money, enquired what part he had left; on being informed, he desired Charles to leave his horse, and he would advertise it for sale, unless the owner fetched it within so many days, as Charles had no further use for him, the railroad being close at hand, this was agreed to, and the gentleman saw him in one of the railway cars going to Philadelphia; on arriving there he enquired the way to the New York station, from which place he was ninety-six miles, the train was just going, and arrived in New York at night, on seeing a coloured man, asked him where he could find a lodging, when he took him to his own house, and on hearing

how he escaped and what he was, recommended him to get a berth as second cook on board one of the Liners going to England, where he might be safe as long as he lived.

He accordingly offered himself as assistant Cook on board one of the Liners, (*Meat for Manners*,) which was accepted; after being at sea a week, the Rev. W.H. Irwin visited the galley, and speaking of his Panorama of the slave-trade, and stating his opinion of slavery, the cook informed him that his man was a runaway slave, Mr. Irwin wished to see him, and after putting many questions to him respecting his late master, &c. found that he correctly answered every enquiry, (Mr. Irwin being well acquainted with that part of the country.)

This fact though rather singular struck Mr. Irwin was likely to aid him in his Panorama, as Charles spoke English exceedingly well, and for a slave was a fine intelligent looking young man, made an offer to take charge of him on landing in England, Charles most gladly accepted the terms proposed and is now with Mr. Irwin, a living specimen of a Slave; a glance at him will show that it is not that the Slave is wanting in intellect, and as this short account of the last two years of his life will prove. It is now just two years since he first attempted to escape from slavery, and finally succeeded on the 24th of Feb. 1850. On speaking to him he is able to reply on most general points with acuteness, and displays much judgement in all he does and says, as will be seen at the Panorama.

Surely such a one need not be treated as the brute that perishes for lack of understanding, surely the time is coming when it will be too degrading to every nation to hold in slavery and chains, such a one gifted with every intellect necessary to make him not only a useful member of society, but if well directed a valuable one.

Mr. Irwin is doing all he can to instruct him, and hopes in a few years to fit him to supply his place as a Missionary, Mr. Irwin's health no longer allowing him to labour in that capacity.

Notes

1. *The Life of Charles Freeman, Once An American Slave* (London, 1850?). Digitized by HathiTrust: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.69015000003869&view=1up&seq=7>
2. According to a report in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* dated 1 May 1850, under the heading 'Panorama of Slavery and the Slave-Trade', the author writes: 'we earnestly invite those unacquainted with its [slavery's] details, or anxious to have their feelings of detestation deepened against the horrid institution, to an inspection of the moving panorama of American slavery, now exhibiting at the Royal Victoria-hall, Leicester-square . . . The panorama opens with a scene on the African coast, and then follows a series of paintings embracing the great outlines of slavery in the United States, and the escape of slaves into Canada' (p.73).
3. According to the same report in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* dated 1 May 1850, 'The Rev. Mr. Irwin, the proprietor, comes highly recommended to us as a Christian and an abolitionist, who, during twelve years' residence in the slave States, became thoroughly acquainted with the system of slavery, and the sufferings and degradation of the slaves. He accompanies the panorama with illustrative remarks, having himself personally witnessed the events each department of the panorama is intended to represent, with the exception only of the African scene' (p.73). There is no mention of Charles Freeman by name.
4. The Cosmorama Rooms located at Regent Street, London, was a very popular nineteenth-century exhibition space for showing panoramas and dioramas. A copy of a popular handbill

from 1833 is available at: <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/evanion/Record.aspx?EvanID=024-000000747&ImageIndex=0>

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6. The North Star was the guiding celestial landmark that enslaved people relied on in their long journeys of self-liberation from enslavement in the US South to new lives fighting for all freedoms in the northern states and Canada. See 'North Star to Freedom', *U.S. National Park Service*, available at: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/drinkinggourd.htm>
7. The Great Dismal Swamp is the name given to the extensive swamp lands located across parts of the states of Virginia and North Carolina. A historical site of Black liberation sacred to the memory of African diasporic 'fights for freedom', over the centuries enslaved people built new communities and new lives there as they took refuge from enslavement. See Daniel O. Sayers, *A Desolate Place for a Defiant People: The Archaeology of Maroons, Indigenous Americans, and Enslaved Laborers in the Great Dismal Swamp* (Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2016).
8. The 'patrole', also popularly known as 'patrollers' and 'pattyrollers', were gangs of white men who inflicted persecutions and committed violence and murderous acts against enslaved people in their barbaric and brutal roles as guards working in the interests and on the payroll of white enslavers. See Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).



NARRATIVE
OF
PHEBE ANN JACOBS.

BY MRS. T. C. UPHAM.

MY MASTER WILL TELL ME WHERE TO SIT. — PAGE 6.

THE subject of this narrative was a coloured woman, born a slave in Morris county, New Jersey, July, 1785. At an early age she was given to Mrs. Wheelock, wife of President Wheelock of Dartmouth college, to be an attendant on her daughter, Maria Malleville, who was afterwards the wife of President Allen, of Bowdoin college, Brunswick, Maine. She came to Brunswick with President Allen's family in 1820, and remained with them until the death of Mrs. Allen, from which time she chose to live alone. She died in Brunswick, February 28, 1850.

Soon after she became a member of President Wheelock's family, Phebe was brought to see her lost state by nature, and to flee to the Saviour as her only hope and refuge. Her subsequent life evinces that she had clear and happy views of the way of salvation by Christ.

Phebe, for the last eighteen years, supported herself by washing and ironing for the students of Bowdoin college. In her little habitation all was neatness and

Figure 20 Title page from Mrs Thomas C. Upham [Phebe Lord Upham], *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs*. London: W. and F. G. Cash, 1850. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

PHEBE ANN JACOBS

(1785–1850)

3 Mrs. Thomas C. Upham [Phebe Lord Upham], *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs*. London: W. and F. G. Cash, 1850.¹

Biographical History

THE LIFE AND WORKS of Phebe Ann Jacobs live on in historical memory and in the official records. According to the ground-breaking findings of researcher Rebecca Roche, Jacobs experienced enslavement on a northern labour camp ‘owned by’ white enslavers ‘from the Danish West Indies’ and located at Beverwyck in Parsippany-Troy Hills, Morris County, New Jersey.² As scholar Glenn A. Knoblock, summarises, ‘The plantation was about 2,000 acres in size, with excavations on the site in 2003 uncovering several shackles inside the remains of a slave dwelling.’³

Nearly 100 years after Jacobs’ death, on 2 May 1923, Chandler Briggs Allen published a newspaper article titled, ‘Born a Slave Lived in Brunswick 30 Years – Mourned by Hundreds – Story of Phebe Jacobs.’⁴ As the ‘daughter of slave parents’, Allen speculates that Jacobs’ ‘parents were probably sold and sent South while she was quite young’. He explains how Jacobs came to leave New Jersey and live in New Hampshire and Maine for the rest of her life by writing that on a visit to her home town, white US scholar and educator ‘John Wheelock president of Dartmouth College’ met Phoebe Ann Jacobs and was immediately ‘impressed’ by her ‘deportment’ and ‘intelligence’. According to Allen, ‘He had been unable to find any girl reliable to act as a servant and companion for his own daughter in New York’, with the result that when ‘He learned that Phebe’s owner intended to sell her and that she would cheerfully go to New Hampshire’ he ‘paid the price demanded and purchased her freedom’. Preferring to focus his attention almost exclusively on the life of her white enslavers rather than on the life of Phebe Ann Jacobs herself, by way of her personal biography Allen says only that, ‘Money to Phebe was nothing. She contributed to church work and clothed herself decently, and when she discovered poor and needy she drained her purse.’⁵

Working to ensure that the life and works of Phebe Ann Jacobs would never be forgotten and would be forever memorialised in literary history, white US author Phebe Lord Upham (1804–1882) decided to publish the *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs* in 1850.⁶ A testament to the work’s enduring popularity with US and transatlantic audiences, Upham’s

autobiography appeared in numerous differently titled and widely different editions throughout the 1850s and 1860s and was variously published in London, England, Edinburgh, Scotland, and Dublin, Ireland, among many more places. A posthumous work, Upham authored *Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs* in the year of Jacobs' death with powerful implications. This white woman's account of a Black woman's life was the antithesis of a collaborative process: not only was Jacobs denied any opportunity to contribute to the history of her life she was also prevented from reading the final work. As a result, Upham's interpretation of her life is an unauthorised record over which Jacobs had no say and so readers are advised to approach this text with extreme caution.

A deeply religious woman who chose to publish her work with the American Tract Society, Phebe Lord Upham is at pains to interpret Phebe Ann Jacobs' life as the life of a moral exemplar, spiritual paragon, self-sacrificing believer, and devout Christian. While she had no opportunity to produce this work in collaboration with Jacobs, Upham is careful to include many direct quotations in which she claims she is giving readers access to her unedited and unmediated voice; however much this is actually the case, we have no way of knowing. In one of the many instances in which Upham quotes Jacobs directly, she writes that she 'chose to live alone – alone with God, where as she expressed it, "there would be no hinderances to prayer and praise at any time; where she could converse with her Saviour all day long"'.

For Phebe Ann Jacobs, as for Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth – two world-leading self-liberated Black female religious leaders and spiritual thinkers – a direct relationship with God in which she and they 'conversed' with their 'Saviour' defined hers and their existence and functioned as the catalyst to their acts of social justice and human rights philosophies. As for Tubman and Truth so for Jacobs: her faith was her heart's core and the life of her spiritual being. As Upham writes, 'Not long since, a kind neighbour sent her daughter to read to her the little book, "A Trap to catch a Sunbeam." After hearing it, said Phebe, "That is a beautiful book, but I don't need a trap to catch sunbeams; I find sunbeams everywhere."' For Phebe Ann Jacobs, her seemingly effortless ability to find her own happiness by seeing 'sunbeams everywhere', against all the odds and in the face of white persecution and prejudice, was nothing less than a revelation and a hard-hitting testament to a Black woman's liberationist philosophy of resistance and resilience.

In these pages, Upham's narration of Black female sainthood does not come at the price of sanitising or censoring white immorality. She relies on Jacobs' own words to expose white northern acts of racist discrimination as directed against Black people. 'When harsh remarks were made in her presence concerning her brethren or sisters', Upham writes, 'she would say, "We must pray for them."' Steadfast in her refusal to capitulate or concede any ground to the white racist opponents of her 'brethren' and 'sisters', Jacobs lays bare her superior morality in an equal human rights philosophy as undergirded by compassion, kindness, and love. 'And this was her custom', Upham further confides, emphasising that, 'Not long since she was rudely spoken to, and her feelings wounded. Said Phebe, "I have a Friend, to whom I can go;" and with no other reply she turned away, and on her knees before God prayed for this individual. The next morning the person came and asked her pardon.' As Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman repeatedly sought and received divine support against their oppressors, so

Phebe Ann Jacobs' intimate relationship with her 'Friend' transformed sinning persecutors into respectful allies.

A few years later, in 1853, white female US author, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a work in which she compiled 'the Original Facts and Documents Upon Which the Story' of her antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was 'Founded'. Prominent among the lives she includes as a testament to the 'extraordinary piety' of her leading protagonist, 'Uncle Tom' is the exemplary life of none other than Phebe Ann Jacobs. Here she provides further vindication not only of Jacobs' exalted spirituality but of her defiant power in defeating white racist ignorance and prejudice by writing: 'Notwithstanding that the unchristian feeling of caste prevails as strongly in Maine as anywhere else in New England, and the negro, commonly speaking, is an object of aversion and contempt, yet, so great was the influence of her piety and loveliness of character, that she was uniformly treated with the utmost respect and attention by all classes of people.'⁷

Narrative of Phebe Ann Jacobs is not the only surviving monument and memorial to her life. The headstone of Phebe Ann Jacobs' grave located in Pine Grove Cemetery, Brunswick, Maine, is still standing.⁸

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NARRATIVE
OF
PHEBE ANN JACOBS.
BY MRS. T. C. UPHAM.⁹

‘MY MASTER WILL TELL ME WHERE TO SIT.’¹⁰

THE subject of this narrative was a coloured woman, born a slave in Morris county, New Jersey, July, 1785. At an early age she was given to Mrs. Wheelock,¹¹ wife of President Wheelock¹² of Dartmouth college,¹³ to be an attendant on her daughter, Maria Malleville,¹⁴ who was afterwards the wife of President Allen,¹⁵ of Bowdoin college,¹⁶ Brunswick, Maine. She came to Brunswick with President Allen's family in 1820, and remained with them until the death of Mrs. Allen, from which time she chose to live alone. She died in Brunswick, February 28, 1850.

Soon after she became a member of President Wheelock's family, Phebe was brought to see her lost state by nature, and to flee to the Saviour as her only hope and refuge. Her subsequent life evinces that she had clear and happy views of the way of salvation by Christ. Phebe, for the last eighteen years, supported herself by washing and ironing for the students of Bowdoin College. In her little habitation all was neatness and order. All her work seemed to be sanctified by prayer and praise, and to be done cheerfully, heartily, as unto the Saviour whom she loved. However busy, she was always ready to enjoy a season of devotion with her Christian friends who called to see her. She chose to live alone – alone with God, where, as she expressed it, ‘there would be no hinderances to prayer and praise at any time; where she could converse with her Saviour all day long.’ So naturally would she speak to us of the presence of Christ with her, so happy was she in her testimony to the consolations she enjoyed in

communion with Him, that one could not but feel that Christ was with her, and that her little cottage on the plain was near to heaven.

Phebe was contented and happy. As a friend passed her dwelling, and it was beginning to rain, it was said to her, 'I am afraid you will not get your clothes dry to-day, Phebe.' 'That is as the Lord pleases,' she replied. All was right with her, because she resigned her own will to the will of God; hence she seemed to be always peaceful and happy. Every body knew that Phebe was happy, and that it was religion that made her so. Young persons and children, as well as those of maturer years, loved to visit her. At one time a little coloured girl was spending several weeks with Phebe. A gentleman meeting her, said, 'Where do you live, little girl?' 'With happy Phebe,' was her quick reply. Not long since, a kind neighbour sent her daughter to read to her the little book, 'A Trap to catch a Sunbeam.'¹⁷ After hearing it, said Phebe, 'That is a beautiful book, but I don't need a trap to catch sunbeams; I find sunbeams everywhere.'

Who ever heard Phebe complain, or severely censure any one? Fault-finding was not her way of doing good, or being useful in the church. When harsh remarks were made in her presence concerning her brethren or sisters, she would say, 'We must pray for them.' And this was her custom. Not long since she was rudely spoken to, and her feelings wounded. Said Phebe, 'I have a Friend, to whom I can go;' and with no other reply she turned away, and on her knees before God prayed for this individual. The next morning the person came and asked her pardon. How beautifully does this illustrate the passage, 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.'¹⁸ Again, returning home from meeting, one dark evening, with her head bowed down as usual, she was accosted, 'Where are you bound, old woman?' 'To Canaan's'¹⁹ happy land,' she answered.

Phebe loved the Scriptures. Near by her, and always on her mind and heart, was her 'precious Holy Bible,' and her large-print Testament. Phebe had the same Bible that others have, but she found in it a great deal more than is commonly found, as all may observe who have seen her Bible. There the promises, and the threatenings and warnings too, are marked or underscored by her pen or pencil. Phebe's marks beneath or beside a passage, made often with a heavy stroke of her pencil, come to our minds with the force of a commentary, for she was herself a 'living epistle,' 'known and read' by us all. Said her pastor,* 'If a thousand devoted Christians were requested to mark their favourite texts and expressions, it is believed they would hardly mark one not understood by Phebe.'

Phebe loved the house of God. She took great delight in the services of the sanctuary: hence she was never absent except from sickness or urgent necessity. She was indeed a pillar of the church; one in whom the minister found support by her constant attendance and prayers, by her cordial reception and love of the truth. She was the first to be seated in her place at church. For many years, in our former house of worship, she was seen sitting in one corner of the gallery, on the furthest row of seats, with her head bowed in secret prayer. To look up to her as we entered the house of

* Phebe was a Member of the Congregational Church of America, corresponding to the Independents in England. [Author note]

God was, to some of us at least, a prayer, a sermon, a hymn of praise. The last winter, her health failing, she was unable to walk to church as formerly, and remained during the intermission – a season highly prized by some of her Christian friends, who would hasten back to meet her. That glowing look of hers, that close pressure of the hand, that Sabbath-day greeting, will never be forgotten. The best, the most experienced Christians loved to be with Phebe, because she was a happy, Bible Christian, a witness to the truth of God.

Phebe loved to pray. Many times a day would she go to her bedroom, carpeted as for a little sanctuary, and kneel and pray. So much was her soul awake to the interests of Zion,²⁰ it was no uncommon occurrence for her to arise at midnight and pray. ‘At midnight I will arise, and give thanks unto Thee.’²¹ This is a marked passage in her Bible. About four years since, her pastor was strengthened more than usual in his labors; his soul was richly fed with heavenly manna; and of this bread many of his flock partook with him. Not long after this season of refreshing, it was ascertained that Phebe had arisen every night, month after month, at midnight, to pray for her pastor.

Many were the individuals for whom she prayed. During the past winter a friend called to see her. ‘What is the good word?’ said Phebe. ‘Anna – is serious, and inquiring the way of life.’ She arose at once from her seat, lifted her hands, and with tears of joy praised God aloud, and said, ‘For her I have been praying; God is a bearer of prayer.’

Phebe’s faith and confidence in God were practical, and availed her in time of need. When her mistress, Mrs. Allen, died, whom she loved more than any being on earth, and whose death was very sudden, in the dead of night, causing great distress in the family, Phebe calmly said, ‘Don’t we pray, “Thy will be done?”’²² and now it is done.’

Phebe gave of her substance. She made a monthly contribution of fifty cents to missions, and bequeathed her little all, remaining after her decease, to the cause of Christ.

Phebe prayed for the college. The officers and students she bore on her heart to God. She always manifested a deep interest in the annual concert of prayer for colleges. At this concert, in the year 1834, a six o’clock morning prayer-meeting was appointed. When the pastor came, he found that Phebe had been there, on the door steps more than an hour praying! While it was yet dark, she found her way to the prayer-meeting, as Mary to the sepulchre.²³ Who can tell how many souls were converted in answer to the prayers on that door-step – how much they had to do with those conversions in college which occurred at this time, and the fruits of which may be seen in the ministers scattered abroad, preaching the gospel, gathering souls into the kingdom of Christ? Those seasons of revivals in college, have they no connection with the prayers of this humble saint, who lived to pray: lived in obscurity, and yet lived for the college; lived for the church; lived for the pastor; lived for the world?

Phebe loved the church and female prayer-meeting. Through the storm and wind and bad walking, she would find her way to the place of prayer. In the female prayer-meeting, all loved to kneel when Phebe prayed. She approached the throne of grace as if her mind and heart were already there, and she had only to open her lips and the prayer of the heart ascended, in humility and faith and love. The last Sabbath she spent on earth she was at church as usual, and stopped at noon, and was conversing on the value and importance of this meeting. She then alluded to a time, about four years since, when ‘she could not hold her peace.’ About this time Phebe seemed more fully than ever before to receive Christ as an all-sufficient, present Saviour. The

blessings of His salvation seemed as much her own, as if she alone was heir to the redemption purchased by Christ. She 'knew in whom she believed,' and that 'He was able to make all grace abound toward her.'²⁴ Grace was triumphant in her soul, and so continued, by her own testimony given at her last interview with her Christian friends. From this time, as she often expressed it, 'she had never let her Saviour go;' 'she had held Him by the hand,' nay more, 'He had come into her heart, and continued to abide with her.' 'Satan is busy with me,' she would sometimes say, 'but my Lord is stronger than he.' 'My little house,' said she, 'this winter has become a palace: while sweeping my room to-day, I thought, I must sweep softly, for He was here, my Lord and King.'

Phebe was humble. Her humility drew all hearts towards her. All the attention she received did not cause her for a moment to step aside from her own humble path, in which she continued to walk, doing her own work, or rather the Lord's, in her own humble, quiet way. She rarely, if ever, spoke first, yet was always ready to respond heartily to the greetings of her brethren and sisters in Christ. She literally and truly sought out the lowest seat. Down by the door at the evening meeting sat Phebe, with her head bowed, neither seeing nor wishing to be seen. Being urged to come up nearer, as she had often been before, it was said to her, 'What will you do, Phebe, when you got to heaven?' 'My Master will tell me where to sit,' she answered. There was a peculiar lowly attitude of spirit and manner which sat on her with a natural grace and beauty, that cannot be described.

Phebe had no fear of death. She died as suddenly as her mistress, and now lies by her side in the Pinegrove cemetery,²⁵ where lie so many of the loved and honoured. She had often expressed a desire to be placed at her mistress' feet. As she was expecting to die suddenly and alone, she had given the signal to her nearest neighbour, that when she saw no smoke from her chimney in the morning, she would know that she was gone. 'When you hear I am gone home,' said she to the writer of this, the Sabbath before she died, 'praise the Lord.' 'I shall go soon, very soon. If to-morrow you hear I am gone home to heaven, rejoice and give thanks, and remember, it is well with me.' 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' she repeated at this, our last Sabbath interview; 'yes, lover, LOVER, LOVER! How can I better express it? "Jesus, lover of my soul."'

A few hours only before she was called away, she came to look on the wife of her pastor, then sleeping her last sleep, from which she was to awake only in heaven. As Phebe was standing and looking earnestly, and as it was believed wishfully, on that near approach to heaven, she was asked, 'Phebe, don't you wish you were going home so soon?' 'Yes, indeed I do,' was her emphatic answer. 'Are you not unwilling to be there alone in your house, when you may be taken sick at any time?' She replied, with solemn earnestness, 'I am not alone; my Saviour is with me: He is my keeper, my Shepherd, my All - my All in All.'

The next morning Phebe's body was found in her bed, cold and lifeless, her eyes calmly closed, the mouth shut, her hands placed by her side, her candle burnt out, her Testament and spectacles by the bedside, the door of her house unbolted; no smoke ascended from her cottage, and Phebe was not - God took her.

'Who now will pray for us?' said one; 'Phebe is gone.' 'We have lost Phebe's prayers,' said another; 'what a loss!' Again, 'Phebe has been praying for us all these thirty years; and now we feel that God has made a great breach upon us.' Said another, 'Yes, we have lost, but heaven has gained. Who will sing the Saviour's praises louder, sweeter, than Phebe?'

The Sabbath following, at the close of the afternoon services, her remains were brought to the house of God. A large assembly were collected from all the congregations of the village. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Adams, though in deep affliction, his companion lying dead, to be buried on the morrow, could not refuse to be present: a highly valued member of his church had been taken from him; one on whose prayers he depended, whose encouraging words had often given him new strength; one who was a living witness of the truths he preached; an example to believers – yes, the pastor, though in tears, was present to read the hymns, to offer the prayer, to read the Scriptures, to address the assembly, to bear a testimony, a full and emphatic testimony to the worth of Phebe. His trying position and touching address; the sympathy of his flock with him; the loss to us of his companion, a woman greatly respected and beloved; and the loss of Phebe, made this occasion one of peculiar tenderness and solemnity. Slowly and sweetly sounded forth the organ's notes on that day, as if a weeping angel touched the strings; there was sadness and beauty in the strains.

The wife of the pastor died the same night with Phebe, and perhaps at the same hour of the night. We may think of them, as ascending together to the mansions of the blessed. To die with Phebe was a privilege; and the pastor remarked on this occasion, that if his wife had been permitted to choose a companion to accompany her through the 'dark valley,' and into the open portals of heaven, she would have chosen Phebe. She was heard to say, 'I am perfectly happy; Christ is sufficient for all my necessities; I never supposed I could enjoy so much: there is no one on earth I would exchange places with but Phebe.'

At the funeral of Phebe there was no relative, no kindred of the flesh. Those following nearest her remains were President Allen and daughters, who, informed by telegraph, had come nearly two hundred miles to testify their respect and affection for the deceased. Her remains were borne out from the church and accompanied to the grave by officers of the college and others, who might have been chosen for this purpose had the most honoured and most beloved among us fallen. A long procession followed her remains and gathered around her grave.

Notes

1. The *Narrative* is held in Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Dartmouth, New Hampshire. The edition published by J. S. Stewart in London in 1850 is transcribed on Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives and available at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/upham/menu.html>
2. See Roche, 'Phebe Ann Jacobs, Freed Slaves', available at: <http://pinegrovebrunswick.blogspot.com/2010/08/phebe-ann-jacobs-freed-slave.html>
3. See Glenn A. Knoblock, *African American Historic Burial Grounds and Gravesites of New England* (Jefferson NC: McFarland and Company Inc, 2016), p.289.
4. See Chandler Briggs Allen, 'Born a Slave Lived in Brunswick 30 Years – Mourned by Hundreds – Story of Phebe Jacobs', *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, 2 May 1923, p.3.
5. Ibid.
6. For detailed biographical information on Phebe Lord Upham, see Rebecca Roche, 'Phebe and Thomas C. Upham: The Rabble Rousers'. Available at: <http://pinegrovebrunswick.blogspot.com/2010/08/phebe-thomas-c-upham-rabble-rousers.html>
7. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin: Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon which the Story is Founded: Together with Corroborative*

- Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work*. London: Clarke, Beeton and Co., 1853, p.25.
8. A photograph of Jacobs' grave is available online at: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46519010/phebe-ann-jacobs>
 9. Phebe Lord Upham (1804–1882).
 10. Here the publishers of this edition insert a generic drawing of a house located in an imaginary rural idyll.
 11. Maria Suhm Wheelock (1758–1824).
 12. John Wheelock (1754–1817) was a white US scholar and educator. He was appointed as President of Dartmouth College from 1779 onwards.
 13. Dartmouth College was founded in Hanover, New Hampshire, USA, in 1769. A present-day private research university, the institution was first established to train Native American students to become religious missionaries in the Christian faith.
 14. Maria Malleville Wheelock Allen (1788–1828).
 15. William Allen (1784–1868) was a white US educator, scholar, and theologian.
 16. Bowdoin College was an educational institution founded to instruct wealthy and privileged white US male students in 1794 and located in Brunswick, Maine.
 17. Mrs Henry S. Mackarness, *A Trap To Catch A Sunbeam* (Boston MA: J. Munroe, 1849).
 18. Romans 12:19.
 19. The Land of Canaan was popularly referred to as 'The Promised Land': the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants. See Genesis 12:7. Canaan was also synonymous with heaven.
 20. Zion is the name given to Jerusalem in the Old Testament.
 21. Psalm 119:62.
 22. From *The Lord's Prayer*. Luke 11:2.
 23. Matthew 27:61.
 24. 2 Corinthians 9:8.
 25. A photograph of Phoebe Ann Jacobs' grave located at Pinegrove Cemetery, Brunswick, Maine, is available online at: <http://pinegrovebrunswick.blogspot.com/2010/08/phebe-ann-jacobs-freed-slave.html>



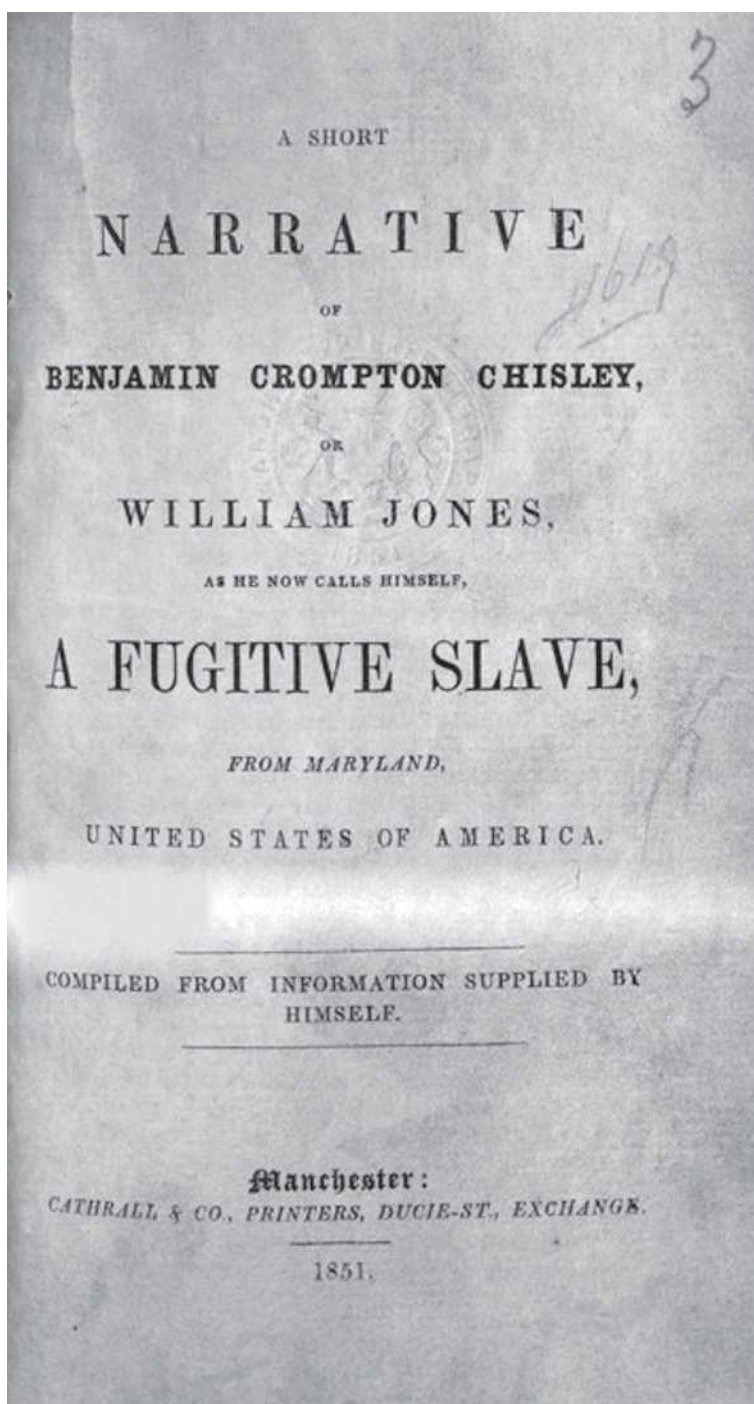


Figure 21 Title page from Benjamin Crompton Chisley, *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley or William Jones*. Manchester: Catrall & Co., 1851. (The Copyright of The University of Manchester; Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives.)

BENJAMIN CROMPTON CHISLEY/ WILLIAM JONES

(1812–DATE UNKNOWN)

4 Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones, *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley or William Jones*. Manchester: Cathrall & Co., 1851.¹

Biographical History

VERY LITTLE BIOGRAPHICAL information survives on Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones beyond what we learn in *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley or William Jones* published by Cathrall & Co. printers in Manchester, England, in 1851.

As yet, we have no way of uncovering the identity of the anonymous author who arranged for this work's transcription and publication. While research into this unknown individual is still ongoing, we learn from the title page that they are at pains to confirm Chisley/Jones' authorial agency from the outset. Writing on the front cover that this narrative was 'compiled from information supplied' by Chisley/Jones 'himself', a few pages in they reassure the reader that they are providing the 'account' of 'his escape into one of the free states' in words as 'given by himself, (with some grammatical corrections)'.

Immediately, this author's statement lays bare the disrespectful demands and wilful tampering exerted by white paternalist and repeatedly outright racist abolitionists who worked unceasingly to appropriate, package, and represent Black testimonies on their own terms and according to their own rules. At the forefront of their discriminatory strategies was an overly prescriptive adherence to westernised grammar conventions that repeatedly committed violence against a formerly enslaved person's spoken language and textual expression. At the same time, however, the author's decision to reproduce Chisley/Jones' 'account' in the first person provides powerful confirmation that they were indeed attempting to record his autobiographical history in the words 'given by himself'. Working to give readers direct access to Chisley/Jones' voice, the anonymous writer is almost certainly transcribing his words as the result of one or more in-person interviews. If this is the

case, the fact that Chisley/Jones trusted this anonymous author with his life story suggests that they may well have established some sort of beneficial and supportive relationship with one another.

Chisley/Jones' narrative begins by the unknown author's record of his birth to 'parents who were both slaves' in Calvert County, Maryland, as 'the fourth of a family of five children'. The writer or compiler of Chisley/Jones' 'account' meticulously lists all of his sisters' and his brother's names: Rebecca, Margaret, Barbara, and Elzey. For Chisley/Jones, his narrative survives as a memorial to the untold lives not only of his sisters and brother but of his father who 'was sold and separated from his wife' and had 'since died' and his 'aged mother' who was 'still living'. While he was powerless to fight against his white enslaver's determination to tear apart, violate, and destroy his family as an enslaved child, as a self-liberated adult narrator Chisley/Jones does powerful justice to their intimate bonds and emotionally supportive relationships.

Chisley/Jones' first-person narration begins with his traumatised memory of witnessing an enslaved woman's physical abuse at the hands of his white enslaver. As he painfully recalls, 'my owner was flogging a woman, and I objected to it, on which he ceased flogging her and threatened to flog me; I objected to that being done, but said I would agree to be sold, rather than stay and see such ill treatment any longer'. For Chisley/Jones, Black female suffering operates as the catalyst to Black male protest and self-liberation. At the heart of his 'account' are his death-defying acts of physical resistance against his white enslavers. In one instance of his exposure to violence and persecution, his white enslaver commands a 'young man' named Dory to 'assist him in tying me' with only one result: 'I threatened to kill Dory if he put a hand upon me.' For Chisley/Jones, as for Black liberator Harriet Tubman no less than the white Founding Fathers of the US nation, it was a fight for 'liberty or death.'²

Securing his self-liberation to the northern states, Chisley/Jones lives a new life as an agricultural labourer under the name of William Jones. He begins his own family by marrying 'a free coloured woman' and succeeds in assisting 'my mother's escape from Baltimore, where she was a slave'. A few years later, living and working in the UK at the time of the publication of his narrative, Chisley/Jones summarises his 'two objects in view': first, to 'compass my own freedom', and, second, if 'failing in that object', to secure sufficient funds to 'obtain the passage of my wife and my aged mother, from America to England'. For Chisley/Jones, freedom meant nothing without his family beside him. He was not alone. For all of the thousands of Black people of all genders and ages living as 'fugitive slaves', the fight to liberate their enslaved family members and reunite their families was the sole reason for living.

As Harriet Tubman – a woman who had also experienced enslavement in Maryland and who went on to become one of the most important Black liberators on the Underground Railroad, the clandestine system supporting enslaved people on their long journeys to freedom – remembered of her own arrival into the north: 'I had crossed the line. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there. But I was free, and they should be free. I would make a home in the North and bring them there, God helping me.'³

Further Reading

Primary

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A SHORT
NARRATIVE
OF
BENJAMIN CROMPTON CHISLEY
OR WILLIAM JONES,
AS HE NOW CALLS HIMSELF,
A FUGITIVE SLAVE,
FROM MARYLAND,
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

COMPILED FROM INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY
HIMSELF.

Manchester:
CATHRALL & CO, PRINTERS, DUCIE-ST., EXCHANGE
1851.

NARRATIVE

BENJAMIN CROMPTON CHISLEY was born at a farm near Huntingtown, Calvert County, Maryland, in the year 1812, of parents who were both slaves, and was the fourth of a family of five children. The elder three were his sisters, Rebecca, Margaret, and Barbara; the younger was his brother Elzey, now about thirty-two years of age.

When Benjamin Crompton Chisley was about seven years of age his father was sold and separated from his wife, and has since died, but she, now an aged mother, is

still living, in the City of Trenton, in the State of New Jersey, with Benjamin Crompton Chisely's wife.

Benjamin Crompton Chisely lived with his owner, Mrs. Ann B. Wilson, until the year 1827, when, at fifteen years of age he was hired out to a party named James Reynolds, with whom he staid twelve months; afterwards he was hired out to several other parties, staying various periods of time, generally from twelve to eighteen months, until 1833, when he went back to his owner, Mrs. Ann B. Wilson. On the 22nd of July in that year Mrs. A. B. Wilson died, leaving her property, including slaves, to her daughter Miss Mary E. Wilson.

From 1834 to 1842, the subject of our narrative was again hired out to various parties, amongst whom was the Rev. Wm. T. Wilson, a Wesleyan Minister.

In 1842 Mr. Robert W. Yoe was married to Miss Mary E. Wilson, by which marriage he came into possession of all her property, including B.C.C., and the other slaves, eighteen in all. B.C.C. appears now to have staid working on the plantation until July 8th, 1844, when a rupture occurred between himself and his owner, and he effected his escape into one of the free States; the account of which, and of subsequent events, as given by himself, (with some grammatical corrections,) is as follows:—

Monday morning, July 8th, 1844 – When I came in to breakfast this morning, Mr. Yoe, my owner was flogging a woman, and I objected to it, on which he ceased flogging her and threatened to flog me; I objected to that being done, but said I would agree to be sold, rather than stay and see such ill treatment any longer. After this I went into the tobacco field to plough. Mr. Yoe came into the field and said to me, 'You shall be sold if you wish it.' I immediately left the plough, and he and I started for the house. When passing by the tobacco-house we saw a young man in it of the name of Dory, and Mr. Yoe said to him 'Saddle Butterfly.' We then passed on to the house; when there, he said to Mrs. Yoe that 'Ben' was going to be sold. She replied, 'If you will take him, and give him a good flogging, he will know he has a master, and behave himself.' By this time the man had come with the horse saddled, and Mr. Yoe came out of the house, to get on the horse, looking up at a peach tree, as if he were going to break a switch to ride with, but getting off the horse again, against me, he seized me by the collar, and called Dory to assist him in tying me. I threatened to kill Dory if he put a hand upon me, and Mr. Yoe said, with an oath, if he did not *he* would kill him. At this crisis Mrs. Yoe came out of the house, and catching hold of a stick, began thrashing Dory, to make him take hold of me, but he still refused to do so; she then called Eliza, my sister Barbara's daughter, and sent her for an adjoining neighbour, a Mr. John Ogden. I struggled hard during her absence, to get away without hurting Mr. Yoe, who still held me, and Mrs. Yoe then called Susan, another girl, and sent her for a neighbour also, but before any one could come, I had succeeded in getting away from Mr. Yoe, by biting his hand.

I then ran off in the direction of Chesapeake Bay,⁴ on the way I met with a gentleman whom I had lived with in 1832. I asked him if he had seen a runaway this morning, he said 'No, unless you are one.' I said I was one, and asked him to buy me. He said my owner would ask three times as much from him as I was worth, for which reason he could not buy me; on which I left him, and after some time reached Wm. R. Johnson's, whom I found trying his pistols before going in search of me – the sum of fifty dollars being offered for my re-capture. I stayed hereabouts, notwithstanding the reward, until the 17th of September, when I hastened to reach the City of Baltimore.

It was Saturday night when I started, and on my way a thunder-storm came on, which obliged me to find shelter until Sunday morning. On again taking the road I went up the country to V. G. Maxey's, on the West River, where I had lived in 1829, and breakfasted with one of his slaves, after which I again proceeded for Baltimore. On arriving at the 'Tapsco River, I did not know how to get across the bridge to escape the toll-gatherer, however, I ventured to tap at his door, and, as I had hoped, he was asleep, or didn't hear me; so leaving the door, I walked backwards towards the bridge, with my face to the door, so as to be in a position, in case he came out, to go up and settle for the toll, but as he did not come out, I went on across the bridge. On arriving in Baltimore, I got lost, and rambled about the streets for some time, but at last found an acquaintance, with whom I stayed until morning, and there I learned that two hundred dollars were offered for my re-capture. I stayed in Baltimore until the Sunday following, when I left in the night, for Pennsylvania, and a little before day-break succeeded in reaching the line of division between Maryland and that State, and joyfully crossing it, my foot, for the first time, trod on free soil, and continued to do so until the passage, by Congress, of the Fugitive Slave Bill,⁵ compelled me to seek again a place of safety.

I early assumed the name of WILLIAM JONES, and during the first three months of my residence in Pennsylvania, worked for various parties up and down the country, but after that time I engaged with Mr. J. T. Schofield, with whom I remained three years, working on his farm. After which I removed to Trenton, State of New Jersey, where I worked two years with Mr. S. E. Decoe. From both these gentlemen I have testimonials to my good conduct in their service.

In the year 1848, whilst living in Trenton, I married a free coloured woman, and had also the pleasure, with the help of a man whom I paid for the purpose, of obtaining my mother's escape from Baltimore, where she was a slave. She still resides with my wife in Trenton, and being in her eightieth year, is too old to make it worth while undertaking her re-capture.

After my two years' service with Mr. Decoe, I went to Philadelphia, to work there, but the passage, by Congress, of the Fugitive Slave Bill, rendered my schemes of no use, and a reward being offered for my apprehension and re-capture, I was compelled to make a speedy flight, and in the month of December, 1850, landed at Liverpool, in England, whence I soon arrived in Manchester, and was fortunate enough early to obtain an introduction to the Rev. Mr. Raven, Independent Minister, of that town, from whom I have received much kindness, and by whose recommendation I was soon enabled to get employment with Messrs. Dilworth & Son, with whom I have remained ever since, until recently, and who have kindly given me a handsome testimonial of good conduct.

I am now engaged, by the recommendation of sundry friends, in endeavouring to purchase, from my reputed owner, Mr. R. W. Yoe, my right to return free to America, and negotiations are in progress, with a view to effect that object. But failing in this endeavour, the money which several friends have been kind enough to promise, is to be employed in bringing over my mother and my wife, from Trenton, in America, to England.

Several letters have passed between Mr. Yoe and myself, one of which, from Mr. Yoe, is appended hereto, *verbatim*, as a remarkable specimen of correspondence between a slave-owner, and a fugitive from his service.

It will be seen I have now two objects in view, – first, to compass my own freedom, for which, through the medium of a highly respectable firm in Manchester, negotiations are on foot. And secondly, – failing in that object, to obtain the passage of my wife and my aged mother, from America to England. Any subscriptions which parties may be inclined to give, to aid my endeavours, if paid to me, or to *Messrs. Binyons & Hunter, Tea Dealers, St. Ann's Square, Manchester*, will be carefully appropriated towards the objects in view.

THE AMERICAN FUGITIVE SLAVE BILL

From the Manchester Examiner and Times, May 10, 1851.

There is in Manchester a fugitive slave, who some years ago escaped from Maryland into the free state of Pennsylvania, where he found profitable employment, and maintained himself respectably. By his earnings he had managed to save enough to purchase his cottage, and was doing exceedingly well up to the time when the Fugitive Slave Bill passed both houses of the American congress. His safety, however, was compromised by that law, and being threatened with capture, he contrived to escape to this country, leaving behind him his wife and an aged mother. He is now earning some 15s. a week, but feeling that he can do much better in Pennsylvania, and anxious to return to his wife and home, he has, since his arrival in England, entered into correspondence with his former master, to try if he can purchase his freedom, and thus place himself beyond the reach of the fugitive slave law. The following is the letter received by the last American mail, from the slaveowner to whom he formerly belonged, in reply to his proposition, which will be read with interest, as showing the cool business way in which the traffic in human flesh is conducted in the southern states:–

Prince Frederick,⁶ April 14th, 1851.

Mr. Benjamin C. Chisley,
Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your favour of the 14th ultimo, I must confess that I do not know which feeling predominated, surprise or gratification, as, strange as it may appear to you, I was gratified to hear from you at all, and more so to see that you had some respect for the country which you have left. I have no doubt but you feel a wish to live in the country of your birth, though your lot was cast as many of your colour have been (in servitude), tis true, that for near seven years you have enjoyed a degree of freedom, which would now no doubt make servitude irksome, but you must confess that your mind has not been free from apprehensions, that you might be caught and again brought back to service, and especially since the passage of the Fugitive Slave Bill by the Congress of the United States, and the treaty entered into between Great Britain and the United States, to deliver up any person that may owe allegiance to the other country; but to come to particulars, your letter was written for the ostensible purpose of offering me a sum of money for your freedom, which if granted, would relieve your mind from further apprehension, the sum you offer is fifteen pounds English money, (about sixty-six dollars) just about the sum

you would have for one year. The reason you assign for offering me that amount is, that it is as much as you can save for that purpose, that you only get fifteen shillings a-week, now suppose you had been in England and receiving that amount from that time you left me, would you not be able to offer or pay more than that sum; you have been gone for seven years next July, and have been in this country up to last summer, for I heard a gentleman say that knew you well that he saw you in Boston about that time, and from what I know of your industrious habits and economy, I know that instead of sixty-six odd dollars which you offer as the amount which you are able to pay, that you are able to pay a thousand dollars for your freedom if I was to ask it, I do not ask that amount, however, but I do ask five hundred dollars, and that to be paid before I ever sign any papers that will guarantee to you what you want, and for this purpose, I have declared that you may if you choose come to the United States for the purpose of making arrangements to raise the money or of paying it yourself which I know you have, but if you have not the money yourself, I know that you can raise it in Boston, New York and Philadelphia in three days after you get there, and that you may then send an agent to Baltimore, which I will meet if addressed in time to do so on any day that he may appoint, and will then and there execute a deed of manumission or bill of sale as you may desire, with this condition, that you are not to come to Maryland, which I need not make as the laws of Maryland forbid free persons of colour from coming into the State from other States to live, this privilege of coming to the United States without my interfering with you or molesting you in any way, I most solemnly declare I will extend to you if you choose to accept of it until June, and will extend it to July if you wish it for the purpose of affording you ample time of raising the money, but not longer; this arrangement, if you choose to accept it, will for ever relieve your mind from further apprehensions, and I most sincerely declare that I will on my part perform the above conditions, but should you not accept this my proposition, then I am sure you will not think hard of me when I assure you I will accept of no other, and will use my best exertions of bringing you to servitude again. I would say however in conclusion, that if you would like to return home to live, that I will forget and forgive the past and treat you kindly as I know how, but I must say that I prefer the proposition which I have made you above.

Yours most respectfully,

ROBERT W. YOE.

P.S. You will be kind enough to answer this and let me know your intentions in regard to the matter contained in the letter.

Yours, R.W.YOE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE AMERICAN SLAVE CODE.

GEORGIA. *Princes Digest*. – Act, December 19th, 1818. Penalty for any free person of colour (except regularly articulated seamen) coming into the State, a fine of one thousand dollars, and on failure of payment, to be sold as a slave, p.465.

Penalty for permitting any slave to labour or business for himself, except on his premises, thirty dollars per week. p.457.

No slave can be a party to any suit against a white man except on claim of his freedom, and every coloured person is presumed to be a slave, unless he can prove himself free. p.446.

Act, December 13th, 1722. Forbids the assemblage of negros under pretence of divine worship, contrary to the act of regulating patrols, p.342. This act provides that any justice of the peace may disperse any assembly of slaves which may endanger the peace, and every slave found at such meeting, shall receive without trial, twenty-five stripes. p.447.

Any person who sees more than seven men slaves, without any white person in a high road, may whip each slave twenty lashes. p.451.

Any slave who harbours a runaway, may suffer punishment to any extent, not affecting life or limb. p.452.

SOUTH CAROLINA. *Brevards Digest*. – Slaves shall be deemed sold, taken, reputed, and adjudged in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors, and executors, administrators, and assigns, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatever.

Act of 1743, in the preamble, states that ‘many owners of slaves and others that have the management of them do confine them so closely to hard labour, that they have not sufficient time for natural rest,’ and enacts that no slave shall be compelled to work more than *fifteen* hours in the twenty-four, from March 26th, to September 25th, or fourteen in the twenty-four the rest of the year. Penalty, from £5 to £20.

Stroud’s New Code. In the trial of slaves, the court consists of five justices, without juries, even in capital cases. I. p.420.

VIRGINIA – *Rev. Code*. Any emancipated slave remaining in the state more than a year, may be sold by the overseer of the poor, for the benefit of the literary fund. Vol. 1, p.436.

Any slave or free coloured person found at any school for teaching, reading or writing, by day or by night, may be whipped at the discretion of a justice of the court, not exceeding twenty lashes. p.424.

Sappl. Rev. Code. Any white person assembling with slaves, for the purpose of teaching them to read and write, shall be fined not less than 10 dollars, nor more than 100 dollars, or with free coloured persons, shall be fined not more than fifty dollars, and be imprisoned not less than two months. p.245.

By the revised code, seventy-one offences are punished with death, when committed by slaves; and nothing more than imprisonment, when by the whites.

MARYLAND. Stat. Law sect. 8. – Any slave for rambling in the night or riding horses by day without leave, or running away, may be punished by whipping, cropping, or branding in the cheek, or otherwise, not rendering him unfit for labour. p.321.

Any slave convicted of petty treason, murder, or wilful burning of dwelling houses, may be sentenced to have his right hand cut off, to be hanged in the usual manner, the head severed from the body, the body divided into four quarters, and the head and quarters set up in the most public place, in the county where such act was committed! p.190.

DELAWARE – Laws. More than six men slaves, meeting together, not belonging to one master, may be whipped to the extent of twenty-one lashes each. p.104.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. – The act of Congress incorporating Washington city, gives the corporation power to prescribe the terms and conditions on which free negros and mullatos may reside in the city. City Laws, 6 and 11. By this authority, the city, in 1827, enacted that any free coloured person coming there to reside, should

give satisfactory evidence of his freedom, and enter into bond, with two freehold sureties, in the sum of 500 dollars, for his good conduct to be repeated every year, for three years; or failing to do so, must leave the city, or be committed to the work-house, for not more than one year, and if he still refuses to go, may be committed for the same period, and so on. *Ib.* 198.

Coloured persons found without free papers about them, may be arrested as run-away slaves, and after two months notice, if no claimant appear, must be advertised ten days and sold to pay their goal fees. *f.* Stroud. 85. note.

Coloured persons residing in the city, who cannot prove their title to freedom, shall be imprisoned as absconding slaves. *Ib.* 198.*

The city of Washington grants a license, to trade in slaves, for profit, as agent or otherwise, for 400 dollars. City Laws, p.249.

d. By the operation of this provision, twelve slave-holding States, whose white population only equals that of New York and Ohio, send to Congress twenty-four senators, and 102 representatives, while these two states only send four senators, and fifty-nine representatives.

e. Thus it may be seen that a man may be doomed to slavery by one authority sufficient to settle a claim of twenty dollars.

f. The prisons of the district, built with the money of the nation, are used as store-houses of the slaveholders human merchandise. From the statement of a keeper of a jail in Washington, it appears that in five years, upwards of 450 coloured persons were committed to the national prison of that city, for safe keeping; i.e. until they could be disposed of in the course of the slave trade, besides nearly 390 who had been taken up as runaways. Miner's speech in H. Rep. in 1829.

NORTH CAROLINA – *Heywood's Manual* Act of 1798, sec. 3. Enacts that killing a slave shall be punished like that of a freeman, except on a slave outlaws *a.* or a slave offering resistance to his master, or a slave dying under moderate correction. p.530.

Act of 1799. Any slave set free except for meritorious services, to be adjudged of by the county court, may be seized by any freeholder, committed to jail, and sold to the highest bidder. p.525.

Patrols are not liable to the master for punishing his slaves, unless their conduct clearly shows malice against the master. *Hawk's Reps.* Vol. 1, p.41.

CATHRALL & CO., PRINTERS, DUCIE-ST., MANCHESTER.

Notes

1. Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones, *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley or William Jones* is held in the collections located in Manchester Central Library, Manchester, England. Reference: GB127.Tracts/H.186.3.

* A Slave may be outlawed when he runs away, conceals himself, and, to sustain life, kills a hog, or any animal of the cattle kind. – *Haywood's Manual*, p.588. In South Carolina, any person may seize such freed man, and keep him as his property. [Author note]

2. See Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, p.20. Patrick Henry (1736–1799) was a white U.S. enslaver, politician, and Founding Father of the nation. In the fight for national independence from Britain, Henry famously declared, ‘Give me liberty, or give me death!’
3. See Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, Auburn NY: W. J. Moses, 1869, p.20.
4. The Chesapeake Bay is an estuary located in the state of Maryland.
5. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of proslavery legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all ‘fugitive’ persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
6. Prince Frederick is an area located in Calvert County, Maryland.



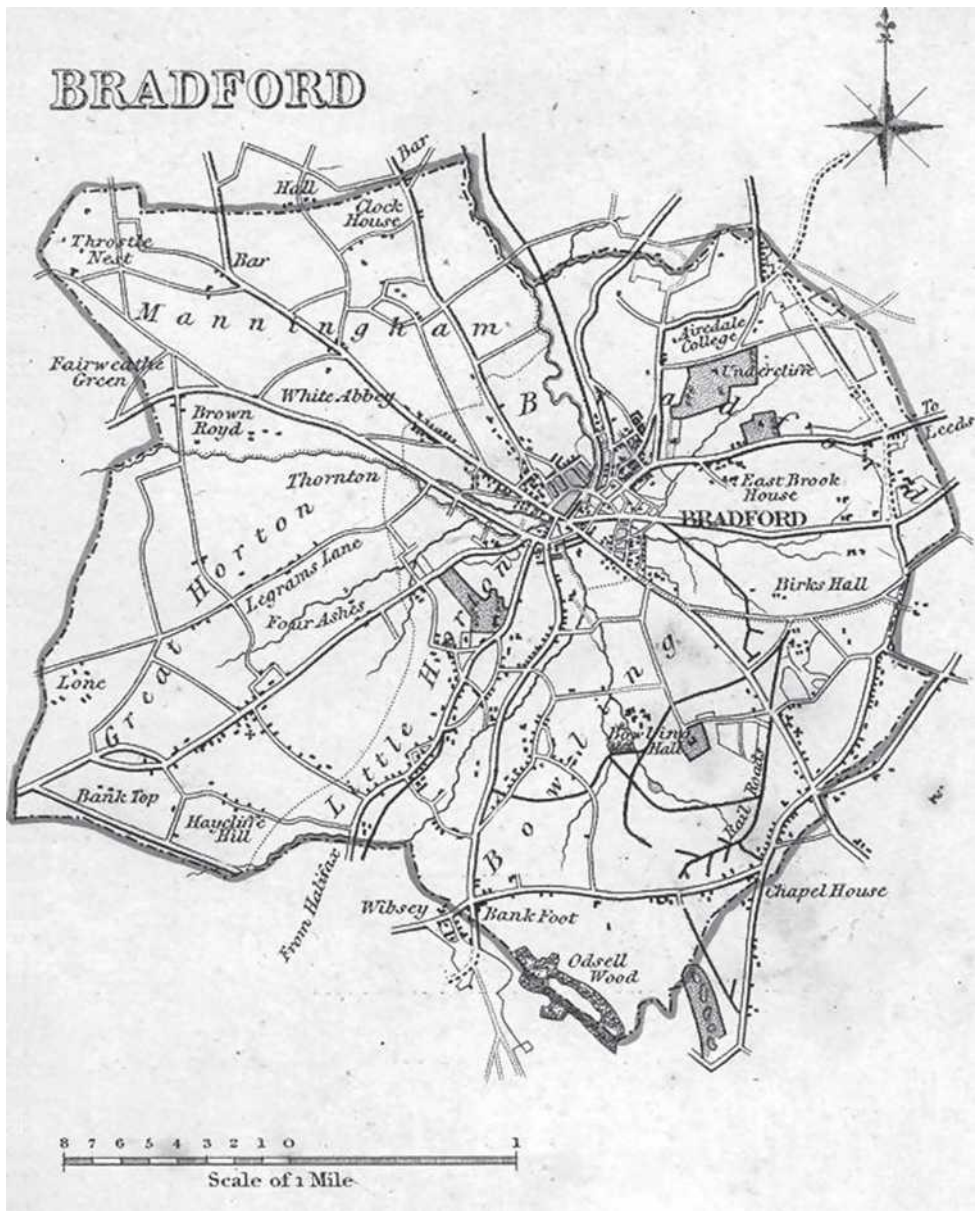


Figure 22 Map of Bradford, England, by Robert Creighton, 1835, engraved by J. & C. Walker for Samuel Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary*. (Wikimedia Commons.)

JOHN HART

(DATES UNKNOWN)

5 Anon., *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave*.
Bradford: Joseph Bentley, n.d. [after 1855].¹

Biographical History

BEYOND THE PAGES of his narrative, very little biographical information survives on the life and works of John Hart. Authored in the first person, *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* was published in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, by Joseph Bentley, a white British publisher about whom research is still ongoing.

As of our writing, it is impossible to shed any light on the processes of this narrative's production. Instead, we are left with many unanswered questions. While the text is written in the first person, was it written by Hart himself? Not only is it the case that his title omits the phrase, 'Written by Himself' – the all-important declaration of authorship that was a first priority for all enslaved authors fighting for agency against the racist limitations imposed by white abolitionist demands – but he also choose to include no account of his acquisition of literacy. No less revealingly, he makes no reference to a collaborator and/or possible author.

Another possibility yet to be explored is the question concerning whether his testimony may have originated as a transcription of a speech he delivered at an unrecorded location on an unknown date. Another possibility is that this text may well have been the result of a first-person interview with an anonymous interviewer of as yet unknown race, gender, or nationality. If so, there is currently no way of establishing the nature of this potential, yet so far impossible to prove, collaboration between John Hart and an unknown amanuensis.

On the frontispiece, the author and/or publisher have made the powerful decision to reproduce a generic woodcut image showing a standing, almost entirely naked man tied by ropes to a wooden post. Inarguably, this figure whose facial features are indecipherable and almost entirely invisible was intended to embody the 'sufferings' of John Hart. A clothed figure with scarcely more discernible features stands over him and brandishes a whip as he is in the diabolical act of committing horrifying violence against John Hart's body. The subtitle to *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* is inserted immediately beneath this image and functions as a revealing description of

its traumatising content by explaining as follows: 'Showing how he was stolen with his mother and sister by the Spaniards – how they were sold for slaves, and the dreadful sufferings they endured, together with the horrid tortures the slaves undergo in the United States of America.' Here the emphasis is not only upon the 'dreadful sufferings' in slavery, as directly experienced by John Hart and his 'mother and sister', but upon the 'horrid tortures' the 'slaves undergo'. For this reason, the woodcut image of a non-identifiable John Hart and his generic murderous and persecutory enslaver guarantee their representative status as political weapons evidencing the atrocities and traumas experienced not by one but by untold millions of enslaved families.

Born in Sierra Leone on the south-west coast of Africa, John Hart informs his readers that 'I was stolen by a company of Spaniards, and taken to Charlestown, South Carolina, together with my mother and sister.' As a family who was 'stolen' from Sierra Leone, Hart and his family endure the unspeakable tragedies of the Middle Passage: the traumatising and horrifying experience endured by millions of enslaved people who were kidnapped and incarcerated on board ships owned by European enslavers and forcibly transported from Africa to the Americas in unimaginably inhumane conditions over the centuries.

In his narrative, Hart relies on a graphic use of language to narrate his personal experiences on the 'whipping post, where I received 36 lashes, and my body was afterwards washed in salt and water'. He also does hard-hitting justice to his sense of powerlessness in being unable to protect his mother who was 'tied to the whipping post and severely flogged, receiving from 36 to 50 lashes'. In these pages, Hart is candid regarding the terrible pain he experienced in his family's separation. While he writes 'My sister was left in the market place to be sold, but I never knew who bought her', he confides the devastating experiences suffered by his mother by remembering, 'she was again severely flogged, and afterwards taken to the Richmond market and sold'. For Hart, Black female subjugation operates as the catalyst to Black male liberation. As he confirms, it was the loss of his mother that was the stimulus to his own acts of self-liberation: 'Being parted from my mother, I formed the idea of running away from my master.'

In no way defeated by the innumerable atrocities he experienced at the hands of his white enslavers as punishment for his repeated attempts at 'running away', Hart eventually secures his liberty and reaches a free Black community in New York. Living 'among the free blacks' for the first time, he obtains the vital information he needs to secure his long-term liberties: 'they told me if I would run away from my master, they would get me a berth on board a vessel, that I might come to England, and be a free man'. Benefiting from long and widely established Black transatlantic 'networks to freedom', the unknown author records that Hart immediately 'embraced the opportunity, and got a situation, as cook on board the "*Ann Johnson*," and landed at Liverpool three years ago.'²

Ultimately, *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* leaves us with more questions than answers. In this work, Hart includes a final section titled, 'Description of American Slavery', in which he or his interviewer, his amanuensis, or his publisher have made the decision to copy verbatim, and with no acknowledgement or citation, whole passages from two works: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855). Both of these world-renowned narratives were authored by none other than Frederick Douglass, the most

famous self-liberated author, freedom fighter, and philosopher in US and transatlantic history (see *Speeches*, 'Frederick Douglass', Speech Nos 21–23). As best-selling works widely celebrated in their own time and read by audiences in Britain, Ireland, and the US in their thousands, the reasons behind Hart's or his author's or his publisher's decision to reproduce whole sections of Douglass' writings requires further investigation. He or the unknown author or his publisher undertake to include these passages from Douglass' texts in their entirety but with some significant minor amendments and omissions concerning the replacement and removal of specific names and regions. This decision offers yet further confirmation of their deliberate intention to remove any and all specific names and geographical locations that might run the risk of giving away the identity of the world-famous author who originally wrote these words. While research into these key questions is ongoing, the fact that this narrative reproduces Douglass' works makes it possible for us to date this work to 'after 1855'.

Ultimately, the powerful reality that the *Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* owes a self-evident yet unacknowledged literary debt to the *Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* is a hard-hitting testament to the tangled skeins of centuries of African American narrative creation, production, and dissemination that are still to be fully explored, fully understood, and fully respected.

Further Reading

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THE LIFE AND SUFFERINGS OF JOHN HART, AN AMERICAN SLAVE³

Showing how he was stolen with his mother and sister by the Spaniards – how they were sold for slaves, and the dreadful sufferings they endured, together with the horrid tortures the slaves undergo in the United States of America.

LIFE OF JOHN HART.

I was born at Sierra Leone,⁴ from which place I was stolen by a company of Spaniards, and taken to Charlestown, South Carolina, together with my mother and sister. After being landed, we were taken to the cattle-market and sold by public auction: my mother and I were bought by a man named W. Danbridge, Esq. My sister was left in the market place to be sold, but I never knew who bought her.

After my mother and I were sold, we remained at Charlestown for two months, when we were sent to my sister's son, at Richmond, in Virginia. I was taken into the house of my master as servant; and my mother was turned out to work on the plantation. She being old and infirm, was unable to do as much work in the day as some of the young slaves that were out in the field at work with her, she was therefore tied to the whipping post and severely flogged, receiving from 36 to 50 lashes; her back was afterwards washed with salt and water, a method used in that country to prevent the flies sticking to the backs of the slaves after they have been flogged. Hearing of the above, I went to my master and begged of him to let me go and work in the fields, in order that I might help my mother as much as lay in my power; for that offense my master ordered me to the whipping post, where I received 36 lashes, and my body was afterwards washed in salt and water. My mother was again turned out to work, and being unable to perform her regular day's work, she was again severely flogged, and afterwards taken to the Richmond market and sold. From that time I never knew what became of her.

Being parted from my mother, I formed the idea of running away from my master. Accordingly, as my master and mistress were sleeping one night, I went and got as much provisions as I could get away with conveniently, and started off, on the road to Philadelphia. After travelling for several days, I lay myself down to sleep by the roadside, I had not been long there before I was overtaken by five negro hunters, men that are employed to catch slaves who run away. They asked me what my master's name was, where I lived, and where I was going? I was compelled to tell them; for a man that is a slave there, is not allowed to go any great distance from his master's plantation, unless he has a free pass. Having no pass to show them, they conveyed me to Petersburg⁵ gaol, and put me in irons. After having examined me and found my master's private mark, a letter having been sent to my late master. I was taken back to the plantation I had run away from at Richmond, when my master ordered up the rest of the slaves to see me punished for absconding, and I

then received 393 lashes. I was then again put into irons, and sent to New Orleans to work in the chain gang, in the common sewer in the city, a place that runs under the streets to drain off the filth and the dirt. I remained there upwards of twelve months, with an iron band round my waist, with a chain and ball attached, weighing 36 pounds, I was taken and put on the jetty, where I worked for six months.

My master ordered me to be brought back to the plantation at Richmond, and sent into a tobacco field to work. After being there for several months, my master asked me if I would be a dutiful servant, I promised him I would; he then took me back into the house as a servant. After being there but a short time, he was called on by some gentlemen to go to New York; when getting among the free blacks they told me if I would run away from my master, they would get me a berth on board a vessel, that I might come to England, and be a free man. I embraced the opportunity, and got a situation, as cook on board the '*Ann Johnson*,' and landed at Liverpool three years ago.

DESCRIPTION OF AMERICAN SLAVERY.

The bloodhound is regularly trained in the United States and advertisements are to be found in the Southern papers of the Union, from persons advertising themselves as bloodhound trainers, and offering to hunt down slaves at fifteen dollars a piece; recommending their hounds as the fastest in the neighbourhood, never known to fail. Advertisements are inserted stating that slaves have escaped with Iron collars about their necks, with bands of iron, about their feet, marked with the lash, branded with red hot irons – the initials of their master's name being burned in the flesh; the master advertises the fact of their being branded with their signature, thereby praying to the world, that however daring it may appear to non-slave owners, such practices are not regarded as discreditable among them. Why, I believe if a man should happen to brand his horse in this country; or burn the initials of his name into any of his cattle, and publish the horrid deed, that the united execrations of the christians of Britain would descend upon him. Yet, in the United States, human beings are thus branded.⁶ Some of the most awful scenes are constantly taking place in the middle States of the Union. We have in those States what are called 'the Slave breeding States.' Allow me to speak plainly, although it is harrowing to the feeling, it is necessary that the case should be stated. There are States where men, women, and children, are reared for the market, as horses, sheep, and swine. Slave rearing there, is looked upon as a legitimate trade, – the law sanctions it, – public opinion upholds it – the church does not condemn it.⁷

My master had on the home estates 300 or 400 slaves; and on the plantations a much large number. This was the principal place for business, and the seat of government for the settlement of disputes, between the overseers. If a slave was convicted of a misdemeanor, or become unmanageable, or detected in the attempt to run away, he is brought here to be whipped, or sold to some of the traders that come alone to buy up negroes as a warning to the other slaves. The slaves from all other plantations receive from here there monthly allowance of good, and their yearly clothing.⁸

FRIENDS,

I have stated that I come from Sierra Leone, but⁹ I have no accurate knowledge concerning it; by far the large part of the slaves know as little of their age or parentage

as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters in my knowledge, to keep their slaves thus ignorant, I do not remember to have ever met a slave who call tell his birth day, they seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, spring-time, or fall-time; a want of information concerning my own age was a source of unhappiness to me, even during childhood, the white children could tell their ages; I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege; I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master, he deemed all such on the part of a slave improper and impertinent.¹⁰

So profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery are many persons, that they are stubbornly incredulous whenever they read or listen to any recital of the cruelties which are daily inflicted on its victim. They do not deny that the slaves are held as property; but that terrible fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure to outrage or savage barbarity. Tell them of cruel scourgings, of mutilations, and of branding; of scenes of pollution and blood; of the banishment of all light and knowledge; and they affect to be greatly indignant at such enormous exaggeration – such wholesale mis-statements – such abominable libels of the character of the Southern Planters; – as if these direful outrages were not the natural result of slavery; as if it was less cruel to reduce a human being to the condition of a thing than to give him a severe flagellation, or to deprive him of necessary food and clothing; – as if whips, chains, thumb screws, padlocks, bloodhounds, overseers, drivers, patrols, were not all indispensable to keep the slaves down, and to give protection to their ruthless oppressor: – as if, when the marriage institution is abolished, concubinage, adultery, and incest, must not necessarily abound; as if, when all the rights of humanity are annihilated, any barrier remains to protect the victim from the fury of the spoiler; – as if, when absolute power is assumed over life and liberty, it will not be wielded with destructive sway.¹¹

It is a common custom in that part of America¹² from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age; before the child has reached twelve months, its mother is taken away from it and hired out to some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labour. For what purpose this preparation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection towards its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child.¹³

This is the inevitable result. The Washington plantation will give you some description of it, and of slavery as it there existed; this plantation is a mile from Richmond. The principal produce raised upon it were tobacco, corn, and wheat.¹⁴ This plantation was under the overseership of a man named Jackson. The overseer of this and all the rest of the plantations belonging to my master, numbering 10, requiring all the pens of the managers of the town plantations; this was the great business place: it was the seat of government of the whole 10 farms, all the disputes for the overseers were settled here. If a slave was convicted of any high misdemeanor, become unmanageable, or evinced a determination of running away, he was brought here, and, after being whipped, he was sold to some of the Georgia Traders, as a warning to the slaves remaining here, and to the slaves of all the other farms. Who have seen what was their monthly allowance of food; there was not beds given to slaves unless a miserable¹⁵ blanket be considered such, this however is not considered a great privation. They find less difficulty in the want of beds than from the want of

sleep. For when their day's work is done in the field, the most of them having their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and have few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing these things. Very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day. When this is done, old and young, male and female, drop down side by side on one common bed the cold damp floor, each one covering him or herself with his or her miserable blanket, there they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver's horn, when they must be no halting, every one must be at his or her post, and woe betides them who hear not this morning summons to the field. For if they are not awakened by the sense of hearing, they are by the sense of feeling – no age or sex finds favour.¹⁶

The Washington plantation wears the appearance of a country village, all the mechanical business for the farms was performed here. The shoemaking and mending, the blacksmith work, cartwrighting, coopering, weaving, and grain grinding, were all performed by the slaves on the home plantation. The whole place wore a business-like aspect, very unlike the neighbouring farms. Few privileges were esteemed higher by the slaves of the out farms, than that of being selected to do errands at the great house farm; – it was associated in their mind with greatness. A representative could not be prouder of his election to a seat in the American Congress than a slave would be of his election to do errand at the great house farm. They regarded it as evidence of great confidence reposed in them by their overseers, and it was on this account, as well as a constant desire to be out of the field from under the driver's lash, that they esteemed it a high privilege – one worth living for. He was called the smartest and most trusty fellow who had this honour conferred upon him the most frequently. The competitors for this office sought as diligently to please their overseers as the office seekers in political parties seek to please and deceive the people. The same traits of character might be seen on the plantation as are seen in the slaves of political parties. The slaves selected to go to the great house farm for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow slaves were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way they would make the dense old woods ring with their wild song, revealing the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting on neither time nor tune, the thought that came up came out, if not in the word, in the sound, and as frequently in the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone. In to all their songs, they would manage to weave something of the great house farm.¹⁷

Sold by Joseph Bentley, 48, Market, Street, Bradford, Yorks.

Notes

1. A surviving original copy of *The Life and Sufferings of John Hart, An American Slave* is held in the Rare Books collection located at the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Reference: E.444.L544.
2. For further information on nineteenth-century African American systems of liberation see 'National Underground Railroad network to freedom', US National Park Service, available at: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1205/index.htm>
3. Here an image is inserted showing the generic figures of a person tied to a post and a person wielding a whip.

4. Sierra Leone, present day Republic of Sierra Leone, is a country located on the south-west coast of western Africa.
5. Very likely he is referring to a penitentiary located in Petersburg, Pennsylvania.
6. In these sentences, Hart is continuing to quote – with some omissions and adaptations – from the following passage Frederick Douglass included in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1855). Douglass' original passage reads as follows: 'The blood-hound is regularly trained in the United States, and advertisements are to be found in the southern papers of the Union, from persons advertising themselves as blood-hound trainers, and offering to hunt down slaves at fifteen dollars a piece, recommending their hounds as the fleetest in the neighborhood, never known to fail. Advertisements are from time to time inserted, stating that slaves have escaped with iron collars about their necks, with bands of iron about their feet, marked with the lash, branded with red-hot irons, the initials of their master's name burned into their flesh; and the masters advertise the fact of their being thus branded with their own signature, thereby proving to the world, that, however damning it may appear to non-slaveholders, such practices are not regarded discreditable among the slaveholders themselves. Why, I believe if a man should brand his horse in this country—burn the initials of his name into any of his cattle, and publish the ferocious deed here—that the united execrations of christians in Britain would descend upon him. Yet, in the United States, human beings are thus branded' (p.410).
7. In these sentences, Hart is continuing to quote – with some omissions and adaptations – from Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1855). Douglass' original passage reads as follows: 'Some of the most awful scenes of cruelty are constantly taking place in the middle states of the Union. We have in those states what are called the slave-breeding states. Allow me to speak plainly. Although it is harrowing to your feelings, it is necessary that the facts of the case should be stated. We have in the United States slave-breeding states. The very state from which the minister from our court to yours comes, is one of these states –Maryland, where men, women, and children are reared for the market, just as horses, sheep, and swine are raised for the market. Slave-rearing is there looked upon as a legitimate trade; the law sanctions it, public opinion upholds it, the church does not condemn it' (pp.411–412).
8. In this paragraph, Hart is quoting – with many minor edits and key omissions – from Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Boston: Antislavery Office, 1845): 'Colonel Lloyd kept from three to four hundred slaves on his home plantation, and owned a large number more on the neighboring farms belonging to him. The names of the farms nearest to the home plantation were Wye Town and New Design. "Wye Town" was under the overseership of a man named Noah Willis. New Design was under the overseership of a Mr. Townsend. The overseers of these, and all the rest of the farms, numbering over twenty, received advice and direction from the managers of the home plantation. This was the great business place. It was the seat of government for the whole twenty farms. All disputes among the overseers were settled here. If a slave was convicted of any high misdemeanor, became unmanageable, or evinced a determination to run away, he was brought immediately here, severely whipped, put on board the sloop, carried to Baltimore, and sold to Austin Woolfolk, or some other slave-trader, as a warning to the slaves remaining. Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing' (p.9ff.).
9. From this point onwards, Hart continues his unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.1ff.).
10. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.1ff.).

11. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.x.).
12. Here Hart changes Frederick Douglass' insertion of the word 'Maryland' for 'America'. See Douglass' *Narrative* (p.2).
13. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.2).
14. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.2 and p.8).
15. The word 'miserable' is 'coarse' in Douglass' *Narrative* (p.10).
16. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.9 and p.11).
17. All of this paragraph is unacknowledged quoting, with only very minor changes, of Douglass' *Narrative* (see p.12 and p.13). At the end of the narrative another image is inserted; this time the illustration shows a white woman carrying a sceptre and seated beside a lion: very likely a hagiographic and mythic symbol of the British nation as a nation of liberty. Nothing could have been further from the white supremacist and white racist reality.



THE NARRATIVE
OF
JOHN WILLIAMS,
A Negro;

SHOWING HOW HE MADE HIS
ESCAPE FROM NEW ORLEANS, IN AMERICA,
AND CAME TO ENGLAND,
WHERE HE LEARNED THAT
THE BLACK MAN HAS MANY KIND AND SYMPATHISING FRIENDS,
AND WHERE HE WAS INSTRUCTED IN
THE SAVING TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Once a Slave, a slave no longer,
Jesus Christ hath set me free;
He whose chords of love are stronger
Than the bonds of slavery—
He hath bought me, ransom paying
For my poor benighted soul;
His I am, His will obeying,
Subject unto his control.

CHATHAM:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR BY R. TAYLOR,
ALBION PRINTING OFFICE, 89, HIGH STREET.

1855.

Figure 23 Title page from John Williams, *Narrative of John Williams, A Negro*. Chatham, Kent: R. Taylor Albion, 1855. (The British Library Board, General Reference Collection, 10882.aaa.37.(2.).)

JOHN WILLIAMS

(DATES UNKNOWN)

6 John Williams, *Narrative of John Williams, A Negro*.
Chatham, Kent: R. Taylor Albion, 1855.¹

Biographical History

‘THE FOLLOWING IS a true narrative of my escape from Slavery; a simple statement of events exactly as they occurred’, so writes John Williams, a man who experienced enslavement in Louisiana, in the ‘preface’ to his autobiography, *Narrative of John Williams, A Negro*, published in Chatham, Kent, England, by R. Taylor Albion in 1855.

By this date, Williams had been living in England for sixteen years and the narrative’s publication – designed to memorialise his life history and financially support his young family – followed years of gruelling lecturing tours. From 1849, Williams, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to Black solidarity, kinship networks, and religious freedom, lectured alongside African American temperance campaigner and abolitionist, Benjamin Benson. Both men repeatedly spoke together on temperance, religious morality, and the evils of enslavement, with Williams often speaking first on his own experiences.² Audiences were ‘highly gratified’ at their addresses throughout the early 1850s, which were chiefly designed to support temperance causes. Both Williams and Benson discuss at length the correlation between white US barbaric enslavers who were alcoholics and repeatedly inebriated when they committed savage acts of murderous violence, sexual abuse, and inhumane torture against enslaved Black people of all genders and ages, and argued that abstinence would in part be a key factor resulting in the death knell of enslavement.³ Williams also spoke alone in South Molton in Devon, Ryde and Newport on the Isle of Wight, and around the county of Sussex between 1852 and 1854. According to the reporters summarising his speeches, he ‘gave an affecting account of the horrors of slavery, and much interested the audience by the details of his own escape’.⁴ At some point, Williams settled in Bristol, where he was employed by Counterslip Sugar Refinery for nearly two years. In the 1851 England Census, he was still living and working in Bristol as the guest of the Whitfield family and was working as a sugar refiner. In this census, he records his age at thirty-two, and instructed the clerk to record that he was born in New Orleans

but was a 'British subject'. Nowhere mentioned is the fact that he was born in enslavement, clearly a specific decision made by Williams; with no accurate knowledge of his birth, tragically the '32' was his best guess at his age.

Between 1851 and 1855, suffering from financial hardship, Williams – together with his wife and three children – received help from the white-led Ladies' Society to Aid Fugitives from Slavery, which noted in its annual report for 1855 that Williams was 'accidentally disabled' and was thus 'unequal to bodily labour', so donations of £26 were raised to send him and his family to Canada. His former employers at the Refinery also contributed a £5 donation.⁵ In 1857, fellow freedom fighter Francis Anderson – who had been living in Canada and was also assisted by the Society – reported that Williams was living in Chatham, Canada, and 'that he was doing well'.

While Williams was at pains to reassure his readers regarding the veracity of his personal history in his *Narrative* he published a few years later in 1855, he was equally determined to defend his rights as the sole *author* of the narrative of his life. Liberated from the very real difficulties presented by having no choice but to rely on a white amanuensis or interviewer, as a writer himself Williams experienced less of the challenges endured by many of the self-liberated women and men whose personal histories are included in this anthology and who had to fight against all the odds to memorialise their life stories in print.

'Nothing is here set down to heighten the interest of the story, and I wish my readers to understand, at the outset, that I have no strange and wonderful adventures to relate', declares Williams. Laying bare his refusal to pander to white audiences' desires to be entertained, he issues a powerful declaration of authorial independence against white nefarious tendencies toward commodifying, appropriating, and consuming Black narratives, histories, and memories. Shedding light on his social justice purpose for writing, he readily admits, 'I thought that others to whom I had no opportunity of speaking myself, might be also glad to learn how the poor black *chattel*, called TOBY, was by the providence of God, brought forth from the house of bondage, into the clear light of freedom and Christianity, and converted into the *man*, John Williams.'

For Williams, as for the majority of the writers and orators in this book, a determination to represent his transformation from a 'chattel' into a 'man' was a first intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and political priority. At the same time, Williams made the decision to publish his story from practical reasons as he laboured 'with the hope that I might be aided by the profits of the sale, in my efforts to support myself, my wife, and three children, in a useful, honest and respectable way'. Ultimately, for Williams, as for the vast majority of African American writers publishing their personal lives during this period, authorship was activism as he and they wrote their autobiographies to support and safeguard the survival of their families.

'My parents were of pure African blood; I never heard their names, nor do I know the year in which I was born', declares Williams. Denouncing the inhumanity of enslavement which purposefully eradicated all trace and destroyed all records of Black lives, he informs his readers, 'there is no registry of the birth of plantation slaves'. Williams does powerful justice to the unimaginable traumas experienced by enslaved children who are separated from their family members at a young age by bearing witness to his

own suffering. At 'about seven years old', he writes, 'my father was then taken from us and sold, but where he went to we never heard, nor do we now know whether he is alive or dead'. As he sorrowfully remembers, 'I had several sisters and brothers, but never saw but one, a dear sister', poignantly recalling, 'the others were all sold, and sent away from my mother before I was born'. As Williams sought to ensure the survival of his new family in freedom so he refused to forget the struggles and sacrifices of his family as devastated and torn apart by enslavement.

A life-giving source of hope in the face of ongoing existential despair, John Williams foregrounds the importance of Black storytelling traditions. Writing of 'my sister' who 'used frequently to talk to me about those dear relatives who had been sent she knew not where, to undergo all the trials and sufferings of a life of slavery', Williams does hard-hitting justice to his sister's importance as a griot and a keeper and guardian of family histories otherwise annihilated by inhumane bondage. Her importance in communicating the life stories of 'dear relatives' who did not make it to freedom but who endured all the 'trials and sufferings' of a 'life of slavery' is all the more powerful in the context of the tragedies of her own life. Bereft of any certain knowledge regarding her fate, Williams is left only with painful speculations. He writes, 'this sister' who had 'when I left, one child, quite an infant . . . perhaps even now is toiling in the cotton fields, under the hot sun of Louisiana'.

Working to 'give my readers but a faint idea of the cruelties practised on the bodies of the poor Negroes', Williams is candid regarding the physical violence he experienced in his own body. Writing of one especially traumatising physical assault he endured at the hands of his white enslavers he concedes, 'so severe was the beating which I received that the flesh was torn from my back, and for several days after I had to crawl to my labour on my hands and knees, with my back covered with flies'. A living testament to unimaginable acts of white persecutory violence, Williams' body is a site not only of violation but a carrier of memory as he confirms, 'I bear about me to this day the scars of this punishment.'

Despite such horrific bodily and mental scarring, Williams champions his own survival, demonstrated also through a powerful visual account of his liberation. Along with several enslaved comrades, Williams escapes a gaol and attempts to find some white British sailors anchored offshore who had promised to aid him in his self-liberation. He writes of the living nightmare of floating on a plank of wood in complete darkness, surrounded by the lost voices of his comrades, bloodhounds and bloodthirsty white men who were sent to catch him, and even alligators who may have claimed the life of his friend Caesar and lay in wait to take his own. Unlike many of the narrators and orators in this book for whom the North Star was a guiding light, for Williams the shining stars only reflect back his own terror, as the glimmering shapes symbolise the 'glaring eyes' of other monsters, men or beasts. By painstakingly writing not only of his own struggle for liberty but of the experiences of Caesar, he pays tribute to and memorialises fellow Black revolutionaries who made the brave decision to secure his liberation, and who may have died in their quest for freedom, but who have left no trace in the written record.

In the pages of his narrative, Williams does powerful justice not only to his own physical and mental pain but to the bodily violence suffered by many more enslaved

people. These include the atrocities experienced by a woman named 'Old Nab'. Living her life in courageous defiance of her white enslavers, Williams remembers that she 'would pray' despite their protestations against her right to a spiritual life and a relationship with God. Suffering tragic and terrible consequences as a result, she was not only tortured and persecuted as a 'refractory slave', but 'she died under the lash, suspended like a martyr to the cross'. As Jesus died for the sins of his persecutors only to be reborn into sainthood, so 'Old Nab' was crucified at the hands of white murderers to experience rebirth as a spiritual 'martyr' in the ongoing fight for equal human rights.

Living and working as a social justice campaigner and lecturer in the UK following his self-liberation from enslavement, Williams expresses his heartfelt gratitude not only for his survival but for being able to do all that 'lies in my power to advance the cause of religion and morality'. Working tirelessly in the antislavery struggle, he turns to the centuries-long history of the transatlantic abolitionist movement as a source of hope by celebrating the fact that, 'Earnest efforts have been, and are being made, both here and in America, for the liberation of these poor slaves.' 'I pray God they may be successful', he informs his readers.

As a man who 'often' thought of 'my mother and sisters' still living in enslavement, Williams ends his life story by returning to his first-hand experiences of violence and suffering as a means to add yet further powerful weight to his emotionally charged declaration that, 'I know full well what American Slavery means, and would not return to it for one year, though I knew, at the end of that time, I should be seated upon a throne.'

Further Reading

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Narrative of John Williams,
A NEGRO;
SHOWING HOW HE MADE HIS
ESCAPE FROM NEW ORLEANS, IN AMERICA,
AND CAME TO ENGLAND,
WHERE HE LEARNED THAT
THE BLACK MAN HAS MANY KIND AND SYMPATHISING FRIENDS,
AND WHERE HE WAS INSTRUCTED IN
THE SAVING TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY⁶

PRICE SIXPENCE

CHATHAM
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR BY R. TAYLOR
ALBION PRINTING OFFICE, 89, HIGH STREET
1855

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Once a Slave, a slave no longer,
Jesus Christ hath set me free;
He whose chords of love are stronger
Than the bonds of slavery –
He hath bought me, ransom paying
For my poor benighted soul;
His I am, His will obeying,
Subject unto his control.

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PREFACE

The following is a true narrative of my escape from Slavery; a simple statement of events exactly as they occurred. Nothing is here set down to heighten the interest of the story, and I wish my readers to understand, at the outset, that I have no strange and wonderful adventures to relate. Then why, it may be asked, did I publish this narrative? Because, I reply, those to whom I have related the incidents of my past life, seemed pleased and interested, and I thought that others to whom I had no opportunity of speaking myself, might be also glad to learn how the poor black *chattel*, called TOBY, was by the providence of God, brought forth from the house of bondage, into the clear light of freedom and Christianity, and converted into the *man*, John Williams.

It was also in accordance with the advice of a good friend, who undertook to prepare my narrative for the press, that I determined on publishing it, with the hope that I might be aided by the profits of the sale, in my efforts to support myself, my wife, and three children, in a useful, honest and respectable way. In the Schools and Christian Congregations, and other Public Assemblies which I am accustomed to address, in my humble way, there are, I feel assured, very many who would gladly purchase at a trifling cost, a book like this, not only for the sake of that it contains, but also for the pleasure of rendering assistance to a struggling man, who is doing his best to prove that he is truly grateful for all kindness shown to him, and sensible of the inestimable blessings of freedom and Christian fellowship.

J.W.⁷

NARRATIVE OF JOHN WILLIAMS

I was born a slave on the estate of Joseph Baptiste, a large cotton planter, whose land bordered on the Mississippi river, and was distant from the city of New Orleans about fifteen miles. My parents were of pure African blood; I never heard their names, nor do I know the year in which I was born; there is no registry of the birth of plantation slaves, or, as they are generally called, ‘bush negroes;’ they are considered and treated like cattle, and the birth or death of one of them would scarcely be thought so much of as that of a dog or a horse. I was brought up with my mother until I was, as I should judge, about seven years old, until which time my father and mother lived together; my father was then taken from us and sold, but where he went to we never heard, nor do we now know whether he is alive or dead. I had several sisters and brothers, but never saw but one, a dear sister; the others were all sold, and sent away from my mother before I was born. My sister, who remained on the estate, might be about four and twenty years old, and she used frequently to talk to me about those dear relatives who had been sent she knew not where, to undergo all the trials and sufferings of a life of slavery; this sister, who perhaps even now is toiling in the cotton fields, under the hot sun of Louisiana, had, when I left, one child, quite an infant. When I was about ten or twelve years old, the heaviest blow fell upon me of which my slave-life affords any recollection. This was my separation from my dear mother, who was also sold. The last time I saw her, she was standing outside of the plantation, with a number of other slaves, chained together, ready to be marched off to the market: until that moment I had no idea of losing this beloved parent. I saw my sister crying, and asked her what ailed her; for some time she could not reply for her sobs, at length she said, ‘Mother is

gone away,' and pointed to the group on the other side of the fence. I attempted to make my way towards my mother, when the driver, who saw me coming, bade me go back, and seeing that I did not obey him, but endeavoured to run on, gave me a blow with the butt end of his heavy whip which rendered me senseless for some time, so that I lay like one dead. I just remember seeing a hand wave, which I fully believed was my mother's, and this was all the parting we had. When I recovered my senses, my sister was standing by me, weeping bitterly over this double grief, my suffering and the loss of our mother. She urged me to go back to the spot where we were labouring, but with the natural instinct of a child, I determined if possible to follow my lost parent, and set off to do so; seeing which the driver laid hold of me, and commenced flogging both me and my sister cruelly with the cow hide; so severe was the beating which I received that the flesh was torn from my back, and for several days after I had to crawl to my labour on my hands and knees, with my back covered with flies. I bear about me to this day the scars of this punishment, and the mark of the blow between the eyes, which first rendered me senseless. This will give my readers but a faint idea of the cruelties practised on the bodies of the poor Negroes. Before I left the plantation, I was an unwilling witness of many painful scenes of this character: one of these I will now relate. There was on the estate an old Negress very much advanced in years, and very infirm. Master bought her with a lot of other slaves, intending to sell her again, but being so old he could get no bidding for her, and so being obliged to keep her, he sent her to the estate to end her days. The name that was given to her was 'Old Nab,' why I do not know; all slaves are distinguished by some nick-name, and this was hers. To make the poor old creature in some degree useful, she was driven into the field with the rest. She used to sit down with her back against the fence, and there remain separating the fibres of Cotton from morning till night, being supplied by children, or, as the planters call them, 'the young stock.' When our Saviour said – 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;'⁸ did he not include in the invitation this 'young stock,' I wonder? But planters and 'nigger drivers' know little about the precepts and examples of the Gospel, and so they look upon these young negroes as so many soulless brutes; and speak of them as 'stock.' Indeed, they frequently tell the victims of their cruelty that they have no souls; they never acknowledge the existence of this immortal principle in the negro, for fear he should become aware of the truth, that he, as well as the white man, is entitled to the blessed privileges purchased by our Saviour's blood. But let us return to poor 'old Nab.' When the driver sounded the horn, we all had to turn out as quickly as we could, and this feeble old creature was of course generally last. Our sleeping place was merely a shed, or 'harvel,' as it was called, open at one side to the weather; and here we lay huddled together like so many brute creatures, upon such bits of sacking and refuse cotton as we could pick up. Altogether our penn⁹ was very much like a dog kennel, a square enclosure, with a gate in front, and high palings which also extended down each side, until they met the covered portion where we slept. This gate was fastened at night, and opened in the morning by the driver, who generally walked through the yard into the shed, to see that we turned out quickly; and his anger was excited by seeing our old companion, instead of hastening out with the rest, kneel down in a corner, and make what appeared to us Negroes very strange motions. We none of us knew then, although, I thank His goodness and mercy, that I have come to the knowledge since, that there was a God and Father in heaven to pray to. And this poor old woman had been taught to pray, most likely by some good

missionaries, and it was a comfort in her affliction to be able to offer supplications, and to pour out her griefs to One who never turns a deaf ear even to the lowliest of His creatures. But what cared the brutal man for all this? even if he knew the poor slave was praying, which is very doubtful; he roughly bade her get up and not waste time in that way, threatening to punish her if he saw her doing so again. The act was repeated, and then the *cow hide* fell upon those aged shoulders, and that back, bent with the weight of years, till the flesh quivered again, and the poor soul groaned and writhed with anguish. Several times was this punishment inflicted but all without effect. Old Nab would pray, notwithstanding the cursing, and swearing, and *cow hide* of the driver, and so she was reported to the steward of the estate; and he, whom we may suppose to be an enlightened, educated and Christian man, ordered her to – what, think you? Worship God unmolested in the best manner she was able? No, he ordered her, as a refractory slave, to be sent to New Orleans, there to receive at the public whipping post *nine hundred* lashes, at the rate of one hundred every other day, as he was fearful that her weak frame would not otherwise endure the dreadful punishment. And then she was – that poor old trembling creature, who for all her weakness would not cease praying to God, – had up and flogged, till the flesh flew from her quivering back, and the blood ran down in streams. But poor old Nab only received a third portion of her punishment; twice was she brought up and taken back again with some sparks of life in her agonized frame, but the third time was the last of her suffering; she died under the lash, suspended like a martyr to the cross. And the driver who went into the city on each day of punishment to see it inflicted, came back and told us with brutal laughter, how he had then left the old black –, calling her by a name I would rather not repeat – hanging dead, and threatening us, with dreadful oaths, that we should be served the same, if we did not mind what we were about.* I would say here a few words about this driver: he was a Portuguese, and one of the worse men that ever had power over the poor negroes. He was much addicted to cursing and swearing, and never seemed so well pleased as when he was torturing the poor slaves, who trembled at the sound of his voice. Not to speak of common humanity, he seemed to be quite devoid of natural affection for his own children, of whom he had three by a negro woman, who was a domestic servant in Mr. Baptiste's house. Two of these children, one a pretty curly-headed girl, whose age might be about six years and a half, and the other a boy two years older, I saw sent off with a drove of slaves to the market; the father left the estate with them in the morning and returned without them in time to lock us up for the night: he did not manifest any particular emotion at parting with his children, that we saw, and his manner during that and the following day, was as if nothing particular had occurred.

* Of the cruel punishments inflicted on Slaves, I might say a great deal; but I prefer confining myself to what has come under my own observation. I cannot say that I saw any other instrument of torture than the *cow hide* used upon our plantation, although I have heard of several others; among them was the paddle, a flat heavy piece of wood, in shape somewhat like a cricket bat, perforated with holes, through which the blood spirts up at every blow that is struck upon some fleshy part of the victim of cruelty; who, to render him more helpless, and to increase his sufferings, is tied and doubled up something like a trussed fowl, as presented in the cut. [Author Note]

The cruel death of poor old Nab did not seem to make much impression on the minds of the slaves, it was talked of for a little while, as a matter of course, and now and then alluded to by the driver, when he threatened others with similar punishment. Soon after this, I thank the Lord, I was enabled to effect my escape from this gloomy house of bondage; and this is how I managed it. The sickly season in New Orleans occurs in about the months of June and July; then it is that the yellow fever is prevalent, and works with deadliest effect upon white people, and those who are not used to the climate. At this time of the year the¹⁰ slave owners send drafts of negroes into the city to do the necessary work of loading and unloading the ships at the wharves, &c; I then, a young man of about 17 or 18 years old as I suppose, was included in one of these drafts from our estate, and set to work to help load with cotton the ship which was destined, I little thought so then, to bring me to this free land of Britain. It was my part of the duty to roll the bales of cotton down from the press yard where it is packed for shipment, on to the stage which projected from the side of the river over the water. The mate of the vessel which we were engaged in loading was a reformed drunkard, who through the grace of God had been brought to see the error of his ways. With spiritual enlightenment came, as it ever does, love for his fellow creatures, and he was filled with grief at the wretched and degraded condition of his sable brethren: he took every opportunity of conversing with us, and seems to have determined in assisting us, if possible in effecting our escape. To carry out such a design he was obliged to proceed with great caution, for had it been known, he would have been liable to a fine and imprisonment, if not heavier punishment, by the slave laws; and the captain of the ship and all the crew would have got into great difficulty. My notice was first attracted to this good man by seeing him actually shed tears when the market boats came down the Mississippi from Virginia and Alabama, laden with slaves for the New Orleans market. He stood and watched them coming up from the river handcuffed together, two and two, and every now and then he wiped the tears from his eyes, and shook his head, as much as to say – this is too bad! More particularly was his emotion manifested when the provision casks, in which the children had been packed for economy of space, were opened one after another, and the little negroes, some dead and some living, were taken out; the former were laid upon deck until sundown, when they were thrown overboard to be devoured by the Alligators and other destructive creatures which abound in the Mississippi. He used to stand and watch the chain gangs, too, who worked in large iron collars with three prongs sticking out, or dragging a heavy ball linked to the leg. Shortly after I had observed him doing this, he began to make opportunities of speaking to us privately, and by degrees he came to propose that we should try to get away to his ship, where he would endeavour to conceal us until she was quite clear from the land of America. We had many consultations among ourselves; some were too timid to make the attempt, others resolved to do so if they could get a chance; and many schemes were suggested and rejected as impracticable, our white friend all the while encouraging us, and advising us as well as he could without exciting suspicion; there were watchful eyes upon us, and we had to speak under our breath and keep our secret close, lest the driver of our draft, which consisted of about twelve young men and lads, should find it out; he was a white man of the city, and not nearly so brutal and cruel as the plantation driver. Besides him, there was there the *Stevedor*,¹¹ also a white man of the city, whose duty it was to superintend the whole of the Negroes employed in the loading of the ship. These men had sharp eyes, whenever

they looked at us we trembled, for they seemed to read the secret which we tried to hide within our bosoms. After a great deal of consultation among ourselves, it was at length determined by all our gang, to make the attempt to escape; we had several secret talks with our white friend, and in accordance with his advice, we allowed the ship to leave the leveé, or shore, and drop down to the lower bar, or Belize,¹² where the loading of all large vessels freighted at New Orleans is completed, the river near the city being too shallow to allow of those of deep draught taking in the whole of the cargo. Before leaving for the bar, the good mate, and some of the sailors, who were also interested in us, prepared several planks, which they conveyed to the shore, near the cotton-press yard, and left covered with mud and leaves, so as to conceal them, letting us know the exact spots where they could be found. These planks were intended as rafts for us to float down the river on, and to protect us against the attacks of alligators. Every night at sundown we were locked up in the cotton-press yard, and with us were many other negroes, some Domestic Slaves, some Market Slaves, that is, such as were taken from town to town, and offered in the public markets until they found purchasers; we plantation slaves were called Bush Negroes. I do not remember whether any of these former classes were concerned with us in the attempt to escape. I know that they rendered us assistance, as will be seen. It had been agreed between ourselves and our white friends, that on the night of the fifth or sixth day after the ship left the city, we should climb over the wall, and, taking to our planks, float down the river in the darkness, they promising to be on the look-out for us in the canoe, which they purchased for this purpose. Accordingly, as soon as the night set in, and all was quiet, we gathered together in the yard, and made our preparations for the great attempt; and now it was that some of our number grew faint-hearted, and drew back. The wall was high, perhaps fourteen feet, and without assistance it was clear that us lads could not climb over it; so we were obliged to tell some of the grown up domestic and market slaves of our intention, and to ask their help; at first they shook their heads and looked discouragingly, but after some talk among themselves in the African tongue, they resolved to assist us. We then went to the bottom of the yard, where the wall was lowest, and a tall man took up one of the least of us, named Caesar, and tried to push him up to the top; but he could not effect this; so after some further consultation, one of the men placed himself on the ground, another lay on the top of him, and a third stepped on the upper one, and then tried to lift the boy up sufficiently high, but failed. What was to be done now? must the attempt be given up? We feared so, and disappointed, were turning away, when an old woman who had been watching the proceedings and encouraging us, came forward, and taking the place of the man who had stepped from the bodies of his fellows, stood there, and bent her hands against the wall, and got one of us to stand upon her shoulders with his back to the wall; poor little Ceasar was then handed up to him, and by dint of much struggling and scrambling, pushed up to the top, when he fell over and was considerably hurt. The question was then asked in a low voice – ‘who next?’ ‘All,’ we answered, ‘we all want to go to the Buckra-man’s country.’ And I among the rest stepped forward, and was the next taken and pushed up in the same manner. I, like my friend Caesar, fell over, and was sorely bruised by the fall, but dared not cry out for fear of discovery. Awhile we lay there, hushing our groans and expecting some of our companions to follow, and should no doubt have waited longer, had we not been startled by a loud noise, which to our excited feelings seemed like the barking of the blood hounds, which the slave

catchers train up to hunt negroes, by feeding them on human flesh, as I myself have witnessed on my master's plantation.*¹³

This sound might have been only an echo in the woods of the cocks crowing across the water; but we were ignorant of the nature of an echo, and it terrified us dreadfully, so we at once made our way as quickly as possible to the planks, and taking one each, set it afloat, and committed ourselves to the current, which soon bore us away from the city. I recollect seeing glimmering lights, as I floated away, but whether they belonged to houses or ships I could not tell; the only sounds in my ears were those of the winds and rushing waters, with now and then a faint cry from my companion, Caesar, as his plank was caught in the rushes, and so for a while detained, until I passed him, or his was caught in an eddy, and carried past me. In this way I went on in the dreary stillness for about three quarters of an hour I should think, sometimes quite alone, and now and then cheered by the knowledge that one living being, at least, poor little Caesar, was within call. The water went gurgling and rushing along beneath me, and the wind sighed mournfully amid the tall rushes which lined the banks of the river; now and then I heard a plunging sound, which made me shrink and tremble, for I fancied that the monstrous jaws of an Alligator might be about to seize me, and drag me to the bank there to be devoured. As the foam of the ripples went dancing past me, it glittered in the faint star-light, and seemed like glaring eyes of some river monsters. But still my plank floated on, and there sat I, little Toby, peering through the surrounding gloom, and daring at times to hope that I should yet reach the Buckra-man's¹⁴ ship, and be carried to that free and happy land of which he had told me.

I had gone on in silence for some time without hearing the voice of my companion, when suddenly it came to my ears again, seeming not far off, but whether above or below me in the river, I could not make out. This time the cry was sharper and louder than it had been before, as though stimulated by fear. 'Toby,' I thought it said, 'Toby, did you hear that?' 'What?' I asked. 'Somebody talking,' was the reply, 'and saying they thought they had heard us.' My plank was now carried by an eddy round a winding of the river bank, and I found myself close in among the rushes, by grasping which I managed to scramble on shore. I was about to call to my companion again, and endeavour to ascertain whereabouts he was, when I myself distinctly heard a man's voice, and it seemed to me that of the driver of our gang in New Orleans. 'I am sure I heard them,' it said, 'and they must be somewhere about here.' Terrified beyond measure, I plunged into the water, got upon my plank, and pushing it out into

* It has been said that bloodhounds are not used, as in Cuba, and other Spanish settlements, for the hunting of slaves in America. If not, I am at a loss to understand why these ferocious animals were kept upon our estate, and fed as I have described; and why the negroes were constantly told that any attempt to escape would be useless, as these animals would be sure to find them out, and that most likely the fugitives would be killed by them if not shot by the 'man hunter,' who would be fully authorized to adopt such a means of recovering his lost property, if he chose. Many instances are on record of run-away slaves being mangled by dogs sent in pursuit of them, and of their being shot at and killed, without any punishment being inflicted on the murderer, to convict whom there must be a white free man to witness the transaction, and give evidence against him. [Author note]

the stream, went drifting away I knew not whither. At times I thought I heard voices, now on this now on that side of me, but I could not tell whether they were real or conjured up by my fears; and if real, whether those of friends or enemies. And still I floated on, borne like a straw upon the breast of the great Mississippi, the mother of waters, as the Indians call her, with my ears full of whispering sounds, and my breast full of terrible fears, that made every one of the thousands and thousands of stars that looked down upon me, seem like the eye of a watchful foe. Sometimes my plank shot rapidly on in a straight line, at others it was caught by a cross current coming out of some creek or inlet, and went spinning in a different direction; and all the time it seemed to me that an unseen pursuer must be close at hand somewhere; for every now and then my ears caught what appeared to be the faint sound of voices, and seemed like the dip of oars, and the gliding of a boat through the water. In this way I should think two hours had passed since I left the city. I was getting wearied and chilled, and beginning to lose all hope of meeting with my white friend, when all of a sudden I screamed out, and almost leaped off from my plank into the water, as a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a voice said, 'Hush! don't make a noise, for fear that the Yankees should hear you; make haste, get into the canoe, you are all right now.' I did as he bade me, pleased enough to find my friend so unexpectedly, for it was he and two of the sailors of the ship, which lay at no great distance. I told them that myself and little Caesar were all that I believed had got away, and directed them, as well as I could, to the spot where I had last heard his voice. After rowing about for a long time, we at length found his plank, but no Caesar could we discern. Whether, like myself, alarmed by the voices, he had got on shore and hid in the thicket, or been drowned, or eaten by Alligators, it was impossible to say; so our friends gave up the search, and paddled softly back to the ship which they reached while it was yet dark, so that they had little difficulty in smuggling me on board, and concealing me in the foremost part of the vessel. This they were obliged to do, for the Captain of the ship knew nothing of the proceeding. I kept close in my hiding place, supplied with food by my friends for some days, until the ship had left the Belize, and was fairly out of sea, where every hour increased the distance between myself and the so-called free land of America.

On the seventh day, I made my first appearance before the Captain. I was helped up on deck by one of the friendly sailors, and being unable to stand on account of the pitching of the vessel, I crawled towards the after part, and having got about half way, I sat down trembling with fear. The good mate pretending now to see me for the first time, called out in quick tone to the Captain, who was walking on the quarter deck with several passengers, Capt. J – here's a Slave on board!' To which his superior officer replied – 'Where?' and drew nigh me. As soon as he saw me, he commenced asking me, in a harsh tone of voice, how I came on board? and as I could not at once reply for weeping, he threatened to have me thrown overboard, making use of many oaths and wicked expressions. One of the passengers, who was a missionary, named Bingham, now stepped forward, and standing between me and the captain, begged of him to moderate his anger, and cease using those blasphemous expressions, reminding him that the same God who made the poor crouching negro, made him also; the tears fell from the cheeks of this true minister of Christ, upon my naked feet, as he thus interceded for me; and I looked up in his face, so full of pity and tenderness, and felt thankful and assured that another

friend was now sent to me; but of the God of whom he spake I had no knowledge at that time. The remonstrances of the Missionary had a good effect upon the minds of the Captain, who soon after spoke in a friendly way to me, and ordered some clothes to be brought for me to put on, for I had no other clothing than a small maroon, or cloth round the waist. When the steward brought up a pair of white duck trousers, of which my friend the mate, seeing they were too long, cut off the bottoms of the legs, and I was bidden to put them on, it was a sore puzzle to me how this was to be managed; there I sat, looking first at the trousers, and then up into the faces of those around me in a state of utter bewilderment. 'Put them on,' said the mate; but it was more easily said than done. The good missionary, seeing my perplexity, was stepping forward to assist me, when he was pulled back by the coat tail by the laughing captain, who, with the mate, seemed greatly to enjoy the fun – which indeed was no fun to me. I turned the trousers this way and that way, and could see no way that seemed the right. At last the mate took them up, made me catch hold of the waist band with him, and bade me look through them, and then try if I could not manage it; I made a desperate plunge to obey him, and thrust both feet into one leg of the pantaloons. This would not do, and I was wondering what would, when the mate relieved me out of the state of distress, by kindly showing me the right way. I mention this incident purposely, to exhibit the state of utter ignorance of all civilized manners and customs in which we bush negroes were. Behold Toby, now dressed like a civilized being; well-fed, kindly treated, and altogether in so different a state to what he was accustomed, that he could scarcely believe his senses. The ship had a quick run, and on the 33rd day after leaving the Belize, reached Liverpool.*¹⁵

I will mention two things which caused me the greatest surprise. One of these was the clock of the old church near Prince's dock: just as I stepped up the wharf, this clock began to strike, and I looked up to see where the sound came from, catching hold, as I did so, of the arm of a passer by, who rudely demanded what I wanted. I begged his pardon as well as I could, and said – 'Masser Buckra man, what do you call that?' He told me it was a Clock; and I then said, 'Sir! Clock – clock!' in a state of the greatest astonishment. I continued to linger about the old church looking up

* Thus it was that I made my escape from the so-called free land of America. Many of my unfortunate brethren have attempted their self-deliverance and perished in the attempt, or have been led back to bondage to undergo tenfold greater sufferings and indignities, than those to which they had before been exposed. One of the most romantic and exciting chapters in the dark history of American Slavery, is that which relates these efforts, successful and unsuccessful, of the poor negroes to gain their freedom; and one of the most remarkable of the episodes which this chapter contains is the case of Henry Box Brown, who was packed by some friends in a box *three feet one inch long, two feet wide, and two feet six inches deep*, and so transported from Richmond to Philadelphia, a distance of 300 miles by Railroad and Steam Boat. The box being on the way roughly tumbled about, and several times placed the wrong end uppermost, to the great pain and peril of the inmate, who however arrived safely at this journey's end, and was welcomed by those expecting him as a man risen from the dead. [Author note]

at this wonderful clock, until the time came for it to strike again, when I listened as before, not knowing whether it was alive or no. Often and often afterwards, when I had become familiar with clocks and many other thing, then strange and wonderful to me, did I call to mind, as I passed the old church by the Prince's wharf, the first surprise of hearing the iron tongue give note of time. And even now when passing the spot I cannot refrain from stopping and looking up as though to greet an old familiar friend.

The second surprise, which occurred on the same quay, was seeing a person, dressed like a gentleman, with a face black and shining as ebony – an unmistakeable negro – come walking down the street with a beautiful white lady on his arm. I stood and stared, and presently asked a man who was near by, if they would not flog this nigger for walking along with the Buckra Missis. 'Why do you ask that?' he inquired. 'Because, Sir,' I said, 'in my country they do not allow black and white people to associate together.' 'In this country,' he said, 'we are all brothers; and a coloured man may walk with whoever is willing to keep him company.' All this seemed very strange to me. Indeed I had now got into a new world altogether, and I am thankful to God that I found in this world the way opened to another and far brighter one, where there is no regard to colour or condition, but into which all who believe in Jesus, and trust in his salvation, are invited to enter.

Before concluding my story, I must just mention an incident or two connected with my career in this country, which may serve to exhibit the goodness of God in raising up friends for the poor debased negro lad, and bringing him to a knowledge of the Saviour and Redeemer.

Before the ship reached the place where she was to discharge her cargo, I was landed on the wharf, as, for some reason the Captain did not wish it to be known that he had brought a run-away slave among the passengers. I was bidden to wait till somebody came to me from the ship, but having been attracted by the wonderful clock before spoken of, and other strange objects, I wandered away from the spot and lost myself. Whether search was made for me I do not know, but if so, it was not successful, and looking about me, and wondering at everything till I grew tired, I crept beneath a pile of loose timber, and there made my bed for the night.

And this was my lodging house for four nights, and, for that matter, days too, for I feared to go far away. How I lived I scarcely know: children, and sometimes grown people, observing me, would occasionally bring pieces of bread, and other broken victuals; so that I do not recollect that I suffered much from hunger during that time. Not far from my hiding place was a house used by some Wesleyans as a chapel, and when Sunday came they assembled near it in the open air for worship. I watched them for some time, and wondered what was going on, observing and listening to the preaching. When the singing began, they came and asked me to join them; this I at first refused to do. But afterwards was persuaded to go to the chapel. Here all was new and strange to me, for I had never been in a place of worship before; with the tall pulpit, and seats placed all around, looked to me for all the world like a Slave Market, only that the people in it were so different from those who frequented such scenes; and the praying, and the praising, and the singing, could have nothing to do with the business there transacted, although what they really had to do with, I could not then make out. After the service was ended, many questions were

asked me by different members of the congregation, who were evidently interested in me; and at length one of them, a worthy and pious man, of whom I have reason to entertain a grateful recollection, invited me home to his house. There I went, and there I remained for the space of two years, treated more like a son or a brother, than a poor outcast; sheltered and protected from motives of charity. And there not only was I supplied with the food that perisheth, but also with that which feeds the soul, and makes man wise unto salvation. Yes, praised be God, the poor benighted negro was taught that he had a soul to be saved, as well as those with fairer skins, and made acquainted with the truths of that precious book, wherein it is written, that 'Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for sinners: that *all* through him might have everlasting life.'

And now I am, as I hope, a Christian man, living in a Christian country, under the protection of just and equitable laws; my time, my energies, and such abilities as I possess, are my own; and so that I conduct myself properly, and fulfil the duties of my state and station, to God only am I called to give an account of my actions. I have a dear wife, who cannot be taken away from me at the whim or caprice of any man, however powerful; and beloved children, whom I may hope to see grow up around me, to be a support and comfort to me in my old days; unlike mine, their backs will never be scarred by the lash of the Slave-driver; unlike mine, their youthful days will not be spent in a state most akin to that of the brutes that perish.

The degradation and misery that their father has known they will never know; and should they not turn out so honest, and industrious, and God fearing, as I would have them, it will not be for want of proper and prayerful teaching. Oh, that all the poor benighted Africans, toiling and groaning in that far-off Western land, had the same advantages of Christian instruction that these have! I often think of them, and of my mother and sisters – especially of her whom I left on the plantation by the Mississippi, little dreaming, when we parted, that it was for ever. Earnest efforts have been, and are being made, both here and in America, for the liberation of these poor slaves: I pray God they may be successful, for I know full well what American Slavery means, and would not return to it for one year, though I knew, at the end of that time, I should be seated upon a throne.

I am thankful for the privileges I enjoy in this free Christian land, and am glad to do what lies in my power to advance the cause of religion and morality; to make men wise unto salvation, and good members of society here. Especially does it please me to talk, in my humble way, to the children of Sunday, and other Schools, about the evils of intemperance, the miseries of slavery, and the goodness of God to the poor negro boy, Toby, now changed into the man John Williams a name given to me by the Rev. John Andrew Knox, of Birkenhead, a good Minister of the Gospel, about two months after I came to this country, where I have now been about sixteen years, doing my best to earn an honest livelihood, and render unto every man that which is his due. Many kind friends have I met with; some crosses and afflictions, one of these being a severe injury to the spine, which has rendered me incapable of hard work. I have suffered privations, too, and at times have not known where to look for the means of procuring bread for myself and family; but God, who fed Elijah in the wilderness, has also fed me, and will continue to do so.

ANTI-SLAVERY POEMS

BY H. G. ADAMS.¹⁶THE CRY OF THE AMERICAN SLAVE TO THE ABOLITIONIST¹⁷

THERE's promise of freedom
 For me and for mine;
 I hear the glad tidings;
 I see the light shine;
 But it shineth afar yet,
 The hill-tops are bright,
 While the vale where the slave lies
 Is gloomy as night;
 And the voice of deliverance
 Sounds faint, when the cries
 And the groans of the scourged,
 And the fettered arise.

Press on, my white brothers!
 The tyrants are strong,
 Ye have giants to cope with –
 Oppression and Wrong;
 Be brave, my white brothers!
 Your work is of love;
 We see scowling faces
 On every hand;
 We bear on our persons,
 The marks of the brand;
 We're fed, and we're cared for,
 Like horses and hogs,
 We're cut, and we are shot at,
 And hunted with dogs;
 Like goods we are bartered,
 And given, and sold;
 And the rights of our race
 There are none to uphold;

Save ye, noble workers
 In freedom's great cause;
 Save ye, loud proclaimers
 Of God's righteous laws,
 Who call us your brothers,
 Though black be our skin
 And own we have hearts
 These dark bosoms within –
 Like feelings, emotions,
 And passions, with those

All good men pray for you
 And God is above;
 And the poor slave he crieth
 Unto ye for aid –
 Oh, be not discouraged!
 Oh, be not afraid!

From the cotton plantation.
 The rice-swamp, the mill,
 The cane-field, the workshop,
 The cry cometh still:–
 Oh, save us, and shield us,
 We groan, and we faint;
 No words can our sorrows,
 Our miseries paint;
 Our souls are our masters',
 They sport with our lives,
 They torture and scourge us
 With whips, and with gyves.
 To his thoughts, and his hopes
 With the proudest on earth;
 When no master shall own him,
 Nor tear him apart,
 From the wife of his bosom,
 The child of his heart.

I know the time's coming,
 I'm *sure* 'twill be here,
 For the voice of a prophet
 Hath sung it in my ear –
 'Make ready the way
 For the advent of Him,
 In whose presence the splendours
 Of earth shall grow dim;
All pride shall be humbled,
Oppression shall cease,
And men like true brethren,
Shall sojourn in peace.'

I see the faint glimmer
 Of light – shall these eyes
 Behold the bright sun

Who spurn us, and scorn us, And scoff at our woes.	In its glory arise? Shall these hands grasp the freedom For which I and mine, In the depths of our misery, Languish and pine; Life waneth apace – I am feeble and old – Oh hasten to snatch me From slavery's hold!
Oh! press on, and hasten The good coming time, When the hue of the skin Shall no more be a crime? When a man, though a negro, May fearless give birth,	

FREEDOM.

PASS HIM ON!
A LAY OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.¹⁸

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, is one of the 'peculiar institutions' of America, the nature of which will be well understood by those who have read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'¹⁹ Many a poor fugitive slave has been passed along this road, fed, and clothed, and treated tenderly as a brother or sister, by those whose hearts, are ever open to the calls of Christian Charity, and hands ever ready to aid the distressed and persecuted, until safely landed on the Canadian shore, the chattel becomes a free man or woman, to feel no more to²⁰ the lash or galling chain, to crouch and grovel no more in abject slavery.

Pass him on! Pass him on!
Another soul from slavery won;
Another man erect to stand,
Fearless of the scourge, and brand;
Another face now lifted up –
Lips that drink not sorrow's cup,
Eyes no longer dimmed with tears.
Breast no longer filled with fears;
Limbs that have no galling chain
Their free motives to restrain;
Back no longer bowed and scored,
But with birthright now restored.
He that late the burden bore
 Felt the lash and pangs untold,
To be chattelized no more,
 Bartered, given, bought, or sold –
 Pass him on!

Pass him on! Pass him on!
Every man who hath a son,
Every woman who hath borne
Child, and hath a heart to mourn
O'er the woes by others felt;

Every maiden who hath knelt
 Down in prayer for brother dear
 Or a loved-one yet more near;
 Every youth who hath a friend
 With his thoughts and hopes to blend.
 And desireth aye to be
 Both in speech and action free;
 Every one who hates the wrong,
 And would vindicate the right,
 Help the weak against the strong,
 Aid this brother in his flight –
 Pass him on!

Pass him on! Pass him on!
 Ye whose sires the sword have drawn,
 And with blood your freedom bought;
 Ye by whom the truth is taught.
 That the God who dwells on high,
 Sees one human family,
 In the races of mankind,
 And would all together bind
 In one unity of love,
 Blissful as the life above;
 Ye who speak and wield the pen,
 Eloquent for rights of men,
 And would proudly spurn the thought
 That if you had skins less fair,
 You might then be sold and bought,
 And the galling fetters wear.
 Pass him on!

Pass him on! Pass him on!
 Though his foes be legion;
 Though the bloodhounds on his track
 Yelling strive to bring him back:
 Though man-hunters from the South
 Threat you with the pistol's mouth,
 And the federative law
 Would your spirits overawe;
 Heed them not; endure the fine
 Grow, through sacrifice, divine;
 Do as you'd be done unto,
 Careless of the consequence;
 Keep the higher law in view,
 Heed not ruffian violence, –
 Pass him on!

Pass him on! Pass him on!
 Let him lie your couch upon;
 Give him raiment, give him food,
 Give him kindly words and good;
 Watch and guard his hours of rest
 Hide him from the searcher's quest;
 Through the city wrapped in sleep,
 O'er the river broad and deep;
 By the farmstead, through the vale,
 Lighted by the moonbeam's pale;
 O'er the prairie wild and wide,
 where the red men still abide,
 Hunters these, but not of slaves,
 Far more merciful than they;
 Storms and tempests, winds and waves,
 Nought the fugitive must stay –
 Pass him on!

Pass him on! Pass him on!
 Crime hath he committed none;
 Would you have him grovelling lie,
 In the bonds of slavery?
 Nobler far to rend in twain,
 And throw off the yoke and chain;
 Nobler far through darkness grim,
 Dangers thick besetting him,
 Freedom thus to seek in flight,
 'Scaping from the gloom of night
 Unto Freedom's glorious morn;
 From the darkness to the dawn
 Leapeth he o'er chasms wide;
 Help him all who help him can,
 God the North Star for his guide
 Giveth: every fellow man –
 Pass him on!

FINIS.

R. TAYLOR, PRINTER, 89 HIGH STREET, CHATHAM.

Notes

1. *The Narrative of John Williams* is held in the General Reference Collection, British Library, London, England. Reference: 10882.aaa.37.(2.).
2. Anon., 'Temperance', *Derbyshire Courier*, 1 December 1849, p.2.
3. Anon., 'Temperance and Anti-slavery Movements', *Worcester Journal*, 7 March 1850, p.3; Anon., 'Slavery', *Banbury Guardian*, 28 February 1850, p.3; Anon., 'Intemperance and

- Slavery', *Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*, 11 January 1850, p.6.
4. Anon., 'American Slavery', *North Devon Journal*, 16 December 1852, p.8; Anon., 'Slavery', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 4 June 1853, p.4; Anon., 'Atheneum and Mechanics Institute', *Isle of Wight Observer*, 28 May 1853, p.3; Anon., 'Slavery', *Sussex Advertiser*, 28 February 1854, p.6.
 5. Letter from Thomas Davies, 8 September 1854; Counterslip Sugar Refinery, 16 January 1853 and 19 January 1855. Anti-Slavery Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 18/C30. File 46 and 144. Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
 6. In the original publication, an image is inserted here. We have not reproduced this image because we have no confirmation that Williams commissioned, gave permission for, authorised or approved of the inclusion of this image.
 7. In the original publication, an image is inserted here. We have not reproduced this image because we have no confirmation that Williams commissioned, gave permission for, authorised or approved of the inclusion of this image.
 8. Matthew 19:14.
 9. This word is reproduced as per the original spelling.
 10. In the original publication, an image is inserted here. We have not reproduced this image because we have no confirmation that Williams commissioned, gave permission for, authorised or approved of the inclusion of this image.
 11. This word is reproduced as per the original spelling.
 12. Belize is a Caribbean country located on the north-eastern country of North America.
 13. In the original publication, an image is inserted here. We have not reproduced this image because we have no confirmation that Williams commissioned, gave permission for, authorised or approved of the inclusion of this image.
 14. 'Buckra' is a colloquialism popularly used by people of African descent during this period to refer to a white man.
 15. In the original publication, an image is inserted here. We have not reproduced this image because we have no confirmation that Williams commissioned, gave permission for, authorised or approved of the inclusion of this image.
 16. Henry Gardiner Adams (c.1811–1881) was a white English author. Directly below the insertion of his name, the author and/or publisher make the decision to reproduce the image of the shackled and kneeling figure shown on the title page.
 17. Henry G. Adams included this poem in his collection, *Peace Lyrics*, By H. G. Adams (London: C. Gilpin, 1850), pp.34–37.
 18. This 'lay' was also authored by H. G. Adams and originally appeared in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* on 12 March 1859. For a contemporary reproduction, see Monica Pelaez, ed., *Lyrical Liberators: The American Antislavery Movement in Verse, 1831–1865* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018).
 19. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
 20. This word is reproduced as per the original spelling.



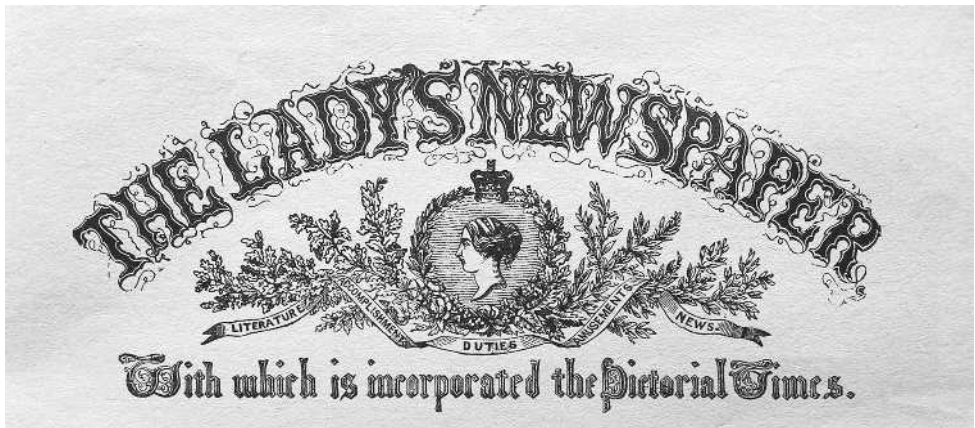


Figure 24 Front page of *The Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times*, 1852. (Author copy.)

HENRY (SURNAME UNKNOWN)

(1820–DATE UNKNOWN)

7 Henry (Surname Unknown), ‘The Story of a Fugitive Slave: With a Glance at the Present Aspects of the Slavery Question in the United States’.

Edited by Frederick William Chesson, *The Lady’s Newspaper*,
London, England, September 1856–January 1857.

Biographical History

‘THE STORY OF a Fugitive Slave: With a Glance at the Present Aspects of the Slavery Question in the United States’ is a serialised autobiographical narrative authored by a man whose first name was ‘Henry’. Very little biographical information survives on the life and works of Henry who experienced enslavement in Nashville, Tennessee, and who secured his self-liberation by leaving the United States and arriving in the United Kingdom. Henry’s surname has not survived in the white dominant official record in traumatising vindication of Frederick Douglass’ lifelong conviction that Black lives exists only in the ‘chattel records’ of a white supremacist imaginary.

Authored in the first person, Henry’s autobiography was serialised in *The Lady’s Newspaper*, ‘one of the earliest’ white British owned ‘newspapers produced for an exclusively’ white dominant ‘female audience.’¹ Henry’s narrative was edited for publication in this periodical by Frederick William Chesson (1833–1888), a white UK abolitionist and author. In his private diary, Chesson notes that during the summer and autumn of 1856, he ‘continued my [?] Fugitive Slave Narrative in the Lady’s Newspaper.’ As a result, Henry’s manuscript is weighted with a complicated, painful, and difficult editorial and publishing history according to which white male control exercised unrestrained power over Black male authorship.² There is no information that survives to provide us with any indication or confirmation that Henry exerted final editorial power or control over Chesson’s wilful, disrespectful, and invasive editing of his autobiography. All the information that does survive reveals that the original manuscript of Henry’s ‘narrative of a Fugitive Slave’ was written from his ‘own personal observation and experience’ and was given to Chesson by an unnamed ‘gentleman’ who was ‘well known for his active interest in the cause of Emancipation’. We would argue that this unidentified man is very likely Chesson’s father-in-law, white British antislavery campaigner, George Thompson (1804–1878). Complicating the history of

Henry's manuscript yet further, Chesson writes that, 'the story of his life was taken down from his lips by a skilful shorthand writer; and compiled under the personal direction of the gentleman who placed the MSS. in the hands of the present Editor'. He then informs the reader that he has since 'carefully re-written it'. The involvement of numerous unnamed white editors in the publication of his autobiography is an act of violation and violence against Henry's life which has painful consequences for even beginning to remember and respect his experiences, voice, and individualism. Criminally, Chesson also offers no explanation for the gulf in time between Henry's arrival in Britain in 1846 and the publication of the narrative a decade later. Relying on speculation only, Henry may have died after entrusting his life story with a white abolitionist, which may explain a delay in publication. Henry alludes to the fact that his testimony would be published in book form, so there must have been specific reasons why Chesson chose *The Lady's Newspaper* instead of a traditional narrative format that he and his famous father-in-law were well versed in. Lastly, unlike other biographies where white amanuenses allude to the location, family life, or ambitions of a Black freedom fighter, Chesson is silent on all counts. Henry's tragic and untimely death may be the reason for these unanswered questions, and may explain any lack of urgency on the part of white abolitionists to publish his revolutionary testimony.

Despite these very real difficulties, Henry makes his voice, experiences, political beliefs, philosophy, and emotions heard in the pages of his powerful autobiography. A survivor of a life lived in enslavement, he takes on the representative role of bearing witness to the experiences endured by millions of people living in an inhuman barbaric system of US legal bondage. 'My chief motive in making the world acquainted with my humble history has been a desire to furnish an additional testimony to the realities of slavery from a member of that long-suffering people, who possess but few opportunities of describing the diabolical slave system of which they are the innocent but most miserable victims', he informs his readers. He draws on the authority of his personal lived realities by declaring, 'I have seen slavery not only as it is exhibited to the unsuspecting stranger, but as it is known to the slave himself'. Henry exposes the failures of language even to begin to do justice to the abuses and atrocities he and millions of enslaved people have and continue to endure by stating, 'But oh! no tongue could describe the agonising scenes which I have witnessed – wives torn from the arms of their husbands, brothers parted from their sisters.' As Henry painfully writes, he witnessed many unforgiveable and traumatising scenes that were also committed on white-operated steamships – the heinous murders of Frank Jeffreys and Jacob Benson for example – as well as the untold violences against Black women by white enslavers, white racist politicians, and even white former presidents.

At the heart of Henry's autobiographical history is his determination to represent and memorialise centuries-old traditions of Black revolutionary heroism. He begins with honouring his father, a soldier in the Revolutionary War, who after fighting for freedom was cruelly and unforgivably enslaved in New Orleans. Inspired by his sacrifice, Henry also pays tribute to another revolutionary figure. 'The truth is, that the slaveholders are in constant fear lest a servile insurrection should arise', he writes, only all too aware that, 'they still retain a vivid recollection of the Virginian slave rebellion headed by the famous Nat Turner'. Sharing his story with transatlantic audiences in

the mid-1850s and just a few years before the beginning of the US Civil War, Henry is at pains to inform his readers that, ‘There have not been wanting symptoms in more recent times of a disposition on the part of the slaves to rise in arms against their white oppressors.’ He is adamant regarding the moral justification of enslaved people to undertake any and all acts of revolutionary warfare by rhetorically questioning, ‘where is the man who will refuse to acknowledge that, in this case, it would be as justifiable as was the struggle of the Revolutionary Fathers against English tyranny?’ A revolutionary human rights philosopher and radical social justice commentator, Henry compares the execution of Nathaniel Turner, a Black freedom fighter who was persecuted, tortured, and killed for leading a moral war on inhumane bondage in 1832, with the adulation received by George Washington, a white military general who fought the British armed forces and went on to become the nation’s first president. ‘Does not the memory of Nat Turner possess as good a claim to be commemorated in marble as that of George Washington?’ he declares, adamant that, ‘Both were patriots – the only difference between them is, that the one was a black man and the other a white; that the one was unsuccessful, and the other, instead of meeting a traitor’s doom, became the saviour of his country.’

A prophet as well as a freedom fighter, Henry issues a warning to any and all white enslavers: ‘let the slaveholders beware, lest, in an hour when they are sleeping in fancied security, some black Washington should exact atonement for the wrongs of his injured race by imbruing his hand in the tyrant’s blood.’

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INTRODUCTION.³

In presenting this narrative of a Fugitive Slave to the notice of the British public, the Editor begs to state the circumstances under which it came into his possession. It was placed in his hands by a gentleman⁴ well known for his active interest in the cause of Emancipation, with the request that he would avail himself of a suitable opportunity to give it to the world. The hero of the narrative (the phrase could not be more appropriately employed) came to England, bearing with him testimonials which afforded satisfactory evidence of his trustworthiness and respectability. Upon the discovery being made that he was able to afford, from his own personal observation and experience, a striking testimony on the subject of American slavery, the story of his life was taken down from his own lips by a skilful shorthand writer; and compiled under the personal direction of the gentleman who placed the MSS. in the hands of its present Editor. The narrative, in its original form, was in a fit state for publication; but the writer having been requested to do so, has carefully re-written it – being scrupulous, however, to act with the strictest fidelity in dealing with every fact contained in the MSS.

It is often remarked of such narratives as the following, that they are exaggerated portraiture of slave-life; that, as the men who write them labour under a sense of having been cruelly wronged – a feeling which becomes more and more strengthened as their appreciation of the blessings of freedom is developed – they are naturally disposed to represent their own condition in slavery in too unfavourably a light, and to charge upon the slave-system generally the commission of cruelties which are really perpetrated in only a few exceptional cases. This view of the subject would appear to be borne out by the solemn asseverations of slaveholders and their supporters, who argue that it is manifestly to the interest of the master to treat his slaves with justice and humanity; and who glowingly expatiate upon their happy and contented condition. These statements, again, would appear to be confirmed by the testimony of many English and other travellers, who, while visiting the slave-states and enjoying the hospitality of ‘the southern chivalry,’ have been permitted to behold, and of course to admire, slavery in its holiday attire, profoundly unconscious of those dark secrets of the prison-house which were craftily concealed from their gaze. And yet it is on such evidence as this that fugitive-slave narratives have been treated with suspicion and distrust. To expose the worthlessness of this evidence, and to vindicate the truthfulness of the accompanying Autobiography, the Editor has appended a Supplementary Chapter, which, in his judgment, will prove from incontrovertible facts, that American slavery at this hour is, what it has ever been a Pandemonium of horrors which no pen can describe and no imagination can conceive.

But really, evidence to confirm even the humble testimony of a fugitive slave would be rendered wholly unnecessary, if the doubting mind would only endeavour to comprehend what is meant by the word – ‘a slave.’ ‘A slave,’ said George

Thompson,⁵ in one of those passionate outbursts of eloquence, which frequently impress the human soul with an intenser conviction of the moral turpitude of the evil-doer than calmer oratory could possibly do – ‘a slave is a piece of merchandize – a beast of burden – a nonentity in the state (except as a property-qualification of his oppressor) – a dumb cipher in the court of justice – an animated hoeing-machine in the field – a kennelled dog at home – a leper and a pariah in the house of prayer – an outcast from the grave-yard of the white man.’ Never did human tongue more truly describe the actual position occupied by the proscribed negro-race in the southern states of republican America. But if the reader should imagine that the picture is too highly coloured, let him read the legal definition of a slave as furnished by the highest judicial authorities in the United States. Judge Stroud (the Blackstone of America) asserts that ‘the cardinal principle of slavery, that the slave is not to be ranked among sentient beings, but among *things*, as an article of property, a chattel personal, obtains as undoubted law in all the slave states.’⁶ The Louisiana Civil Code declares that ‘the slave is one who is in the power of a master to whom *he belongs*.’ And again, the law of South Carolina pronounces slaves ‘to be chattels personal, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever.’ Such being the absolute power which slavery confers upon the white oppressor, that man must either be devoid of moral perception, or, what is more probably, must be wilfully blind, who fails to see that this irresponsible despotism is necessarily the prolific parent of the most hideous and revolting crimes. Jefferson,⁷ a statesman wise above his day and generation, declared that ‘the whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other.’⁸ And while human nature continues to be possessed by the spirit of evil, and men are prone to gratify their animal passions and instincts, without reference to conscience or duty, the relations subsisting between master and slave must ever be what they were in the days of Jefferson and Patrick Henry.⁹ It has been well remarked, that an archangel could not wield the power of a slaveholder, and at the same time preserve his purity. It is a power which belongs to God alone; and any exercise of it by one being over another, is a usurpation of the Divine sovereignty.

But the reader may be disposed to admit everything that can possibly be urged in condemnation of slavery, and to inveigh against the system in honest and indignant language; while, at the same time, he may be at a loss to know what is the practical utility of the publication in this country of information on the subject. He may argue, that as the mind of the British nation is thoroughly made up as to the iniquity of slavery, they do not need an anti-slavery literature; and that, having emancipated their own slaves, their work is accomplished, and they can do no more. This is taking a very superficial view of a great question. In the first place, an anti-slavery public opinion is too valuable in its influence upon the national character to be permitted to die out, or even to stagnate, as to a great extent it would undoubtedly do, if the immorality and injustice of the slave-system were not, on fitting occasions, brought prominently before the people. A hatred of oppression in all its forms, a just perception of what is due from one man to another, and a keen sense of the dignity of human nature, are among the feelings to which an anti-slavery sentiment will naturally give birth. Those whose sympathies become awakened on behalf of the despised negro, may feelingly exclaim, with the immortal dramatist¹⁰ –

Are we not brothers?
 So man and man should be.
 But clay and clay differs in dignity,
 Whose dust is both alike.¹¹

Anti-slavery information is also needed as an antidote to the gross misrepresentations of the slavery question, which are introduced into England by the majority of American travellers who visit this country. They endeavour to make slavery palatable to Englishmen in a variety of ways. The American merchant declares it to be an economic necessity. The American politician pleads the constitutionality of slavery, and dilates upon the terrible jeopardy in which a successful anti-slavery agitation would inevitably involve his 'glorious Union.' The slaveholder himself presents a delightful picture of the earthly paradise in which the slave resides, and is tenderly cared for; and contrasts his blissful condition with the misery and degradation of the free coloured population. But it is reserved for the American pro-slavery divine to enlarge upon the religious advantages of slavery, and to represent it as a missionary institution designed by Providence for the conversion to Christianity of the sable sons of Africa.

Then, again, the tide of immigration still continues to flow with such marvellous rapidity between these British islands and the shores of the western republic, that it is the manifest duty of this country so to inspire its adventurous children with the anti-slavery spirit, that when they reach the land of their adoption they may be prepared to resist that spirit of compromise, which will be sure to assail their integrity, and to take the side of justice against oppression. Would that they all could be induced to cast in their lot with the Sumners¹² and the Sewards,¹³ or better still, with the Garrisons¹⁴ and the Phillipses.¹⁵ Now alas! they are too often disposed to imitate the silence of Kossuth,¹⁶ or to identify themselves even more closely with those pro-slavery institutions and prejudices which they should be the first to condemn.

The public opinion of mankind is a power strong enough to move the world. Lord Palmerston¹⁷ once said that 'opinions, if they are founded in truth and justice, will in the end prevail against the bayonets of infantry, the fire of artillery, and the charges of cavalry.' And there can be no doubt that remonstrances against American slavery on the part of the English people will exercise no inconsiderable influence upon their American brethren. Let every English cottage, therefore, send forth that indignant protest against the enslavement of the Negro, which has so often been issued from the stately halls of Stafford House. Let every English Reformer express his abhorrence of that spurious democracy which, in the sacred name of Liberty, manacles three millions and a half of the human race. Let every English pulpit be closed against pro-slavery bishops and divines; and let the English Church address the recreant Christians of America with apostolic earnestness and fidelity. But these protests and rebukes, to be effectual, must not bear upon them even the semblance of a compromise; they must not deal tenderly either with the wrong-doer or his evil deed. If man-stealing be the crime of crimes, 'the sum of all villainies,'¹⁸ the man-stealer himself must occupy a like prominence amongst criminals; and any concealment from him of his true position would be treason against the truth. Burke wisely said, that 'it is one of the signs of a degenerate age, and one of the means of ensuring its further degeneracy, to give lenient epithets to crime.'¹⁹ The slaveholder and his supporters should

be warned of the consequences of their misdeeds, although this is scarcely necessary; for slavery, while it gratifies their cupidity and love of power, encompasses them with many dangers which fill them with constant uneasiness and dread. So true is it that

Tyrants' fears

Decrease not, but grow faster than their years.²⁰

Their fears are the reverse of being imaginary; and one could almost exclaim with the Prophet: – ‘Go to, then, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you; the cry of those who have reaped down your fields, whose hire is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and their cry hath entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.’²¹

It is true that words of warning and reproof from British lips may be spurned by the advocates of American slavery. Be it so. Upon them will rest the responsibility of turning a deaf ear to wise and honest counsels; and they will reap a bitter and abundant harvest of folly. But let not want of success in endeavouring to influence the conscience of the slaveholding transgressor deter England from sending fraternal messages to those devoted friends of the slave who require to be sustained by the expression of her sympathy, and by yet more practical proofs of her interest in them. The American abolitionists greatly need this active co-operation. They, like their unhappy clients, have been, and are yet, a proscribed class – branded as infidels, and scoffed at as fanatics. The time was, when large rewards were offered for their leaders, dead or alive; when Garrison²² was dragged through Boston with a halter round his neck; when Lovejoy²³ was murdered; when Tappan’s²⁴ house was sacked; and when Pennsylvania Hall²⁵ was burnt to the ground. And, even now, proslavery violence is repeating again the sanguinary scenes of earlier days. A ruffian arm has laid prostrate the chosen champion of freedom on the very floor of the Senate chamber;²⁶ while the despicable instruments of slaveholding aggression have perpetrated deeds of rapine and blood on the soil of Kansas, which have excited the horror and indignation of mankind. Surely every Englishman will employ all the means in his power to strengthen the hands of those American patriots who are endeavouring to redeem their country from this worse than Egyptian bondage, and to give vitality to that principle of the American Revolution which declares that ‘all men are born free and equal.’²⁷

Chapter I My Early Life.²⁸

My chief motive in making the world acquainted with my humble history has been a desire to furnish an additional testimony to the realities of slavery from a member of that long-suffering people, who possess but few opportunities of describing the diabolical slave system of which they are the innocent but most miserable victims. There will be little of romance in these pages; there will be no highly-coloured scenes to excite the imagination of the reader; but I believe that my simple narrative will not, on this account, be less calculated to awaken the interest and arouse the indignation of every honest and sympathising heart. I rejoice to find that there are many British travellers and authors of high repute who have not permitted themselves to be misled by the misrepresentations and blandishments of the southern slaveholders; but others

(from some of whom might have been expected more moral courage, and a higher sense of Christian duty) have unfortunately suffered a little hospitality, personal flattery, and a few shallow plausibilities to overcome their former professed hatred of an institution which involves the commission of every crime, and the violation of every principle of justice and virtue. I have been placed in a different situation from these tampered witnesses. I have seen slavery not only as it is exhibited to the unsuspecting stranger, but as it is known to the slave himself, and they who have beheld it merely in its holiday attire, have no conception of what it is in its every-day dress. Having effected my escape from the gloomy prison-house, and being in the enjoyment of that freedom which made the British flag the symbol of hope to the slave, I think I cannot render a better service to the cause of my fellow-bondmen than to present a picture of what I have suffered, and of what they still endure.

I was born at Nashville, in the State of Tennessee, on the 4th of October, 1820, upon the estate of General Andrew Little, formerly engaged in the United States' service, but at that period a cotton planter and slave owner. My father was a native of Philadelphia, the Quaker city, and was born free. He was an engineer, in which capacity he worked in Philadelphia for several years. During the American war,²⁹ like many other coloured men, he was induced to go to the Southern States to render assistance to his white fellow-countrymen, in their conflict with Great Britain. While in New Orleans he became attached to a slave woman, a native of Louisiana, who was owned by a Monsieur Baubé, a French planter. At the close of the war, and on the final establishment of the American Republic, my father proposed to resume his former occupation as an engineer, still continuing, however, to reside in New Orleans. But unfortunately he did not possess any legal proofs of his freedom; and as there is no law in the slave-states to protect a man thus unhappily circumstanced, he was seized by my mother's master, and converted into his 'chattel.' And this iniquity was permitted, although it was notorious that he had come to New Orleans a perfectly free man, and had long lived as such in Philadelphia. Such was the cruel return made to my father for having exposed his life in the cause of those who enslaved him – such, to him, was the first fruit of that republican tree whose roots were supposed to be nourished by the very soil of liberty, and whose leaves were intended to be for the healing of the nations! This tyrannical act may appear incredible, but it is, nevertheless, strictly true; indeed, many other instances of treachery equally inhuman might be enumerated. I leave the reader to make his own comments upon the enslavement of a man who had not only committed no crime, but whose very breast had been a target for the bullets of his country's foes.

My father remained at Nashville until 1830, being hired out by his master to work as an engineer upon the rivers Cumberland and Ohio, on board steam-vessels running from Nashville to Pittsburgh and from there to New Orleans. He was then sold to General Little, who employed him on steamboats in the Red River, and the General's purse soon experienced the benefit of his efficient services. From that time to the present I have neither seen my father nor received any tidings of him; and I fear that his subsequent fate is a mystery which only the grave will unlock. Two years after he was carried to that Red River which is associated with so many slave tragedies, my mother was likewise sold, but to whom I never could ascertain. I was, at the time, absent from the city working upon the river. The separation of parents and children was in our case final and complete. But oh! no tongue could describe the agonising

scenes which I have witnessed – wives torn from the arms of their husbands, brothers parted from their sisters, Rachels weeping for their children because they were not –

Denied, though sought with tears, the sad relief
That misery loves, the fellowship of grief.³⁰

I was once informed that my mother was at Montecello in the State of Alabama; but on visiting this place in 1832 I could learn no tidings of her, and I have been equally unsuccessful in my subsequent inquiries. The rest of our family consisted of three sisters and two brothers, all of whom were older than myself. Two of them were born at Memphis, and the remainder at Nashville. My sisters being then young were employed as domestic servants; while my two brothers worked upon the plantation as field labourers, or rather as teamsters. In 1831, they were all sold in separate lots, my brothers being sent to a swampy district as a punishment for having attempted to escape to Canada. I could never discover the whereabouts of my poor sisters, whose probable fate I shudder to contemplate. My ignorance on this subject is easily accounted for. It is a part of the crafty policy of the planters never to give correct information to the slaves respecting the destination of their relatives, as it is supposed, and with good reason, that such knowledge would promote desertion. So strong, indeed, are negro attachments, that many a slave would cheerfully plunge into the thickest forests, wade through the most dismal swamps, and brave the bloodhounds of the pursuing demons, if by doing so he might hope to discover some beloved one, who had been ruthlessly dragged from his protecting arm.

Up to my tenth year I was employed about my master's house in domestic matters. In 1830, the General presented me to his son, Mr. William Little, who, not having any present occasion for my services, hired me out as a cabin-boy on board the steamer-vessel *Randolph*, running from Nashville to New Orleans, a distance of 1,300 miles, and carrying passengers and goods. For my services Mr. Little received ten dollars per month, which, as my clothing cost him scarcely nothing, and my food nothing whatever, must be considered to have been nearly so much profit arising from his proprietorship of a mere child. While on board this vessel, and throughout my subsequent career, I was treated remarkably well – for a slave. This circumstance, I believe, without vanity, I may attribute to my extreme docility, and the readiness and activity with which I fulfilled the duties imposed upon me. The exercise of these qualities – comprising, as they do, the sum of every virtue which a master wishes his slave to exhibit – procured for me much milder treatment than was received by my fellow-slaves, the steward, cook, and firemen, being often shamefully maltreated. If a slave looks a white man boldly in the face when the latter is giving him orders, it is very likely to be construed into an act of impertinence, an offence always followed by severe punishment. Indeed, the slaveholder employs every art and contrivance which his ingenuity can devise, to extinguish within the breast of the slave every spark of manhood, and to bring him, in his own estimation as well as in that of others, to the level of the tamed brute, possessing no higher faculty than the blind instinct of obedience to the will of his master. At that time, the laws of Alabama inflicted a death-penalty upon any coloured man who drew the blood of a white, although the wound might be ever so trivial. The whites – especially those belonging to the lower and more vicious classes – constantly took advantage of this anomalous state of the

law. With the knowledge that the slaves were not permitted the right of self-defence, and that the law afforded them no remedy in case of ill-usage, however brutal, they naturally availed themselves of suitable opportunities to gratify their cruel and cowardly passions with impunity.

At this period of my life, notwithstanding the comparative kindness with which I was treated, my situation was exceedingly laborious, as I was generally occupied nearly the whole twenty-four hours in waiting upon the passengers, some of whom were always up; and, more often than not, spending the lonely hours of the night in gambling and drunkenness. In this situation I remained two years, during which time my wages were, without the slightest compensation, appropriated by my master to enable him to lead a life of idleness and profligacy. In 1832, I was removed from the Randolph to the Tuckahoe, a steamer running between Memphis and New Orleans, and up the tributary rivers. Although only twelve years of age, I was promoted to the position of under-steward; and my master now derived fifteen dollars a month from my services instead of ten, which he previously received. Much has been said and written about the contentment of the slaves with their condition, and many superficial observers actually persuade themselves that they are indifferent to the blessings of freedom. To this statement I give a most emphatic and solemn denial. Young as I was at the time of which I am now writing, and comparatively favourable as were the circumstances in which I was placed, it is yet true that the iron of slavery had entered my soul, and I experienced intense longings to be free like the white men whom I saw around me. With my boyish perception (which is often most acutely susceptible of indignity or injustice) I observed, and felt indignant at, the striking difference between my own condition and that of the poorest white children of my acquaintance. I reflected that I had been guilty of no violation of American law, that I had never even rebelled against the capricious will of my master. These thoughts gradually impressed me with the conviction of the wrongfulness of my enslavement, and created within me the desire to achieve a nobler destiny.

In this frame of mind I ventured one morning to propose to my master the purchase of my own freedom. It was a bold thing to do, but nevertheless, I coolly asked him what sum he would take for me; seriously intending to redouble my exertions, and to hoard up every coin I might obtain in addition to my regular wages. My master was amused with my proposition, and asked me why I put to him such a question? I told him frankly that I wished to be free, so that I might enjoy my own earnings, after the manner of the white men, and as several slaves of my own acquaintance were then doing. He replied that I was better off than the free negroes or the white boys; and audaciously declared that his estates belonged to me as much as to himself, and that my labour would be as beneficial to me as it was to him. I was unable to comprehend the force of this logic; but was compelled to accept it as satisfactory. I subsequently learnt that equally wretched balderdash is not unfrequently employed by masters to allay dissatisfaction on the part of their slaves, and to render them contented with their degraded condition. But I need scarcely say that in the secrecy of their own hearts the slaves repel with indignation and contempt the insults thus offered to their common sense. The slaveholder may congratulate himself upon the success of his deception; but his triumph is only imaginary.

Chapter II

My Acquaintance with Some Distinguished Men – My Master and I Travel³¹

In justice to my master, I am bound to state that he acted towards me with singular kindness. He appeared to feel pleasure in stepping in between me and the lower order of whites, when they exhibited a disposition to ill-treat me. But yet, paradoxical though it be, his plantation-slaves, numbering about eighty, were treated with considerable cruelty and oppression; thus affording another example of the strange manner in which sometimes the most opposite qualities are blended in one character. The protection which was happily extended to me rendered my condition much more endurable than that of the rest of the slaves, who were not only obliged to submit without a murmur to the brutality of the overseer, but were likewise compelled to endure much ill-treatment from the low and ruffianly whites.

My master was on intimate terms of friendship with General Jackson and Colonel Polk, each of whom has been President of the United States.³² He was also on exceedingly friendly terms with Dr. Houston, father of Sam Houston, ‘the hero’ of Texas; General Cass, the celebrated democratic statesman, who is famous for his hatred of England; and other men of eminence. I was frequently required to wait upon these gentlemen when they visited my master’s house; and I was also in the habit of meeting them occasionally on board the steam vessels on which I was employed. As my master gave me a good character, and as I always behaved with studied civility towards his distinguished guests they became very familiar with me, and took me under their special patronage. My reputation for guilelessness caused them to throw off all restraint in my presence, and I thus involuntarily became a witness of many scenes of debauchery and vice which were carefully hidden from the public eye. I do not intend to shock the reader by describing these midnight orgies; it is sufficient for me to state that they furnished a painful illustration of the demoralising influence which slavery exercises upon the minds of comparatively good and estimable men. But there is another view of the subject which must outrage the holiest feelings of human nature, and especially agonise the hearts of all virtuous women. It is the awful degradations to which slavery consigns many of its victims. To them, indeed, it is a living death – the bottomless pit of despair, into which no ray of hope can ever descend. And I have reason to know that some of them experience the acutest sorrow, and weep the bitterest tears of anguish; seeing, as they do, no prospect of deliverance on this side the grave. And oh! how many a mother’s soul has been wrung with grief unutterable in contemplating the future of her hapless female children. There is a world of truth in that poem written by Maria Lowell,³³ which represents the slave-mother as bending over the form of her infant-child, and praying God to take it unto Himself: –

She cannot bear to know her child
Must be as she hath been,
Yet she sees but one deliverance
From infamy and sin;
And so she cries at midnight,
With exceeding bitter cry,
‘God grant my little helpless one
In infancy may die.’³⁴

My master and his friends frequently cautioned me against holding communications with the other slaves, an order which I pretty faithfully fulfilled for a long time. I carefully avoided entering into conversation with a fellow-slave in public; and when I conversed with one in private, I was careful never to speak about any matter of importance, the circulation of which might have led to my betrayal. My fidelity was perceived by my master and his friends, and rewarded by increased proofs of their approbation; for they were well able to appreciate the qualities of implicit obedience and profound secrecy when exhibited by a slave constantly employed about their persons. But this favouritism possessed its disadvantages, as it provoked the enmity of the poor blacks, who often took advantage of some place of concealment to discharge at me a volley of stones. I should explain that during the whole of the winter, and also in summer, when the water was very low, the running of the Tuckahoe was suspended. I thus lived with my master, and was employed by him in attending him in his hunting excursions – a sport into which he entered with great zest, and which was to me a pleasant change from the monotony of steamboat life.

In 1834 I accompanied my master on an excursion he undertook through the western part of North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. This tour occupied about ten months; and my master's kind treatment of me frequently exposed him to personal danger, and upon one occasion involved him in a serious quarrel with the landlord of the hotel where we put up for the night. Strangely enough, my master had always permitted me to take my meals at the same table as himself, after he had eaten his own. This was stoutly objected to by the host, who, like all southern landlords, from the master of the most stately hotel down to the keeper of the humblest tavern, was strongly imbued with the prevailing prejudice against colour. As my master was well acquainted with the popular feeling on the subject, he thought it prudent to succumb, and I was accordingly removed to a meaner apartment, and offered an unpleasant dish of broken victuals. 'That,' I was contemptuously told, 'was fare good enough for a slave.' This kind of food was so different from that to which I had been accustomed that I refused to eat it, and complained to my master in the belief that his authority would be sufficient to remedy the grievance. My master sent for the landlord, and entreated that I might be permitted to have my food from what he himself was accustomed to leave from his own meals. A very angry altercation ensued, in which the landlord expressed his surprise and indignation at such a gross breach of custom and propriety as that of a white man permitting his nigger to eat in his own presence and from his own dish. Words ran very high on the point, and the enraged landlord repeatedly informed my master that he must leave his house immediately rather than that it should be profaned by such a horrid violation of the decencies of life. The dispute was, however, ultimately compromised, the landlord permitting me to remain in the kitchen, and partake of the cold victuals which were brought from my master's table. But I was yet to experience another proof of the petty malignity of 'mine host.' When the hour of rest arrived, and I anticipated sleeping in some bed, however humble, the angry landlord called the ostler, and asked him to act as my chambermaid. The man thereupon conducted me to a barn, and taking a bundle of wheat straw threw it down upon the hard ground, and in an insolent manner, informed me that that was my bed. I presently walked out of the building and desired to see my master, stating, with some dissimulation I admit, that I wished to ascertain what time he would require my services in the morning. On obtaining admission to my master's room, I told him of the arrangements which had been made for my sleeping.

He expressed himself very strongly on the subject; but evidently felt himself to be in the power of the ruffian under whose roof we were. He, however, sent for him; and desired him to let me have a pallet or even a buffalo skin to lie upon. The anger of the churlish Boniface was excited anew – he declared that the proposition was monstrous – that he never before heard of such an impudent nigger coming from the state of Tennessee; and, indeed, that the very notion of a blackamoor sleeping upon a bed at all was abominable. My master, however, was exasperated by this insolence; and at length he insisted upon my remaining in his room the whole of the night. The host here became absolutely furious, and used language of the most revolting character, in which he was joined by all the white people in the house, some of whom expressed a strong desire to tie me up to a tree and give me the benefit of a sound flogging as the best means of bringing ‘the delicate nigger’ to a sense of his true position. My master, notwithstanding the clamour with which he was assailed, remained firm; and I accordingly spent the night in his room, sleeping upon the hard floor – a bed with which I was quite contented after the triumph I had achieved. The next morning Mr. Little arose at an early hour, paid his bill, and proceeded on his journey without stopping to get his breakfast. This haste was, doubtless, dictated by prudence, as if he had remained at the hotel until the other guests had arisen, there would, doubtless, have been a repetition of the scenes of the previous day, terminating, probably, with some demonstration of violence against myself. To avoid similar collisions in future, my master ever afterwards caused me to wait upon him at dinner, and then, previous to the removal of the dishes, I was permitted to help myself. In this way all further quarrels, arising from my favourable treatment, were effectually prevented. I mention this seemingly trivial circumstance to illustrate the intensity of the prejudice against slaves which obtains in this part of America. Indeed, that prejudice amounts to positive hatred, a state of feeling which forcibly exhibits the degrading influence of slavery upon the character of its supporters. God intended that the diverse races of mankind should regard each other as brethren, united by the bonds of a common origin and by the hopes of a common destiny. Slavery, on the contrary, makes the colour of the human skin a pretext for snapping asunder this Divine relationship, and for degrading millions of immortal men and women to the level of the brute that perisheth.

As I was known to be a slave who had travelled much, great care was taken to prevent my coming in contact with other slaves. Indeed, it is the universal practice to prevent strange slaves, if possible, from coming into contact with each other. This policy is inspired by the fear that some interchange of sentiments upon the subject of their grievous wrongs, and upon the means of effecting their deliverance, might take place should they converse together. In view of these facts, what becomes of the arguments of those shallow writers who are constantly prating about the contentment of their slaves, and their entire want of sympathy with the efforts which their northern friends are making in their behalf? The truth is, that the slaveholders are in constant fear lest a servile insurrection should arise; and they still retain a vivid recollection of the Virginian slave rebellion headed by the famous Nat Turner.*³⁵ There have not

* Immortalised in ‘Dred’. [Author note] He is referring to *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*, a novel authored by white US writer Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) and originally published in 1856. Available online at: <https://archive.org/details/dredtaleofgreatd01stowrich>

been wanting symptoms in more recent times of a disposition on the part of the slaves to rise in arms against their white oppressors; and how much soever many persons may deprecate a resort to violence, where is the man who will refuse to acknowledge that, in this case, it would be as justifiable as was the struggle of the Revolutionary Fathers against English tyranny? A life-time of that oppression, which it was considered so patriotic to overthrow, would be far more endurable than one hour's subjection to republican slavery is to the majority of the slaves. Does not the memory of Nat Turner possess as good a claim to be commemorated in marble as that of George Washington?³⁶ Both were patriots – the only difference between them is, that the one was a black man and the other a white; that the one was unsuccessful, and the other, instead of meeting a traitor's doom, became the saviour of his country. But let the slaveholders beware, lest, in an hour when they are sleeping in fancied security, some black Washington should exact atonement for the wrongs of his injured race by imbruing his hand in the tyrant's blood.

There is a poor blind Sampson in this land,
Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of steel,
Who may, in some grim revil, raise his hand
And shake the pillars of this commonweal,
Till the vast temple of our liberties
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies.³⁷

(To be continued.)

Chapter III The Treatment of the Slaves³⁸

During my travels with my master, I had abundant opportunity of witnessing the condition and treatment of the slaves upon the plantations in Western Georgia, and North and South Carolina. It is scarcely possible for any writer, however 'fanatically' inclined, to describe the miseries of which I was an unwilling spectator during that period of my life. How often in reading the inspired pages of Shakespeare³⁹ and Milton⁴⁰ are we conscious that even their powerful description of some awful scene in Nature fails to do justice to the reality! and, even so, no tongue, no pen which has ever sought to accomplish the task, has succeeded in daguerreotyping the abominations of that slave-system which has lowed man in the scale of created things below the level occupied by the cattle of the field, and which has made woman, his help-mate, the creature of infamies which the imagination would do well not to endeavour to realise.

Throughout the whole of our journeyings, it was a common every-day practice to see women holding and driving the plough with a child lashed to their backs like a soldier's knapsack: both the women and the infants being almost entirely denuded of dress. The least relaxation in toil was certain to bring down upon them the lash, or subject them to other kinds of brutality. Notwithstanding the orders that had been given me, and which, up to this time, I had obeyed with tolerable fidelity, I occasionally obtained secret interviews with the slaves, and received from them much information regarding their feelings, and general mode of treatment. The daily food of adult slaves,

toiling on the plantations beneath the oppressive heat of a burning sun, consists of about one pint of Indian corn, a small quantity of rice, and molasses, with a few sweet potatoes and a little cotton seed – the latter being often used as food for slaves. On many occasions I have seen a slave-driver (an overseer he would be designated in the language of politeness) take a bridle from off a horse at the plough, and flog a poor woman most mercilessly, for such a simple offence as putting down her child for a short time, while she ran round two or three furrows, and thus obtained a slight relief from the heat and the fatigue by which she was oppressed. A woman is invariably punished for the slightest neglect of her children, not from any affection felt for them by their master, but because neglect impairs their marketable value. On a large plantation, from morning till night, in one direction or another, the flogging continues; and throughout the whole of the day cries of anguish, mingled with prayers for mercy, proceed from bruised and lacerated slaves – filling the air with sorrow, and ascending up to heaven, as if to exclaim, ‘How long, O Lord, how long!’ I have sometimes felt not only sick at heart, but almost inclined to plunge into the bottomless abyss of despair and unbelief, when in what was supposed to be the very sanctuary of the Most High, I have heard men who I knew were accustomed to flog their slaves for the most trivial offences, repeat with an apparent warmth of devotion that petition for pardon which they should have been the last to utter: ‘Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.’⁴¹

In the night time, a body of men called patrols are in the habit of riding round the negro quarters of the several estates to prevent the escape of the slaves, and to detect any who may, contrary to orders, be absent from their cabins after the prescribed hour. If any slaves are discovered breaking these regulations, they are conveyed to the nearest quarters, and locked up in a cell, unless their masters are known to be in the immediate vicinity. The following morning they are examined, severely flogged, and returned to their masters, who frequently gratify their vengeful spirit by punishing them again. If the least resistance is offered by the hapless negro, half a dozen or more of the low whites are immediately called in to assist in coercing him with sticks and other weapons, and being, of course, unarmed, he is soon compelled to submit to the superior force of his cowardly assailants. I have, however, been several times amused by seeing a slave, under these circumstances, seize some weapon which lay accidentally within his reach; and without striking, or attempting to strike a blow, but simply by his determined bearing, he has caused the ruffians to run away in all directions. I presume the reason is, that cowardice and ruffianism are closely related, and invariably dwell in the same breast. In every part of North and South Carolina there are large numbers of low and drunken whites, who live almost entirely upon the charity of the planters; and who, in return for the money, food, drink, and clothing they receive, keep a watch upon the plantations and prevent the slaves from running away.

There are also some poor whites, whose limited means enable them to become slaveholders only upon a very small scale, and who do not own more than three or four negroes. These needy persons often adopt the business of slave-hunting that they may make both ends meet. They keep dogs properly trained for the purpose, and both themselves and their bloodhounds – the latter being often far less vicious than their masters – are hired by planters whose slaves have absconded. Immediately on the appearance in the newspapers of an advertisement offering a reward for the capture of a slave, the professional slave-catcher sets off in pursuit of the fugitive, in the hope of obtaining the proffered reward, the amount of which generally depends upon whether

the slave is brought in dead or alive. These rewards vary from fifty to as much as eight hundred dollars – so high a sum as the latter being given only in cases where the anger of the master is strongly excited at the slave, and he is determined, at any expense, to bring him back, that he may make a terrible example of him. In such cases the punishment is excessively severe, and commonly ends in death. Many are the sacrifices of this kind which slavery has offered up on her unrighteous altars, in the vain hope that her manacled victims might be effectually deterred from committing so great a crime as that of endeavouring to be free.

I need not occupy much space in detailing the various tortures which are inflicted upon the slaves, and in describing the ingenuity by which they are distinguished – an ingenuity in which the slaveholder prides himself as much as the Indian exults in the skill with which he wields his tomahawk. Whipping slaves to within an inch of their lives is common; while in Mississippi, Alabama, and the lower countries, generally, it is not at all unfrequent to shoot the runaway negro in the presence of a large assembly of slaves summoned from the surrounding plantations. Upon these occasions the man is sometimes tied to a tree and deliberately fired at, as an amateur sportsman in a shooting-gallery fires at ‘the bull’s eye.’ Upon other occasions (after the model of a Spanish bull-fight) he is turned loose in the middle of a large space, with numbers of white men armed with loaded guns stationed at every point around him. It is deemed capital sport to shoot the poor fellow down as he runs about in the vain hope of discovering some way of escape.

To compel one of a mob of whites to aid in the coercion of a single refractory slave is considered a meritorious act; and when a poor solitary negro, having no strength in his arm, and no weapon with which to defend himself, is subdued, it is not unusual to hear the planters and drivers boast of the number of times they struck him down, or how many cuts they inflicted upon him with their knives. The cowardly act of a number of men, armed with knives, sticks, and stones, assembling to overpower a defenceless slave, is regarded as a most heroic deed, the miserable cowards imagining that no leader of a forlorn hope, no courageous traveller contending against the wild beast of the forest, ever exhibited more courage than they. Such are among the wretched deceits with which they delude themselves! such the egregious vanities with which slavery has puffed up her ignorant and degraded agents!

I must add, that if a runaway slave is fortunate enough to escape death, a part of his punishment almost invariably consists in branding him with certain marks in the presence of the other slaves in the neighbourhood. The advertisements which appear in nearly every southern newspaper afford abundant evidence of the barbarous nature and general prevalence of these practices.

As I have before stated, during my travels with my master I availed myself of every opportunity to converse with the most intelligent slaves with whom I came in contact. Everywhere I found an intense desire for freedom animating their breasts. Frequently, where the eternal deportment betokened the greatest cheerfulness and contentment, I found the inward sense of injury to be the keenest, and the determination to seize the first favourable opportunity to strike for freedom the strongest. This profound dissimulation of feeling is considered by the slaves to be a matter of justifiable policy, because they are well aware that if their real thoughts and purposes were known to their masters, their lot would become still more unbearable, and their chances of escape become fewer and more remote. That negro must, indeed, be demented who would breathe the faintest whisper of freedom in the ears of an oppressor of his race.

Opportunities, however, are not wanting for the interchange between the slaves of those burning thoughts of liberty which glow like volcanic fires within their breasts. They are permitted to assemble periodically in each other's huts for purposes of religious worship, when the more intelligent and devotional among them are accustomed to offer up vocal prayer to God, and deliver a brief scriptural exhortation to their brethren. Upon such occasions their worship is a strange but not unnatural blending of ardent religious emotion with intense aspirations after their own deliverance from slavery. I have frequently listened with feelings of profound interest, such as could only be engendered by fellowship of suffering, to their fervent supplications to the throne of Almighty Justice for the redemption of our captive race from the bondage which we have so long endured. No such petitions are, of course, ever offered up to the Most High until it is absolutely certain that no white man is within hearing, as such acts of worship would inevitably be denounced as constructive rebellion, and be visited with condign punishment. In the simple expositions of Scripture given at these devotional gatherings, some curious commentaries are made upon certain passages, very different to the orthodox interpretation, and evidently suggested to the speakers by the circumstances in which they and their hearers are placed. Much stress is laid upon such texts as 'the first shall be last and the last shall be first,'⁴² 'the day of your redemption draweth nigh,'⁴³ &c. – passages which are construed into having a primary application to the enslaved children of America, and into foreshadowing, by the inspiration of prophecy, the result of the national slave insurrection which may one day come to pass. I can solemnly testify, from my own personal knowledge, that these elements of discontent are rapidly gaining ground on the plantations of the South. Bitter experience has taught the slaves the necessity of concealing their real sentiments in an impenetrable reserve. But let not the slaveholders trust too confidently to external appearances; for if they had the same means of judging of the true feelings of the slaves towards themselves as I have had, they would know that the day of their adversity would be seized by the blacks as the divinely-appointed opportunity for effecting their deliverance. And I should not be surprised if, at any hour, the conflagration were to burst forth.

(To be continued.)

Chapter IV The Negro Martyr⁴⁴

In the last chapter I alluded to the terrible examples which are sometimes made of runaway slaves, after their capture has been effected. It often happens that the poor fugitive, baffled in his efforts to be free, grows desperate, and, in the vain hope of escaping, strikes one or more of his captors. This offence is, in almost every instance, visited with the punishment of death; and on these occasions the most horrible scenes are enacted – scenes the actors in which must have become de-humanized ere they could sustain the parts which they play. I will describe one, amongst several cases, which came under my own immediate observation.

In the year 1838 a slave, with whom I was intimately acquainted, and whose name was Frank Jeffreys, endeavoured to effect his escape. He had worked for some years as a fireman on board steam vessels traversing the Columbian; and having long groaned

under the weight of his chains, he determined to make an effort to snap them asunder. He succeeded in getting a considerable distance; but he was unfortunately captured about four miles from Walnut Hill, in the state of Mississippi. The poor fellow was conveyed to the gaol, where he lay for some hours in silence, solitude, and darkness, brooding over his misfortunes, and contemplating with dread the certain punishment which awaited him on his return home. While he was in this gloomy mood, the gaoler brought him his food; and he could not resist the temptation to endeavour once more to effect his escape. He immediately knocked down the gaoler, and made off with all possible speed. By the aid of swift horses, and still swifter bloodhounds, he was speedily re-taken, and again deposited in the prison. But, in the meanwhile, the fact of his having struck the gaoler – a white man – had been circulated throughout the whole district, and had occasioned intense excitement. A numerous and infuriated mob soon assembled around the prison, and demanded that the slave should be given up to them, a request which was refused by the authorities with an air that intimated, ‘if you like to take him you can have him.’ The ominous noise from without reached the ears of the unhappy prisoner, who knew well enough that if the demons, who were yelling in the streets like hyenas thirsting for blood, should once obtain admittance, his doom would be inevitably sealed, and he would suffer an agonising death – a death rendered terrible by an ingenuity of torture rivalling the Inquisition in its palmiest days. He listened with breathless anxiety to the heavy blows which resounded upon the door of the gaol, and his soul sickened as he heard the cracking of the timbers, and the shouts of triumph which succeeded. The door was at length forced open, and the brutal mob entered, their lawless proceedings having been quietly acquiesced in by the constituted authorities. Indeed, the only consideration which induced the latter for a moment to hesitate, ere they assumed an attitude of neutrality, was the possibility of an action for damages, for the value of the slave, being brought by his master against some of the rioters. The fate of the unhappy man did not weigh a feather in the balance. Jeffreys, well knowing what was about to happen, grew desperate, and so resolutely did he defend himself that unfortunately two white ruffians were killed in the affray. The strength of a Samson would have barely sufficed to enable one man to contend against such a host of blood-thirsty Philistines;⁴⁵ and at length, covered with blood, he was struck down amid shouts of triumph, curses, and imprecations. He was instantly manacled, brought forth from the gaol, and led to an open space about two miles from the town. The original offence of striking down a white man was a capital crime in the estimation of the disciples of Judge Lynch;⁴⁶ but the subsequent slaying of two other members of the dominant race had aggravated his guilt in an infinite degree in their eyes, and the mere hanging, or shooting of the wretched man in the ordinary manner, would not now suffice to glut their vengeance, or satisfy their savage natures. After a conference they, the white men, who, according to southern philosophers, are so much superior, intellectually and morally, to the degraded negro, deliberately determined to *burn the poor slave alive*. A spot suitable for this worse than heathenish sacrifice was selected, and the now unresisting victim was bound to the stump of a tree. Slaves were despatched in every direction to gather pine knots, brush, and other light woods, which were piled up around the bleeding man. There he was left for a time, while the slaves from the surrounding estates were sent for. A terribly agonising death for Frank Jeffreys was not all that the slaveholders wanted; there was that to be achieved, which in America has been deemed a sufficient apology for the foulest crimes – *an example!* The masters cheerfully granted a holiday to their slaves, who were driven up in troops from every quarter to

witness the barbarous death of one of their own number for simply asserting and defending his outraged rights as the Revolutionary Fathers had done. Every precaution was taken to prevent any outbreak on the part of the negroes, should their feelings of manhood chance to be quickened into life by the scene, and they be inspired to attempt the rescue of the victim, or to avenge his consignment to a lingering death. An extraordinary feast was provided for them; abundance of the best food was set before them; and five or six barrels of whiskey were opened on the ground for their unrestrained use. A stranger contemplating the scene might have imagined that some great day of rejoicing had arrived – who could have supposed that the entertainment was provided that the slaves might make merry over the cruel murder of one of their number? Having thus deadened the moral sensibilities of the negroes by a copious application of ardent spirits, the brutal mob set fire to the wood; and that the cries of the victim might be drowned, the slaves were commanded to dance and sing around the blazing pile in the midst of which the living, suffering body of a fellow creature, and a fellow bondsman, was being consumed by the devouring element. I know not what their real feelings or inmost thoughts were when they thus took part in the murder of one whom they should have died to protect; but I thank God I was not called upon to do more than gaze upon the hideous scene from a distance. Mixed, however, with the indescribable loathing which I have experienced, was some slight feeling of satisfaction; there were some sweet drops in that most bitter cup. I turned my eyes from the frenzied mob, drunk with passion as well as with liquor, to the solitary being who, among the assembled hundreds, was the only individual that maintained the dignity of a man. Neither before nor after the fire reached his body did a sigh, or a groan escape his lips; not a word of supplication for mercy to any human being did he utter. He knew the disposition of his tormentors, and with a martyr's heroism resigned his body to the flames; while his countenance indicated a triumphant conviction that there was a spirit within him, which no material fire could destroy, no earthly tyrants subdue. There stood poor Frank Jeffreys, chained to the tree stump, his body bound, but his spirit free; his human frame suffering the acutest torments, but the divine essence within him triumphing over death and the grave, and about to enjoy a glorious emancipation. There, too, stood some hundreds of white men – their bodies free, but oh! how enslaved in soul, how degraded by the bondage of base passions, how sunken and lost in the service of the Prince of darkness, and the Mammon of unrighteousness! Here, also, were assembled a great crowd of the down-trodden coloured race, whom God had created 'free and equal,' and whom Christ had redeemed by the sacrifice of his own life, but who had been deprived of all the dignity and all the blessedness of their natural destiny by the cruel selfishness of their stronger fellow-men. And these men – while proudly boasting of their political and personal freedom, while holding up their liberal and democratic institutions as worthy of the world's imitation, while laughing to scorn crowned tyrants and imperial despotisms, and while making a noisy and public demonstration of their religion, as if they were the chosen depositaries of the Christian faith – could perpetrate a tragedy which no absolute government would dare to commit, which no monarchical ruler could be found sufficiently cruel to sanction. The truth is that these slaveholders, with all their professions of democracy, are the greatest tyrants on the face of the earth – the intensest hatred to the very principle upon which human freedom is based being enshrined in their hearts. They are the slaves of every evil passion, which, after all, is a worse servitude than that endured by the negroes; they are the victims of a moral death far more to be dreaded than the consuming flames of an earthly fire.

The fate of the poor slave whose dying scene I have endeavoured to portray furnishes another illustration of the extreme measures which the slaveholders are impelled to adopt that they may terrify the slaves into an unquestioning submission to their will, and that they may make the failure to escape so terrible a calamity that only a slave possessing the most undaunted courage would care to make the attempt. 'Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God,' said Patrick Henry,⁴⁷ a great southern statesman, whose famous maxim, *when applied to the oppression of white men*, is universally applauded by his fellow-countrymen. Woe be to the slave, however, who gives to the maxim a wider application! Resistance to tyranny on his part is a crime which can only be expiated under the severest strokes of the lash, or by lighting up such a martyr's fire as that in which Frank Jeffreys perished.

(*To be continued.*)

Chapter V How General Ripley Helped Me To Be Free⁴⁸

In 1836 I was hired out by master as steward on board the steam vessel A. M. Phillips, of Wheeling, Virginia; and for my services, in this capacity, I received forty-five dollars per month. While in this and similar situations my owner was in the habit of supplying me with a small stock of clothing, which cost him about twenty dollars a year. With this trifling deduction, the whole of my wages went into his pocket as so much clear profit, arising from his proprietorship of me; so that, at this period, he derived from my services a clear annual income of about 113*l.* As steward, I was, however, in the habit of receiving frequent gratuities from the passengers, who sometimes rewarded my uniformly studied civility in a very liberal manner. I did my best to render myself useful to them, trespassing often to a considerable extent upon the hours of rest which nature demanded, that I might obtain larger gratuities. The whole of this money I contrived to keep from my master. Had he been as avaricious as the majority of slaveholders, or had he formed any idea of the amount I really received, he would, doubtless, have demanded it from me; it being the general custom of masters who hire out their slaves to take from them the last farthing of their earnings, and then display their generosity by throwing back a few cents, or picayune, to the man by whose skill or industry the whole was obtained. The money I derived from these sources, I still further increased by availing myself of every opportunity of trading on my own account with the Indians on the banks of the different rivers I was accustomed to traverse. I was in the habit of purchasing at New Orleans, trinkets, gunpowder and shot, which I secretly stowed away on board the vessel; and while the boat was lying at the river's side, I was accustomed to steal on shore unobserved, and traffic with the Indians, bringing back in return for my commodities, sometimes furs and at other times money. Whatever I thus purchased I brought again to Orleans upon the return voyage and re-sold. By this species of thrift, and dexterous scheming, I managed for a long period to amass for myself no less a sum than 10*l.* a month, my possession of which I took great care to conceal from the knowledge of every human being. I felt a considerably degree of security in this course of trading (which would have been impracticable in almost any other slave), because it was well known that my master was in the habit of commissioning me to trade for him, and had I been

discovered trafficking with the Indians, it would probably have been supposed that I was acting as my master's factor instead of trading on my own account.

My growing prosperity revived within my breast the intense longing to be free, which I had felt even when a child of ten years of age, and which had grown with my growth. I, accordingly, resolved to make an effort to purchase my freedom. In pursuance of this object I waited upon my master one morning, and offered him a thousand dollars for my manumission, which sum I represented I could obtain from a certain source to be paid in monthly instalments, he still receiving periodically a specified sum for my services until the last instalment had been paid, and I was no longer a slave. My master did not manifest the slightest feeling of anger, but merely laughed at the proposal, and said that he would not sell me at any price. This ended the matter for the present.

Pecuniary emolument was not the only advantage I derived from my studious endeavour to give satisfaction to the passengers. By these means I obtained the friendship of many influential white men; among them being General Ripley, for whom I had occasionally carried messages, letters, and packages to various places. The assiduity and faithfulness with which I fulfilled these commissions gained me the esteem, and, as I had reason to hope the friendship of that gentleman. Undaunted, therefore, by previous failures, I proposed to the General to buy me from my master, so that I might subsequently have an opportunity to re-purchase myself from him. He willingly consented to do so, and waited upon my master for the purpose. He, as I was afterwards informed by the General, consented to sell me for eighteen hundred dollars; but the General would not bid higher than fifteen hundred, which sum my master, after some haggling, consented to take. My professed friend having communicated to me the result of the interview, I, at once, and with joyful confidence, paid into his hands seven hundred dollars towards my own purchase. Some little time afterwards, Mr. de Grasse, a New Orleans lawyer, agreed to advance the residue of the amount requisite for my purchase upon condition that he should retain my ownership until I had earned sufficient upon the steamers running to New Orleans and Mobile to repay him what he had so advanced on my behalf. A negotiation was opened to bring about this result; and I waited for its accomplishment with the deeper interest. I called upon General Ripley once or twice in the course of each month to ascertain how the matter progressed; but was put off from time to time with a variety of flimsy excuses, such as the pressure of his own business, his inability to see my master, &c., &c. This evasive conduct actually lasted a whole year, during which period he systematically endeavoured to keep hope alive within my breast, no doubt in the expectation that I should entrust more dollars – the fruits of my unwearied industry – to his dishonest keeping; but fortunately for me, I was seized with the apprehension that I had been duped, and determined for the future to act as my own banker. At the expiration of the year my occupation was changed and I removed to the St. Charles's Hotel, New Orleans, where I was engaged as receiving porter. Tired, and somewhat disgusted by the delay in the settlement of my purchase, I obtained an interview with Mr. de Grasse, and induced him to wait upon the General, and, if possible, obtain a definite answer upon the subject. The General coolly informed the lawyer that 'he thought I was better off as a slave than I should be as a free man, and that he considered it most imprudent to permit slaves to have their freedom, as they would, when emancipated, accumulate property, and obtain an amount of power which might render them troublesome to the white community.' This expression of sentiments so opposite to those which the General had previously held to me personally, caused my blood to

boil with indignation and contempt. But suppressing these feelings, and still hoping that he might render to me a modicum of justice, I went to the General myself and solicited a return of my seven hundred dollars, a request which he treated with the utmost disdain; while, at the same time, he generously promised 'to keep an eye upon me, and befriend me whenever an occasion presented itself.' That opportunity, however, as may be readily imagined, never arrived; and not one farthing could I subsequently obtain of that money which had occasioned me so much toil and anxiety to earn, and which I had with such perfect confidence placed in the keeping of a man, whose high position in the American army, and whose distinguished reputation as an American citizen, appeared to afford ample security for his trustworthiness and sense of honour. But I afterwards discovered that the robbery, of which I had been the victim, was only a fair illustration of the miserable dishonesty, and low trickery, which the whites, of all classes, in the southern states, consider themselves justified in adopting towards the unfortunate negroes. I had at the time a keen perception of the moral degradation which slavery, in this and other ways, inflicts upon the characters of the man-stealers. Indeed, it often completely effaces from their moral natures every lineament of the Divine image. Although myself only a degraded slave – an article of merchandise, a creature who might be bought and sold in the public auction mart as a 'chattel' – I still possessed such a Divine sense of the dignity of my own manhood, and such a conviction of the moral superiority of my race, that I would not, at that moment, have exchanged positions with General Ripley, with all his honours, wealth, and aristocratic connexions. Far better was it, I thought, to be the down-trodden victim of a compulsory servitude, one which entailed dishonour only on the proud oppressor, than to be the slave of base passions and selfish appetites. The three millions and a half of negroes are not the only slaves in America: –

Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard and stronger
Than the colour of our kind

Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours.⁴⁹

Were it necessary I could relate no less than twenty similar instances, which subsequently came under my own observation, of men who were regarded as most respectable members of the community, and were held in high estimation by their fellow-citizens, but who yet, without the slightest compunction, were guilty of breaches of good faith, and acts of the grossest dishonesty towards their slaves, which, had they taken place in the business relations of one white man with another, would have occasioned the banishment of the offender from all reputable society, and would, perhaps, have caused him to be consigned to a lengthened residence in the state prison.

Mr. Muzey, of Yazoo, in Mississippi, was owner of a slave named Robert Carter. He entered into an agreement with the poor fellow to grant him his freedom for the sum of nine hundred dollars. Carter was employed as cook on board a steamer plying up the river. The arrangement was that he was to pay his master fifty dollars per

month as the value of his services, and all that he could make besides, which would be chiefly made by the sale of his ‘slush’ and cold victuals among the poorer deck passengers, was to form a fund for the purchase of his own freedom. The poor slave, inspired by the glorious prospect of deliverance from captivity, laboured with the most commendable perseverance and industry, and practised the greatest thriftiness, habitually depriving himself of every little luxury and comfort with which he could possibly dispense. In course of time he had paid his master, in various amounts, no less a sum than eight hundred and fifty dollars, leaving only fifty more to be raised to complete the entire purchase money. Although Carter had fulfilled his part of the agreement with the utmost fidelity, and he naturally regarded himself as being all but a free man, yet his master wickedly trumped up a false and frivolous charge against the poor fellow of intending to run away, and actually sold him to a slave-broker, by whom he was resold to a planter living in the low countries, where he was compelled to work upon the sugar and rice plantations. This description of labour is of the severest kind, and must have been most acutely felt by him, because it was diametrically opposed in its nature to his former occupation of cook on board steam boats. Of him it might be truly said: –

Gone, gone, – sold and gone
 To the rice swamp dank and lone,
 Where the slave-whip ceaseless swings,
 Where the noisome insect sings,
 Where the fever demon strews,
 Poison with the falling dews,
 Where the sticky sunbeams glare
 Through the hot and misty air.⁵⁰

While I furnish these examples of a numerous class of cases in which masters have hypocritically beguiled their slaves into saving large amounts of money only to plunder them of every farthing, and leave them to utter desolation and despair, I cheerfully admit that I have known of many instances in which the honest feelings of the man have risen superior to the despicable morality of the planter, and in which the slaveholder has honourably carried out the agreement for the manumission of his slave. It is far from my wish to create the impression that all slaveholders are animated by the sordid and unprincipled spirit, which characterised the conduct of General Ripley and Mr. Muzey. I am anxious to be scrupulously just in all that I state, and to present the bright as well as the gloomy side of the picture.

(To be continued.)

Chapter VI Some Phases of Life in New Orleans and Natchez⁵¹

While officiating as waiter at the St. Charles Hotel, I gained much knowledge of the news and current topics of the day by listening to the conversation of the guests, and reading unobserved the various newspapers that fell in my way. It would, indeed, have been fool-hardy on my part had I opened my lips upon social or political subjects to a Southerner; but to a foreigner, or a stranger from the North, I would

sometimes speak with comparative freedom when I became satisfied of their favourable disposition towards the slaves. But even upon these rare occasions I cautiously avoided any manifestation of my desire to be free, and any expression of sympathy with those excellent persons whom I knew to be labouring for the emancipation of my race. I availed myself of every opportunity of conversing with Europeans, especially Englishmen; and eagerly sought for information respecting that Paradise of my imagination – Great Britain. I listened with wonder and admiration to what I occasionally heard regarding the treatment of the black man in that country. Familiar as I was with the frightful prejudice against colour prevailing in the United States, I could scarcely realise the idea that in England a negro enjoys precisely the same advantages as a member of the Anglo Saxon race.

Having been so cruelly deceived in my efforts to be free by citizens of the United States it will not be thought surprising that I acquired a deep disgust, and even hatred for the entire white population of that country, and all their political institutions. I embraced every opportunity to infuse the same feeling into the minds of all the slaves with whom I became acquainted; and was most assiduous in pointing out to them the difference between the condition of the coloured population of Republican America, and that of even the very poorest classes in the aristocratic dominions of Queen Victoria.⁵² Indeed, at that time my most ardent desire was the overthrow of the slaveholding Republic, and the establishment, in its place, of a coloured monarchical government – a desire which is shared almost universally by American slaves. Nothing, indeed, is more hateful to the ears of a negro than the word ‘Republic,’ a system of government which, in his mind, is identified with every conceivable form of cruelty, injustice, and immorality. Such is the feeling which the abuse of any institution, however good it may be in theory, or when rightly applied, necessarily produces in uninformed minds. Some exceedingly strange notions are entertained by the slaves respecting monarchical institutions: and very curious, although erroneous inferences in favour of that form of government are drawn by them from the Scriptures and other sources. They regard the establishment of a monarchy among the Jews as a proof that a kingly rule is ordained by the Deity, and that every other mode of governing must be in opposition to His will. Another circumstance which tends to predispose them in favour of royalty, is the fact that their own ancestors were the subjects of kings and princes; and they firmly believe that the descendant of one of the former rulers of their race will be the monarch of the new kingdom which they imagine will one day be established on the shores of Africa. The love of nationality, and the aspiration to be politically great, are as strongly developed in the negro-slave of America as in the Pole or the Hungarian. And his faith in the realisation of his hopes may be fittingly compared to the belief, unshaken by many centuries of exile, entertained by the Jews that their scattered tribes will again be united, and that their long-lost nationality will once more be consolidated on the sacred soil of the Promised Land.

While engaged as waiter in the St. Charles’ Hotel, I had ample opportunity of witnessing the habits of American society. At that celebrated establishment large dinner parties, masked balls, and similar entertainments were of constant occurrence. As I still retained my position as a favourite servant, less restraint was laid upon me than upon most slaves similarly situated. During these carnivals of folly and dissipation I was a constant spectator of scenes not at all creditable to American manners and morality. A night of debauchery was commonly ended by the most fierce

and serious quarrels among some of the guests; and an evening's entertainment was frequently followed by a duel in the morning. The violence and impetuosity of the Southern planters upon these occasions would greatly surprise those who were not accustomed to see them wield the slave-whip upon their own estates. In the midst of mirth and jollity it is by no means uncommon to behold a glass suddenly thrown by one guest at the head of another, which is immediately returned by a decanter being hurled with the greatest force at the assailant; bowie knives are then drawn; fierce encounters take place; and one man loses a portion of an ear, another receives a gash in the cheek, while another, perhaps, is stabbed in a more vital part. Two or three other quarrels usually arise out of the first, and when the party break up, some go home with dislocated teeth and others are covered with blood streaming from gaping wounds; while the horrors of the night often give place in the grey dawn of the morning to a more fatal conflict with rifles or revolvers in the open air. The wicked practice of duelling is so common in the South that the man who refuses a challenge is instantly branded as a coward, and loses his position in society. Such is the pernicious influence which this barbarous custom exercises that I have myself, on several occasions, seen the daughters of respectable parents urging their lovers to avenge some real or fancied insult offered to themselves at a ball, and demanding that the man to whom they were betrothed should meet the obnoxious individual in deadly strife. If none of the exciting amusements which I have described are afforded to the guests they are compelled to devise some other method of spending the time agreeably. One of the most popular of the Bacchanalian amusements which they adopt as a *dernier resort* is what is called 'having a lark with the niggers.' One of the company will watch an opportunity, and when the back of a poor black waiter is turned, will excite a laugh by throwing a glass of wine or hot coffee over him. If the unfortunate man turns round another *gentleman* will strike him a sharp blow on his head or back, sometimes causing the blood to flow. His exclamations, first of surprise and then of pain, produce shouts of laughter among men who profess to be the *élite* of this well-educated and highly civilised community. The present of a few cents is supposed to be an ample compensation to the poor negro for the indignity and suffering inflicted upon him by his heartless tormentors.

While at New Orleans I frequently passed by the slave-prison, which is situated in a part of the town called the Lower Fauborg, and near which the slave auctions take place. The mental agony occasioned by the prospect of a final separation on this side of the grave between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, is so great that any human heart which had not become petrified by familiarity with this inhuman custom would either be melted with grief or would burst with indignation. The cries of the victims torn one by one from the family circle to be separated for ever are often piteous in the extreme; and what astonished me was that such a system could possibly be endurable to any being wearing the form of humanity. But nevertheless, 'use is second nature,' and these harrowing spectacles are witnessed by crowds of white men, not only with soulless indifference, but likewise with jocular and merriment; for even these scenes of desolation and woe afford material for ribald jests and pointless jokes. When a slave is brought out of his den to be placed upon the auction block it is a common practice for the driver to give him unexpectedly a sharp cut with a whip, causing him to jump and bound that he may exhibit his physical proportions in the same manner as a horse would be compelled to do under similar

circumstances. The grotesqueness of the attitudes which the poor slaves involuntarily assume upon the application of the whip occasions bursts of merriment, and produces brutal jokes from the bystanders. I have heard in America strong expressions of abhorrence of the levity of English mobs at the execution of criminals, but they form the very refuse of English society; while the groups surrounding the Southern auction blocks are frequently composed of the most wealthy, influential, and (professedly) Christian men of the state.

In 1837, I was removed by my master from the St. Charles' Hotel, and hired as steward on board the *Huntsville*. In this capacity I remained one year at an annual salary of about seven hundred and sixty dollars, or about 150*l*. In one of our voyages I happened to be at Natchez when the news of the Canadian rebellion arrived. As the report of this event travelled from the British frontier, and passed from village to village, from town to town, and state to state, it wonderfully increased in magnitude, so much so, that when it reached Natchez it startled us by the announcement that the rebels were completely triumphant, and that Canada had successfully hoisted the flag of independence.⁵³ The somewhat slumbering but still malignant enmity borne by the slaveholding South to anti-slavery England now blazed forth most furiously. Large were the real, and much greater the promised contributions of men and money to the cause of the rebels. To one who, like myself, was acquainted with the intrinsic value of the vaunted courage and prowess of these men, their inflated declamation was most ludicrous. There was not a man among them – from the highest militia officer down to the more humble but equally valiant tailor's apprentice – who was not a Pompey⁵⁴ or a Julius Caesar⁵⁵ in his own braggart estimation; and there was not one of these mock heroes who was not ready to shoulder his musket, buckle on his knapsack, and march to Canada to fight, and, if needs be, to die for Canadian independence. To all appearance, the sun of England was about to set for ever. How could it be otherwise? With such tremendous odds against her, it was, alas! but too evident that it only required the arrival of the pot-house heroes of Natchez and other Southern towns upon Canadian soil to dispossess Great Britain of every foot of territory on the North American continent, and to humble her pride as it had never been previously humbled since William the Conqueror⁵⁶ dealt a death-blow at Saxon power. But to the reproach of Temperance, it must be confessed that she proved herself by no means so potential in exciting this patriotic ardour as the jolly good Bacchus; for by far the most valorous descendants of the high and mighty Sir John Falstaff⁵⁷ were to be found in the grog-shops of Natchez, which were completely thronged with the choicest spirits of Freedom. There they were accustomed to sit night after night, discussing the feats of bravery which they one day meant to perform, and exhibiting their knowledge of military strategy by drawing sundry water-marks upon the well-worn and well-soaked tables.

At this memorable period a neglect of my customary caution in expressing my feelings involved me in a serious difficulty, which had well-nigh cost me my life. Canada, as a well-known land of refuge for escaped slaves – as the chosen home of negro freedom – had naturally obtained a high place in my affections; and I knew a moral certainty existed, that if it once became independent, it would be absorbed into the United States, in which case (although it might not actually become a slave-state) its value as a place of escape for the American bondsman would be utterly destroyed. In conversing with a fellow-slave – a steward of another boat – I expressed my wish that in the pending struggle

the British would be victorious. Unfortunately, my remark was overheard by two white men, who immediately reported to an intoxicated mob that I had raised my voice against the patriots, and in favour of the English tyrants, and that I was a black traitor. I was at once furiously attacked with knives and bludgeons by the mob, whose number was speedily increased to 200, every one of whom exhibited a strong disposition to inflict upon me some mortal injury. Fortunately, some gentlemen, to whom I was known, interfered, at the peril of their own lives, and rescued me from the hands of the cowardly and blood-thirsty crowd, who would undoubtedly have sacrificed me to their frenzied hatred of England. To this hour I retain upon my head and other parts of my body the scars left by the deep wounds I received upon that occasion. Although my life had thus been almost miraculously saved, such was the strength of the popular feeling against me that it was necessary to remove immediately from Natchez; and accordingly I was conveyed to New Orleans, and kept for two months in Dr. Stone's hospital. My departure, however, was only permitted at the intercession of several influential gentlemen, and upon a distinct understanding that I should never again plant my feet in the streets of Natchez. Although I continued in the situation of steward on board a steam-vessel plying to that port, I never went on shore there for upwards of two years, but at the expiration of that period, the affair had so far blown over that I ventured to land, although at some considerable peril.

In 1838 I was hired as steward on board the Walnut-hill steamer, receiving the same wages as in my last service. While in this capacity – in June of that year – I witnessed one of those awful violations of the laws of God and man, which are sometimes inflicted upon the persons of slaves, but the narration of which is so astounding as almost to defy credence. The name of our cook was Jacob Benson. One day we were going from Memphis to New Orleans, having on board, among other passengers, a number of poor German emigrants. One of these emigrants, a young woman, under the pressure of hunger, made her way to the kitchen, and begged from Benson some cold victuals. A little harmless conversation ensued between them; but while the cook was thoughtlessly laughing and chatting with the German girl, he was observed by some of the deck hands and the lower class of American passengers, who immediately raised an outcry – distorting the inoffensive conduct of the poor black man into a serious breach of morality. No charge could be more calculated to excite the spirit of cruelty and vengeance among the whites. My poor friend Jacob was instantly mobbed by a gang of infuriated ruffians, dragged out of his kitchen and hoisted on deck, where he was shamefully beaten before the steam furnace. At the time the riot began the cabin passengers were dining in the saloon where I was waiting upon them. Hearing the disturbance they immediately went on deck, and on being informed of the charge against the cook they took a prominent part in the attacks which were made upon him. Not a soul on board dared to raise either his hand or his voice on behalf of the poor fellow. At length wounds and bruises would no longer satisfy the brutal and murderous feelings of the excited mob; and they accordingly bound the bleeding slave hand and foot, and deliberately cast him into the Mississippi. I stood by the side of the boat, watched the last spasmodic struggles of the dying man, and listened to his gurgling cries until the smooth waters of the mighty Mississippi closed over him, and he had disappeared for ever. My eyes grew dim, my blood curdled, and my soul sickened as I gazed upon the awful scene. But I did not dare, either by look or voice, to express sympathy with the murdered man; and was compelled, on the consummation of the tragedy, to return to the cabin and wait upon those who had

sacrificed the life of an innocent fellow-creature – my friend and brother in bondage. The murderers returned to their potations, and sought to drown in their cups their secret consciousness of the horrible iniquity of the deed which they had perpetrated – a deed that could not be concealed from their own consciences, or hidden from the eye of an avenging God, even by the dark bosom of the mother of waters. And the dread day will come when the voice of the All-Just One shall ring in their ears the dreadful inquiry, ‘Cain, Cain, where is Abel thy brother?’⁵⁸

(To be continued.)

Chapter VII Southern Conventions and Slaveholding Politics⁵⁹

In 1839, I left the Walnut Hill steam vessel, and went to the city of St. Louis, where I was engaged as steward and runner at the Planter’s Hotel. Part of my business here consisted in going on board steam vessels immediately on their arrival, and acting as touter for my employers. At first I was paid fifty-six dollars per month, but my services became so profitable to the hotel, that, in the course of two or three months, my wages were advanced to seventy-five dollars per month, or at the rate of 180*l.* per annum, the largest sum my master ever received on my account.

During the period I remained at the Planters’ Hotel, several conventions were held among the slaveholders of Mississippi, and many other slave states, for the purpose of considering the best means of preventing the escape of slaves, who, for a long time, had run away with such frequency without being re-captured as to entail upon many planters rather serious losses. A variety of most stringent resolutions were passed; many violent speeches were delivered; and petitions to the Legislatures of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois were adopted, praying them to revise their laws relating to slavery, and calling upon them to inflict heavy punishments upon persons found harbouring, or in any way promoting the escape of slave property. These conventions were attended by nearly all the largest slaveholders in America. It filled my mind with disgust immeasurable, to hear men who were steeped in robbery and guilt, themselves assume the air, and employ the language, of virtuous and deeply-wronged citizens. A stranger gazing on the scene would have imagined that they were men groaning under some intolerable burdens; or that they were patriots nobly endeavouring to relieve their country from the plots of unscrupulous marauders and disturbers of the public peace. Permission had been given to several coloured men to work upon the United States’ mail boats in various capacities. For this privilege they paid a license fee of seven dollars a year, and found security for their good behaviour. The latter regulation was quite unnecessary, as these poor fellows were a very quiet and respectable body of men. Several of them, and among others three of the names of Delaney, M’Cradock, and Wilson – were accused of aiding the escape of certain slaves. The planters immediately convened a meeting upon the subject, and publicly offered a thousand dollars for Wilson’s head. Wilson was then working on a boat plying between Cincinnati and St. Louis; and for a long time previously he had been doing a thriving business, and was reputed to be worth twenty thousand dollars. The proclamation of outlawry, however, compelled him to abandon his home and business, and to take up his abode at Cincinnati, where, I believe, he rented a small store, and succeeded in escaping

the fate which had been reserved for him. Delaney, having previously left St. Louis, also escaped slaveholding vengeance; but he was warned (although the warning was scarcely needed), never again to enter that port. The general belief among disinterested observers was that these harsh and tyrannical proceedings rested upon no more satisfactory foundation than mere suspicion and rumour, and that of the vaguest kind. The circumstance, however, awoke the planters to a sense of the danger to be apprehended from the contact of the slaves with the free blacks; and accordingly, the latter were removed from all situations on board the vessels in the river. Worse than this, a law was passed which enacted that if these proscribed children of labour returned to the slave states, they should suffer incarceration in the nearest prison. They were then to be required to furnish legal proofs of their freedom; and if unable to do so, they were to be sold as slaves. Moreover, even if their title to be free could be satisfactorily demonstrated, and yet they were unable to pay the gaol fees, together with the fines imposed upon them, they were to be sold by public auction to meet these infamous charges. Under this iniquitous law – which was not unfrequently stretched to its utmost limits, and even beyond them – many free coloured men suffered a long imprisonment before they could release themselves; and not a few of them were consigned to a merciless bondage from which death alone would deliver them.

My master at length required my services for his own individual use; and removed me from the Planters' Hotel to his house at Nashville. The State Legislature was then assembled in the city; and he was desirous of giving to the members of that body a series of splendid entertainments. He had so high an opinion of my integrity, and business qualifications, that he was accustomed to place the whole management of these banquetings in my hands, and to require all his domestic slaves to obey me as they would himself. During these entertainments I was, of course, almost constantly in the apartment, and was an eager spectator and auditor of all that passed. The most frequent topic of conversation was the alleged increasing audacity of the free coloured population of the Northern States, and the danger of taking slaves at all north of Mason and Dixon's line.*⁶⁰ This was gratifying intelligence to me, for I intuitively felt that as the free coloured population had, to a certain extent, a common battle to fight, the success of the one class must promote the emancipation of the other. The disposition of the coloured race generally to take up arms against the Americans, was argued from the promptitude and enthusiasm with which the fugitive slaves, and other negroes in Canada, prepared to fight against the Canadian and pseudo-American patriots, and in favour of British supremacy in Canada.† Some of the Canadian patriots were present at my master's dinners; and caused much amusement among the company by their exaggerated descriptions of the droll figure which, they alleged, the blacks cut in the red coats worn in the British army; but I thought of the ludicrous appearance presented by many of the southern militia regiments, whose harmless displays on the peaceful parade-ground I had witnessed, and chuckled in

* The boundary line between the free and the slave States. – ED. [Author's note]

† This is an illustration of the state of feeling existing among the negroes (both bond and free) which 'the Hon.' Mr. Wise, the Governor of Virginia, would do well to meditate upon ere he again talks about 'their faithful slaves' taking up arms in defence of southern rights. – ED. [Author's note]

my turn. With increase of wine came increase of valour; and cowardly men became heroes – in their own estimation. Indeed, to such a towering height did their courage mount, that they went so far as to boast that if they had only raised the old familiar slave-whip (that object of terror to the slaves), every one of the free coloured men in the British army would have fled in dismay! But I could not reconcile this braggadocio with the intense alarm which had been previously expressed at the increasing boldness of the free coloured population of the north, and the hostile part which, it was feared, the blacks would take against the South in the event of internal commotion, or war with some foreign power. Besides, if the Southern arm be so strong, and Southern prowess so indomitable, how is it, I thought, that when these bravest of the brave went to hunt down a poor wandering, weary fugitive slave, they always proceed to accomplish their despicable object in companies of not less than half-a-dozen well-armed muscular men. How was it, I thought, that if the solitary fugitive makes a show of resistance, by snatching up a club, or presenting a pistol, the valiant pursuers not unfrequently display the most contemptible cowardice? How was it, I also, thought, that if any symptoms, however slight, of a slave rebellion are manifested, the planters are seized with mortal terror and alarm? If resistance is offered, merely by two or three insubordinate slaves, consternation spreads with almost telegraphic rapidity over the whole of the surrounding districts; and the planters within a circuit of many miles, for a long time keep a jealous watch upon the movements of their slaves, anxious to detect, and to punish, the slightest sign of disaffection. Verily, the guilty man is ever haunted by the fear of punishment; and the brave words of the planter cannot conceal the cowardice which preys upon his heart!

In the commencement of 1840 I was transferred to the steam-vessel *Maria*, running from St. Louis to New Orleans, and received sixty-five dollars per month. In addition to my receiving these wages, it was stipulated that I should trade for my master among the Indians with whom we came in contact. My services, in the double capacity of steward and trader, must have yielded my owner, at this time, at least one hundred dollars per month. Our custom was to purchase live stock, and other articles, up the rivers, upon the re-sale of which a profit of from two hundred to three hundred per cent was netted.

About this time the election⁶¹ for President took place; and the country was alive with political excitement. In the Southern States, Martin Van Buren,⁶² the previous President, had made himself unpopular by his supposed partiality for England. He was also much censured for not demanding the most ample reparation from England for the

* He must not be confounded with his son John Van Buren. That gentleman, as a staunch Union-saving democrat, is notoriously opposed to the anti-slavery cause. The reader may not remember the following laughable incident: When the time-serving 'Prince John' last visited England, the Manchester Anti-Slavery Conference, in commemoration of West India emancipation, was about to be held; and inspired by some mischievous wag connected, it is said, with the American Embassy, a London morning journal announced that the Hon. John Van Buren would take a prominent part in the proceedings of the Conference. The sensation which this laughable announcement created in the political circles of America may be more easily imagined than described. The idea of a man of John Van Buren's name, character, history, and party connexions, flinging himself into the arms of the most Radical section of the English Anti-Slavery party was ludicrous indeed. But justice renders it necessary to state that Mr. Van Buren gave to the calumny a prompt denial. – ED. [Author note]

affair of the *Caroline*, the ship which, it will be remembered, was cut adrift by order of the Canadian Governor-General, and sent reeling over the falls of Niagara. General Harrison,⁶³ having adopted the opposite policy, and pandered to the prejudices of the Anti-English party, became the popular candidate, and was ultimately elected to the Presidency on these principles. While this political agitation was in progress, a convention was held at Memphis, for the purpose of increasing the power of the Southern States, and enabling the planters more effectually to cope with the Abolitionists, who, it was on all hands admitted, were increasing with dangerous rapidity. The Convention deemed it advisable to endeavour to bring about a union between the slave States and the free States of the west and south-west. In furtherance of this object representations were sent from the southern States to the free States in question, setting forth the desirability of such a combination for the protection and advancement of their common interests. The necessity of maintaining intact the Federal Union, which was being assailed, if not endangered, by the Abolitionists, was strongly urged; and it was asserted that the well-known enmity borne to America, and American institutions, by the free blacks, rendered it necessary that they should be kept down with a strong arm. This, it was declared, was a measure needed to preserve the security, peace, and prosperity of the whole country. The conduct of Mr. John Quincy Adams⁶⁴ was denounced in scurrilous language; and he was represented as having been ‘rocked in a British cradle,’ to indicate his unpopular friendship for England. Mr. Webster⁶⁵ also came in for a large share of opprobrium for his English sympathies; and the Convention further called upon the south-western and western States to form a party for the purpose of putting down ‘the Yankee influence,’ or, in other words, the influence of the New England States. The agitators of the Convention helped to swell the cry of ‘Down with Adams, Webster,* Joe Smith, and all other fanatics.’ They even suggested that the defences of Charleston should be strengthened, and that railroads should be constructed from that city to Memphis, in Tennessee, for the purpose, if necessary, of conveying troops from the one place to the other. Such were some of the more prominent topics of conversation, not only in the Convention, but generally throughout the south. Feelings of hostility towards England were being most sedulously engendered; and the vain-glorious talk about southern prowess, and the deeds of the revolutionary fathers, indulged in alike by grey-headed men, and by youngsters scarcely emancipated from the nursery, gave one the idea that the character of *Bombastes Furioso*⁶⁶ was far from being a mere creature of fiction.

(To be continued.)

Chapter VIII My Further Life in Slavery.⁶⁷

It is singular to observe the influence of slavery corrupting the moral sentiment of the non-slaveholding whites, and causing them to exhibit (although on a smaller

* This was, of course, before Webster had committed that fatal act of his political life – his despicable advocacy of the Fugitive Slave Law. It is well known that his original intention to oppose the passing of the Fugitive Slave Bill was overcome by that unscrupulous ambition, which often makes sycophants and slaves of great men. – ED. [Author note]

scale than the slave-owner), the dishonest spirit of the system. In nothing is the unscrupulousness of the lower class of whites more apparent than in their treatment of slave property when opportunity serves them. For example, there is a body of men employed on the Mississippi called 'flat boatman.' They hire themselves to work the huge boats, which come from the upper countries down the Mississippi to New Orleans, bringing a variety of produce from the different plantations. These men are, generally, vile and treacherous in character, and may be employed to accomplish any evil deed.* As they descend the river they unhesitatingly, and as a matter of course, appropriate to themselves whatever they can steal from the estates through which they pass. If a slave-child should chance to stray unobserved to the margin of the water, the boatman craftily watches his opportunity, springs on shore, and in a marvellously short time the child is stowed away in the hold of the boat, a market being readily found for it some hundreds of miles off. Sometimes, however, the thievish propensity of the boatmen is turned to good account. It sometimes happens that slaves, who have bad masters, jump on board the boats as they pass, and suffer themselves to be sold cheap to some not over-scrupulous planter in a remote district. The gain to the slave is the chance of his getting a better master, and perhaps, a present of a few coins from the boatman, should that respectable individual happen to be in a benevolent mood. Sometimes, however, the master has succeeded in discovering the whereabouts of his missing slave, and has regained him; but this very seldom occurs.

In 1841 I was removed to the *Diana* steam-vessel plying in the same direction, but going somewhat higher up the country. My trading pursuits among the Indians, both for my master, and on my own account, brought me into frequent contact with the Cherokees, Chictaws, Creeks, Seminoles, and other tribes. This intercourse begat familiarity, and familiarity speedily led to friendship. We related to each other our respective wrongs, and discovered that we were both animated by the same spirit of hatred towards our common oppressors. The Indians complained to me with great bitterness of the faithlessness and treachery with which they had been treated by the dominant race, and especially of the flagrant manner in which the latter had broken the most solemn treaties, while taking care that the Indian fulfilled them to the letter. I clearly saw that in the event of any general rising of the slaves they would instantly find powerful allies in the aboriginal inhabitants of the soil. This discovery afforded me infinite satisfaction; for, at that time, I looked to revolutionary violence as the chief instrumentality by which the oppressor was to be laid low. Since then, I have learnt to place more confidence in moral agencies, and to believe that even freedom for the American slave may be won without the shedding of blood. But I am bound to state that my conviction is that if the employment of the sword for the overthrow of tyranny be lawful in any case, it is lawful for the extinction of that southern slave system which comprehends crimes that shall be nameless, and woes that are unutterable. Nay more, I will even say that upon the principles of the Americans themselves, in view of their own War of

* They who have read the 'Pirates of the Mississippi,' by Frederick Gerstacker, will have formed a just, and by no means exaggerated idea of the boatmen of that river. – ED. [Author note]

Independence, and their own fourth of July,* the black patriot who shall raise the standard of revolt upon the plantations of the South, deserves the homage which America pays to Washington,†⁶⁸ and Switzerland to William Tell.⁶⁹

During the years 1841 and 1842 I was employed as steward on board various steam-vessels, as waiter at certain hotels, and as messenger in the carriage of parcels for several mercantile companies. In the following year my master required me to attend him in his travels through Carthagen, and other districts; also to Havannah, Porto Rico, and other remote places – all blasted by the withering curse of slavery. I am bound in justice to say that, as far as my observation extended, the slave system in those regions is quite as severe and degrading as that in the southern States; but the prejudice against colour exists there in a much less degree than among the American planters.

At the termination of these travels I resumed my old occupation of steward on board steam vessels. While serving in a boat called the *White Cloud*, several cases came within my knowledge of vessels having been seized by the authorities, and held until payment was made by the owners, of slaves who had managed to escape in them. I was again transferred from the river to the land, and became a waiter at an hotel in Memphis. While I was there the planters held a meeting for the purpose of devising means to put down the fanatics for the northern States, and to stop that European interference, of which they have so great a dread. The High Priest (or rather President) of this conclave of evil spirits was Judge Humphrey, of Mississippi. The principal speaker on the occasion was Judge Childs, of Carolina. He chose for the subject of his address a favourite theme among the planters, the ethnological theory that the negro does not belong to the human race. The speaker maintained that the flat nose, peaked forehead, long heels, and woolly hair of the negro, were conclusive evidence of his having descended from the same ancestry as the ring-tailed monkey. It may hereafter become a curious and almost incredible fact that such a speech was actually delivered in this advanced period of the Christian dispensation by a high legal authority in the American Republic, addressing, not an assembly of lunatics, but a body of highly intelligent, moral, and Christian gentlemen! I have frequently debated in my own mind whether it be possible that educational prejudices, and the constant repetition of such nonsense as the theory to which I have referred, could bring men to believe in the non-existence of the manhood of the negro; and

* The fourth of July is a day of public rejoicing and festivity in the United States, it being the anniversary of the declaration of independence. In every city, town, and village throughout the country ‘orations’ on the revolutionary war are delivered; there is a general turn out of the militia, and processions of other public bodies take place; every street waves with patriotic flags and banners; and a day of merriment, festivity, and sight seeing, winds up with a grand display of fireworks. – ED. [Author note]

† In such high estimation is the patriot held by his fellow-countrymen, that every year his birthday is celebrated by demonstrations similar to those which take place on the fourth of July. The writer was in New York during the celebration in 1850, and well remembers hearing a fulsome ‘oration’ on Washington delivered by General Foote, a senator and slaveholder from Mississippi, who at one moment exalted to the skies the liberty-loving sentiments of that great man, and the next enjoined upon his auditors the duty of submission to the Fugitive Slave Law. – Ed. [Author note]

certainly we read in Scripture of men whose hearts become so hardened that they actually themselves believe the falsehoods which they have invented to justify or to conceal their own evil deeds. Be this as it may, it is evident that such a doctrine as that of Judge Childs is one absolutely necessary in a state of society where the life of a slave is held of no more account than that of an ox; because the recognition of the manhood of the slave involves the belief that the taking away of his life would be an act of murder. If Judge Childs be right in propounding his revolting theory, of course, the slaveholder does no more than fulfil the law of God, by exercising lordship over the inferior creation. But if, on the contrary, his doctrine be false, then what an accumulation of guilt rests upon the slaveholder's conscience! What a terrible day of retribution will, sooner or later, arrive for him!

From Memphis I once more returned to my old vocation on the river; and now I was again constantly meeting the wives and families of the poorer class of slaveholders. It is amusing to witness what may be termed the aristocracy of slaveholding. The possession of one or two slaves is almost essential to a man's obtaining any standing in society; and consequently the poor, but aspiring whites, are constantly in the habit of parading their 'niggers' before the world. A fine specimen of this feeling presented itself to my notice in a Virginian, who came down the river in our boat with his wife and children. He owned nine slaves, whom he had brought with him. Two were adult males, two adult females, and the rest children. He was too poor to afford cabin fare, and was obliged to content himself with a deck passage, which is held to be rather *infra dig* in a slaveholder. He did his best, however, to uphold his respectability, by mustering his slaves in a conspicuous place on the arrival of the boat at every landing place, and exhibiting himself in their midst, so that the bystanders on shore might be duly impressed with the importance of the would-be great man. He was not, however, satisfied with this ostentatious parade, but every now and then displayed his authority by bumping one of the children, cuffing another, and, ape-like, imitating the airs of a wealthy proprietor. Such as some of the petty vanities in which the poor slaveholder indulges.

(*To be continued.*)

Chapter IX My Escape into the Free States.⁷⁰

My sense of the injustice to which I was subjected, and the ardent love of freedom which filled my breast, had so greatly increased as I grew older, and my observation became more extended, that I was frequently on the point of overstepping the bounds of prudence, and committing some rash act. And on the principle that a man cannot help leavening those with whom he may come in contact with his own spirit, I communicated much of my hatred of the slaveholders to my fellow slaves, and to our brethren in misfortune, the Indians. At length I determined that, come what might, I would make an effort to effect my deliverance; this time, however, not by offering gold, but by a much less costly process. This resolve I formed towards the close of the year 1845, at which period I filled the situation of steward on board the Corsair steamer, plying between New Orleans and St. Louis. For some time my plans were deranged owing to the escape of several slaves, and the vigilant watch which was consequently kept upon those who remained. But my opportunity at length came.

Upon the arrival of our vessel at Vicksburgh we lay alongside the J. M. White, United States mail steamer. Being known to the hands on board that boat, and being rather intimate with the steward, I determined to secrete myself in this vessel. Watching my opportunity, I carried my trunk on board, and stowed it away, unperceived by any one, in one of the steward's rooms. I then went on shore upon my ordinary business, got my stores on board the Corsair, and gave the cook the needful culinary instructions for the ensuing day. I then took the precaution to inform various persons that I was going into the town again to purchase some articles to trade with at New Orleans, for my master. I told this story to the clerk of the vessel, and gave him all the money I had belonging to the boat. He admonished me not to be absent long, as the Corsair would soon be under weigh. I went into the town, but returned almost immediately to the shore, when I watched the proceedings on board the J. M. White, for the purpose, if possible, of getting on board without attracting attention. In this I at length succeeded, gained the steward's pantry without the knowledge of any individual, and quietly stowed myself away behind some barrels of flour. After the vessel had sailed some fifteen minutes I proceeded on deck, and was questioned by the captain and the clerk as to my business on board. I replied that I was going to St. Louis to join a new boat which was coming out there. This excuse, although a complete fabrication, was not doubted, as I was known to be a confidential slave, trusted by my master and others with a degree of liberty seldom enjoyed by members of my race. The captain treated me kindly, and commended me to the steward; while the clerk passed a high encomium on my general trustworthiness and fidelity.

Thus matters proceeded satisfactorily enough until our arrival at Memphis, where some unfortunate derangement of the machinery detained the vessel no less than eighteen hours. This was a great misfortune to me; for had it not been for this delay, I have no doubt I should have succeeded in effecting my escape without much difficulty. My lengthened absence from the Corsair soon excited surprise; and a suspicion at length arose that I had sailed away in the J. M. White. Application was made to the authorities, and a pursuit was instantly commenced; and before we could get away from Memphis, the J. M. White was boarded by a sheriff, and a pursuing party. I was immediately ordered on deck and placed in the custody of the sheriff. The captain's kindness towards me nearly involved him in unpleasant consequences, as the sheriff, for some time, expressed his determination to seize the vessel for harbouring a run-away slave. But upon the reiterated asseverations of the captain, that he knew nothing whatever of my evil intentions, he was allowed to proceed on his voyage. I was taken before the Mayor of Memphis, who was about to order me to be placed in irons, when I asked to be permitted to speak on my own behalf. With perfect coolness I stated that I did not intend to run away; and that as my master was accustomed to allow me to make my own engagements, I was proceeding to St. Louis to hire myself as steward on board another boat. I offered to accompany my captors to my master's residence at Nashville, that he might confirm my statement. The mayor and several gentlemen who were present, stated that they had known me for a long time, and were inclined to credit my story. The sheriff, thereupon, became a little mollified; and agreed that if I returned peaceably I should not be put in irons. I was then conveyed on board a steamer which was going to New Orleans, my baggage having previously been seized, and placed in the after part of the vessel, where I, also, was ordered to go. I now reflected upon my melancholy situation, and it well-nigh filled me with despair, the dread of being flogged

operating upon me most powerfully. I was also painfully conscious that my story about seeking another situation would scarcely bear the severe scrutiny to which it was certain to be subjected; and, moreover, I knew that at the best I should be hereafter treated as a suspected slave, and that, in consequence, my chances of ever breathing the air of freedom, would become woefully diminished. I revolved the consequences in my own mind; and at length determined to make another attempt to escape. I looked about for the means, and presently discovered that a small boat was fastened to the stern of the steamer. Watching my opportunity I unloosened the painter, and as the vessel was getting up her steam, I slipped down into the boat unperceived, and, as quietly as possible, paddled out into the river towards the Arkansas side. When I had nearly got half across the stream, I perceived, from the cries which proceeded from the vessel, that I was again discovered. A number of persons speedily assembled on the shore, some of whom threw large stones at me, and others fired at me, but happily they missed their mark, and I escaped uninjured. The die was now cast; and I felt that now, indeed, I had to choose between liberty and death, and must exert all my strength and skill to overcome the dangers by which I was encompassed. I paddled away as energetically as I could, and succeeded in gaining the opposite shore. I immediately ran for the woods, and, to divert the pursuit after me, I plunged into a swamp, which I traversed at the peril of my life, for I frequently sank up to my neck in water. That was indeed 'a dismal swamp' to me; but God, in His mercy, sustained me with almost supernatural strength, or else I could not have remained as I did from sixteen to twenty hours in this miserable position, with the rain descending in torrents nearly the whole of the time. Having emerged from the swamp, I again betook myself to the woods, where, in addition to my other discomforts, I experienced the pangs of hunger, not having tasted food for upwards of twenty-four hours. I succeeded in obtaining a few nuts and wild fruit, which somewhat appeased my appetite. It was not until the third night after my escape, that I ventured to creep out of my place of concealment. I walked a little distance, when I observed, afar off, a light gleaming from a farm house. I had been sadly perplexed as to the manner in which I should procure food; for, although I had a little money in my pocket, I knew that any attempt on my part to purchase bread would excite suspicion, and probably lead to my arrest, especially if a description of my person had been published, and a reward for my capture offered. I came to the conclusion that my only resource now was to steal, a course which I was very loth to pursue. The contest between hunger and conscience was maintained for a long time, but ultimately the latter was beaten; and accordingly I found my way into an outhouse of the farm, and loaded my person with a stock of provisions sufficient to last for a week. Day after day passed away, and it seemed as if my journeyings were never to come to an end. My bodily sufferings were great; and so, also, was my mental anxiety. During the day, I hid myself in the trackless recesses of the forests, having snakes and reptiles for my companions; and during the night, I travelled in the darkness along barbarous roads, and across uncultivated fields, shunning the haunts of men, and following the pale light of that North star, which has been as safe and blessed a guide to many a way-worn, hunted, fugitive slave, as the pillar of fire was to the Israelites of old. My progress was often interrupted by rivers, creeks, and ponds, which I managed to cross on rudely constructed rafts. No hissing serpent, no beast of prey, did I dread nearly so much as the face of a human being; and to escape observation, I was compelled to crouch behind a tree, and on other occasions to lay flat beside a log, or plunge into the thick recesses of some brushwood, until the danger was past.

At midnight, the fourteenth day after my escape, I arrived at Cairo, at which place I found a steam-boat going up the Ohio, to St. Louis. I adjusted my dress as well as I could, went on board, and took my passage to Louisville. This was certainly a bold step for a fugitive slave to take, especially when there could be no doubt that my person had been accurately described in the principal Southern newspapers, and that a reward had been offered for my capture, or even for the trophy of my head. I crept down into the kitchen of the steamer, and entered into conversation with the cook, whom I took care, however, not to enlighten on the subject of my escape. Having arrived at Louisville, I walked some three miles further down the river; and there obtained a canoe and crossed over to the state of Indiana. I walked to New Albany, and from thence I took a steamer to Pittsburgh. From the latter city, I walked through Holydaysburgh and Harrisburgh to York, where I lost my road, and got into the Slave state of Maryland, without being conscious of it. While retracing my steps, I was greatly alarmed at being hailed by three ruffianly fellows of the lower class of whites, who are always on the look-out to obtain rewards for apprehending run-away slaves. I took no notice whatever of their call, and, without manifesting the slightest fear or trepidation, I went boldly up to a house by the wayside, as though I had a right to enter. When the door was opened, I respectfully asked, and readily obtained, a glass of water. I prolonged my stay as long as I could; but, on coming out of the house, I found the three white ruffians on the watch for me. They sought to enter into conversation with me, but replying with a stare, I made off at the top of my speed. The fearlessness of my bearing had the desired effect, and they suffered me to pass without molestation. I then got as speedily as I could into the state of Pennsylvania, determining never again to tread slave-holding soil, or to submit my neck to the Southern yoke. In bidding farewell for ever to the land which God has enriched with so many scenes of beauty and delight, but which selfish men have rendered infamous by deeds of cruelty and oppression, I could not help feeling some measure of that sorrow which has been so aptly expressed by the poet: —

Alas! that such a beauteous land,
 So vast, so fertile, so sublime,
 Should wear upon her from the brand
 And impress of so dark a crime.⁷¹

Chapter X The End of My Troubles.

On the day I arrived at Columbia in Pennsylvania I saw at a distance a venerable member of the Society of Friends standing at the gate of his neat cottage. A broad brimmed hat, and a straight coat, had greatly re-assured my confidence in the human species. I ventured without fear to accost him, and beg for a little refreshment. He cheerfully placed before me the food which I needed, and, with a benevolent expression of countenance, asked me from whence I had come? I replied ‘from Pittsburgh;’ whereupon he looked at me as if he doubted my answer, but at the same time as if he understood my motive for evading his question. On parting he presented me with a quarter of a dollar, and a letter of introduction to that excellent and well known Abolitionist, Mr. Thaddeus Stevens,⁷² of Lancaster, in the same state. Mr. Stevens received

me upon my arrival at Lancaster with the most unbounded hospitality; and I freely confided to him the story of my escape, to which he listened with profound interest. There lives not in America a more devoted friend of the despised negro. When we parted he gave me two dollars, and a letter of introduction to another generous hearted man, Mr. Thomas Earls, of Philadelphia.* I took my place in what are called in America the 'burthen cars' – similar to the luggage trains in England – partly from motives of economy, and partly to avoid the possibility of being recognised. On arriving at Philadelphia I delivered my letter to Mr. Earls, and that gentleman received me with great kindness. He sent his servant with me to Mr. Young, who also resided in Philadelphia, and having presented me with a small pursue, containing the contributions of sympathising friends, he gave me letters to the Rev. Mr. Bishop and the Rev. Mr. Rush, of New York, and sent me on my way rejoicing. On arriving at New Jersey I went on board one of the many steamboats, which are constantly crossing the river which separates New York from New Jersey. While sitting in the fore part of the boat, ruminating on the gloomy past, and contemplating that happy future in which I should speedily realise what it was to be a free man, I heard a voice from the after part of the vessel exclaim 'Henry.' That voice sank into my soul like the tolling of a passing bell, and, for the moment, I was paralysed with fear. Presently I looked round and beheld my master's son endeavouring to approach me. Fortunately the boat was so crowded that he was unable to accomplish his object, and, of course, I took no notice of his repeated calls. As the boat touched the quay I leaped off, and made my way as fast as I possibly could, traversing numberless streets until I got to a remote part of the city. After I became comparatively reassured respecting my safety, I went on board a boat, which was starting for Albany. I crept below, and hid myself behind some curtains in the cabin, where I remained until the boat had arrived at its first place of stoppage. I then went upon deck, paid my fare, and, amid the darkness of the night, found myself again on shore. Having heard so much of the abolition character of the new Englanders (whose hatred of the slaveholders is only equalled by slaveholding hatred of them), my first inquiry was for the road to the Yankee States. I was informed that there were two, the one leading to Connecticut, which was thirty miles distant, and the other to Massachusetts, which was thirty-five. I chose the former, and with a light heart proceeded on my way. Upon reaching Connecticut, I inquired of a man whom I met by the way-side, whether there were any Quakers residing in the neighbourhood. Without, at first, deigning a reply, he scanned me from head to foot, and then asked me whether I was a preacher or an abolition lecturer. I replied that I was neither; but he pertinaciously insisted that I was one or the other of these

* It will be observed that the unknown Quaker (unknown to the world, but known to the recording Angel,) and the Hon. Thaddeus Stevens, made our hero practically acquainted with the mysteries of that 'underground railroad,' which has promoted the flight, and secured the safety of many a poor trembling Fugitive Slave. The phrase 'underground railroad' is of southern origin, and is meant to designate that admirable system of intercommunication between the Abolitionists, by which they are enabled to send the fugitive bondsman from village to village, and from town to town, until he has got so far beyond the reach of the pursuing demons. After the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, in 1850, the writer had an opportunity of seeing the 'underground railroad' in full activity. – Ed. [Author note]

obnoxious characters. At length he turned from me churlishly, saying, ‘I can’t tell you about the Quakers; but there’s an abolitionist lives down yonder (pointing to a large house). Go to him, perhaps he can tell you.’ I went to the house in question, and found that its occupant was Col. Gould, a man full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness. He shook me warmly by the hand, exclaiming, ‘Here comes another of my relations.’ I presented the large-hearted man with the letters I had in my possession, and narrated to him the details of my escape.

Chapter X
The End of My Troubles
(CONTINUED)⁷³

Several friends of the slave came to the colonel’s house to hear my story, and express their brotherly sympathy with me. I rested under the roof of my excellent protector that night – a night which will always be a green spot in my memory. The next morning my purse was replenished, and, after having been furnished with a letter to another abolitionist, I resumed my journey.

By the gentleman in question I was most hospitably received, and presently dispatched to Mr. Potter, of New Marlborough, in whose house I was generously entertained; and I then started again on my journey, with recruited strength of mind and body, blessing from my soul those good Samaritans who had welcomed to their homes the poor fugitive slave. My next stage was to Springfield, a distance of about fifty or sixty miles. Motives of economy induced me to walk the whole way, although it was the month of December, and the weather was intensely cold, the snow falling in large flakes all the time. Being but ill clad, considering the severity of the season, my sufferings soon became exceedingly severe. I walked with the greatest rapidity, and resorted to every means I could think of, to keep my body in a state of warmth; but my strength gradually deserted me, and my limbs became so benumbed, that I fell down by the roadside perfectly insensible. How long I remained in this wretched plight I cannot tell; but I was fortunately picked up by a man who was travelling on the same road; and he carried me to a tavern about five miles from Western, where I was put to bed, and received medical treatment. Some days elapsed before I was able to proceed; and to this day I occasionally experience the ill effects of my misadventure.

From Springfield I proceeded to Worcester, and from thence to the great centre of American Abolitionism, the city of Boston, which is to the fugitive bondsman what the Promised Land was to the expectant Jew. I there found a truly noble band of Christian philanthropists, who have laboured for the holy cause of the oppressed at the peril of life, character, and social position, and who, in many instances, have passed through a fiery ordeal of persecution. In no country on the face of the earth, and in no period in the history of our race, can we discover a nobler band of patriots and philanthropists than the men and women of America, who, in the face of prejudice, of calumny, and even of death,* have borne a consistent and courageous

* One of the Southern States set up a price upon Mr. Garrison’s head; and there can be no doubt what his fate would be if he ventured South of Mason and Dixon’s line. – ED.
[Author note]

testimony against slaveholding iniquity, and Northern recreancy to the slave. In Boston – the head-quarters of these deadly foes of Southern oppression – I was most hospitably entertained by many gentlemen, and, among others, by that most eloquent, faithful, and accomplished champion of freedom, Mr. Wendell Phillips.⁷⁴ My health was so seriously impaired, by the hardships I had undergone in my long journey from the South, that I became an inmate of the United States Hospital, where I remained for nearly three weeks, when I left, to all appearance, perfectly recovered. The kindest offers of assistance and support were now tendered me by the Boston Abolitionists, but I was ever haunted by the fear of capture. Several cases came to my knowledge of slaves having been returned to slavery, to suffer death, or to endure horrors far worse than those of mortality. I knew that no efforts would be wanting on the part of my American benefactors to shield me from danger; but, nevertheless, I felt unwilling to expose myself even to the possibility of being restored to captivity; and, therefore, contrary to the advice of some of my friends, I resolved to visit the land of Wilberforce⁷⁵ and Buxton.⁷⁶ Through the kind exertions of Mr. Phillips, and the generous assistance of a coloured steward, I procured a passage to England, and sailed from Boston on the 5th February, 1846. On the eight day of our voyage we encountered a terrific gale, which lasted five days, during which time the vessel was in imminent danger of becoming a perfect wreck. Indeed, at one period, the danger was so great that every body on board abandoned all hope of our surviving the storm, and prepared with becoming fortitude to meet that doom which it seemed impossible to avert. I rejoice to say that in that dread hour I experienced not the fear of death; the conviction fastened itself upon me that if my body perished amid the terrors of the storm and the raging of the sea, I should yield up my spirit, not to a slaveholding despot, but to the only Being, whose lordship over me I was ever able to recognise – that God, in whose tender mercy, and fatherly protection, the fugitive slave can exercise far greater confidence than any Southern taskmaster (however sanctimonious his aspect, or numerous his prayers), can possibly do. To the mind of the slave the phrase – ‘Our Father in Heaven’ – contains a depth of meaning which gives to it all the charm of a glorious reality. On the 1st of March we entered the Mersey, and on the same day I landed at Liverpool, feeling as if my emancipation was now complete, and as if the last link in the chain with which I had been bound had fallen from me. I can only compare my feelings with those attributed to the Pilgrim in Bunyan’s Divine allegory,⁷⁷ upon his arrival at the Canaan of his hopes, the Heavenly Paradise.

I have since thought it rather curious that the first spot of British soil touched by myself, and other fugitive slaves, should be about the only place in Great Britain where any degree of sympathy is expressed for the Slaveholders; and this probably arises from the same selfish commercial considerations, which have so long rendered the merchants and traders of the North subservient to the Southern slaveholders. But I most cheerfully and gratefully testify that, even in this great emporium of proslavery prejudices, there are many able and worthy friends of negro freedom, to whose generous aid I am not a little indebted. And there can be no doubt that, to a great extent, they will succeed in leavening the mercantile spirit of the town with the influence of their own good example.

I have now described the principal events in my humble history. Some circumstances I have suppressed, lest their publication should involve others in calamity; for

of all men on the face of the earth slaveholders are the most revengeful, and nothing is so calculated to evoke their vengeance as interference with that monster sin which they so fondly cherish. One of the incidents which gratitude would prompt me to record, is the manner in which I managed, while a slave, to pick up, as it were, a few crumbs of learning, the possession of which afforded me infinitely more gratification than the richest banquets ever set before a monarch could possibly have done. But were I to give expression to the feelings of my heart respecting that truly good man, who, in spite of the most infamous laws against educating slaves, and, at the risk of his life, ventured to teach me to read – were I to furnish any clue as to who he is – his utter ruin (if he be living), would inevitably ensue.

My story having now come to an end, my earnest hope is that the foregoing pages may do something towards exciting attention, on this side of the Atlantic, to the appalling iniquities of American slavery, and towards swelling that omnipotent tide of public opinion which shall, sooner or later, sweep the accursed system from off the face of the earth for ever.

Chapter XI

A Few Facts And Illustrations.

It often happens that barbarities, which have taken place in past times, and which we read of on the page of history, cause us to feel more acutely than deeds of a similar character which are perpetrated in our own day, and almost at our own doors. We are so accustomed to regard the present age as pre-eminently distinguished for sublime and elevating ideas, and just and human feelings between man and man, and we are so accustomed to draw comparisons between ourselves and our progenitors highly unfavourable to them – that it is somewhat difficult to dispel the self-complacent delusion by a calm and rational survey of the world as it is. We are apt to forget that the cause of justice and morality does not necessarily advance in proportion to the progress of our material civilization. We fail to remember that national virtue is not called into being by railways and electric telegraphs, and great industrial and commercial enterprises, and enormous mercantile navies, important auxiliaries as these agencies are in the elevation of our race. All these blessings a nation may possess, and yet be seriously wanting in those moral elements, which alone can confer upon it true glory, greatness, and stability. Judged by her theory of government – by the indomitable energy which has marked her history – by the wonderful extension of her territory – and by the rapidity with which she has raised cities and towns, organised manufactures, created a magnificent merchant marine, and converted the wilderness into smiling gardens and waving corn-fields – judged by these manifestations of her material greatness and prosperity, America may well claim the homage, and extort the admiration of the world. But yet, as long as she maintains the institution of negro slavery, with all its accumulated infamies and wrongs, she cannot be morally superior to the feeblest and most uncivilised of nations. She may, indeed, be great, but only as Alexander was great;⁷⁸ she may be powerful, but cannot be just, or Christ-like.

When we read of the horrors of the middle passage; the inhumanity of the Chinese towards their rebellious and fanatical fellow-country; or the cruelties perpetrated by New Zealand, or West African tribes, in their wars with one another – we are horrified at the recital, and blush for human nature. But there is scarcely a

crime committed by men the farthest removed from Christian enlightenment and civilisation, which does not daily and hourly take place under the protection of the American flag, and on the soil of a Christian Republic. We can scarcely credit this statement; and many people, in their incredulity, disbelieve it altogether; but it is, nevertheless, true. Such persons mistake the profession for the reality, the shadow for the substance – they imagine that, because the slaveholders prate about humanity to their slaves, therefore they are humane – that because they fast and pray, and build churches and Sabbath-schools, and send missionaries to the Feejee Islands, and to India and China, therefore they are disciples of Christ. They must, however, be subjected to the test, which the Divine Teacher himself authorises us to employ – ‘By their deeds ye shall know them.’⁷⁹ No high-sounding professions will then avail against the overwhelming evidence of facts – against the terrible testimony of three millions and a half of witnesses, themselves groaning under the tyrant, and writhing beneath the lash of the Christian slaveholder. The slaveholder may help to support missionaries in the East, but his doing so, while he perpetuates polygamy and idolatry, murder and oppression, within his own borders, will only add hypocrisy to the long catalogue of his crimes, and proportionately increase the weight of his condemnation.

The minds of Englishmen are so fully made up on the subject that it is unnecessary to argue that slavery is essentially unrighteous and anti-Christian. And the condition of the enslaved population of America need scarcely form the subject of inquiry, when so many illustrations of slaveholding cruelty are constantly appearing in the public journals, and when every Englishman is almost as familiar with the deeds of atrocity perpetrated by the Border Ruffians on the ill-fated soil of Kansas, as if they had been committed in London or Paris. If (it may fairly be asked) slavery revels in deeds of cruelty and blood in Kansas, what reason have we to believe that her sway in her own peculiar dominions is more merciful and just? Peruse the brutal speeches of the chosen champions of slavery – the Wises, the Butlers, the Brooks’, and the Toombs’⁸⁰ – and then say if it be possible to come to any other conclusion than that the men who, in bullying language, shout defiance at the North; who sound the tocsin of civil war heedless of the blood that may be shed; who put down Free speech and a Free Press, by the lawless use of the revolver and the bowie-knife and who would, if they could, exterminate the Abolitionists, as they have hunted down the Indians – let the reader say if these men are likely to act towards the negroes belonging to their own plantations with even a show of moderation and humanity.

Is it possible for slavery to be other than a source of wretchedness and degradation to the slave? Irresponsible power in the hands of any man must inevitably lead to mischief. It is a power which no human being can exercise without abusing; to argue otherwise is to insult common sense, and to call in question the most certain laws of human nature. If, then, despotic power may not be entrusted with safety to even virtuous and patriotic men – how is it likely to be used by tens of thousands of slaveholders, who, unfortunately, like a large majority of their fellow-creatures, are influenced by selfish dispositions, by fierce passions, and by propensities even yet more evil? How, for example, is it likely to be used by the ruffian Brooks,⁸¹ who, with infamous cowardice, smote down the chivalric Sumner⁸² in the very Temple of American liberty, because that great and good man had presumed to assail slaveholding South Carolina? And how is irresponsible power likely to be employed by the desperadoes of Kansas,

whose language and manners, as described by a graphic pen (to say nothing of their deeds), reveal a depth of depravity as low as human nature has ever descended.

But when it is remembered that the laws of America afford no protection to the slave; that they do not recognise his human existence; that they rank him with the cotton which he picks, and the rice which he cultivates; that they will not receive his evidence in a court of law under any circumstances whatever; that they do not even shield the sanctity of his home, or respect the wife of his bosom; that they will not permit him to enjoy the instruction of a Sabbath-school, or to read the lessons of Heavenly wisdom; and that, in the event of his endeavouring to obtain freedom by flight, they authorise his being hunted by bloodhounds and dragged even from the hospitable homes of the free men of the North – when these facts are remembered, no honest man will doubt that the American slave system, from beginning to end, is utterly evil, possessing no one redeeming feature, shedding forth no solitary gleam of light to relieve its impenetrable gloom.

(To be continued.)

Chapter XI A Few Facts and Illustrations. *(Continued)*⁸³

The Rev. Dr. Nehemiah Adams,⁸⁴ of Boston, recently wrote a work entitled ‘A South-side View of Slavery,’⁸⁵ in which he puts himself forward as an unblushing advocate of the slaveholder, and an unscrupulous apologist for his crimes. However, another work – entitled ‘The Inside View of Slavery’⁸⁶ – was subsequently written by Dr. Parsons⁸⁷ (a doctor of medicine and not of divinity), in which the writer faithfully records a large number of facts concerning the treatment of slaves, which came under his own personal observation, and which strikingly confirm the statements of even the ultra-abolitionists. The following extracts will furnish some idea of the condition of the plantation slaves of the south: –

How The Slaves Are Fed.

‘I spent a few days near a large plantation in the country, whose owner had five hundred slaves; and I had free access to their huts. They were never required to labour hard, as the master only desired to make the plantation support itself. His only profit was the increase of the slaves, which amounted sometimes to twenty-five thousand dollars a year. But though the slaves were not overtasked, they were provided with only a peck of corn a week. His overseer was ordered to procure coarse waled cloth enough to make each of them two garments a year. Hats and shoes were provided in winter for the wood-choppers and fence-builders, but for no others. The whole expense for food and clothing, reckoning the price of the corn and cloth at the market value, could not have exceeded ten dollars to each slave. There was very little labour done on that plantation. One northern man would perform as much as five of those slaves. And yet I never saw a more miserable, degraded, despairing family of human beings. Debts, taxes, and expenses of all kinds were paid by the sale of slaves, and the “soul driver”

was an almost weekly visitor. There was not an unbroken family among them – not even parents and children living together, excepting the mothers who were nursing their infants. I frequently saw those mothers take their infants and their corn cake, at the sound of the horn at day break, and march in slow and solemn procession to the corn-fields. When they reached the place where they left their hoes the evening before, a long distance from the huts – as the fields near by had been worn out – they laid their infants down in the “gum cradles” – troughs cut in logs – and each one hoed a long row out and back in season to nourish the infants and eat the dinner-cake at noon. Then they hoed two more rows before returning to the cheerless huts, to rest their weary limbs at night. When they reached the huts, they took one quart of corn each, and putting it into a mortar – made by themselves by burning a hole into the end of a pine log – they pounded it into coarse meal with a wooden or iron pestle. After this they put one third of it into the kettle, and boiled it for supper, and then kneaded the remainder into a cake, and put it into the embers to be baked for breakfast and dinner the next day. They then laid down on the ground – as the huts had no floors – and slept, some on a few filthy old rags, others on a thin layer of rice straw, until the horn called them again to perform their daily round of cheerless toil. One look at those slaves – and they had a kind master, if by kindness is only meant not to whip, or overtask – would have been sufficient to convince any Northern man that happiness is incompatible with such a condition. When provisions are very scarce the slaves suffer much from hunger on some of the large plantations. “I have known slaves to suffer so much from hunger,” said a gentleman to me residing in a place called “Cave Run,” South Carolina, “that they were accustomed to eat unclean beasts, and birds, fish, insects, and reptiles. I have known them to eat alligators, crows, owls, &c., and other things that nobody would eat if sufficient wholesome food could be obtained to keep them from starvation!” “The dogs,” he added, “fare better than the slaves with some masters – because whipping will not prevent the dog from stealing sheep, or fowls, when he is hungry.”

Instruments to Torture.

Dr. Parsons describes the various instruments of torture, which are employed to punish refractory slaves. He gives the following description of the thumbscrew, which he saw worn by a poor boy about sixteen years of age, who ultimately died of lockjaw, induced by the agony he endured: –

‘The apparatus consists of a wristband of iron, with an iron stud or post about three inches long standing up in it opposite the thumb. A thin strap of iron passes around the ball of the thumb, attached to a piece of round iron, which runs back through a hole in the top of the post. Upon the end of this round iron is cut a screw, and behind the post a nut is put on. When this nut is turned, the thumb is drawn backward. The instrument is strong enough to dislocate the thumb by this retraction. The greatest amount of suffering which man is able to endure can be inflicted upon the slave with this instrument, and no scar remains to reduce his value in the market. By a long application the large nerves of his thumb become highly inflamed, and the most intense pain ensues.’

After describing ‘the stocks,’ and ‘the bell,’ the writer furnishes the following account of ‘the Gag’: –

‘The Gag is a piece of iron, about three inches in length, one inch in width at one end, half an inch at the other, and about one-eighth of an inch in thickness. This instrument is put into the mouth, over the tongue, with the narrow end inside, while the wide end is left projecting through the lips. The outer end is inserted into a small strap of iron that passes over the mouth, the ends of which extend around to the back of the neck, where they are fastened together by a rivet or a padlock. With this long, wide piece of iron thus confined on the tongue, the slave is truly gagged – as he is unable to utter a syllable.’

Dr. Parsons saw this instrument used on a slave *preacher*, as a punishment for having, contrary to his master’s orders, left his hut in the night time to preach to his fellow slaves in the woods.

The ordinary cotton planter’s whip is thus described: –

“This is called the Cotton planter’s whip,” because the planters say that *this whip raises the cotton*. The stock is covered with green hide, about four feet long, and is loaded with lead at the butt. The lash is long and heavily wrought into hard knots towards the end, with wire. The staff is so heavy, and the lash is so long, that the whipping-master is obliged to twirl it skilfully in the air before he can command its full force. Hence the labour of using the whip is hard, and when several hundred lashes are ordered, the whippers take turns.

“The paddle,” writes Dr. Parsons, “is made of a board, and is about three feet long, and four inches wide. One end is shaved down for the handle, and the other end is bored full of half inch auger holes. The paddle is sometimes applied to the back of a slave until all the skin is taken off by it, so that no scar will remain to reduce the value of the slave in the market.”

Slave Hunting.

The reader has, doubtless, often heard of bloodhounds being employed to capture runaway slaves. Indeed, throughout the Southern States they are an absolutely necessary appendage to every slave plantation. The following advertisements, extracted from Southern newspapers, are samples of similar advertisements which are constantly appearing:

(From the *Wilmington* (North Carolina) *Journal*.)

‘TEN SILVER DOLLARS REWARD will be paid for apprehending and delivering to me my man Moses, who ran away this morning; or I will give five times the sum to any person who will make due proof of his being killed, and never ask a question to know by whom it is done. – W. SKINNER.’

(From the *Sumpter County* (Albania) *Whig*.)

‘NEGRO DOGS. – The undersigned having bought the entire pack of negro dogs, (of the Hay and Allen stock,) he now proposes to catch runaway negroes. His charges will be three dollars a day for hunting, and fifteen dollars for catching, north of Livingston, near the Lower Jones’ Bluff Road. – WILLIAM GAMBREL.’

Dr. Parsons was the accidental spectator of a slave hunt, which he thus describes: –

'I left the hotel in M----- after breakfast on a December morning, and walked a few miles along the bank of the Flint River. Ascending a small sand hill, I saw, after reaching the top, a negro coming up on the other side, slowly, wearily, without a particle of clothing on. When he saw me, he was frightened and ran out to a willow tree that lay bent down, nearly horizontally, over the stream; and turning about, he leaned against a limb, looking at me, and tossing up his hands, he exclaimed, imploringly, "O, Goddy, master!" I supposed he intended to request me not to betray him; and I said to him, "I will not betray you, Cuffee!" But before I had time to inquire into his history, two hounds came over another hill, half a mile distant, distinctly in view, on a straight road. Soon as the baying of the dogs reached the ear of the fugitive, he leaped from the willow into the river – swam a long distance under water towards the opposite bank, when he arose to the surface. I was surprised to see how directly he swam across, as the waters were cold, and the current strong. I saw him emerge upon the opposite side, climb an oak tree, and seat himself on a limb. The hounds came on slowly, following the track (and well they might, for the blood of the slave was left in nearly every foot-step), keeping up a constant baying. I had heard of "the baying of hounds," but I had never conceived how appalling the blood-thirsty tones were, until they fell on my ear, while I saw their victim, weary and helpless, with no longer any hope of escape. The dogs came up the hill where I stood, followed the track out upon the willow, plunged in where the man did, swam across, and ran up to the tree, baying loudly in the triumph of success. I walked out to the willow and sat down upon it in sadness of heart at what my eyes had seen, and my ears heard. Soon two white men came over the farther hill on horseback, and when they saw the man in the tree, and heard the dogs baying beneath it, they set up a tremendous shout, and rode on at full speed down to the tavern, three miles below. Thinking it might be unsafe for me to remain and watch the fate of the slave, whom I had no power to assist, I returned to the tavern. Here I found a large crowd of men who had gathered around the bar to receive a "treat" from the "nigger-hunters," who always have that kind of glorification when the man is captured alive. It was now about nine o'clock, yet they continued to drink until four o'clock in the afternoon, before they went over the river to take the man down. And what astonished me more than anything else was that no man suggested that it was time to go and bring the slave in. I heard no question asked as to how long he had been without food, how far he had run, or whether he was so famished and exhausted that he would be likely to fall from the tree and be rent in pieces by the dogs. But the conversation ran mainly upon the feats they had performed in the negro hunts, and the punishments the run-aways get when they are caught. Finally, after seven hours of rioting, they rode away. What became of their poor victim I never learned.'

Slave Auctions.

The spectacle of human beings sold in the public auction mart, like ordinary articles of merchandise, must of necessity, even in its least repulsive form, be most distressing to every one who possesses a heart to mourn over human misery and degradation. Even in cases where the slave is apparently indifferent to his fate, and unconscious of the infamous wrong which is being inflicted upon his manhood, the slave auction, while it may lose some of the tragic interest generally associated with such scenes, is divested of none of its heinous brutality and guilt. But the sale of slaves is not unfrequently a spectacle

of horror, which must make angels weep. When families are cruelly separated, and the nearest and dearest ties are sundered for ever; when the slave is terrified by the prospect of being sold to a bad master, or conveyed to the extreme south; and especially when female virtue is outraged by the abominable usages of the auction mart, and female beauty is bartered away for gold to some inhuman speculator, or abandoned *roué* – then we are able to realise some idea of the full extent of the tragedy.

The writer of ‘Pictures of the Peculiar Institution, as it exists in Louisiana and Mississippi,’ furnishes the following sketch of the slave market of New Orleans: –

‘Go to the slave market in New Orleans, in the Arcade, on days of auction sales of slaves, and you will see and learn what you cannot in any other place in the world; for you have here unmistakeable proof how completely unfeeling, inhuman, and brutalised a man may become, and yet be a “*gentleman and respectable*.” Surely it would be unkind and ungenerous in the extreme, to say that those fine-looking, rich and *generous-hearted* men who stand there daily and *only* sell slaves, are not “*gentlemen and respectable!*” Notwithstanding all the brutality which you see them exhibit, they claim to have, in a large degree, the common sympathies of our nature, as well as *moral sensibilities*. But an astonishment amounting to amazement comes over you when you view these men as they are truly exhibited here. You see before you a hundred men, women, and children, of all ages, colours and complexions, and many of them as white and even whiter than the auctioneer describes the qualities and condition of some female, and you can see her shrink back and drop her head, with true feminine delicacy of feeling; and yet this just rebuke upon them only calls out another rude joke, as evidence of greater brutality, while the blush of shame which their rudeness had brought upon the brow of the slave should teach them to observe the common rules of decency, while treating with females, even in a slave market; for certainly, a man should never forget that modesty is one of the natural impulses of the female heart, and never can be invaded without changing the warm current of her blood into a blush of shame upon her brow. When slaves are put upon the block to be sold, their age is told, their capabilities for different kinds of labour described, their perfections and imperfections are all given in detail, and if they are healthy and in good condition, the auctioneer proclaims that they are “fully guaranteed against all the vices and maladies prescribed by law,” and “now, how much is bid for him?” While the sale is progressing, the slave usually stands like a statue, not a muscle in his countenance moves, nor an expression other than a wandering gaze; yet you can see that there is an agony and a struggle with the feelings of the soul, deeper than tears can call up, or groans express. Here they stand, as cold and chilled as the speechless marble, awaiting their doom and destiny. While all this is going on, you can hear, in the crowd of slaves, in low whispers, the mother pleading with the inhuman slave-dealer, and begging and beseeching him, in all the agony of a mother’s heart, that her child may not be torn from her. In return for this, she gets the blasphemous curse and a look of more than demon’s glare, that bid her be silent, for the child is not her own.’

We extract from the narrative of an eye witness the following incident which occurred at a slave auction in a Southern city: –

‘I turned to look for the doomed. She stood upon the auction stand. In stature she was of the middle size, slim, and delicately built. Her skin was lighter than many a northern *brunette*, and her features were round, with thin lips. Indeed, many thought no black blood coursed in her veins. Now, despair sat on her countenance. O! I shall never forget

that look. "Good heavens!" ejaculated one of the two fathers, as he beheld the features of Helen, "is that beautiful lady to be sold?" Then fell upon my ear the auctioneer's cry, "How much is said for this beautiful healthy slave-girl – a real albino – a fancy girl for any gentleman? How much? How much? Who bids?" "Five hundred dollars," "Eight hundred," "One thousand," were soon bid by different purchasers. The last was made by the friends of the merchant, as they wished to assist him to retain her. At first, no one seemed disposed to raise the bid. The crier then read from a paper in his hand, "She is intelligent, well-informed, easy to communicate, a first-rate instructress." "Who raises the bid?" This had the desired effect – "Twelve hundred," "Fourteen," "Sixteen," quickly followed. He read again – "She is a devoted Christian, sustains the best of morals, and is perfectly trusty." This raised the bids to two thousand dollars, at which she was struck off to the gentleman in favour of whom was the prosecution. Here closed one of the darkest scenes in the book of time. This was a southern auction – an auction at which the bones, muscles, sinews, blood, and nerves, of a young lady of nineteen, sold for one thousand dollars; her improved intellect for six hundred more; and her Christianity – the person of Christ in his follower – four hundred more.'

This affecting incident might have suggested to the poet Whittier⁸⁸ the idea of those verses which commence –

'A Christian! going, one!
Who bids for God's own image? – for his grace
Which that poor victim of the market-place
Hath in her suffering won.'⁸⁹

(To be continued.)

Chapter XII The Present Political Aspects of the Slavery Question.⁹⁰

The great issue involved in the Presidential Election,⁹¹ which has recently terminated, was not merely whether Slavery should be allowed to triumph in Kansas, but it comprehended the broader question – whether the Free North or the Slaveholding South should control the national policy during the succeeding four years. The choice lay between the government of a Slaveholding Oligarchy, and the just and enlightened rule of Northern Republicans (Republicans in fact as well as in name), having no mere sectional or selfish interests to serve, and being determined to exercise the power of the Federal Government on behalf of Freedom against Oppression; on the side of the slave against his tyrant. The American people, or rather their representatives in the Electoral College, have made their choice; and a more unwise, and perhaps fatal choice they could not have made. They have chosen a man who has pledged himself to wield the whip of the slave driver; they have rejected a man who would have spurned that revolting instrument of torture with loathing and contempt. They have selected James Buchanan,⁹² a statesman whose political life has been characterised by the utmost subserviency to the Slave Power; and they have abandoned to defeat Col. Fremont, a worthy representative of the real Democracy of the Age, and a man whose deeds are associated with much that is truly great and heroic, in the history of American adventure and enterprise. Who could be better fitted to become President in this great crisis of American history than a

man who, like Col. Fremont,⁹³ is endowed with the highest qualities of justice, generosity, and courage? He is a man who, to judge with that Giant Wrong, which All Powerful as it may appear to be, will surely succumb before the omnipotent strength of a Righteous Will, and of a Just Cause.

But the American people have chosen Mr. Buchanan, whose public life has been spent in the commission of acts, and the propagation of opinions, which bear their natural fruits in the Border Ruffianism of Kansas, and the filibustering exploits of the military adventurer, who has usurped the government of Nicaragua. The Southern Conspirators boldly announce the schemes of aggression and conquest, of which the election of Mr. Buchanan is the prelude. Natural timidity, or the difficulties of his position, may cause him to hesitate ere he endeavours to carry out this iniquitous policy; but he is not the less pledged to employ every means in his power to effect its accomplishment. He has solemnly undertaken to adapt his own conscience to 'the platform' of the Democratic party, of which he regards himself as 'a plank;' and to recognise no higher law than the edicts of the Cincinnati Convention. He, therefore, stands committed to such measures as the admission of Kansas into the Union as a slave state, the acquisition of Cuba, and Slaveholding supremacy in Central America. In the exultation of their recent success, the Slaveholders are dreaming of even greater triumphs; and cautious and crafty, as the new President may be, he is not unlikely to be dragged by headstrong and unscrupulous men into the prosecution of measures even yet more fatal to freedom than those of which he has already approved. Be this as it may, the slaveholders confessedly regard the period of his Presidency as the appointed season for carrying out their most cherished schemes. If, in times past, they have worn a mask, they now wear one no longer; if they have been accustomed to clothe their designs in ambiguous language they have now altogether abandoned this Jesuitical mode of expression. Their leading journals declare that they will not rest contented until the South becomes the dominant power on the American continent; and Nicaragua, Mexico, Cuba, and other suitable countries, have been carved into slave plantations.* They

* As a confirmation of this statement, the reader's attention is requested to the following extract from the *New Orleans Delta*: 'Remember that Nicaragua and Cuba are vastly more important to us than the Kansas Territory, though we should not renounce the latter. Mexico is not far off. The genius of commercial empire beckons to us from Tehauntepic. But Nicaragua is the great political nucleus, and while the national men of the South are busy over the spoils of the victory won through the courage and boldness of the Southern party, let us put forth all our strength in Nicaragua. We have only four years to prepare for the great contest of 1860. Give Walker the power and he will solve not only the Central American question, but with it that of Cuba. Once firmly established in Nicaragua, he will restore the West Indies to their original condition as slave colonies. It can be demonstrated that the comparative decline of New Orleans commenced with the abolition policy of England in the American tropics. It only requires the defeat of Walker in Nicaragua and the Africanization of Cuba to make the decline more than comparative, perhaps irretrievable. It only requires, on the other hand, the organization of Central America, as a slave-producing country, with the redemption of the West Indies from negro barbarism, to make New Orleans the centre of a vast tropical empire, and to realise, in connexion with the Pacific trade, the advantages to which she is geographically entitled. This is a work for the Southern party. We have shown our power in national politics, let us give it practical direction at home.' [Author note]

declare that free society is a failure; 'that slavery is the natural and normal condition of the labouring man, whether white or black;' that 'master and slave is a relation as necessary in society as that of parent and child; and that the theory of free government is a delusion.'^{*} They propose that the labouring poor shall be converted into a slave population; and that even the emigrants who flee to America from the poverty and despotism of the Old World, shall be made to participate in the blessings of 'the peculiar institution.'[†]⁹⁴ Nay more, hating free labour as the deadliest enemy which slavery can possess – as an institution from God, in whose presence that unnatural system cannot possibly live; the slave-holders now advocate the restoration of the African slave trade, as the only means open to them by which labour can be found to bring the vast regions they propose to subjugate, under profitable cultivation. Such are some of the schemes which the pro-slavery party openly advocate, and which they will spare no effort to accomplish.

But let it not be imagined that no gleams of sunshine illumine the Western horizon – that the darkness of the Southern night is permitted to brood undisturbed over the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the soil on which the Revolutionary heroes fought and won the battles of liberty. On the contrary, while previous to the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Abolitionists formed numerically a small and insignificant band, since that period the people of the North have gradually combined to resist those hideous encroachments to which they had previously succumbed without a murmur. The Fugitive Slave Law,⁹⁵ by granting to the slaveholder the power to cross the threshold, and to violate the sanctity of every Northern home in pursuit of his fugitive victim (thereby converting free men, whose

* The *Richmond Enquirer*, one of the ablest journals in the southern states, and one of Mr. Buchanan's leading organs, has recently published articles on the failure of the experiment of free society! The following is a choice extract: – 'Repeatedly have we asked the North, "Has not the experiment of universal liberty failed? Are not the evils of free society insufferable? and do not most thinking men among you propose to subvert and reconstruct it?" Still no answer. This gloomy silence is another conclusive proof, added to many other conclusive evidences we have furnished, that *free society, in the long run, is an impracticable form of society*; it is everywhere starving, demoralised, and insurrectionary. We repeat, then, that policy and humanity alike forbid the extension of the evils of free society to new peoples and coming generations. Two opposite and conflicting forms of society cannot, among civilised men, co-exist and endure. The one must give way and cease to exist, the other must become universal. If free society be unnatural, immoral, unchristian, it must fall and give way to slave society – a social system old as the world, universal as man.' 'Free society!' (exclaims the *Muscogee* (Alabama) *Herald*, in disgust,) 'We sicken at the name. What is it but a conglomeration of greasy mechanics, filthy operatives, small-fisted farmers, and moon-struck theorists.' [Author note]

† A New York Journal (attached to the Buchanan interest) makes the following proposal relative to those German and Irish emigrants who are unable to support their families: 'Sell the parents of these children into slavery. Let our Legislature pass a law that whoever will take these parents, and take care of them and their offspring, in sickness and in health, feed them, and house them, shall be legally entitled to their service; and let the same Legislature decree that whoever receive these parents and their children, and obtains their services, shall take care of them as long as they live.' [Author note]

boast it had been that no tyranny could subdue them, into Southern vassals), created a large amount of healthy anti-slavery opinion. But the repeal of the Missouri Compromise⁹⁶ (a solemn compact by which the great North west territory, of which Kansas forms a part, was consecrated to freedom for ever) has done far more than even the Fugitive Slave Law to array the Free against the Slave States. Taught from the earliest childhood to believe that fidelity to the Compromises of the Constitution is a patriotic duty, the Northern States have scrupulously fulfilled their part of the dishonest bargain, and have often made concessions which were not constitutionally necessary. But the repeal of the Missouri Compromise by Southern threats, and intrigues, has done much to weaken Northern reverence for the Constitution, and Northern affection for the Union existing between the two sections of the country. The people of the Free States are beginning to open their eyes to the fact, that the South, instead of being patriotically anxious to promote the common prosperity and happiness of the whole country, desires only to advance its own selfish political and commercial interests. They are beginning to see that the conquest of Kansas by the Slave Power, is preliminary to still more extensive measures of aggression; and that the national question has now become not only whether the Negro shall be free, but whether the Free States will allow themselves to occupy towards the South the same relation of servile dependence that India does to England, and Cuba to Spain. There is great cause for congratulation and hope in the hatred of Southern domination, which is now generally entertained throughout the Northern States. It heralds the approach of a purer patriotism, and announces the advent of a nobler policy. It has, as we before remarked, effectually shaken that fanatical love for the Union, which has clung so tenaciously to the hearts of the people of the North, and which has been the strongest pillar in the Slaveholding edifice. And these feelings of antagonism towards the Slaveholders may be regarded as the first great step taken towards producing that wide gulf of separation between the North and the South, which can only be bridged over by an Act of Emancipation.

Every one who studies the tendencies of American politics, who watches the widening of the breach between the Slaveholders and their adversaries, and who possesses the discernment to perceive the utter incompatibility of Northern interests and opinions with Southern designs and prejudices, must arrive at the conclusion, that unless some miraculous moral revolution takes place in the Slave States, a dissolution of the Union will become as much a political necessity, as it is already a moral duty. It is, indeed, the only means by which the North can recover its forfeited independence, as well as rid itself of complicity in the guilt of slavery. The attempt, so often made by the Free States, to reconcile, not only conflicting interests, but principles like justice, and oppression, truth and falsehood, which are, in their very nature, essentially opposed to each other, has always proved an ignominious failure, or rather has resulted in the still further triumph of evil. The people of the North are now recovering from their blindness, and opening their eyes to these facts; and now that Compromise and Concession, on their part, have, for the future, been rendered impossible, a separation of the North from the South is the only remaining alternative. We are convinced that Time, which solves all doubts and overcomes all difficulties, will demonstrate that Mr. Garrison,⁹⁷ and his friends of the American Anti-Slavery Society,⁹⁸ who have so long raised the standard of 'No

Union with Slaveholders,' have indicated the only practical solution of the slavery question. All honour to them for having proclaimed this doctrine in the face of calumny, persecution, and death!!

Without the assistance of the North, the South would be powerless to maintain her domestic institution. How could three hundred and fifty thousand Slaveholders, deprived of external support, keep in a state of bondage three millions and a half of slaves, constantly increasing in numbers, in intelligence, and in a knowledge of their rights? True, we must not overlook the non-slaveholding white population; but there is so little sympathy between the lordly planter, and this depraved and dangerous class of the community, that he would have but little to hope for from them in the hour of danger. That the seeds of disaffection have been scattered abroad among the slaves is obvious from the conspiracies which have recently been discovered in Tennessee, and some neighbouring States, and which the Slaveholders, in their madness, have sought to suppress by introducing a reign of terror. Foolish men; who did not see that these retaliatory measures only add fuel to the flame, and hasten the day of vengeance and retribution. When the South is no longer permitted to lean upon the strong arm of the North for support, and is compelled to rely upon her own resources for self-preservation, she will have to choose between the performance of a voluntary act of justice to the slaves, and the alternative of becoming the victim of a righteous punishment. Her fate is in her own hands; but whatever her decision may be, the days of slavery are numbered.

They who imagine that the Emancipation of the American slaves would be attended by deeds of anarchy and blood, neither understand the character of the negro race, nor remember the experience of history, nor exercise faith in that moral law which it is the interest, as well as the duty, of all men to obey. Let such persons recollect the 1st of August, 1834,⁹⁹ when the Negroes of the West India Islands ceased to be slaves, and became English citizens and freemen. No act of violence, no deed of blood darkened the glory of that day; but the enfranchised race acted as became their newly acquired dignity. And if another proof of the intellectual and moral worth of the liberated children of Africa be required, surely it may be found in Hayti, where, under the government of an able and enlightened sovereign, and of statesmen of intelligence and integrity, the descendants of the former slaves of France are satisfactorily solving the problem of negro self-government. If America were wise, she would profit by these examples, and 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance'¹⁰⁰ by opening wide her prison-doors, and bidding the captives be free.

Notes

1. According to the British Newspaper Archive: 'The Lady's Newspaper was one of the earliest newspapers produced for an exclusively female audience. It marketed itself as a general newspaper, containing all of the news of the day, but presented in a way considered suitable and enjoyable for women to read. In its opening issue it stated that: "We shall make you acquainted with all the leading events of the day, without fatiguing or disgusting you with lengthy disquisitions. We can tell you that a battle has been won or lost, without shocking your sensibilities by its painful details. We can inform you that a minister has resigned, and yet omit the long dull speeches with preceded his doing so." It included regular features on London and Paris fashion, needlework patterns, book and theatre reviews, and serialised fiction, which appeared alongside surprisingly graphic accounts of

- wars and imperial uprisings, as well as in-depth political analysis and articles on current events. The newspaper had a very pro-imperial outlook, and also regularly included items on emigration and the life prospects of women in empire.' See 'Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times', available online at: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/ladys-newspaper-and-pictorial-times>
2. Diary of Frederick W. Chesson, 5 June 1856 to 19 July 1857, REAS 11/4. John Rylands Research Institute and Library.
 3. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 13 September 1856, p.4.
 4. Possibly George Thompson (1804–1878), an internationally renowned white British anti-slavery campaigner and politician and the father-in-law of Frederick William Chesson (1833–1888), a white British abolitionist and the editor of Henry's manuscript who had married his daughter, Amelia Ann Everard Thompson.
 5. George Thompson (1804–1878).
 6. George McDowell Stroud (1795–1875), author of *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery in the Several States of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1856).
 7. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), a white US Southern enslaver, 3rd President of the United States, and a key architect of the Declaration of Independence. He was a philosopher, statesman, author, and orator. Black antislavery activist, philosopher, political leader and revolutionary David Walker (1785–1830) holds Jefferson to account not only for his crimes against humanity as an enslaver of hundreds of Black people of all genders and ages but for his endorsement of scientific racism. See David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, In Four Articles; Together with A Preamble, To the Coloured Citizens of the World* (Boston, MA: Published by David Walker, 1830). Available online at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html>
 8. He is quoting the words of Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) in his book, *Notes on the State of Virginia* published in 1787 in which he writes: 'The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. If a parent could find no motive either in his philanthropy or his self-love, for restraining the intemperance of passion towards his slave, it should always be a sufficient one that his child is present. But generally it is not sufficient. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances.' Available online: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/quote/thomas-jefferson-slavery-and-liberty>
 9. Patrick Henry (1736–1799), a white US enslaver, politician, and Founding Father of the nation.
 10. William Shakespeare (1564–1616), a white British playwright.
 11. He is quoting from William Shakespeare's play, *Cymbeline* (1611), Act IV, Scene II, available online: http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/cymbel_4_2.html
 12. Charles Sumner (1811–1874), a white US senator, civil rights campaigner, orator, and powerful advocate of Black liberation, antislavery activism, and equal rights for all.
 13. William H. Seward (1801–1872), a white US antislavery advocate, senator, and statesperson.
 14. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879), a white US abolitionist radical, reformer, and social justice advocate.
 15. Wendell Phillips (1811–1884), a white US antislavery campaigner, orator, and attorney.
 16. Louis Kossuth (1802–1894), a Hungarian-born freedom fighter, political leader, and author.
 17. Henry John Palmerston (1784–1865) was a white British politician who was elected as UK Prime Minister between 1859–1865.

18. He is quoting the condemnation of 'that execrable sum of all villainies, commonly called the Slave-trade' as recorded in 1772 in the journal of white British antislavery campaigner and religious leader, John Wesley (1703–1791). See Samuel J. Rogal, 'John Wesley's Journal: Prescriptions For The Social, Spiritual, And Intellectual Ills of Britain's Middle Class', *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 26.1 (1988): p.39.
19. He is quoting the words of George Croly, *A Memoir of the Political Life of The Right Honorable Edmund Burke* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1840), p.245, on the life of Edmund Burke (1729–1797), a white philosopher and economist.
20. He is quoting from Act 1, Scene II of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1609) authored partly by William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and available online: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/pericles/pericles.1.2.html>
21. James 5:4.
22. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879). He is referring to a white mob's failed attempt to murder Garrison in Boston, Massachusetts, on 21 October 1835. Further information is available online at: <https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-boston-mob-of-1835/>
23. Elijah Parish Lovejoy (1802–1837), a white US antislavery activist who was murdered by a white racist mob for his abolitionist labours as a radical journalist and human rights newspaper editor.
24. He is referring to the New York City home belonging to Lewis Tappan (1788–1873), a white US antislavery activist whose house was set on fire.
25. A white racist mob set fire to Pennsylvania Hall in 1838 in protest against an abolitionist meeting that was being held there. Further information is available online at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/abolitionists-burning-pennsylvania-hall/>
26. On 22 May 1856, Preston Brooks (1819–1857), a white US proslavery advocate and white supremacist, attacked white abolitionist Charles Sumner (1811–1874) in the Senate Chamber, Washington, DC. Further information is available online at: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/The_Canin_g_of_Senator_Charles_Sumner.htm
27. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
28. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 20 September 1856, p.4.
29. The American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). For further information about this international conflict between the US and England see the following online resources at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/american-revolution-1763-1783/>
30. These poetic lines are quoted in Lewis W. Paine, *Six Years in a Georgia Prison. Narrative of Lewis W. Paine* (Boston MA: Bela Marsh Publisher, 1852), p.172.
31. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 27 September 1856, p.11.
32. Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), a white US lawyer, was seventh president between 1829–1837 and James K. Polk (1795–1849), a white US political leader, was the eleventh president from 1845–1849.
33. Maria White Lowell (1821–1853), a white US poet and antislavery campaigner.
34. These poetic lines are from the poem, 'The Slave Mother', by Maria White Lowell (1821–1853), and are available online: <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/slave-mother-0>
35. Nathaniel Turner (1800–1831), a prophet, military general, preacher, orator, activist, and freedom fighter who had experienced enslavement in Southampton County, Virginia. In August 1831, he led enslaved people in a war against their white enslavers. While some white enslavers died as necessary acts of warfare, untold numbers of Black people of all genders and ages were tortured, persecuted, and murdered in the terrible aftermath as they suffered at the hands of white racist persecutors, torturers, and killers. Turner himself was tragically executed. While he was in prison, a white lawyer, Thomas R. Gray, interviewed Turner and published his powerful and inspirational oratory in

- the pamphlet, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (Baltimore MD: Thomas R. Gray, 1831). An inspirational orator and revolutionary leader, Turner's words defy Gray's white racist framing to live on as a manifesto of Black liberation and one in which he jubilantly declares, 'Was not Christ crucified.'
36. George Washington (1732–1799), a white US military general, enslaver, and first President of the United States.
 37. These lines are from the poem 'The Warning' published in 1866 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882), a white US poet, antislavery campaigner, and educator. Available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=80
 38. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 4 October 1856, p.4.
 39. William Shakespeare (1564–1616).
 40. John Milton (1608–1674), a white UK poet and philosopher.
 41. Matthew 6:12–14.
 42. Matthew 20:16.
 43. Luke 21:28.
 44. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 11 October 1856, p.4.
 45. Judges 16:20.
 46. Possibly a reference to Charles Lynch (1736–1796), a white US enslaver and judge who ran unjust, illegal, persecutory, and discriminatory trials in the state of Virginia and which has led many to argue that the word 'lynching' and the phrase 'lynch law' are a reference to his surname.
 47. Patrick Henry (1736–1799), a white US enslaver, politician, and Founding Father of the nation.
 48. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 18 October 1856, p.4.
 49. This is an excerpt from 'The Negro's Complaint', a poem by white English poet William Cowper (1731–1800), first published in 1788. Available online at: <https://archive.org/details/the-negros-complaint-by-william-cowper-1731-1800>
 50. These lines are from 'The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother To Her Daughters Sold Into Southern Bondage', published in 1853 and authored by white US antislavery poet John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892). The full text is available online at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAE0044.0001.001/1:4.16?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>
 51. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 25 October 1856, p.7.
 52. Queen Victoria (1819–1901), the white British monarch who was the ruling monarch of the United Kingdom and Ireland from 1837 until the day she died.
 53. He is referring to the armed rebellions which occurred in Lower and Upper Canada in 1837 and 1838. These military conflicts initially resulted in the Act of Union of 1840 before finally securing the British North American Act of 1867 – legislation which resulted in the formation of the Canadian Constitution and government structures – a few decades later.
 54. Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (106 BC–48 BC), a renowned Roman military general and political leader.
 55. Gaius Julius Caesar (100 BC–44 BC), a renowned Roman military general and political leader.
 56. William the Conqueror (c.1028–1087), the first monarch of England.
 57. Sir John Falstaff, a fictional character who repeatedly appears in plays by white British playwright, William Shakespeare (1564–1616).
 58. Genesis 4:9.
 59. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 1 November 1856, p.4.
 60. Mason and Dixon's line refers to the geographical demarcation mapped by white US surveyors Charles Mason (1728–1786) and Jeremiah Dixon (1733–1779) which became popularly known as the dividing line between the northern and southern United States.

61. In the US presidential election in 1840, William Henry Harrison (1773–1841), a white US political leader, defeated Martin Van Buren (1782–1862), a white US lawyer and political leader and president of the nation from 1837–1841, only to die a month after his inauguration in 1841.
62. Martin Van Buren (1782–1862).
63. William Henry Harrison (1773–1841).
64. John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), a white US lawyer, political leader, and President of the nation from 1825 until 1829.
65. Daniel Webster (1782–1852), a white US lawyer and political leader who held the position of US Secretary of State.
66. The popular drama *Bombastes Furioso, or A Burlesque Tragic Opera*, was written in 1810 by William Barnes Rhodes, a white British author.
67. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 15 November 1856, p.4.
68. George Washington (1789–1797), a white US enslaver, Founding Father, military general, and first President of the United States.
69. William Tell, a mythic legendary heroic originating from Switzerland.
70. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 22 November 1856, p.10.
71. These lines are authored by 'J. S. Buckingham, M. P., 1847' and reproduced in Wilson Armistead, *A 'Cloud of Witnesses' Against Slavery and Oppression* (London: William Tweedie, 1853), p.84. Available online: <https://archive.org/details/cloudofwitnesses00armi>
72. Thaddeus Stevens (1792–1868), a white US political leader, antislavery activist, and antiracist radical.
73. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 6 December 1856, p.4.
74. Wendell Phillips (1811–1884) was a white US antislavery campaigner, orator, and attorney.
75. William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a white British politician and antislavery campaigner.
76. Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845) was a white British Member of Parliament and antislavery campaigner.
77. John Bunyan (1628–1688), a white English author and religious leader, is the author of the spiritual work, *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which is to Come* first published in 1678. Available online: <https://archive.org/details/pilgrimsprogress00inbun>
78. Alexander the Great (356 BC–323 BC) was the ruling monarch of Macedon, an ancient Greek kingdom.
89. Matthew 7:16.
80. Henry A. Wise (1806–1876), a white US enslaver, lawyer, and politician; Matthew Calbraith Butler (1836–1909), a white US Confederate Civil War general and senator; Preston Brooks (1819–1857), a white US proslavery politician; Robert Toombs (1810–1885), a white US enslaver and leading Confederate politician in the US South.
81. Preston Brooks (1819–1857).
82. Preston Brooks (1819–1857) was a white US proslavery politician who attacked and nearly killed Charles Sumner (1811–1874), a white US antislavery and civil rights leader, on 22 May 1856, in the US Senate.
83. *The Lady's Newspaper*, 13 December 1856, p.4.
84. Nehemiah Adams (1806–1878), a white US apologist and endorser of enslavement and an author.
85. Nehemiah Adams (1806–1878) published *A South-Side View of Slavery* (Boston MA: T. R. Marvin, 1855), a discriminatory work of injustice. Available online at: <http://www.authorama.com/full/pdf/A-Southside-View-of-Slavery--Nehemiah-Adams.pdf>
86. Charles Grandison Parsons (1807–1864), a white US doctor and author published his antislavery volume, *Inside View of Slavery: or a Tour Among the Planters* (Boston MA: John P. Jewett & Co., 1855). Available online at: <https://archive.org/details/insideviewofsla00pars/page/n5/mode/2up>

87. Charles Grandison Parsons (1807–1864).
88. John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892).
89. This poem is titled, ‘The Christian Slave’ and was authored by white US antislavery poet John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) in 1843. The full text is available online at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAE0044.0001.001/1:4.22?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>
90. *The Lady’s Newspaper*, 10 January 1857, p.4.
91. The 1856 US presidential election in which James Buchanan (1791–1868), a white US lawyer and political leader, defeated John C. Frémont (1813–1890), a white US military officer and political leader.
92. James Buchanan (1791–1868).
93. John C. Frémont (1813–1890).
94. For further information on white enslavers’ use of the sanitising designation ‘peculiar institution’ as a description of US enslavement, see Fitzhugh Brundage, ‘American Slavery: A Look Back at The Peculiar Institution’, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 15 (1997): pp.118–120.
95. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all ‘fugitive’ persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
96. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 was the work of white US Senator Stephen A. Douglass (1813–1861) and authorised by white US President Franklin Pierce (1804–1869). The act resulted in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that admitted Maine as a free state and Missouri as an enslaving state. The aim of this legislation was an attempt to sustain equal power relations between North and South in the Senate in recognition of the fact that the legislation forbid enslavement north of the 36° 30’ parallel. This legislation stoked the fires of the nation’s conflict over enslavement and led to a number of violent and acts called ‘Bleeding Kansas’ or the Border War between 1854–1861. Further information is available at: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Kansas_Nebraska_Act.htm
97. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) was a white US leading antislavery campaigner, author, orator, and editor of *The Liberator* (1831–1866), an abolitionist newspaper published in Boston, Massachusetts.
98. The American Antislavery Society was established by white US reformers William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan (1786–1865) between 1833–1870.
99. He is referring to the passing of ‘An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted Slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of Such Slaves’ in Britain on 28 August 1833 and which took effect from 1 August 1834. The full text is available online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/6-7/98/enacted>
100. Luke 3:8.

THE END.



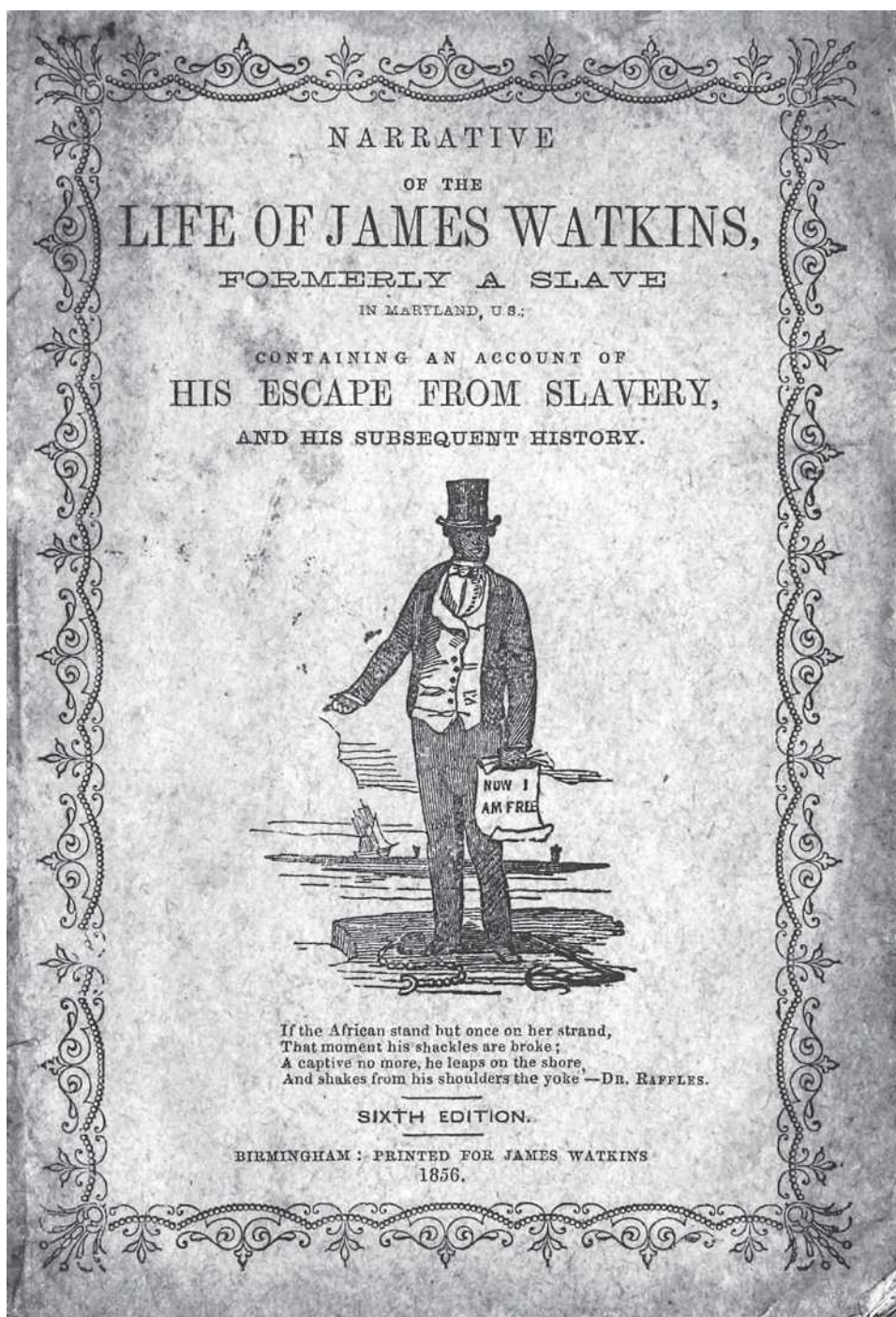


Figure 25 Front cover, 'Now I am Free' from the *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly a Slave, in Maryland, U.S.* Birmingham: Printed for James Watkins, 1856. (Boston Athenaeum.)

JAMES WATKINS

(c.1823–1825–DATE UNKNOWN)

8 James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly A Slave in Maryland, U.S.* Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1859.¹

Biographical History

See also ‘James Watkins’ in *Speeches*.

IN THE PREFACE to his *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, Formerly A Slave in Maryland, U.S.*, the autobiography he published in Manchester, England in 1859, freedom fighter James Watkins powerfully declares, ‘I will never relax my efforts in attempting to put down that accursed system of human suffering, degradation, and torture – *slavery!*’ An emotionally unequivocal declaration first written in that 1859 edition and included again in his subsequent revised work, *Struggles for Freedom* published a year later, Watkins refuses to cease his lifelong efforts in the cause of antislavery and Black liberation.²

Watkins experienced enslavement in Cuckerville, Baltimore County in Maryland. Throughout his various narrative editions, he changes the exact date of his birth. In his published autobiography we reproduce here, he records it as 1825, though in earlier versions he marks it as 1823. The terrible reality that Watkins was not in possession of an accurate birth date is a searing indictment of the dehumanising practices of white enslavers who attempted to deny enslaved people their humanity. Warring against the white supremacist ‘chattel record’, survivors of US enslavement often chose a symbolic date or fought to live with the devastating fact they would never know their exact age. Watkins’ decision to include both 1823 and 1825 across different editions of his narrative works is another brutal and violating reality that plagues him throughout his literary life as an activist, but also indicates his own untold personal trauma of the living legacies of enslavement. In another hard-hitting condemnation and radical protest against white violence, and specifically sexual abuse against Black women, he refers to Milcah Berry and the white overseer Amos Salisbury as his mother and father.

Whether during his enslavement and experience of nominal freedom following his act of self-liberation while living in the US, or within his activism on transatlantic soil, Watkins relied upon a variety of strategies including literary experimentation, song, oratory,

and performance, all of which have been largely neglected by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. First published in 1852, *The Narrative of the Life of James Watkins* was printed by the publishers Kenyon and Abbatt in Bolton, England, and written by an almost certainly white, male – yet still unidentified – amanuensis. Various later editions however, including his 1853, 1856, and 1859 versions of *Narrative of the Life of James, Watkins, Formerly A Slave in Maryland, U.S. and Struggles for Freedom; the Life of James Watkins* (1860, 1862, 1863), signal his determination to secure his self-liberation from the literary restrictions of white paternalist authors and develop his own authorial voice. Across these narrative editions, he chose to edit, reframe, insert, and delete sentences, paragraphs, and even entire chapters. Designed to have maximum emotional, cultural, and geographical impact across his years of activism on British soil, Watkins' edits serve to differentiate between his narratives. More importantly, he reminds readers that they are living through a momentous period of antislavery struggle which they had the power to act by working to end enslavement from their privileged position abroad. His engagements with other forms of literary production, including his *Poetry, Original and Selected* (1856 and 1859) represent Watkins' experimental and radical literary strategies through which he sought to educate his audiences and to raise their awareness and awaken their responsibilities to the antislavery movement. Indeed, Watkins includes several poetical verses in his *Narrative*, some from famous antislavery authors, others potentially of his own composition. Keenly aware of the circulatory practices of printed culture like poetry amongst international abolitionists, Watkins follows in the footsteps of William Wells Brown's *Antislavery Harp*, a compilation of poetry published in Boston in 1848 which gathered together songs, verses, and poems that spread the antislavery message. In a literary move to distinguish his own poetry volume, however, Watkins includes two poems audience members wrote in response to his own lectures. Inspired by his oratory, Watkins uses poetry here to highlight his impact on local communities and how he had specifically motivated members of his audience to pen works of antislavery poetry and become involved in the abolitionist cause.

From 1856, subsequent editions of his narrative were published by Abel Heywood (1810–1893), a white British reformer and printer based in Manchester, England, who worked tirelessly for social reform and education particularly amongst the working classes.³ Heywood also prints the 1859 version we reproduce here, which Watkins boldly and proudly states is the eighteenth edition.

In this autobiographical narrative, Watkins tells various brutal stories of his life as lived in enslavement. Building on a myriad of performative techniques such as masking employed by African American author activists across the centuries, he recounts one incident where his tyrannical white US enslaver, Luke Ensor, violently beats him while he is intoxicated. As he remembers, he 'struck me some violent blows on my forehead, which felled me to the ground, bleeding most dreadfully. I was in an unconscious state for some time; my master got alarmed, and thought he had killed me.' In a determination to enact revenge upon Ensor, and to protect his fellow enslaved brethren, Watkins 'wished him to think that my senses were gone, in order to get a little sympathy from him and others' with the powerful and transformative result that Ensor 'never ventured to beat his slaves on their heads again.'

Watkins' personal experience of trauma dominates his narrative, from his description of the 'slave auction and market' that had such a devastating effect upon him that he

declares ‘I shall never forget the parting as long as I live’, to his incarceration in Baltimore after spending an evening with Elizabeth Simmerwell, a free Black woman. Watkins and a fellow enslaved comrade were arrested and tortured, and here he describes the devastating and sadistic violence committed against his mind, body and soul by white persecutors ‘which almost deprived me of my senses’. The ‘torture was such I never experienced either before or since’, Watkins says, in ‘the boasted “Land of Liberty!!”’

In his quest for freedom, Watkins’ first attempt at self-liberation ends in torture inflicted upon his body from bloodhounds and his white enslaver. The second liberation attempt, for which he manages to give the date of May 1845, was exceptionally painful not only because of the dangers he faced in his terrifying flight but also due to the heartbreaking separation he endures between himself and his mother. He resolved to run, however, and prepares to face death rather than ever return to bondage. Eventually aided by white Quakers, he travels to Hartford, Connecticut, where he settles within the local community and marries a young Black woman, Mary Eliza Wells.

As Moses Roper makes clear in his radical speeches delivered across Britain and Ireland (*Speeches*, Speech Nos 60–62), he could not experience real freedom while his family were in bondage: ‘you call me a free man, but I cannot feel myself free while they are slaves.’⁴ As he confirms in his slave narrative, this was a ‘weight which hangs heavy on me.’⁵ Watkins, like most survivors, felt the same, for he took the courageous decision to return to Maryland to find his mother. Although friends and colleagues warned him against the ‘wild scheme’ for it was like ‘going into the tiger’s den’, Watkins could not rest until he had made the death-defying journey to learn the whereabouts of his family. Against all the odds, he eventually reunited with his mother who at first, refuses to see him ‘for she could not believe I was in Maryland again’. Watkins suspected his enslaver Ensor had told her a sadistic lie of him being ‘sold to the rice swamps in Georgia, and, consequently, she had no idea of seeing me any more in the flesh’. At first, she does not recognise him, ‘I was so altered’, but they ‘had nevertheless a joyful meeting’. Watkins finds she has been nominally freed after she was brutally tortured by a neighbouring white enslaver. Forced to leave and return home, he recounts that ‘the parting was painful in the extreme’ for ‘I had not thought of ever seeing her again in this world’. According to current research, his tragic prediction almost certainly came true.

After briefly settling in Hartford once again, Watkins was ‘thrown into the greatest disquietude and peril by the enactment of the “American Fugitive Law”’. Like Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones, Ellen Craft and William Craft, and the countless others who were forced to seek refuge outside of the northern US to escape this draconian and white persecutory legislation, Watkins was forced to leave Connecticut behind and travel to England. For months Watkins wrestled with his decision: ‘this was afflictive work for my mind; a terrible conflict going on within continually, made me that I scarcely knew what I was doing; at intervals my feelings completely overpowered me, and it was some time before I could get my courage up to the point of preparing for my departure’. Separated from his wife and children, and the local community of Hartford, Watkins was determined never to return to bondage. He writes ‘I hate the whole thing with a perfect hatred, and no consideration shall induce me again to become a slave.’ Upon hearing white working classes describe their situation as akin to enslavement while in Britain, Watkins was at pains to point out all that he had suf-

ferred and chastises them for 'forgetting that they can, at any time, give a fortnight or a month's notice to their employers that they are going to leave, and then they are at liberty to improve their circumstances if they can.' He powerfully states, 'All this is very different to being placed on the auction block, and knocked off to the highest bidder, with the same ease and as little consideration as a piece of old furniture is done in any English market-place.' Most importantly, if his tyrannical white enslaver made 'me an offer to clothe me in the best broad cloth, place a gold chain and watch about my neck, give me a horse to ride upon, and feed me on the best his plantation could produce, on the condition that I would return to him a slave, that is, his *property*, I would spurn the offer with indignation . . . I should fly from him as from the face of Satan.' Watkins not only equates his white enslaver Ensor with the devil, he also describes the entire system of US enslavement as demonic and barbaric in nature; no amount of riches, food, or home comforts would ever induce him to return to Baltimore. Given Watkins' countless trials and tribulations during his fight for his liberation, his near-starvation and death, and his struggles to survive in Britain and Ireland, he was determined to live free or die in the attempt. His devastating separation from his wife and children, together with his relentless activism in Britain, indicated he was determined to protect that freedom at all costs.

Once on British soil, Watkins begins his antislavery lecturing career in Manchester. Similar to marking the date of his self-liberation from enslavement, he notes the exact date of his first speech in every edition of his *Narrative* – the 5th of June 1851 – as another example of his purposeful acts of liberation against US enslavement and the white persecutory practices of enslavers. Travelling through Wesleyan networks across England in particular, he notes that in so doing he discovers 'in this path of labour a tract of ground but very little affected by the valuable operations of my coloured brethren who have hitherto appeared before the British public in the large cities and towns'. While saluting the relentless careers of his fellow survivors and revolutionaries in the cause, Watkins is determined to follow his own path and make an impact in areas that have remained untouched or were rarely visited by other African American freedom fighters.

In the version of his narrative that we reproduce here, Watkins also includes a collection of newspaper articles, extracts from slave laws, and a treatise from proslavery defenders that he uses as further evidence to his readers of the barbarity of US enslavement. He deliberately inserts his testimony alongside these articles to silence white enslavers and ignorant white transatlantic audiences that chose to question his oratorical and literary truth. Without letting the reader pause to rest, he charges his audience with complicity if they refuse to become active abolitionists in the cause, fully aware that their silence was an act of violence in itself. As Watkins declares, 'Britons, help as you can; and when you can; and may God bless our labours, and hasten the day of Jubilee.'

Watkins' narrative, then, is powerful in its content, not only for the extensive detail he includes of a new life as lived in Britain but also the themes he touches upon. These are as follows: white racism in the US and Britain; colonisation; the religious hypocrisy of white religious ministers who defend enslavement; the abolitionist movement; and the unfreedom he experiences in the northern states of the US and at times in Britain. In a comprehensive call to arms against racism and enslavement, he silences white

enslavers who promoted, promulgated, and propped up white persecutory violence and torture against enslaved people.

This narrative is also revolutionary due to Watkins' meticulous recording of his speaking locations as well as the families, religious networks, and white religious ministers he stays with throughout his career. In the appendix to his narrative, he lists hundreds of ministers, friends, and kinship webs who organised lectures for him, opened up their homes, and introduced him to others along the way. Watkins includes this extraordinary detail not only to express his gratitude and immortalise his friends in print, but also once again to contrast his warm reception in Britain and Ireland with the pressures and dangers he experienced in the US as a political device to flatter white transatlantic audiences. Due to the confines of space and word count, we have omitted the locations but include some of this information in a footnote.

Watkins also inserts testimonials from these same white British ministers to further demonstrate his impact on local communities. He writes that 'the utmost interest was awakened in them by the vivid pictures I brought before their minds of the cruelties and brutality of the slave owners, and of the deplorable condition of the slave, and his utter helplessness, especially since the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law'. Watkins demonstrates his incalculable contributions to the international antislavery cause and notes how he inspired antislavery feeling across numerous audiences – from the white British aristocracy to the working classes – who were impressed with his speeches and literary work. Along similar lines, he is at pains to point out his determination to create a legacy of future abolitionists when speaking to children: 'in my simple way I have been able to make impressions on the youthful mind of this country, in favour of freedom, and in detestation of slavery, which will never be effaced. And I have reason to hope my humble addresses to the Sabbath schools have been made useful to the souls of some of my little hearers.' Watkins was determined to express his 'gratitude' for 'I have felt all, and more than all, I have expressed. Nor is it to be wondered at that my gratitude should be warm and difficult to restrain, when it is home in mind what are the blessings I now enjoy, compared with my previous position in slavery, and with that of millions of my race at the present hour.' The stark contrast between his oppression in the US versus the warm support he receives from people in Britain and Ireland were substantial, even overwhelming, but Watkins never forgets that while he campaigns on transatlantic soil arranging meeting after meeting, his enslaved brethren, including members of his own family, were experiencing enslavement.

Watkins' antislavery crusade was forever altered through the integral help and support he received from his activist wife, Mary Eliza Watkins. While her husband lectured in Britain, she performed various activist roles in Hartford including managing their home, raising their children (Simeon W. Watkins, Ellen A. P. Watkins, and Mary Isabella Watkins), engaging with the antislavery cause, and providing moral support to her husband thousands of miles away, a role she continued while living on British soil alongside him. Watkins honours this support by printing two of her letters in the 1852 edition of his narrative. While we know little of Mary Eliza's own life and voice across the Atlantic, we do know she sang antislavery songs in at least one lecture. Her contributions to British society are immeasurable and invaluable, summarised by her undying support to her activist husband when she powerfully writes, 'My dear,-- the

thought that you and I must be for ever separated in this life to me indeed is very painful, yet far rather had I that it be so, than you should be dragged back to bondage, the scourge, and the chain.⁶

After several years of lecturing by himself, Watkins orchestrates the arrival of his wife and their children to Britain. Initially refused entry onto a Cunard steamship because of the racist practices of a white clerk, they board the SS *City of Manchester*, part of a British-owned Inman line. They live together for nearly six years, with Mary Eliza sometimes joining him on the antislavery platform, but she and their children returned to the US after the British climate had seriously debilitated her health. In 1860, the family is briefly united together in the US, but in the 1861 British Census, Watkins is living as a boarder with Thomas Skinner, a basket manufacturer, where his profession is listed as a lecturer on enslavement.⁷ Watkins himself possibly returns to the US permanently on the SS *Nevada* in 1869.⁸

Although research into both James' and Mary Eliza Watkins' lives and deaths are still ongoing, both are forever enshrined in British memory as carved stone heads in the small village of Westhoughton, near Bolton and Manchester. Throughout his numerous speeches and various editions of his *Narrative*, Watkins' relentless activism and intimate networks with this particular local community prove that his testimony had far-reaching consequences. The local community memorialised the Watkins' faces in stone to serve as a powerful and lasting tribute to both their impact on the town but also to their own revolutionary acts of individual and collective self-liberation.⁹

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NARRATIVE
OF THE
LIFE OF JAMES WATKINS,
FORMERLY A SLAVE IN MARYLAND, U.S.;
CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF
HIS ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY,
AND HIS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

WITH NOTICES OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW,
THE SENTIMENTS OF AMERICAN DIVINES ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY
AND THE LABOURS OF THE FUGITIVE IN ENGLAND,
ETC., ETC.

EIGHTEENTH EDITION

‘Worse than all, and most to be deplored
As human nature’s broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.’¹⁰ – COWPER.¹¹

MANCHESTER:¹² PRINTED FOR JAMES WATKINS.
1859

PREFACE TO THE EIGHTEENTH EDITION.

My Kind Readers,

Through the blessing of God, who has preserved me for so many years from the cruel and unrelenting persecutions of my oppressors, I now feel a great pleasure in presenting to the British nation the Eighteenth edition of my narrative, embodying as it does

the stern realities and horrors of Slave Life in the Southern States of America. To thousands of warm-hearted Christian Friends, both in the Free States of America and in Great Britain, who have so kindly and generously assisted me since I set foot on freedom's ground, do I beg leave to tender my most warm-hearted thanks; and I can assure them that I will never relax my efforts in attempting to put down that accursed system of human suffering, degradation, and torture – *slavery!*

In revising the present edition for the press, I have taken all the pains my humble abilities will allow to make it as accurate as possible; but if any slight mistakes should still exist, I must humbly throw myself on the kind indulgence of my readers, who, I am sure, will excuse them, when they look back on my childhood and youth, and see how few have been my opportunities of acquiring education. Thanking again all those kind Christian friends who have so generously assisted and protected me,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,
Your obedient servant,
JAMES WATKINS.

TESTIMONIALS

'Hartford, Connecticut,
November 11th, 1850

'The bearer of this letter, JAMES WATKINS, has been well known to me for the last five years. It gives me pleasure to state that during this period he has sustained an excellent character for sobriety, industry, and integrity. I recommend him as entirely worthy of confidence in the sphere of life in which it has pleased Providence to place him.

THOMAS CHURCH BROWNELL,
Bishop of the Diocese of Connecticut.'

'I am well acquainted with the individual named in the above recommendation of Bishop Brownell, and fully concur in all that he has said of his good character.

J. HAWES,
Pastor of the first Congregational Church, Hartford.'

'To Thomas Booth and James Henwood, Esqrs., Hull, England, and to all the friends of freedom.

I have known the bearer, JAMES WATKINS, for some time, and take great pleasure in certifying that he has been a good citizen, and an acceptable member of the Methodist Episcopal Church in this city.

He has been compelled to flee from the United States, in consequence of a law lately passed by Congress, entitled the "Fugitive Slave Law," and take refuge in England, knowing that there, if nowhere else, he can be *free*. I commend him to the Christian kindness of the humane and particularly to the confidence and sympathy of all who have adopted the name and doctrines of Wesley.¹³

HENRY G. FOX,
Pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church,
Hartford, Connecticut, December 3rd, 1850.'

'Hartford, Connecticut, December 3rd, 1850.

The bearer of this, Mr. JAMES WATKINS, is personally known to me as a young man of good character and unblemished reputation. Feeling somewhat insecure in his present residence, in consequence of the operation of the recent "Fugitive Slave Act"¹⁴ of Congress, he proposes to travel to parts where he may feel more at ease, and be less liable to unpleasant interruption. It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to commend him to the confidence and sympathies of the good, wherever, in the Providence of God, he may journey.

J. N. MURDOCK,
Pastor of South Baptist Church, Hartford, Connecticut.'

'St. John's Parish, Hartford, Connecticut, College Green,
November 14th, 1850.

JAMES WATKINS is a respectable coloured man, who has lived for several years among us in habits of industry and moral rectitude, and who is very generally esteemed and loved by those who have known him in Hartford. He is a pious man, of the Methodist persuasion, but sometimes attends the services of the Church, to which he might belong, if we Churchmen had not sadly neglected his people. He is now forced, by no fault of his, to seek an asylum under the flag of England; and I commend him to the charities of Christians, and to the blessing of that God, to whom "the pious commits himself as the helper of the friendless."¹⁵

A. CLEVELAND COX, Rector.'

'Hartford, December 16th, 1850.

To the Hon. Benjamin Rotch, Counsellor, No.1, New Furnival's Inn, Holborn, London.

DEAR SIR, – The bearer, JAMES WATKINS, is a negro man of highly respectable character and standing as a servant, and for the last five years has been a resident of this town. He has certificates of character from Bishop Brownell, and other clergymen.

This man has been advised to go to England for a few months, and in case he should be in London, I have ventured to recommend him to call on you for advice.

Any aid you may render him will be duly appreciated; and I pray you may receive a ten-fold greater reward for your kindness.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient Servant,
JOHN A. TAINTOR.'

'Hartford, December 28th, 1850.

I have known the bearer of this for several years past, and have neither seen nor heard anything against his character as a man of integrity in every form. He is generally esteemed by all who know him, and will prove himself worthy, I have no doubt, of whatever confidence may be given him, or kindness shown him.

HORACE BUSHNELL,
Congregational Pastor.'

'Rev. William Chalmers, Minister of the Free Church of Scotland; Rev. Dr. Cox, Hackney, London; or other friends of freedom.

I have known JAMES WATKINS for some time, and can recommend him as a worthy and industrious man, and profoundly regret that anything in the laws of this country should subject him to the necessity of finding a home in another part of the world.

ROBERT TURNBULL,
Pastor of the first Baptist Church, Hartford, Connecticut.'

'6, Grinfield-street, Edge Hill, Liverpool,
April 21st, 1851.

John Cropper, Esq.

DEAR SIR, – Last Friday, while passing the street, I met with JAMES WATKINS, and hasten to fulfil my promise. He is the man I have long known in Hartford, and who answers the character I have before given of him. I have seen his letters, and from the long intercourse I have had with all the gentlemen, I am satisfied of their genuineness.

Yours, truly,
J. W. C. PENNINGTON,¹⁶ D.D.'

INTRODUCTION.

It is now about eight years since I set my foot on British ground, under that standard of liberty which has been long the glory of this great and happy nation.

Driven from my home, my wife, my children, and all I held dear to me upon earth, to a strange land, by that accursed law which passed the Congress of that liberty-boasting land (alas! where so little of it exists, or exists but partially), none can tell the deep feelings which stirred within my soul, and throbbed within my bosom, but those who have been in a position similar to my own.

It may be interesting to my numerous readers to know a little more of that law, called the 'Fugitive Slave Law,'¹⁷ by the operations of which I have been placed in my present circumstances; and not only I, but hundreds; for I can speak of Christian churches devastated, ministers scattered, homesteads broken up, hearts smitten with anguish, and of many who have been hidden with their sorrow in the grave; whose deep long loud wail of woe has pierced the clouds, and has entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath: whose sorrows, like Abel's¹⁸ blood, cry aloud for vengeance: and He who governs universal empire, He who smote the great Egyptian slaveholder of old, will ere long 'avenge his elect, who cry day and night unto him mightily,' for we know who hath said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'¹⁹

By this law, called the Fugitive Slave Act, passed in Congress in the year 1850, all slaves who have escaped from bondage, and have taken refuge in the free states, are liable to be recaptured at any subsequent period, and dragged back again into slavery; and so cruel and relentless it is, that it makes punishable with fine and imprisonment any parties who may be convicted of giving even a cup of cold water to one of these sons of sorrow and wretchedness.

Take one or two quotations from the act itself, as given in the *Electric Review* for June, 1851.

'This act provides for the appointment by district judges of commissioners in each county of the several states, whose duty it shall be to issue process for the arrest of

slaves, and of assistant commissioners, whose duty it shall be to arrest such slaves. The deputy marshall in each county is also authorised and required to serve such process; and any of the said commissioners or marshalls holding such process, may call to his aid every citizen of the country; and if such citizen shall refuse when called on, he will forfeit 500 dollars; and if the deputy marshall or commissioner shall fail to arrest such slave when he has the power to do so, he shall forfeit one thousand dollars.'

In the 6th section of the act are these words, 'and by taking or causing such persons to be taken forthwith before such court, judge, or commissioners, whose duty it shall be to hear and determine the case in a *summary manner*.'

This sixth section of the act, says the writer of the Review, is enough to condemn the whole act, and is a palpable violation of the 5th article of the constitution, which avows that 'no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of the law.' It is equally a violation of the constitution of each free state, which guarantees personal liberty to all, unless deprived of it by 'due course of law,' and maintains that the right of trial by jury shall be inviolate. The affidavit and bare testimony of the slaveholder are received as sufficient evidence, and the alleged fugitive is not allowed to procure and produce evidence to establish his freedom. At Detroit, a negro was brought before the commissioners as a fugitive slave from Tennessee; the counsel for the negro presented an affidavit duly sworn by the former, that he was manumitted by deed of the present claimants for 700 dollars, which the latter had received for the same, and that the deed is now in the hands of the negro's friends in Cincinnati; on this affidavit, the counsel for the prisoner moved that the case lie continued until the deeds of emancipation can be procured and used as evidence. The commissioner decides that the deed would be inadmissible if produced; that he has no power to enquire into any defence the negro may have against the claim, but only to determine whether the case presented on the part of the claimants is sufficient to entitle him to a certificate for the removal of the negro. The Buffalo Express comments with reason, 'If this decision is sustained, no coloured man north can be safe for a single day.'

The parts of the act most revolting to the feelings of the northern men, are the clauses which require all good citizens to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law, whenever their services may be required, under heavy penalties; and those in section 7, by which it is enacted, that any person who shall in any way, directly or indirectly, aid the fugitive in his flight, shall incur a penalty of two hundred dollars, and suffer six months' imprisonment.

Such is the Fugitive Slave Law, which, not content with recapturing the poor fugitive, compels free citizens of the commonwealth to be petty informers, and to form a constabulary of slave hunters, contrary to their most sacred conviction, and contrary to the laws of Christ.

But that which appears to me to be the most astounding is, that ministers of religion, the preachers of that glorious gospel which proclaims liberty to the captive, and breathes goodwill to men, and unites and binds mankind in one great bond of brotherhood – that the exponents of this gospel should support and advocate this vile system. When I only think what slavery is, and what I have known of it in the painful experience of twenty years, I can only say that I am not surprised that any right minded man should deprecate it in language the most strong and vehement: and now I cannot do better than give you the opinion of the Rev. Dr. Dixon on this question. He says, speaking of slavery as a system, 'as to slavery in its own nature, nothing can

be said but that it is the grossest evil under the sun; it is in truth every possible wrong in one. Rob a man of his clothes, his watch, his purse, his house, his lands, – is not this a moral evil, a sin? If not, what of the laws of civilized communities, jails, and gallows? But is it not a greater evil to rob a man of himself, than to strip him of his coat, to pull down his house, and to drive him from his home? The degrees of evil in each case can bear no comparison. Slavery is robbery in its highest possible enormity. But it is a lingering injury, it is inflicted for life; a life of conscious wrong: for to imagine that these wretches are not sensible of their condition, is to add calumny to injury. It is a robbery, torture, degradation, misery mental and physical, dealt out by the moment, the live long day, the whole period of existence; it is as if by some infernal contrivance existence was sustained – as with the damned, while the operations of the whip, the iron, the fangs of slavery were constantly at work upon their tortured and lacerated limbs. To say that villany like this can in any way be identified with Christianity, is to degrade our holy religion to a co-partnership or a connivance with men's greatest, most concentrated, and unmitigated crimes against his fellows.

'There is not a truth, a doctrine, a principle, a precept, of the gospel which, if fairly carried out, would not annihilate slavery. The very existence of the church is fundamentally opposed to the spirit and injustice of this evil. How can a slaveholder make his servants his property, and then meet them as brethren at the table of the Lord?'²⁰

And yet this is the system, and this is the crime which has the patronage and support of the ministers of religion in the slaveholding states. I do not say of all, for there are, thanks be to God, some memorable exceptions. Permit me to give here a few of the sayings of some of the most eminent of these American divines in support of what I have affirmed: and here again I quote from the same article in the 'Electric Review' for June, 1851; in reviewing the anti-slavery Reporter from January to April of that year.

The Rev. Dr. Gardner Spring, an eminent Presbyterian clergyman of New York, lately declared from the pulpit, that 'If by one prayer he could liberate every slave in the world, he would not dare to offer it.'

The Rev. Dr. Parker, of Philadelphia, affirms in a recent thanksgiving sermon, 'that there are no evils in slavery, but such as are inseparable from any other relation in social life.'

The Rev. W. Rogers, an orthodox minister of Boston, delivered on the last thanksgiving day a sermon, in which he says, 'when the slave asks me to stand between him and his master, what does he ask? he asks me to murder a nation's life; and I will not do it, because I have a conscience, and because there is a God.' He proceeds to affirm that if this resistance to the carrying of the 'Fugitive Slave Law' should lead the magistracy to call the citizens to arms, their duty was to obey, and 'if ordered to take away human life, in the name of God to take it.'

The Rev. Orville Dewey, D.D., of the Unitarian connection, declares that for his part, he 'would send his own brother or child into slavery, if needed to preserve the union between the free and slaveholding States.'

It must not be supposed that the ministers of America are all chargeable with these opinions; there are noble exceptions, and they are becoming daily more numerous. Large numbers of them feel deeply the dishonour done to their country and their religion by the perpetuation of this atrocious system, and are labouring with national energy to bring it to a speedy termination: may God speed the work.

While politicians void of shame,
 Cry this is law and liberty,
 The clergy lend the awful name
 And sanction of the Deity,
 To help sustain the monstrous wrong.
 And crush the weak beneath the strong.²¹

The Heathen, Atheist, Turk, and Jew,
 May well reject with loathing scorn
 The doctrines taught by those who sell
 Their brethren in the Saviour born;
 And with the price of Christian blood
 Build temples to the Christian's God.²²

Lord, thou hast said the tyrant's ear
 Shall not be always closed to thee,
 But that thou wilt in wrath appear,
 And set the trembling captive free.²³

NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

I was born on Mr. Abraham Ensor's plantation, about six miles from Cuckerville, Baltimore Co., Maryland. I do not know the date of my birth – slaves know little of dates – but, from what I have been able to gather, I think it was about the year 1825.²⁴ I remained upon the same estate till I attempted my first escape, about the year 1841. My father's name was Amos Salisbury; he was a clever, shrewd man. Mr. Ensor had made him his overseer. He was a cruel and severe disciplinarian, and has often punished me very severely, never recognising me as his son. My mother's name was Milcah Berry. I was called Sam Berry, after my mother, but more commonly 'Ensor Sam.' I was removed from my mother when about a year old, and was nursed by an old female slave whom they called Aunt Comfort. I lived with this old woman till about five or six years old, rolling in the dirt like a pig, and little better cared for. I was now thought of some use to my owner, and was sent to attend the cows, and keep them off the corn, there being no hedges there. I continued at this sort of employment till about nine years old; then I was sent to the plantation, where my work was picking stones, clearing the soil, assisting the sheep-shearing, washing the wool, and making myself generally useful. I was now employed in the general work of the farm, lodged with the other slaves, clothed in rags, sleeping sometimes under a tree, and sometimes in the lodging provided for us – a kind of shed, where male and female slaves were huddled together for the night, without any kind of bed but a sloping kind of platform, inclining to the fire. Early in the morning we were called, and a breakfast provided, principally of corn bread, and occasionally some whisky with it.

CHAPTER II. YOUTH.

When about fifteen or sixteen years of age my master died, and many of the slaves were driven to the market, but I was kept on the estate, being valued at 900 dollars. About this time a wager was made that I could fetch a bucket of water from a spring in a given time; it appeared they had a good opinion of my activity and ability to perform this task, but I had not sufficient time allowed me to do it in. I did all I could to accomplish it, knowing that I should be punished if my oppressor lost his wager, but I failed; he was greatly enraged, and getting a switch from the hedge, laid it on my bare back till the blood ran down to my heels, and for this slight offence almost took my life – at least I thought so. About a year after my whipping my father (being, I think, about forty years of age,) came into the field in harvest time, and thinking the slaves had not worked hard enough, called for a ‘cradle’ – a thing used for cutting corn – and took the lead; the slaves kept so well up with him that they almost got the head of him; but he was determined not to be beaten, so kept going at a furious rate till he was quite exhausted. He was almost immediately taken ill, as was supposed from over exertion, and died the next day, about four o’clock. I believe this was year 1836.

I have mentioned the death of my old master, Mr. Abraham Ensor, who died about this time, between 70 and 80 years of age. His son, Mr. Luke Ensor, succeeded to the estate, and not only took me at a valuation, but also my mother, with the rest of the children; a circumstance which pleased us much, as we dreaded to be separated – for we poor slaves, with all our degradations, have strong natural affections. Our new master was what is called a moderate one, though at times violent in his temper, and tyrannical in his conduct, but not more so than his abominable slave holding propensities would make him; he gave us plenty of work, and did not overfeed us, our food being Indian corn, red herrings, cabbage, and always something very cheap; you may be sure when we could catch anything better we were no way particular about taking it. I remember on one occasion we found about a dozen eggs, and were resolved to have a feast; so we took them to our quarters, and placed them in the ashes to roast. Whilst they were cooking, Mr. Ensor came to enquire about some business; being Sabbath day we were dreadfully afraid, thinking he had come to look after the eggs, and were all but scared to death lest he should discover them in our possession, when lo! as he stood at the door, a tremendous explosion took place amongst the ashes. Mr. Ensor had staid so long that some of the eggs had got overdone, and exploded with a frightful noise, scattering the ashes in all directions, even to the door where Mr. Ensor stood. He immediately enquired what was the matter. We all declared we did not know, but our answer did not satisfy him, so he came forward, and with his cane began poking in the ashes, where he found some which had not broken. He demanded who brought them there, and I along with three others were obliged to confess. We all got a severe caning on the spot, with a promise that for the next offence we should be tied up and *bled!*

A circumstance which proves the violence of Mr. Ensor’s temper occurs to me. I was sent out to harrow in a large field of corn, and had got pretty well on with my work, when my master rode up on horseback, and, unfortunately for me, in that state sometimes called ‘three sheets in the wind.’ He called me to him and complained that my work was badly done. I durst not answer, so he followed up his complaint by laying his cane about my head and shoulders; he then took the butt end of his whip

and struck me some violent blows on my forehead, which felled me to the ground, bleeding most dreadfully. I was in an unconscious state for some time; my master got alarmed, and thought he had killed me. Having dismounted from his horse, and called some slaves, he bade them remove me under the shade of a large tree; he then commanded them to rub me, in order to bring me round again. I was then carried to the kitchen at the 'big house,' where I was cared for by Mrs. Ensor, who quite believed her husband had beaten the senses out of me, and scolded him severely for having done so. I remained in this state for some time, and, though badly hurt, was not so bad as I pretended, for I wished him to think that my senses were gone, in order to get a little sympathy from him and others – an ingredient which poor slaves do not often meet with. Though still keeping up the deception, I was sat shelling corn, Mrs. Ensor frequently blaming my master for having 'driven poor Sam crazy.' However he came into the kitchen one day, evidently to try me, and called out 'Sam, Sam, come here and saddle and bridle my horse.' I looked up at him very stupidly, and followed him very slowly to the stable. I then took down the bridle, and moving gently to the horse's tail, began to lift up the bridle in that direction, when he cried out, 'you black ghost don't you know the horse's head from its tail?' and taking it from me, put it on himself and rode off. I returned to the kitchen, where Mrs. Ensor continued her care of me, plying me well with calomel and jalap, until I was completely tired out, and resumed my occupation again. This affair had a very salutary effect on Mr. Ensor, who never ventured to beat his slaves on their heads again.

The above-named incidents serve to show the degrading character of slavery, and its pernicious effects on the moral as well as the physical condition of both victim and victimisers.

I still continued Mr. Ensor's slave, and got on for a length of time as comfortably as most do in my situation, but, from the frequent whippings and ill treatment which I received, as well as witnessed, I began to feel a longing desire for freedom. I felt as though I had been unfortunate in being born black, and wished that I could by any means change my skin into a white one, feeling certain that I should then be free. Seeing my poor mother frequently shedding tears, I used anxiously to press her to tell me why she did so, and would often say, 'Mother, why do you weep?' 'Oh!' she would say, 'I am sick at heart to think that I am a poor wretched slave for life, and you and your brothers and sisters are in the same condition.' I, of course, sympathised very deeply with my poor mother, particularly as at this time two sisters and a brother of mine were sold by Mr. Ensor; also a cousin, a girl nearly white, and a daughter of my Aunt Comfort. This was a sore trial to my poor mother and aunt, and I thought they would never see through their grief at parting with their children, which proved to be for ever, as they never saw them more. I shall never forget going down to Baltimore to take a last farewell of my relatives. I had to intercede with Mr. Ensor for a length of time before he would consent to let me go on such an errand. At last, after ridiculing the idea of black people having any feelings, he consented, and to Baltimore I went, along with my poor mother. We found our relatives in a large prison, in Pratt-street, together with eight or nine hundred other slaves, who belonged to two slave dealers named Slater and Woodfork,²⁵ who had bought them for the southern market, and although they do all they can to keep up the spirits of the poor wretches, by supplying them with plenty of whisky and amusements of various kinds, yet the grief and anguish that prevailed amongst them is beyond description. My mother and I were only allowed about half an hour to take

leave of those whom we were about to lose for ever. I shall never forget the parting as long as I live; I really thought it would have killed my mother, and have no doubt that her health and spirits then received such a shock as she will never recover from.

These separations made me sigh for freedom with an intensity of feeling such as I had hitherto been a stranger to, and I resolved on making an attempt to escape the very first opportunity that should present itself. I set about obtaining every information in my power on the subject, and for that purpose frequently made stolen visits to some limekilns, about two or three miles from our quarters, ostensibly to give the men a hand at their work, but really to hear something about freedom, and – don't laugh²⁶ – to help the poor fellows to eat their supper, my visits being always paid in the evening, where I frequently remained till three o'clock in the morning. I often met persons there who would say something sympathising to me on my cruel bondage; I well remember meeting with two Irishmen at this place, who listened to my tale of woe with manifest feelings of interest: they told me there was a country where I should be free if I could get there; but I could not conceive where this country could be, or how I was to get to it, nor, in fact, how I was to keep myself anywhere, for Mr. Ensor had always tried to make us believe that we could not take care of ourselves if we had the liberty, so that my poor mind was in such a dark state that I was far off being in a condition to seek for freedom in right good earnest.

Oh! when I heard of this sweet land,
 Where Freedom bravely thrives,
 And sure protection guards each class,
 And treasures human lives,
 Oh! then like flashing lightning, quick
 Came Hope unto my mind;
 Why! should not I like others strive
 That blessed land to find?²⁷

CHAPTER III. MANHOOD.

And now, behold me a man! strong, active, energetic, but not owned by myself! the chattel of a man like myself, who dared, in the sight of High Heaven, to deprive me of my birthright – the right to act, and think, and speak – behold me! body, soul, and spirit, valued at 900 dollars, and a slave! – but to my narrative.

My master seemed to gain confidence in me, and being as he called 'a fine young man,' and a 'valuable slave,' he made me into his market-man, and frequently sent me to Baltimore market, with a wagon and two horses, laden with the produce of the plantation. The distance was about 20 or 30 miles, which took us a long day to travel. We generally arrived there in the evening, and put up at the Bull's Head, kept by Mr. George Manley. When we got there in good time we had an hour or two to spare, previous to going to bed. This time was generally spent in visiting friends with whom we had become acquainted in the course of our business transactions. One of these friends was a free coloured woman, named Elizabeth Simmerwell, to whom I had become warmly attached, having a strong desire to make her my wife. After some time I resolved to ask Mr. Ensor's permission, which I was bound to do before I could take any further steps in this important business. My courage failed me, I was so afraid to name the matter to him; however, I took the first opportunity to consult Mrs. Ensor. The first question she asked

me was, 'who is this woman; is she free or a slave?' On being told that she was free, she said, 'you cannot have her; master will never consent for you to marry a *free* woman; but I will name it to him.' She then stated that there were several slave women from among whom I might choose one that suited me, such as Suke, Nancy, or Fan; these had 'good masters to take care of them.' Mrs. Ensor seemed quite willing, and indeed anxious, that I should take one of those for my partner, – for as slaves we were not allowed to be married. Now Mrs. Ensor firmly believed that my so doing would have settled me for life, but such was not to be case, as the sequel of the narrative will clearly prove.

Mr. Ensor accosted me the day following in the field, where he came rubbing his spectacles, and appeared as though he hardly knew how to make a beginning; but at last he called out, 'Sam, I want you here. What was that you were saying to your mistress yesterday?' 'Nothing sir,' I replied. 'You black rascal, do you mean to tell me lies?' 'No, sir, I said nothing;' but immediately recollecting myself, I said, 'Oh, yes, I told her that I wanted to get married.' He then made similar enquiries to what Mrs. Ensor had made the day before; he also asked many foolish questions, such as did I really love the girl, and how I met with her, to which I gave very simple answers, such as I suppose he would laugh heartily at when he saw the mistress again; our interview closed with his saying, 'Now mind, you cannot have this free woman, but you may have any slave who has got a good master to take care of her; let me hear no more about this free negro woman; if you do, I will *hoist you up*.' Mr. Ensor had a particular objection to any of his property being connected with free persons. He knew that the offspring of a free mother could not be his chattels. I was far from being obedient to his tyrannical commands, as may naturally be supposed; and I managed to continue my visits to Potter-street from time to time, the laws of Baltimore being very inconvenient, however, as they prohibit coloured people of all grades from appearing in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, under any pretence whatsoever! On the occasion of one of these stolen visits, I was accompanied by an acquaintance, also a coloured man. There being several of both sexes present, and the company agreeable, the time flew swiftly away, the poor girls meanwhile reminding us that if we staid much longer we should get into the Calaboose. We nevertheless staid till the clock struck eleven; for what man will not risk much for the society of a virtuous woman? Our anxiety now was to get to our quarters without being discovered; but darting down a dark street for that purpose, we had not gone many yards when a policeman collared me, and, springing his rattle, demanded to know whose slave I was. I hesitated for some time, but was at length compelled to say I was Mr. Ensor's, fearing I should be sold to pay expenses, which is commonly the case if the owner be not forthcoming. My companion and I were safely lodged in the Calaboose in Front Street, where we had to be on the cold ground till five o'clock in the morning, when each captive was aroused, and our names called over in rotation: presently I heard my friend give a dreadful scream, which made the prison ring again; this alarmed me terribly, knowing that my turn came next, which was the case; for being called, I was told to strip off my clothes, and was then placed in a wooden frame, with my head down and the other part of my body up, having no power to change my position. The goaler, a coloured man, then got a long paddle that was perforated with a number of holes, about a quarter of an inch in diameter, and laid it on the fleshy part of my body with great violence, which almost deprived me of my senses. The flesh rose up into the holes of the paddle, leaving hard lumps which the next stroke burst; these blows were repeated six times, and the torture was such I never experienced either before or since. I was then turned out into the street, with a dozen others who had been degraded and punished in this abominable

manner, and for no crime but the breaking of a law which is a disgrace to humanity, and especially disgraceful to the boasted 'Land of Liberty!!'

I now walked up to see my horses and get the load of produce into the market, where I had to remain, in this wretched condition, till all was disposed of. I arrived home in due time, and did not intend mentioning my adventure to my master, but in this I was disappointed, for the papers had given an account of each of us, together with the expense incurred by each of our masters on our account. This enraged Mr. Ensor considerably, who said I deserved all I got, and comforting me with a slight caning, drove me off to my work.

I now began to think seriously of making my escape from slavery, and told my mother of my intention, which grieved her very much. She did all she could to dissuade me from it. Poor soul! she told me that she had been a slave all her life, that all my brothers and sisters were slaves, that I had better be satisfied and remain with them; besides she would say, 'You will surely be retaken.' Poor woman! she could not bear the thought of parting with me: however I resolved to try. This conversation took place on a Friday night, I think in June, 1841.

On that night following I made a start direct north, taking the north star for my guide, having been told that Canada lay in that direction. I travelled through woods and swamps, being afraid to take the high road, even during the night. I had made a little provision for my journey in the shape of corn bread, sufficient to last me probably for three days; fearing to take what would make too large a bundle, which would be sure to create suspicion if met by any on the road. In addition I was armed with a walking stick and an old dirk; though I felt in no humour for fighting, being alarmed at the slightest noise I heard. The first night I walked about fifteen miles, and lay up for the day on John Merryman's, Pine-hill; this was on a Sunday. In the evening I proceeded on my journey, and had, on the third, taken up my lodgings at Deer Creek, in the woods, when I was overtaken by John Nelson and Bill Foster, two negro-catchers, who resided a few miles from Mr. Ensor. These men had a number of bloodhounds with them, who soon scented me out, when I got upon my feet, and had a most desperate struggle with them, but they succeeded in tearing my clothes to rags. They endeavoured to seize me by the throat, and bit me severely on the breast, the marks of which are plainly visible to this day. The fellows now came up and made them loose their hold, at the same time exultingly shouting, 'well, Ensor Sam, we've got you at last!' They then handcuffed me, and dragging me along some distance, mounted their horses, while I trudged along on foot, weak, wretched, and miserable, for two whole days. When we arrived at Mr. Ensor's the whole family turned out to upbraid me for my ingratitude, reminding me of Mr. Ensor's *great* kindness in having paid 950 dollars for me rather than send me to Georgia, which would have been my fate had he not purchased me with the estate; but upbraidings were not all. I must be severely punished; and Eli Stephenson, the overseer, got orders to give me a severe lashing upon my bare back, the effects of which I feel to this day. In addition to this a yoke was made for me to wear on my head. This was a band of iron, to which was affixed two upright pieces hooked to the top, from which were suspended two bells, the whole fitting closely to my head; and this disgraceful badge I wore day and night for three months. So much again for slave-holding tyranny.

My spirits this time seemed so broken and subdued, that life appeared not worth the having. My master often tauntingly asked me how I liked the 'yoke;' and, while pretending to pity me, always threatened that if I attempted to escape again, I should wear it for life. About this time two gentlemen came on a visit to Mr. Ensor, and frequently

asked me if I would like to be free and go with them to the north; but my constant answer was, 'No, I would rather stop with my master and be a slave.' I durst not trust them – I had no confidence in them – slavery destroys confidence between man and man. I was conscious that I was uttering falsehoods, and doing what I ought not to do. And let me ask my kind readers who is the party answerable at the judgment seat of God for such wickedness; is it myself, or my cruel persecutors? Oh! I could have told them of big thoughts swelling in my bosom – thoughts of Liberty, Liberty. I felt that slavery was a burden too heavy to be borne. My poor degraded fellow slaves laughed at my sorrows, and exultingly exhibited their *freedom* in contrast to my disgrace. The neighbouring planters forbade me association with their slaves, lest I should contaminate them. I was shunned and dreaded in the neighbourhood, and treated as an outcast by all around. However, time works wonders, and so it did for me. I began to feel I was again regaining the confidence of those around. I became much attached to a number of slaves on the late Mr. Gorsuch's plantation, which joined Mr. Ensor's, and often went to their quarters in the evening, and remained with them till morning. This came to Mr. Gorsuch's ears, who watched his opportunity for forbidding it. One summer's evening I paid one of my usual visits, and as at that time of the year the slaves slept in the hayloft over the horses, of course I did the same. We were all fast asleep, when about three o'clock in the morning we were all startled by Mr. Gorsuch's voice calling the slaves' names over; he then inquired if there were any stray niggers there? Some said 'No;' while others said there was a 'darkey' there, meaning a stranger. He soon found me out, and with a thick stick laid on me most unmercifully. I jumped from the loft into the stable, he after me in quick pursuit; I then attempted to scale a boarded fence, but it was too high for me, so I put my head through a hole in the boarding, hoping to drag my poor body after, but whilst struggling there, neither able to get backward or forward, Mr. Gorsuch came up and renewed the attack in the most savage manner: at last the boards gave way. I took to my heels, but my unmerciful punisher was not satisfied; he followed me home, related the affair to Mr. Ensor, who encouraged him to give me a second beating before his face, which he did, leaving me in such a state that after a week I had not recovered from the effects of his brutality.*

* This is the same Mr. Gorsuch who was shot in September, 1851, at Christiana, in Pennsylvania, whilst attempting to re-capture four of his own slaves. He was considered one of the best slaveholders in Maryland, and was esteemed a very pious man amongst the Methodists, being a class leader and a local preacher. This may appear strange to English professors, but it is a lamentable fact that amongst the various religious denominations in America numbers of those who publicly profess to be the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus are traffickers in human flesh. The Society of Friends forms an honourable exception to this disgrace.

[Here Watkins is referring to the death-defying heroism of self-liberated freedom-fighter, William Parker (1821–1891). He experienced enslavement in Maryland and he successfully made his escape to Christiana, Pennsylvania, only to be murderously attacked by his white enslaver Edward Gorsuch who, as Watkins writes, was 'attempting to re-capture four of his own slaves'. As a result, Gorsuch was killed in self-defence as Parker and his formerly enslaved heroic collaborators fought for their lives against the murderous and persecutory forces of white enslaving despotism, tyranny, and oppression. For Parker's narration of his life story, see William Parker, 'The Freedman's Story – Parts I and II', *Atlantic Monthly*, XVII (February/March 1866): pp.152–166; pp.276–295. Available online at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/parker1/menu.html>]

CHAPTER IV.
CONVERSION.

About the year 1846 or 1847 Maryland was visited by the cholera, which swept off great numbers of the slaves, not omitting white people in its ravages. I began to be much alarmed for my own safety, and (ignorant as I was) felt that if I were cut off in my sins I should be eternally lost. I cried to the Lord earnestly for preservation, and besought pardon for my transgressions. I continued in this state of mind for about six months, praying to the Lord daily and hourly that he would sustain and strengthen me. I had chosen a large tree for my place of prayer, under whose spreading branches I often poured forth my soul in supplication. During this time there was a great Camp Meeting held by the Methodists. These Camp Meetings are of a most interesting character. At certain seasons of the year, thousands of persons flock to some vicinity previously arranged, for cities, towns, and villages, all send their quota; tents are erected in a kind of circle, a sort of raised platform in the centre accommodates the preachers, who sometimes number twenty or upwards. Posts are driven into the ground, round which candles are placed, to give light when needed; and for six or eight days and nights prayer and praise re-echo through the woods and groves, forming altogether a scene of the grandest description. To return: this camp meeting was about four miles from our quarters. I longed to attend it: but although Mr. Ensor had given permission to some of the slaves to go he would on no account consent in my case. However, I was determined to risk it, and resolved that when the master had retired for the night I would start. About ten o'clock I set off, and on arriving at the place found a very large company, the whites in front of the minister and the coloured people behind them, it being well known that even at a camp meeting they are not permitted to mix together. The Rev. Mr. Collins was, at the time, preaching in a very powerful manner. Whilst listening to him I felt as though my heart would burst. He spoke of one Jesus, who had told the blind man to go to the pool and wash, and he received his sight. Oh! I thought could I but find this Jesus! how I long to know him! He further stated that 'if the Son had made us free then we should be free indeed;' then I thought if I could but find this great man I should be free from slavery as well as from sin. He also said many other things which wrought upon my feelings very powerfully, so much so that I burst into a flood of tears, still feeling ignorant of what I should do to be saved. I left the ground and proceeded to some considerable distance, where, kneeling down at the foot of a very large tree, I poured out my soul to the Almighty in my weak and ignorant way, beseeching Him mightily to pardon my sins. I remained there wrestling with God for the space of three or four hours, when blessed for ever be, His adorable Name, my prayers were answered in a very unmistakeable manner. My heart was so filled with the love of God that the fear of the whip, or even of death, was entirely taken away from me. In this state I went home rejoicing. It was now near eleven o'clock in the forenoon. I could have said with the poet –

With thee conversing, I forget
 All *time*, and toil, and care;
 Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
 If thou, my God, art here.²⁸

I met Mr. Ensor some distance from our quarters; he was on the look out for me. He accosted me with, 'you infernal black ghost, where have you been?' I said I had been to the camp meeting, and told him what the Lord had done for my soul. 'You infernal black ghost, you have got no soul. I'll teach you to go to the camp meeting without my leave,' and ordered me off to the whipping post. I immediately went into the barn, and falling on my knees prayed earnestly for myself and master. While there he came in with one of his sons, and ordered me to strip. This I immediately did, then looking earnestly at him I told him my soul was happy, and although he might punish my body he could not harm my soul. I further reminded him that every stripe he laid on my back would be registered in heaven and rise up against him at the day of judgment. However he fastened me up, and tying my hands to the beam over my head, left me. I had continued my pleadings with him till he trembled from head to foot like an aspen leaf. I firmly believe the Lord stood by me on this occasion and paralysed the arm of my master, for he seemed utterly unable to lift the lash or give me a single blow. After staying in the house for about half an hour he and his son returned and released me, but on loosing the cords from my wrists my arms fell down by my sides useless. Contrary to anything I ever saw done on such occasions, they each took one of my hands and arms, and commenced rubbing them, in order to restore circulation; they then told me to go to my work, and be more obedient for the future. How applicable are the words of scripture – 'the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.'²⁹

CHAPTER V. ESCAPE.

Hark! the bloodhound's fearful bay,
 Whilst cruel hunters thread their way;
 Up! Fugitive, and bravely speed,
 For dangers thicken fast indeed:
 Away from scenes where grief enthral,
 For Freedom! heavenly Freedom, calls.³⁰

I was now very diligent at my occupation, and was what Mr. Ensor would call a 'good slave,' yet I never gave up the idea of one day trying to obtain my freedom. The notion considerably increased with me after my conversion; nor can I think that three millions and a half of slaves could be kept in bondage if they had the same advantage of education and religion as the white people of America have. Their cruel task-maskers feel this, and '*ignorance*' – '*ignorance*', is their stronghold.

I had been planning my escape for some time, having saved a little money by making mats, brooms, and baskets, which I managed to dispose of. I had also secured to myself some provisions, and in May, 1845, resolved to make a start. I had fixed on Saturday night as the best time, and having equipped myself with a walking stick, set out for my mother's hut, which was about three miles distant. I found her up, and told her my intention: she entreated me, with tears in her eyes, to remain in slavery, as it would break her heart to part with me. I told her I could endure it no longer, and left her, but she kept following me, weeping and pleading. I at length bade her farewell, and tore myself from her, though with a bleeding heart. It was a hard trial to leave my poor mother. I travelled all night and till about

nine o'clock on Sunday morning, when I concealed myself in the woods for the day, and when night arrived again made considerable progress. On the third night I reached the village of Newmarket, when I met three men who inquired where I was bound. I gave them an evasive answer, and took to my heels, and got on pretty well for the remainder of the night. On Tuesday, being the fourth day of my travels, I was concealed in the side of a mountain, when I heard the voice of bloodhounds on my track along with the noise of a number of negro hunters. I had taken the precaution, before I took up my station for my day's rest, and concealment, to make a circle by trampling the ground, and then strewn it with a good quantity of snuff and cayenne pepper. When the dogs came up full tilt to this place they began sneezing terribly, which caused them to lose scent of me entirely, although I was only about three hundred yards from them. I distinctly saw the men and dogs; all of them appeared to be at a loss, and I was very glad to see them move off in another direction. I took my repose during the remainder of the day in some degree of comfort and safety, and about eight o'clock in the evening I again started on my journey in pursuit of freedom. About midnight I was accosted by two men and a woman who charged me with being a runaway negro; I denied the charge, for I was only *walking* away. They told me I was a slave belonging to Mr. Luke Ensor, and that they had seen an advertisement offering 250 dollars for my apprehension, which they were determined to obtain by detaining me. I then told them I was a free man, and begged they would not interrupt me. One of the men, however, took me by the collar, and we had a struggle together. I struck him a heavy blow, and he fell to the ground, when the second man engaged me, who at the same time gave me an awful blow on my head. I now determined to be free from them all, and I felled him to the ground. I was then tackled by the woman who held on by my leg. I pleaded with her as if she had been my sister to let me go, but she would not, screaming with all her might for assistance, not wishing to lose the prize of 250 dollars. I found I must make another effort, or still remain in slavery, so I served her in the same way as I had treated her companions, and off I ran with the speed of a racer, and saw no more of them. I now got on for a considerable distance without any further delay. Having again rested for the day I proceeded onwards, and soon found myself in Pennsylvania. I here began to discover fresh difficulties; for my provisions were exhausted, and how to procure more I did not know. I durst not venture into a store or shop for that purpose although I had a little cash in my pocket, and for three days and nights I was without food of any description; a little cold water was the only thing that I took in my stomach during that time. For seven days and nights I could not sleep at all; and oh! what were my feelings then? My imagination pictured the oppressors' steps after me, and I constantly thought that I heard the baying of the bloodhounds, the tramping of the men hunters' horses, and the horrid imprecations which were heaped on my poor devoted head. The night following I passed a village called Logansville, in which place I approached a gentleman's residence, and found a large barrel of swill in the yard adjoining the house, for which I felt exceedingly glad, and made a most hearty meal of its contents. I also furnished my little bag with sufficient to supply me with food, such as it was, for the next day. This was a most fortunate circumstance for me, as I had begun to fear that I should perish with hunger. In the course of the following night I was again tracked by two men, who chased me up a river. In order to free myself from their pursuit I jumped

in and swam across. In doing this I, of course, lost my bag and stick, and was again without food. In a comfortless and destitute condition I still journeyed on, supported by hope. After travelling about twelve nights further I reached Little York, where I was so oppressed with hunger that I resolved to make some application for food, whatever might be the consequence. I was providentially directed to a house where I happily found a number of kind and sympathising friends, who took me in and supplied my wants for three days, whilst I recruited my strength a little. The master of the house then engaged a coloured man to conduct me to a village about a dozen miles distant, which we travelled on horseback. My guide instructed me to wait until he had put his horse up, when he would see me across the Susquehanna river to Columbia, which is in Lancaster County. I waited for about two hours for him, but from some cause or other he never came. I felt this to be a great disappointment, and bemoaned my sad condition, concluding that if I was again pursued by the base negro hunters I would jump into the river rather than return to bondage. In this state of mind I was met by a white man with a coloured one accompanying him, who appeared as though they had been fishing. They inquired where I was going, but I was afraid of them and evaded the question, on which they left me to myself. Shortly after, the coloured man returned and invited me to his house, but I objected to go with him for some time; his entreaties, however, were so oppressing that I at length yielded – though not without fears that he might betray me. He provided me, to my great surprise, with a good breakfast, it being about three o'clock in the morning, and, contrary to all expectation, put me into a boat and ferried me across the river to Columbia town. This was help indeed, and caused me great delight, for which I returned him many thanks. The good man had not yet done with me, for he further conducted me to the house of a good old Quaker gentleman, who took me in and made me feel quite at home. Amid the best of treatment I remained with him about three days, and then he yoked his one-horse carriage and conveyed me fifteen or twenty miles to the residence of another friend, which was a little beyond Lancaster city. Here I remained all night and the following day, receiving the kindest attentions, and feeling quite safe and happy. From this 'home' I was again conducted about twelve miles, to the residence of a distinguished member of the Society of Friends, one who is well known in America as ever ready to assist the poor fugitive. The present state of the law will not permit me to mention the names of those to whom I shall ever feel grateful: it would expose them to persecutions and loss were I to do so. The gentleman I have mentioned received me as though he had been my father, making many inquiries as to where I came from – my master's name – and what I was called. After I had satisfied him he suggested the propriety of an immediate change of my name, and asked me what name I should like in future; I replied JAMES WATKINS – for I had even thought of these things before I left Mr. Ensor. He advised me to adopt it at once, and never change it again. He then proposed to hire me as his servant, at ten dollars per month, with board and washing. This I gladly accepted, and began to think myself a *man*, out of the clutches of the accursed man-stealers; but my hopes were soon crushed, for about a fortnight after some negro hunters were seen about the neighbourhood, and my employer considered me in danger, so he paid me a month's wages and took me to the railway station, where he got me stowed away into a covered luggage van, paying all expenses himself. He then took a seat in one of the

carriages; and off we started for Philadelphia. At the end of our journey of sixty miles, we were met by several friends at the station, who escorted us to one of their houses. The kindness with which they treated me did not prevent a severe attack of illness, which the doctor said had been brought on by so much exposure to the weather, particularly during the night. I remained in this place about three weeks, when, having pretty well recovered from indisposition, I was accompanied by one of my friends direct to New York.

I was here hospitably received by the Rev. Mr. Wright, and a number of other kind friends of the down-trodden and deeply injured slave. I staid but a day and a night among this delightful band of philanthropists, after which I was forwarded to Hartford city, being furnished with letters of introduction to A. F. Williams, Esq., and other gentlemen of that city.

CHAPTER VI. LOCATION.

I arrived safe at Hartford, the journey to which more than completed a thousand miles which I had travelled since I had started to seek a place where God alone would claim me as *property*.

I now felt myself so safe from pursuit that my original intention of hastening to Canada began to give way, and I entertained the idea of settling here. This was strengthened by my being surrounded with a great number of friends soon after my arrival.

The first day I spent here I had the great pleasure of meeting with an uncle who secured his self-liberation about fourteen years before, from the very same plantation I had bid adieu to – Mr. Ensor's. It is impossible to describe our mutual feelings under these circumstances. Of course the adventures of our several flights were gone into, and also the particular circumstances which had happened in our histories during the fourteen years were talked over.

Mr. Ensor had informed us that my uncle had been re-taken and sent to Georgia to pick cotton, for running away. This is considered a great punishment, and according to the accounts which the slaveholders give their slaves, few escape being caught and sold into the most horrible degradation the horrible system includes. I have no doubt my companions in trouble were duly acquainted with my capture and the dreadful calamities which had befallen me, while I was enjoying myself in Hartford all the time! lying and deceit are practised in every form to keep the light from breaking in.

My uncle took me with him to his own house, where I found him comfortably settled, having married. He procured me employment as a farm labourer with Mr. Horace Williams, of East Hartford. In this situation I remained about a year. This time passed sweetly, and gave me such an experience of freedom, not from work, but from serfdom, that made me feel glad I had escaped, though at such risks. Here I found no objection to knowledge being obtained; on the contrary, a little daughter of master's took me in hand as a pupil, and heroically engaged to lead me through the alphabet. The dear child little knew what a dunce slavery had provided for her. I had often been told, as all slaves are, that I had 'a head as thick as a beetle;' that is, as thick and hard as a mallet or hammer. I am afraid my little teacher sometimes thought this true, for this A B C work made me perspire at times more than any one could imagine. I conquered, and great was my delight. So little did I know the extent

of the field I was entering, that this acquisition made me feel as though I was going to be one of some account in the world.

The year following I was employed by Mr. Samuel Kennedy, in whose service I had treatment of the first order, and to whom I hope I shall always entertain the liveliest gratitude, as one of my best friends. I cannot enter into the particular incidents of these periods of my life. Many, undoubtedly, there were, but generally such as are common to persons in a similar station to the one I occupied. I kept improving in general knowledge of things belonging to civilised society, and great indeed I felt the change to the heathen life I had left.

CHAPTER VII. MARRIAGE.

My next situation was with Roswell Brown, Esq., in Hartford city, my stay with him being also about twelve months. In the course of the passing months I had occasionally met with a young woman, to whom I became strongly attached. She was the daughter of a respectable citizen of Hartford, named Mr. Thomas Wells. He threw many obstacles in the way of my wishes, on account of my being a fugitive, his daughter being a free woman. This objection was not to be wondered at when the danger is considered of taking me 'for better and for worse;' the chances of the one being quite as great as of the other. However, eventually all difficulties were overcome, and we were married in April, 1846, having previously provided a cottage for her reception. This step was one of freedom, for in slavery the marriage ceremony is but a mockery. The whole affair is as the owner determines or wishes, and the fiat 'whom God hath joined let no man put asunder' might never have been issued, so little is it regarded by the most pious of the dispensers of the 'peculiar institution.'³¹ A trifle light as air will make a sale that will separate man and wife hundreds of miles, and the bleeding hearts are frequently compelled to enter into new engagements to please the tyrant whose property they may be for the time? Oh! the horrors of the system from which I have escaped! Millions of immortal beings without the enjoyments of a *family* hearth.

There are features in this great monstrosity that I cannot describe in language fit to be read. O that they were blotted out for ever.

In my little cottage, with my 'help meet,' I had all the comfort and happiness a 'home' could afford. We carried on a small business, the principal part being the making and selling of hominy, an article of food made from Indian corn, which was in great demand in Hartford.

Up to this time I never had an opportunity of hearing from my relatives which I left in the 'house of bondage;' my desires to know something about them were nevertheless very strong at times. This desire had increased to such an extent while my own comfort was becoming greater, that in May, 1850, I made a resolution to go and try to see my poor mother. Of course I was much opposed by all my friends in this 'wild scheme,' as they called it. I was told it was like going into the tiger's den, for certainly I should never return if I did such a foolish thing. My poor wife was sadly distressed at the possibility of my being captured and again taken into slavery. Somehow or other these things did not overcome my intense desire after the welfare of those I loved, and who had cared for me. The more my circumstances became different from what

they had been, the more I remembered others still 'in Egypt.'³² I at last determined to yield to my desires, and made preparations for a journey to the South, to ascertain how they fared, and with the hope of one way or other freeing my mother and the rest of the family from degradation. I left Hartford on Wednesday evening, taking my railway fare to New York. From thence I proceeded to Philadelphia, where I met with several friends, who dissuaded me strongly from going any further. I could not plant within them my feelings, and though I was thought head-strong, I proceeded onwards by railway to Columbia, and from thence to a small town called Strasburg, not far from the junction of Pennsylvania and Maryland, where I remained for a short time, and was again persuaded not to proceed further. Though this advice I did not follow, I took the precaution to travel by night only, and on foot, through the swamps, as when I escaped. Three nights' travelling brought me within ten miles of my mother's hut, where I stopped to get lodgings with an old acquaintance. My anxiety to see my only parent became intense as I got near to her residence, and I sent a conveyance over to fetch her to me, but she could hardly be induced to come, for she could not believe I was in Maryland again. She had, as I expected, been told by Mr. Ensor that I had been re-taken, and sold to the rice swamps in Georgia, and, consequently, she had no idea of seeing me any more in the flesh. However she was prevailed upon at length to come, but she did not know me at first, I was so altered. We had nevertheless a joyful meeting, and the night glided swiftly away whilst we related to each other what we had passed through the four or five years we had been separated. One circumstance my poor mother mentioned shows another trait of the system, which I may mention. A number of slaves had escaped from neighbouring plantations, and in searching for them the owners called at my mother's hut, and insisted that she knew something about them: not having seen the fugitives, she of course denied the charge; but as the masters give so much cause for deceit, they placed no reliance upon her statements, and they resolved to punish her to make her tell where they were. They carried out their threats by stripping her, and then tied her up and cut her with the whip upon her back until she stood in her blood, leaving her all but dead. When Mr. Ensor was informed of the circumstance, he said he could do nothing in the matter, as no white man was present when the act was perpetrated, the evidence of coloured people being of no value according to the laws of the country which declare 'all men equal,'³³ a white man's testimony, whatever his character, being more than that of any slave. Her owner was, however, far from being pleased with the treatment his property had thus received; this circumstance, along with the fact that she was getting into years, and not of much market value, induced Mr. Ensor about this time to turn her loose. Old as she was it gave her no small pleasure to be able to call her body and soul her own, and most certainly I was exceedingly glad to have this piece of news communicated to me during this interview, that she was no longer a chattel but a free woman.

I will not give more particulars of what passed that, to me short night, but simply say that when the time approached when I must leave or be in danger of immediate capture, the parting was painful in the extreme. I had no thought of ever seeing her again in this world, and I bid her a long farewell with streaming eyes, and then hastened off to the bushes, and she returned to her hut. We *have* feelings, slaves though we have been; these we have not been deprived of, notwithstanding all the pains that have been taken to accomplish that object. They are implanted by our great Creator,

and lie too deep to be erased by the ruthless hands that use the whip. I ought to add that my mother had not then got her free papers, though she was nominally liberated.

I reached Strasburg in safety, where I took the railway train again direct to Philadelphia, where I stayed a day among the friends who were interested in my adventure, and then hastened on by the same means to my own ‘Castle’ at Hartford. I need scarcely say that my reception was marked by every demonstration of joy and pleasure, not only in my family, but by a great number of friends and acquaintances who had given me up for lost. My poor wife had been all but frantic during my absence, with fear that I had again been taken into bondage. I had been a fortnight from home, which was longer than we first expected. After this extraordinary trip I pursued my business with increased vigour. I needed to be very industrious, since by this time I had two children, a boy and a girl, whom I valued at something more than ‘two guineas a pound,’ which is a price slave-traders sometimes mention. Indeed, I was very proud of them, and wished to do for them whatever my industry and exertions could afford.

I must not omit to mention that through the generosity and kindness of American and English friends, I was instrumental in releasing from the cruel bonds of slavery, my two sisters and one brother. I brought three other slaves, – two males and one female, – to the Free States the girl was a white slave, the daughter of John T. H. Wethington, Esq., member of Congress, by a slave mother. One of the male slaves afterwards lived as servant with Edward Westhead, Esq., Manchester. I thought no self-denial or toil too great, in carrying out these designs, but was very happy in having it in my power to render them any help whatever, more especially as I had the pleasure of afterwards having them near me, and of enjoying their society. This happiness was increased by my seeing the pleasure I had been the means of imparting to others. I felt that I indeed ‘got good by doing good.’

CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER FLIGHT FOR SAFETY.

Another cloud hangs o’er my head,
And dangers thickly press,
But still I trust in God alone,
For succour and success.
With confidence and faith, and hope,
Misfortunes do I stand,
Until with pleasure and with joy
I tread on Freedom’s land.³⁴

In 1850 I was in the enjoyment of comfort and prosperity, and surrounded by a large circle of friends both civil and religious; I was certainly enjoying the communion of saints in the church to which I belonged, and I had few things to wish for in this world, excepting that all those who were in thralldom might be speedily set free, and become as comfortable as I was. In these circumstances, and with these feelings I was living, when with hundreds – nay thousands – of others whose skins were not white, I was thrown into the greatest disquietude and peril by the enactment of the ‘American Fugitive Law.’³⁵

This atrocious and abominable law makes it a great crime, punishable with heavy fines and imprisonment, to be either directly or indirectly a party to the escape of a slave. It also appoints Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners throughout the so-called Free States, to see after catching the fugitives, and returning them to their owners. These officers are, in addition, empowered to call in the aid of free citizens in carrying out the provisions of this 'sop' to the slave states. Any one who refuses to assist in catching his fellow-man, and depriving him of liberty, is also exposed to a heavy penalty. Under these circumstances I was not only uncomfortable myself, but all who knew my history were somewhat in jeopardy, as being 'accessory after the fact.' All my dreams of prosperity and happiness in store for me were upset; I was quite unfit for business of any sort, and I could not help wondering at times that Providence permitted the legislature to pass such a law, when their duty seemed to be to abolish all those acts that were already on the statute books which licensed slavery, in a nation which had for a fundamental principle, that 'all men are equal.'³⁶ It appears likely however, that what is thoroughly bad and disgusting to many who have hitherto been indifferent, will yet turn out for the advancement of emancipation; and it may be said with Cowper,³⁷ –

'His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.'³⁸

I was in a state of great perplexity for about four months after the passing of the bill; some of my friends advising one thing and some another; but all agreed I would have to leave Hartford, or they would be compelled to assist in chaining me, and sending me back to bondage. Anything of this kind they detested, and therefore wished on their own account, as well as mine, that I was safe; for to crown all, Mr. Chamberlain, one of the city constables, sent for me, and told me that Mr. Ensor had offered one thousand dollars for my apprehension; also, that if I did not leave the city, he was afraid he would be necessitated to arrest me, which he did not like the thoughts of, much less did he wish to do the deed.

My poor wife was in sad distress; and said she would rather hear of me being 'buried in the blue seas,' than see me again taken into slavery. With the most conflicting feelings, as may well be imagined, she joined in the advice to leave the country, at least for a time. This was afflictive work for my mind; a terrible conflict going on within continually, made me that I scarcely knew what I was doing; at intervals my feelings completely overpowered me, and it was some time before I could get my courage up to the point of preparing for my departure. My friends were not backward in assisting me to the extent of their power, in various ways, including numerous letters of introduction to philanthropists in the 'Old World.'

On the 20th of January, 1851, I was ready to start from Hartford. Now came the struggle. The difference between the conflict of feelings at this time and those I had when I left Maryland was great. It is true I had my mother and my brethren there, whom I was now leaving behind, but I had not a 'home.' Oh! that sweet word, to which slaves are strangers! I had not then what makes a home comfortable – a partner of my joys and sorrows; I had not the responsibilities of a parent. These new

relationships and circumstances, added to my increased knowledge and capability to feel deprivations, all combined to make this into a hour of trial to me, even though I was in good hopes that our separation would be but for a season, and that it would all 'work together for good.'

On the day I have mentioned, I took my farewell of my poor wife and children, now three in number, in confidence that they were in good hands, and with an understanding that she would try to make up to the little ones for my absence. I prayed that the Lord would be with her and protect her, and that, if we should not meet again on this side of Jordan, we might in heaven, where slavery and sorrow can never come.

Having made all the necessary preparations for my voyage across the ocean to this land of liberty, I started by the railway cars for New York, with my heart quite full, and ready to burst at the thoughts of my having such a choice – to leave those I loved, with a possibility of not seeing them again, or return into hopeless, helpless bondage. The latter I could not now endure the thoughts of, not because of the labour a slave has to perform – being healthy and strong, I was never afraid of that, for I could always accomplish it without much difficulty. It was the tyranny regularly practised – the many cruel whippings, and various other indignities to which they were subjected – the thousand immoralities that flow through the system – and in short, the fact that, in body and soul, a slave is made to feel that he is the property of a fallen human being, instead of the free agent that the Creator has designed him to be, free to serve him where and how his conscience, regulated by the divine will, dictates. This is the essence of the agony, to my mind – that whatever might be the duty that I felt I had to do in the world, it depended upon the will of another whether I had the opportunity. In fact, I hate the whole thing with a perfect hatred, and no consideration shall induce me again to become a slave.

Since I have been in England, I have often been surprised to hear working men declare that they, too, know what slavery is. They argue that they are compelled to work very hard and long for little pay, and this they call 'slavery,' forgetting that they can, at any time, give a fortnight or a month's notice to their employers that they are going to leave, and then they are at liberty to improve their circumstances if they can. All this is very different to being placed on the auction block, and knocked off to the highest bidder, with the same ease and as little consideration as a piece of old furniture is done in any English market-place. Before a slave can get a 'fresh shop,' however skilful he may be, he must go through the same process that a horse does that changes masters. When I hear people talk thus, I think they don't comprehend the subject. I can truly say, that were Luke Ensor to make me an offer to clothe me in the best broad cloth, place a gold chain and watch about my neck, give me a horse to ride upon, and feed me on the best his plantation could produce, on the condition that I would return to him a slave, that is, his *property*, I would spurn the offer with indignation, and be horror-stricken at the idea of the proposition; I should fly from him as from the face of Satan, for I prize my freedom above every earthly blessing.

With thoughts akin to these my mind was occupied as I travelled from Hartford to New York, where I arrived about four o'clock in the morning. I took my lodgings at one of the hotels, where I remained four days, until the ship was ready to sail in which I had arranged to cross the Atlantic. I was obliged to keep as much as possible within doors, for fear of meeting the man-hunters or their emissaries. When the day of sailing arrived, I was conveyed in a close carriage to the dock, and put on board,

where I was again concealed till we got out to sea. I very reluctantly withhold the names of the captain and vessel. Such was the goodwill and kindness manifested, that I shall ever feel grateful to this gentleman, and I only regret the existence of laws which prevent one from giving 'honour to whom honour is due.'³⁹ It is possible that no notice would be taken of so insignificant a fact as the escape of one 'nigger,' as we are called, but, nevertheless, there is a liability to punishment, and a heavy penalty hanging over the heads of those who directly or indirectly assist coloured men to obtain freedom. I had substantial proofs of the views and feelings of this generous-hearted captain before I left his care.

There were many incidents of an interesting character in connection with the voyage, but they were such as usually happen to most people more or less, during a three week's sail, and therefore I do not mention them here. I was every day struck with the admirable management of everything that was manifested by the persons in authority. We came in sight of Cape Clear, in Ireland, sooner than we expected. The prospect of free soil, even though a long way off at this time, made me feel delighted, and when we entered the Mersey and came into the docks at Liverpool, I could not help leaping and shouting for joy, and I sung a song of liberty. Some of the bystanders and waiters declared that a 'mad black man' had just landed from an American ship. They little knew the emotions I was then the subject of. I cannot make them understand by any description; persons must be in similar circumstances to know what they are. To say that I was greatly excited is like saying nothing. My joy was unbounded, and I was able to fully adopt and appreciate the assertion of Cowper,⁴⁰ that –

Slaves cannot breathe in England. If their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.⁴¹

I could also add with perfect confidence –
'NOW I AM FREE!'

CHAPTER X. IN ENGLAND.

I had now got fairly into England, and I began to feel more and more certain of the truth that I was now out of danger, as I mixed in English society – I say *English*, for during my stay in Liverpool I had more than one proof that the 'leprosy' had affected some on British soil, especially those who came much into contact with American merchants and captains, &c., and just as far as I found the pro-slavery feeling had been received, I considered these parties *un-English*. With the exception of these instances, I felt as though I had started new life. The kind sympathy everywhere shown to me, and the hearty reception I received from some of the best men in Liverpool made me feel very happy. The testimonials I had with me greatly assisted me, and many friends on this side of the Atlantic being personally acquainted with some of my friends in America, made the matter still more easy. I had obtained the following lines from the parties connected with the ship I had come over in, which removed any doubts in Liverpool: –

'JAMES WATKINS, fugitive slave, made his escape from Maryland to Hartford, and thence came over in the ship *Artic*, from New York, with me, as passenger to Liverpool, and had his fare paid by some of his friends to Liverpool.

J----- A-----,

Captain of the *Artic*.

'I certify the above to be correct, and that Mr. JAMES WATKINS has satisfied me by his testimonials that he is a deserving and respectable man.

TAPSCOTT, SMITH, & CO.'

When I begin to think of the kindness and Christian feeling I have been the subject of in this country, and the names of those who have acted thus towards me, I am at a loss how to give them the honour my gratitude prompts. I should like – as there is no law to cause fears here, to mention the name of every one, but this is impossible in my short narrative; however, some I must give, and about the first that stands in my memory is that of Dr. Raffles,⁴² who not only treated me with Christian kindness, but immediately interested himself by giving me a note to John Cropper, Esq., in whose family and circle I found every feeling that could be expected. The estimable family of E. Cropper, Esq., and Mr. Hope, were included in this circle. I cannot omit the proprietor of the Adelphi Hotel, Mr. Radley. His interest in me was warm and active, and since I left their port it has continued. Through the gentlemen named, I had ready access to the Rev. Dr. McNeile, who treated me as a brother. I had also encouragement and sympathy from the Rev. R. Newstead, and from Rev. W. Berrill. I stayed between two and three months in Liverpool and the neighbourhood, during which time I attended several public meetings of a religious character, and occasionally was called upon to speak a few words. This was capital training for me, and I gradually became more at ease in thus appearing in behalf of freedom.

My objects of first securing safety, and secondly, doing what lay in my power to excite interest in the cause of the slave, were gradually being attained during this time; and many – very many – were the friends who manifested their sympathy towards me.

I left Liverpool for Manchester, and, in this great centre of manufactures, I found a great number of earnest sympathisers in the cause of the Abolition of Slavery. I had many opportunities, in private companies, of spreading information on the condition of my suffering brethren, and also on the nature and operations of the 'Fugitive Slave Law.'⁴³ In addition to these, my way opened and my courage increased so far, as actually to enable me to attempt the delivery of an address of 'lecture' on slavery, &c. The very word 'lecture' had many times made me tremble when I had heard it mentioned as a thing I ought to engage. This, to me very important event took place in the Rev. F. Tucker's school-room, Manchester, on the 5th of June, 1851. I got through my task as well as I could expect, from my being so long kept in a state of ignorance.

The gentleman mentioned encouraged me to continue to avail myself of this means of helping the growth of right opinions on the 'great sin;' and, in addition, presented me with the following testimonial! –

'I have much pleasure in stating that JAMES WATKINS gave a very interesting and affecting address on the 'Operation of the Fugitive Slave Law, as illustrated by his own case,' in my school room, last evening. It is only justice to him to add that the tone and spirit of his address was admirable.

'Manchester, June 6th, 1851.

FRANCIS TUCKER.'

Though I have received many recommendations of a valuable character since then, respecting my labours, there are none I value more highly than this *first* one. Having thus made a commencement, I have continued to deliver addresses to audiences of various descriptions, most generally in school rooms or chapels, gratuitously allowed for the occasion. Frequently the places have been densely crowded, the population of the district being very great. Members of the congregations, Sunday school teachers, and senior scholars, have formed to me a most interesting portion of these meetings. I have also discovered in this path of labour a tract of ground but very little affected by the valuable operations of my coloured bretheren who have hitherto appeared before the British public in the large cities and towns. I have appended a list of places where I have held my meetings, and also of the chairmen. To mention the latter I feel almost a duty, as many of them thus helped our cause at much personal inconvenience. I regret the list is not so complete as I should like. Having had no idea of writing a narrative like this, I have not taken sufficient notice to enable me to give it fully, but I think it is correct as far as it goes. During my stay in Manchester I had interviews with, and assistance from, the Rev. Hugh Stowell, Rev. Dr. Beard, Rev. Dr. Halley, Rev. Dr. Mc. Kerrow, Rev. S. Simpson, Rev. J. J. Taylor, and the Rev. G. Osborn. The last named placed me under special obligation, by giving me the following note, which certifies a knowledge of some of my American friends: –

'I have carefully examined Mr. WATKINS' case, and from my knowledge of the parties who have signed his testimonials in America, and elsewhere, am prepared to recommend it as one which deserves the support of the friends of humanity and freedom.

Manchester, June 7th, 1851.

GEORGE OSBORN.'

Among towns around Manchester which I visited I must not omit to mention Stockport. Here, the Mayor, Dr. Turner, presided at a meeting, and I found many friends; James Marshall, Esq., among the rest, was exceedingly kind.

I have mentioned the prospect of my freedom being secured in accordance with the provisions of the laws of the United States, which do not recognise the *rights* of humanity, these rights being, of necessity, unimpaired by colour, clime, or age. My unshaken patron and friend, A. F. Williams, Esq., during my absence, had magnanimously interested himself for me.

I had introductions given me to Messrs. Isaac Wright, jun., and David Crossley, of Bolton. These gentlemen interested themselves in arranging for a meeting, over which Robert Heywood, Esq., a highly esteemed magistrate, presided. While in Bolton, I was introduced by Mr. Wright to Mr. and Mrs. Abbott and family, a kindness for which I can never be too grateful, for I here found a 'home' of the best description, and in Mrs. Abbott a mother; at whose fireside I have received many lessons, useful

both for time and eternity. I very soon resolved on making Bolton my head quarters while I remained in Lancashire, and arranged accordingly.

I found little difference to arise from a change of residence, with regard to having opportunities of holding meetings; for, wherever I have been in this ‘hive of industry’ I have found villages like little towns, and audiences easily attainable, when it has been understood that ‘a fugitive slave was going to address them about slavery.’ The interest on these occasions has always been increased by my singing one or two of our negro melodies. The people are exceedingly fond of singing in this district, so much exercise in the art being given in the Sunday schools that abound, and even in the factories. While I have been thus engaged, I have, I trust, been increasing in knowledge. I may safely say I have attended few meetings without getting much general information; in many instances I have actually received instruction about the slavery question, such as I had never heard of before.

I shall not soon forget the pleasure I had in hearing the Rev. J. Hocken state at a meeting, that in the life of the ever-to-be-remembered William Wilberforce,⁴⁴ by his sons, there appeared a letter of Mr. Wesley’s⁴⁵ encouraging the devoted friend of the slave to renewed and increased exertions against negro slavery. They were among the last words he ever wrote, as he died in less than a week after. I obtained a copy, and give it here: –

‘MY DEAR SIR, – Unless Divine Power has raised you up to be an *Athanasias contra mundus*,⁴⁶ I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? Oh, be not weary in well doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of his might, till even American slavery – the vilest that ever saw the sun – shall vanish before it.

‘That He who has guided you from your youth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear Sir, your affectionate servant,

‘February 24th, 1791.

JOHN WESLEY.’

When it is borne in mind that I have had the happiness of being connected with the Methodist community, and that among the professed followers of this great and good man, who thus counselled the illustrious Wilberforce, there are many now in America who buy and sell human flesh, it will not be wondered at that I was glad to know that their practices were so condemned by the venerable founder of their society.

With pleasure I have continued my labours, with the exception of a trip to see the ‘World’s Fair,’⁴⁷ in the company of my esteemed friends, the Abbots, who introduced me to their most esteemed friend, Thomas Payne, Esq., of King’s Road, Chelsea. This kind hearted gentleman’s house I made my home during my stay in London, and when I was taken rather poorly, he tended me with as much solicitude as though I had been his own brother. While in London we visited the Great Exhibition,⁴⁸ and here I beheld such wonders that I never saw before, and was amazed. I saw the productions of all nations and of all men, both black and white; and as I gazed upon the vast multitude of freemen by whom I was surrounded, my mind travelled over

the broad Atlantic to my own country, and I thought of the many millions of human beings that were there, groaning and falling beneath the iron yoke of slavery and oppression. And oh! how I wished that they could taste the like freedom, and enjoy the same privileges as white men.

Another beautiful place that we visited while in London, was the palace of the noble Duke of Northumberland: here I wandered through the fine halls and chambers, no one daring to make me afraid. I was shown about with as much politeness as though I had been a white man, and I mingled with ladies and gentlemen of the first rank, and every one I met with showed me the greatest of respect.

Had I dared to enter such a place in my own country, where they boast so much of liberty and equality, they would have driven me from the place, and have said, 'get away, you black nigger! you have no business here.'

The more I saw of England, the more I felt convinced that it is the best and freest land under the sun. My friend, Mr. Abbott, next took me to the Bank of England, where I was handed about, and treated with the same respect as the white gentlemen. I visited many other places that space will not permit me to mention, but in all I was treated like a gentleman and a brother.

After a stay of about eight days in London, we all started back to Bolton, but I had one sad mishap on our way. The train had stopped at Rugby station; I and many more alighted, to get some refreshment; but I staid too long, and did not return till the train was in motion. Mr. Abbott and all my friends were already safe in the train; I attempted to get in, but the company's officers seeing me, seized me, and held me till the train had gone: thus I was left by myself to find my way home by another train; where I arrived safe at last, and where I remained with my friend Mr. Abbott about seven months. While at Bolton, I received an invitation from Wigan. I gladly accepted the invitation and went; when I was introduced to the Rev. W. Roaf, and to the Rev. Mr. Powell: this latter gentleman interested himself very much in the anti-slavery cause; he was owner of a very fine convenient hall, which he very kindly put at my service, and I gave lectures three successive nights to crowded audiences, of all denominations. I was also kindly received by the Rev. Samuel Rowe, Wesleyan minister, and superintendent of the circuit, and attended several of their missionary meetings.

I also visited St. Helens; I had letters of introduction to the Rev. J. Hocken, who introduced me to the Rev. J. Edmunds, Independent minister; and he very kindly lent me the use of his very fine chapel, where I lectured to some fifteen hundred intelligent people. Mr. Edmunds had himself been a missionary among the heathen: he presided over the meeting.

I also gave a lecture in Mr. Hocken's chapel, under that gentleman's presidency, which, like the others, was numerously attended.

I may here state that I gave lectures in almost all the towns and villages in Lancashire. At Stockport, Dr. Turner, the mayor, kindly lent me the use of the town hall, when he took the chair at the meeting.

Among my many friends in Lancashire, I must not forget my old and tried friends, the Rev. B. C. Etherige, of Bolton, and the Rev. A. Hewlett, of Astley. Mr. Etherige not only made speeches on my behalf, but gave me letters of introduction to many of

his friends in different towns. Thus, throughout all Lancashire, by all denominations and classes of the people, was I kindly treated.

In June, 1852, I left Bolton, and proceeded to Birmingham, and called upon the Rev. Dr. Dixon, who received me with much kindness and cordiality, after he had read a letter which I presented to him from the Rev. J. Hocken. The Doctor very kindly introduced me to his brethren the Wesleyan Ministers of the Birmingham East Circuit, and also to J. Yates, Esq., whose reception of me was as that of a friend. I then called upon the Rev. J. Oldknow, minister of Trinity Church, to whom I had a letter of introduction from an American clergyman. The Rev. J. Oldknow not only received me in the most friendly manner, but wrote for me the following testimonial: –

‘I can, without hesitation, certify the authenticity of the testimonial from the Rev. Arthur Cleveland Cox, who is my intimate friend; and from his recommendation I have no doubt that the case of James Watkins well merits the kind attention of Christians.

J. OLDKNOW, M.A.,
Perpetual Curate of Holy Trinity Chapel,
Bordesley, Birmingham.

June 19, 1852.’

I received a cordial reception also from the Rev. John Angel James, the Rev. James Methley, the Rev. E. Lightwood, the Rev. J. Taylor, the Rev. W. Landels, the Rev. Isaac New, the Rev. Dr. Crofts, the Rev. Brewin Grant, George Dawson, Esq., M.A., the Rev. G. S. Bull, the Rev. George B. Macdonald, the Rev. E. Derrington, the Rev. W. Morgan, and other ministers, who offered to forward my interests by allowing me the use of their school-rooms and chapels in which to give my lectures. I here take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the numerous friends I met with in Birmingham. I have been patronised by crowded audiences night after night, and have had so many kindnesses shown me by so many people, that I feel it unfair to name any one in particular, lest I should have been thought to have forgotten someone who had been equally kind. When at last it shall be said, ‘inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of my servants, ye have done it to me,’⁴⁹ it will be found that many in Birmingham had shown kindness to a poor fugitive brother.

Of course the Society of Friends, who have always been the friends of the slave, received me with their usual kindness: amongst whom I must not forget to mention that benevolent gentleman, Joseph Sturge,⁵⁰ Esq.

I waited upon Mr. Woodward, Superintendent Registrar of Edgbaston, to whom I presented a letter from his son, a resident in Hartford, who received me as one of his family. From his son I received the following testimonial: –

‘It is some time since I parted with James Watkins, in Hartford, Connecticut, America; on that occasion I gave him a letter of introduction to friends in Birmingham, thus adding to many valuable credentials already in his possession from persons of high standing and integrity. Since that time I have re-crossed the Atlantic, and am gratified to find the American testimonials numerous added to by English gentlemen. I have known him and his family during many years, and have ever found him honest and

trustworthy, and a pattern of patient persevering industry. I have lately read his narrative, and believe in its verity.

ALFRED WOODWARD,
32, George Street, Edgbaston.

February 21, 1853.'

To this testimonial Mr. Woodward, sen., has added his own, as follows: –

'In the autumn of last year I received a letter from America in favour of James Watkins, a man of colour, and formerly a slave. On his presenting the above, and after many enquiries, I invited him to my house, and there, from familiar intercourse, and from repeated conversations with others respecting him, I have pleasure in recommending him to the notice and esteem of the religious public.

JOSEPH WOODWARD,
Superintendent Registrar.

Edgbaston, March 1, 1853.'

I have spoken to more than 200,000 Sabbath Scholars on the Sabbath days since my arrival in this country; it has filled my heart with joy when I have seen the union of feeling displayed, and to witness the interest taken in this country by the teachers in learning the children the way to heaven; and when I cast my recollection to my own country, and remembered that in that boasted land of equality and freedom there were 800,000 children in slavery, who have none to teach them the way to heaven – education of the slaves being strictly forbidden in most of the slave states – my heart swelled, and my sable cheeks have often been bedewed with tears, as I have thought of the contrast. In this country, every smiling child I looked upon had its home, and not one of them could be sold from its parents; but in my country no poor slave woman could own her children, nor prevent the white man who claimed them as his goods or property from taking them from the weeping mother whenever he liked to do so – or whenever he chose to sell them as he would sell his lambs or his pigs.

The first school I visited in Birmingham was the Cherry-street Sunday School – I afterwards addressed the children in Belmont Row School, and in the schools of Carr's Lane, the Circus, Bradford-street, Mount Zion, the schools connected with the chapel of George Dawson, Esq., and many other schools too numerous to be inserted. I was delighted with the Easter School Festivities – especially those of Wesley Chapel, addressed by the Rev. E. Lightwood; and Mount Zion school, addressed by the Rev. C. Vince, the Rev. T. Swan, and the Rev. R. A. Vaughan. On both these occasions the singing was delightful, and my heart turned again to the thousands of poor children of my own race, who are kept in degradation and ignorance by their professedly Christian masters! and I thought could we but have a few such noble-hearted christians as had addressed those meetings – and a few such hands of devoted teachers as I saw before me – could we but place such persons in the midst of the darkest slavery, their speeches, their prayers, and their teaching, would hasten the downfall of the accursed system of slavery.

I feel very much indebted to Mr. W. Street, of Birmingham, who manifested much interest in me, and who has been at much trouble in giving me instruction in correct reading and writing. I have derived great assistance from his friendly aid, besides

which I have received kind attention from his family. I hope to make a proper use of the instruction I have received, and I feel it will be much to my disgrace if I am not advantaged by it both in this world and the world to come.

In closing my present account of Birmingham I must say that I have found more heartiness in their sympathy – more earnestness in their desire to forward my interests – and more friendliness at their firesides, than in any town I have seen. The poor man in his lonely cottage, and the gentleman in his mansion, were alike my friends. It cannot therefore be surprising if I seek to fix my home where I have found so many friends – if I say ‘this people shall be my people, and their God be my God – where they die, there will I also be buried.’⁵¹

I have pleasure in appending the following testimonials, kindly furnished by the Rev. Dr. Dixon, and the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A.: –

‘Slavery itself is so repugnant to our better instincts, that only familiarity and personal interests can be supposed to sophisticate men’s judgments, and lead them to palliate so unnatural a monstrosity.

‘Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
That to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace!’⁵²

The same is true of slavery, which includes all vices, beginning with man-stealing, which is robbing God and man in one act, and is as impious as it is dishonest.

Every man whose conscience is not vitiated, and his affections not blunted, must sympathize with the escape of a slave into manhood, and MR. WATKINS’ simple tale will gain for him the sympathy of those who may not, like the writer of these lines, have had an opportunity of witnessing his personal deportment, by which he has gained the confidence of many friends. He has my hearty sympathy and best wishes for his future success and comfort.

BREWIN GRANT,
Independent Minister.

Birmingham, April 14, 1853.’

‘I have no doubt but that Mr. JAMES WATKINS, once a slave, but now, thank God, a free man, is in all respects trustworthy; that the account he gives of himself is true, and that any public countenance given will not be misplaced. I have arrived at this conviction by personal intercourse and conversation, by the respectable and unquestionable testimonials in his possession, and also from his general good conduct in this country. To favour a fellow Christian, who has escaped from the accursed system of American slavery, to assist him to rescue others, his relatives or friends; and to bring them to settle in this country, and enable them to enjoy in unmolested peace the blessings of liberty and religion – must surely be a pleasure, as well as a duty, to every British Christian.

I most heartily recommend our coloured brother christian to the sympathy and charity of all.

JAMES DIXON.

Birmingham, April 14th, 1853.’

I here also, with much pleasure, append the testimonials of the Rev. Mr. Landells and R. F. Sturges, Esq., both of Birmingham:

‘Mr. Watkins having been born in slavery, and for many years its victim, is able from observation and experience to give graphic illustrations of the evils of a system which cannot be too strongly denounced.

I have frequently had occasion to meet with him during the last two years, and in some of his own social meetings have heard him speak in a manner which appeared to me profitable, as well as interesting. I trust his lectures will serve to excite and strengthen feelings of hostility towards a system which treats such men as things.

W. LANDELLS.

Edgbaston, 15th January, 1855.’

‘I have sincere pleasure in adding my testimony to the highly respectable and numerous letters of recommendation which Mr. James Watkins has obtained, and believe him to be every way worthy the sympathy and patronage of the British public, and all Christian societies in particular. Mr. Watkins is a consistent member of the Methodist society, and, I may add, meets in my class.

R. F. STURGES.

Dec. 31, 1854.’

From Birmingham I made several excursions into Staffordshire, commonly called in Birmingham – the black country. R. F. Sturges, Esq., kindly gave me letters of introduction to the Rev. Mr. Sergeant, of Smethwick, who opened my way into the West Bromwich circuit. Mr. Barnsley gave me an introduction to Mr. Cox, of Tipton, who received me with open hands, and said ‘Well, my friend and brother Watkins, I have a son who has always felt a deep sympathy for your race, and who wished to go to preach to them the ever blessed gospel.’ We had very large meetings there. I was then introduced to the Rev. Michael Johnson, of Dudley, and the Rev. John Stevenson, who presided over the meeting at Dudley. At his house I met with his brother, who was on a visit from Connecticut, America, and after my lecture, he made some remarks confirming what I had said. By him I sent a parcel to my wife and family, he kindly undertaking to see the same. I am much indebted to Mr. Lester, of Dudley, belonging to the New Connexion, for the interest he manifested on my behalf, and for the letters he gave me to friends in the neighbourhood. The Rev. Mr. Rogers shewed me much kindness, and said his chapel was at my service. Hence I proceeded to Brierley Hill and Stourbridge, having letters of introduction to the Rev. John Newton, Wesleyan Superintendent; the Rev. James Richards, Independent Minister; all the religious denominations in that part shewed me much sympathy.

I was introduced to Tamworth by Mr. Whatton, of Birmingham, and lectured in the town hall, which was kindly lent by the mayor; the attendance was so large that many of the gentry of the neighbourhood, who had come to the lecture, were obliged to return without being able to obtain standing room. I gave two lectures at Tamworth, and one at Fazeley, and experienced much kindness and all the comforts of a home with the Mr. Wattons, and their families. I was taken over the grounds and mansion of Sir Robert Peel,⁵³ M.P., by Mr. Alfred Watton, the Steward. I con-

trasted this attention with the difference I should have experienced in America, and thanked God I was in England. The Rev. T. Johnson, of Tamworth, gave me a letter of introduction to the Rev. Robert Massie, of Atherstone, where I lectured to large audiences, over one of which C. H. Bracebridge, Esq., deputy-lieutenant of the county, presided; the Rev. R. Massie shewed me the kindness of a brother, and accompanied me to Hinckley, and introduced me to the independent Minister of that place; and also to the Rev. J. Mackie, incumbent of the parish church. The Sabbath schools connected with the church attended the town hall, on the Sunday afternoon, the clergyman presided on the occasion, where I addressed a numerous and highly respectable audience. The dissenting schools all proceeded to one large chapel, and I delivered another address to them. The kindness I experienced from the clergy, the dissenting ministers, and the people generally of that part of the country, I shall never forget.

J. Ward, Esq., of Birmingham, gave me a letter of introduction to T. Davis, Esq., of Hill Top, where we had a large meeting. Mr. Lee gave me an introduction to Mr. Horton, of Wednesbury, where we had large meetings – so also in the chapels and school rooms of the Church of England, the Wesleyan Reformers, and other Christian denominations of that town. I received much kindness from Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Horton, of Wednesbury. Samuel Lloyd, Esq., presided at the meeting in the Wesleyan Reformers' chapel, I had a letter of introduction from some of my Birmingham friends to Mr. Jabez Rubury, of Darlaston, who espoused my cause heartily. He was named by his father, who was an old Methodist, after Jabez Bunting, the celebrated Wesleyan minister. The Rev. Mr. White, the church clergyman, to whom I had been introduced by Mr. Green, invited me to lecture in his school rooms. I also lectured in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, the meeting being presided over by David Bowen, Esq. From the Rev. Mr. Pugh I experienced much sympathy. Mr. White very kindly furnished me with letters of introduction to several clergymen. I shall not easily forget his kindness – I insert a testimonial he gave me.

‘Darlaston Rectory, South Staffordshire,
March 24th, 1853.

I hereby certify that Mr. JAMES WATKINS (formerly a slave in America), delivered, in my school room, a most interesting lecture, on the cruelties and abominations of slavery.

The lecture seemed to me and to others, well calculated to correct an error, often advocated by the ignorant, viz., that the slave was in as happy a position as the hard working labourer among our own countrymen; and to stimulate the free and generous to use every lawful means which the Christian religion suggests, whereby they may be God's blessed agent in saying “let the oppressed go free.”⁵⁴

W. W. WHITE,
Rector of Darlaston.’

At the same time Samuel Mills, Esq., presented me with the following testimonial: –

‘I attended the lecture named by the Rev. W. White, and was much pleased by the information afforded.

Darlaston, March 26th, 1853.

SAMUEL MILLS.’

I addressed about 600 children in a Wesleyan Reform school at Darlaston; the singing was delightful. I had a letter from the Rev. W. White, to the Rev. W. Fletcher, who kindly gave me one to the Rev. J. B. Owen of Bilston, and I addressed the schools of various denominations in that place. I also was introduced to Mr. Wood, of Bradley, who received me with much kindness, and I lectured in the Wesleyan Reform Chapel in that place. In concluding my notice of the 'black country,' I must give them praise, for their large chapels and school rooms; while the personal kindness I received at their hands made a deep impression on my mind. I visited J. Brewer, Esq., of Walsall, and who has ever showed me he had a warm and friendly heart, and drove me round to various friends. I found him and his lady to be warm hearted and kind Christians.

CHAPTER XI.

MY WIFE'S ATTEMPT TO REACH THIS COUNTRY, AND MY TOUR IN WARWICKSHIRE, YORKSHIRE, ETC.

My dear wife, at my earnest request, left the home of her father with a kind friend, who accompanied her to New York, intending to sail in one of the Cunard steamers from that port to this country. She had engaged her place, but on her arrival with the three children at the packet-office, she was refused a passage on account of her colour! This, of course, was a great and an annoying disappointment: she had travelled 200 miles, and found herself amongst strangers, unable to induce a fellow man to allow her a passage in his ship on the broad ocean, because of her coloured skin. She wrote me a melancholy letter, which deeply affected me, for I was just then expecting to welcome her to these shores. I went, full of grief, to Henry Van Wart, Esq., an American merchant, and a magistrate of Birmingham; he very kindly wrote me a letter to George Wright and Co., of which the following is a copy: –

'Birmingham, February 8th, 1854.
Messrs. George Wright and Co., Liverpool.

Dear Sir, – This note will be delivered to you by James Watkins, a respectable coloured man, who wishes to make an arrangement to get his wife out from America. She is, we understand, a free woman, and never has been a slave. This person has sent a considerable sum of money through us to his relatives in the U.S.

If you can assist him in securing a comfortable passage for his wife, we shall be much obliged.

We remain, dear Sir,
Yours truly,
VAN WART, SON, & CO.'

I was received very kindly by the gentleman to whom the letter was addressed, and also by Messrs. Richardson, Brothers, the large ship owners, to whom Messrs. Wright and Co. introduced me. I made arrangements, which my kind friend, Henry Van Wart, Esq., completed, for securing a passage for my wife and family by the unfortunate 'City of Glasgow' steamer. I need not remind my readers that this ship,

with 480 passengers and crew, on its way from Liverpool to Philadelphia, is supposed to have sunk, as it has never been heard of since its departure.

The ship not arriving at Philadelphia in due course, the proprietor despatched the 'City of Manchester' in its place, and my wife and family were taken on board, and treated with much kindness by the English captain.

I received a letter from her, stating when about I might expect her, and as it allowed me a few weeks interim, I occupied myself in visiting Coventry, Leamington, Banbury, and also in a tour to Yorkshire, at the invitation of the Rev. Mr. Mills, of the Wesleyan New Connexion.

Mrs George Dawson gave me a letter to Charles Bray, Esq., of Coventry, who received me with warm cordiality. The Rev. P. Sibree gave me also a letter to the Rev. J. Sibree, and the Rev. E. Delph, of Coventry. The Superintendent of the Wesleyan New Connexion there, also received me with great kindness. I made my home at the house of Mr. Wilkinson, who invited me to be his guest, to whom I was introduced by letter from Mr. Baker, of Birmingham. From J. Cash, Esq., and his lady I experienced much sympathy, he presided at my first meeting. To many other friends of that ancient city and neighbourhood I am under heavy obligations. Arthur Adkins, Esq., of Coventry, gave me a letter to James Cadbury, Esq., of Banbury. This gentleman not only showed me much personal kindness but he also incurred trouble and expense in visiting other places in the neighbourhood to arrange for my holding meetings in them; no kindness or trouble seemed too great for him to show on behalf of the poor millions still held in slavery. The Rev. Mr. Yates, Wesleyan Minister, Mr. Richard Edmunds, the Rev. J. Parker, Independent Minister, the Rev. W. T. Henderson, Baptist Minister, all gave a hearty reception, the various chapels were opened to me for my lectures, and a good attendance manifested the sympathy of the inhabitants of Banbury with the cause I advocated. Mr. Ranslon, of Coventry, wrote a letter to Mrs. Cash, at Leamington, concerning me. This lady's daughter introduced me to the Rev. M. Pope. Also the Rev. W. Allen, Wesleyan Minister, allowed me the use of their chapels, and evidenced a warm sympathy, as did the people generally of that beautiful place.

R. F. Sturges, Esq., of Birmingham, gave me a letter to the Rev. W. Powis, Wesleyan Minister, of Redditch, as well as one to Mr. Harrison, of the same place. Mr. Powis cheerfully gave me the use of the chapel; and to Mr. Harrison and family I feel under many obligations. The Rev. Mr. Ashwell, Independent Minister, to whom I was furnished with letters of introduction, also placed his chapel at my service, and manifested much friendliness. To the inhabitants generally I feel myself indebted for their sympathy.

Through an introduction to Mr. Bragg, who evidenced much friendship for me, I also lectured in the school-room of the New Jerusalem Church, Summer Lane; the Rev. E. Madeley presided, and spoke with much feeling and effect on my behalf of the cause I was advocating. Having attended some of the missionary meetings of the New Connexion in Birmingham, I was invited by the Rev. Mr. Mills, of Barnsley, to pay a visit to his circuit, and attend some of their missionary meetings in that neighbourhood. I accepted the invitation, and spoke at several of their meetings to overflowing audiences. A religious feeling pervaded the assemblies, and many found it good to be there. In the house of the reverend gentleman I made my home, and experienced every possible kindness from him and his excellent lady. The pleasure of my visit was

enhanced by my meeting at the same house with the Rev. Mr. Addyman, who was the first missionary sent out by the New Connexion to Canada, where he had been the means of pointing many of my poor fugitive brethren to the Saviour.

I had a letter of introduction to the Rev. J. Smart, Wesleyan minister, who gave me a cordial welcome, and accompanied me to his respected colleague, the Superintendent, who cheerfully agreed to my having the Wesleyan chapel to lecture in, and kindly undertook to preside at the meeting, and Mr. Smart promised to take part in it also. From the Rev. J. Smart and family I received much kindness. This gentleman afterwards removed to Wigan, being appointed Superintendent of that circuit. I called upon him there, and found him suffering from a disease which proved fatal to him. He expressed his pleasure at seeing me, and confidence in his hope of heaven, and trusted I should meet him there. I felt much sorrow at seeing him surrounded by his numerous little children, and with little prospect of recovery. He died triumphantly soon after, and I hope God will be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow.

Mr. Wilkinson, of Mapplewell, in the neighbourhood of Barnsley, evidenced much sympathy for me and for my race. My short visit to Yorkshire convinced me that the people of that county are a warm-hearted people, full of sympathy for my oppressed brethren, and I determined on paying them another visit. Language is inadequate to give expression to my warm feelings of gratitude to the people of this country for the unabated sympathy they manifest to the cause of my injured brethren.

During my residence in Birmingham, I have been favoured with the following testimonial from Mr. Nelson, who kindly presided at one of my lectures, and whose eloquence on behalf of my brethren in bonds electrified the audience: –

(Copy.)

‘I have had many opportunities of personal intercourse with Mr. James Watkins, and can with confidence recommend him and his case alike to the kind consideration and Christian sympathy of every one whose spirit resists the foul lie that a man has a right to hold in his hand the fee-simple of his brother’s liberty; and having flogged, collared, chained, and punished him at his pleasure, and worked him like a beast of burden, to transfer him at the auction-mart, or in his will, to his creditors, his heirs, or his assigns, as if he were an ox or an ass.

JOHN B. NELSON, M.D., &c.’

I am glad here to be at liberty to insert an extract from a letter I received from a true friend of the cause. After alluding to the calumny that the African is an inferior race, and bringing forward Ward,⁵⁵ Pennington,⁵⁶ Douglass,⁵⁷ and Garnett,⁵⁸ as evidences of the falseness of the charge, he adds – ‘As a Christian brother, humbly attempting to propagate that Gospel preached by the meek and lowly Jesus, I look with astonishment on those who preach the gospel of liberty, and yet hold their brethren in bondage: to such will I never extend the right hand of fellowship, nor acknowledge their right to traffic in another’s blood.’

From an esteemed member of the Ladies’ Negro Friend Society, I received a kind letter asking for six copies of my narrative, and expressing her deep sympathy with the suffering coloured race. She observes, ‘Callous indeed must be the heart that can read the details of a slave’s life, without shuddering at the atrocious system.’ She then

alludes to my expectancy of my wife coming to this country, and writes – ‘many of her white sisters will be glad to welcome her, and none more so than myself, having been in some degree the humble instrument of her coming to England, the refuge of the oppressed.’ – Signed on behalf of the Friends, A.C.

In my simple way I have been able to make impressions on the youthful mind of this country, in favour of freedom, and in detestation of slavery, which will never be effaced. And I have reason to hope my humble addresses to the Sabbath schools have been made useful to the souls of some of my little hearers. I have felt all the conscious pride of manhood when I have gone into the different places of worship in this country, to find myself treated with the respect white men only receive in my country. In America, even in the free states, I could go to no place of worship frequented by whites without being put in a pew erected purposely for coloured persons. I could not be allowed to take the Lord’s supper with the white members; but here, thank God, this prejudice has no existence. The Rev. Dr. Pennington,⁵⁹ an Independent minister of colour, formerly a slave, was not allowed by any of the Independent ministers of New York to preach for them: but in this country Dr. Pennington has been gladly received in the pulpits of the Rev. J. Angel James and Dr. Raffles. The Rev. Stephen Gloster⁶⁰ was treated with the same contempt *there*, but *here* he had free access to Mr. James’s pulpit. W. Cromwell,⁶¹ who was the son of a slave, went to a college in America, but was refused to be allowed to remain; but he came to this country and had admission at once to Cambridge University – and has preached in the Birmingham parish church, for the Rev. J. C. Miller.

I feel that I cannot return to America, to be treated as not belonging to the human species – I feel that my religious well doing is endangered by dwelling amongst those whose conduct must always appear to the coloured people of that country as a libel on Christianity, and have a strong tendency to make all negroes doubt the truthfulness of religious professors. What could be my opinion of Christian missions, as learnt from what I saw in the slave states? It is no uncommon thing for a lady to take the child from the parent to sell, that she may give the amount to send the Bible to the heathen. Oh my readers, how different does Christianity appear to me in this country. It is a thing of loveliness *here* – speaking goodwill to all men, and aiming at the elevation of all. *There* it is made to aid the white man in oppressing his coloured brother – and its blessed truths are perverted to countenance the wrong they perpetrate on the helpless suffering slave. It has been my highest pleasure to give my little assistance to the mission cause here – I love it – I look upon the freedom of 800,000 of my brethren in the West Indies as resulting mainly from the labours of the missionaries – aided as they were by the kindly feeling of the people in England. I have of course a natural love to my native country – could it be freed of its plague-spot; but the hatred of the Americans to the race they have so deeply injured seems to pervade their institutions. It is well known many are now attempting to get a law passed empowering the free states to ship off the free Black people to Liberia, in Africa, at the same time they intend to retain the slaves – a measure which arises from no love or pity they have to the unhappy race, but from their deeply seated hatred to them. Why should I and my relatives be shipped off to a country we never saw, and with which we cannot be so naturally connected by descent, as the free states are to England? What would be thought of a measure, that should be attempted to be passed by one portion of the American nation to extirpate and send off to England all the present inhabitants of America of

English descent? Surely if any part of the population of that country has the *right* to act so, it would be the poor aboriginal Indian – for the white man is no more a native originally of the country than the negro. But in this sweeping condemnation it ought to be said the injured coloured man has some noble friends in America: some who had ‘resisted unto blood:’⁶² and who boldly advocate the cause where such advocacy brings them reproach instead of plaudits. Amongst these I must mention Bishop T. C. Brownell, of Connecticut; the Rev. Dr. Hawes, of Hartford; the Rev. Dr. Patten, of New York; the Rev. Dr. Beecher,⁶³ of New York, Brooklyn; the Hon. C. Sumner;⁶⁴ J. P. Hale, Esq., member of Congress; and William Lloyd Garrison,⁶⁵ Esq., the great champion of the negro. The Friends – every one of them – have in that country washed their hands of slavery, and are the friends of the coloured man.

I ask my kind readers, when an American minister comes among them, and attempts to palliate the enormities of slavery, to admit of no excuse for such a crime. Let them see you are filled with pity and with shame that a Christian minister should attempt to palliate its enormity. Let every such man, when he pays a visit to this country, plainly see your opinion of his conduct, and may God help him to amend his creed.

Every man – every child – can do something to help on the cause of freedom. Public opinion is a powerful battering ram, and it is made up of the opinions of individuals. Let each his friendly aid afford to shorten the days of suffering and toil now being endured by the poor degraded African. I am happy to say Christian churches, whether of the Establishment or Dissenters, have been freely open to me – and as I never introduce any subject but what relates to slavery in America, I hope the same freedom of access will continue to be afforded to me. I have no time nor any wish to learn what are the distinctive differences of the various sects of this country. My mission is a very simple one; and by God’s help my feeble abilities shall be unreservedly devoted to advocate in every place the cause of my poor brethren. Many a gleam of sunshine shall flash across my heart as I think that my puny efforts, aided as they are by the earnest prayers of my Christian brethren here, are doing something to bring freedom to my race.

Haste, happy day,
That time I long to see,
When every son of Adam
Shall be free.⁶⁶

Till then, alas, what must be the sufferings of my race [____?]. Ye mothers of England, surrounded by your happy families, think what would be your feelings if your home was liable to be entered at any hour, by a man claiming to own you, your husband, and your family. A man who could sell you to one country, your husband to another, and your daughters for purposes which no mother can think of without horror. I have seen many sent off for such purposes, even some of my own relatives. And no mother in that country dare lift up her voice against it. She assigns them to the accursed dealer, and never expects to hear of them again. And to none can she unburden her loaded heart but to God. My readers, you might think that I am relating outrages that occur in the midst of heathenism – in the interior of poor benighted Africa; but no! these scenes I am speaking of occur daily in a civilised Christian country; in a country advanced in

all the arts and sciences – in a country making a high profession of Christianity – and sending missionaries to the heathen!

All I ask of you English fathers and mothers is, that you will send your prayers to the throne of grace that the sable millions now kept in slavery by their white masters may speedily enjoy the sweets of freedom and the blessings of Christianity.

CHAPTER XII.

I was introduced at Wakefield to Mr. Alderman Harrison, the Rev. R. Rawlins, and the Rev. Mr. Wilcox, where I held some large meetings, at which much sympathy was manifested towards the oppressed slaves. Mr. Candley and Mr. Mackie took a warm interest in my proceedings; indeed from all sections I received great kindness in Wakefield, and also in its vicinity.

I then proceeded to Sheffield, having a letter of introduction to the Rev. – Wilson, and to R. Broadhead, Esq., a member of the Society of Friends. The Rev. Mr. Wilson, the Rev. J. Methley (the latter of whom had known me in Birmingham), opened my way at once amongst our Wesleyan friends. The Rev. W. Batchelor and other dissenting ministers also received me with much favour. By Mr. Alderman Schofield I was also kindly received; he presided at a large meeting I held in Mount Tabor Chapel. Mr. Broadhead got up several meetings for me in the neighbouring villages, and kindly hired vans to take his workpeople to the meetings. By the Rev. Mr. Wilson I was introduced to T. Newton, Esq., of Thornley Cliff Works, at which place I held some well attended meetings, and where I was laid under many obligations by the kindness of the Messrs. Newton. Mr. Turnel took a warm interest in my proceedings. From every denomination in Sheffield I experienced uniform sympathy, which I shall always remember with gratitude. I ought not to omit to mention the kindness I received from some friends of Mr. Denton, of Birmingham, who had interested himself in my favour by writing me letters of introduction to his friends in Sheffield, who were glad to evidence their respect to him by showing kindness to me.

I was introduced to George Hayward, Esq., of Rotherham, who kindly welcomed me to his house, where I spent several happy days with his family. My meetings were so numerous attended, and my statements so well received, that I was strongly invited to pay another visit to Rotherham.

I then journeyed to Preston, where I was introduced to the mayor, who agreed to take the chair at one of my meetings. Amongst those gentlemen at Preston to whom I feel myself deeply indebted I must name M. Satherthwaite, Esq., Mr. Burrows, Mr. Eaton, Mr. Slater, the Rev. Mr. Newton, and the Rev. Mr. Scott, the superintendent of the Wesleyan Society, who I found had been in America, and knew the gentlemen in that country who gave me my first testimonials. I was glad to meet my old friends Mrs. Abbott and family, now removed here from Bolton. At their house, and Mr. Swindley's, I always found the welcome and comforts of home. To Mr. Lowe, to the Rev. Mr. Skidmore, and to many others, I am indebted for the sympathy they manifested.

Thence I proceeded to Bolton. Joseph Crook, Esq., M.P., who took a great interest in my welfare in 1851, I found to be still my warm friend. The same disposition was shown also by my other old friends, Messrs. Raper, Cunliffe, and Councillor Barlow. I visited Chorley, and held large meetings under the presidency of the Rev. Mr. Baker,

and the Rev. W. Skidmore. Much sympathy to the cause I advocated was evidenced in Chorley. Mr. Baker presented me with the following testimonial: –

‘I regard Slavery as high treason against God’s throne, and man’s rights and dignity. I cannot but mark with astonishment and indignation that sanction which American churches have given it by precept and example, and heartily rejoice in every honest effort to crush it out of the world. I wish Mr. Watkins, himself an embodiment of its cruel oppressions, all success in unmasking this foulest of wrongs, commending him to the kind consideration of those especially who profess that Christ came “to give liberty to the captives.”’⁶⁷

JOHN BAKER, Chorley.’

I took an opportunity, while in the neighbourhood of Wigan, of going there, to see my dying friend, the Rev. J. Smart, to whom I have alluded in a previous part of my book. I was introduced to J. Meeks, Esq., of Wigan, who endeared himself to me by his amiable and generous disposition. I was favoured by the Rev. Mr. Baker with a letter of introduction to the Rev. Mr. Pierce, of Pendleton, and lectured in his chapel to a large audience: John Hewitt, Esq., of Charlestown, presided. He kindly gave me a letter to J. Sidebottom, Esq., who brought the subject before the deacons of Dr. Halley’s church, when they at once placed their large school-room at my service, where I held a large meeting, J. Sidebottom, Esq., taking the chair. Nor was this all the kindness I experienced from J. Sidebottom, Esq.: he invited me to his mansion, to partake of his sumptuous hospitality, and expressed his willingness to do anything he could to remove the grievances of those in bondage. He gave me a letter to the Rev. Mr. Sutcliffe. I was introduced to the Rev. Mr. Hacking, and I found the school-rooms of the Wesleyan Association open to my use. Mr. Crighton interested himself very much in my favour: I shall always remember his kindness, for it was great. Mr. Crighton introduced me to H. Acken, Esq., who presided at several large meetings, and invited me to his house. Mr. Farnell called with me upon the Rev. Mr. Vine, Superintendent of the Wesleyan Circuit, Oxford Road. He received us heartily, and expressed the pleasure he should feel in forwarding in any way the emancipation of the millions in slavery, and should be happy to take the chair at any of my meetings. Edward Westhead, Esq., also treated me with much kindness, and invited me to visit his family. From my old tried friend, the Rev. Dr. Beard, I still had sympathy and encouragement. He took part in my meeting at his school-rooms, as did Mr. Alderman Heywood. The Rev. G. Taylor, Wesleyan Superintendent of Salford, interested himself on my behalf, and in conjunction with the Trustees, placed the school-rooms at my service, where I held some large meetings. The Rev. Mr. Leake, to whom I was introduced by Mr. Adkins, presided at several meetings in his circuit, and took up the cause warmly. I was introduced to Mr. Bailey, Superintendent of London Road school, and found in him a warm friend. Indeed all the superintendents of that school seemed to take much interest in the cause I advocate. The Rev. Peter Duncan, who had resided in the West Indies during the reign of slavery, received me with much cordiality, and said his heart was with me and my coloured brethren: he regretted that his having just then to take a journey to Scotland would prevent him presiding at my meetings. The Rev. Mr. Bedell opened his large chapel cheerfully, and took part in a great meeting in it. Mr. Mountcastle’s family have always been my warm friends since

I arrived in this country. Mr. Hacking and the members of his dear family have also always treated me with much hospitality. I must also mention the obligations I am under to Mr. Norman and family, for many expressions of kindness and sympathy.

Mr. Jackson, Superintendent of the Oxford Road Sunday School, invited me to the school, where I gave an address, and at their request, I promised, at a future time, to give a lecture on Slavery. Enoch Harrison, Esq., also Superintendent of George-street Sabbath School, invited me to address the children, which I did with much pleasure; and afterwards lectured in the same place to a crowded audience, Enoch Harrison, Esq., presiding on the occasion. I was introduced to Mr. Swallow, who, after seeing the Trustees and Minister of Lever-street Chapel, cheerfully placed their large school-room at my service, where I held a large meeting under the presidency of Mr. Swallow. Through the kindness of Mr. Thomas Woolfe and his brother, I was introduced to the Rev. J. L. Figgins, who received me also with kindness, and stated his school-room was at my service.

In the Wesleyan New Connexion Chapel, Strangeways, I lectured, Mr. Jenkins taking the chair. He afterwards introduced me to Mr. Jackson, of Peter-street Chapel, where I lectured, and the minister of the circuit presided. To Mr. Farnell I must express my thanks for the many acts of kindness I have received, and the deep interest he and his family have taken in my welfare.

Indeed, I ought to mention many other friends, but my little volume would not contain a hundredth part of my statement of deep obligations which I feel I am under to the friends of the slave in Manchester. To all sects and parties my gratitude is equally due. I feel I cannot recompense them, but they shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, when the gift of a cup of cold water shall not be overlooked.

While I have been making so many friends, I am deeply grieved at having lost by death my dear friend, Mr. Abbott, of Bolton, at whose kind home I resided ten months, on my arrival in this country. This good member of the Society of Friends, on hearing my wife's intention to come to this country, kindly wrote, inviting her and the children, with myself, to again make his house my home, offering to meet her at Liverpool; but before she arrived he had 'Gone to the land of the blest,'⁶⁸ having died suddenly. I need not add that I felt I had lost a dear friend, whose place could never be filled up, though from many others I have received undeserved and overpowering kindness. Another great bereavement to me has been the death of Mr. John Fletcher, of Leigh, near Bolton, who had married Mrs. Abbott's sister, and who showed much kindness to my wife and family on their arrival. I was invited to follow this worthy 'Friend' to the grave by the family, and need not say I did so with much grief, especially as he left a young and interesting family, whom I pray God may protect and guide, until they are removed to the 'better land,' where I humbly trust I may be permitted again to meet the friends I have lost.

CHAPTER XIII. ARRIVAL OF MY WIFE.

After many bitter disappointments, it was with sincere pleasure I at last had the welcome information that my dear wife and family were approaching the shores of this land of freedom in the 'City of Manchester' steamer. She had had much difficulty in procuring a passage, which had been refused her by the American captains, though

she was a free native of the country; but the English captain agreed to bring her, and treated her with much kindness on the passage to this country, where she arrived on the 10th of May, 1854, in Liverpool. Being very ill myself at the time in Yorkshire, the son of my dear friend Mr. Abbott went to meet them, but unfortunately missed them. As she knew my residence was at Birmingham, she took her place in the railway, and reached my residence, where she was kindly received by my friends Mr. and Mrs. Francis, who made them at once at home. In a few days I joined them in Birmingham, where we had a joyful meeting, as my readers will easily imagine, after being so long separated from my wife and three children. I must here say I had always had a very high respect for the people of England, but the warm kindness which has been extended to my wife and family has much increased my feelings of respect and admiration; and I am very proud to say – far away from the tyrant's lash, and 'the baying of hounds,' I have taken and furnished a little house, which I feel is my castle, where I fear no Fugitive Slave Law, but where I hope to be spared to bring up my family.

I here tender my thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Francis, with whom I have resided in Birmingham, and who in my absence welcomed my wife and family. My obligations for their friendship and kindness are such as will not be erased, though I have now left their hospitable roof for a small castle of my own.

In conclusion I may add, through the great liberality of my English friends, and the friends of abolition in America, I have been enabled to purchase the freedom of three of my brothers and sisters from slavery. To H. Van Wart, Esq., of Birmingham, and J. Crook, Esq., M.P. for Bolton, through whom I sent my remittances to America, I am deeply indebted. H. Van Wart, Esq., paid 125 dollars for the purchase of my wife's passage ticket, which kindness I shall always gratefully remember – and which sum of course I repaid that gentleman, with many thanks. There are others whom I hope, by the blessing of God, yet to be the means of effecting their liberation; others there are of my brothers and sisters, whose freedom I could not purchase if I had all the wealth of England, as they were sold and sent I know not into what part of the United States. It would be a relief to my burdened heart if I could hear of the death of these, as I could then hold up both hands to Heaven and thank my God they were released from the accursed yoke of slavery.

My wife attended several of the meetings in Lancashire and was received with much kindness – both in public, and at the houses of my friends. And I cannot but mention the warm invitation we receive from the lady of the late George Bradshaw, Esq., at whose hospitable mansion we received every sympathy. I feel under heavy obligations to the many friends who invited us to their homes. I found it impossible to accept of half the kind invitations given, but I express my humble acknowledgements for the kindness of those whose invitations I accepted, and of those I was unable to call upon. In all places I visited in Yorkshire and Lancashire, I experienced the greatest kindness, and was cheered to find so many warm friends of the cause of abolition in those great counties.

CHAPTER XIV. MY PROCEEDINGS SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF MY WIFE.

My journeyings since the previous edition of this Narrative was printed, have been principally in Cheshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire. I have held large

meetings again in Manchester, and its neighbourhood; also in Macclesfield, Leek, Congleton, Derby, Burton-upon-Trent, Belper, Nottingham, &c. John Porteus, Esq., presided at one of my meetings at Manchester, and kindly received me at his residence; besides this he proffered, with much cheerfulness, to give me several letters of introduction to friends in Ireland, thus opening a new field of labour to me, when I could find opportunity to go.

At Altrincham I was received cordially into the family of Mr. Harrison, from whom I received much kindness, as well as from the family of Mr. Lomas, the Rev. Mr. Christopherson, and many others. I had an introduction from Joseph Meek, Esq., of Wigan, to his brother, Mr. Meek, of Macclesfield. I was also introduced to D. Holland, Esq., Mr. Brunt, Mr. Brocklehurst, and to his Worship the Mayor. My obligations are great to all these gentlemen, especially to D. Holland, Esq., whose guest I had the happiness to be during my stay: nor should I forget the kindness I received from the clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Pratt. My respected friend Mr. Brocklehurst, kindly accompanied me to Congleton, and introduced me to the ex-mayor, – Hatfield, Esq., who received me with cordiality. I was also introduced to the Rev. Mr. Dyson, whose friendship I shall always remember, and who introduced me to – Barlow, Esq., whose hospitality was very great; and as through the illness of a member of his family, I declined his request to make his mansion my home, insisted on my going to the head hotel of the place, and remain there at his charge.

I was introduced to the Rev. Offley Crewe, by the Rev. J. Dyson, and also to the minister of the Independent Chapel, and from one and all received much warm sympathy. But I must not omit to mention that the Mayor, J. Dakin, Esq., placed the Town Hall at my disposal, and kindly presided at one of my meetings. My esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Dyson, not content with showing me kindness in his own residence, accompanied me to Leek, and introduced me to – Wardle, Esq., Mr. Wardle's sister, – Catting, Esq., and Mr. Johnson: also Mr. Johnson, druggist, Mr. Heapey, and their families. I held some large meetings at Leek. The Rev. Mr. Hollis took the chair on one occasion, the Rev. Mr. Gostock on another, and the Rev. Mr. Medgley took part in one of the meetings, bearing his protest against the enormities of slavery. I must return my sincere thanks to the Trustees and Committee of West Street Rooms, who generously returned me the two guineas which are invariably paid for the room. I may say I met with very many friends in Leek: especially must I express my gratitude to Mr. W. Heapey and his kind lady, who at once opened their house for me – a stranger and a fugitive – and afforded me all the hospitality of friendship, as well as taking me in their conveyance to give me an introduction to some friends at Burslem. My prayers are offered up for them and their two dear children – that when my wanderings are ended, I may meet them in heaven.

From the Rev. Mr. Oldfield I had letters of introduction to the Rev. W. R. Rogers. I also had a letter from Mr. Johnson, of Leek, to the Rev. Mr. Tyndall, of Burslem, and one from the Rev. Mr. Gostock to the Rev. Mr. Scholefield, who received me with much kindness. I was introduced to the Rev. Mr. Watts, New Connexion Minister, to whom I am under obligations, and the Rector and the Curate of that place. I held some large meetings. Two nights I lectured in the Wesleyan large rooms, the Rev. Mr. Tyndall presiding at one, and the Rev. Mr. Watts at the other. The Rev. Mr. Scholefield also took part in the meeting. In the large National School Room I also lectured, when the

Clergyman presided. From him, and from many friends in the Potteries, I experienced warm sympathy. Especially I ought to mention – Pinder, Esq., and the Chief Bailiff, in whose families I was entertained with much hospitality. The lady of the Chief Bailiff also, with much cheerfulness, offered to accompany me to Hanley and Newcastle, to introduce me to the ministers and friends of those places. I also have a letter of introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Jones, of Hanley, from my esteemed friend Mrs. Cash, of Coventry, – a lady well known and respected for her piety and benevolence. In my small account I have not space to notice half the acts of kindness I received; but though not written in my book, I may say they are written in my heart, from which they will never be effaced.

As Tunstall I was received cordially by Mr. Edge and family, and was at once introduced to many friends. The Rev. W. R. Rogers presided at a large meeting. Mr. Blackhurst and partner showed me much kindness, as did many other friends.

The Rev. Mr. Page kindly presided at a meeting at Kidsgrave, and presented me with a piece on Slavery, which I insert; –

‘That man is no longer in his state of primeval excellence, but is fallen and depraved, is sufficiently proved by the universal history of our race. But nothing has furnished more appalling evidence of the awful nature and depth of man’s depravity than the system of Slavery. And of all the dark shades that throw their horrid gloom around the poor slave, as he toils through the live-long night of his Egyptian bondage, none has so deep a tinge as that which attempts to rob him of his manhood. Having robbed him of his freedom, and of all his rights as a man; having held him in debasing slavery for ages, and kept from him all the means of improvement and self-elevation; in short, having treated him in a manner that in an equal length of time would stultify the loftiest mind, debase the noblest blood, and break the proudest spirit; and then; as a justification of the multiplied wrongs heaped upon him, point to him in his depth of misery and debasement, and say he is only a connecting link between man and the brute, is a feature in human degradation that demonstrates slavery to be of all crimes the most inhumanising and inhuman.’

‘GREGORY A. PAGE,
Wesleyan Minister.’

‘November 1, 1855.’

The Rev. Mr. Sanders, of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, with many of his people, showed me much sympathy. Nor should I forget Mr. Cunliffe and family. As far as my experience goes, I have visited few places where a warmer sympathy is shown or more hospitality afforded to a person like myself – a stranger in a strange land – yet meeting with a home in every town, and a welcome in nearly every family. I hope again to visit that locality, having received an invitation from the Rev. Mr. Boycott, whom I had the pleasure of meeting with at Tipton.

I visited Derby, and was received by the ex-Mayor, – Madeley, Esq., – Chadwick, Esq., Mr. Jones, Mr. Norton, the Revds. Messrs. White, Ward, Griffiths, and Gawthorn. I had some large meetings at Derby, and found the same kindness I have had so frequently to mention as being shown to me in other places. The Rev. Mr. Tarlton not only presided at one of my meetings, but also welcomed me to his house.

At Castle Donnington I was introduced by letter to Wm. Clarke, Esq., whose kindness was great: and I had much pleasure in being introduced to Joseph Souter, Esq., who had been the companion of Dr. Newton, in his visit to America in 1839. With him I had much interesting conversation. He presided at a meeting, and bore testimony, from his own experience, to the cruelties inflicted on my brethren in America. I lectured also at Belper, where the Rev. Mr. Simons presided. Mr. Charles Palmer and other friends interested themselves on my behalf.

I was introduced to Mr. Lowe, of Burton-on-Trent, to Mr. Whitehouse, – Douglas, Esq., Mr. Wright, Mr. Bellmay, the Rev. Mr. Wilson, Mr. Coxon, and other friends, and held large meetings there, as well as at Newhall and Swadlingcote, where Mr. Allbrighton received me into his house with much hospitality. From Jas. Wood, Esq., and his lady, I also received much kindness, which will never be forgotten. Mr. Kinnersley, of Newhall, also made me welcome at his house, and showed me much sympathy.

That I should be deeply affected by the very great kindness I have received from friends of every class in this country, cannot surprise those who bear in mind what my treatment was previous to my escape from slavery. Let them contrast the two and they will not wonder at my heart overflowing with gratitude to my English friends: and perhaps they will be disposed to excuse a little warmth of expression against those who deprived all the early part of my life of those circumstances which render life a blessing and an enjoyment. Is it not excusable if sometimes I speak with warmth when I remember that in the Slave States of America, to this very hour, every slave, however intelligent he may be, is regarded as a chattel, and not as a man. There are laws which forbid his rising his arm to ward off a blow from a white man, on pain of forfeiture of the arm which has offended; and although I admit this law is not frequently carried out to the full, yet the poor slave who shall have obeyed the natural instinct of raising his arm to receive a blow aimed at any other part of his person, is often subjected to the loss of an ear, or to some other mutilation. And one who will be at the trouble of referring to the American Statute Books will find this fully borne out, or they may see the quotations correctly given in the ‘Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’⁶⁹ the ‘Thousand Witnesses,’⁷⁰ or indeed, in many books of travel in the United States, in which any account is given of slavery.

Thank God, I feel myself and family are safe from such indignity in this land of freedom – I am received as a ‘man and a brother,’⁷¹ and welcomed by thousands upon thousands of happy children, with a welcome that would touch a heart of stone. At least 500,000 Sunday School children I have addressed in this country, and I refer with much pleasure to the introduction I have received into these schools, by the many benevolent and devoted gentlemen who, as superintendents of these schools, have welcomed me – gentlemen second to none in the world for benevolence, piety, and respectability. Amongst these my mind at once reverts with gratitude and joy to J. Yates, Esq., of Birmingham; Mr. Alderman Harrison, of Wakefield; John Hewitt, Esq., of Manchester; Mr. Woodward, of the Rev. Dr. Halley’s Chapel, and George Jackson, Esq., of Oxford Road Schools; Mr. Alderman Parnell, Cheetham Hill, Manchester; Mr. Hollingsworth and Mr. Matthieson, of the Rev. J. A. James’s School; Mr. J. R. Lee, and Henry Manton, Esq., Birmingham; Mr. Shaw, of Burslem; – Catting, Esq., of Leek; Mr. Low, of Preston; and Mr. Taylor, of Bolton. Very many others could I name, but my small book is now extended beyond its limits.

I was warmly received by the Rev. G. Swann, of Stafford, also by the Rev. G. Wood, and had the free use of their chapels, as well as that of the Rev. J. Spiers; from these friends, as well as the family of Mr. Sylvester, I experienced the friendliness of a brother. While in this neighbourhood I went to Rugeley, the scene of Palmer's crimes, and was welcomed by the Rev. W. G. Hillman, Mr. Salisbury, and other friends. I proceeded to Stoke, Longton, Uttoxeter, Tutbury, and Tean, at all of which places I had large meetings, and experienced much kindness; I must especially mention Abraham Ward, Esq., of Tutbury Castle, and the Rev. Samuel Evans. Mr. Jones and Mr. Phillips I am much indebted to for the kindness manifested to me at Tean.

The Rev. T. Marsland, of Bakewell, invited me to visit that place, and interested himself much in my favour, so that I held large meetings in Bakewell and neighbouring places. By Mrs. E. Evans I was introduced to Henry A. Norman, Esq., the nephew of the Duke of Rutland, of Winsted, and also to Miss Worsley, whose sister Henry Norman, Esq., had married. With this noble family I stayed several nights, and was treated with the greatest kindness. He cheerfully presided at some of my meetings. I must not pass without mentioning also Mr. Rain and family, of Winsted, to whom my thanks are due.

I visited Stony Middleton, and by letter invited Lord Denman to preside at my meeting. His lordship, with the greatest possible kindness, forwarded me the following reply: –

‘Middleton, April 4th, 1856.

‘Sir, – I shall be happy to attend the meeting at which you will actually “take the chair.”

‘It will give me great pleasure to endeavour to create an addition to the good feeling towards you, which (from information received yesterday) I know to exist already in Middleton.

‘Your obedient Servant,’

‘Mr. James Watkins.’

‘DENMAN.’

He took the chair at several of my meetings, and invited me to his mansion, where I was kindly received by the ladies of the family. My warmest thanks are due to his lordship, who evinced the greatest interest in my welfare, as will appear by the following letters I received from him. His father was a noble advocate of the slave's cause while Lord Chief Justice of England, and I was furnished by the present Lord Denman with the following copy of a prayer, made by his worthy and noble ancestor: –

‘April 10th, 1856.

‘My dear Sir, – I regret that I cannot attend the lecture to be given by you at Eyam.

‘You asked me for some writing of my father's. I give you a prayer in verse by him. It was intended for Africa, but in many cases it applies to America.

‘From that abyss of misery raise
These brethren of thy only Son,*
Oh thou all wise, all just, all good!
Deign to suppress thy wrath divine!

* ‘Forasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.’ [Matthew 25:40].

Forbear to visit for the blood
 By Moloch poured on Mammon's shrine:
 Quench not the blood of honest shame;
 Touch reckless hearts with love again:
 Let Christians still deserve their name,
 And men remember they are men.'

'It is in this spirit that I wish to act, to let bygones be bygones, and the Southern States, like Penn's Quakers, suppress slavery by the scruples of their own awakened consciences.

Yours very truly,

'Mr. James Watkins.'

'DENMAN.'

After I had left the neighbourhood, I received the following interesting and kind letter from his lordship: –

'Dear Sir, – I desire no thanks for my good will towards you and others less fortunate than yourself, but am glad that you like the poetical prayer of my father.

'You know that I wish you to appeal to the slumbering feelings of humanity within the breasts of the slave-owners, and of the advocates of the fugitive slave law, and to disprove their allegations, that a system so liable to base abuse, and so hardening to the heart as slavery is, is preferable to freedom, however well some slaves in perhaps frequent instances are kept *bodily* by their masters.

'I now give you a stanza, written by a relation, in reference to my father, after he had lost the power of speech and writing, and to a letter of his (which I mentioned at Stony Middleton at your second meeting) to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe: –⁷²

'Tis sweet to think the last that thou hast written,
 With power to show thy thought to other eyes,
 Is in behalf of the oppressed and smitten,
 Whom *some* that pity all men else despise.
 While greeting her, whose tale of highest power*
 Won for the slave compassion and respect,
 Ah, from thine earliest to thy latest hour,
 The cause of mercy thou didst ne'er neglect.'

And then, in allusion to him as Lord Chief Justice –

'Mercy and justice joined, how deeply felt,
 Was doom pronounced, when pity might not melt.'

* Uncle Tom's Cabin. [For further information on Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which first appeared in 1852 see Meer, Sarah, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005)]

‘Your letter came to me only this morning, as I am now in London, and remain
 ‘Dear Sir,
 ‘Yours respectfully,
 ‘May 24th, 1856.’ ‘DENMAN.’

Nothing will obliterate the impression his Lordship made upon me by the warm sympathy he evidenced for the millions in slavery, and for the personal kindness I experienced from him. Never either shall I forget the kindness I experienced also from Mr. Bentley and family, of this place.

Two nights I spent at Heane, Mr. Bromley kindly presiding one night, and Mr. Andrews the other. I found these gentlemen everything that was kind and honourable. I then visited and lectured at Cromford, Matlock Bath, Darley Vale, Wirksworth, Moneyash, Great Hucklow, Shirley, and Ashbourne. At all these places I was received with much kindness: but I must especially mention my obligations to John Yeomans, Esq., and his good lady, of Shirley, who not only received me as a Christian brother, but invited my wife and child to spend with me a few days under their hospitable roof – days that memory will cherish, wherever my wandering steps may carry me, for no one could have evidenced more genuine kindness than did this gentleman and lady to me and mine. In a letter I received after leaving Shirley, from Mrs. Yeomans, she says –

‘I look upon slavery as revolting to the human family at large. The baneful effects it is calculated to diffuse in the hearts of both slaveholders and slave, are alarming to an enlightened mind. When I look upon the man, woman, and child that God has formed in his own image, to serve him as the Supreme Being, bought with the precious blood of Christ, used as cattle, I feel intense compassion for those in bondage, and anxiously sigh for the day when the Lord’s Christ “shall have the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession,”⁷³ and the poor slave enjoy liberty.

‘A. YEOMANS, Shirley.’

I was kindly received at Fircliffe House, the residence of Walter Sorby, Esq. Mrs. Sorby I found to be a relative of Colonel Talbot, of Maryland, America, whose family my master, Mr. Ensor, used to visit. I have often driven him to their house, but little I expected I should ever meet any relatives of Colonel Talbot in this country. She kindly invited me to her house, where I spent some happy days. Her family, after being slave holders, had generously liberated their slaves, and had devoted themselves to help the poor fugitive slave to escape from the land of bondage ‘by the underground railway,’⁷⁴ as the secret method of their flight has been called by the slaveholders; she herself having often secreted and fed the slaves in her father’s house while pursued by bloodhounds, and by human hounds more bloody than they.

I then made an excursion to Warrington, Penketh, Preston Brook, Frodsham, Northwich, Middlewich, Winsford, Crewe, Runcorn, Wood End, Farnworth, Sandbach, and Great Budworth, where I held meetings, and found all classes of the Christian community glad to listen to me, and to testify their abhorrence of the sufferings of the slave. Dr. Smith, the Rev. Mr. Paine and colleague, and Mr. Garnett’s family, of Warrington, the Rev. Mr. West, the Rev. Mr. Kendall, the Rev. Mr. Watts, of Northwich, and Mr. Cooper, of Wood End, I ought to mention for the sympathy manifested

in the cause, as well as Mr. Potter and the Rev. Mr. Sumner, Mr. Simpson, of Run-corn; also the Wesleyan Reform friends of the same place.

At Penketh I lectured in the Friends' school room, conducted by Mr. Richardson, where the audience contributed at the close of the lecture; but after my departure I was gratified by receiving a post office order, which had been forwarded to me by the scholars, who, after attending the meeting, subscribed an additional sum themselves, which they sent to me, and testified, in well expressed terms, their strong abhorrence to the system of slavery; which indeed their sect has always been foremost in condemning.

I spent a week in the family of Mr. Wales, of Mowcop. At that time I was unwell, but received every attention and kindness from this worthy family, to whom I was greatly indebted. Also from the clergyman, Mr. Roberts, I had much sympathy.

I afterwards proceeded to Nottingham, having letters of introduction to the Rev. J. P. Haswell, and the Rev. W. Cattle. I may say I was warmly received by nearly all the Christian ministers of Nottingham, as well as by the mayor, and other gentlemen. The mayor kindly introduced me to Mr. Alderman Herbert, who took the chair at several of my meetings, and in whose house I spent several happy hours. The Rev. Mr. Stevenson, the Rev. Mr. Wright, the Rev. J. P. Haswell, the Rev. Mr. Little, and the Rev. Mr. Lewitt, all evidenced their friendliness.

At Mansfield, I was received by the Rev. W. B. Dennes and the Rev. Mr. Bonser, with much kindness.

I had several large and interesting meetings in North Wales, where I am happy to say the Calvinistic, Methodist, and other friends opened their chapels to me, and showed their noble British feeling against the cruel and accursed system of slavery. At Rhyl I was warmly received by the Rev. J. Williams, Robert Williams, Esq., and many other friends. I visited Denbigh, Mold, Holywell, Wrexham, Brymbo, and Ruthin, and I was received by Thomas Gee, Esq., Mr. Parry, Mr. Hughes, and other kind friends at Denbigh. I was also received by Mr. Aaron Williams, and by his worship the mayor, Jas. Morris, Esq., Dr. Jones, the Rev. E. S. Hart, Mr. Jones, and others, at Ruthin. At Mold I was received by Mr. D. Jones, Mr. Davies, and the Independent minister and many friends; also at Wrexham and Brymbo by my friend Mr. Roberts, his worship the mayor, the Rev. John Jones, Mr. Bott, and W. H. Darby, Esq. I also visited Chester and Whitechurch, and was kindly welcomed by the Rev. Mr. Egerton, Rev. Mr. Morrell, and Messrs. Morris and Brothers. At Holywell I was received by Rev. Mr. Bartley, Rev. Mr. Hughes, Mr. Lloyds, and families. I was received by the Rev. Mr. Carlyle, George Marsh, Esq., the Rev. Mr. Roby, and many other friends at Chester. At Liverpool I was received by the Rev. H. S. Brown, Dr. Mc. Neill, David Lewis, Esq., M. Jones, Esq., G. Morris, Esq., Rev. Dr. Ryecroft, Rev. G. Curnock, David Hughes, Esq., the Rev. Mr. Lamb, and Mr. E. Pugh. At York Terrace School I was received by Mr. J. Roberts and the conductors of the school, and many other friends.

I visited the Isle of Man, and was warmly received by his worship the mayor of Douglas, – Jones, Esq., and – Collister, Esq., of Ramsay, the Rev. Mr. Brash. Castleton, Captain Kerry, also Mr. Brown, at the College, the Rev. Dr. Dixon, and Mr. Connell. At Laxey Captain Rowe and other friends received me very cordially.

At Didsbury, near Manchester, I was received by the Rev. John Bowers, Rev. Dr. Hannah, and Ralph Waller, Esq., of Withington, who presided at the meeting, and received me very kindly. At Cheadle I was received by Mr. Bostock and friends very

warmly. At Hollinwood I was received by the families of Mr. Schofield and friends, and Mr. Whitaker's family and other friends. At Oldham I was received by the Rev. Mr. Ashworth, Rev. – Antcliffe, Mr. W. Ball, and G. Wainwright, Esq., and family, and other kind friends. At Southport I was received by the Rev. E. Millson, Rev. – Clark, Rev. – Hargreaves, J. Stanley, Esq., Dr. Goodman, and other warm-hearted friends to the cause of freedom, 'which is the cause of God.' Indeed, time and space would fail to tell of the warm expressions of sympathy and kindness received from all my friends. Mr. Illingworth and family, to whom I am especially indebted for their extreme kindness and hospitality, as also Mr. Roberts and family, of Wrexham, with other families, are worthy of honourable mention for their many acts of kindness to me during my stay with them. I could mention many others to whom my expressions of gratitude can never be sufficiently made known. T. Wright, Esq, prison philanthropist, also received me very cordially. The cause of emancipation beats high in the hearts of thousands in the city of Manchester, and since my first reception, seven years ago, I find the same kind feeling to exist towards me as was then exhibited by Mr. Farnell, of Oldham-street, and his family, who, with Mr. Booth and others, first took me by the hand on setting foot in the noble city of Manchester.

I might name hundreds of others, clergymen, dissenting ministers, and gentlemen, who have shown me the greatest sympathy, and have evidenced their hatred of the system of slavery, but my little book has already exceeded its limits.

It has been stated that offence has been taken by friends finding their names mentioned by Mrs. Stowe,⁷⁵ in her 'Sunny Memories,'⁷⁶ and by other travellers who have been admitted to the privacy of home in the families that have afforded them their hospitality. I trust I shall have given no offence by the mention of the friends from whom I have received sympathy and kindness. I have felt all, and more than all, I have expressed. Nor is it to be wondered at that my gratitude should be warm and difficult to restrain, when it is borne in mind what are the blessings I now enjoy, compared with my previous position in slavery, and with that of millions of my race at the present hour. In South Carolina or Georgia, it is punishable with death to instruct a slave to read, and in Maryland it is imprisonment for any one to commit the same offence. Even the free blacks in Maryland are kept from being taught to read with great care. In Richmond, Virginia, a Mrs. Douglas⁷⁷ and daughter⁷⁸ (white ladies) commenced a school, to teach the free coloured people to read. The inhabitants arrested the mother, and brought her to trial, when she was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and a fine. A clergyman present at the time expressed his disappointment that the punishment was not five years instead of one, for daring to attempt to teach coloured people to read. Thank God a different feeling is experienced and expressed by many of the ministers of religion in America, for some of the slaves' warmest friends have been preachers of the gospel.

Before concluding my little book, I take the liberty of adding a remark of the French popular author, Lamertine,⁷⁹ who, when speaking of Wilberforce,⁸⁰ says, 'he went to the gates of heaven with a million of broken fetters in his hands, as emblems of a life well spent;' and the following observations by

LORD BROUGHAM⁸¹ ON SLAVERY.

'Tell me not of rights, talk not of property of the planter in his slaves. I deny the right, I acknowledge not the property. The principles, the feelings of our common nature

rise in rebellion against it. Be the appeal made to the understanding or the heart, the sentence is the same that rejects it. In vain you tell me of laws which sanction such a claim. There is a law above all human codes, the same throughout the world, the same in all times, such as it was before the daring genius of Columbus pierced the night of ages, and opened to one world the sources of power, wealth, and knowledge – to another all unutterable woes, such as it is at this day. It is the law written by the finger of God upon the heart of man; and by that law unchangeable and eternal, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they will reject with indignation the wild and guilty phantasies that man can hold property in man.⁸²

Let me insert in my narrative the opinion of Lord Aberdeen,⁸³ expressed in the House of Lords: – ‘A slave commits no crime when he throws off his master’s yoke, and escapes into liberty; nor was it theft if he availed himself of his master’s horse, or his master’s boat, in his flight. Any strong man has as much right to reduce to slavery, and hold in bondage, a weak crippled fellow creature, in this country, as any elder or deacon in America can have to hold in slavery any one because certain moneys have been paid into the hands of a third party, which party has no moral right to sell.’

My Christian Friends, – I know your expression of sympathy is sincere, and you would espouse my cause even if life were jeopardised by it. I join you in thanking God this country is free from persecution for such a cause. Let us not forget the new faithful witnesses to the right of the coloured class who advocate our cause in America, at the risk of life itself. I here insert a brief notice of Elijah P. Lovejoy.⁸⁴ He was a native of Maine, a graduate of Waterville College. He settled at St. Louis, Missouri, and attained a high reputation as an editor of a newspaper there. He became a clergyman, and at length an abolitionist. After the burning of M’Intosh, at St. Louis, he spoke out in his newspaper⁸⁵ on the atrocity of the deed, &c. For this his press and types were destroyed, and he then established himself on the opposite side of the river, in the free state of Illinois. But the town of Alton was very dangerous to him as if it had stood in a slave state. It was the [____?] of slave-traders and of river-traders, who believed their interests depend on the preservation of slavery. Three times was property [____?]; still his paper continued to be the steady, dispassionate advocate of freedom, and reprover of violence. In October, 1837, he wrote to a friend in New York, to unburden his full head and heart. After describing the fury and murderous spirit of his assailants, and the manner in which for weeks his footsteps had been tracked, he proceeded – ‘And now, my dear brother, if you ask what are my feelings at a time like this, I answer, calm, perfectly calm, perfectly resigned. In the midst of danger I have a constant sense of security. God has said, “as thy day is, so shall thy strength be;” and He has made his promise good. True I am a husband and a father, but I am commanded to forsake father, and mother, and wife and children, for Jesus’ sake: and the time for fulfilling this pledge, it seems to me, has come. I dare not flee from Alton.’⁸⁶ He was murdered in a few days after writing thus. His office was surrounded by an armed mob, and defended from within by the mayor of Alton. When the attack was supposed to be over, Lovejoy looked out to reconnoitre. He received five bullets in his body, was able to reach a room on the first floor, declared himself fatally wounded, and fell on his face dead. His age was thirty-two.

I add another incident: – a fugitive, escaped from Maryland, and on his way to Canada, was seized in Vermont. The abolitionists rallied round him – took all parties into court. Three judges were on the bench; one aged and feeble. The defence wished to know why this man was taken. The reply was that he had broken the laws of Maryland State, and *stolen* himself. Proof was demanded that he was a slave. The slaveholder held forth a document, saying, ‘This is a *bill of sale* made in my favour for this man, signed by his original owner.’ The learned and venerable judge rose to his feet, and with a voice of thunder, strangely loud for one so old, demanded, ‘who signed it, sir?’ ‘John Williams,’ replied the astonished owner. ‘Take it away, sir, take it away,’ said the venerable judge, raising his hands to heaven; ‘it is not valid, sir, it is falsely signed sir; it is falsely signed, sir; it is a blasphemous forgery; none can sign that bill of sale but God Almighty.’ Need we add that the court was electrified, and the slaveholder shrunk out! and when the news spread it resulted in thousands more of abolition votes at the next election. When the pious defenders can *show* the right the judge required, we cease our labour. Until then we proclaim an earnest war, with the conviction that the day is not far distant when this blot will be wiped from the world’s escutcheon. Britons, help as you can; and when you can; and may God bless our labours, and hasten the day of Jubilee.

Forgive me my readers if, in the recollection of my wrongs and sufferings – forgive me if, in the contemplation of the persecutions endured by those who dare in America to advocate our cause – forgive me, I say, if under these circumstances I have sometimes written or spoken in anger. God knows my heart has often been ready to burst – but my Heavenly Master has taught me to pray for my enemies! and I feel that if he does not bless the man prayed for, He blesses the poor fugitive that prays.

Thou knowest, oh God! my grief,
 Thou seest my bitter tears;
 Thou knowest all my sufferings past,
 And my foreboding fears.

I pray, oh God! for him
 Who caused all this woe;
 Though he no mercy had for me,
 To him thy mercy show.

No vengeance would I ask,
 Let not thy wrath be felt,
 But let thy goodness touch his heart,
 Its stubborn hardness melt.

One thing, at least, I trust,
 My only hope it is –
 There’ll be no slavery in the world
 That follows after this.⁸⁷

THE WARNING.

Beware! The Israelites of old, who tore
 The lion in his path, – when, poor and blind,
 He saw the blessed light of heaven no more,
 Shorn of his noble strength, and forced to grind
 In prison, and at last led forth to be
 A pander to Philistine revelry –

Upon the pillars of the temple laid
 His desperate hands, and in its overthrow
 Destroyed himself, and with him those who made
 A cruel mockery of his sightless woe;
 The poor blind Slave, the scoff and jest of all,
 Expired, and thousands perished in the fall!

There is a poor, blind Sampson in this land,
 Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of steel,
 Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand,
 And shake the pillars of this commonweal,
 Till the vast temple of our liberties
 A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies.⁸⁸

LONGFELLOW.⁸⁹

The *Inquirer* newspaper narrates the following: –

‘A lady in this country, who has lately travelled in America, had issued a book containing her impressions of what she had seen. She is not unknown in this country for her sympathy with our white slaves, and her name has an honorary place in the history of reformatory schools. This lady, the Honourable Miss Murray, adopted in the southern states the tone of the society she found there; and agreed heartily not only in what was said of the white slaves in England, but also what was said of the black slaves in Carolina. She has therefore not hesitated to publish in her book opinions favourable to negro slavery, even to the extent of dogmatically saying that God created negroes to live under restraint, and that slavery is a means designed by providence for the making of some good Christian men and women. As one of the queen’s ladies in waiting, Miss Murray wished to dedicate the book to her Majesty. It is understood, however, that on seeing the proof sheets, her Majesty not only refused the dedication, but required that Miss Murray, if she published it, should resign her place at court.’

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO SLAVES.

In some places the slaves are favoured with attending the preaching of the Gospel; my readers may judge of the edification the poor slaves receive at such services, from the following extracts, which are from the published sermons of Bishop Meade,⁹⁰ addressed to congregations of slaves; they may be taken as a fair sample of the

religious instruction imparted to the slaves, where any instruction at all is given. – Page 30–3.

‘You little consider when you are idle and neglectful of your masters’ business, when you are saucy and impudent, and when you are telling lies and deceiving them, or when you prove sullen and stubborn, and will not work without stripes and vexation – you do not consider, I say, that what faults you are guilty of towards your masters and mistresses are done against God himself, who hath set your masters and mistresses over you in his own stead, and expects that you would do for them just as you would for him himself. And pray do not think I deceive you when I say that your masters and mistresses are God’s overseers, and that if you are faulty towards them, God will punish you severely for it in the next world, for God himself hath declared the same. * * * You are not at liberty to choose your own masters; but into whatever hands God hath been pleased to put you, you must do your duty. * * * Take care you do not murmur, grumble, or repine at your condition; this will greatly offend Almighty God. Any discontent at your not being free, or rich, or great, is quarrelling with your heavenly Master, and finding fault with God himself, who hath made you what you are. * * * Now when correction is given you, whether you deserve it or not, it is your duty to bear it patiently. You may perhaps, think this is a hard doctrine, but you must think otherwise of it. Suppose you do not deserve it, or deserve so much, for the fault you have committed, you perhaps have escaped a great many more, and are at last paid for all, and you ought to give glory to God Almighty, and be thankful that he would rather punish you in this life for your wickedness, than destroy your souls in the next. * * *’

Almighty God hath been pleased to make you slaves here, and to give you nothing but labour and poverty, which you are obliged to submit to, as it is His will it should be so. * * * Your bodies, you know, are not your own; they are at the disposal of those that you belong to.’ (See this sermon more at length in the Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin,⁹¹ pages 486–9.)

REMARKS BY F. DOUGLASS,⁹² FUGITIVE SLAVE.

We cannot be surprised that men who have been under the ban of this cruel system find it difficult to reconcile the proceedings of slavery and slaveholders, with the Christian religion. Frederick Douglass, at the close of his narrative of slave life,⁹³ says ‘between the Christianity of Christ, and the Christianity of the Slave States of America, I recognise the widest difference. The man here who robs me of my earnings all the week, meets me as a class leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way to be just and the way to get to heaven. He who sells my sister for purposes of prostitution stands forth as the pious advocate of purity. We have men sold to build churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase Bibles for the *poor heathen! all for the glory of God and the good of souls!* The slave auctioneer’s bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. Revivals of religion and revivals in the slave-trade go hand in hand together. The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm and solemn prayer may be heard at the same time. The dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence of the

pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return, covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. There we behold religion and robbery the allies of each other; slavery and piety linked and interlinked; preachers of the gospel united with slaveholders! A horrible sight, to see devils dressed in angels' robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise.'⁹⁴

'Just God! and these are they,
Who minister at thine alter, God of right!
Men who their hands, with prayer and blessing, lay
On Israel's ark of light.

'What! preach and kidnap men!
Give thanks, and rob thy own afflicted poor!
Talk of thy glorious liberty, and then
Bolt hard the captive's door!

'What! servants of thy own
Merciful Son who came to seek and save
The homeless and the outcast, fettering down
The tasked and plundered slave!

'Pilate and Herod friends!
Chief priests and rulers, as of old, combine!
Just God and holy! is that church, which lends
Strength to the spoiler, thine?'⁹⁵ – *Whittier*⁹⁶

I feel happy to inform the public that I am now publishing the eighteenth edition of my work on Slavery, with the addition to it of some few fresh extracts, &c. When I think that there are no less than four millions of human beings, of all colours, now held under the inhuman and tyrannical system of slavery, in a land where they boast of their professed freedom, Christianity, and equality, and where they are not permitted to be married according to the usual rights of law, but where they live together as herds of cattle, and are not so well treated as the poor dumb beast of the field. They are kept for the same purpose as the farmers here (in this land of real and not boasted freedom) keep their cattle to breed stock from, to supply the large towns in England. Just so are the poor slaves kept to supply the southern cotton fields and rice fields. What if this were done in India or Asia, among the Pagans, where there are millions of that denomination; or if it were done in Turkey, where Mahomedanism reigns. In Russia, where they are held in serfdom,⁹⁷ chiefly by the nobles. I say, what if slavery was carried on in any of those countries to a tenth part of the extent it is carried on in America, what would the American professors say? They would say it was dreadful. But no! Such deeds of cruelty are not permitted in any of those countries, but are positively done in a land that has boasted of such men as the Hon. Daniel Webster,⁹⁸ Henry Clay,⁹⁹ James K. Polk,¹⁰⁰ and J. Taylor,¹⁰¹ the latter two having been presidents: also Buchanan,¹⁰² who is now, 1859, the president of that great nation. This man actually sanctions this shocking and cruel system. But, thank God,

I am truly proud to say all were not like him. We have had some noble-minded men, who were opposed to the whole system of slavery. Such men as the Right Honourable John Quincy Adams,¹⁰³ when he first rose to speak against slavery, and on account of his abolition principles, was actually shot at in the Congress Hall, Washington. But he was like those noble Englishmen, Buxton¹⁰⁴ and Clarkson;¹⁰⁵ also the immortal William Wilberforce,¹⁰⁶ who was forty years pleading for the emancipation of slaves. Through their efforts, and the glorious enterprise of the Gospel, with God's blessing upon missionary efforts, eight hundred thousand slaves got their freedom in one day, in the *West India Islands*. I am also proud to say that John Quincy Adams was president of that great nation at the time this glorious occurrence took place; and I hope the day is not far distant when we shall see his like again, as noble-minded a man as he to fill the presidential chair, and may be soon be enabled to carry such measures as will for ever do away with the greatest stain on a nation's character – the curse of slavery. Adams, with Clarkson, Buxton, and Wilberforce, are gone, we trust, to that rest which remains for the people of God, and from whence no traveller returns. I will now give you a few words with respect to their advertisements and markets.

ONE COW, 'Laura,' Red, four years old, half Brahmin and half Durham, a good milker and superior breeder.

JULIA, a Griff, aged 19 years, a Plantation hand. MARTHA, a Black, aged 15 years, a Plantation hand. ELLEN, a Mulattress, aged about 29 years, somewhat of a Cook, and is a good Field hand; and her daughter NANCY, about 4 years, both duly guaranteed.

JACK, a Mulatto, aged about 32 years, Plantation hand, and good Cotton picker, guaranteed in title and health. Sold as a thief and runaway – 100 *Dollars Reward*.

RUN AWAY from Mr. J. Frazer's Plantation, Red River, a Yellow Boy, named LEWIS, 5 feet 4 to 6 inches high; thin lips; shows his teeth when talking, and one upper tooth out next to the two centre ones; weighs about 160 pounds, rather heavy built, about 28 years of age; heavy beard and whiskers on the sides of his face when he left; formerly belonged in Mississippi, now belongs to Mr. Burns, Bossier Paris, La. A liberal reward will be paid for his apprehension, and if aided by any white person one hundred dollars will be given for their apprehension.

WILSON, POMROY, & CO.,
35, Carondelet-street.

I shall now give you an account of the year's sale of human beings in Richmond negro market. The editor of the *Warrington (V.A.) Whig*, who was recently on a visit to Richmond, was informed by Messrs. Dickinson, Hill, & Co., auctioneers, of that city, that the gross amount of their sales of negroes, last year, reached the enormous sum of 2,000,000 dollars! The entire sale of houses, of a similar kind, in Richmond, it is said, would make the amount go over 4,000,000 dollars, and still the business is increasing. O shame on the man that would sully and disgrace himself and country by trading in a human being that by the laws of God is entitled to the same freedom

he himself enjoys. But the time cannot be far distant when the poor slave shall be as free and unshackled as the birds of the air.

In my tour through Ireland I must say I have met with such a warm reception, and such a good feeling of sympathy, that I shall forever remember and feel grateful to the friends I met there, including all classes and denominations. The utmost interest was awakened in them by the vivid pictures I brought before their minds of the cruelties and brutality of the slave owners, and of the deplorable condition of the slave, and his utter helplessness, especially since the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law in the United States. Those, also, who before were ignorant of the fact, seemed particularly horrified at the sanction, as well as in their preaching as in their practice, rendered by the resident clergymen to this ungodly and inhuman system. They seemed, too, to be unanimous in their opinions that so long as America holds her brother in bondage, her boasted liberty is a *lie*, planned by the powers of darkness. May God in his infinite mercy stretch forth his mighty arm, and help the poor slave, who has suffered so long from cruel oppression, tenfold worse than Egyptian bondage.¹⁰⁷

As a proof of the sympathy displayed by my friends at a large meeting held in Dublin, on Monday, the 16th March, 1857, I was presented with a handsome Bible, accompanied with a testimonial of their love to me, as a fugitive lately delivered from a hateful and cruel bondage. In America this would have been deemed a grievous offence, and would have subjected the giver, as well as the slave receiver, to a long confinement, for having given, or received, a copy of God's holy word. This, I mean, is only in the slave states, where it is forbidden to give a slave a copy of the Bible. Amongst the numerous and sincere friends I met with in Ireland, I may mention Samuel Edgar, Esq., Belfast; Rev. Dr. Edgar, ditto; Rev.— Jones; Wesleyan minister, ditto; Rev.— White, Primitive Methodist, ditto; Rev. — Taylor, New Connexion, ditto; Mr. Lamb, Society of Friends, ditto. To Mr. S. Edgar and Mr. Lamb I shall ever feel grateful for their extreme kindness, and the handsome manner they caused me to be introduced to numerous other friends: also to the proprietors of the *Banner of Ulster*, for their kindness towards me and the cause I am advocating. Also at a town called Lisburn, near Belfast, where I met with the kindest reception from Squire Stewart's family, and numerous other friends. Were I to mention every town, I might fill a volume; but I cannot pass over my Dublin friends without paying them a small tribute of respect for the welcome manner I was received. Amongst my kind friends there I may mention the Rev. Dr. Howick, Rev. T. Hull, Wesleyan minister; A. W. Leake, C. L. K, A. M.; Rev. — Edgar, Presbyterian; Rev. — Macquire; Rev. — Marks, D. D.; Rev. Samuel Moore, Rev. — McHenry, Rev. Samuel Connor, Rev. John West, Rev. John Smythe, ministers of the United Brethren's Church; Mr. Brownlow, Judge Crompton, — Guinness, Esq., &c. I have received much kindness from many persons; but I can never forget the kindness I received at the hands of Mr. John Devoy's family, and Mr. W. Marchant, with whom I had the pleasure of stopping near two months. I feel I shall never be able to return them an adequate tribute. Also to Mrs. Lords and family, Capt. Cairns, Rev. Dr. Henry, Mrs. E. J. Ferris, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Blissard and family, Mr. Cooper and family, Mr. Dunbar and family, and many others I could mention.

I was then invited by the Rev. Samuel Jackson to pay a visit to Pickering, in Yorkshire, where I had some very large meetings and most respectably attended, and from whom I received a great deal of kindness. I may especially allude to Thos. Bird,

Esq, Rev. R. Smailes, Rev. Mr. Beard, Mr. Masons, Mr. Ray's family, and numerous others, who paid me a great amount of feeling and sympathy, and to whom I shall ever, I trust, feel grateful.

At Malton, too, I was received very kindly, and had some large and well-attended meetings. Amongst the friends I met with there I beg to mention the names of the Rev. R. Moore, Rev. C. Garrett, Rev. Mr Shakespear, and the Trustees of the Wesleyan and Baptist Chapels, who kindly gave me the use of their buildings to lecture in; and Mr. Gibson, who received me warmly, and who felt much sympathy in the cause.

From Malton, I proceeded to Beverley, where I received a reception nowhere surpassed. On the Sabbath afternoon I gave an address to the different Sunday schools in the town, and had the large Wesleyan chapel densely crowded. On the Monday evening I lectured in this chapel, under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. Ryan. At the close of the lecture, a resolution of sympathy for myself, and of condemnation of slavery, was proposed by the Rev. Richard Bell, and seconded by the Rev. W. C. Upton, who advocated the claims of the coloured race with great emphasis and power. On the following evening I lectured in the Baptist chapel, the Rev. Dr. Ryan again presiding. The Rev. Mr. Upton again spoke, and was followed by my warm-hearted friend, the Rev. J. Woodcock. I likewise lectured, during the same week, in the chapel belonging to the Wesleyan Free Church. From all Christian denominations, I have received the heartiest sympathy and co-operation. And among my kind friends I must not forget to mention Mr. Bird and Mr. Piercy and family; also Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong, Mr. and Mrs. Linley, Mr. Brough, of Hunsley, and Mr. Johnson of Riplingham. At the request of the Wesleyan ministers, I attended several missionary meetings in the Beverley circuit, and everywhere was received as a man and a brother.

In Pocklington and the neighbourhood I met with many friends and great assistance; among whom I must include Mr. Robert Thomas and family, with whom I remained for a fortnight; Rev. W. Chambers, Rev. Mr. White, Rev. C. Clay, Mrs. Lyon and family, and Mrs. Green and family, of Market Weighton.

At Driffeld, also, I have been received very warmly by the Rev. R. B. Warters, Mr. Tindal, Mr. Parrott and family, Mr. Johnson, of Fridaythorpe, and Mr. Topham, of Bainton-field. But it would be impossible for me to name all the kind friends, to whom I trust I shall ever feel grateful.

And here I must be permitted to express my thankfulness to God for bringing me to this enlightened and Christian country, and also my admiration of the English character. Here in this free and happy land I am permitted to mingle with all classes of society. I am nowhere regarded with scorn or repulsion, and nowhere subject to insult or humiliation.¹⁰⁸ I am welcomed to the hearth and board of an English man's home, and regarded as an equal and a brother. I can also worship God in the same pew, and partake of the holy sacrament in the same way with him. I am acknowledged a fellow saint, and can join with him without any distinction or degradation in supplications and prayers, in the same way. How very different, how painfully different, is all this to the treatment I received in America, even in the professedly Christian and free States of America! In that land of boasted freedom, I am everywhere, civilly and religiously, regarded as an inferior. I am not permitted to worship God with the white man, unless in a *pen or pew*, reserved for the coloured race. I cannot meet in Christian fellowship in the same way, or take the Lord's Supper, or bury my children, or ride on the railway with the white man. In the northern States of America, where

they boast so much of equality and religion, I am subject to a thousand indignities, on account of what I cannot help, the colour of my skin! And when reverend gentlemen, so called philanthropists, come to England and profess such hatred to slavery and such love for the coloured man, what must be my feelings, when I know their conduct at home? Which of them would ride with me in the railway carriage, join with me in social intercourse as in this country? Which of the eloquent gentlemen, who thunder in Exeter Hall, would allow a *coloured man* to occupy his pulpit, though he might be a Watson in theology, or a Chalmers in oratory? Which of them would give me the sacrament in the same way and on the same condition as a white man? Ah! if the coloured man deserves his freedom civilly, he deserves it also religiously. If I am a man, treat me as a man! What is the colour of the skin? Who has made it so? Happy England! what light and privileges are thine! Land of liberty and of might, – help, help to strike the death blow to that unmitigated iniquity, that accumulation and climax of woes and sorrows, American Slavery!

HORRIBLE EXTRACTS FROM AMERICAN PAPERS.

For Sale. A likely Griffe Girl orphan child, eleven months old, will be sold low at 88, Phillippa Street. F. Scranton. – *New Orleans Paper*.

Run away, a Negro Woman and Two Children. A few days before she went off I BURNT her with a iron on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M. M. Ricks – *Raleigh Standard, North Carolina*.

Negro Dogs. The undersigned having bought the entire pack of Negro Dogs (of the Hay and Allen stock), he now purposes to Catch Runaway Negroes. His charges will be three dollars per day for hunting, and fifteen dollars for catching a runaway. He resides 3½ miles north of Livingstone, near the Lower Jones Bluff Road. Wm. Gambel. – *Sumner County Whig, Alabama*.

Run Away, My Negro Man, Richard. A reward of 25 dollars will be given for his apprehension, *dead or alive*. Satisfactory proof will only be required of his being *killed*. Durant H. Rhodes. – *Wilmington Advertiser, North Carolina*.

If facts were wanting of the degrading and brutalizing effects of slavery, here they are (most correctly quoted) as above, in all their revolting and sickening colours. Is it not true that the poor slave has been flogged fearfully? that he has been branded in the head, on the cheek, or on the forehead? that he has been hunted, yes, and worried to death by bloodhounds? that he has been shot, when his escape was otherwise inevitable? is it possible to read or think of these things without a shudder?

TWO-FOLD SLAVERY IN THE FREE STATES OF AMERICA.

Even in what are termed the ‘Free States’ of that land which arrogates to itself the title of ‘the land of the free,’¹⁰⁹ even in the city of New York, or of Philadelphia, the maxim that ‘all men are born free and equal’¹¹⁰ is no less *really* ignored than in the plantations of the south.

A man may enjoy all the advantages of education and wealth, he may be a liberal supporter of public charities, his private conduct may be unexceptionable, he may be a large contributor to the revenue of the country, and a loyal subject of the republic,

but all this will avail him nothing if he is cursed with a complexion of a different hue to his brethren. If he walks out in the public streets he must make way for, and run the risk of, being insulted by the most degraded wretch he meets if only he boast of a white skin. He cannot send his children to the same schools as his neighbour. They would not be allowed to mingle with others lest they should contaminate, by their association, their fairer sisters. He cannot frequent a place of public amusement as others can. The doors of the theatre, the concert room, and the lecture room which are held open so temptingly to all besides are rudely closed in his face; or if, indeed, he has the temerity to obtrude himself into such places of resort, he is not allowed to mingle with the rest of the audience, but is boxed off into a 'Nigger's Pen.'

Is he weary with a day's exertion, and wishful to ride to his dwelling? He cannot hail the first public conveyance that passes, but must wait for a vehicle known by the polite title of the 'Jim Crow¹¹¹ Bus,' and instituted especially for men of his colour. If, however, after having endured for a week all the annoyances and inconveniences entailed upon him simply by the colour of his skin, he imagines on Saturday night that he has, at all events, got rid of them for one day; that on the Sabbath, on the day of rest, he shall at least stand on the same footing as his brethren, that he has surely the right to go and worship his God in the same manner as others, 'none daring to make him afraid.'¹¹² He will, alas! soon discover his mistake. Yes, *hear it*, ye upholders of American institutions, whether religious or otherwise, even in that consecrated building designed and erected professedly for the service of God, even in *that* place set aside for the worship of Him in whose sight ALL mortals are but as grasshoppers, even there, in the midst of all the fervid devotion and all the professed holiness and piety, even there, in the immediate presence of the Eternal, the detestable distinction is upheld with as much rigour as elsewhere, 'the Nigger Pen' is no less conspicuous than in the 'theatre' or in the 'concert room.' The worshippers profess to be actuated by the spirit of Him who said 'Whosoever cometh to me shall in *no wise* be cast out.'¹¹³ He does not say whoever comes in a first class carriage, whoever comes with a white face, but '*whosoever cometh*;' and yet these people, who profess to take his word as the guard and guide of their lives, *push back* the suppliant who approaches the altar along with themselves, to offer his devotion to the same God as they simply because he does so *clothed* in a different colour.

It is sometimes said and deplored in this country that poverty is treated as a crime; but in America the very colour of a man's body is considered an unpardonable sin, an inextinguishable offence. But I should like to ask the supporters of the system which so orders this, I should like to ask those good people who, with streaming eyes and apparently penitent hearts, approach the footstool of Him who made us all, I should like them to say, as they visit a black skin as a black crime, at whose door they lay the offence? Not surely at his who is the sufferer by it. A man does not make himself; and who then is guilty of the crime but God, the creator of us all. What does the Saviour say: – 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'¹¹⁴

After residing in this land of liberty for the space of five years, in the town of Birmingham, and anticipated spending the remainder of my days there, with my own dear wife and children, but her health having seriously failed through change of climate, the best medical advice was obtained, which resulted in a recommendation for her to return to her native land; accordingly I made arrangements, and paid the passage money to America, and when I went down to look for a comfortable berth for my wife

and children, I was told they would not take her, she being a coloured woman. On this shameful affair I attach no blame to Messrs. Tapscott, Smith, & Co., the agents of the vessel, – my money of course was returned. These gentlemen then made arrangements with the owners of another vessel, called the *Serenax*, belonging to Messrs. Cope & Co., of the Society of Friends. I am happy to say she arrived safe at home, but still is very poorly. Some of my readers may say why I did not return with my dear wife and children? Because I could not with safety again set foot on American soil, on account of the existence still of the Fugitive Slave Law. I hope the day will come when the British public will have the same views as expressed by that eminent minister in Manchester, the Rev. Dr. Mc.Kerrow: lately he called attention to the prejudice against persons of colour which was even countenanced on board our British steamers, and trusted the merchants of Liverpool would receive such an expression of public opinion as would cause them to give any coloured person desiring a first-class passage, access to the saloons, and allow them to mingle in the company of the other passengers.

A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM TO MR. JAMES WATKINS
COMPOSED BY MRS. JOHN WILLIAMS,
Holywell, Flintshire, North Wales, January 20th, 1859.

THE SLAVE'S LAMENT.

What have I done? what have I done?

Thus to be born a slave?

Oh! would that I had died a babe,

And now within the grave!

On England's happy shores I'm told

That all her sons are free:

Because their skin is white and fair,

They are not slaves like me!

I wonder oft if they have heard

How we are bought and sold;

A living stock exposed for sale,

And bought with *paltry gold!*

Oh! would they not compassion feel

For our wretched state,

Could they but know the pangs we feel;

Ah! 'tis a fearful fate!

The lash in readiness is held,

And freely used each day,

By heartless men, who tear in scorn

The human flesh away:

They heed not how the blood will gush

In torrents down the back;

They care for neither prayers nor groans,

Because the skin is black!

I once possess'd a mother dear,
 Who press'd me to her heart;
 I've heard her say she'd rather die,
 Than from her child to part.
 She often used to press my hand,
 And look up to the sky;
 And I while sitting on her lap,
 Would ask the reason why?

She would reply, my darling child,
 There is a God above
 Who guards us with a watchful eye,
 And with a Father's love.
 He keeps for us a home on high,
 Where we shall dwell in peace;
 If scorned while here because we're black,
 Our bondage then will cease!

When we are parted here on earth,
 And sold by cruel men,
 If we will pray in faith to God,
 We all shall meet again:
 And when I lift my eyes to heaven,
 My soul is wrapt in prayer,
 That if I'm torn from thee below,
 We'll meet each other there!

Ten tedious year or more have pass'd
 Since she was torn from me;
 'Twas then with all my soul I wished
 That she and I were free.
 I see her now '*exposed for sale*,'
 So haggard and so wild;
 And when the hammer fell she cried,
 Oh! buy – oh! buy my child!

She clasp'd her hands and look'd to heaven,
 And mov'd her lips in prayer;
 But when she heard that I was sold,
 'Twas more than she could bear!
 She groaned aloud with frantic pain,
 And tore away her hair,
 And then I thought there was no God,
 To hear my mother's prayer!

I heard her plead, in heavy chains,
 To toil by day and night,

If she could only have her child,
 To be within her sight:
 But no! I heard them say '*she's mad!*'
 And all our tears were vain;
 Unheeded were our breaking hearts,
 Which ne'er should meet again!

That parting scene – I'll ne'er forget,
 When she with streaming eyes,
 Gazed on her child while torn away,
 In spite of all our cries.
 And now I often look above,
 As mother used to do,
 And wonder whether all she said
 About that God was true!

The more I think, the more I feel
 There is (though out of sight)
 A God who loves me quite as well
 As if my skin was white
 And so I'll toil and pray through faith,
 (Contented with my lot;)
 And thankful feel what mother taught
 Has never been forgot!

I care not how the lash may smart,
 Upon my bleeding back;
 There is a Christ who died for me,
 Although my skin is black!
 And when I die I shall be free,
 In heaven beyond the grave,
 Where I shall meet my mother dead,
No more to be a slave!

The following poem was written for, and kindly presented to, Mr. James Watkins, by Mrs. Sergeant, the wife of the Rev. Mr. Sergeant, Wesleyan minister, Easingwold, Yorkshire.

Joy to the wanderer! be his path
 Illum'd with radiance from on high!
 Round hearth and altar happy hearts
 Exult in joyous liberty!
 Stranger and exile! yet be peace
 And sunlight on his quiet home;
 That home where tyranny and bonds,
 And fierce oppression may not come!

Vile slavery! accursed thing!
 God speed thy downfall! crush thy might;
 And unto broken spirits bring
 The radiance of His love and light!
 Comes not the sufferers' weary groan
 Into Thine ears, oh, God of love!
 Unbind the captives: hear their moan,
 And guide them to a home above!

LINES RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO MR. JAMES WATKINS,
 BY ROBERT DIBB,

18, New York Street, Ardwick, Manchester, 2nd December, 1859.

Oh who can paint the sufferings great,
 Which once o'erwhelmed thy frame;
 When slavery had o'er thee cast
 Its thrice accursed claim?
 But savage threats and cruel blows,
 From rude and ruthless hand,
 Could not subdue that glorious hope,
 Of freedom in our land!

Friend! thou art here in safety now,
 No dangers need'st thou dread;
 The flag of England, Freedom's flag,
 Hangs fluttering o'er thy head.
 No bloodhounds now will tear thy flesh,
 Nor cruel whip draw blood;
 Thou art amongst a Christian race,
 Benevolent and good!

A list of the meetings held by Mr. Watkins, together with the names of the gentlemen who presided at them.¹¹⁵

I was introduced by Mr. John Thompson and Mr. Edward Fitton to Councillor William Jones, Esq., J. R. Vickers, Esq., and John Rigby, Esq., and I shall never forget the kindness of Mr. Garland and his family, of Wavertree, near Liverpool, and also my friend Mr. Kidd, and his family. I was introduced by Mr. Todd to Messrs. Fielden Brothers, of Todmorden, who gave me a warm invitation to pay them a visit and give them a lecture. I was introduced by my friend, the Rev. Mr. Curnock, to the Rev. Dr. Hannah and the Rev. Mr. Bowers, who received me very kindly, and expressed the warmest sympathy for me and the cause I advocate. The Rev. E. Harper kindly brought me before the ministers and conductors of his circuit, where we held several interesting meetings in the neighbourhood of Islington, Ancoats, &c., in connection with the Grosvenor-street circuit. I was kindly received by Mr. Woodhouse and family, and all the friends.

The efforts of James Watkins in this country have been attended with great success – success because he represents in himself a standing monument of the injustice of American institutions towards his class, a distinction to selfish legislation the Englishman's nature abhors. His lectures are full of interest, and his claims to the sympathies of the public are abundant. I trust that whilst he stays in this country he may never have cause to regret the want of kindness and good fellowship towards him from all classes of the people.

ABEL HEYWOOD.

THE SLAVE SINGING AT MIDNIGHT.

Loud he sang the psalm of David!
 He, a Negro and enslaved,
 Sang of Israel's victory,
 Sang of Zion, bright and free.

In that hour when night is calmest,
 Sang he from the Hebrew Psalmist,
 In a voice so sweet and clear
 That I could not choose but hear.

And the voice of his devotion
 Filled my soul with strange emotion;
 For its tones by turns were glad,
 Sweetly solemn, wildly sad.

Paul and Silas, in their prison,
 Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen,
 And an earthquake's arm of might
 Broke their dungeon-gates at night.

But, alas! what holy angel
 Brings the slave this glad evangel?
 And what earthquake's arm of might
 Breaks *his* dungeon-gates at night?¹¹⁶
 LONGFELLOW.¹¹⁷

ABEL HEYWOOD, PRINTER, 58, OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER.

Notes

1. This edition is held in the collections located at the Edith Garland Dupré Library, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana, US Reference: Microfiche 79 No.394. We gratefully reproduce this edition in this anthology with their very kind permission.
2. James Watkins, *Struggles for Freedom, or the Life of James Watkins* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860). This edition can be accessed online at Documenting the American South: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/watkins/watkins.html>

3. Anon., 'Death of Alderman Heywood', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 26 August 1893, p.17. For more information on Heywood, see Joanna Williams, *Manchester's Radical Mayor: Abel Heywood, the Man who built the Town Hall* (Stroud: History Press, 2017).
4. Anon., 'Moses Roper', *The Sheffield Independent*, 19 May 1838, p.2.
5. Moses Roper, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery* (Philadelphia PA: Merrihew & Gunn, 1838), pp.87–88. Roper also has an emotionally devastating reunion with his mother, who does not immediately recognise him.
6. James Watkins, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins, formerly a 'Chattel' in Maryland, U.S.* (Bolton: Kenyon and Abbatt, 1852), pp.40–41. See also *The Lancaster Gazette*, 26 August 1854, p.5.
7. James Watkins is listed as a lecturer on slavery: 1861 England and Wales Census, 1861, Ancestry.com. Accessible online: https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/8767/images/LANRG9_2946_2951-0412?treeid=&personid=&hintid=&queryId=318eb7e2f06588d9e86e25ca7d1d5673&usePUB=true&_phsrc=XjK2&_phstart=successSource&usePUBjs=true&cpId=9267892.
8. It is not certain whether the person recorded here is definitively James Watkins, but his namesake – an American – is listed as a passenger on SS *Nevada*, on 25 October 1869 from Liverpool to New York. Accessible online at: https://www.immigrantships.net/v3/1800v3/nevada18691025_2.html.
9. See the James Watkin's page on the Revealing Histories website, available online at: <http://revealinghistories.org.uk/what-evidence-is-there-of-a-black-presence-in-britain-and-north-west-england/people/james-watkins-abolitionist.html>
10. This is an excerpt from Book II of *The Task: A Poem, in Six Books* by white English poet William Cowper (1731–1800), first published in 1785. Available online at: <https://poets.org/poem/task-book-ii-time-piece-excerpt>
11. William Cowper (1731–1800) was a white English poet who was the author of many antislavery works.
12. This version of Watkins' narrative was published by Abel Heywood, a white British mayor and publisher in Manchester, who also printed Watkin's volume *Poems, Original and Selected* (1859) and a subsequent narrative edition *Struggles for Freedom, or the Life of James Watkins* (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860).
13. John Wesley (1703–1791) was a white British antislavery campaigner and religious leader.
14. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
15. This quote is an adoption of Psalm 10:14: 'The poor committeth himself unto thee; for thou art the helper of the fatherless.' White British composer John Hopkins records his version of Psalm 10, 'the poor committeth himself unto thee; for thou art the helper of the friendless'. See the full Psalm at: <https://www.sjcchoir.co.uk/listen/sjc-live/psalm-10>
16. James William Charles Pennington (1807–1870). For further information on his life and works see 'James William Charles Pennington' in *Speeches* (Speech No. 52).
17. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp

18. Genesis 4:1–16.
19. Romans 12:19.
20. Watkins is quoting from the following work by James Dixon titled, *Methodism in America: With the Personal Narrative of the Author During A Tour Through a Part of the United States and Canada* (London: Printed for the Author, 1849), pp.494–495.
21. James Watkins is quoting these lines verbatim from ‘How Long?’, a poem written by James Monroe Whitfield (1822–1871) a free-born renowned African American poet. This poem appeared in the antislavery collections of writings edited and produced by white British abolitionist and author Julia Griffiths Crofts (1811–1895) titled *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston MA: John P. Jewett, 1853), p.46ff. For further information on Whitfield’s life and works, see Robert S. Levine, ed., *The Works of James M. Whitfield: America and Other Writings By a Nineteenth-Century African American Poet* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
22. In this verse Watkins is quoting from James Monroe Whitfield’s poem ‘How Long?’ (see previous note for further information) but with some variations as the poet’s original lines read: ‘That Moslem, Heathen, Atheist, Jew, / And men of every faith and creed, / To their professions far more true, / More liberal both in word and deed, / May well reject with loathing scorn / The doctrines taught by those who sell / Their brethren in the Saviour born, / Down into slavery’s hateful hell; / And with the price of Christian blood / Build temples to the Christian’s God.’
23. James Watkins is quoting these lines verbatim from ‘How Long?’, a poem written by James Monroe Whitfield (1822–1871) a free-born renowned African American poet.
24. Reflecting the acts of violence and dehumanisation committed against Black genealogical records by white US enslavers, who dismissed and disrespected dates of birth and death for enslaved people to the extent that they rarely left accurate records, Watkins’ record of his birth conflicts between different dates: in the 1852 and 1860 editions of his autobiographical narratives he records his birth date as 1823. As Frederick Douglass powerfully declared in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ‘Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves’ (p.34).
25. Very likely Watkins is referring to Austin Woolfolk (1796–1847), a white US Baltimore-based infamous and barbaric trader in enslaved people. For further information on Woolfolk, see William Calderhead, ‘The Role of the Professional Slave Trader in a Slave Economy: Austin Woolfolk, A Case Study’, *Civil War History*, 23.3 (1977): pp.195–211. For a detailed investigation into white US systems of buying and selling enslaved people, see Tomoko Yagyu, *Slave Traders and Planters in the Expanding South: Entrepreneurial Strategies, Business Networks, and Western Migration in the Atlantic World, 1787–1859* (PhD dissertation Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2006).
26. It is possible Watkins told this particular story to live audiences, hence the inflection of ‘don’t laugh’.
27. As of our writing, research is still ongoing as to the author of this verse: very likely Watkins himself.
28. Watkins is quoting a verse from the poem, ‘On a Journey’, included in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, ed. George Osborn, and first published as multi-part volumes between 1868–1872. Available online at: <https://ccel.org/ccel/wesley/works/works.x.xix.html>
29. Psalm 76:10.
30. Research into the author of this poem is ongoing: very likely Watkins himself.
31. For further information on white enslavers’ use of the sanitising designation ‘peculiar institution’ as a description of US enslavement, see Fitzhugh Brundage, ‘American Slavery: A Look Back at The Peculiar Institution’, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 15 (1997): pp.118–120.
32. See the Book of Exodus. For further information, see Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press), 2006.

33. Watkins is quoting from 'The Declaration of Independence'. Dated 4 July 1776, the original transcription is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
34. Research into the author of this poem is ongoing; very likely Watkins himself.
35. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
36. Watkins is quoting from 'The Declaration of Independence'. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
37. William Cowper (1731–1800).
38. Watkins is quoting William Cowper's poem, 'Light Shining Out Of Darkness', available online at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44028/light-shining-out-of-darkness>
39. Watkins is paraphrasing Romans 13:7.
40. William Cowper (1731–1800).
41. Watkins is quoting from Book II of Cowper's poem, *The Task: A Poem, in Six Books*, first published in 1785. Available online at: <https://poets.org/poem/task-book-ii-time-piece-excerpt>
42. Thomas Raffles (1788–1863), a white British religious minister and abolitionist based in Liverpool. Raffles also welcomed Moses Roper when he arrived from the US in 1835. See Roper's *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper From American Slavery* (Berwick-Upon-Tweed: Printed for the Author, 1848). Online and accessible from Documenting the American South: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/roper/roper.html>
43. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
44. William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a white British politician and antislavery campaigner.
45. John Wesley (1703–1791) was a white British antislavery campaigner and religious leader.
46. Watkins is referring to Athanasius of Alexandria (c.296/298–373) a Roman-born religious leader. He was also known by the popular designation 'Athanasius Contra Mundum' which translates as 'Athanasius Against the World'.
47. He is referring to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations which was held in a purpose-built space, Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, and took place in 1851.
48. For further information, see Lisa Merrill, 'Exhibiting Race "under the World's Huge Glass Case:" William and Ellen Craft and William Wells Brown at the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace, London, 1851', *Slavery and Abolition*, 33.2 (2012): pp.1845–1865.
49. Watkins is paraphrasing Matthew 25:40.
50. Joseph Sturge (1793–1859) was a white British antislavery campaigner and activist. For further information, see Andy Green, 'The Joseph Sturge Monument', available online at: <https://www.search.connectinghistories.org.uk/Details.aspx?&ResourceID=447&SearchType=2&ThemeID=153>
51. Ruth 1:16.
52. Watkins is quoting a verse from 'Essay on Man, Epistle II' published in 1733–1734 and authored by white British poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744), available online at: <https://poets.org/poem/essay-man-epistle-ii>

53. Robert Peel (1788–1850) was a white British politician. He served two terms as UK Prime Minister (1834–1835 and 1841–1846).
54. Isaiah 58:6.
55. Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817–c.1866). See the Ward entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 72–73).
56. James William Charles Pennington (1807–1870). See the Pennington entry in *Speeches* (Speech No. 52).
57. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See the Douglass entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 21–23).
58. Henry Highland Garnet (1815–1882). See the Garnet entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 27–28).
59. James William Charles Pennington (1807–1870). See the Pennington entry in *Speeches* (Speech No. 52).
60. Watkins is referring to Stephen H. Gloucester (1802–1850), a man who experienced enslavement in Tennessee and who became one of the leading Underground Railroad operators, social justice campaigners, and religious leaders in Philadelphia. See Kellie Patrick Gates, ‘Exclusive: Finding Reverend Gloucester’, available online at: <https://why.org/articles/4551/>
61. For further information on the Cromwell family of Black freedom fighters, see Adelaide M. Cromwell, *Unveiled Voices, Unvarnished Memories: The Cromwell Family I Slavery and Segregation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).
62. Watkins is quoting Hebrews 12:4.
63. Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) was a white US religious minister, social reformer, and antislavery campaigner.
64. Charles Sumner (1811–1874) was a white US senator, civil rights campaigner, orator, and powerful advocate of Black liberation, antislavery activism, and equal rights for all.
65. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) was a white US leading antislavery campaigner, author, orator, and editor of *The Liberator* (1831–1866), an abolitionist newspaper published in Boston, Massachusetts.
66. Research into the author of this poem is ongoing: very likely Watkins himself.
67. Luke 4:18.
68. Very likely Watkins is quoting from the poem, ‘The Gate to the Land of The Blest’, reproduced in *The Guardian: A Monthly Magazine*, 1859, p.378. Available online at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Guardian/oRwXAAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0
69. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Boston MA: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1853).
70. Watkins is referring to the antislavery volume by white US abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld (1803–1895), *Testimony of A Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839). Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/weld/weld.html>
71. Watkins is quoting the political slogan of the transatlantic abolitionist movement, ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’, which was repeatedly reproduced on white-authored and -generated antislavery campaign materials, including the abolitionist medallion created by white British ceramicist and antislavery supporter, Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795) in 1787. For further information, see David Dabydeen, ‘The Black Figure in 18th-century Art’, available online at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/africans_in_art_gallery_02.shtml
72. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
73. Watkins is quoting Psalm 2:8.
74. For further information on the Underground Railroad, see William Still, *Still’s Underground Rail Road Records: With a Life of the Author* (Philadelphia PA: William Still, 1886).
75. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
76. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) published her literary work, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* in Boston, Massachusetts, with Phillips, Samson publishers in 1854.
77. Watkins is referring to a white US educator, Margaret Crittendon Douglass (1822–date unknown) who was imprisoned for teaching ‘free coloured people to read’ in Norfolk,

- Virginia. Douglass wrote her autobiographical experiences in her work, *The Personal Narrative of Mrs. Margaret Douglass, A Southern Woman Who Was Imprisoned for One Month in the Common Jail of Norfolk* (Boston MA: John P. Jewett and Co., 1854).
78. Hannah Rosa Douglass was the daughter of Margaret Crittendon Douglass (1822–date unknown). See previous note.
 79. Alphone Marie Louise de Prat de Lamartine (1790–1869) was a white French author and political figure.
 80. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
 81. Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868) was a white political leader and antislavery supporter.
 82. Brougham's speech is reprinted in Anon., *The Legion of Liberty! And Force of Truth* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1843), p.28ff.
 83. George Hamilton-Gordon (1784–1860) was the white British 4th Earl of Aberdeen and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
 84. Elijah Parish Lovejoy (1802–1837) was a white US religious minister, newspaper editor, and antislavery campaigner who was murdered by a white proslavery mob in Alton, Illinois.
 85. Lovejoy's abolitionist newspaper was titled the *St. Louis Observer* and published in St Louis, Missouri (1833–1836).
 86. Lovejoy's letter was reprinted in David Root, *A Memorial of the Martyred Lovejoy: In a Discourse* (Dover NH: Published by request, 1837), p.6.
 87. Watkins is reproducing verses from 'The Mother's Prayer' reprinted in Thomas Hill, *Christmas, and Poems on Slavery, For Christmas, 1843* (Cambridge: Published by the author, 1843), p.5ff.
 88. White US poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) published his poem, 'The Warning', in his collection, *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842, available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=80
 89. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) was a white US poet, scholar, and teacher.
 90. William Meade (1789–1862) was a white US Bishop of Virginia (1841–1862).
 91. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston MA: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1853).
 92. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See Frederick Douglass entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 21–23).
 93. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slavery* (Boston MA: Antislavery Office, 1845). Available online at: <https://archive.org/details/narrativeoflifeo1846doug>
 94. Watkins is quoting, with some variations, from the 'Appendix' Douglass chose to insert at the end of his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slavery*, p.118ff.
 95. Douglass also reproduces this poem in his 'Appendix' to his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slavery*, p.120ff. This poem is titled 'Clerical Oppressors', and is authored by white US antislavery poet, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892), in 1836. The full text is available online at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAE0044.0001.001/1:4.9?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>
 96. John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892). See previous note.
 97. For a study examining the end of Russian serfdom and the abolition of US enslavement see Amanda Brickell Bellows, *American Slavery and Russian Serfdom in the Post-Emancipation Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).
 98. Daniel Webster (1782–1852) was a white northern US-born attorney and orator who served as Senator from Massachusetts (1845–1850) and Secretary of State between 1850–1852.
 99. Henry Clay (1777–1852) was a white US attorney, enslaver, and senator for Kentucky.

100. James K. Polk (1795–1849) was a white US politician who was elected US President from 1845–1849.
101. Zachary Taylor (1784–1850) was a white US politician who was elected US President from 1849–1850.
102. James Buchanan (1791–1868) was a white US politician who was elected US President from 1857–1861.
103. John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) was a white US politician who was elected US President from 1825–1829. See Louisa Thomas, ‘So Palpable a Stain: The Adams Family and Slavery in Washington D.C.’, *The New Yorker*, 25 April 2016, available online: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/so-palpable-a-stain-the-adams-family-and-slavery-in-washington-d-c>
104. Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845) was a white British Member of Parliament and antislavery campaigner.
105. Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846) was a white British antislavery campaigner.
106. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
107. See the Book of Exodus.
108. Watkins significantly revises this statement in later editions of his autobiography and writes with searing honesty about the racism he experiences in Britain. See James Watkins, *Struggles for Freedom; or The Life of James Watkins, Formerly a Slave in Maryland, U.S.*, (Manchester: Printed for James Watkins, 1860). This version can be accessed online at Documenting the American South: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/watkins/watkins.html>
109. Watkins is quoting a line from the US national anthem, ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’, authored by white US author and lawyer, Francis Scott Key (1779–1843). Further information and access to the lyrics can be found online at: <https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/the-lyrics.aspx>
110. Watkins is quoting from ‘The Declaration of Independence’. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see the following link: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
111. ‘Jim Crow’ was originally a white, racist, fictional character created by white US performer, Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808–1860), in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the decades that followed and on through to the present day, the phrase ‘Jim Crow’ has become synonymous with white persecutory systems of legal racial segregation. Due to white US systems of racist persecution and prejudicial exclusion, African American travellers were prohibited from using all methods of transportation apart from the ‘Jim Crow Bus’.
112. Acts 5:13.
113. John 6:37.
114. John 13:35.
115. Watkins meticulously lists pages of his speaking locations which we have omitted here for space, including, but by no means limited to, the following places: Manchester, Warrington, Stockport, Bolton, Wigan, Westhoughton, Bacup, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Leamington, Sheffield, Liverpool, Dublin, and Nottingham.
116. Watkins is quoting from white US poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem, ‘The Slave Singing at Midnight’, included in his collection, *Poems on Slavery*, published in 1842, and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=78
117. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882).



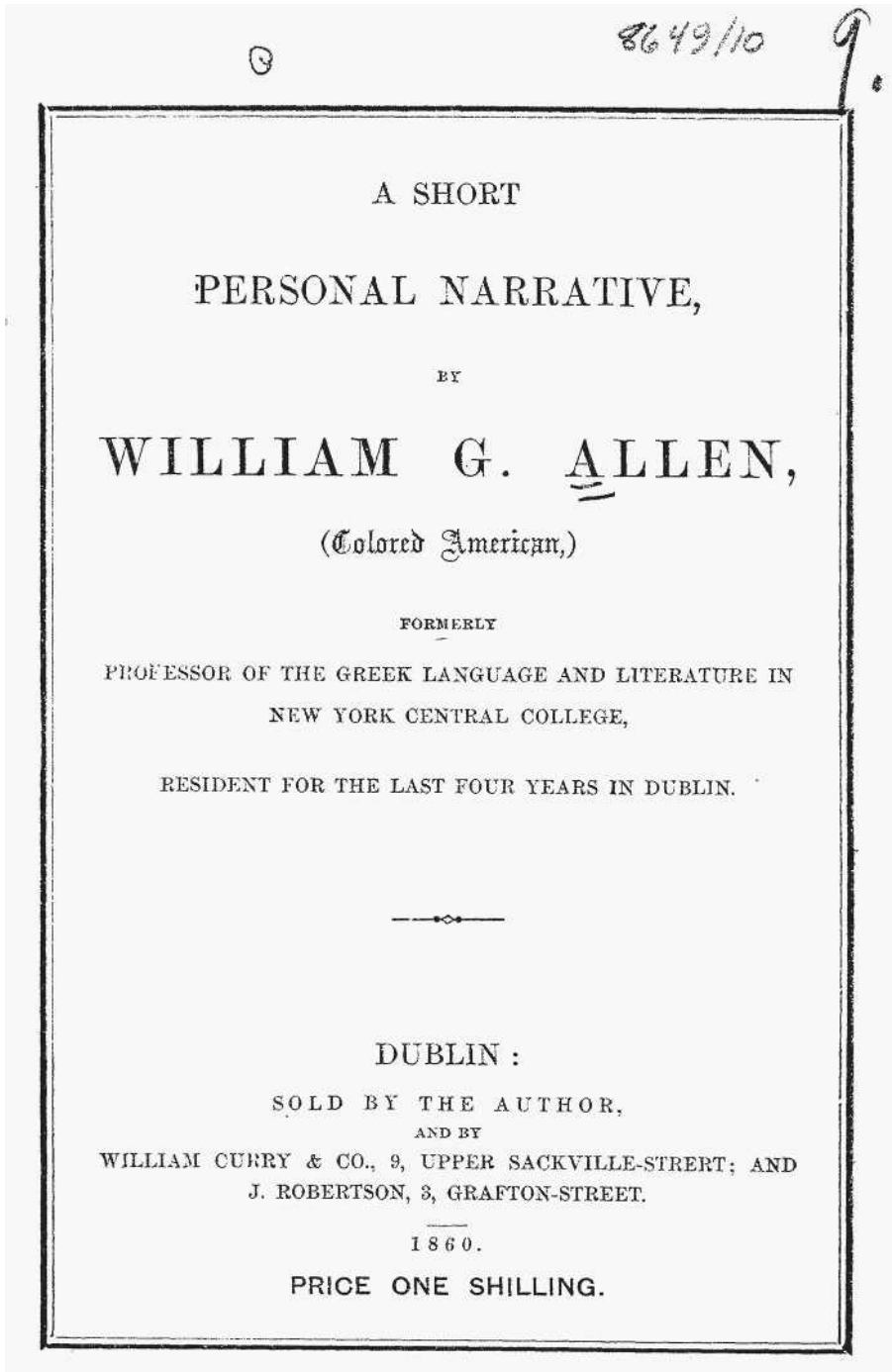


Figure 26 Title page from William G. Allen, *A Short Personal Narrative*. Dublin: William Curry & Co., 1860. (Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.)

WILLIAM GUSTAVUS ALLEN

(c.1820–1888)

9 William Gustavus Allen, *A Short Personal Narrative*.
Dublin: William Curry & Co., 1860.¹

Biographical History

BORN INTO A LEGAL freedom that was in name only in Virginia, William Gustavus Allen went on to become a world-renowned author, scholar, orator, antislavery advocate, political activist, social justice campaigner, educator, political commentator, and transatlantic reformer.

At the start of the ‘preface’ to his autobiographical work, *A Short Personal Narrative*, which he published in Dublin, Ireland, in 1860, Allen offers his readers the following explanation: ‘In preparing this little narrative, I have not sought to make a book, but simply to tell my own experiences both in the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States of America, in as few words as possible.’ Here he is at pains to deny, if not outright eradicate, the literary possibilities of his narrative as a ‘book’ in order to ensure that nothing will distract his audiences from comprehending the enormity of his ‘own experiences’. He shoulders the political priorities of an author-activist by purposefully working with ‘few words’ and only with ‘facts’ to bear witness to his ‘own experiences’, and in so doing ‘add one more to the tens of thousands of illustrations of the terrible power with which slavery has spread its influences into the Northern States of the Union’. For Allen, as for the African American writers and orators included in this anthology, words are weapons in the antislavery struggle.

At the heart of Allen’s autobiography is his determination to narrate his ‘own experiences’ of Black revolutionary heroism. Early in his personal account, he remembers the war on enslavement led by enslaved military general Nathaniel Turner and his men in 1831. He writes, ‘In 1831, Nathaniel Turner, a slave, having incited a number of his brethren to avenge their wrongs in a summary manner, marched by night with his comrades upon the town of Southampton, Virginia, and in a few hours put to death about one hundred of the white inhabitants.’ As a ‘slave’ turned military general, preacher, paper-maker, gunpowder manufacturer, philosopher, political revolutionary, and prophet, Nathaniel Turner and his followers believed he was a divine warrior appointed by God as the chosen liberator of his enslaved people. While Turner and many of his men were barbarically

tortured and executed without due process of law – and thousands more Black people, enslaved and free, suffered all forms of persecution, torture, and death at the hands of vengeful white mobs – Turner was immovable in his conviction regarding his divine-appointed mission. When asked by a white interviewer during his imprisonment, ‘Do you not find yourself mistaken now?’ he had only one answer, ‘Was not Christ crucified.’²

Allen miraculously suffered no direct attacks in the wake of Turner’s revolutionary war. However, he remembers that Turner’s military campaign had a cataclysmic effect on his early educational aspirations. ‘This act of Turner and his associates struck such terror into the hearts of the whites throughout the State, that they immediately, as an act of retaliation or vengeance, abolished every colored school within their borders,’ he writes, further confirming that, ‘having dispersed the pupils,’ they ‘ordered the teachers to leave the State forthwith, and never more to return.’ As a result, Allen’s early education in a ‘school composed entirely of coloured children’ and taught by a ‘man of color’ who was ‘highly esteemed, not only as a teacher, but as a preacher of rare eloquence and power,’ was of ‘short duration.’ While his formative educational experiences were in a Black school run by a Black teacher, he ultimately had no choice but to continue his education with white educators living elsewhere in the US.

As ‘one’ among ‘the tens of thousands of illustrations of the terrible power’ of enslavement, Allen does hard-hitting justice to the pain generated by the impossibility of forgetting when it comes to his personal experiences of the atrocities of enslavement. As he poignantly writes, ‘could I forget the innumerable scenes of cruelty I have witnessed, and blot out the remembrance of the degradation, intellectual, moral and spiritual, which everywhere surrounded me – making the country like unto a den of dragons and pool of waters – my reminiscence of Virginia were indeed a joy and not a sorrow.’ As a child growing up in the midst of enslavement and personally witnessing the ‘ships and brigs carrying into unutterable misery and woe men, women and children,’ each of whom were ‘victims of the most cruel slavery that ever saw the sun,’ Allen is burdened by a lifelong memory of the ‘unutterable misery and woe’ experienced by enslaved people of all ages and genders.

Eventually leaving the US South and completing his education with honours in the northern states, Allen had the prestigious distinction of receiving the ‘appointment of Professor of the Greek Language and Literature in New York Central College – a college of recent date, and situated in the town of M’Grawville, near the centre of the State of New York.’ Recognising the trailblazing importance of his exalted position, he jubilantly confirms, ‘This was the first college in America that ever had the moral courage to invite a man of color to occupy a professor’s chair; and, so far as I know, it is also the only one.’ And yet, while this northern educational establishment broke new ground by recognising his exceptional academic prowess and world-class scholarship, white popular opinion confirmed the terrible stranglehold exerted by the racist discrimination that continued to define white northern society. ‘Such a college, in the midst of corrupt public sentiment, could not fail to meet with the greatest opposition,’ he writes, only too painfully aware that, ‘It was persecuted on all sides, and by all parties, showing how deep-seated and virulent is prejudice against color.’

All his life, Allen and his collaborators in the freedom struggle had a fight on their hands in their war not only against enslavement but against the mind-body-soul-destroying force of a deeply entrenched white US ‘prejudice against color.’ Among his

many defining experiences of a ‘deep-seated and virulent’ ‘prejudice against colour’ were the murderous threats, abuse, and attacks he and Mary King, a white woman, received following their marriage at the hands of a white persecutory mob clamouring for their immediate death. Suffering on all sides, they had no choice but to ‘set sail for England’. As Allen powerfully observes, ‘prejudice against color was the offspring of slavery’, and ‘it will never be fully vanquished until slavery has been abolished’. Working tirelessly towards this goal, Allen actively collaborated with other fellow freedom fighters travelling in Britain, including William Wells Brown, William Craft, Ellen Craft, Samuel Ringgold Ward, and Sarah Parker Remond.

Writing his ‘short personal account’ while living a new life in Ireland and Britain, Allen informs his readers of his heartfelt longing: ‘I desire a more permanent settlement for myself and family.’ He readily admits to his ‘hope that the sale of this little narrative may help to create means to that end.’ For Allen, as for all the writers and orators in this anthology, a determination to use any and all funds raised from their published testimonies to protect, nurture, and secure the lives of their families is their life’s work. Just a year before he published this ‘short personal narrative’, on 14 May 1859, Allen writes a personal letter in which he expresses his joy that, ‘We have now three children, the last a sweet little girl, named Harriet Aurilla, for my wife’s deceased mother and sister’, happily concluding, ‘Ere long we shall have four children.’ The final words Allen writes to his friend are a hard-hitting testament to the life-giving force of family as a source of salvation and heartfelt jubilation: ‘Dearly we love them & welcome them all.’³



Figure 27 View of College Green, Dublin, Ireland, c.1807. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

While laboring to support his young family, Allen faced numerous financial hardships demonstrative of the immeasurable difficulties Black people faced on British and Irish soil. Allen had published his autobiography in part to financially support his wife and seven young children and to raise funds for an alternative public initiative; he purchased a small school in Islington, London, which contained over 150 students. Despite its success, Allen faced horrific racism and white supremacist sabotage from white teachers who forced Allen's landlord to forgo the school. In 1869, Allen wrote to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and described how his wife had managed to open a small school for girls with thirty students, which was received favourably almost certainly because she was white. He applied for help in paying rent for the school and to potentially guard against further discriminatory attacks against their livelihood. As Allen powerfully writes, never to be defeated: 'I deplore the circumstances which have placed me at this disadvantage, but I can not change my color to please those who have thus placed me, and I would not do so if I could.'⁴

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A SHORT
PERSONAL NARRATIVE,
BY
WILLIAM G. ALLEN,
(COLORED AMERICAN)
FORMERLY
PROFESSOR OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN
NEW YORK CENTRAL COLLEGE,⁵
RESIDENT FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS IN DUBLIN

DUBLIN
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J. ROBERTSON, 3, GRAFTON-STREET.

1860
PRICE ONE SHILLING

DUBLIN: PRINTED BY ROBERT CHAPMAN,
TEMPLE LANE DAME STREET

PREFACE

In preparing this little narrative, I have not sought to make a book, but simply to tell my own experiences both in the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States of America, in as few words as possible. The facts here detailed throw light upon many phases of American life, and add one more to the tens of thousands of illustrations of the terrible power with which slavery has spread its influences into the Northern States of the Union – penetrating even the inmost recesses of social life.

W. G. A.

DONNYBROOK, DUBLIN,
JANUARY, 1860

A SHORT PERSONAL NARRATIVE

I was born in Virginia, but not in slavery. The early years of my life were spent partly in the small village of Urbanna, on the banks of the Rappahannock, partly in the city of Norfolk, near the mouth of the James' River, and partly in the fortress of Monroe,⁶ on the shores of the Chesapeake.⁷ I was eighteen years in Virginia. My father was a white man, my mother a mulatress, so that I am what is generally termed a quadroon. Both parents died when I was quite young, and I was then adopted by another family, whose name I bear. My parents by adoption were both coloured, and possessed a flourishing business in the fortress of Monroe.

I went to school a year and a half in Norfolk. The school was composed entirely of coloured children, and was kept by a man of color, a Baptist minister, who was highly esteemed, not only as a teacher, but as a preacher of rare eloquence and power. His color did not debar him from taking an equal part with his white brethren in matters pertaining to their church.

But the school was destined to be of short duration. In 1831, Nathaniel Turner,⁸ a slave, having incited a number of his brethren to avenge their wrongs in a summary manner, marched by night with his comrades upon the town of Southampton, Virginia, and in a few hours put to death about one hundred of the white inhabitants. This act of Turner and his associates struck such terror into the hearts of the whites throughout the State, that they immediately, as an act of retaliation or vengeance, abolished every colored school within their borders; and having dispersed the pupils, ordered the teachers to leave the State forthwith, and never more to return.

I now went to the fortress of Monroe, but soon found that I could not get into any school there. For, though being a military station, and therefore under the sole control of the Federal Government, it did not seem that this place was free from the influence of slavery, in the form of prejudice against color. But my parents had money, which always and everywhere has a magic charm. I was also of a persevering habit; and what therefore I could not get in the schools I sought among the soldiers in the garrison, and succeeded in obtaining. Many of the rank and file of the American army are highly educated foreigners; some of them political refugees, who have fled to America and become unfortunate, oftentimes from their own personal habits. I now learned some thing of several languages, and considerable music. My German teacher, a common soldier, was, by all who knew him, reputed to be both a splendid scholar and musician. I also now and then bought the services of other teachers, which greatly helped to advance me.

Many of the slaveholders aided my efforts. This seems like a paradox; but to the credit of humanity, be it said, that the bad are not always bad. One kind-hearted slaveholder, an army officer, gave me free access to his valuable library; and another slaveholder, a naval officer, who frequented the garrison, presented me, as a gift, with a small but well selected library, which formerly belonged to a deceased son.

My experience, therefore, in the State of Virginia, is, in many respects, quite the opposite of that which others of my class have been called to undergo.

Could I forget how often I have stood at the foot of the market in the city of Norfolk, and heard the cry of the auctioneer – ‘What will you give for this man?’ – ‘What for this woman?’ – ‘What for this child?’ Could I forget that I have again and again stood upon the shores of the Chesapeake, and, while looking out upon that splendid bay, beheld ships and brigs carrying into unutterable misery and woe men, women and children, victims of the most cruel slavery that ever saw the sun; could I forget the innumerable scenes of cruelty I have witnessed, and blot out the remembrance of the degradation, intellectual, moral and spiritual, which everywhere surrounded me – making the country like unto a den of dragons and pool of waters – my reminiscence of Virginia were indeed a joy and not a sorrow.

Some things I do think of with pleasure. A grand old State is Virginia. Nowhere else, in America at least, has nature revealed herself on a more munificent scale. Lofty mountains, majestic hills, beautiful valleys, magnificent rivers cover her bosom. A genial clime warms her heart. Her resources are exhaustless. Why should she not move on? Execrated for ever by this wretched slavery – this disturbing force. It kills the white man – kills the black man – kills the master – kills the slave – kills everybody and everything. Liberty is, indeed, the first condition of human progress, and the especial hand-maiden of all that in human life is beautiful and true.

I attained my eighteenth year. About this time the Rev. W. H – of New York city visited the fortress of Monroe, and opened a select school. He was a white man, and of a kind and benevolent nature. He could not admit me into his school, nevertheless he took a deep interest in my welfare. He aided my studies in such ways as he could, and, on his return to the State of New York (he remained but a short time in Virginia), acquainted the Honorable Gerrit Smith,⁹ of Peterboro, with my desires. Mr. Smith’s sympathies were immediately touched on my behalf. He requested the Rev. W. H – to write to me at once, and to extend to me an invitation to visit the State of New York, enter college, and graduate at his expense – if need be.

I have to remark just here that at the time of the visit of the Rev. W. H – to the fortress of Monroe, my parents were in greatly reduced circumstances, owing to a destructive fire which had recently taken place, and burned to the ground a most valuable property. The fire was supposed to be the work of incendiaries – low whites of the neighbourhood, who had become envious of my parents' success. There was no insurance on the property. Under these circumstances I gladly accepted the kind offer of Mr. Smith. His generous nature then and there turned towards me in friendship; and I am happy to be able to add, he has ever continued my friend from that day to this.

Mr. Smith is one of the noblest men that America has ever produced; and is especially remarkable for his profound appreciation of that sublime command of our Saviour, 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.'¹⁰ Where he treads no angel of sorrow follows.

He is a man of vast estates – a millionaire. He is also what in America is termed a land reformer. He believes that every man should possess an inviolable homestead. He himself possesses by inheritance millions of acres in the Northern and Eastern States of America; and shows his sincerity and consistency by parcelling off from time to time such portions of these lands as are available, in lots of forty or fifty acres each, and presenting the deeds thereof, free of charge, to the deserving landless men, white or black, in the region where the lands in question are located.¹¹ He also long since vacated the splendid Peterboro' mansion,¹² into possession of which he came on the death of his father; and now resides, himself and family, in a simple cottage near Peterboro', with only forty acres attached. His sympathies are not bounded by country or clime. He sent into Ireland, during the famine of 1847,¹³ the largest single donation that reached the country from abroad.

He was elected to the United States Congress a few years ago, as one of the members for New York, but resigned his seat after holding it only a year – probably feeling outraged by the manners and morals, not to say superlative wickedness, of so many of his associates. Whatever may have been the cause which induced him to resign, he did well to give up his post. Nature had evidently not set him to the work. Of great ability, winning eloquence, and undoubted moral courage, his heart and temper were too soft and apologetic to deal with the blustering tyrants who fill too many of the seats of both houses of Congress.

Mr. Smith is truly a great orator. He has in an eminent degree the first qualification thereof – a great heart. His voice is a magnificent bass, deep, full, sonorous; and being as melodious as deep, it gives him enviable power over the hearts and sympathies of men.

In personal appearance he is extremely handsome. Large and noble in stature, with a face not only beautiful but luminous with the reflection of every Christian grace.

He is now engaged in the care of his vast estates, and in his private enterprises, scarcely private, since they are all for the public good. He is sixty-two years of age. A true Christian in every exalted sense of the term, long may he live an honor and a blessing to his race.

Having accepted the invitation of this gentleman, I prepared to leave the South. On making arrangements for a passage from Norfolk to Baltimore, I found that the 'Free Papers' which every man of color in a slave state must possess, in order to be able to

prove, in case of his being apprehended at any time, that he is not an absconding slave, were of very little avail. I must needs have a 'Pass' as well, or I could not leave. However I obtained this document without much trouble, and as it is a curious specimen of American literature, I will give it. It does not equal, to be sure, the 'charming pages' of Washington Irving,¹⁴ but it is certainly quite as illustrative in its way: –

'Norfolk, Oct. 1839.

'The bearer of this, William G. Allen, is permitted to leave Norfolk by the Steam Boat Jewess, Capt. Sutton, for Baltimore.

'Signed, J.F. Hunter,

'Agent, Baltimore Steam Packet Company.'

This document was also countersigned by one of the justices of the peace. Really, there is something preposterous about these slaveholders. They make all sorts of attempts to drive the free colored people out of their borders; but when a man of this class wishes to go of his own accord, he must then be *permitted*!

I reached Baltimore in safety, but now found that neither 'Free Papers' nor 'Pass' were of any further use. I desired to take the train to Philadelphia *en route* to New York. I must this time get a white man to testify to my freedom, or further I could not go. Or, worse still, if no such man could be found, I must be detained in Baltimore and lodged in jail! By no means a pleasant prospect. There was no time to be lost. My previous experience had taught me this truth – the more we trust, the more we are likely to find to trust. Acting upon this principle, and putting in practice my studies in physiognomy, I presently found a friend among the crowd; who, being satisfied with my statements and the documents I presented, kindly gave the desired testimony. The ticket seller then recorded my name, age, and personal appearance in his book, and delivered my ticket. I now had no further trouble, and reached the college (in the State of New York) in safety.

Remaining at this college (Oneida Institute,¹⁵ Whitesboro') five years, I graduated with some honor and little cost to my patron, Mr. Smith. I quite paid my way by private tuitions: during one vacation I taught a school in Canada.

I cannot leave Oneida Institute without paying the tribute of my heart's warmest admiration and love to the President thereof – Reverend Beriah Green.¹⁶ America has few such men – men of that true greatness which comes from a combination of wisdom and virtue. Wherever found in that country, they are the 'chosen few,' consecrating their energies to the cause of Humanity and Religion – nobly and earnestly seeking to rid their country of its dire disgrace and shame. President Green still lives. He is a profound scholar, an original thinker, and, better and greater than all these, a sincere and devoted Christian. To the strength and vigor of a man, he adds the gentleness and tenderness of a woman. He has never taken an active part in the world of stir and politics; but in the line of his proper profession has immeasurably advanced the cause of human progress. May such men be multiplied in America, and elsewhere, for surely there is need.

Out now in the great world of America, my ambition was to secure a professorial chair. That any man having the slightest tinge of color, nay, without tinge of color, with only a drop of African blood in his veins, let his accomplishments be what they may, should aspire to such a position, I soon found was the very madness of madness.

But something must be done. I repaired at once to the city of Boston, and entered the law office of E. G. L –, Esq. a distinguished barrister, who had already shown his regard for the colored young man – now practising with much success in Boston. Black men may practice law – at least in Massachusetts. I remained in the office of this gentleman two years, and was just entering my third and last year, when, unsolicited on my part and to my great surprise, I received the appointment of Professor of the Greek Language and Literature in New York Central College – a college of recent date, and situated in the town of M’Grawville, near the centre of the State of New York. This was the first college in America that ever had the moral courage to invite a man of color to occupy a professor’s chair; and, so far as I know, it is also the only one.

The college was founded by a few noble-minded men, whose object was to combat the vulgar American prejudice, which can see no difference between a man and his skin. They sought to illustrate the doctrine of Human Equality, or brotherhood of the races; to elevate the nation’s morals, and give it more exalted views of the aims and objects of Christianity. Such a college, in the midst of corrupt public sentiment, could not fail to meet with the greatest opposition. It was persecuted on all sides, and by all parties, showing how deep-seated and virulent is prejudice against color. The legislature countenanced the college so far as to grant it a charter, and empowered it to confer degrees, but would not, seemingly on no earthly consideration, give it the slightest pecuniary patronage. The debates which took place in the State House at Albany when the bill relating to the college came up for consideration, would, in vulgar flings at ‘negroes,’ cries of ‘amalgamation,’ and such like, have disgraced a very assemblage of pagans. However the college held on its way, and is still doing its work, though its efficiency is of course greatly marred. All the other professors were white; so also were the majority of the students.

I was four years in connexion with this college as professor, and in all probability would have been in M’Grawville still, but for the following circumstances.

I bethought me now of marriage, having what might be termed good prospects in the world. Visiting the town of Fulton, County of Oswego, State of New York, about forty miles from New York Central College, on an occasion of public interest, I was made the guest of the Rev. L. K. –, ¹⁷ a highly esteemed minister of the gospel, and greatly distinguished for his earnest and zealous advocacy of the principles of abolition. He was a white man. This gentleman had a large family of sons and daughters. A feeling of friendship sprung up between one of his daughters ¹⁸ and myself on the occasion of this visit, which feeling eventually ripened into emotions of a higher and more interesting character. The father welcomed me: the mother was long since deceased. The parties immediately concerned were satisfied – why should others demur? I knew something of prejudice of color, but I supposed that a sense of dignity, not to say decency, would deter the most bitterly opposed from interference with a matter wholly domestic and private, and which, in its relation to the public, was also wholly insignificant. I reckoned without my host however. The inhabitants of Fulton had received the impression that there was a union in contemplation between the lady and myself; and they determined that it should not take place, certainly not in their town, nor elsewhere if they could prevent it. They stirred the town in every direction, evoking all the elements of hostility, and organizing the same into a deadly mob, to act at a convenient opportunity. I was ignorant of the great length

to which this feeling had attained; so also were the parties immediately interested in my personal safety. I was therefore greatly surprised when, on the occasion of my last visit to Fulton, and while in company with the lady, both of us visiting at the house of a mutual friend, residing about two miles out of town, a party rushed into our presence in hot haste, bidding me, if I wished to escape with my life, to 'fly with all possible speed!' The party who performed this kindly office had scarcely gone, when, on looking out of the window, I beheld a maddened multitude approaching – about six hundred white men, armed with tar, feathers, poles and an empty barrel spiked with shingle nails! In this barrel I was to be put, and rolled from the top of the bottom of a hill near by. They also brought a sleigh, in which the lady was to be taken back to her father's house. They intended no harm to her.

Knowing the character of an American mob, and also knowing how little they value the life of a man of color, I expected, as I saw the multitude surrounding the house, to die – in fact, prepared for death.

Having assembled about the premises, they began to cry out in the most uproarious manner, 'Bring him out!' 'Kill the Nigger!' 'Hang him!' 'Tear down the house!' Shouts, groans, maledictions of all sorts and degrees followed. No one who has not witnessed an American mob can have the slightest idea of the scene which presented itself at this point. Had six hundred beasts of the forest been loosed together, in one promiscuous assemblage, they could scarcely have sent up howls and yells and mad noises equal to those made by these infuriated men. There is no exaggeration in this statement. For the sake of humanity, I only wish there was. Nor were the members of the mob confined entirely to the rabble; far from it. Many of its members were also members of a Christian church. The mob occurred on a Sabbath evening, about six o'clock, so that these men absolutely deserted their pews on purpose to enjoy the fun of 'hunting the nigger.'

There came with this mob a self-constituted committee of gentlemen, lawyers, merchants, and leading men of the town, who, altogether partaking of the general feeling of prejudice against color, did not wish, for the sake of the reputation of their town, to see bloodshed; besides also many of them, I doubt not, entertained feelings of personal friendship for myself.

This committee divided itself. One half came up to the drawing-room, and advised that the young lady should consent to go home in the sleigh provided, and that I should consent to leave the town. Conceding so much to the mob, they thought my life might be spared. The other half of the committee remained below, to appease the maddened multitude, and deter them from carrying their threats into execution.

We agreed to the propositions of the committee. The young lady was taken home in the sleigh aforesaid, about one third of the mob following on foot, for what purpose I know not. I was then conducted by the committee through the mob, many members of which giving me, as I passed, sundry kicks and cuffs, but doing me no serious bodily harm. I was next taken by the committee to an hotel, where arrangements had been made for my reception. The mob followed, hooting and hallooing, the sight of their victim seeming to revive their hostile feelings. They would have broken into the hotel, had not the proprietor held them back by his threats. He was not a friend of mine, but he had agreed to shelter me, and he was, of course, determined to protect his property.

The committee then secured the use of two sleighs, one of which they placed at the back entrance of the hotel, and the other they caused to be driven about four miles out of the town. Into the first sleigh I was to get when I could find my opportunity, and be driven to the other sleigh, in which I was to be finally conveyed to the town of Syracuse, about twenty-five miles distant. I made several attempts to get into the sleigh at the back entrance of the hotel, but was driven back by the mob every time I made my appearance at the door. Meanwhile the committee furnished the mobocrats with spirits to drink, and cigars to smoke, for all of which I had to pay. Comment upon this extraordinary act of meanness would be entirely out of place. One would have thought that these mobocrats would have been content to have mobbed me free of expense, at least. Not so it seemed however.

But midnight drew on, and of course the multitude grew weary. Presently, seeing my opportunity, I jumped into the sleigh at the back entrance of the hotel, drove rapidly off to the second sleigh, and reached the town of Syracuse early next morning. Some of the mobocrats attempted chase, but soon gave it up.

Had this tumult ended here, I should probably have been in my chair at the college today; and the whole affair, so far as it related only to myself, would have been regarded by me as merely a bit of an episode in my life – of course a most exciting one. But the worst was to come, at least so far as it concerned the lady personally; and the very worst it would be better to say nothing about.

After we had been disposed of in the manner already described, the next step taken by the inhabitants of the town of Fulton was to place the lady under a most degraded surveillance. True, she was to continue in her father's house, but so overpowering had the mob-spirit become, that the mobocrats commanded (and were obeyed!) that no communications should be sent to her or from her, unless they had been previously perused and sanctioned by duly deputed parties. Nor would they permit any persons to call upon her, unless they too had been previously approved.

There was a line of railway between the towns of Fulton and Syracuse. Guards were placed by certain individuals at the various stations on the line, in order to prevent the possible escape of either party, or rather to prevent the possible meeting of the parties, *i.e.* of the lady and myself. Meanwhile the telegraphic wires and newspapers spread the news throughout the length and breadth of the land; the consequence of all which was, I became so notorious that my life was placed in jeopardy wherever I went. On one occasion particularly I barely escaped with it.

On the day after the occurrence of the mob, and for several days after, the town of Fulton presented a scene of unparalleled excitement. Had the good people witnessed the approach of an invading army, but, by some lucky chance, succeeded in driving it back, they could not have been more extravagant in their demonstrations. Their countenances indicated the oddest possible mixture of consternation and joy. Seriously, if one can be serious over such details, never before did the contemplated marriage of two mortals create such a hubbub.

The inhabitants of Fulton immediately assembled *en masse*, and voted unanimously, in congress especially convened for the purpose, that Mr. and Mrs. P –, school teachers, our friends, at whose house we were being entertained at the time of the mob, 'DO GIVE UP THEIR SCHOOL, AND LEAVE THE TOWN FORTHWITH.' For what crime? None, save that of showing us hospitality. Our friends had therefore

not only to give up their business at an immense pecuniary sacrifice, but had absolutely to make off with their lives as best they could.

During all this time the lady who had been thus rudely treated was true to her noble and heroic nature; but of course so much outward pressure, and of such an extraordinary character, produced its consequences upon her health. It failed, and it became necessary that she should be released from her thralldom. Once more at liberty she visited, incognito, the town of Syracuse, where I was still tarrying. The mobocrats would not have permitted her to have left Fulton in peace, if they had known whither she was going.

We met again: reviewed the past and discussed the future. As I am not detailing sentiment, but merely stating facts, suffice it to say, that we made up our minds that we could not be defeated by a mob.

But to the future. What was to be done? We came to the conclusion that I could no longer expect to hold my position in M'Grawville. The college had already received a terrible shock by reason of the cry of 'amalgamation' which had been raised by the mob. And though the trustees were willing, at heart, to face the storm of prejudice, wordly wisdom, they considered, dictated that they should not incur the odium which they could not avoid bringing upon the college, if they persisted in retaining me longer as one of their professors. The trustees thought it would be better to be cautious, and save the college for the good it might do in future. Such a union as ours was, in fact, but one of the logical results of the very principles on which the college was founded. I do not profess to sit in judgment, and therefore attempt no comment. They were now evidently anxious that I should resign, though, of course, they did not express so much to me in words.

I also came to the further conclusion that I could no longer, under the circumstances, whatever I might be able to do in future, hold my position in the country. For, however willing I might be to endure all things in my own person, I felt that I ought not to expose to any further danger one who had already suffered so much and so heroically for my sake. I knew several of the lady's friends who were bitterly opposed to our union, solely on account of my color, and who were prepared, if the occasion should require it, to go to desperate lengths. They would not have hesitated to have sworn her into the lunatic asylum. I therefore decided not only to resign my professorship in the college, but also to leave the country.

Our plans being now quietly arranged, the lady returned to Fulton, and it was then supposed that all communication between us was for ever broken off. The mob had ordered that it should be so, and doubtless thought it was so. The most mistaken idea they ever entertained. The lady remained for a short time in Fulton, and then retired into the interior of the state of Pennsylvania. I continued to remain in the town of Syracuse.

Soon a favorable opportunity presented itself, and we met in the city of New York, on the 30th March, 1853, and then and there asserted our rights in due and legal form: after which we immediately took the train for Boston.

Owing to the great publicity which the newspapers had given to our affairs and the consequent excitement thereon, we found it necessary to use the utmost caution, such as walking apart in the streets, and travelling in the trains as strangers to each other. It would have been fool-hardy to have provoked another mob.

We remained in Boston ten days, quietly visiting among our friends, and then set sail for England. Wishing to get out of the country without farther ado, we were

compelled to submit to many sacrifices, pecuniary and otherwise, of which it is not necessary to speak. In England and Ireland, including a short trip to Scotland, we have been ever since, and have constantly received that generous and friendly consideration which, from the reputation of Great Britain and Ireland, we had been led to expect; and for which we are grateful.

To go back for a single moment to New York Central College. On receiving the appointment to the professorial chair, the pro-slavery newspaper press of the country opened a regular assault. The 'Washington Union' thus wrote:

'What a pity that college could not have found white men in all America to fill its professors' chairs. What a burning shame that the trustees should have been mean enough to rob Mr. L – of his law student, and the Boston bar of its ebony ornament.' I was never at the Boston bar, and therefore could not have been its ebony ornament. The imagination of the editors supplied them with the fact, and that answered their purpose as well.

A reverend doctor of divinity writing in a Cincinnati newspaper, wondered 'how a man of sense could enter that amalgamation college. If this professor would go to Liberia and display his eloquence at the bar there; or, if he has any of the grace of God in his heart, enter the pulpit, he would then be doing a becoming work.'

From Augusta, Georgia (Slave State), I received the following document, signed by several parties, and containing the picture of a man hanging by the neck, under which was written, 'Here hangs the Professor of Greek!'

'Augusta, Geo. Nov. 1850.

'SIR, – we perceive you have been appointed Professor of Greek in New York Central College. Very well. We also perceive that you have occasionally lectured in the North on the "Probable Destiny of the African Race." Now, Sir, if you will only have the kindness to come to Augusta, and visit our hemp yard, you may be sure that your destiny will not be *probable*, but certain.

'Signed, –
–
–'

Of course I did not go to Augusta, Georgia.

These assaults and attempts at ridicule served to bring me into general notice. I soon found that by reason of them, and without merit or effort of my own, I had become known throughout the whole country as 'the Colored Professor.' I had a status. The lady being the daughter of a highly respectable minister, she also had a status. To permit therefore the union of these parties would be to bring the principle of amalgamation into respectability. So reasoned those who attempted to reason on behalf, or rather in excuse, of the mob. 'We are so sorry,' they went on condescendingly to say, 'for Professor Allen, for though a man of color, he is nevertheless a gentleman, a Christian and a scholar. But this union must not be; the "proprieties of society," must not be violated!' Here then was the secret of this extraordinary outbreak. Had we moved in what these good people would have been pleased to term a lower strata of society, they would have let us alone with infinite contempt.

The most lamentable feature of this Fulton mob was the fact, that we could not, if we had sought it, have secured any redress. No court of law in the State would have

undertaken to bring to justice the perpetrators of this outrage. But on the contrary, such court would have been inclined to take sides with the mobocrats, and to justify them in the means which they employed wherewith to chastise a colored man who had presumed so grossly to violate the 'proprieties of society.'

Before closing I cannot forbear a further word with regard to New York Central College. During the four years I was in connexion with that college as a professor, I never experienced the slightest disrespect from trustees, professors or students. All treated me kindly, so kindly indeed that I can truly say that the period of my professorship forms one of the pleasantest remembrances of my life. Terrible as prejudice against color is, my experience has taught me that it is not invincible; though, as it is the offspring of slavery, it will never be fully vanquished until slavery has been abolished.

In illustration of the direct influences of slavery as they affect the free man of color, I go back for a single moment. Having spent three years at Oneida Institute, I proposed to myself a visit to Virginia, to look once more into the faces of beloved parents, relatives and friends, to walk again upon the strand at Fortress Monroe, where I had so often in childhood beheld the sunbeams play upon the coves and inlets, and seen the surf beat upon the rocks. I at first had some difficulty in getting a passage to Virginia, most of the masters of the New York vessels to whom I applied seeming to be of a friendly nature, and not willing to expose me to the slave laws of Virginia. I however succeeded at last – the captain of a Philadelphia vessel consenting to land me at the fortress of Monroe. I remained in the home of my childhood and youth seven days in peace; but on the morning of the eighth day, while walking on the strand, I was rudely assaulted by a person who had known me from my infancy. I had always supposed him to be a gentleman, and was therefore greatly surprised and shocked. But slavery is relentless; it ruins both the morals and the manners. This individual, after belaboring me in a savage manner, gave me distinctly to understand that unless I left Virginia speedily, I might find myself in trouble. He afterwards remarked, as I understood, to his friends that 'this Allen has been off to an abolition college and returned among us. Let us look out for him.'

I took the hint; and on the next morning secured the services of a party who rowed me off in a small canoe to a vessel lying in the harbour, where I bargained with the captain, who, for a handsome sum, consented to take me quietly out of the state. I left Virginia at once, and have never returned to it since, though I would gladly have done so, as relatives and friends near and dear to me have since died, by the side of whose death beds I desired to stand. In conclusion I have only to say that were I in the United States of America to-morrow, it would be more than my life or liberty would be worth to put foot upon the soil of my native state. Is this freedom? If it be, then give me slavery indeed.

A word or two with regard to my course in this country. Hitherto my income has been derived solely from lectures, tuitions, and such other odds and ends of work in my line as my hands could find to do. I desire a more permanent settlement for myself and family, and hope that the sale of this little narrative may help to create means to that end.

I send it forth therefore, desiring that it may stand upon its own merits, at the same time earnestly hoping that it may interest all into whose hands it may fall.

FROM LORD SHAFTESBURY¹⁹

‘Lord Shaftesbury sympathizes most heartily with Professor Allen and sincerely wishes him success in his undertaking. It will give Lord Shaftesbury great pleasure to assist, in any way that he can, a gentleman of the colored race, who is a hundred times wiser and better than his white oppressors.

‘London, *July*, 1854.’

From Rev. I. G. ABELTSHAUSER, L.L.D. Trinity College, Dublin, and others;—

‘DUBLIN, 14th April 1856.

‘The undersigned having made due enquiry from the most trustworthy sources relative to the character and attainments of Professor William G. Allen, have much pleasure in recommending him as a gentleman of high attainments and honorable character.

I. G. ABELTSHAUSER, Clk. LL.D. Trin. Col. Dub.
 Wm. URWICK, D.D. 40, Rathmines Road, Dublin.
 JAMES HAUGHTON, 35, Eccles-street, Dublin.
 RICHARD ALLEN, Sackville-street, Dublin.
 JONATHAN PIM, 22, William-street, Dublin.
 JOHN EVANS, M.D. 38, Richmond-street, Dublin.
 R. D. WEBB, 176, Great Brunswick-street, Dublin.
 JOHN R. WIGHAM, 36, Capel-street, Dublin.

From RICHARD D. WEBB,²⁰ Esq. of Dublin.

‘DUBLIN, 3rd November 1858.

‘DEAR MR. ALLEN,

‘Your name was familiar to me long before I knew you personally. I had often heard of “Professor W.G. Allen,” who, while connected with the Central College, in the State of New York, and respected there as a man and a teacher, was obliged to leave his native country for the offence of marrying a white lady of respectable family and great excellence of character, who is now much liked and esteemed by her numerous friends in this city. I became acquainted with you soon after your arrival in London; and particularly during your residence in Ireland I have had nearly as much opportunity of knowing you as any of your acquaintances here. I can truly say, that you have earned the hearty respect of all who know you (of whom I have any knowledge), by the industry, energy, and self-respect you have evinced in the course of a long and difficult battle with those adverse circumstances, with which a comparatively unknown and friendless stranger has to contend, in his efforts to effect a settlement in a strange country. Your conduct has been industrious, honorable and in every way deserving of esteem and sympathy. Some time since, in the columns of the “Anti-Slavery Advocate,”²¹ without hint or solicitation on your part, I took the liberty to speak of your course as I do now; for amongst all the colored Americans with whom my interest in the Anti-Slavery cause has made me acquainted – and many of whom are my own personal friends – I have known none more deserving of respect and confidence than yourself.

‘Yours truly,

‘RICHARD. D. WEBB.’

HAVING, in my avocation as a lecturer on ‘The African Race,’ and ‘America and the Americans,’ visited nearly the whole of Ireland, I respectfully submit the following letters and notices, the letters being from gentlemen who kindly presided at the meetings: –

From the Rev. DOCTOR FITZGERALD, Archdeacon of Kildare, (now Lord Bishop of Cork).

‘Professor Allen delivered some lectures on the African Race, in Kingstown, which seemed to have given general satisfaction. I regret that I was unable to attend more than one, but I can truly say that it bore evidence of a highly cultivated mind, and imparted valuable information in a pleasing form. From what I have seen and heard of Professor Allen, I should be glad to think that any testimony of mine could be of service to him.

‘W. FITZGERALD, Archdeacon of Kildare,
(Now Lord Bishop of Cork.)

‘Dublin, Nov. 1856.’

From Rev. DOCTOR URWICK. Dublin.

‘I have known Professor Allen since his first coming to Ireland, and believe him to be a gentleman of high character and attainments. His lecturings, more than one of which I have heard, display much power, and by the amount of information they contain, united with a clear, and often eloquent style, and earnest manner, cannot fail, at once, to interest and instruct the audience. I cordially commend him to the confidence and kind attention of my friends.

‘W. URWICK.

‘Dublin, Nov. 30, 1857.’

From CORK – see ‘Constitution,’ ‘Examiner’ and ‘Reporter,’ March 1858.

‘Cork, Feb. 28, 1858.

‘To WILLIAM G. ALLEN, Esq, late Professor of Greek in New York Central College. ‘DEAR SIR – We, the undersigned, having heard your lectures on “America and Africa,” and derived therefrom much instruction as well as gratification, do, on our own part and that of many of our fellow citizens who are anxious to hear you, respectfully request that you will give, at least, two lectures more upon these interesting subjects.

‘(Signed)

HENRY MARTIN, Congregational Minister.

R. W. FORREST (Free Church).

RICHD. CORBETT, M.D.

J. D. CARNEGIE.

HENRY UNKLES.

GEORGE BAKER.

RICHARD DOWDEN, (Rd.)

WILLIAM MAGILL, (Scot’s Church).

JOSEPH R. GREENE, Professor, Queen's Coll.
 THOMAS JENNINGS.
 N. JACKSON, C.E.
 JOSEPH COLBECK.'

From 'Belfast News-letter,' Dec. 10, 1858.

'Rev. DOCTOR COOKE occupied the chair. Professor Allen then delivered a lecture of great ability and interest. Dr. Cooke said he had listened to a remarkable oration. He was glad he had heard it. He thanked Professor Allen, in the name of the meeting, for his truly valuable and instructive lecture.'

From the DEAN OF WATERFORD.

'Professor W. G. Allen, an American gentleman of color, having visited Waterford, delivered two lectures here, one on "America," and the other on "Africa and the African Races." On each occasion I had the pleasure to occupy the chair at the meetings held to hear Mr. Allen's lectures, which proved most interesting and instructive. The Professor is himself a witness that there is nothing in color or race to hinder a man from being distinguished for eloquence, good taste, and religious feeling.

'I have seldom heard public addresses which have interested me more, and I have no doubt that Mr. Allen's lectures will prove useful, wherever they are delivered, in creating an interest on behalf of our fellow men, who have suffered so great wrongs from professing Christians, though happily no longer at the hands of British subjects.

'EDW. N. HOARE,
 Dean of Waterford.

'Deanery, Waterford, Jan. 16, 1858.'

From Rev. DOCTOR BROWNE, Principal of Kilkenny College.

'Kilkenny College, Feb. 3, 1858.

'I have attended Professor Allen's lectures on "America and the Americans," and on the "African Races," and have received much pleasure as well as information from the talent and power with which he has handled the subjects of which he treated.

'His knowledge, his ardent and impressive manner, and clear melodious voice, render him a most pleasing as well as instructive lecturer.

'JOHN BROWNE, Clk. LL.D.'

Notes

1. This work survives in a vast number of library collections across the world.
2. See Thomas R. Gray, *Confessions of Nat Turner, Leader of the Negro Insurrection in Southampton, Virginia*. Baltimore MD: Thomas R. Gray, 1831, p.11.
3. See William G. Allen, 'To Gerrit Smith, 14 May 1859', in C. Peter Ripley, ed. (with George E. Carter, Jeffery S. Rossback, Roy E. Finkenbine, Fiona E. Spiers, Debra Susie), *The Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol I: The British Isles, 1830-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp.453-454.

4. Letter from William G. Allen, 21 April 1869 and 12 April 1869, Anti-Slavery Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 18 / C105. No. 113 and 115. Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
5. New York Central College was founded in McGrawville, New York, in 1849 as an educational institution committed to the principles of 'Radical Anti-Slavery, and Equality of the Sexes'. For further information see anon., 'New York Central College', *The Liberator*, 20 November 1857, p.3.
6. Fort Monroe is a historic military garrison located in Hampton, Virginia.
7. Chesapeake Bay is a large estuary located between the states of Maryland and Virginia.
8. Nathaniel Turner (1800–1831) was a Black prophet, military general, preacher, orator, activist, and freedom fighter. He experienced enslavement in Southampton County, Virginia.
9. Gerrit Smith (1797–1874) was a white US philanthropist, politician, senator, antislavery campaigner, and social justice advocate.
10. Matthew 7:12.
11. For further information on Gerrit Smith's land initiative, see E. P. Tanner, 'Gerrit Smith: An Interpretation', *The Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association*, 5.1 (1924): pp.21–30.
12. The Smith family estate located at Peterboro, New York, is now a national US landmark. Further information is available at: <https://www.gerritsmith.org>
13. Between 1847–1853, the Great Famine, also known as the Irish Potato Famine, maintained its terrible grip on Ireland and led to mass starvation and disease and the deaths of over 1 million people.
14. Washington Irving (1783–1859) was a world-renowned white US fiction writer, historian, and diplomat.
15. The Oneida Institute, a white-founded radical antislavery educational establishment in which Black male students enrolled, was in existence between 1827–1843 and located in Whitesboro, New York.
16. Beriah Green (1795–1874) was a white US antislavery campaigner, scholar, professor, and religious minister. He served as president of the Oneida Institute.
17. Lyndon King (1796–1854) was a white US religious minister and abolitionist.
18. Mary King (1831–1894?) was the white US daughter of Lyndon King (1796–1854).
19. Anthony Ashley-Cooper (1801–1885), 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, was a white British philanthropist, social reformer, and politician.
20. Richard Davis Webb (1805–1872) was a white Irish editor, publisher, and antislavery campaigner.
21. The *Anti-Slavery Advocate* was a white-led abolitionist newspaper published between 1852–1863 in London, UK.



PLEASE TO PURCHASE THIS PAPER,
PRICE ONE PENNY.
OF A POOR AFRICAN,
 Who Escaped from Slavery with his Wife and Four Children.



NARRATIVE.

I was born at Minia, in Africa. my Father, Mother and myself, were taken to the Slave Market at New Orleans and sold to different masters when I was only eight years old. My master was a very tyrannical person He put me to learn the manufacturing of sugar and tobacco. When I entered the sugar establishment I was not aware of the process of the business, the controller was a blood-thirsty man; I came to work at 1 o'clock in the morning and before six o'clock I helped to prepare 4 tons of sugar ready to go the cooling pan; the sugar was not trampled enough, and two of the boilers exploded. The overseer came forth in a rage, and had me taken to the whipping post, called one of the drivers and then had me tied hand and foot until fogged. After I had received my punishment they scored my back to let the blood run and they washed my back with salt pickle; then I was taken and put in irons, with an iron band round my waist, and a chain and ball. Sixty weight attached to it afterwards, I was turned out with the rest of the slaves in the field, and at night was brought and returned to my former duty. I ran away but it was not long before I was overtaken by the Negro-hunters, men who are employed in the Southern States of America to catch slaves who run away. I was taken back to the Plantation and received 120 lashes, and then taken back to the public market and sold to a man named Joseph Johnson, who was very severe with me. I started to run away again and went to a gentleman I heard of, who assisted me to escape to Boston; and then I found one of the Mission Gentlemen had been sent to Montreal and I got on board the brig Elizabeth, Captain McDonald owner. I arrived in Glasgow on the 7th of last November.

New ladies and gentlemen, I have made this narrative so as to give you an account of slavery I have been in slavery 33 years. Should any gentlemen have any left-off clothes I shall be very thankful for them, as I have been in ill health since my arrival in this country. May the Lord bless the British gentlemen for their kindness to me and other negroes.

The man of colour leaving this paper will act for an answer.

JOHN COMBER.

"And they asked Him, saying, Master we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to tribute to Caesar or not?"—Matthew xxii.—4, 17.

Now, gentle christians not away,
 Nor our petition seen;
 Christ hungared on the Sabbath day,
 And plucked the ears of corn.



The Slave's Hope.

From this sore bondage I then shall be free,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead;
 Rest, in the grave, there remains yet for me,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.
 Here I expect still to suffer and toil,
 And with my heart's blood to fatten the soil;
 But Oh! I shall rest from this world of turmoil,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.

I shall be free from the tyrant's strong hand,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead,
 Not trembling hear his loud threatening command
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.
 Now they may bind me and beat when they please
 Press me with burdens which give me no ease,
 No more as their victim on me shall they seize,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.

I shall be free from their scorn and contempt,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead
 They to their malice may give a free vent,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.
 Far from their power I then shall abide,
 Safe from their envy, secure from their pride;
 And soon in the dust they will lie by my side,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.

I shall be free; O the rapturous name:
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead
 Free from the shackles and all accretal's claim,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.
 And my dear Saviour I hope then to see,
 Who gave his life as a ransom for me,
 That I in his kingdom might ever be free,
 After I'm dead,—after I'm dead.

HYMN I.

Then dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
 We love to hear of thee;
 No music's like Thy charming name,
 Nor half so sweet to me.
 O may we hear thy voice,
 In every to us speak,
 And in our praise we will rejoice,
 Thoo great Melchisedec.

Jesus shall be our theme,
 While in this world we stay,
 We'll sing of Jesus' holy name,
 When all things else decay.
 When we appear in yonder cloud,
 With all the favourites throng;
 Then we will sing more sweet, more long,
 And Christ shall be our song.



HYMN II.

Whoever shall read this narration,
 If rich or poor, woman or man;
 Of whatever creed, colour or nation,
 Resolve to do all you can,
 To loose the African fetters,
 And take him to nations among.
 Teaching him sciences, religion, and letters,
 And soon he'll sing liberty's song.
 Columbia, take Britain's example,
 Who freed her black slaves in a day;
 Columbia, on selfishness trample,
 And wash your foul slave stains away.
 Our riches, distilled from oppression,
 Will profit you nothing on high;
 An unshackled slave's prayer and blessings,
 Will more future happiness buy.
 Many slouts of delight have succeeded,
 From earth to the heavens above;
 But the shout when all slavery's ended,
 Theills their foundations shall move.

Hymn by Bishop Heber.

From Greenland's icy mountains,
 From India's coral strand;
 Where Africa's sunny fountains,
 Roll down their sunny band,
 From many an ancient river,
 From many a palm plain;
 They call us to deliver,
 Their land from error's chain.
 What though the spicy breezes,
 Blow soft on Ceylon's isle;
 Thine every prospect pleases,
 And only man be vile.
 In vain with lavish kindness,
 The gifts of God are strewn;
 The heathen in his blindness,
 Bow down to wood and stone.

Shall we whose souls are lighted,
 With wisdom from on high;
 Shall we to man beighted,
 The lang of life deny.
 Salvation! O! salvation!
 The joyful sound proclaim,
 The heart's remotest nation,
 Has learnt Messiah's name.
 Waft, waft, ye winds this story,
 And you ye waters roll;
 Till like a sea of glory,
 It spreads from pole to pole.
 Till o'er the ransomed nature,
 The Lamb for sinners slain;
 Redeemer, King, Creator,
 In bliss returns again.

PRICE ... ONE PENNY.

Figure 28 John Comber, *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children.* N.p., 1861. (National Library of Scotland.)

JOHN COMBER

(DATES UNKNOWN)

10 John Comber, *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children*. N.p., 1861.¹

Biographical History

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN about the life and works of social justice activist, author, and self-liberated freedom fighter, John Comber, who was born in 'Minnie, in Africa'. Surviving not within the pages of a stand-alone book publication but typed onto the surface of a large-sized single sheet of paper, his *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children* was printed in Britain in 1861: the first year of the US Civil War.

On sale for just 'one penny', Comber's *Narrative* circulated as a mass-produced broadside: a poster that was one among thousands of 'transitory documents created for a specific purpose, and intended to be thrown away'.² Often referred to as 'street literature' or as the 'tabloids of their day', easily affordable broadsides were a ready and popular means for the 'distribution of information' and were often produced as an integral strategy within political campaigns and fund-raising missions.³ As 'printed ephemera', it is very likely that this document was 'never meant to be kept'.⁴ A way of sharing news very quickly, 'single sheets' like Comber's typically 'carried public notices, news, speeches and songs that could be read (or sung) aloud'.⁵

A multi-part work, Comber's broadside consists of the following: his printed narrative; a Bible quotation; a poem titled 'The Slave's Hope'; three religious songs, 'Hymn I' and 'Hymn II', and a 'Hymn by Bishop Heber'. This single sheet of paper also includes three wood-block illustrations. The first provides a close-up of the profiled face of 'Queen Victoria'. The second shows a barely visible and archetypally generic and caricatured image of an erect Black figure, partially clothed, and standing next to barrels and before a ship. The third also reveals a barely visible and archetypally generic and caricatured image of a Black figure, but this time leaning on a barrel and smoking a pipe.

The anonymous creator's decision to place the profiled portrait of Queen Victoria directly above the placement of Comber's *Narrative* commits a wilful act of political violence against the social justice message and consciousness-raising purpose

of his autobiography. As a monarch who was problematically associated with white supremacist fantasies of Britain as a philanthropic nation that had ended enslavement in the Caribbean decades previously, the inclusion of Queen Victoria's portrait mediates and frames Comber's *Narrative*. As a result, white British self-aggrandising myths of freedom are given prominence over real autobiographies of Black enslavement.

'I was born at Minnie, in Africa, my father, mother and myself, were taken to the Slave Market at New Orleans and sold to different masters when I was only eight years old'; so Comber poignantly begins his personal history. Here he narrates his personal experiences as an enslaved child by memorialising his forcible capture by European enslavers on the African continent and as followed by his immediate loss of his family on their arrival in the 'Slave Market' of the US South. Labouring in the inhumane and death-inducing conditions of sugar and tobacco labour camps, Comber denounces his white enslaver as a 'tyrannical person' and his white 'controller' on the 'sugar establishment' as a 'blood-thirsty man' only to reserve the full force of his condemnation of white villainous barbarity by narrating the murderous actions of his white 'overseer'. When the 'boilers exploded', he recalls he 'had me tied hand and foot and flogged' after which 'I was taken and put in irons, with an iron band round my waist, and a chain and a ball 36lbs weight attached to it afterwards'. In a refusal to surrender to any and all acts of white murderous savagery, Comber 'ran away' in protest only to be captured and returned with the terrible result that he 'received 150 lashes'. Immediately sold to another white enslaver who was also 'very severe', Comber decided 'to run away again' and this time he succeeded: he made it into the northern states, then Canada, and eventually Glasgow, Scotland.

'Now ladies and gentlemen, I have made this narrative so as to give you an account of slavery', Comber authoritatively informs his British audiences, declaring, 'I have been in slavery 33 years'. As a man who had been in bondage for over three decades but who chose to publish a printed narrative of only two paragraphs in length, there can be no doubt that his 'account of slavery' is necessarily characterised by his own preferred ellipses and omissions and inclusion criteria. In a bold departure from his painful narration of the loss of his mother and father, Comber made the powerful decision not to share the life stories of his 'wife and four children' who 'escaped' with him: all we know of their lives is the brief reference included in his work's title. Almost certainly, he chose to maintain his silence on the lives of his wife and four children for their protection and safety.

Comber concludes his *Narrative* by issuing a heartfelt plea. 'Should any gentlemen have any left-off clothes I shall be very thankful for them, as I have been in ill health since my arrival in this country', he writes. Comber's decision to mass produce his narrative as an immediately available affordable poster was almost certainly the result of his own and his family's need for immediate relief from their poverty and destitution. All too aware of the political currency and persuasive power of appealing to white British arrogance and delusions of moral superiority Comber concludes with a blessing. No parts factual and all parts political, his final benediction is nothing less than a survival stratagem: 'May the Lord bless the British gentlemen for their kindness to me and other negroes.'

Further Reading

Primary: Archival resources

- Comber, John, *Narrative of a Poor African, Who Escaped From Slavery with his wife and four children*. N.p.: n.p., 1861. National Library of Scotland. Available online: <https://digital.nls.uk/english-ballads/archive/74629330?mode=transcription>
- 'Printed Ephemera: Three Centuries of Broad-sides and Other Printed Ephemera', Washington DC: Library of Congress. Available online: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/broad-sides-and-other-printed-ephemera/about-this-collection/>
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Secondary

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PLEASE TO PURCHASE THIS PAPER,
Price One Penny,
 OF A POOR AFRICAN,
 Who Escaped from Slavery with his Wife and Four Children.

QUEEN VICTORIA.⁶

NARRATIVE.

I was born at Minnie, in Africa, my father, mother and myself, were taken to the Slave Market at New Orleans and sold to different masters when I was only eight years old.

My master was a very tyrannical person. He put me to learn the manufacture of sugar and tobacco. When I entered the sugar establishment I was not aware of the process of the business, the controller was a blood-thirsty man; I came to work at 1 o'clock in the morning and before six o'clock I helped to prepare 4 tons of sugar ready to go to the cooling pan; the sugar was not tranated enough, and two of the boilers exploded. The overseer came forth in a rage, and had me taken to a whipping post, called one of the drivers and then had me tied hand and foot and flogged. After I had received my punishment they scored my back to let the blood run and they washed my back with salt pickle; then I was taken and put in irons, with an iron band round my waist, and a chain and a ball 36lbs weight attached to it afterwards. I was turned out with the rest of the slaves in the field, and at night was brought and returned to my former duty. I run away but it was not long before I was overtaken by the Negro-hunters, men who are employed in the Southern States of America to catch slaves who run away.) I was taken back to the Plantation and received [____?]⁷ lashes, and then taken back to the public market and sold to a man named Joseph Johnson, who was very severe with us, I started to run away again and went to a gentleman I heard of, who assisted me to escape to Boston; and then I found one of the Mission Gentlemen there he sent me to Montreal and I got on board the⁸ Brig Elizabeth, Capt. McDonald owner. I arrived in Glasgow⁹ on the 7th, of last November.

Now ladies and gentlemen, I have made this narrative so as to give you an account of slavery. I have been in slavery 33 years. Should any gentlemen have any left-off clothes I shall be very thankful for them, as I have been in ill health since my arrival in this country. May the Lord bless the British gentlemen for their kindness to me and other negroes.

The man of colour leaving this paper will call for an answer.

JOHN COMBER.

*'And they asked Him, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardeddest not the person of men Tell us therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to tribute to Caesar or not?' – Matthew xxii., 6, 17.*¹⁰

Turn, gentle christian not away,
Nor our petition scorn,
Christ hungered on the Sabbath day
And plucked the ears of corn.¹¹

The Slave's Hope¹²

From this sore bondage I then shall be free,
After I'm dead, – after I'm dead;
REST, in the grave, there remains yet for me,
After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
Here I expect still to suffer and toil,
And with my heart's blood to fatten the soil;
But Oh ! I shall rest from this world of turmoil,
After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.

I shall be free from the tyrant's strong hand,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead,
 Nor, trembling hear his loud threatening command,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 Now they may bind me and beat when they please
 Press me with burdens which give me no ease
 No more as their victim on me shall they seize,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 I shall be from their scorn and contempt,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 They to their malice may give a free vent,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 Far from their power I then shall abide.
 Safe from their envy, secure from their pride,
 And soon in the dust they will lie by my side,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 I shall be free; O the rapturous name!
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 Free from my shackles and all mortal's claim,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.
 And my dear Saviour I hope then to see,
 Who gave his life as a ransom for me,
 That I in his kingdom might ever be free,
 After I'm dead, – after I'm dead.

HYMN I.¹³

Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
 We love to hear of Thee,
 No music's like Thy charming name,
 Nor half so sweet to me.
 O may we hear Thy voice,
 In mercy to us speak.
 And in our praise we will rejoice,
 Thou great Melchisedec.¹⁴
 Jesus shall be our theme,
 While in this world we stay,
 We'll sing of Jesu's holy name,
 When all things else decay.
 When we appear in yonder cloud,
 With all the favourite throng,
 Then we will sing more sweet, more long,
 And Christ shall be our song.¹⁵

HYMN II.

Whoever shall read this narration,

If rich or poor, woman or man,
 Of whatever creed, colour or nation,
 Resolve to do all that you can.
 To loose the African's fetters,
 And take him to nations among,
 Teaching him science, religion, and letters,
 And soon he'll sing liberty's song.
 Columbia, take Britain's example,
 Who freed her black slaves in a day
 Columbia, on selfishness trample,
 And wash your foul slave stains away.
 Our riches, distilled from oppression,
 Will profit you nothing on high,
 An unshackled slave's prayer and blessings,
 Will more future happiness buy.
 Many shouts of delight have ascended,
 From earth to the heavens above,
 But the shout when all slavery's ended,
 The hills their foundations shall move.

Hymn by Bishop Heber¹⁶

From Greenland's icy mountains,
 From India's coral strand;
 Where Africa's sunny fountains,
 Roll down their sunny land.

From many an ancient river,
 From many a palmy plain
 They call us to deliver,
 Their land from error's chain.

What though the spicy breezes,
 Blow soft on Ceylon's isle,
 Though every prospect pleases,
 And only man he viles.

In vain with lavished kindness,
 The gifts of God are strewn,
 The heathen in his blindness,
 Bows down to wood and stone.

Shall we whose souls are lighted,
 With wisdom from on high,
 Shall we to man benighted,
 The lamp of life deny.

Salvation, O salvation,
 The joyful sound proclaim,
 The hearth's remotest nation,
 Has learnt Messiah's name.

Waft, waft, ye winds this story,
 And you ye waters roll,
 Till like a sea of glory,
 It spreads from pole to pole.

Till o'er the ransomed nature,
 The Lamb for sinners slain,
 Redeemer, King, Creator,
 In bliss returns again.

Price One Penny.

Notes

1. This work is held in the National Library of Scotland (reference: Crawford.EB.2140) and is accessible via the digital gallery: <https://digital.nls.uk/english-ballads/archive/74629330/#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-2038%2C0%2C6575%2C3664>
2. For further information, see 'Printed Ephemera: Three Centuries of Broad-sides and Other Printed Ephemera', Washington DC: Library of Congress, available online at: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/broad-sides-and-other-printed-ephemera/about-this-collection/>
3. See 'Printed Ephemera'; 'The Word on the Street', Edinburgh, Scotland; National Library of Scotland, available online: <https://digital.nls.uk/broad-sides/>
4. See 'Printed Ephemera'.
5. See 'The Word on the Street'.
6. This caption accompanies an image of white British monarch Queen Victoria (1819–1901) who was the ruling monarch from 1837 until the day she died.
7. This word is blank in the original document.
8. The word reads as 'tee' in the original document.
9. This word reads as 'Glasgow' in the original document.
10. Matthew 12:14.
11. Matthew 12:1. In the original publication, an image is inserted here showing a human figure standing next to barrels and in front of a ship.
12. 'The Slave's Hope' is a poem included in George Thompson's *Prison Life and Reflections* (New York: S. W. Benedict, 1848), p.349ff.
13. This hymn was authored by John Cennick, a white English religious minister and published in John Cennick, *Sacred Hymns*, 1743–1744, p.143. A copy of the hymn and further information is available at: https://hymnary.org/text/thou_dear_redeemer_dying_lamb
14. Melchizedek 'King of Righteousness', see Hebrews 7:2.
15. In the original publication, an image is inserted here showing a human figure smoking a pipe and leaning against a barrel.
16. Reginald Heber (1783–1826) was a white English bishop and author who wrote many hymns. Heber authored this hymn titled, 'The Missionary Hymn', in 1820, available online at: <https://www.bartleby.com/library/poem/2481.html>



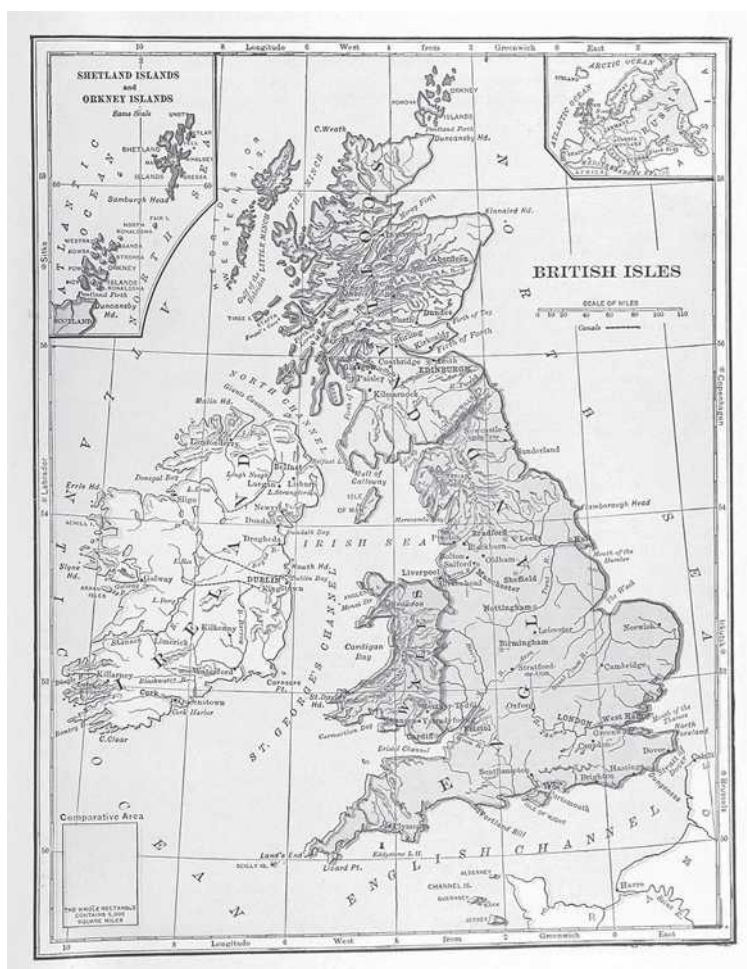


Figure 29 Map of the British Isles, 1899. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)



Figure 30 Sarah Parker Remond, c.1865. (Wikimedia Commons.)

SARAH PARKER REMOND

(1826–1894)

11 Sarah Parker Remond, ‘Sarah P. Remond’ in Matthew Davenport Hill, *Our Exemplars, Poor and Rich; or, Biographical Sketches of Men and Women Who Have, By An Extraordinary Use of Their Opportunities, Benefited their Fellow-Creatures*. London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1861, pp.276–286.¹

Biographical History

See also ‘Sarah Parker Remond’ and ‘Charles Lenox Remond’ in *Speeches*.

BORN LEGALLY FREE in a freedom that was in name only in Salem, Massachusetts, to parents Nancy Lenox Remond and John Remond, antislavery radicals, business owners, foodways specialists, political thinkers, and community leaders in their own right, Sarah Parker Remond was the ‘youngest but one of ten children.’ Living and working as a social justice campaigner in the US, Britain, and Ireland, she went onto become a renowned author, letter-writer, essayist, antislavery orator, radical reformer, scholar, and pioneering physician.

Beginning her career as an abolitionist lecturer by undertaking speaking tours in the US, Remond soon made the transatlantic journey to Britain and Ireland not only to labour as an antislavery campaigner but to continue her education. First, she enrolled as a student at Bedford College, ‘now Royal Holloway University of London.’² Later, in 1866, and after the US Civil War, Remond relocated to Florence, Italy, where she undertook extensive medical training prior to becoming a leading and influential physician for over two decades.³

In 1861 when Sarah Parker Remond was just thirty-five years old and working tirelessly as an antislavery activist by undertaking lecturing tours across Britain and Ireland, Matthew Davenport Hill (1792–1872), a Birmingham-born white lawyer, author, prison reformer, and father of a pioneering female suffragist, decided to publish her life story in his edited collection, *Our Exemplars, Poor and Rich; or, Biographical Sketches of Men and Women Who Have, By An Extraordinary Use of Their Opportunities, Benefited their Fellow-Creatures*, printed in London by the publishers Cassell, Petter, and Galpin.

Written to inspire his British readers to acts of social, moral, and philanthropic uplift for the betterment of everyone in society, Davenport readily explains in his 'preface' that he selected these 'biographical sketches' as a means to 'illustrate by facts the ability which all, in every rank, possess of adding to the stock of human happiness'. As he summarises, each of the 'authors have aimed at showing that neither the temptations which beset rank, power, and wealth, nor the hindrances interposed by poverty, ignorance, infirmity, and even disease, are sufficient to prevent man or woman, desirous of doing good, from compassing that great object'.⁴ Sarah Parker Remond was the only Black female author he chose to include in his collection as she joins a number of white women Davenport selected in a determination to right the wrongs presented by the unjust reality that 'notices of self-made women' remained 'rare' in extant biographical studies authored by men.⁵ Writing a brief introduction to Remond's narrative, Davenport expresses his gratitude that she has 'kindly favoured us with the following autobiography'. He also lays bare his heartfelt admiration for her life's work. As a reformer 'gifted with natural eloquence', Remond had already and continued to excel as an inspirational 'lecturer on the anti-slavery question' during her extended transatlantic sojourn.

Remond begins her 'biographical sketch' by celebrating the social justice labours of her mother, Nancy Lenox Remond. An antislavery radical and visionary reformer, Nancy Lenox Remond's daughter does powerful justice to her mother's life-defining importance in ideally equipping her children with all the practical and emotional skills they needed for their survival. 'Her aim seemed to be to guard, and at the same time strengthen her children, not only for the trials and duties of life, but also to enable them to meet the terrible pressure which prejudice against colour would force upon them', Remond summarises.

Living in the northern states in which US enslavement had been legally abolished decades earlier but in which 'prejudice against colour' maintained a persecutory stranglehold on all Black lives, Nancy Lenox Remond sought not only to protect but to 'strengthen her children' in order to safeguard their individual and collective capacity to endure the 'trials and duties of life' and the 'terrible pressure' generated by white racist acts of persecution, disenfranchisement, and discrimination that were an everyday reality. 'While our mother never excused those who so unjustly persecuted those whose only crime was a dark complexion, her discipline taught us to gather strength from our own souls, and we felt the full force of the fact, that to be black was no crime, but an accident of birth', Remond declares. A lifelong activist, at the same time that Nancy Lenox Remond refused to defend or deny the 'unjust persecution' of white racists, she instilled a 'discipline' in her daughters and sons by which they were able to 'gather strength' from their 'own souls' and keep mind and body as well as soul together and survive white persecutory hate.

'My strongest desire through life has been to be educated', Remond declares. Living first in Salem, Massachusetts, and later in Newport, Rhode Island, she and all the members of her family were repeatedly subjected to white racist acts of persecutory exclusion in their ongoing fight for the right to an education. Still at a very young age, she writes how she and her sisters and brothers were 'insulted and robbed of their personal rights' by being 'expelled from the school they were attending on the sole ground of our complexion'. She proves she is her mother's daughter by giving powerful vent to her feelings, 'I only wept bitter tears', only to immediately transform her pain, in just 'a few minutes', to a lifelong determination to fight against any and all such acts of white racist

discrimination. Refusing to surrender, but instead gathering her strength for a lifelong battle, she issues a declaration of war against all inequalities by stating, ‘I thought of the great injustice practised upon me, and longed for some power to help me to crush those who robbed me of my personal rights.’

At the heart of Remond’s autobiography is her heartbreaking conviction that ‘prejudice against colour has always been the one thing, above all others, which has cast its gigantic shadow over my whole life’. As she is all too powerfully aware, ‘In joy or sorrow, whether pursuing the pleasures or business of life, it has thrust itself, like a huge sphinx, darkening my pathway’. While she readily admits that the devastating impact of ‘prejudice against colour’ has had the terrible power of ‘almost overwhelming the soul constantly called to meet such a conflict’, it has ultimately failed to destroy her due to the ‘discipline’ instilled in her by her mother who ‘taught us to gather strength from our own souls’. While Remond was denied a white official education as defined by ignorance and discrimination, she thrived under a Black familial pedagogical tradition as undergirded by a philosophy of equal human rights and social justice activism. For Remond, the exclusionary racism of the Rhode Island educational system in particular was all the more barbaric, unjust, and horrifying in light of the self-evident reality that, ‘Large fortunes were formerly made by the foreign slave trade in this town, and, if report was true, the chains worn by some of the wretched victims of that inhuman traffic could still be seen in the cellars of some of the houses of the elder citizens’.

For Remond, as for thousands of African American activists, including the radical reformers whose life stories and speeches are reprinted in this volume, ‘prejudice against colour’ was ‘the legitimate offspring of American slavery’. Committing her life’s work to fighting for the ‘anti-slavery cause’ as a means not only to end the centuries of US enslavement but to eradicate all ‘prejudice against colour’, Remond laboured tirelessly in gruelling antislavery lecturing tours she undertook in cities and towns all across Britain and Ireland.

In an enduring testament to her self-appointed role as a freedom fighter, on 6 October 1859, Remond makes a powerful vow in a letter she writes from Warrington, England: ‘I shall on every occasion that I can still continue to lecture and do all I can for our cause.’⁶

Further Reading

Archives

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SARAH PARKER REMOND, 'SARAH P. REMOND'

Miss Remond, who has kindly favoured us with the following autobiography, is a colored lady of great talent and energy. She is gifted with natural eloquence, and is thus qualified for the profession she has adopted – that of a lecturer on the anti-slavery question. During her stay in England she has made a tour through some of our principal towns, where her spontaneous appeals were listened to with respect, and even with admiration.

'I was born at Salem, Massachusetts, the youngest but one of ten children of John⁷ and Nancy Remond.⁸ Salem is fourteen miles from Boston, and is one of the most healthy and pleasant of New England towns. It contains about 25,000 inhabitants, who are characterised by general intelligence, industry, and enterprise, and few towns in the States can boast of more wealth and refinement than Salem. My mother was born at Newton, seven miles from Boston, and her immediate ancestors were natives of that vicinity. Nancy Remond is a woman possessing every characteristic which can adorn or ennoble womanhood combined with the most indomitable energy. We were all trained to habits of industry, with a thorough knowledge of those domestic duties which particularly mark the genuine New England woman. With no private means, it was also most necessary. We were taught to knit and sew, and to cook every article of food placed upon the table. The most trifling affair was obliged to be well done. Her aim seemed to be to guard, and at the same time strengthen her children, not only for the trials and duties of life, but also to enable them to meet the terrible pressure which prejudice against colour would force upon them. Our home discipline was what we needed; but it did not – could not, fit us for the scorn and contempt which met us on every hand when face to face with the world, where we met a community who hated all who were identified with an enslaved race. While our mother never excused those who so unjustly persecuted those whose only crime was a dark complexion, her discipline taught us to gather strength from our own souls, and we felt the full force of the fact, that to be black was no crime, but an accident of birth.

'It seems important to state *this*, as prejudice against colour has always been the one thing, above all others, which has cast its gigantic shadow over my whole life. In joy or sorrow, whether pursuing the pleasures or business of life, it has thrust itself, like a huge sphinx, darkening my pathway, and, at time, almost overwhelming the soul constantly called to meet such a conflict. Let no one suppose that every member of the community treated us with mixed contempt and cruelty. No, thanks to the better part of human nature, there were those who would gladly have saved us from such an ordeal. Most gladly would they have enlightened with the spirit of justice a civilised people, who thus willingly insulted any of the human family. But these were few, very few; only exceptions to the general rule. As a community, the most refined and the most vulgar treated ever coloured person, so far as their personal rights were concerned, worse than *criminals*. In such an atmosphere, so well calculated to crush out all the finer feelings, and almost to make one despair, I grew to womanhood.

'My strongest desire through life has been to be educated. We had from time to time been taught to read and write a little, but received no regular instruction. I found the most exquisite pleasure in reading, and, as we had no library, I read every book which came in my way, and like *Oliver Twist*,⁹ I longed for more. Again and again, mother would endeavour to have us placed in some private school, but, being

coloured, we were refused. We soon knew the real reason, and the most bitter and indignant feelings were cherished by me against those who deprived me the opportunity of gaining knowledge. My eldest brother¹⁰ had been admitted to one of the public schools, and, at a much later period, the three youngest children, including myself, were admitted to one of the public primary schools. All went on well for a time, and the children generally treated us kindly, although we were very frequently made to feel that prejudice had taken root in their hearts. We remained in this school a very short time, passed the examination, and entered the high school for girls. In the primary school we had been taught by a lady; the principal of the high school was a gentleman. Both teachers always treated us with kindness. We had been in this school a very short time, when we were informed that the school committee contemplated founding a school exclusively for coloured children. The public schools of Salem are located in the different districts, and the established rule was, that children can only be admitted to the school in the district of their residence, and we were in the school of the district where we resided.

'The schools were then divided into separate ones for the boys and girls. These schools were also arranged according to age and capacity. Now, they intended to found a school for young and old, advanced pupils, and those less advanced; boys and girls were all to occupy but one room. The many disadvantages can be seen at a glance. It did not matter to this committee, who merely reflected the public sentiment of the community in what district a coloured child might live; it might walk in the heat of summer, and the cold of winter, to this one school. But more than all this, it was publicly branding us with degradation. The child of every foreigner could enter any public school, while the children of native-born parents were to be thus insulted and robbed of their personal rights. My father waited upon the school committee, and most earnestly protested against their proposed plan. We still continued to attend the school, but felt much anxiety. One morning, about an hour before the usual time for dismissing the pupils, the teacher informed us that we could no longer be permitted to attend the school, that he had received orders from the committee to give us this information, and added, 'I wish to accompany you home, as I wish to converse with your parents upon the matter.' Some of the pupils seemed indignant, and two expressed much sympathy. I had no words for any one; I only wept bitter tears; then, in a few minutes, I thought of the great injustice practised upon me, and longed for some power to help me to crush those who robbed me of my personal rights.

'Years have elapsed since this occurred, but the memory of it is as fresh as ever in my mind, and like the scarlet letter of Hester,¹¹ is engraven on my heart. We had been expelled from the school on the sole ground of our complexion. The teacher walked home with us, held a long conversation with our parents, said he was pained by the course taken by the school committee, but added it was owing to the prejudice against color which existed in the community. He also said we were among his best pupils, for good lessons, punctuality, &c. Add to this the fact that my father was a tax-payer for years before I was born, and it will need no extra clear vision to perceive that American prejudice against free-born men and women is as deep-rooted as it is hateful and cruel.

'In such a community, it is always easy to call forth this feeling as the occasion may require. It is always to be felt in a greater or less degree. Our parents decided we should not enter an inferior exclusive public school, and in a short time our

whole family removed to Newport, Rhode Island. Here we met the same difficulty. The schools would not receive coloured pupils. Large fortunes were formerly made by the foreign slave trade in this town, and, if report was true, the chains worn by some of the wretched victims of that inhuman traffic could still be seen in the cellars of some of the houses of the elder citizens. Be this as it may, the spirit of prejudice was exceedingly bitter in Newport. A private school was established by a few of the more influential of the coloured citizens, and for a time I was a pupil. Thus ended my school-days, and the limited teaching I had; and its desultory character was not its only disadvantage.

‘Separate churches and schools for coloured persons are an immense disadvantage to the descendants of the African race, and a great drawback to their elevation. They are based completely on prejudice against colour, the legitimate offspring of American slavery, and it is to be regretted that many well-wishers to the coloured race assist in sustaining them. Accustom any one to occupy any position in life, based upon an accident of birth, and wrong ideas will be engendered. Accustom every individual who has fair hair and blue eyes, to feel that they cannot enjoy their personal rights, that they must worship God in a separate church, must be educated apart from the general community, and – it does not matter to what race they belong – many disadvantages will be felt; and let this be done from childhood to maturity, and the impression will not be easily, if ever, effaced.

‘I never knew a pro-slavery man or woman who did not do all they could to encourage and keep up separate schools and churches, enforcing at the same time the idea that God intended such distinction to be made. There is a refinement of cruelty in the treatment of this class of persons, rather difficult to describe to those who have never seen the working of prejudice against colour. The more intelligence and refinement they possess, the more liable they are to insult. The chivalry of America seems to take immense satisfaction in insulting those who will feel it the most keenly. It is, in fact, considered presuming for any coloured man or woman to demand their just rights. In New York, Philadelphia, and other cities, they are excluded from public hotels, and are not allowed to ride in an omnibus. In Philadelphia, the managers of one of the finest halls have an established rule that on no public occasion shall any coloured person be admitted. Men, women, and children, have been obliged to remain on the decks of steam-boats all night, travelling from Newport and Providence to New York, the coldest nights in winter; and an intimate personal friend of mine took cold on one of these boats, and was the victim of consumption in consequence. Again, and again, persons have been ordered from places of amusement, and in some instances, forcibly taken out. I was myself forcibly removed from the Howard Athenaeum,¹² in the city of Boston, and my arm injured; and after this, on the public bills, could be seen announced that coloured persons could only be admitted to a particular part of the house. The press of Boston, as a rule, encouraged this proscription, and one of the leading papers put forth an elaborate article, in every way worthy of the spirit of hatred, against a race guilty of no crime, but having a complexion which identifies them with a proscribed race.

‘In the meantime we had returned to our native town. I had now reached an age when my services were more required at home, as every member of the family was expected to contribute a share toward the general whole. We left Newport with some regret. The coloured population was of an elevated character, and for

industry, morality, and native intellect, would compare favourably with any class in the community. Our social relations had been pleasant, and the natural beauties of Newport were most enchanting. Although I had few leisure hours, I read more or less daily. Our home was constantly supplied with the best daily and weekly newspapers, and I could obtain from public libraries, and often from the private libraries of friends, some of the best English and American literature. These were resources of which *even* prejudice could not deprive me. A book once obtained, I could peruse it with pleasure and profit. When some friend would play on some favourite musical instrument, or sing a song, no negro hater could rob me of the pleasure I enjoyed. When some abolitionist who had buried all prejudice against colour, which education and habit had taught – whose wealth of intellect and accumulated knowledge was the admiration of even those who placed no value on the principles of justice and humanity, which the abolitionists of the States have ever inculcated – when such a one was the guest of my parents, I treasured up in the store-house of memory the information derived from conversations in the society of some of the most gifted of the sons and daughters of America, and whose genius and disinterested devotion to the cause of the American slave have stamped themselves indelibly upon the age in which they live. These opportunities were not frequent, but they were valuable. Reading was the staple and never-failing resource.

‘Persons accustomed to find no obstacle in their way to improvement, except such as come as a matter of course, can little understand the feelings of those who have not only all which is the lot of any one, but an accumulation of obstacles to surmount, engendered by prejudice. American politics claimed my attention, but the influence derived from that prolific source was not elevating. If some matter-of-fact historian should write the political history of the United States, from the formation of the government until the present time, it might serve as a warning to future generations, but would neither elevate humanity, nor advance the moral progress of the world.

‘My statements thus far have been made in reference to the coloured population of the free States. In the Southern Slave States, quite a different order of things prevails, and the laws in reference to the coloured race, whether bond or free, are cruel in the extreme. And although in some of the free States the treatment (in some instances) of the coloured people has been much improved by the efforts of the abolitionists, still the laws which emanate from the compromises of the constitution, as the Fugitive Slave Law,¹³ and the Dred Scott decision, are most keenly felt by all the coloured race; – the Fugitive Slave Law, which returns into bondage every slave who seeks an asylum in a free State from the slave hunters and their bloodhounds, who in many instances have kidnapped free persons of colour; the Dred Scott decision, which declares that ‘black men and women have no rights which white men are bound to respect,’¹⁴ completely annihilating the citizenship of every coloured American; also, the inhuman slave laws of the slave States, which place every slave at the complete mercy of the master, – laws which prevent any black person from giving testimony in a court of justice against a white person, no matter what outrage may have been committed upon the victim, and who, consequently, can make no appeal to the laws of the land.

‘Previous to the year 1829, no decided effort had been made in behalf of the slave population. Now, a young man, a native of the State of Massachusetts, essentially a man of the people, demands the immediate emancipation of every slave, as the right

of the victim, and the duty of the master. His clarion voice is heard, and the nation wonders. What? the negro a man! The American people had never dreamed that the slaves had rights in common with themselves, and a demand based upon justice filled the people with consternation! They considered the coloured race as so many beasts of burthen. My mother hailed the advent of this young and noble *apostle of liberty* with enthusiasm, and among my earliest impressions is mingled the name of that now venerated friend of the oppressed, William L. Garrison.¹⁵ As years rolled on, I became more and more interested in every effort made in behalf of the enslaved. The germ of a glorious reform was now planted, and had taken root; the American Anti-Slavery Society¹⁶ was founded, based upon principles which, in every age, had broken the bonds of the oppressor, and elevated humanity. Auxiliary societies were formed in different localities of the free States, and a nucleus formed, around which the friends of freedom have rallied. Although mobocracy and various kinds of persecution met them on every hand, all who had counted the cost, and were in earnest, still pursued their way, trusting in the justice of their cause. My eldest brother,¹⁷ early in the conflict, publicly advocated the cause of his enslaved countrymen, and from my earliest days, until I left the States, fifteen months since, I have attended the public meetings of the abolitionists. I am grateful beyond expression for the many influences which led me to become familiar with the principles and mode of action destined to completely upset that vile system of American chattel slavery, which is, at the present time, demoralising the various ramifications of the country.

As time rolled on, the antagonism between freedom and slavery became more and more conflicting. I was led to investigate, to the best of my ability, the causes from which sprang such conflicting principles. At the same time, convinced that the anti-slavery element was the only source of hope for the slave, I also endeavoured to acquaint myself with the operations of the friends of freedom, whose principles will finally emancipate the bondmen.

'In 1857 I was urged by a few friends to speak in public. A defective education, and a pro-slavery atmosphere, are not the best incentives for such a purpose. After much consideration, and encouraged by one of the noblest women of my native State, one who had made many sacrifices, and spent the best years of her life in publicly advocating the cause of the slave, I started on my first anti-slavery tour, in company with my brother Charles L. Remond. We travelled in the State of New York. Upon the obstacles which met me after this determination I do not think it necessary to dwell. I was quite determined to persevere. I was always kindly and warmly welcomed by the most earnest friends of the slave. From 1857 until within one week of my sailing for England, December 29th, 1858, from time to time I continued to speak in public. I had an intense desire to visit England, that I might for a time enjoy freedom, and I hoped to serve the anti-slavery cause at the same time.'

Miss Remond has a sister, Mrs. Putnam,¹⁸ who came to England as a first-class passenger in an English steam-vessel, highly subsidised by the British Government for the transport of the mails. The captain, with the concurrence of the owners, subjected this lady and her family to the indignity of being refused places at the public table, merely on the ground that American passengers objected to associate with persons of colour. This unworthy submission to foreign prejudice was denounced by Lord Brougham¹⁹ in Parliament, and was the subject of indignant comment in many of our journals. We are glad to record that on her return, in a mail-packet belonging to the

Company by which she had been thus treated, Mrs. Putnam was permitted to take her place at table without objection, although American slaveowners were among the passengers. An auspicious omen!

Miss Remond is now (September, 1860) a student at the Ladies' College, in Bedford-square, London, availing herself with ardour of her long-sought opportunity for reaping the advantages of a liberal education.

Notes

1. This work has been digitised by Google Books and is available at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Our_exemplars_poor_and_rich_or_Biographi/5sY5AAAAcAAJ?hl=en
2. See John R. Oldfield, *The Ties that Bind: Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Reform, c. 1820–1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p.82.
3. Lucy Jordan, 'A Voice for Freedom: The Life of Sarah Parker Remond', available online: <https://london.ac.uk/news-and-opinion/leading-women/a-voice-freedom-life-sarah-parker-remond>
4. Davenport Hill, 'Preface' to *Our Exemplars, Poor and Rich*, p.xi.
5. *Ibid.*, p.x.
6. Sarah Parker Remond, 'To Maria Weston Chapman', 6 October 1859, in C. Peter Ripley, ed. (with George E. Carter, Jeffery S. Rossback, Roy E. Finkenbine, Fiona E. Spiers, Debra Susie), *The Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol I: The British Isles, 1830–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p.462.
7. A renowned social justice campaigner, business owner, foodways specialist, restaurant owner, and hairdresser, John Remond (1786–1874) was born on the island of Curaçao and migrated to the US as a young child. See Burnett, 'The Remonds of Salem'.
8. An inspirational antislavery advocate, radical reformer, foodways specialist, business owner, and baker, Nancy Lenox Remond was the daughter of Cornelius Lenox, a Revolutionary War veteran, leading hairdresser, and caterer. See Burnett, 'The Remonds of Salem'.
9. Oliver Twist is the famous white English child who asked for more in the novel of the same title published in 1838 by white British author, Charles Dickens (1812–1870). See Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist; or, the Parish Boy's Progress. By 'Boz'* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838). Available online: <https://archive.org/details/olivertwistorpar03dick>
10. Charles Lenox Remond (1810–1873). See 'Charles Lenox Remond' in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 55–56).
11. Hester is the white US female protagonist of the novel, *The Scarlet Letter: A Romance*, published in 1850 by white US novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864). She was forced by the white Puritan community of seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts to wear the 'scarlet letter' 'A' as a punishment for charges of adultery. Available online: <https://archive.org/details/scarletletter00hawt>
12. The Howard Athenaeum (1845–1953) was a famous theatre located in Boston, Massachusetts.
13. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
14. Robert B. Taney (1777–1864) was a white US Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who was responsible for the white supremacist, discriminatory, and persecutory ruling in the

Dred Scott v. Sandford case of 1857 in which he villainously decreed that Black people have ‘no rights which the white man was bound to respect’. For access to Taney’s decision in full, see *The Dred Scott Decision: Opinion of Justice Roger B. Taney, in the Dred Scott Case* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton & Co., 1863).

15. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879).
16. The American Anti-Slavery Society was an antislavery organisation founded by William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) and other abolitionists in 1833; it was disbanded in 1870.
17. Charles Lenox Remond (1810–1873). See the ‘Charles Lenox Remond’ entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 55–56).
18. Caroline Remond Putnum (1826–1908) was an antislavery activist, social justice campaigner, business owner, and specialist in wig manufacture and hair-care products. See Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African-American Women* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
19. Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868).



THE HARBINGER:

The Magazine

OF THE

COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION

AND THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

VOL. I. NEW SERIES,

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1863.

Figure 31 Front page of *The Harbinger: A Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion*. London: Ward & Co., 1863. (Google Books.)

JAMES CHEENEY THOMPSON

(DATES UNKNOWN)

12 James Cheeney Thompson, 'Remarkable Escape from Slavery', in *The Harbinger: A Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion*. London: Ward & Co., September 1863, pp.267–271.¹

Biographical History

See also 'James Cheeney Thompson' in *Speeches*.

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN about the life and works of James Cheeney Thompson, a Virginian born self-liberated freedom fighter, social justice campaigner, and religious missionary, beyond the biographical information he included in his narrative, 'Remarkable Escape from Slavery', published in *The Harbinger: A Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* in London in 1863.

The unforgivable reality that if we rely solely on the dominant white supremacist US and UK archive for information it is as if James Cheeney Thompson never existed, makes it a first urgent priority that not only his autobiography, but the autobiographies of thousands of Black authors and activists, are not only made widely accessible but are accorded their pre-eminent position in the official records as well as their due recognition in literary history and extant scholarship. As published in the pages of *The Harbinger*, Thompson's narrative is a transcription, authored by an unknown and unnamed transcriber, of a lecture he originally delivered in the 'Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel' located in 'Great Malvern', Worcestershire, and which he 'illustrated by diagrams' that have not survived.

'Our master died when I was five years old, and the whole estate being sold by auction, my father, mother, brothers, and sisters of my mother, whom I met with years after, I have not seen or heard of any of them since that time', so Thompson painfully begins his lecture by narrating his personal grief in the loss of all his family members as a young child. Burdened by inconsolable emotional pain, he experiences unimaginable physical pain after being sold to a white enslaver in Cuba. At the hands of his barbaric torturer, Thompson was subjected to 'habitual cruelty'. As he remembers, he 'frequently' tied 'me to a bedpost of a morning' and immediately began 'beating me until the blood ran down my back'. The fact that his white enslaver was a 'student' offers

categorical confirmation that western systems of education and learning – all the spurious arguments used by white racist apologists that enlightenment was emancipation to the contrary – was a guarantee not of humanity but of inhumanity.

For Thompson, as for thousands of self-liberated orators and authors, including the African American activists writing and speaking in this volume, a determination to transform white racist violence into a platform for Black activist liberation was a first urgent intellectual and political priority. Speaking of the sadistic torture he and other enslaved people experienced at the hands of a white US ‘baker,’ Thompson informs his readers, ‘if we had not sold a certain quantity’ of bread he would ensure that they ‘were punished by being chained by the leg to iron vessels in the cellar, and compelled all day on Sunday to pound corn with a large heavy pestle, with frequently the addition of a severe beating on a plank, to which we were fastened with straps.’ No capitulator to white violence, Thompson succeeded in transforming his tool of oppression into a weapon of liberation. As he confides, ‘it occurred to me that I might, with a blow of the heavy pestle, break the link that connected the chain to the iron mortar.’ While his strategy worked, he endured repeated failed liberation attempts as a result of which he barely survived the life-threatening violence to which he was repeatedly subjected by numerous white enslavers before he finally made it to freedom.

Thompson endured many near-death experiences of starvation and persecution following his self-liberation from enslavement, including his period of incarceration in a Virginia penitentiary. As he remembers, he was apprehended by his white enslaver only to fearlessly deny his demands – ‘I refused to tell him how I had come so great a distance in so short a time’ – with terrible results: ‘he became enraged, and branded me so dreadfully that I scarcely expected to live.’ Barely surviving with his life, Thompson recalls, ‘I lay ill in the prison for eight months.’ He readily admits that ‘to this day’ his body carries the imprint of his scars as ‘my flesh lies in ridges on my left side.’ And yet, while he refuses to shy away from denouncing white murderous savagery, Thompson also foregrounds Black radical traditions of liberation. In remembering his terror of the dogs who were trained to hunt down, maim, and kill ‘fugitive’ persons on the run from enslavement by stating, ‘My principal fear had been of the blood-hounds, which were constantly used in that part for tracking runaways,’ he also recalls his and his enslaved community’s powerful solution. ‘I had obtained from a negro a bottle of some liquid, which he assured me would destroy the scent,’ he writes. A powerful testament to hidden histories of Black activism, agency, and artistry, over the centuries enslaved people of all generations devised successful strategies of subversion in order to defeat white totalitarian power and tyrannical oppression.

No more powerful confirmation of untold centuries of Black liberation movements can be found than in Thompson’s admission that he eventually secured his successful liberation from enslavement after he had ‘met with some members of the underground railway, a secret society formed for the purpose of assisting slaves to escape into Canada.’ A ‘secret society’ that had been in existence in various forms for centuries, and certainly as long as enslavement had existed, the Underground Railroad was the clandestine system of safe houses and routes by which Black liberators and their allies aided enslaved people to freedom. ‘After innumerable difficulties and dangers,

myself, and five other slaves, under the guidance of the pilot appointed by this society, at last approached one of the bridges connecting Canada with the United States,' Thompson recalls. Remembering that their fight was far from over, he writes, 'Here we were attacked by some men who make it their business to look out for runaways at these points,' with the result that 'An obstinate contest ensued,' but to no avail. As he jubilantly celebrates, white threats of attack were no match for a triumphant Black heroism: 'we being the larger number disarmed our opponents, and succeeded in reaching the long-dreamed-of land of freedom.'

Now living and working in Liverpool at the time of delivering his lecture to his audiences in Great Malvern, Worcestershire, Thompson appeals to their benevolence for support for his recent practical, philanthropic, and spiritual labours. 'I have been learning to manage the machinery of a cotton-mill, under the auspices of the Foreign Aid Society, and am to be sent by them to Abbeo-Keuta, to teach the natives in the cotton districts the use of the cotton gins,' he declares, informing his listeners, 'before doing this, I desire to complete my education, in order that I may also work among them as a missionary, and carry the Gospel to that part of Africa.' As a man who had experienced enslavement and who had secured his self-liberation, he sought to devote 'my life' to the 'service' of God and to his 'work' as a 'missionary' responsible for 'carrying the Gospel' to 'Abbeo-Keuta' or Abeokuta in southwest Nigeria.



Figure 32 St George's Hall, Liverpool, England, c.1890s. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

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REMARKABLE ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY

THE following interesting sketch of the principal incidents in the life of Mr. J. C. Thompson, an escaped slave, from Richmond, Virginia, was recently related by himself in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel,² Great Malvern,³ in the form of a lecture, illustrated by diagrams,⁴ and was listened to throughout with intense interest.

Mr. Thompson said – I was born near Warrington, in Virginia, my parents being slaves in the possession of Capt. Reed. Our master died when I was five years old, and the whole estate being sold by auction, my father, mother, brothers, and sisters of my mother, whom I met with years after, I have not seen or heard of any of them since that time.

I was purchased by a family, and removed to Cuba, where, after a year or two, I was appointed the personal attendant of one of the sons, who was a student

at Athens, about 60 miles from Havannah. This youth, whose name was Lewis, treated me with habitual cruelty, frequently tying me to a bedpost of a morning, and beating me until the blood ran down my back. Not requiring me during the greater part of the day, he hired me out to a butcher in the neighbourhood, who treated me with some amount of kindness. When I was about nine years of age, Mr. Lewis went away to be married, and not wanting my services any longer, he left me with a baker, named Pritchard. This man was one who did everything, even the most cruel acts, in a jovial manner, and seemed positively to find amusement in torturing his slaves. He had several boys about my own age, and our duty was to carry bread every day round an appointed district. At the end of the week, if we had not sold a certain quantity, we were punished by being chained by the leg to iron vessels in the cellar, and compelled all day on Sunday to pound corn with a large heavy pestle, with frequently the addition of a severe beating on a plank, to which we were fastened with straps. As this cruelty gradually increased, and the whip was more frequently used, we began to be afraid to go home on Saturday nights, and so, managing secretly to return the basket to the house or cellar, we ran away into the woods – not with any idea of obtaining freedom, for we had never heard of such a thing, but merely for the sake of escaping a dreaded punishment for the present. We were always caught and brought back to him in the course of a few days, or at most a week, when we, of course, received yet harder punishment. At last the three years for which I was hired had nearly passed, and I determined to run away to Mr. Lewis, and tell him how badly I was treated, and beg him to send me somewhere else. Just then I happened to be chained in the cellar, working out a longer penance than usual, and the baker being out, and his wife busy in the shop, it occurred to me that I might, with a blow of the heavy pestle, break the link that connected the chain to the iron mortar; I watched my opportunity, and succeeded; then, slipping the chain up the leg of my trowsers, holding the middle of it with my hand in my pocket, and stiffening my leg, to prevent the clanking sound of the iron, I contrived to get out of the town unmolested. Some days passed in the woods before I could meet with a coloured smith, to relieve me of my chain, and then my leg was so fearfully swollen, that I felt excruciating pain in every nerve of my body. I succeeded at last in reaching my old home, but found only the agent there, who, so far from granting my request, only kept me till the baker could arrive to claim me again. Passing over the events of several years, during which, after Mr. Lewis had sold me, I changed hands at least half-a-dozen times, I found myself hired out as a waiter at a New Orleans hotel, and there it was that I first conceived the idea of gaining my freedom, for up to this time I had no knowledge that there was any country or state where slavery did not exist.

There was an Englishman staying at the hotel, who could speak Portuguese, which I understood, though my native language is Spanish; and as he noticed me with unusual kindness, I felt pleasure in waiting on him with extra attention. One evening I was ordered to light a fire in his room, and while doing so he entered into conversation with me, and saying it was a pity I was a slave, began to tell me about the free States and England. He even asked me to sit down. After locking the door, I tried; but it was so strange to sit down with a white man, that I felt uncomfortable, and was glad to stand and listen to him. Evening after evening I made errands to his room, for the sake of continuing the conversation, and having gained as much information about the free

States, Canada, and England as I could, I determined that as soon as I was old enough, I would try for my freedom.

My next master was a Mr. Dixon, a rich planter, who was one of the greatest drunkards I ever knew. It was my duty to go with him to his drinking parties, and drive him home at night in the buggy, he lying helplessly drunk across my knees. One night, as we were thus driving along a difficult road through the woods, he suddenly roused himself up, and, twisting his hand in the reins, startled the horses, who set off in a furious gallop, overturning the buggy against a tree, and smashing it to pieces. I managed in some way to take my master to the nearest house, from which he was afterwards removed home. He would frequently wake me up in the middle of the night, and send me some miles on horseback, to procure liquor. To avoid this, I at last used to carry bottles with me, and get them filled at the places where he was accustomed to drink; but discovering this, he often defeated my plan by calling on a friend on the way home, when they would consume between them all I had provided. One night when this had been the case, he woke up after having partly slept off the effects of the liquor, and called for something to drink. I thought he spoke in his sleep, and only replying that there was none, fell asleep again; upon this he got out of bed, and, finding his boots, beat me about the head and face as I lay, so unmercifully that I was almost choked with the blood, and the marks of the gashes remain on my face to this day. I escaped into the yard, and Albert, one of my fellow-servants, bound up my wounds, and then I told him I was determined to run away that day.

My principal fear had been of the blood-hounds, which were constantly used in that part for tracking runaways, and some time previously I had obtained from a negro a bottle of some liquid, which he assured me would destroy the scent. I now determined to trust in this, and so washed my whole body most carefully with it, and then hid myself in a swamp close at the bottom of the garden, having agreed with Albert to return the next night to hear all he could gather of my master's plans for capturing me. Soon after daybreak I heard my master shouting to me from the verandah, in great anger at my absence; and not being able to hear anything of me, he set off early to engage the blood-hounds to track me. They started from the house, but the dogs found no scent, so I suppose the liquid was efficacious.

Two or three days passed, and I slept at night in Albert's hut; when my master returned from his fruitless search, promising himself, however, that eventually he must catch me, as he had advertised largely in all the neighbourhood round about. It was now my turn to leave the plantation, and having obtained from Albert all the information he could give me as to a roundabout way of reaching Enfield, I started with only the value of a few pence in my pockets – change I was to have given to my master the morning I hid myself.

During this painful journey I suffered terribly from hunger, as I dared not make many attempts to procure food, and I reached Enfield railway station, weak from being almost famished. As I crept stealthily round the back of the station, wondering how I should venture into the refreshment room, a train came in, and assuming the manner of a gentleman's servant looking after the luggage, I made myself very busy. I then thought I might venture to procure something to eat, and taking out my money, asked for a ticket to the kitchen dining room. The man looked suspiciously at me, and said, 'Who is your master?' I felt in a fix, but caught sight of a gentleman walking at some distance on another platform, and said 'There he is.' The person

was satisfied, and gave me the necessary ticket – I then went to the dining room, and by accosting different attendants, managed to satisfy a ravenous appetite without attracting attention.

After this I walked boldly up and down the platform, wondering what I should do next, when all at once the thought struck me that if I could climb up unperceived on to the roof of one of the carriages, I might do some part of my journey in that way. Favoured by the darkness of the station, which was not lighted as they are in England, I clambered to the top of a saloon, and lay on my face, holding on by the funnel of the stove-pipe. I remained thus as long as the darkness made it safe, and then hid myself during the day. While travelling thus I suffered terribly from the cold, which so benumbed me that I had often to crawl away from the carriage as daylight appeared, being quite unable to walk. However, feeling it to be my only chance for liberty, I continued this plan until I reached Richmond, in Virginia, always getting down from the carriage just before it became light, and during the day hiding in the vicinity of the station, where I could sometimes beg a little food. Here I met with one of the coloured men employed about the station, and he told me how many stations I was from Gordonsville,⁵ where I was to change for another line. I suppose the train stopped at one more station than he had expected, for on getting down I saw at once I had made a mistake, and had discontinued my journey too soon. Seeing a coloured man alone, as I thought, near the platform, I said ‘Uncle, is this Gordonsville?’ ‘No,’ he said, ‘it is the next station.’ At that moment the station master, who, unperceived by me, had overheard my question, seized me, and because I could show no pass, sent me to Farquhar jail, very near my native place. I was recognised by means of the advertisement, and my master sent for. He came, although he scarcely expected to find his slave, not comprehending how I could have come 1,400 miles in so short a time. As he intended to sell me, he did not at first punish me so very severely, but when I refused to tell him how I had come so great a distance in so short a time, he became enraged, and branded me so dreadfully that I scarcely expected to live. I lay ill in the prison for eight months, and to this day my flesh lies in ridges on my left side. Now I see that even this frightful suffering was wisely ordered for me by God, as it prevented my returning much farther south than Richmond.

As soon as I had recovered my master sent word I was to be sold, and whilst waiting for this in Robert Lumbkins’ jail a plan of escape suggested itself to me. The men and women occupied different wards, which opened into each other; but the men’s ward was locked up at night, whilst the women had the liberty of the yard. I confided my plan to a woman, and persuaded her to lend me a dress, and allow me to conceal myself in her room as night came on. She consented to help me, and towards evening I pretended some errand into the woman’s ward, and, slipping into her room, put on the dress which she provided, tied up my head in a large handkerchief, and lay down on the bed as though I were ill. There I remained undiscovered until night, then, having taken off my disguise, and well bandaged my hands and feet with rags to protect them from the glass on the wall, I once more effected my escape by climbing out of the yard.

Again travelling by the same means that I had previously employed, I succeeded in reaching Baltimore, and ventured to walk about some of the less frequented streets of the city. At last, meeting a coloured man whom I thought I could trust, I said, ‘Uncle, I want to rest for a little time; can you tell me of a place where I can lie down.’ He

said, 'I see you are in trouble, my boy, come with me.' He took me to his house, and while I slept he went out, as he told me, to try to get a situation for me. When he came back he said he had found a Quaker family who wanted a servant, and who would, at a suitable time, help me to obtain a liberty. I was filled with gratitude to him; and because I had nothing else I gave him a ring, to which he took a fancy, but which it pained me to part with, because it was my mother's. At night he conducted me to the Quaker's house, and with mutual expressions of friendship, and of the deepest gratitude on my part, he left me. The supposed Quaker conversed with me for some minutes in a room which opened in the street, but on his getting up to go to an inner part of the house, I noticed that he first locked the street door, but did not take the key out of it. Then, leaving the inner door open behind him, I saw a man standing in the next room, whom I recognised as a slave trader I had seen at Richmond, and then I knew, to my despair, that I was betrayed, and was again in jail. It was the work of a moment to rush to the door, open it, and gaining the street, slam it in the face of the assumed Quaker and his companion, who followed me; but again I succeeded in escaping.

Resuming my former mode of travelling I succeeded in reaching within five miles of the Free States. It was intensely cold, and the snow was so deep upon the ground that I dare not leave the high road; but as I walked on in the grey light of the early morning I was suddenly seized by a toll-keeper, and having no pass to show, was again lodged in jail. I was purchased by General MacMurray, a trader to the rice swamps of Georgia, who, knowing me to be a determined runaway, kept me carefully chained and watched. He was then proceeding southwards with a large gang of slaves, and during the journey we came to a place where we had to change to another train. There was considerable confusion, owing to there not being enough porters to remove the baggage sufficiently quick, and General MacMurray, afraid of being delayed, hastily unlocked me and the man to whom I was chained and sent us to help. At the last moment he hurried both of us into the same saloon with himself, without again locking our chains. When the train was at full speed, and going at a much greater rate than an English express, he walked, according to American custom, into the smoking carriage. Without a moment's hesitation I also left the carriage, and went on to the platform outside the door, there waited until the train came to a high embankment, and after an awful moment of breathless suspense, closed my eyes, and sprang from the carriage. I rolled over and over down the bank, and was of course terribly bruised, but not otherwise seriously hurt, and was able to crawl away when I reached the bottom, and hide myself in the woods.

After a time I met with some members of the underground railway, a secret society formed for the purpose of assisting slaves to escape into Canada. After innumerable difficulties and dangers, myself, and five other slaves, under the guidance of the pilot appointed by this society, at last approached one of the bridges connecting Canada with the United States, and here we were attacked by some men who make it their business to look out for runaways at these points. At obstinate contest ensued, but we being the larger number disarmed our opponents, and succeeded in reaching the long-dreamed-of land of freedom, where the first thing we did was to thank God for having brought us safely through so many perils.

For some time after my escape I served as a waiter at a large hotel on the Canadian side of the Niagara falls, but I suffered so severely from the cold, that, by the advice

of my friends, I went to New York, where I joined a coloured man in establishing a hair-dressing business, and where for a time everything seemed safe and prosperous. I began to learn to read, and was saving money for the purpose of buying my mother, when one day I was warned by a friendly policeman, that some one who recognized me had obtained a warrant for my apprehension under that most diabolical of all acts, the Fugitive Slave Law.⁶ I had only time to fly to an obscure part of the city, and there lie hidden, while my friends brought me my clothes, and then, disguised as a Portuguese, I managed to get on board the steamer 'Baltimore,' bound for Liverpool, which I received in safety.

During the time I was trying to effect my escape, and while I was suffering in prison, I vowed that if God would hear my prayers for liberty, the rest of my life should be entirely devoted to his service.

I have been learning to manage the machinery of a cotton-mill, under the auspices of the Foreign Aid Society, and am to be sent by them to Abbeo-Keuta,⁷ to teach the natives in the cotton districts the use of the cotton gins; but before doing this, I desire to complete my education, in order that I may also work among them as a missionary, and carry the Gospel to that part of Africa.

It is perhaps necessary to add that all Mr. Thompson's statements can be satisfactorily endorsed, and that he has introductions and recommendations from clergymen, ministers, and other gentlemen of the highest standing.

Notes

1. This narrative was published in *The Harbinger: A Magazine of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* (London: Ward & Co., 1863, pp.267–271) and can be found online via Google Books: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Harbinger_Or_New_Magazine_of_the_Cou/cicEAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=james+thompson+countess+huntington+1861&pg=PA152&printsec=frontcover
2. The Countess of Huntingdon was Selina Hastings (1707–1791), a prominent white English religious figure. The chapel in Great Malvern was originally founded in 1827.
3. Great Malvern, Worcestershire.
4. Thompson exhibited drawings and paintings of his own composition. See *Speeches* (Speech no. 60). See also: Anon., 'Slavery', *Wrexham Weekly Advertiser*, 3 June 1865, p.6.
5. Gordonsville is a town located in Orange County, Virginia.
6. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all 'fugitive' persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal government. A transcription of this legislation is available online at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
7. Abeokuta is the capital city of Ogun State located in southwest Nigeria.



Horrors
OF THE
VIRGINIAN SLAVE TRADE
AND OF THE
SLAVE-REARING PLANTATIONS.

The True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Virginian Slave,

NOW ON LONDON,

ON WHOSE BODY ARE ELEVEN SCARS
LEFT BY TORTURES WHICH WERE INFLICTED BY HER MASTER,
HER OWN FATHER.

TOGETHER WITH EXTRACTS FROM THE LAWS OF VIRGINIA, SHOWING THAT AGAINST
THESE BARBARITIES THE LAW GIVES NOT THE SMALLEST PROTECTION
TO THE SLAVE, BUT THE REVERSE.

BY

JOHN HAWKINS SIMPSON,

Author of

'Poems of Olaf and Mayo Mythology,' 'Napoleon III., on England,' &c.

LONDON:

A. W. BENNETT, 5 BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT.

1863.

The right of translation is reserved.

Figure 33 Title page from Dinah Hope Browne and John Hawkins Simpson, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave*. London: A. W. Bennett, 1863. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

DINAH HOPE BROWNE

(1815–DATE UNKNOWN)

13 John Hawkins Simpson, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave*. London: A. W. Bennett, 1863.¹

Biographical History

IF VERY LITTLE biographical information survives on white British author John Hawkins Simpson, Dinah Hope Browne, the Virginian-born self-liberated Black female protagonist of his narrative, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave*, published in London in 1863 by A. W. Bennett, has been entirely obliterated from the white supremacist UK and US official histories, archives, and narratives.

An ‘as told to’ autobiography published against the backdrop of the US Civil War, the title page of *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade* immediately betrays Simpson’s white paternalist biases and the fight Browne had on her hands to carve out a space for the expression of Black female agency, authority, and autonomy against the dehumanising agenda of her white British amanuensis.² A traumatising testament not to Browne’s activism or agency but to her body as a site of wounding, Simpson’s frontispiece text proclaims that she is a woman ‘on whose body are eleven scars which were inflicted by her master’. As one among thousands of self-liberated Black female narrators who had no choice but to rely on a white interviewer-author – including world-renowned freedom fighters Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, among many more – Dinah Browne fought a double fight. Her first was against the violent persecutions she experienced at the hands of her white enslavers as an enslaved woman living in enslavement in the US. Later, living a new life as a legally free Black woman in the UK and battling against the nation’s prejudices, her second fight was not only against the paternalist biases of her white supporters, such as Simpson, but in opposition to the traumatising acts of discrimination, disenfranchisement, and persecution she endured at the hands of white British racists in a nation that mythically proclaimed itself as the bulwark of human liberty and actually practised and perpetuated all forms of injustice.

‘The story of Dinah is written with no attempt at elegance of style,’ Simpson declares in his ‘preface’. As a white, British, male author who had published ornate works on

white male historical figures, including his work dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, his decision not to apply the same level of respect and dedicated attention to the life of Browne that he had given to his biography of a French military general is politically damning. As he writes, his deliberate strategy was to abandon his capabilities as a literary author on the grounds that, 'My aim was, not to spin out a long tale, and not to introduce anything at all of an imaginary nature.' The antithesis of a literary interpreter or a respectful co-author, Simpson appoints himself as judge and jury of Browne's oral testimony. 'It took me five days to take notes from her word of mouth,' he explains as he was at pains to inform his readers that, 'those notes were answers to questions and cross-questions searching as I could make them'.

As a woman who had effected her self-liberation from a life of torture, persecution, abuse, and near-death experiences in enslavement, Browne endured horrifying trials as a free woman labouring to communicate her story to a white man who saw her, first and foremost, as a body of evidence rather than as a living, breathing human being who was his intellectual, political, moral, and social superior. At the same time, however, Simpson's declaration, 'I have merely connected the answers as briefly as possible,' suggests he chose to include minimal personal commentary across the pages of his work. Here he provides us with hope that the recovery of Browne's voice, perspective, and authorship is possible.

At the heart of Browne's narrative is her life story as a daughter, a mother, and a wife as she poignantly shares her own and her family's experiences during enslavement. Beginning with the tragic death of 'her mother Priscilla' who 'died of consumption when Di was only six months old,' Browne shares her maternal ancestor's brief biography with Simpson who writes, 'She had been a black house servant, and her master was always looked upon by his own family as the father of her little girl, as also of another child which had died before the birth of Di.' According to her powerful personal testimony, Browne not only lays bare her white enslaver's identity as her father but also communicates her mother's unimaginable grief in the loss of an unnamed 'child who had died.' A life-giving source of hope in the face of despair, Browne testifies to the importance of intergenerational family relationships among enslaved families for individual and collective survival. As Simpson records, 'When Priscilla died the baby was taken care of by its grandparents in their own shanty.'

Browne's autobiography is a memorial not to Black female martyrdom but to Black female liberation. While Simpson provides a graphic and harrowing account in which he confirms that Browne 'remembers well the first time she was flogged with the cow-hide, how the blood trickled down her back on to the soil, how her breath seemed to go from her, and how great was the pain when her bleeding back was washed with brine to prevent mortification,' she was equally insistent that he record the reason for her endurance of physical suffering. According to her testimony, 'She was thus flogged because she answered her master back again.' On these grounds, the white enslaver's physical abuse of Browne's body exposes his verbal powerlessness in any attempt to exert control over her autonomous voice. Browne lived a life of speaking back to white male power regardless of what it cost her. As she emphasises in her testimony, it was her determination to resist her white enslavers that lay at the heart of her resolution to be free. As Simpson confirms, 'Di endured all cruelties as long as she could, but at last her yearning for freedom was so great that she made up her mind to escape on the very first opportunity.'

In her autobiography, Browne not only informs Simpson of her numerous death-defying self-liberation attempts and the repeated terrible violence to which she was subjected in vengeful reprisals at the hands of her white enslavers, but she also shares the stories of her sacrifices and struggles as an enslaved mother. 'In her husband's lifetime Di had fifteen children', Simpson confirms, painfully recording a devastating reality: 'many of them however were born dead from the effects of ill-usage'. Among Browne's unimaginably emotionally traumatising experiences in the loss of her children was the sale of her daughter: a child she had named after her mother. Ever the freedom fighter, as Simpson confirms, 'when Priscilla was put on the platform' on the auction block 'for inspection, like a tigress robbed of her whelps, Di tore through the devilish group, bounded on to the platform and snatched her child away'. As faced with the mind-body-and-soul-destroying reality of the sale of her own daughter by white enslavers, Browne, against all odds, exerts a mother's rights and fights to save her child. All her life, she lives with the harrowing memory that she was painfully defeated by a white enslaver who 'wrung her arms to make her loose the child'. A powerless witness to the terrible screams of her child who called out 'my mother, my mother!', she immediately 'fell down, and great drops of blood seemed to her to be falling from her heart, till it was cold, heavy, and lifeless'. Decades later, Browne endured the unimaginable grief of having no knowledge of the fate of her daughter. As Simpson confirms, 'From that day to this, now twenty-three years, she has never seen or heard of her child.'

Years later, Simpson confirms Browne 'finally secured her self-liberation to the northern states after which she travelled to Calcutta and then to England in March 1863'. No halcyon of liberty, safety, or equality, on her arrival into the UK, Browne 'was robbed of all her money the first night, in a low lodging-house to which the cabman drove her'. As Browne immediately realised, she had effected her self-liberation from enslavement in the US only to face daily battles for survival in her new life fighting for freedom in the UK. Living in London 'in the house of a poor woman (where I took down all this history)', Simpson summarises Browne's new life as the life of a 'penniless runaway slave'. Not only is it the case that she endures extreme financial hardships and terrible racist persecutions in a hostile British society but Simpson confirms that she 'suffers often dreadfully from the terrible injuries she received during 25 years of a wretched life'. Browne is not only persecuted by physical pain but she experiences ongoing emotional torture as an individual suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. As Simpson writes, 'for nights together she is kept awake by frightful dreams, in which she fancies she is being tortured over again.'

In the final pages of Browne's narrative, Simpson readily confirms that she is not only 'quite willing to let one or two medical men examine and report upon the eleven scars on her person', but that 'she also will reply to questions put to her by two or three gentlemen and ladies who may wish to thoroughly investigate the case'. And yet, while Browne may have agreed to the invasion of the privacy of her own body in disrespectfully invasive medical examinations and to the interrogation of her personal life at the hands of racist whites, there can be no doubt of her determination to safeguard the autonomy of her personhood. As Simpson informs his readers, 'she is most anxious to be protected from mere idle curiosity, as well as from gross insult'. Simpson failed to help Dinah Hope Browne in this regard. As further confirmation of the white racist preoccupation

with Dinah Hope Browne's physical scars and of the ongoing disrespect of her person by discriminatory whites who refused to endorse her equal rights, her life is referred to in an antislavery speech by Rev. Newman Hall at a large meeting held in Exeter Hall, in London in November 1863. Hall begins his speech 'with an account of a fugitive slave woman who he had that day seen, who bore the marks of chains on her wrists yet, and on her side the blow that had crippled her for life'. The newspaper correspondent does not name Dinah Hope Browne, but a double violence may be at work here, considering that Hall himself may not have referred to her by name, only revealing to the audience that he had participated in a violation of her body by viewing the horrific and intimate scars that Dinah Hope Browne carried all her life.³ A survivor of enslavement living in a persecutory white racist and white supremacist British nation in which any and all claims to a belief in equal human rights were only ever a propagandistic illusion, Browne was unceasing in her fight to protect herself not only against white US violence but also against white UK voyeurism.

By February 1864, Dinah Hope Browne was in hospital, although in a letter to the London press Simpson believed this was a temporary stay and attempts to solicit some donations for her care.⁴ Ultimately, Simpson is only too aware of his own failures to do justice to Browne's life story. 'My only fear is that I have failed to describe vividly enough this dreadful series of crimes and atrocities', he admits. As an author who held himself accountable to the imagined sensibilities of his white audiences rather than to the social justice demands placed upon him by a Black female freedom fighter dedicating her life to the fight for equal human rights, he made a decision which guaranteed his failure to prioritise Browne's personal history. 'I could easily fill pages with accounts of the horrible cruelties which Di has seen practised upon female slaves, of which she too has had personal experience', he writes only to confide that any such narrations 'would certainly cause this little book to be excluded from many a drawing-room to which I trust it may now find its way'. Working with a policy of exclusion rather than inclusion when it came to memorialising the 'horrible cruelties' endured by enslaved women that might offend privileged white women living sheltered and protected lives in elite 'drawing-rooms', there can be no doubt that Simpson not only 'failed' to do justice to the 'personal experience' of Dinah Hope Browne but he failed to memorialise the lives of millions of 'female slaves' still living in enslavement. Where Simpson ultimately fails, however, Dinah Hope Browne succeeded. Warring against any and all acts of white racist tyranny, oppression, and murder, no paternalist attempts by Simpson could ever dilute, diminish, or devalue Browne's life history as a revolutionary, radical, and reformer dedicated to all freedoms.

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HORRORS
OF THE
VIRGINIAN SLAVE TRADE
AND OF THE
SLAVE-REARING PLANTATIONS.
The True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Virginian Slave,
NOW IN LONDON,
ON WHOSE BODY ARE ELEVEN SCARS
LEFT BY TORTURES WHICH WERE INFLICTED BY HER MASTER,
HER OWN FATHER.
TOGETHER WITH EXTRACTS FROM THE LAWS OF VIRGINIA, SHOWING
THAT AGAINST
THESE BARBARITIES THE LAW GIVES NOT THE SMALLEST PROTECTION
TO THE SLAVE, BUT THE REVERSE.
By
JOHN HAWKINS SIMPSON,
Author of
'Poems of Oisín and Mayo Mythology,'³ 'Napoleon III, on England,'⁴ &c.
LONDON:
A. W. BENNETT, 5 BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT.
1863. The right of translation is reserved.

LONDON
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NEW-STREET SQUARE

PREFACE.

I HAVE often heard men of generally good education say, 'Why should not the South be independent, and recognized as such, just in the same way as, in 1776,⁵ the United States claimed, and, to the delight of all liberal-minded men, secured, separation from England?'

Whether the South will or will not become independent is a question that can be solved by Americans alone, no country having the smallest right to interfere in the struggle⁶ now being carried on. As to the recognition of the South when independent, if that ever could be, I believe, or rather hope, that few who express themselves in language such as is above described, can be aware how utterly impossible it is for the Southern States to proclaim their independence, 'just in the same way as, in 1776, the United States claimed, and, to the delight of all liberal-minded men secured, separation from England.'

That they may be able to reconsider their views I give a portion of the

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
OF
THE UNITED STATES.⁷

(Signed on paper 4th July 1776.)

It begins thus: –

'When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, &c. &c.'

The contrast between the 'self-evident truths' of Washington,⁸ Jefferson,⁹ and other men of that time, and the self-evident truths of the President and the Vice-President of the Confederation, both of them unflinching advocates of Slavery and of its future extension, is about as startling as any contrast can be, and the cry that comes from men here in England about the 'glorious struggle for Southern Independence' is disgusting indeed when it comes, as it very often does, from men who would not hesitate to deluge in blood either Scotland or Ireland, if either of those countries claimed independent government, and by force of arms endeavoured to secure it.

In the following pages I do not wish to be an indiscriminating advocate of the North, nor do I assert that all who are now waging, in America, uncompromising war against rebellious slave-owners have always been, or even now are, hostile to

slavery in the abstract. But then, in England, do we not often see men advance in liberal and enlightened professions and actions also? Is it usual, would it be wise, after they have really advanced, to do nothing but remind them of their earlier and less advanced views, or else express doubts as to the goodness of the motives which led to the change? If we have any such doubts, the wise course is to take steps to guard against the possibility of a relapse.

It cannot be denied that, until immediately before the rebellion broke out, Southern or slave-owning interests were actively or passively, directly or indirectly, promoted by numbers of men in the North. But these Northern allies of the slave power have at last (in self-defence it is true) withdrawn their support, both active and passive; and it was brought about in this way:

When slave-owners, not content with unthreatened possession of their chattels in their own states, obtained from the highest tribunal in the United States (which Southern influence had filled with Southern lawyers) a decision,¹⁰ by which it was affirmed that slavery exists *ipso jure*¹¹ in all the territories, and that not even the settlers themselves could make it illegal, – by which also was recognised the right of the slave master to carry his slaves with him to any part of the Free States, and hold them there, any local law to the contrary notwithstanding – when the slave interest thus became outrageously aggressive – then, and then only, its northern colleagues withdrew their support.

Slave-owners could no longer hope for a majority in the councils of the Federation: secession and, if need be, civil war were determined upon by the Southerners. Then a committee of thirty-three members of Congress, one representing each State, met, before the last presidential election, to consider the dangers which threatened the Union. All Southern grievances were put before that committee. THE PRINTED REPORT OF THAT COMMITTEE, extending to about forty pages, SETS FORTH NO FISCAL WRONGS ENDURED BY THE SOUTH, NO DEMANDS ON THE PART OF SOUTHERNERS FOR FREE TRADE: it is filled from beginning to end with the slave dispute in all its bearings. Southern men had no other complaints to make.

Again, the Emancipation Proclamation¹² may not have been dictated by unmixed regard to the slave: it was only the exercise of a belligerent right – a right most distinctly recognized by the laws of nations, and repeatedly acted upon by their generals. But why should not we be glad if (as most people will admit, now that nearly a million slaves have been actually and practically freed under its protection) the Proclamation has turned out to be in the interest of the slave, although its aim and primary object were to injure a rebellious master?

If fetters are, in fact, being removed, and if that is what we think we should like to see done more and more, why should we say, over and over again, ‘You fellow there, who are now knocking off those fetters, remember you are paid for, or else you gain by, so doing: I’m wide awake, believe me; that is not what you have been doing all your life, so you need not ask me to say you are doing right now.’ Were we to hear a man speaking so, we might not question the accuracy of his judgment, but surely we should be right in thinking that joy for the slave’s liberation was far from abounding in that man’s heart.

Those who, only after mature study of history, of finance, and of military science, are of opinion that the South is certain to be independent, cannot be blamed if they

doubt that good is likely to result to the slave in the end: to those who so think I do not address the observations given just now.

From mixed motives, or passions, the North will fight till slavery, at any rate as an aggressive power, is crippled. Were the North to agree to terms by which this would not be secured, it would deserve to be overwhelmed with contempt and ridicule. Let us not, led by falsely-grounded sympathies or antipathies, refrain from protesting, at this important juncture against the BUYING AND SELLING OF SLAVES. Whatever else we may prefer to leave undone, surely we must all agree that this part of the slave system may and ought to be at once abandoned. By so protesting, we shall (and it may be needed after all) bring a strong moral pressure to bear on the North quite as much as, perhaps more than, upon the South.

The story of Dinah is written with no attempt at elegance of style. It took me five days to take notes from her word of mouth: those notes were answers to questions and cross-questions searching as I could make them. I have merely connected the answers as briefly as possible. My aim was, not to spin out a long tale, and not to introduce anything at all of an imaginary nature.

J.H.S.

LONDON: December, 1863.

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HORRORS OF THE VIRGINIAN SLAVE TRADE.

CHAPTER I. VIRGINIA.

THE area of Virginia is about 70,000 square miles, very nearly equal to England and Scotland united; its productions are more varied and its natural resources greater than those of most of the States; its climate is happy and its soil fruitful, its scenery romantic and lovely, and its rivers fine and numerous. Its mineral wealth is great; gold, copper, lead, iron, coal, salt, limestone, marls, marbles, granites, &c. abound.

Its population, by the American census of 1860, was as follows:

Whites	1,041,613
Free Coloured	57,579
Slaves	490,887

This gives a population about one half that of London to a country nearly as large as England and Scotland united.

The EARLY COLONISTS OF VIRGINIA, in 1607, sought for gold. The first negro slaves were introduced there in 1630,¹⁴ and slavery was continually forced upon the colony, after the express request of its legislature that it should be discontinued. It is recited in the Constitution of 1776, and reaffirmed in the new instrument adopted in 1830, that George III.¹⁵ had prompted the rising in arms of ‘those very negroes whom, by an inhuman use of his negative, he had refused us permission to exclude by law:’ in 1778 the new state imposed heavy penalties on those who should import them.

We could expect no less from men who, two years earlier, had drawn up a ‘Declaration of Rights made by the Representatives of the good people of Virginia assembled in full and free convention,’ passed June 12, 1776. The First Clause of which is –

‘That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot by any compact deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.’

The Fifteenth is –

‘That no free government, or the blessing of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue, and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.’

The Sixteenth and last –

‘That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practise Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other.’

Four out of the first five Presidents of the United States were men from Virginia; this shows that the framers of the clauses given above were practical men, and not mere dreamy philanthropists. Virginia seems to have commenced its career of independence under the guidance of able men influenced by the highest motives.

Slave labour continued for some years profitable; afterwards, having exhausted the soil, it was found to have 'eaten away its own profits, and the recolonization of the State by free settlers had actually begun, when suddenly came the prohibition of the African slave trade, and nearly at the same time the vast enlargement of the field for slave labour by the purchase of Louisiana; and these two events made slavery in Virginia again profitable, as a means of breeding slaves for exportation and sale to the South.'

The extension of the area over which slave labour might be introduced having thus, by making it pay to breed slaves for exportation, caused slavery to revive in Virginia, we find ever afterwards the highest families in Virginia living by this infamous traffic, – a SLAVE TRADE; a slave trade far more cruel than the African; an organized system carried on between Virginia and the slave-consuming states of the South and West.

Speaking of this internal slave trade, John Randolph,¹⁶ himself a slave-holder, said in Congress, 'What are the trophies of this infernal traffic? the handcuff, the manacles, the blood-stained cow-hide.'

This slave trade was not the result of events unforeseen or undesired by the majority of the Virginians. In the debates of the Virginia Convention, in 1829, Judge Upshur said, 'The value of slaves as an article of property depends much on the state of the market abroad. In this view, it is the value of land abroad, and not of land here, which furnishes the ratio. Nothing is more fluctuating than the value of slaves. A late law of Louisiana reduced their value 25 per cent. in two hours after its passage was known. If it should be our lot, as I trust it will be, to acquire the country of Texas, their price will rise again.'

After some years this was fulfilled, for we find that 'between 1830 and 1840 the number of slaves in Virginia underwent an actual diminution; but in 1844 came the annexation of Texas, followed by an increased demand for slaves for the South, and in 1850 the slave population in Virginia was found to have increased.' – Prof. Cairnes.

However fatally injurious the rice-grounds of Georgia or the swamps of Mississippi may be to the human constitution, still the waste of slave life is repaired from the teeming preserves of Virginia and Kentucky.

We will now try to obtain an unexaggerated estimate of the number of slaves annually exported from Virginia, and we will take the report of the special committee of South Carolina, which committee was, in 1857, appointed to establish a case for re-opening the African slave trade, on the ground of the insufficiency of the supply from the slave-trading states in America. Therefore this committee would not be likely to over-state the number sent by internal traffic.

The conclusion arrived at by them was, 'that for the decade of 1840 to 1850 the number of slaves exported from the Border States (of which nearly half came from Virginia) was 235,000. This will give an annual export of 23,500 slaves.' Taking them at 700 dollars each (not too high for slaves in good working order) their value would be about 3,290,000l. Virginia is thus seen yearly to export about 12,000

slaves, who regard the slave trader with greater horror than that with which the prowling kidnapper inspires their less wretched brethren in the wilds of Africa; and the yearly value of the Virginian slave trade to the slave-owners of that state (I write of the time before the war broke out) may be calculated at about 1,500,000*l*. The season of the trade is generally from November to April; but local dealers, during the summer and autumn, buy up many at low prices, trim, shave, wash and fatten them, so that they may look sleek, and sell them to the traders at a great profit.

During November, December, January, February, and March, the negroes are daily sent South by water, or else by rail, in trains something like our cattle trains.

The dealers sell them again in the South to considerable profit, and the agents to whom they are consigned inform their customers of their near or actual arrival by advertisements, of which this may be given as a specimen: –

In the *Memphis Eagle and Inquirer*, November 13th, 1852.

FIVE HUNDRED NEGROES WANTED.

‘We will pay the highest cash prices for all good negroes offered. We invite all those having negroes for sale to call on us at our mart, opposite the lower steam-boat landing. We will also have a large lot of Virginia negroes for sale in the fall. We have as safe a gaol as any in the country, where we can keep negroes safe for those that wish them kept.

‘BOLTON, DICKINS, and Co.’

Since the war broke out, West Virginia has been made a separate state, and all children of slaves henceforth and for more than a year past born in it are born free.

I have given these scanty particulars about Virginia because it is the state in which the events occurred that are now to be related; the state, moreover, of which the capital is Richmond, the seat of the Secession government.

CHAPTER II. THE PLANTER AND HIS PROPERTY.*

ABOUT two miles from Petersburg, in the State of Virginia, lived a wealthy planter, to whom we will give the name Henry Hope. He had, at the time when our story begins, that is, more than thirty-three years back, a great number of slaves, probably not much less than four hundred. He was also a partner in a large warehouse in the town, where ready-made clothes were sold.

He was of middle height, somewhat bald, had heavy shoulders, and when he walked he rolled from side to side. He was a hard rider, fond of shooting and fishing, and, when he had been drinking freely, which he very often did, his language was of the coarsest, and his acts of the most brutal description.

* This is the true story of the escaped slave, having eleven scars on her body, referred to by the Rev. Newman Hall, in his speech lately at Exeter Hall, in the meeting at which the Rev. H. Ward Beecher gave his address.

[Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) was a white US antislavery campaigner and religious leader].

The Mrs. Hope with whom we shall shortly become acquainted was his second wife; the first wife left him several children, and some of them were at school when he married a second time. His second wife was a tall fair lady of rather pleasing face and manners, and was generally kind to the children of her predecessor. She had not been long married, had as yet no children of her own, and in those days treated her household slaves with the gentleness which became her as being an English-born lady.

The 'big house,' as the slaves called it, was a large square building having several floors. Having entered the grounds through a pretty lodge gate, you drove up to the front door along an avenue shaded by many beautiful trees. Creepers of every kind covered the verandah which ran round the house; the lawn was wide, well kept, and adorned with a sparkling fountain, in the basin of which some Chinese ducks might generally be seen swimming and diving. Near to the fountain, at some distance from the house, were two wide-spreading trees, between which was hung the swing in which the romping girls used to enjoy themselves under the breezy shade.

An admirer of horses would have been pleased to see how well Mr. Hope lodged his handsome riding and carriage steeds, for the stables were neat in the extreme, and the pigeons and doves made the yard seem full of happy life by their wheelings and flutterings. The cow-yard was at a greater distance from the house, and was reached by following a path which wound through shrubberies gay with many colours and by the side of a gurgling brook, whose waters were darkened by overhanging willows and other trees; beneath the shade of these might be found deep pools here and there, where bathers were wont to cool themselves at all hours during the hot weather.

Cotton and sugar were the principal crops of the plantation, and cocoa-nut trees were plentifully scattered over all its extent. Not very far from the house, in the rear, there was a long row of shanties, and between these shanties and the big house rose one stately oak, having great branches which nearly fell to the ground on every side.

The nearest neighbour the Hopes had was a young doctor, supposed to be from England, who had lately settled in a good house by the side of the highway, a few hundred yards farther from the town than the gate lodge which has already been mentioned, and on the other side of the road. He was a thin, delicate-looking man when he first came there in the hope of making a comfortable little fortune, with which to return to his native land. His name shall be Robert Durant; he was a bachelor, and a coloured woman kept his house for him.

Dinah, or Di as she was always called (the escaped slave whose sufferings are about to be set forth), was now about 13 years of age; her mother Priscilla died of consumption when Di was only six months old. She had been a black house servant, and her master was always looked upon by his own family as the father of her little girl, as also of another child which had died before the birth of Di.

When Priscilla died the baby was taken care of by its grandparents in their own shanty. The baby grew up to be a lively strong child, and at the age of ten was brought up to the big house to run errands and be useful in many ways. But she was not happy, for she was often beaten, and that severely, for very small faults. She remembers well the first time she was flogged with the cow-hide, how the blood trickled down her back on to the soil, how her breath seemed to go from her, and how great was the pain when her bleeding back was washed with brine to prevent

mortification. She was thus flogged because she answered her master back again,* and it was then that she first wished she had a living mother.

She was often flogged for picking grapes or gooseberries when she felt hungry, as she often did feel whilst growing quickly. Another time she was cruelly flogged with the cow-hide for having unstitched a pair of her master's trousers, and then, using them as a pattern, cut out a new pair from fresh cloth. She had often before this asked to be taught to sew, but had been told she was too young. The flogging this time had been very severe, and the doctor had to rub her back with sweet oil. She thinks, but is not sure, that this beating was inflicted by order of a magistrate, she having a faint recollection of standing in a court-house, and being spoken to by a stranger.

One day when her master was going out to a ball, she had delayed (playing) in bringing his patent leather boots from her grandfather's shanty, where she had to clean them. In his passion her master kicked her on the right thigh, and the swelling and injury was so great she could not walk for many days, and Dr. Durant had to lance her thigh. She still has the marks of this, as well as of the floggings on her back.

The doctor could not see her suffer so much without trying to cheer her by telling her of England, where, he said, women were not beaten, but soldiers sometimes were; and he seems to have led her to look forward to going with him some day when he should be returning home. She was about 13 years old, to the best of her knowledge, when she began to think seriously about running away, she little knew whither. It seemed to her that the free country of which she had been told must be in those dark large woods far beyond the plantation on which she had been reared. There she fancied she should be safe from harm, should be able to eat enough (for the usual allowance of rice, molasses, and Indian corn did not satisfy her hunger at all times), and should, when the cold weather began, be welcomed in the happy houses which she doubted not were there in abundance.

On the other hand she dreaded the dogs of which she had heard the negroes tell fearful tales, of their untiring pursuit, of their never-failing power of smell. But as she had generally fed most of the dogs herself, she hoped they would, if they found her, not be savage to her; and she remembered having heard her master, not very long ago, read to his wife a letter about the safe escape of one of his slaves, together with his wife and seven children.

There was only one tie which at all bound her to the plantation, and that was friendship for a girl of her own age called Jessie. They had grown up side by side from early childhood. Jessie's mother was a quadroon girl, dead some time, and her father was a white man, so that she herself was quite white; her hair was long and of a deep brown shade, her eyes dark and flashing, and her cheeks were as rosy as those of any English maiden. She had a very high spirit, and whenever she had been flogged for childish tricks she would bite her arm till it bled, would roll over and over on the ground, or else rushing against a tree tear pieces out of the bark with her teeth.

Her work was at first in the fields; but for the two last years she had been too weak for out-door labour, so she was set to make clothes at her own shanty for the children

* 'A negro shall be punished with stripes (not exceeding 39) if he use provoking language or menacing gestures to a white man.' – Revised Code of Virginia, p.754. It is to be remarked that this punishment is inflicted for disrespect to a white man, whether he be his master or a perfect stranger.

of the slaves. The poor girl was evidently growing weaker, and suffered much from a cough, which her mistress was pained to hear. Di was sent to her friend with tarts, fruit, or any little things the girl might fancy. But though her mistress treated her kindly, she met with rough usage from the white overseer if her appointed task was not duly performed; indeed her strength was very uncertain, and some days she felt too listless to care to exert herself even with the certainty of punishment befalling her.

As the disease progressed her spirits failed her; she drooped her head and would seek for quiet places; her chief wish seemed to be that she might have rest. Vague ideas of prayer, caught up from some old negro at a camp-meeting, crossed her mind, and then she forgot how time fled whilst, on her knees beneath some tree, she prayed a simple fervent prayer that she might go to the land of peace. In this way she was absent from the usual calling over more than once, and was cuffed for praying, as it was deemed to be only an excuse for idleness.

Two or three times when Di was out walking in the fields with the children, they had come upon her whilst praying or else lost in reverie. The girls would say to her, 'Now, Jessie, we'll tell papa; you'll catch it;' whilst the boys pulled her beautiful silky hair, spat in her face, and kicked her thighs and ankles.*

With all the slaves poor Jessie was a favourite for her gentleness now, as she had been in earlier years on account of her high spirits; though she associated as little as she could with the dark skins, she gave no offence by so doing; her manner did not seem to imply that they were her inferiors; rather it seemed to be a dignified assertion of her own natural rights against the tyranny of those of her own colour.

Di endured all cruelties as long as she could, but at last her yearning for freedom was so great that she made up her mind to escape on the very first opportunity. She tried to talk Jessie into the belief that she would get better if she were once quiet in the woods; but the consumptive girl only shook her head, saying, 'I'll never be free till Jehovah calls me;' then the two friends cried and sang plaintive songs about their wrongs and about hopes of a happier life in another land. Where that land was they knew not, nor did they think of Jehovah as of a God in our sense of the word; but they believed he was a stronger and a kinder man than their own master; and that he would take care of them if once they got to him.

CHAPTER III.

DI RUNS AWAY TO THE WOODS: IS BROUGHT BACK, FLOGGED, AND BRANDED.

DI's mind being now bent upon finding her way to the woods, she had not long to wait for an opportunity. One night the Hopes were giving a dance to which all their neighbours had been invited. Feasting and merry-making had been the order of the

* Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1836] himself, born and bred a slave-owner, says, – 'The commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions on the one hand, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it. The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to the worst passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped with its odious peculiarities.'

day. In dancing and drinking the evening hours had been uproariously passed, and many had fallen into a heavy sleep at midnight; whilst those who were still awake were either too drunk or too busy in the crowd of guests and their servants to observe the movements of any one; least of all would they watch the steps of a girl like Di, who was always running about the house as a house servant.

She went into a pantry and wrapped up in a cloth a good supply of cakes, bread and butter, and other eatables which had been handed about in the supper-room; these she took with her and escaped without any difficulty through the lodge, and away into the far woods.

It was the end of July or the beginning of August when she ran away, and the weather is often stormy at that season. She slept at the foot of a big tree that first night; but the second night she was out a terrible thunder storm rushed through the woods; and as she listened to the rending of boughs, and tried to keep the flashes of lightning from reaching her eyes, she was frightened into a wish that she had never left the plantation. She was wet and cold also, and felt lonely now that she had been many hours in vain looking for one of the friendly houses with which her fancy had filled these forests.

However, when the storm passed away and the joyous sunrise brightened up those majestic trees which had seemed to her, during the storm, to have been tortured equally with herself; when the birds began to sing, and the rabbits and other little animals to hop about and feed, she also felt glad at heart. There still remained some of the cakes, and for several days she lived on these and on the willow berries, tea berries, blackberries, and nuts which were just beginning to turn ripe.

But when there had been no showers for some time she began to suffer from thirst. She could find no water fit to drink, and her strength began to fail when her last cake was eaten.

One afternoon she was so weary and so sleepy that she could walk no more. Sinking on the ground, under a shady tree, when half asleep she heard, far off, the sounds of horses and of jingling chains; but this did not alarm her in the least. She knew they were people in search of some one or other; that they were after herself she did not for one moment fancy. She believed she had got far away from her master's house, that she could not be carried back from those free woods, and that the chains she heard were chains ready for some criminal who had murdered, stolen, or set fire to houses and crops.

She could not keep her eyes open any longer, and her repose was sound; suddenly an animal bounded through the near thicket and rushed upon the sleeping girl, seizing her shoulder in his mouth and gently shaking her from side to side. When she had recovered from her first fright enough to look at her assailant, she uttered a cry of pleasure and surprise, for she saw her favourite dog Carlo, a large spotted hound. In her delight at meeting with an old friend, she put her arms round the dog's thick neck, patted his grave-looking head, smoothed his long silky ears, and kissed him, saying, 'Carlo, you dear old thing, how glad I am you found me; you little thought to see me when you came hunting and romping in these woods.'

What words can describe the terror of the girl when, having caressed the hound for some time, looking up she saw the hateful face of Wildshaw, the white overseer? Next she saw her master scowling at her; in her fright she got up and grinned in an agony of fear in her master's face, standing with shaking knees before him.

Handcuffs were soon put on her; she was led between the jeering men straight to the court-house, and there left in a dark cell, with bread and water for the night.

The next day, about eleven o'clock, she was brought by the gaoler into the court-house and put into the prisoner's dock. The chief magistrate was reading a paper which lay before him; presently he looked up at her and asked 'why she had run away, and what she wanted in the woods?' 'I wished to be free, and to live in a free house in the woods,' answered Di. 'No,' said the justice, 'that is nonsense, there are no free houses in the woods, and you would certainly have died of hunger if your master had not fortunately found you out. Now, what do you think you deserve? What do you think your master will do with you?' Di cried, and said, 'I don't think he will kill me.'

The magistrate then turned his eyes severely upon her, saying, 'You are charged with theft; you took bread and butter and cake; you left the plantation carrying with you property which belonged to your master. You will be flogged with 24 lashes, then shut up in prison, and be punished when you come out; this will be a warning to you for the rest of your life, never to think of running away.'*

She was led, handcuffed, by Wildshaw's assistant, a black man, accompanied by Mr. Hope and some of his friends, to a field near at hand. There she was stripped naked, then the handcuffs were taken off, her arms put round an oak tree, and her hands tied together; her feet were also fastened to the tree. The coloured overseer took the cow-hide and fiercely swinging it round his head brought it down upon her shoulders. It was of no use to scream; thick came the blows, and freely poured the blood, whilst her master, her father! calmly speculated on the preventive effects of this infernal torture.

As soon as the lash was laid aside, her back and loins were washed with brine or pickle from a tub which had been previously placed there. This was done to prevent mortification of the lacerated flesh. The agony which the girl then endured can only be faintly imagined by most.

From the tree she was again taken to the court-house; there she was shut up in a solitary cell by the gaoler, who asked, 'how she liked the flavour of the pickle?' He told her 'he guessed he could tame her some time.' Her hair was cut off and she was ordered to be kept in solitary confinement. When the gaoler brought her food, which he shoved through a slide in one of the door-panels, he seldom forgot to make some jeering remark, or else he would terrify her with hints about the punishment which yet awaited her.

It should have been told that before she was put into gaol her waist had been encircled with a steel belt, and her left arm was twisted behind her back and locked to the belt. Nothing was ever done to her back, which felt numb and stiff; her left arm became so dead and heavy that she sometimes tried with her right hand to wring it off. The iron made a festering sore on the inside of the left wrist, and I have myself seen the scar left by that wound.

Sadly passed the hours of the night for that wretched girl as she tried to lie still upon her cocoa-nut mattress. If she dozed, then the pain she felt in her arm, waist

* By warrant of a justice a gaoler may confine in gaol a slave, 'at the request of the master, as long as the justice and the gaoler concur in opinion that no public inconvenience will result from it, but no longer.' – See Virginian Code, 1849, p.257.

and back, seemed to give force to the terrors of some horrid dream, from which she would start, trembling in every limb. In those dark hours she could hardly distinguish her mental from her physical pains. The gnawing pain of her body nourished and gave intensity to tortures which her throbbing brain seemed to communicate to the whole of her frame. She became nearly mad from fear of what was to be done to her when her imprisonment should be over. Of one thing she felt sure, the least she should have to suffer would be to be burnt alive.

When she was thus weakened, the gaoler tried hard to make her say who had ever talked to her about a ‘free country,’ but she never allowed the name of the doctor to slip from her tongue.

After she had been five weeks in gaol she was led to her master by the gaoler. Mr. Hope asked him to fasten a thick bar of iron round her right ankle, and he did so. Jem Jones, a young negro blacksmith, was then ordered to heat two brands, one large and one small. She was taken under the two trees which grew on the lawn where the young ladies’ swing was. Round the trees all the slaves had been ranged to witness this deed. Wildshaw held her hands, the black overseer pulled her cotton dress from her right shoulder, then, taking the large brand from Jones, he pressed it deep into the hissing flesh. She writhed in Wildshaw’s grasp and cried piteously. The smaller brand was then given to the coloured overseer; he stooped down and pressed it hard upon her left instep. She became deadly sick; all around her seemed to be a black curtain, and she fainted away.

When she came to herself she was lying on the ground, her head in her grandmother’s lap, whilst near her stood her master and mistress, her grand-father, and an old black woman, Dorcas, who used to take care of sick slaves. Her master was looking at her over her shoulder, her mistress was holding a bottle of smelling salts. She fainted again and again, but was at last supported, dragging the iron bar along the ground, to the door of her grandfather’s shanty. A tub of water stood outside, into which she dipped her burning foot.*

For the first week or more that she was at her grandmother’s shanty her agony of mind and body was so intense that, if the iron bar at her foot had not prevented it, she would have run out and thrown herself into the river. When a fortnight had passed she fell into a dangerous fever, and then the log was taken from her ankle, for she was so weak she could not have walked a hundred yards.

Her arm was helpless from the injury inflicted upon her shoulder, and had to be kept in a sling; the burns were treated with an ointment composed of balm of Gilead, cat-tail (a tall plant growing in marshy ground, of which mattresses are made), and hog’s-lard.†

The shoulder healed too rapidly, and, in consequence, a gathering formed under her right arm; this the doctor lanced after it had been poulticed with a mixture of linseed and turnip.‡

* I have seen the brand on the left foot and the chain’s mark round the right ankle. Her right shoulder is enlarged by the shoulder brand, and to this day she has much pain in it at change of weather.

† This is the way in which Dinah described to me the ingredients of the ointment; she says it was a preparation in common use on Mr. Hope’s plantation.

‡ She tells me she has still a scar the size of her thumb to testify to the truth of this part of her statement.

Mrs. Hope often sent her meal-gruel, grapes and peaches, but, to make her aware she was in disgrace, never came to see her; nor did her master enter the shanty, though he sometimes came as far as the door to find out when she would be fit for work, saying, 'Well, Di, how do you get on? Do you think you will try again to run away?' Should she ever attempt it, he promised he would 'tar, feather, and burn her.'

Two lovely months of summer she passed in this state, and often did she wish her weary life was ended. When she could stand she was sent for to the big house again, to take care of the younger children. Her back was still numb, and her head felt so light, she fancied she was, at times, walking in the air.*

Mrs. Hope had just been confined, so did not send for her till she had been some time in the house. When her mistress, who was a fine looking woman, recovered, she often forgot to treat Di with the tenderness which her weak state of body claimed and would have received from any woman possessing ordinary feelings of humanity. For the most trivial mistake, sometimes for no fault at all, she would now and ever after beat her with a coarse towel steeped in water. She herself had often to be put into bed by Di in a state of helpless intoxication.

CHAPTER IV. JESSIE, THE CONSUMPTIVE GIRL, DIES UNDER THE LASH, FOR PRAYING.

THE winter had passed away and the trees were coming into their first tender bloom, but no spring made glad the wintry heart of Di. A fresh grief was in store for her, of which no number of years can wipe away the memory.

Her friend Jessie, whose strength had been failing all through the cold months, had the progress of her disease quickened by the brutal acts of Wildshaw, whenever she, from weakness and consequent apathy, failed to fulfil her appointed task of clothes-making. At such times she was told she had been wasting her time in praying, or else she could have easily finished what she had been set to do.

Wildshaw and her master were determined that such a dangerous example should not be any longer set to the rest of the slaves, and were ever on the look-out to catch her on her knees. To their great satisfaction, they found her one day (she had been missed at the mid-day calling over) kneeling with her head resting against the trunk of the oak at the back of the house, the branches of which hung down so low that they formed a perfect screen.

Di remembers this was on Friday, or market day; she believes that Jessie was taken before a magistrate, but as she was herself sewing all the morning in the big house, she says only what was told her after the event. The flogging and death of her friend she saw with her own eyes, as is now to be described.†

Mrs. Hope and Di were sitting in the upper front parlour about three in the afternoon, when, looking out of the window, they saw Jessie walking up the avenue,

* She described the sensation in her head as being such that she for a long time fancied the town of Petersburg had been changed to a position the exact opposite of its previous place.

† It took me five hours to take down notes of this awful event, as the greatest care was necessary to separate what she had actually witnessed from what she knew merely by hearsay.

her hands tied together, between the white and the black overseers; several slaves followed them. Mrs. Hope was sitting in a rocking-chair when she caught sight of Jessie's stooping figure. Her heart was heavy at the idea of what was to befall the girl, whose declining state she had long known, and, to do her justice, pitied.*

Rising from her seat she went to the window, turned very pale, and often wiped her eyes with her handkerchief. What were the feelings of Di let any woman try to realize if she can. She was yet weak from the brutal tortures inflicted upon her in autumn, and knew full well she would have to see the cowhide plough up the frail back of her only friend.

Soon the plantation bell was sounded to call all the slaves and their children to see a practical warning by which they were to profit. Mr. Hope's youngest children were at the same time carefully locked in the nursery, with plenty of toys, so that they might see no sight the recollection of which could keep them awake; might hear no cry of distress which should echo through the hours of darkness.

When the bell rang, her mistress said, in a low tone, 'Di, you must go out.' The girl, with streaming eyes and palpitating heart, prayed that she might be allowed to stay where she was and finish her work. The answer was given in a sorrowful voice, 'You must go; you know the rules.'

Di let fall her work, tottered down the stairs, saw, without turning her eyes upon him, her master's beautiful horse tied to a post near the hall door, a white net thrown over his sweating coat to protect it from the bites of flies, went round to the back of the house, whither all the slaves were mutely hastening; crawled rather than walked to the grand oak-tree near which a group was forming; heard, as if sounded in her ears with a trumpet's loudest and shrillest note, the name of each slave called over by two men who were walking with fire-arms in their hands, one inside, the other outside the rapidly extending circle. Overhead the white pigeons, which had often been fed from Jessie's hand, wheeled round and round in the summer air, as though they too were filled with grief.

Di took the place pointed out to her. The 'Stars and Stripes' were waving in the air, gaily floating from a tall pole behind her, and the flag's shadow, now falling upon and now leaving the group of silent many-hued slaves, made upon her excited brain an impression such as the smoke from a witch's cauldron was wont to produce upon the minds of trembling inquirers into dark futurity. The waving of that flag's shadow to this day often seems to her a present reality, coming before her eyes just as a cry heard in a moment of breathless painful listening will seem again to fill the ear of one sitting even amid festive scenes.

When all were assembled the overseers stripped Jessie naked, then tied her hands to a bough of the tree above her head, and fastened her legs together, so that she might not lift them to break the force of the blows about to be rained upon her back and loins. Wildshaw took a cow-hide, or cat-o'-nine-tails, from his black subordinate, and placed himself by Jessie's side: the doctor – whether sent for or accidentally present is not known, – placed himself in front of her, whilst behind him again her

* Mr. Hope often said to his wife in Di's hearing, that 'nothing could be made of Jessie; she would only be a useless burden on the place; that she never would live to rear saleable children.'

master stood, not uttering a single word, looking sternly in Wildshaw's face, to see if he could detect the smallest sign of pity which might unnerve his arm.

'Ready,' said the coloured overseer; the forked cow-hide whistled in the air round Wildshaw's head, fell with a hissing sullen sound on Jessie's writhing back: 'Oh! oh!' shrieked wildly the consumptive girl, as she flung her head from side to side till it seemed as if her neck would break, and the second blow ploughed bloody furrows through her quivering flesh. 'Will you ever pray again?' roared Wildshaw, as the lash whistled and hissed round and round to give her a moment in which to answer; there was now only a low, pitiful, moaning sound struggling to escape in gasps from her bleeding mouth. 'Why don't you pray to Jehovah? What good is he to you-d-n you?' screamed Wildshaw, as the third blow fell, making this time a sound like a splash. The fourth blow flashed through the midst of a shower of curses and threats – but the moaning had ceased – the head fell backward – the cow-hide made cuts on a lifeless body, but the curses were caught by the Almighty's ear.

The planter's hand dropped. The doctor stepped forward; he raised the head, felt the pulses of the neck, removed his hand, – and back fell the heavy head. Not a word did Mr. Hope say, not a step did he stir. The slaves stood horrified, as if rooted in the ground. The doctor said to the master, 'She is dead;' the black overseer sung out, 'It is all up now;' Wildshaw looked in her face all aghast, and then whispered in the black man's ear.

Dr. Durant walked up and down with Mr. Hope for some time at a distance from the circle of slaves. They then came up to the overseers (who had been in the meantime watching the puffing out of the body till it seemed largely inflated with air), and told them to take her down from there. This was done, the once pure-white beautiful figure, now gashed and distorted, was stretched out under the tree where she had prayed, where she had just now been murdered, and over it a cotton sheet was carelessly thrown, whilst a hole was being dug for it in the marsh.*

The plantation bell clanged, and the slaves were sent off to their tasks.

How Di found her way back to the house she does not know, nor can she tell how many hours passed before she noticed anything around her. The first thing she remembers was seeing her mistress pacing up and down the back parlour, from which the tree might be seen under which Jessie's corpse was lying. The rocking-horses and other toys of the children were scattered about the room just as they had left them when they had been taken to another room, before the flogging began.

All that night the sound of horrid bells was ringing in Di's ears, and for several days she lay sick at her grandmother's shanty.

One evening, about a week after Jessie's death, she was standing at the door of the shanty, leaning against the door-post, her eyes following the swaying in the twilight of the boughs of the fatal oak, when, all of a sudden, she thought she saw the figure of her friend dart upright from the ground, and stand with its face towards the tree. Without a moment's thought she ran, frightened nearly to madness, up to the big house, screaming as she went, 'Jessie, Jessie, Jessie!' She flew across the hall, entered

* It is perhaps superfluous to say that members of Mr. Hope's family were not buried in the spongy swamp where the bodies of slaves, however white, and of dogs, were huddled together.

the first-floor parlour, where the family used to sit after dinner; with eyes nearly strained out of their sockets, she, wildly shouting, 'Here comes Jessie! here comes Jessie!' ran up to the couch where her master was lying with a handkerchief thrown over his face, put out her arms, and was about to shake him, when he, lifting his foot, gave her a kick under the chin, saying, at the same time, 'If you don't get out of the house, I'll knock your brains out.'*

Di slunk out of the room, but she was too much frightened to go to her grandmother's shanty, for she feared she should meet Jessie's ghost by the way. She sat down on the step of the hall door, and tried to stanch the blood which flowed from the wound which she had just received: she remained there till a servant came and led her back to her grandmother. Her mistress came once herself to dress the wound with plaister.

When she was lying at her grandmother's shanty, ill from the effects of fright as much as from bodily pains, she heard, from some of the slaves who came to see her, that her master had been several times up to the court-house; they were not sure upon what business he went. On her return to the big house Di was crossing the hall one day and saw a constable standing before the door; he was talking to her master's eldest son Edward and to Wildshaw, and showed them a paper at the same time that he asked to see Mr. Hope. That gentleman was riding over his plantation, but Wildshaw promised he would 'before long come up and see the little account settled.'†

Several verdicts of Virginian juries, and decisions of judges in Virginian 'Superior Courts,' which I have compared with the laws then in force, seem to supply proof enough of the probability of Dinah's statement as to the degree of notice which was taken of this particular case. Two amongst many cases may be given for the reader's satisfaction; they happened in 1851. *Souther v. the Commonwealth of Virginia*.

Souther was the owner of several negroes; one of them, Sam, was thus killed (see Grattan's Reports, 1851):

'The negro was tied to a tree and whipped with switches September 1st, 1849. When Souther became fatigued with the labour of whipping, he called upon a negro man of his and made him cob Sam with a shingle. He also made a negro woman of his help to cob him; and, after cobbing and whipping, he applied fire to the body of his slave, about his back, belly, &c. He then caused him to be washed down with hot water, in which pods of red pepper had been steeped. The negro was also tied to a log, and to the bed-post, with ropes, which choked him, and he was kicked and stamped by Souther. This sort of punishment was continued and repeated until the negro died under its infliction.'

* I have seen a scar under her chin, which she tells me is the mark of that kick.

† I did all I could to find out the utmost that Dinah knows about the punishment, if any, which was inflicted upon these ruffians. She knows no more than the vague surmises which have just been given; she admits that she cannot be sure whether 'the little account' which the overseer promised to settle was a fine for the murder of her friend or for some other offence: she says also that for some weeks after Jessie's death her mind was so confused that she cannot recall distinctly the events which then happened. Of one thing she is quite certain, that neither Mr. Hope nor his overseer was imprisoned.

The slave's offences, according to the master's allegation, were, getting drunk, and dealing with two persons – white men – who were present and witnessed the whole of the horrible transaction. The jury having given a verdict of murder in the second degree, Souther was in the Circuit Court of Hanover sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Against this he, as an injured man, appealed to the Superior Court, and Judge Field said in his decision:

'It has been decided by this Court, in Turner's case, that the owner of a slave, for the malicious, cruel, and excessive beating of his own slave, cannot be indicated; * * * it is the policy of the law * * * to protect the master from prosecution in all such cases, even if the whipping and punishment be malicious, cruel, and excessive.'

Souther did not get off his five years' imprisonment; the opinion of the court was he ought to have been hung at first; but he could not be tried again.

By the Act which came into force July 1, 1850 (this negro was killed in 1849), it seems that flogging to death would not be murder, for murder of the first degree is therein defined – 'Murder by poison, lying in wait, imprisonment, starving, or any wilful, deliberate, and premeditated killing, or in the commission or attempt to commit arson, rape, robbery, or burglary.' The Act now in force leaves out 'wilful and excessive whipping,' which words were in the Act of 1849, by which Souther was tried.

It may easily be believed that the chances are very great that fatal flogging will escape punishment, when we consider that no slave can give evidence in a court, and that no slave ever sits upon a jury. In this case the flogging and ill-treatment were continued for 12 hours, and this satisfied the jury that there was no 'deliberate and premeditated killing!!!'

The second case, reported in the *National Era*, Washington, Nov. 6, 1851, was a trial of Colonel James Castleman and his son, of Clarke County, Virginia, for homicide. They, suspecting a slave of having stolen some articles, first violently flogged and then chained him by the throat; they left him thus, and when next seen he was dead in the chains. The colonel and his son were out on bail even at the time of trial; the jury at once acquitted the colonel, who was to be tried first, because they thought the slave might first have fainted, and then been strangled, in consequence of his inability to stand upright. The case against the son was withdrawn, of course. The colonel afterwards observed that 'he was sorry the slave had died, as he had since found out he was quite innocent of any theft.'

CHAPTER V. DI IS MARRIED TO JEM BROWNE.

As soon as Di was able to get about, she went to see where Jessie had been buried. (Before it was huddled into the swampy hole, the doctor had cut open her body, and, as he long afterwards told Di, found one lung entirely gone). On the grave she placed a flower-pot, in which grew a rose-tree, then in full bloom.

Her task was to attend to the little Hopes and to do needle-work, sometimes at the big house, sometimes at the grandmother's. The eldest daughter of the first Mrs. Hope was the one who looked most actively after domestic concerns, and at her hand Di always received kindness and sympathy as far as Annie Hope dared to show them. She was a tall slender girl, and had dark blue eyes and long brown hair; her

temper was hasty, yet generous, and it is a pity that such a girl early acquired a habit of swearing fiercely when angry.

Very often Di was sent to the doctor for medicine, and he talked to her as frequently about her attempted escape; she was not disposed to tell him all her thoughts, because she feared he would repeat them to her master. Probably he would have done nothing of the sort; at this time and during many years his advice to her was not to try to run away, but to be as patient as she could be, and wait till he returned to England, when, he said, he would try to take her with him.

Summer came and went, autumn and winter passed, and nothing particular befell Di. In those months, Jones, the slave blacksmith, paid her hateful attentions, whilst, if she had a liking for any one, she thought Jem Browne the pleasantest young slave on the plantation. Nor had this mild partiality been unobserved by her master, who had a pretty keen eye for business.

One fine evening in the spring, when Jessie had been dead a year, as she was preparing supper for her grandmother in her shanty, she was told by a man-servant to ‘make haste, and get herself ready (tidy), as master wanted her at the big house directly.’

She washed her face, combed her hair, and was at the house in five minutes; rapping at the dining-room door, she walked into the room where the family was sitting over dessert; ladies and gentlemen, friends of the Hopes, were there also. Slaves, male and female, to make in all thirteen couples, were brought into the room, the females entering first.

As soon as the slaves had come into the room the party got up from dessert; one of the gentlemen, a magistrate, then took the hand of a girl and put it into that of a man, repeating the action till all were paired. Then one of the young ladies laid a broomstick in the doorway, and to each couple as they jumped over the stick, the magistrate said ‘You are man and wife.’ The ceremony was ended by the giving of a glass of strong spirits to each of the men, and they were ordered to dance and be merry.

Jem Browne and Di were thus married; he was four years older than herself, and a general favourite with all the slaves, so she did not feel inclined to complain, though she had been taken completely by surprise. Between Browne and Jones there was enmity from that day.

After her marriage she still acted as nurse and generally useful servant at the big house, but she was allowed to prepare her husband’s simple meals at his shanty.

Now and then she went with other slaves to hear a service (of what sort I cannot gather from her description) in a room near the court-house; the first thing she remembers to have heard intelligibly, it seems to have been the last also, was – ‘Slaves, obey your masters, and your days shall be long in the land.’ Young and artless slaves were encouraged to sing whatever hymns or songs they knew, and as those generally expressed their own genuine feelings on the ills of slavery, this congregational exercise was always held by Mr. Hope in high esteem.

Nine months after her marriage Di was flogged by her master’s order for breaking several china cups; the cow hide was used and her back was torn; this time her hands were not tied above her head.

Priscilla was the name of the first child she had, born early in the summer of the year after her marriage. She nursed with her own baby one of Mrs. Hope’s, born about the same time.

In her husband's lifetime Di had fifteen children; many of them however were born dead from the effects of ill-usage; four times she had twins. She was wet-nurse to thirteen of her master's children, and these children were, in early years, under her care, and used to follow her about everywhere, with one or two of her own; she would carry them sometimes one under each arm and another on her back.

There was a strong proof given of the affection which kind treatment almost always wins from the negro, in the case of an old slave woman on Mr. Hope's plantation, who was a good many years older than her master. This happened just before the birth of Di's third child.

The yellow fever had one summer been fatal amongst the slaves, and at last attacked Mr. Hope himself. No one thought he would ever recover; his friends had been to see him, and he had made his will. In the evening of the day which his friends thought would be his last, his wife and several of his children were in the bedroom watching Di as she, sitting at the bed's head, fanned the invalid. A gentle tap was heard at the door; one of the girls went to the door to see who it was, and brought into the room an old negro woman, who had long been too old to do anything but knit. This aged female had been known, a few years before, as the head of camp-meetings in the neighbourhood, and was held to be a powerful prayer by those who understood such matters, but they were not many.

Silently the bent and dusky figure glided through the twilight to the bedside, and knelt down between Di and Mrs. Hope. This poor woman, herself not far from the grave, the swampy grave, the tears flowing down her sable cheeks, with upraised hands earnestly prayed Jehovah would send away the disease from the master at whose hands she had never received harsh treatment; she prayed long and, as Di believes, effectually: for Mr. Hope's illness seemed almost immediately to abate, and he was soon in his usual state of health.*

CHAPTER VI. PRISCILLA IS SOLD TO A SOUTHERN SLAVE DEALER AT THE AGE OF TEN YEARS.

'It is the slave dealer's business to tear men and women from their houses, friends, and homes, to gratify the cupidity of slave-breeders who sell for money, and the spite of those who sell for malice. He fills his cart with children made orphans while their parents still live, – surrounds it with women who are widowed, not by nature, but by injustice-gathers behind it men fastened by handcuffs; and then follows his gang well armed, to flog the sullen or to shoot the violent. So he travels from Virginia, the slave-breeding State, to Louisiana and Texas, the slave-consuming States.' Hon. Baptist Noel.

ONE fine evening in summer, when Priscilla was ten years old, Di was getting ready her husband's tea, her baby (the only child she then had except Priscilla) was

* Di does not know whether this old negro came of her own accord, but she does not in the least doubt that genuine kind feeling existed between the master and this aged slave. Instances are common of masters who, having been cruel in good health, flogging their slaves for praying, when dangerously ill have tremblingly besought their former victims to come and pray for their departing souls.

playing before the door, when a female servant came from the house, and told Di to clean the child, and make it look smart, and take it up to her master.

Priscilla had been all the afternoon at the big house playing with Mr. Hope's younger children. Di was afraid her child had broken something, or done some childish mischief for which she was now about to receive punishment. On her way with the child she asked the cook, whom she met, just to call and tell Jem that she would be down again directly to give him his tea.

She went to the ground-floor parlour, knocked at the door, and led in her child. Mr. Hope and his eldest son Edward were talking to two strangers, a slave dealer and his assistant. The dealer was a tall stout man, with broad shoulders, very light fierce-looking eyes, and sandy-coloured hair and whiskers. Whisky and brandy decanters were on the table, and several boxes of cigars.

'Come here Di,' said the dealer, 'let me see how you can dance,' and he began to whistle a lively tune. The mother said, 'Sir, her name is not Di; she does not know who you are talking to.'

'It makes no odds what her name is,' replied the dealer, again whistling.

But nothing could induce the girl to leave her mother's side; she fixed her eyes steadily on those of the dealer, and clung to the skirts of her mother's dress. Mr. Hope then tried to get the child to dance to his whistling, but Priscilla would not listen to him either, though he tried and coaxed her as much as he could.

'What have you been saying to the child?' asked Mr. Hope.

Di, still unsuspecting, answered, 'I said nothing at all to the child, for I did not know we should find any strangers here.'

The dealer began to praise the child's teeth, and said he thought she was a healthy looking girl, and he might just as well buy the mother at the same time. Mr. Hope told him he could not spare the mother yet; then turning to Di, he bade her leave the room, and take the child to its tea.

Poor Di's heart had sad misgivings now; but still she did not think it possible that her master would sell the playmate of his own children, who had been nursed at her breast.

Her husband was waiting for her, and was hungry; but all his appetite fled when he saw his wife crying bitterly as she led in the child – for he immediately feared the child must have done something for which it was about to be flogged. Di told him all that had happened, and said she did not after all know if Priscilla was or was not to be sold. Jem Browne, who had often seen such partings, asked if she thought the men would take away their darling at once; all she could say was, 'I don't know.'

When the child had taken its supper, and was in bed, the same servant called again and told Di to go up to the house, as she was wanted to wait at table. She left her husband and went.

She found the same party still drinking in the same room. Her master told her to be quick and lay the tea things in the drawing-room. She did as she was told.

All the family was now seated round the tea-table, ladies and gentlemen. The youngest children only were not there, for they had been in bed long ago. Di made tea at a side-table, and handed it round, together with cakes, bread, and jam.

When she handed a cup to her master he said, 'Di, your child is going, do you know? That gentleman is to take her.' The mother's heart sank; she felt choked, and could hardly get out the words 'No, sir, I did not know.' She cried bitterly, and was told to go into the next room, where she remained crouching on the floor till

the parlour bell rang for her to take away the tea things; this she did, sobbing and blinded with tears, and was then told to go to her shanty, but to 'mind and be up again to wait at supper.'

Husband and wife sat, hand clasped in hand, looking at the sleeping girl. They could not talk, they could only weep; but they stifled their sobs, lest they should wake the child. They wished to strain her to their bosoms as they never wished before, but they would not do so, because she would wake and see how wretched they were.

Between ten and eleven Di went up to wait at supper. When that was over, ladies and gentlemen drank pretty freely of wine and spirits, whilst smoking, gambling, swearing, and dominoes were carried on fast and noisily. Di had to see that all the bed-rooms were ready, and at last her day's work was done.

No sleep that night closed the eyes of the wretched parents.

Early next morning poor Di was told that there was a bill posted on the entrance-gate, containing the names of the negroes, old and young, who were to be sold that day in Petersburg, by public auction. Priscilla's name was among those of Mr. Hope's slaves, thirteen in number, who have destined for the Southern market.*

* Dr. Bailey wrote in the 'Era' in 1847: 'The Davises, in Petersburg, are the great slave dealers. They are Jews, who came to that place many years ago as poor pedlars. * * These men are always in the market, giving the highest price for slaves.'

The masters who have negroes for sale are told by advertisements, such as the following one, where they may find purchasers: it is a sample and by no means an extreme one, taken from 'Rockingham Register,' Nov. 13, 1846.

'CASH FOR NEGROES.

'I wish to purchase a number of negroes, of both sexes and all ages, for the Southern market, for which I will pay the highest cash prices. Letters addressed to me at Winchester, Virginia, will be promptly attended.

'H. J. McDANIEL,
Agent for W. CROW.'

When it was twelve o'clock Wildshaw came to fetch Priscilla. The child was not dressed, for her mother felt as if, in dressing her, she should be hastening and consenting to the loss of her darling. The overseer roughly told Di to get her ready. In vain he stormed and swore; no threat could make her do so. But the grandmother, who had felt keenly her own sorrows early in life, through the chilling effects of age in part, but still more from long experience of the hopelessness of all resistance, was able now, without having a muscle of her face disturbed, or shedding a single tear, with her withered hands to deck for the auction-block the child who, for ten years, had been like a dancing sunbeam in that lowly household.

The sobbing girl was seized by the hand. She bit the thumb of the unmanly ruffian who tore her away from her sheltering home; she screamed; she fell on her bare knees in the dust, and was dragged along. She almost choked as she turned back her head to her mother, crying longer and louder as each step took her further, 'Mamma, mamma, oh! don't let them take me away.' The poor mother started as if from a swoon, and darted wildly after her child.

Twelve other slaves, tied by ropes round their necks, were walking before them on the high road to Petersburg, and the black overseer with his cowhide was trying to stop the heart-rending cries of those who were in an hour to lose for ever, in this world, a husband, a wife, a father, a mother, a son, or a daughter.

As cattle to the market pens, so the ‘hands’ were driven up straight to the auction-block, over which waved the stars and stripes. Several slaves were sold singly or in lots; but when Priscilla was put on the platform for inspection, like a tigress robbed of her whelps, Di tore through the devilish group, bounded on to the platform and snatched her child away. Would that, like a tigress, she had had the power to stretch bleeding at her feet those monsters in human form, those cowardly ruffians whose representative men, ministers as well as politicians, appeal to Christ as not adverse to their organized slave system, who dare to appear in England, who dare to claim the sympathy of English gentlemen and even of English gentlewomen!*

Useless were the mother’s struggles, powerless her appeals to absent humanity. Wildshaw wrung her arms to make her loose the child, and the auctioneer’s assistant held her down whilst the sale went on. A dark pall seemed to be spread over the eyes of Di, and, mercifully, she did not hear the bids of the rival dealers.

When she recovered her senses there was no one near. Master and slaves, dealers and auctioneer, were all gone to the gaol, whither Di followed them. The door of the gaol was closed, but there was a sliding panel through which she saw men tying the lately-sold slaves in pairs by ropes to each other’s feet.

She saw her lost darling in the crowd, and the child saw its mother, and screamed, ‘my mother, my mother!’ Again the poor woman fell down, and great drops of blood seemed to her to be falling from her heart, till it was cold, heavy, and lifeless. From that day to this, now twenty-three years, she has never seen or heard of her child. She believes she was sold for 500 dollars, and one of Mr. Hope’s slaves told her she had been carried to South Carolina; but whenever, in after years, she asked her master if he knew where her child was, she was always told ‘not to be a fool, asking about what did not concern her.’

Wildshaw came the next morning with two glasses of brandy which he tried to make the desolate parents swallow, saying, ‘Master has sent this to you to set you right; and you are to get to work again at once.’ Of course they could not drink the spirits, so Wildshaw drank both glasses himself, and laughed as he promised ‘the master should know how nicely they took the good stuff he had sent them.’

* We must all remember how, some years ago at Cherbourg, Mr. Roebuck’s sensitive nature was pained at the sight of a salute given on the cheek of our Queen, by the Emperor of the French. Who does not call to mind the virtuous indignation with which Mr. Roebuck spoke of this greeting by one he was pleased to call a ‘perjurer’? By what process has this chivalrous gentleman been brought to be a clamorous advocate for the recognition by England of a Confederacy of Slave Dealers? How would he, so keenly alive (as he often tells us) to the dictates of honour and manhood, like to see our Queen, dear to the nation because of her great domestic virtues, holding out her hand to be kissed by the representative of States in which violence and cruelty are daily and hourly, by sanction of the law, rending asunder—and that for sordid gold—the most sacred ties of human nature? It is to be hoped that England’s sons will sternly guard from such pollution the hand of England’s Queen.

CHAPTER VII.
DI WONDERS WHETHER HER MASTER CAN RESTORE HER DEAD CHILD
TO LIFE.

THREE years after the sale of Priscilla, Di was nursing a year-old girl of her own, and at the same time one of Mrs. Hope's, a few months younger. She was for the time living entirely at her master's house.

Her child had been sickly from the time of its birth, but it had lately been getting thinner with alarming rapidity. One evening, after it had been dangerously ill all the day, she was sitting in the nursery, looking anxiously at its pain-drawn features by the light of the summer moon which shone into the room; several children were quietly sleeping in their cots close by whilst this, Di's only one, was gasping out its life without uttering a cry. It died in its mother's arms so quietly at the last that she did not know it was actually dead till she felt its little body grow gradually stiff and cold.

She had often been told that her master was her only Jehovah; that he, and he only, had power over the lives of his slaves, and that he could destroy life at any distance he pleased. Firmly she believed that he had just now taken away her child's breath; she asked herself, 'Will he restore my child to life again if I take the body with me, and beg of him to do so?' She determined to try it at once, so clasping the cold form in her trembling arms, she stepped fearfully out of the nursery into Mr. Hope's bed-room, the door of which was open, and glided like a ghost to his side of the bed. She listened for some time to his breathing, which told her he was certainly asleep. She came as near as she dared, stooped, and put her hand close to his mouth to feel his breath, but she could not venture to wake him.

Suddenly the idea flashed across her mind, 'Can he have killed the child even whilst he was asleep!' She went back into the nursery, and laid the body on the bed, then sat down on the floor a prey to fear, grief, and painful doubt.

Her mind must have been nearly unhinged, for whilst she was thus sitting she fancied she heard a voice saying, 'I took away the breath of your child; your master is not Jehovah.' She rose and went again to her master's room, again listened to his breathing, again stooped to feel his breath, made sure he was still asleep, and went back to the nursery, trembling in every limb, in dread of the Great Unseen.

In this way the wretched woman passed the hours of an awful night; in one moon-lighted room were gently-sleeping healthy children, the cold body of a dead little girl, and a bereaved mother who dared not to ask for sympathy; in the next room the regular breathing of Mr. and Mrs. Hope could be distinctly heard. What pen can describe the utter loneliness of that shuddering, grieving, listening creature?

Before he got out of bed it was Mr. Hope's habit to have a cup of coffee, and Di, as usual, went in with it early the next morning. She was crying, and looked so miserable that her master said to her, 'Why, what on earth is the matter with you now, Di?' As she uttered not a word, he asked the same question again. This time she raised her eyes imploringly, gazed upon his face for a minute without stirring or making a sound, then clasped her hands convulsively together, threw herself on her knees by the side of his bed, and spoke with startling earnestness, 'Oh, tell me, tell me, if you are Jehovah! When the child died you were asleep. Oh, tell me how did its breath go?'

He said, ‘that is not for you to know,’ but he looked at his wife, then at Di, then at his wife again, and whispered, ‘She is going crazy.’*

This is a suitable place for giving an extract from the ‘Code of Virginia, 1849.’ It accounts for any amount of ignorance.

‘If a white person assemble with negroes for the purpose of instructing them to read or write, he shall be confined to gaol not exceeding six months, and fined not exceeding a hundred dollars.’

Slave dealers and slave owners will tell us that this law was enacted in self-defence against the agitation caused by abolitionists, and that its object was to keep from their slaves all knowledge, which might become a mischievous power. Then, having enacted laws for the express purpose of maintaining ignorance, they come before the world as men who pity and care for the slave’s helpless condition, and point to that ignorance, of their own creation, as a strong reason why liberty would only be a curse to him. They wish to keep their slaves free from the contaminating effects of an unshackled press; and, to do them justice, some powers in Europe, both spiritual and temporal, are actuated by the same spirit of consideration for the weakness of others.

In England, even, there is no difficulty in naming men-churchmen, and members of both Houses—who (generous, self denying men!) prefer to think for the people rather than that the people should have the trouble, in the midst of all their other troubles, to think for themselves.

If you seek for an instance of the hopeless depravity of human nature, you will, alas! find it everywhere to your hands in the fact that the objects of this paternal solicitude, as far as we can judge by their words and actions, seem to be both, on this continent and also in America, so utterly devoid of gratitude for all this great goodness, sympathy, and forethought, that they richly deserve to be left to shift for themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. HOPE STRANGLES A CHILD ONE YEAR OLD.

IT is not my object to give a continuous life of the escaped slave, but rather to present incidents in that life, of such a startling description as to make the reader of this true, sad story put to himself or herself such questions as these –

1. Can such things be? Are they true?
2. If true, are they, as far as possible, prevented and punished by the laws of Virginia?

* Many who read this chapter will, I dare say, feel inclined to laugh at it; some to whom I have told the event just related have ridiculed the idea of its being possible that any negro woman at Di’s age could have believed her master was Jehovah. But I, who heard her tell what she went through that night, and saw with what rapid transitions her face changed as she recalled all she then felt, I, for my part, can only say I firmly believe she has told the truth, and I have done my best to give as exact an idea as possible of what she said. Perhaps I ought to mention that she believes she actually did hear a voice, saying aloud, the words, ‘I took away the breath of your child; your master is not Jehovah.’ The reader will probably agree with me that it was only the vivid fancy of a mind then on the very verge of madness.

3. If the laws do not deal equal justice to white men and to black men, and if those laws permit the wholesale flogging and selling of human beings, involving the dissolution of all ties of relationship – can those laws be humane?
4. If not humane, can they by any possibility be Christian?
5. If these laws and customs are neither humane nor Christian laws and customs, WHAT ARE THEY? WHOSE WORKS ARE THEY?
6. These laws and customs being neither humane nor Christian, and therefore (whatever the self-questioner may have decided as the proper answer to Question No. 5) . . . in what way am I to bear myself towards the framers and justifiers of these laws of the * * * * ? Am I to be
 - a. An active sympathizer with them?
 - b. A passive spectator, indifferent?
 - c. Or am I to exert my social, political, intellectual, and moral influence, in order that the framers and justifiers of laws, which are the * * * * 's, may be spurned from or silenced within our Justice-loving, Truth-loving, Freedom-loving island?
7. If the self-questioner cannot at once answer Queries 5 and 6, I would suggest the 7th as possibly one more easy to reply to, viz.: –

What language would Christ have used if he had been present at the sale by auction of Di's little girl? He (be it remembered) who said, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones,'¹⁷ &c. &c.? And what terms would He, if now on earth, apply to those ministers (of a Gospel which they call after His name) who boldly claim the sanction of the Bible for the present relations between master and slave, relations which empower the master to sell and to separate man and wife, father and daughter, mother and son, at any time he likes, and for ever? Surely it is a dreadful thing to have to say of our country that such questions as these are needful questions? Will any one reading them carefully over deny that they are needful, when he bears in mind that many educated men in England applaud the maxim that 'American slavery is the best missionary agency, the hope of the African races'? When he sees, moreover, that the logical deduction to be drawn by such men, from such a maxim, is this, 'We had better withdraw all our cruisers now in watch to catch slaveships, and heartily aid in the kidnapping of African men and women, with a view to their being sold to Southern planters, that so they may come under the influence of the mild, just, and Christian laws which are there in force for the protection and for the education in morals and religion of all those who, by virtue of their negro descent, are thus happily entitled to exceptional legislation.'

The criminal code of Virginia must be a satisfactory proof to their English advocates of the desire which white men in that state have to eradicate evil from the negro race, for from it we learn that there is only one crime, which, if committed by a white man, is punishable with death, whilst there are no less than 68 offences, the perpetration of which by a negro is to be expiated by loss of life! They must also gladly perceive the care with which white men by the revision of the Virginia Code, in 1851–52, have removed from the negro's mind one fruitful source of crime, – doubt as to the certainty of conviction and punishment, – whilst they have not been equally provident towards men of their own class and colour, as this extract will show (it has doubtless already won the admiration of Messrs. Lindsay, Roebuck, Beresford Hope, and others): –

‘The county and corporation courts, consisting of five justices thereof at least, shall be courts of Oyer and Terminer for the trial of negroes charged with felony, except in the case of free negroes charged with felonious homicide, or an offence punishable with death. Such trial shall be on a charge entered on record stating the offence, but without jury, or a presentment, information, or indictment.’

Again, no slave is allowed to give evidence in a court of justice; thus it is impossible for the much-cared-for race to be guilty of perjury. The white men have not been equally thoughtful for their own morality, for they have no law which takes away from the dominant class the power (some men call it a right) to bear testimony in a court; consequently, if such is the inclination of the individual, a white man can perjure himself whilst a slave cannot.

The legal condition of the slave being thus more favourable to the development of morality and true religion than that of his white master, we might naturally suppose that the authors of such excellent laws would not rest satisfied without they made it extremely difficult for a slave to free himself, or be freed from their wholesome restraint. And so we find it: – they actually venture to curb, entirely for the sake of the slave, any morbid philanthropy or democratic tendency which might from time to time arise in their own supreme class; thus –

‘Any white person who shall intermarry with a negro shall be confined in gaol not more than one year, and fined not exceeding 100 dollars.’ – Laws of Virginia, 1847–8, Ch. cxcvi.

Again –

‘If the master shall permit his slave to hire himself out, it is made lawful for any person, and the duty of the Sheriff, &c., to apprehend such slave, &c.; and the master shall be fined not less than 10 dollars nor more than 30, &c.’ – 1st Code of Virginia, 1849.

Again, to prevent the spread of immoral doctrine –

‘If a free person by speaking or writing maintain that owners have no right of property in their slaves, he shall be confined in gaol not more than one year, and fined not exceeding 500 dollars. He may be arrested and carried before a justice by any white person.’ – Code of Virginia, 1849.

Again –

‘Slaves hereafter emancipated shall forfeit their freedom by remaining in the commonwealth more than twelve months after they become actually free, and shall be reduced to slavery under such regulations as may be prescribed by law.’ – Virginia, Constitution of the State, 1851–2.

Having now suggested, as it was only fair I should, how much might be said in support of the views upon slavery as a missionary or civilizing agency held by such gentlemen as Messrs. Roebuck, Beresford Hope, Lindsay, and others, we will again go on with our story.

Four years after the event in Di’s life last related, the slaves were one night, by permission, working on their own little vegetable plots; and as Jem Browne was thus out for the night, Di went to sleep in Phoebe Moore’s shanty; this consisted of one room, in the middle of which, and across it, a curtain of printed calico hung from the roof to the floor. In the division furthest from the door slept Di, in that nearest the entrance Phoebe Moore was in bed with her two children, one three years the other one year old.

Phoebe was nearly white, rather good-looking, not quite so old as Di; her husband had been dead about a year.

While it was yet quite dusk in the morning, Mr. Hope entered Phoebe's shanty and, he not being aware that any one was in the other part of the room, began to be very abusive to her, in words and in actions both. Di heard him say, 'If you don't do as I tell you I'll kill the baby.'

In a minute or two after this, Phoebe shrieked, 'Oh! my baby, my baby; you have killed my baby.' Di rushed from behind the curtain, and saw the youngest child lying on the bed, the master's hand grasping its throat. The two eyes were hanging outside of their sockets, and the tongue was forced out of the mouth, and drawn back under the chin.

Phoebe darted, undressed, out of the door, screaming. Di took hold of her master's hand, and forced it from the baby's throat. He then turned furiously upon her and hissed out rather than spoke the words – 'If you don't get out I'll serve you the same way.'

As she ran off towards her own shanty, she turned her head round to look for Phoebe, and saw her master at the door of her shanty give her two cuts with his ratan over the shoulders.

The child was buried at once in the swamp: the two women who saw the murder, being slaves, could give no evidence against the murderer, so he never heard anything more about it.

CHAPTER IX.

WILDSHAW HITS JEM BROWNE A BLOW WITH A HAMMER FROM THE EFFECTS OF WHICH HE DIES IN TEN MONTHS.

THREE years after the murder of Phoebe Moore's baby, when Di had been twenty years married, Jem Jones the blacksmith and Jem Browne quarrelled one evening as they were gathering cocoa-nuts.

The next day they were ploughing water furrows in a field near the house, preparing the land for sowing cotton or rice. Jem Jones was yoked with a negro in one plough, and Jem Browne was yoked with a negro in another plough: the ploughs now and then came near each other.

Di was standing in her doorway when she heard her husband's voice, shouting, 'Let go, let go,' with a sound as though he were choking. She seized her husband's axe, ran into the field, and saw four men struggling on the ground; both the overseers were trying to separate them. Di saw that Jones, who was a large negro, was strangling her husband; she lifted the axe, and would have struck Jones had she not feared she might hurt her husband.*

Wildshaw lost his temper, and, with a heavy hammer which he always carried about, hit Browne on the left collar bone: the bone was broken with a smashing sound, and a stream of blood spouted from his nose. He stood up and jumped about in agony; his left arm fell helpless to his side. He was unyoked, and led between the

* I could not ascertain the ground of dispute between Jones and Browne.

overseers. The doctor was directly sent for, and the master came down to see the harm which had befallen one of his most useful slaves, the one who knew best how to take care of his horses.

Di was allowed to nurse her husband, but he never got up again from his bed of pain. Mr. Hope, trusting he would recover, sent him chicken broth, cigars, and other things he could fancy. He also spoke angrily to Wildshaw about the way in which he damaged his property.

Two days before Browne died he cautioned Di against Jones, saying, 'He has caused my death, and will be the death of you also, if you don't mind.' At this time Di was very ill indeed, close to her confinement of a child by her master, and was staying at the big house. She was too ill to be near her husband when he died, after lingering ten months, or to see him buried in the swamp.

Very soon after her husband's death in 1855, Di's little boy was born. He was quite white; his mother was at the same time wet nurse to one of Mrs. Hope's, a little girl. These children became much attached to each other.

Di lost her grandmother about this time. Dr. Durant took a young partner, as he was now getting into years.

Nothing worthy of remark happened during the year which followed Browne's death. The boy grew well; but Di was ceaselessly tormented by her master, who did all he could to force her to take Jones the blacksmith, or, if she would not have him, some one else, no matter who, if only she would not remain a widow.

She told Mrs. Hope about the persecution she endured, but that lady took not the smallest notice of her remarks, though they furnished her with just cause (according to English ideas) for complaint on her own account. As Mr. Hope's line of conduct was in accordance with sound Virginian business calculations, she, like a good wife as she thought herself, was inclined to favour rather than to disapprove what she heard, now not for the first time either, by any means.

One day, however, Mr. Hope made Di feel his anger on account of her tale bearing, by hurling a knife at her as she was waiting at table. The knife hit her over the right eyebrow, and the scar across it is still to be seen. Another day she was told to fill her master's glass: she held a jug of water in her right hand, and put out the left to take hold of his glass. The glass had gravy on it (Mr. Hope not having wiped his fingers), and she let it slip on to the table, but without breaking it or spilling any water. He lifted the knife with which he was eating, and cut a large gash on her left arm, just below the elbow, where a scar still remains an inch and a half long.

As may be supposed, Di had her thoughts set upon flight, but she wished to wait till her boy should be strong enough to go with her, so she bore with all her ill-usage as well as she could, and kept her ears and eyes open to learn things which might help her on her way to freedom.

She always dreaded the dogs more than anything, their powers of scent being so strong as almost to preclude all chance of escape; so her joy was great when she by accident found a means by which she felt sure she could overcome this danger. Her young mistress Annie was one day playing with Carlo (a grandson of the Carlo that found out Di when she ran away twenty-one years before), holding up bones, and then snatching them away, when she said to Di, 'I say, Di, what splendid fun it will be to see Carlo's grins and sneezes if we put some cayenne pepper on to one of these bones.' No sooner said than done. Carlo sneezed, and then ran off to bury his nose

in the soil, and kept poking his nose and mouth deeper, deeper, and deeper into the cool ground. Thought Di, 'There's a chance for me after all.'

The boy grew up a lively little fellow, and he was always treated by his master with great kindness, for whenever grapes or toys were given to the youngest children, an equal portion fell to Charlie's lot. Charlie was very fond of his foster-sister, little Law, as Laura, the youngest Hope, was called, and they were inseparable playmates. The boy was always ready to help the gentlemen; he brought their slippers, took off their boots, and struck the fuzees, which he held to their cigars. He danced and sang and amused them all.

When he was about five years old Mr. Hope often said he should soon have to sell him, together with other slaves he was disposing of, in order to raise money to educate his children, of whom he had a great number. Notwithstanding her experience, Di never believed that little Charlie would be sold away from the house, until one day when, after he had danced in the parlour before a stranger, Mr. Hope told her that Charlie was to be sent off to the South the next day.

In that moment of anguish she said, 'I hope Jehovah will take him before he is sold from me.'

Two hours afterwards, the child was seized with fits of convulsions. Dr. Durant was sent for, and the child was, in the meantime, put into a warm bath. Mr. Hope told Di he believed 'she had given her boy something to send him to Jehovah,' which she, of course, denied. The doctor came, and seeing the child's fits were violent, asked if the child had not been put into too warm a bath; being satisfied on that point, he had Charlie put a second time into hot water. But it was of no use, for the child died before dawn, and was next day buried in the swamp.

This was in the fall of the year, when fruit was dropping ripe from the trees.

CHAPTER X. DI ESCAPES, AUTUMN 1860.

WHEN her child was dead, poor Di felt lonely; her master seeing her so, was more than ever anxious she should marry Jones the blacksmith; he himself was at this time walking with crutches, having worn out his strength by drinking.

About this time she heard much talk about soldiers going to fight; the papers were eagerly read by her master and his white overseer. They would often take the papers into the fields, and tell the slaves that 'the red men were coming to kill them, and that the only chance was for them to fight for their master, and that they should be free men when once the war was over.' The slaves said they would fight for them, for the field hands always fancied the men in the North were red men and eaters of men.*

* I give this simply as it was told me by the escaped slave. She being a house-servant knew that Northerners were not red men, for she had seen visitors in the house from the North; she tells me that the field hands all firmly believed they were to be killed by the red men. It must be remembered she speaks of their thoughts in 1860. Her own present opinion of the chances of emancipation is that the North will never be able to procure it for the slaves by fighting. I think it right to state this.

At last, Mr. Hope determined to sell Di; for, said he, ‘You are now of no service; my children are grown up, and you won’t marry Jones, so there is no use my keeping you; you will be sold to-night to a trader.’*

The same evening a trader belonging to the neighbourhood came to the house, and Di was told she was to go with him the next day. She went upstairs, and described to Miss Annie the appearance of the man who was to take her. That young lady, without saying a word, went to a handsome desk, opened it, and took out a revolver with which she often practised; this she put into her pocket, told Di to follow her, and biting her lips all the way, went straight to the parlour where her father was bargaining with the trader and his assistant.

She flung the door open, and stepped like a queen through the room; her eyes flashed fire, and her nostrils were expanded like those of a spirited horse when snorting. In a tone of suppressed anger, she said to her father, ‘What is it that I hear you think of doing? Sell Di! sell her who has nursed all your children, and received only ill-treatment and brutality in return for her care! See her body all covered with scars! No; you shall never do this whilst I can defend her.’

Her father took her by the shoulders and began to push her towards the door, but she paid no attention to this, for her eye had now fallen upon the trader who was standing by, in amazement. She walked up to him, and, her figure drawn up to its full height, said in his face, whilst her right hand held the revolver in her pocket, ‘You villain, you! don’t you fancy you are to have our Di; that you never shall.’

The trader said, ‘Really, ma’m, I have bought her with hard cash, and I’m not likely to lose her.’

She stamped her little foot indignantly on the floor, snorted, and raised the pistol, whilst she never took her eye off that of the big man who now cowered before her. ‘Say no more, Sir, or I’ll blow out your brains; you villain! you coward! you cruel monster! we know what you have done to many poor girls already –’

By this time her hands were seized by her father and by her brother, who had just come into the room, he having heard angry voices as he went by the door.

She was taken upstairs, and locked in her own room, up and down which she paced like a caged tigress for some time, then flung herself on her face on the floor, thinking how she might best serve Di. At last she determined to appear resigned whenever anyone should come to speak to her, which happened before long. Her door was unlocked, and she went into the nursery where Di used to sleep, and told her she should herself sleep that night in the bed by the side of Di’s. In the morning she meant to lie in bed, and thus prevent men from coming to take Di away from the room where was an undressed lady.

* The escaped slave tells me most positively that in several cases on this plantation she has seen the overseer give to slaves who were too old to work and required attendance a dose of black juice which sent them to sleep, and that for ever. She says the slaves dreaded all mention of this black dose, when they had seen three or four sleep to wake no more after it had been poured down their throats. Though I am sure that this statement will make many persons disbelieve the whole of her story, still I think it proper not to withhold any information I possess which may assist others to draw their own conclusions as to the credibility of this history.

Mr. Hope, his son, and the trader sat drinking for a long time, but at last the house was quiet.

Then Di got out of bed, and by the light of the moon looked at her sleeping mistress, her generous defender. She longed to awake her, and tell her she was going to escape, but she thought it would only cause her to be for hours in a fright on her account. Then she wished to give her a parting kiss of gratitude and love. She stooped over her, but suddenly drew back, for she dreaded lest a kiss should awake her, and cause her to cry out so as to disturb the house.

She found the keys of the pantry, and took some small rolls, then she tied up in the end of her long cotton scarf a large quantity of red pepper, many pounds of which were always in a jar in the pantry. How she shuddered at the idea of sneezing. One other thing she thought of taking (she knew she could get it), a massive gold chain set with diamonds, a present to her master from the East Indies. This she knew to be very valuable, and imagined she should be better off with some money to pay her way when once she got to a free land; but her second thought was, 'If they overtake me, and find this chain about me, they will certainly burn me alive;' so she did not touch it.

And now she stepped gently into the hall; there in a rosewood kennel slept Carlo, who had often seen her about the house in the night, so she did not think he would bark, nor did he; he raised his long ears, and looked at her with his thoughtful eyes as she came up to pat his head and tell him to be quiet. She kissed him and glided towards the door; looking back she saw the dog half out of his kennel, evidently anxious to go with her. She looked steadily at the hound, shook her head gravely and earnestly signed to him to lie down. With a wistful look he dropped his nose between his paws, but still he gazed upwards at her all the time, and a big tear, as she imagined, was about to burst from his loving eye.*

Then she stepped out into the full light of the moon, and walked leisurely down the avenue to the gate; there the keeper was sound asleep, so she passed out unhindered into the high road, along which she at first walked, then ran rapidly for a short time in the direction of the town. Leaving the road she crossed a number of fields, making towards the thickest woods she knew of, where she had been once or twice when the slaves had been permitted to go out for a holiday.†

On her way she passed the lodges of many owners of plantations. When she got near the thickest part of the wood, she entered, and began to scatter some red pepper from her scarf behind her back; this she did for some time. All the first two days she was in a dense thicket, and tried to guide herself by the sun. As much as she could she lived on tea-berries, black-berries, huckle-berries, &c. &c., sparing her bread to the utmost.

* Di was very fond of Carlo, for she had nursed him as a pup on her breast at a time when it had been too sore for children to suck. This she did, by the doctor's order, to gain relief. Ever after she seems to have looked on Carlo as a dog of intelligence, superior to that of other dogs, and felt towards him as towards a foster child.

† On these occasions the slaves made rude attempts at praying and singing, and these meetings were sometimes dispersed by a party of gentlemen coming suddenly upon them, and throwing, right into their midst, cows' horns filled with gunpowder, which were exploded by fuzees. Some slaves were maimed for life by such means.

She had not been more than three days walking through the woods, when all of a sudden, at noon, she was terrified by the sound of horses' feet in the distance. Looking round for a hiding place, she found an aged up-rooted tree, which had been decaying for years. It had been snapped in two by a tempest; the top part of it lay at some distance from the thick trunk, which the weight of the roots kept pointing upwards, so that the broken end was at a good height from the ground. The tree was hollow. Di climbed quickly up the trunk, to make sure she should be able to creep down it inside; got down again, and ran from the tree as hard as she could, in a direction leading away from the horses, strewing red pepper all the way. Making a large circle, she returned to the tree, strewing no pepper as she came back; then let herself down the hollow trunk, till her head was many feet lower than the entrance above.

Several hours passed before she heard any sound of horses or dogs. At last she heard what she thought were the sounds of dogs barking and sneezing as they passed at no great distance from the tree. The noise died away, and she stayed all the night in the tree, thirsty and cramped.

Early the next morning she heard dogs barking and sneezing, and her master rode near enough to the tree for her to catch the words: 'D— her, if I catch hold of her she shall never walk again.' It seemed to Di as though the tree were sinking deep into the ground, taking her down, down along with itself, and she expected each minute to see a hideous face peering in from over her head.

Fortunately they did not think of the tree. In it she lay hid all that day and all the next night. She had nothing to drink, and as her strength began to fail her, she kept all night long wondering whether it would not be better for her to go back. On the morning after the second night she had passed in the tree, as soon as looking upwards she saw the sun's rays gilding the tops of the trees over her head, she got out of the tree, weak, cramped, and painfully thirsty. However, the cheerful light and the water and berries which she soon found, gave her fresh courage, and she determined to go on with her journey.

For days and weeks she wandered on, sometimes in woods, sometimes through cleared fields; apples, sweet potatoes, and turnips formed a large portion of her food. The weather grew colder, and when thunderstorms raged in the forests she was ready to die from the effects of a fear which she never could master. At night she would make a fire, having got sparks from two pieces of flint, between which she held some dry pith of trees, then striking these flints with another the pith caught fire.

Often she wished to enter the houses near which she came to get apples, but always the dread lest the people should send her back restrained her. She crossed many streams. But one day when she came to a river running between two deep banks, she did not know what to do, for she felt too weak to attempt to swim. Soon, however, she saw a man fishing in a bark boat. She called out 'Will you please take me over the river?' He made signs to show that he should require something for doing so. Di shook her hands to show they were empty. He shook his head in return. At last she bethought herself of a ring which had been her husband's. When this she showed him, he shoved his boat to the shore at her feet. She stepped in and sat down, whilst he rowed her straight across, not speaking a word. When the boat reached the other shore he made noises which Di could not understand. She stepped out and climbed up the bank.

She had often heard of the rough men who lived in the woods, and was always afraid lest she should meet them. Whenever she saw any one she lay hidden till the danger of being stopped had passed away.*

She crossed the Shenandoah river, the Blue Ridge mountains, over rich plains, and through magnificent valleys, then passed the Potomac, half swimming, half floating, growing weaker and fainter each day, till at last, with scarcely a thread left upon her, she lay down in a lane almost covered over by trees. Her knees were bleeding; she was cold, hungry, and faint. At last she heard wheels and a voice. She cried out faintly. A man said to his comrade, 'I hear a voice.' It was dusk, and she was crouching nearly naked behind a bush. She put up her hand, and it was grasped by a man, who said, 'Who's here?' Di said, 'It's me.' He said, 'Who's me? I know you are a female by your voice.' 'A runaway slave.' 'From what plantation?' he asked. Di told, and he said, 'Come out.' 'I cannot, for I have no clothes,' answered she.

The man sent for a horse cloth out of his gig. She was rolled up, put into the gig, and soon went to sleep, though she did not know whether the men were slave owners or not. They drove on till they came to their house. One of the men jumped down and ran before, to say a slave was coming. The good lady of the house came to the door, and two servants helped her out of the vehicle. They took her to a room on the ground floor, where a nice fire was burning, then gave her one spoonful of warm arrow-root. She soon felt faint; they put her into a warm bath, and tended her all the night.

In this kind Pennsylvanian family she remained four months, sick the whole of the time, spitting blood. When she got better they took her in the carriage to the house of a friend, a clergyman, with whom she remained four months, until March 1861. Whilst she was with this excellent family she several times went to church, having a double veil over her face.

With great difficulty the clergyman got her put on board a ship (I cannot make out where), closely veiled. She went first to Philadelphia, but did not land there; thence she sailed to New York, and remained concealed in the ship, which lay there four months.

* Vast districts in the Slave States, under the exhausting effects of slave industry, are every year surrendered to nature and relapse into wilderness. These deserts become 'the resort of a numerous hoard of people, who, too poor to keep slaves, and too proud to work, prefer a vagrant and precarious life spent in the desert to engaging in occupations which would associate them with the slaves whom they despise. In the Slave States no less than 5,000,000 of human beings are now said to exist in this manner, in a condition little removed from savage life, eking out a wretched subsistence by hunting, by fishing, by hiring themselves out for occasional jobs, or by plunder. Combining the restlessness and contempt for regular industry peculiar to the savage with the vices of the *proletaire* of civilized communities, these people make up a class at once degraded and dangerous; and constantly re-inforced as they are by all that is idle, worthless, and lawless among the population of the neighbouring States, form an inexhaustible preserve of ruffianism, ready at hand for all the worst purposes of Southern ambition. * * * From their ranks those filibustering expeditions are recruited which have been found so effective an instrument in extending the domain of the slave power: they furnish the "border ruffians," who in the colonization struggle with the Northern States contend with "Free-soilers" on the territories, and it is to their antipathy to the negroes that the planters securely trust for repressing every attempt at servile insurrection.' – See Professor Cairnes' masterly work on 'Slave Power.'

The same ship sailed with a cargo for Calcutta, and Di was engaged to wait on the captain's wife, who was confined on the voyage. All were very kind to her on board.

When the ship got to Calcutta, Di lived for four months (as she thinks) on board, and afterwards was for two months in an hotel. The landlady, she says, 'did all she could to overwhelm her with kindness.'

The captain's wife recommended her to a lady, and she engaged Di to wait upon her on the voyage to England in a ship which carried soldiers. From this lady also she received the greatest kindness. They landed at Portsmouth early in the morning. There she received her wages, and the same evening reached London, in March 1863. She was robbed of all her money the first night, in a low lodging-house to which the cabman drove her.

In London she has lived ever since March, generally in the house of a poor woman (where I took down all this history), who has behaved like a sister to the penniless runaway slave. She has had needlework given her by some kind ladies, but the poor thing suffers often dreadfully from the terrible injuries she received during 25 years of a wretched life. So great is the pain, that at change of weather she cannot hold her needle, and for nights together she is kept awake by frightful dreams, in which she fancies she is being tortured over again.

She is quite willing to let one or two medical men examine and report upon the eleven scars on her person; she also will reply to questions put to her by two or three gentlemen and ladies who may wish to thoroughly investigate the case, as I doubt not will be done. But she is most anxious to be protected from mere idle curiosity, as well as from gross insult. From the latter she has by no means escaped, and that at the hands of one in London who should have known better.

My belief is, that all she has told me is quite true. My only fear is that I have failed to describe vividly enough this dreadful series of crimes and atrocities. I tried to the utmost by cross-examination to shake her evidence, but was unable to do so in the least. The real names of all the chief persons are in my possession, but I thought it best to refrain from making them public.

One thing astonished me more than I can say when taking notes, probably the same thing will have surprised the reader in several places, that a woman who has suffered as she has, should of her own accord tell some good traits of her master's character; facts which most women would have kept back, fearing lest the good that was shown to be in him should be urged as a witness against the statement of her own grievous wrongs.

I could easily fill pages with accounts of the horrible cruelties which Di has seen practised upon female slaves, of which she too has had personal experience, but to do so would be of questionable utility in any case, whilst it would certainly cause this little book to be excluded from many a drawing-room to which I trust it may now find its way. When it is remembered that the whiter the slave is the greater is his or her market value, most of those who are at all acquainted with the working of this 'peculiar institution' will readily understand to how great an extent the ill-usage of female negroes is aggravated on slave-rearing plantations by the superior demand there is for white slaves.

It will be observed that I have nowhere in this book referred to the question of slavery, considered merely as compulsory and unpaid labour. My object in passing that by is to enable me to introduce with stronger effect some

OBSERVATIONS OF A PRACTICAL NATURE.

Let me now make a few remarks on slavery. To those who advocate slavery as a beneficial institution I have not one word to say. The scathing reply of the Scotch Clergy to the address sent to them by Christian Ministers of all denominations in the Southern Confederacy may very properly be held applicable to those in Europe who hold the same views.

‘But there are hundreds of thousands who detest slavery with their whole souls, and yet cannot see that at the present crisis the cause of freedom to the slave would gain by any immediate expression of their feelings. They think (I do not say I at all agree with them) that the North is fighting for the Union and for the Union alone; that if the Union were once re-established, by conquest or by treaty, the slave question would be left to settle itself; and that it is therefore injudicious to say or do anything which may possibly, on which side soever victory finally remains, leave the slaves in the power of owners exasperated rather than awed by any present exhibition of English sympathy with slaves in the South. I know that this is one reason why thousands of most conscientious persons do violence to their own feelings by not now writing or speaking in behalf of the slave.

Thousands, again, equally honest in their convictions, not being aware of the gigantic growth, in late years, of the Southern slave power, nourished by a vast internal slave trade, think and say, ‘Slavery must be left to die out of itself; and we may trust, in the main, to the slave-owners, seeing that their own interests are promoted in treating their slaves with decent humanity, notwithstanding all “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”¹⁸ tells us.’

The number of those who hold these views, men and women of high principles and generous sympathies often, is, I believe, incalculable. Incalculable also, as I believe, would be the benefit to mankind if those who are actuated by these motives, in England, France, and Germany, could be brought to proclaim to the world their adoption of a resolution to this effect: –

‘Resolved that, whether the North restores the Union, or whether the South proves itself hereafter strong enough to establish an Independent Confederation, whether the area and power of slavery be or be not contracted at the end of the war, the interests of mankind in general, and of the slaves in particular, cannot but be greatly promoted by our

‘DETERMINATION never at any time hereafter to receive and recognize a minister sent by a country calling itself a Christian country, in which any laws remain unrepealed by which a slave-owner is permitted to buy and sell slaves in order that they may be carried against their own will from the lands on which they were reared.’

Those who doubt the benefit to the slaves of immediate emancipation, will perceive in the alteration of the slave laws here suggested an undeniable improvement in the condition of the slave. His domestic ties will not be torn ruthlessly asunder in any state. Slave-rearing states will by degrees find it to be their interest to educate and free their slaves, they yearly becoming less valuable after the Southern Slave Trade is closed. Slave-consuming states (i.e. slave importing, both from Border States and from Africa), unable to replace by purchase the frightful loss of human life which results from hard-driven labour in their cotton and rice swamps, will soon see that their prosperity depends very much upon the degree of consideration and kindness, tending to prolong life, with which their slaves are treated.

Advocates of emancipation can, without surrendering their own independent line of action, join cordially in such a resolution, because it is a step in their own direction.

‘THE ANTI-SLAVE SELLING SOCIETY’

Might be a suitable name for an association to be formed for the purpose of obtaining signatures in favour of such a resolution as has been somewhat roughly sketched out; and I hope that the plan which I have now ventured to propose will be adopted by philanthropists in numbers sufficient to silence for ever the voices of those who dare to proclaim that ‘Slavery is the best Missionary Agency, consistent with Christianity, and the great hope of the African races.’

LORD BROUGHAM¹⁹ AND STATES’ RIGHTS AND SECESSION.

The ‘Anti-Slavery Reporter’²⁰ for December publishes the following correspondence between the Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society²¹ and Lord Brougham, which explains itself: –

London, Nov. 11.

‘My dear Lord, – The honorary secretaries of the Manchester Southern Club – a pro-slavery organisation got up in Manchester to promote the recognition of the Southern States – allege that you are in favour of “State rights” – that is, of the theory that each individual State of the American Union is absolutely independent, free, and sovereign, a theory by which it is sought to justify secession, rebellion, and civil war.

‘The following passage is quoted by these gentlemen in support of your assertion

‘There is not, as with us, a Government only and its subjects to be regarded, but a number of Governments, of States having each a separate and substantive, and even independent existence, originally thirteen, now six-and-twenty, and each having a legislature of its own, with laws differing from those of the other States. It is plainly impossible to consider the constitution which professes to govern the whole Union – this federacy of States – as anything other than a treaty, of which the conditions are to be executed for them all; and hence there must be certain provisions made, which cannot be altered without universal consent, or a consent so general as to be deemed equivalent for all practical purposes to the consent of the whole.’

‘Whether a “Constitution,” defined by the late Daniel Webster²² to be the fundamental supreme law of a State, can, under any circumstance, be considered “a treaty,” it is not material to discuss; but if I understand the above passage, it conveys your opinion that, regarded even as “a treaty,” the “certain things” it confers, the “certain provisions” it makes, “cannot be altered” nor “annulled” without so general a consent of the parties to it, as to be practically equivalent to the consent of “all of them.” So far, therefore, from your opinion being in favour of this theory of so-called “State rights,” it is inferentially the very reverse, or I totally misapprehend your meaning.

‘Although I believe I might assert, without consulting you, that your words are not susceptible of any other interpretation, it is important I should have your confirmation of my views, to make public use of, if necessary. may I, therefore, solicit your

explanation of the foregoing passage as soon as you can make it convenient to favour me with it? – I remain, my dear lord, yours most respectfully,

‘L. A. CHAMEROVZOW.²³

‘To the Right Hon. Lord Brougham.’

Now, what says the noble and learned lord himself on this point? Let his lordship speak for himself: –

‘Paris, Meurice’s Hotel, Rue de Rivoli,
Nov. 22, 1863.’

‘My dear Mr. C., – Your letter with the printed extract only reached me yesterday, as it went round by Cannes. I consider your construction of it perfectly sound and fair. – Very sincerely,

‘H. BROUGHAM.’

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Notes

1. This volume is publicly accessible through digitisation on Documenting the American South, at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/simpson/simpson.html>. There is also a copy in the General Reference Collection 12706.aaa.9., in the British Library, London, England.
2. For further information on the ‘as told to’ narrative genre, see Xiomara Santamarina, ‘Black Womanhood in North American Women’s Slave Narratives’, in Audrey Fisch, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.235ff.
3. *The Liberator*, 20 November 1863, p.2.
4. *The Bristol Mercury, and Western Counties Advertiser*, 27 February 1864, p.6.
5. John Hawkins Simpson, *Poems of Oisín, Bard of Erin* (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1857).
6. John Hawkins Simpson, *Napoleon III on England* (London: Sanders, Otley, and Co., 1860).
7. The American Revolutionary War took place between the United States and Britain from 1775–1783.
8. The US Civil War took place between the southern and northern states (1861–1865) and resulted in the legal abolition of US enslavement.
9. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
10. George Washington (1732–1799) was a white US enslaver, Founding Father, military general, and first President of the United States (1789–1797).
11. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was a white US enslaver, third President of the United States, key architect of the Declaration of Independence, philosopher, statesman, author, and orator.
12. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was an act of pro-enslaving legislation passed by the US government which made the non-enslaving states the hunting ground for enslaved people by making the return of any and all ‘fugitive’ persons to their white enslavers not only mandatory but accompanied with financial gain and endorsement by the federal

- government. A transcription of this legislation is available online: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp
13. Latin phrase: meaning ‘by the law itself’.
 14. A full text of the Emancipation Proclamation issued by white US President Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) on 1 January 1863, can be found at: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=34&page=transcript>
 15. The original page numbers have been removed as they are not accurate to this edition.
 16. Simpson is referring to ‘The Africans who came to Virginia in 1619’. They had been ‘taken from Angola in West Central Africa’ and ‘captured in a series of wars that was part of much broader Portuguese hostilities against the Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms, and other states’. For further information see ‘The First Africans’, available online: <https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans/>
 17. White English born monarch, George III (1738–1820) ruled over Britain and Ireland from 1760 until his death.
 18. John Randolph (1733–1833) was a white US enslaver and politician.
 19. Matthew 18:6.
 20. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her world-renowned antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin: or, Life Among the Lowly*, in Boston with the printer, John P. Jewett, in 1852. Available online: <https://archive.org/details/uncletomscabin01stowgoog/page/n5/mode/2up>
 21. Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868).
 22. The *Anti-Slavery Reporter* was a white-led abolitionist newspaper established in London, UK, in 1825.
 23. For a detailed history of the white-led British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society founded in London in 1838, see James Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838–1956: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
 24. Daniel Webster (1782–1852).
 25. Louis Alexis Chamerovzow (1816–1875) was a white British antislavery campaigner and writer.





17074 *J. Sella Martin*

Figure 34 John Sella Martin, 1862. (Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.)

JOHN SELLA MARTIN

(1832–1876)

14 Anon., *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin*, in Baptist Wriothlesley Noel, *Freedom and Slavery in the United States*. London: James Nisbet, 1863, pp.156–170.¹

Biographical History

See also 'John Sella Martin' in *Speeches*.

A SELF-LIBERATED BLACK antislavery campaigner, social justice advocate, author, orator, journalist, essayist, political thinker, religious leader, and newspaper editor, John Sella Martin dedicated his life to the US transatlantic abolitionist struggle and human rights movement. A revolutionary activist-author, he repeatedly shared his personal experiences of enslavement in the US southern states across numerous narratives and speeches in which he demanded an immediate end to the centuries-long institution of inhumane bondage.

As powerful calls to revolutionary arms, while the vast majority of his spoken and written testimonies were authored and/or recorded in the first person, here the unknown author of *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin*, published as chapter 9 of Baptist Wriothlesley Noel's volume, *Freedom and Slavery in the United States* in London by James Nisbet in 1863, chose to transform Martin's personal testimony into a third-person account. In this volume in which Baptist Wriothlesley Noel (1798–1873), a white Scottish religious minister and author, dedicated himself to investigating 'Religion and Morals in the United States' and 'Slavery in the Slave States', Martin's narrative is one of only two chapters in which he focuses upon an individual enslaved person's life. In the immediately following chapter ten he traces the 'Life of Josiah Henson' (see 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, Speech Nos 33–36). As the same version of Martin's autobiography that was also published in *The Christian Witness* in 1863 and in *The Bromley Lecture Hall Chronicle* a year later in 1864, it is currently impossible to establish the identity of the author of this work. There is a strong possibility that Noel may well have copied it word for word from *The Christian Witness*. Martin's narrative may possibly have been first disseminated as a speech he delivered during one of his transatlantic lecturing tours and which was then transcribed by an unknown hand.

Writing in the 'Preface' to his volume which he published against the backdrop of the US Civil War, Noel informs his British readers of his political rationale for producing this volume. Here he writes that it is his determination to do all he can 'to prevent a costly, bloody, and disgraceful war between this country and the United States, which would follow a premature recognition of the South'. All too painfully aware of the political stranglehold exerted on popular opinion by white British support for the US Confederate cause due to the nation's financial greed and wilful dependency on the financial profits generated by enslaved labour, Noel published his volume as a moral wake-up call 'to prevent England perpetuating the bondage of four millions of men and women by such a premature recognition.'² At the political and emotional heart of Noel's clarion cry to arouse the British nation to antislavery principles is the *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin*. A hard-hitting conscience-raising work, Martin's autobiography inspires his audiences to acts of antislavery radicalism by voicing his own and his family's first-hand experiences of the atrocities, persecutions, and traumas of enslavement.

As an autobiography in which his denunciation of white enslaving barbarity was never at the expense of his endorsement of Black agency, Martin is at pains to inform his audiences of his subversive strategies for obtaining literacy from white members of his community. As his unnamed amanuensis writes, 'he often played at marbles with white boys; and, being expert in the game, won many', noting, 'of those he made excellent use, by carrying a spelling-book in his pocket, and by giving a certain number of marbles to any boy for teaching him a word of spelling'. As the author emphasises, not only was it the case that 'word after word was lodged in his memory' but 'by degrees he learned to read, and excited the admiration of his fellow-slaves by reading for them scraps of the newspaper'. In powerful ways, Martin's knowledge of reading and writing immediately provided a key source of support, assistance, and strength not only for himself but for many enslaved people with the result that 'he was often asked by the negroes to write for them'. Martin's account of his acquisition of literacy is not only a celebration of the defeat of white power but an affirmation of the deeply entrenched communication networks that were in existence among enslaved people and by which they resisted white enslavers' attempts to destroy all trace of Black agency. For Martin, his ability to read and write only had value as a social justice weapon which he put to hard-hitting use by reading newspapers and writing for members of his enslaved community who were fighting daily battles for survival.

Living a life in enslavement in which he was repeatedly subjected to physical and psychological suffering, Martin eventually effects his self-liberation and dedicates his first months of freedom to securing the liberation of his family members. Working tirelessly as a religious minister and an antislavery lecturer across the US and UK, the unnamed author writes that Martin's 'abilities, amiable manners, and Christian temper, so commended him to various friends in this country, that he obtained a sufficient sum to buy the freedom of his sister and her two children'. In securing their liberty Martin fulfils a promise he had made while in enslavement. As he painfully remembers, 'when he last saw' his sister, 'she said, "If ever you are free, you will try to free us: free Ada first, then Charles; and if you can't do more, I will remain a slave."'

Towards the end of the *Narrative of the Rev. John Sella Martin* the unknown author reproduces Martin's letter to 'a dear friend' in which he expresses his heartfelt jubilation

following his sister's and her family's liberation by writing, 'my sister was in my arms. Oh! it was a glorious meeting.' A hard-hitting testament to the life-sustaining role of family relationships, for Martin, his sister and her family's freedom meant more than his own self-emancipation. As he remembers, 'My first feelings of joy in gaining my own freedom were not half so ecstatic.' In this same letter, he also poignantly confirms, 'My sister brought me some of the soil from my mother's grave, and a piece of the rude board that marks her resting-place.' For a son who bore the pain of having witnessed his mother's repeated sufferings in enslavement before her tragic death, the opportunity to hold 'soil' from his 'mother's grave' and to touch the 'rude board' which was the only marker of 'her resting-place' was a source of healing. 'The board is very much decayed, but I shall cherish it with a sacred affection until I shall be permitted to stand near it and hear the song of the slaves' emancipation sung as the jubilee of the race', Martin confides.

Surviving only a decade longer and carrying the pain of his mother's loss to the day he died, John Sella Martin, the tireless antislavery campaigner and social justice advocate, lived to see 'the slave's emancipation' and the 'jubilee of the race'.

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NARRATIVE OF THE REV. JOHN SELLA MARTIN.

John Sella Martin was born at Charlotte, North Carolina. His father is now agent of the railroad which has its terminus at that place. His mother was the property of Mrs Henderson of Charlotte, who was his father's aunt. I have lately read a letter from his father to him at Boston, signed, 'Your affectionate father;' yet, this father, according to Southern custom, left him in bondage; and still leaves his daughter and her two children to suffer all the horrors of slavery. One night, while they were living in peace at Charlotte, Sella's mother returning from a visit to a friend found a man in her cottage who sternly bade her take off her finery

and follow him. To complain was useless, to resist impossible. Mrs Henderson had sold her and her children, and the trader was now come in the dead of night to carry them off. While Mrs Henderson was counting the money which she had obtained by selling her nephew and niece to a brute, and while Mr. Martin slept comfortably on his bed of down, his two children and the woman whom he had wronged were forced from their home, and were hurried to the place where the trader had penned his human cattle. What tears and groans, what curses and stripes mingled in the pen that night, Sella was too young to remember; nor could he know what happened to the other victims of slave-holding greed. But he and his mother were sold to Dr Chipley, who then lived at Columbus, Georgia, and who now lives at Lexington in Kentucky. When Sella was about nine years old, he was taken for a debt by Mr. Edward E. Powers. He was thus separated from his mother; but could visit her sometimes, as she was living in the same place. Mr. Powers used to have his meals at a hotel, and not wanting Sella at his house, made an arrangement with the landlord that Sella should wait at table, and in return for his board and lodging should go on errands for the landlord. At this time Mr. Powers placed him at a Sunday-school. Here, as Sella recollects, he was often taught that slaves should obey their masters, (Col. iii. 22, 1 Pet. ii. 18;) but never that slaves as well as freemen are children of God by faith in Jesus, and as dear to God as the Christian whose skin is white, (Gal. iii. 26-28.) Slave-holders can misapply Scripture to suit their purposes, as Satan did to Jesus, (Matt. iv.). In that school no scholar was taught to read, for, by a law of the State, any white who teaches a slave to read is liable to a fine of \$500. But the tyranny of that unrighteous law the poor friendless boy contrived to evade.

During this part of his life he often played at marbles with white boys; and, being expert in the game, won many. Of those he made excellent use, by carrying a spelling-book in his pocket, and by giving a certain number of marbles to any boy for teaching him a word of spelling. The bribe conquered their fear of parental injunctions; so, thus, word after word was lodged in his memory. By degrees he learned to read, and excited the admiration of his fellow-slaves by reading for them scraps of the newspaper. While he was so exercising his power of reading, he was often asked by the negroes to write for them. His marbles furnished him with the means of learning; for his spelling-book having been replaced by a black board and a piece of chalk, he used to tell his playmates that he would give so many marbles to any boy who could write a better letter than he. Accepting his challenge, they would write letters on his board; and he, after observing how they formed the letters, would pay them the marbles, acknowledging that he could not write so well as they had done. These letters were afterwards practised in secret; and at length the power of writing was added to that of reading.

When he went one day to see his mother at Dr Chipley's, he found that she had been sent, in exchange for another slave, to Mr. Terry, a Presbyterian minister, who had a plantation in Troop county, Alabama; and that his sister had been sold to Mr. Young, in Columbus. After four years of absence, becoming impatient beyond endurance, because Mr. Powers, who had often promised to let him see his mother, never fulfilled that promise, he forged a pass, and walked sixty miles to see her. She was almost his only friend. But the joy of their meeting had not lasted many minutes, when she remembered the danger to which his filial affection had exposed him. That

night he rested in her cottage, but before dawn the next morning, he sought shelter in a neighbouring wood. It was Sunday: and that afternoon, as he lay in his concealment, he observed some negroes enter the wood, dig a hole near him, and throw into it a dead body. Night enabled him to return to his mother; who, in answer to his questions, gave him the following explanation of the wood scene. A slave who had been bought by Mr. Terry had that morning refused to be flogged, whereupon he was seized, his hands were tied, and he was raised by a rope which passed over a beam in the smoke-house till his feet just touched the ground. Mr. Terry then gave him four hundred lashes with a zeal so worthy a slaveholder that some of the negroes said, 'He is dead.' At which announcement Mr. Terry gave him seven more lashes, and then exclaiming, 'He is dead, is he? let us see,' opened his knife, and stuck it into the dead man's foot. He had done his work. Had he cut out his victim's eyes, or put a slow fire under him, it would have been in vain; but the slave was gone where the slave-holder's fury could not reach him. Not so the shuddering negroes who had aided in the murder. 'Take warning,' said the murderer; 'that is what you shall have if you resist me.' Such was his sermon in the smoke-house. What his text was in the church, to which he immediately rode off, Sella does not know; but he preached, as Sella afterwards heard, on the wickedness of negroes, assuring his congregation that one of his had died that morning of passion. The only effect of that murder was, that the whole congregation pitied the poor minister who was plagued by so perverse a slave. Witnesses of the murder were there; but how could they speak? The law allows no slave to give evidence against a white man; and each would have too keen a recollection of the smoke-house ever to utter a word, except among each other. I know not whether Mr. Terry is still alive, but alive or dead he cannot escape the eye or hand of God; and if he still lives to flog other slaves to death, perhaps when he reads the Word of God, he will meet with this passage, 'Murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.'

That evening, while Sella was with his mother, a step was heard at the door of the cottage. 'Hide! hide!' said the frightened woman. Scarcely was he shut in her wardrobe when Mr. Terry entered. 'Where is your son?' She was silent. 'Where is your son?' Although she saw the fury in his face, and learned it by the thunder of his voice, she would not betray her boy. A blow from his stick then laid her forehead open, and she fell bleeding to the ground. Sella, who through a chink saw all, could not bear it; and springing out, threw Mr. Terry down, and then knelt down to help his mother. The reverend slave-holder, seeing his advantage, stunned him by blows upon his head. For hours he lay insensible; and, when his senses returned, he found himself bound hand and foot, with a negro standing over him. Almost the first sounds which came upon his ear were those of heavy blows in the smoke-house. 'Where is my mother?' 'In the smoke-house.' Mr. Terry had been flogging her a quarter of an hour. 'Oh, let me see her! Do, do!' As the only answer to his prayer, he was carried bound to the waggon, which Mr. Powers had sent for him from Columbus, and in that city was thrown into prison.

By the aid of some other negro prisoners he escaped with them to the woods; but after various adventures was caught, and carried back to prison, where he remained nine months.

Here his chief companion was a Boston man, named Green, confined for theft, from whom he learned much respecting the geography of the country, the difference

between the North and the South, and the way in which he might escape: indeed, far more than a slave shut out by law from all instruction could hope to learn anywhere but in prison. At the end of nine months he returned to live with Mr. Powers.

Meanwhile, his sister Caroline had been sold by Mr. Young to Mr. Dorson, a Baptist minister at Columbus. Nathaniel, his son, using the irresistible power which belonged to him as the son of the owner, constrained her to live with him; and at his death, left her, with his two children, Ada and Charles, slaves to his father. Shortly after, Mr. Powers died, and by his will gave freedom to Sella; but the heir set aside the will by some quibble, so that Sella, instead of getting his right, found that he was to be sold by auction to the highest bidder. He was bought by Horace King, a coloured man; but having resisted when this man attempted to flog him, was soon sold by him to a trader. In the service of this trader, with whom he travelled seven months, he became familiar with the horrors of the slave pen.

In the hands of the trader, who buys Christian men and women like cattle, to be sold by him to any savage who will give his price, they are herded together as cattle. The best are crowded with the worst, the most instructed with the most brutalised. If any weep, the trader, who fears that their tears will injure their sale, cries out, 'Dry up!' enforcing his command by a blow on the face. They must do all that he bids. The old must say they are young, the weak that they are strong; or they will have the whip; for their price depends upon their age and strength. If a girl can neither cook, nor wash, nor sew, he will force her, by the threat of a flogging, to say that she can do all these; because that increases her value. One girl of colour there, who was gentle, pure, acquainted with the Word of God, and evidently a Christian, taught Sella much gospel truth; yet she was forced to lie, because, had she refused, she would have been laid down on the ground naked before all in the place, and would have been flogged. She was a mulatto Christian, with a sweet countenance, whom the trader would sell to any brute for any purpose. This brute might torture her to any extent which he pleased, if she did not comply with all his wishes. Men calling themselves Christians gave him this power over a defenceless Christian girl; and ministers calling themselves Christians write books to uphold the system which allows it.

Sella himself was sold to Mr. Marriott of Carolton, Pickens country, in Alabama. By this man he was allowed to visit his mother, who had been bought by a man named Mangam, and was now living at Columbus, Georgia. Ten days after his arrival she died in faith, expressing her hope in Christ. After his return to Carolton, Mr. Marriott sent him to Columbus, Mississippi, where he learnt the trade of a hair-dresser. Through his skill in this art he was able to pay his master fifteen dollars a-month, by practising it on board a steam-boat upon the Alabama River. At the death of his master, who fell a sacrifice to drink, he was again sold by auction. Mr. Sherod of Pickensville, who was the highest bidder, instead of being content, as Mr. Marriott had been, with fifteen dollars a-month, required him to pay six pounds. Sella was now so much alone in the steam-boat, and went with it so far from home, that Mr. Sherod began to think that he would run away. This, which was in itself not improbable, became more likely from the large sum which he had to pay monthly, which he could keep for himself if he could escape.

Troubled by these suspicions, Sherod sold him to Mr. Garnett of Mobile, by whom he was taken to New Orleans, and there became hair-dresser on one of the Mississippi steam-boats.

Mr. Garnett, in his turn, perhaps under the influence of similar fears, sold him to Mr. Cady, a wine merchant at New Orleans, from whom he finally escaped by false papers to Chicago.

There he was safe; for although Mr. Cady met him one day in the street, he was afraid to claim him, although the Fugitive Slave Law would have obliged the magistrate to give him up. The anti-slavery feeling in Illinois was so strong, that the slaveholder trembled rather than the slave; and Mr. Martin did not even flee.

From that time, he began to deliver anti-slavery lectures. His knowledge increased rapidly. The faith in Christ which, as he thinks, he obtained through the instrumentality of his sister, ripened into decided piety; and he was several times asked to preach. Circumstances now led him to Boston, where he preached to several white congregations, by two of which he was invited to become their minister. Thinking, however, that his negro brethren required his guidance, while white churches could easily obtain ministers, he accepted the call of a black church, and is now their pastor. It was only in the year 1856 that he escaped; but he has so well improved the interval, that he now speaks and preaches as a man of education. His abilities, amiable manners, and Christian temper, so commended him to various friends in this country, that he obtained a sufficient sum to buy the freedom of his sister and her two children. When he last saw her, she said, 'If ever you are free, you will try to free us: free Ada first, then Charles; and if you can't do more, I will remain a slave.' Mr. Dorson, who, though he is a Baptist minister, held his own grandchildren in slavery, would not give them up except at the full market price. Ada is pretty; and if Sella had not bought her, any brute might. She might have been flogged as her grandmother was; or forced against her will into an alliance in which she could not claim the name of wife, as her mother had been. She already suffered much; and she might at any time have been sold in spite of jealousy. But Mr. Martin carried back with him the sum demanded by the slave-trading minister who sells his own grandchildren, and they are now safe.

After long anxiety through not obtaining answers to his letters, he received a letter from Mr. John Dorson, dated Columbus, Georgia, June 5, (1862,) in which he says, 'I received your letter bearing date, Boston, April 9, but did not reply because I saw no way of responding to your proposal, without bringing them to St Louis, or entrusting the business to an agent. I could not do the first, because such madmen and creators of sedition as you and Wendell Phillips³ had plunged the country into civil war; and I had no disposition to do the last. . . . The city from which you write, and I suppose where you live, has always been known as the den of social monsters and abolition infidels; and as I know Carolina to be a Christian, I have feared that God would hold me responsibility for assisting to plunge her into social and moral ruin.'

The hope, however, of obtaining for his son's wife and for her grandchildren 2000 dollars overcame his scruples, and one day Mr. Sella Martin received the following note from two Kentucky slave-dealers, Gault and Ketchum: – 'While in Columbus, Georgia, the Rev. John Dorson informed us that you had made him an offer for certain slaves in his possession – namely, Caroline and her children, a girl and a boy. He further stated that you had the gold to pay his price of redemption. Upon the strength of his recommendation we bought the slaves. We could easily realise for the girl, who is about sixteen, almost as much as we shall ask you for all; but, as we promised Mr. Dorson to let you know that we have them, we write to you to redeem our promise.' With fresh anxiety, but with awakened hope, Mr. Martin arranged for his journey of

six hundred and fifty miles to Cincinnati, and, as he was as much afraid of going into a Slave State as Gault and Ketchum were afraid to bring their slaves into a Free State, he had recourse to an old friend and the ambrotypes. Meantime his sister was taking a journey of four hundred and fifty miles, with slave-dealers and through military posts, but – to a faithful brother and freedom! His letter explains the rest: –

‘BOSTON, UNITED STATES, *Sept. 6.*

‘MY VERY DEAR FRIEND, – I got back last Friday from Cincinnati after a most successful trip of about eight days. I had written to T. J. Martin, Esq., who was one of my earliest and most faithful friends, asking him to act as my agent in buying my sister and her children, as he had promised to take them into his employ, and he was very kindly consented to do so. I wrote to him, also, should he get to Cincinnati before me, to go over to Covington, a place opposite Cincinnati, on the Kentucky side of the river, to where the traders brought my relatives, and get their ambrotypes, so that I should not be cheated in buying others than my sister and the children. He did so, and when I got them, finding by the likenesses that those were the ones I wanted, there was nothing left me to do but to count him out two thousand dollars in gold, and he went over to Covington and made the purchase. The day before when he was over he had tried to get them for less, but he found that it was impossible to do so, and so he was compelled to pay about £412 for them. He was gone about four hours – the time seemed an age to me. A thousand suspicions crept into my mind, and I was depressed by a thousand fears. But had I calculated the time it would take them to make out the papers and get ready to send my sister to the boat, I need not have lived an age of anxiety in four hours.

‘When the boat was about three rods from the ferry-landing on this side, Caroline recognised me in the crowd, and came forward on the boat and waved her handkerchief. I soon recognised her, and I suppose behaved myself rather childishly, judging from the description which my friends give me of my actions and utterances. In a few moments more my sister was in my arms. Oh! it was a glorious meeting. My first feelings of joy in gaining my own freedom were not half so ecstatic . . .

‘My sister brought me some of the soil from my mother’s grave, and a piece of the rude board that marks her resting-place. The board is very much decayed, but I shall cherish it with a sacred affection until I shall be permitted to stand near it and hear the song of the slaves’ emancipation sung as the jubilee of the race.’ . . .

Upon this case the *Daily News* remarks: –

‘Enabled by the kindness of his English friends to pay down the market value of his sister and her children, Mr. Martin, himself an escaped slave, set about their deliverance from a situation full of horrible contingencies, and addressed himself by letter to their reverend owner. The proposition was, in fact, to buy old Mr. Dorson’s grandchildren and their mother; but this was not the reverend gentleman’s difficulty; he had no delicacy on that score. In fact, as far as getting rid of his unhappy relatives, and obtaining hard cash for them goes, he appears to have acted with considerable decision and promptitude. He showed the letter to a couple of Kentucky slave-dealers who were in those parts, and these men, seeing an opportunity of making a profit by

the transaction, bought them in order to sell them again to Mr. Martin. Mr. Curwen publishes their letter, which is a fair, straightforward, business-like communication, very different from that which the Rev. Mr. Dorson addressed to his anxious correspondent. That reverend gentleman, we are told, is “greatly respected in his neighbourhood,” – that is, by his fellow slave-owners, – and we can well believe it. If his sermons are like his letters, his function must be to wrest and pervert the principles of our holy religion, and make it the prop and stay of the greatest of social villainies. Such a man must be invaluable in slave society. But there was no reason why he should export his sophistications to Boston. He writes, however, a letter which reminds us of nothing so much as the letters of Taylor, the murderer, lately published. There is in them the same mixture of wickedness and complacent religious sentiment, presuming even to be didactic. . . .

‘Knowing Caroline to be a Christian, he wants to keep her in the slavery which has defiled her, and fears that if he were to sell her into freedom he should be responsible for her moral and social ruin. We wonder what constitutes a woman’s ruin down South. However, the reverend gentleman’s scruples were not insurmountable, for at the sight of the gold he was ready to entrust not only Caroline, but with her “the slave girl Ada, a quadroon, with hazel eyes, aged 16,” to the tender mercies of two travelling speculative slave-dealers, who could have sold them next day to the highest bidder.

‘We have not brought forward the case of this hardened and conscience-seared old clergyman for its singularity; for all who know Southern literature or Southern society know that his thoughts and words are such as, under similar circumstances, would be heard wherever slaves have long been held. But we see from this case how helpless the South is to reform itself.’*

‘If the South is full of such men, what has England to do with the South?’†

Notes

1. This volume is published online at Google Books, accessible online at: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Freedom_and_Slavery_in_the_United_States/vm0TAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Baptist+Wriothsley+Noel,+Freedom+and+Slavery+in+the+United+States&printsec=frontcover. This narrative was also published as ‘Freedom and Slavery in the United States of America’, in *The Christian Witness*, 20 (London: John Snow, 1863), pp.158–162, which is also accessible at Google Books: https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Christian_Witness_and_Church_Member/BfUDAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=narrative+of+john+sella+martin&pg=PA158&printsec=frontcover.
2. See Baptist Wriothsley Noel, *Freedom and Slavery in the United States* (London: James Nisbet, 1863), p.xiv.
3. Wendell Phillips (1811–1884) was a white US antislavery campaigner, orator, and attorney.

* *Daily News*, Sept. 26, 1862.

† Mr. Curwen, *ibid*.



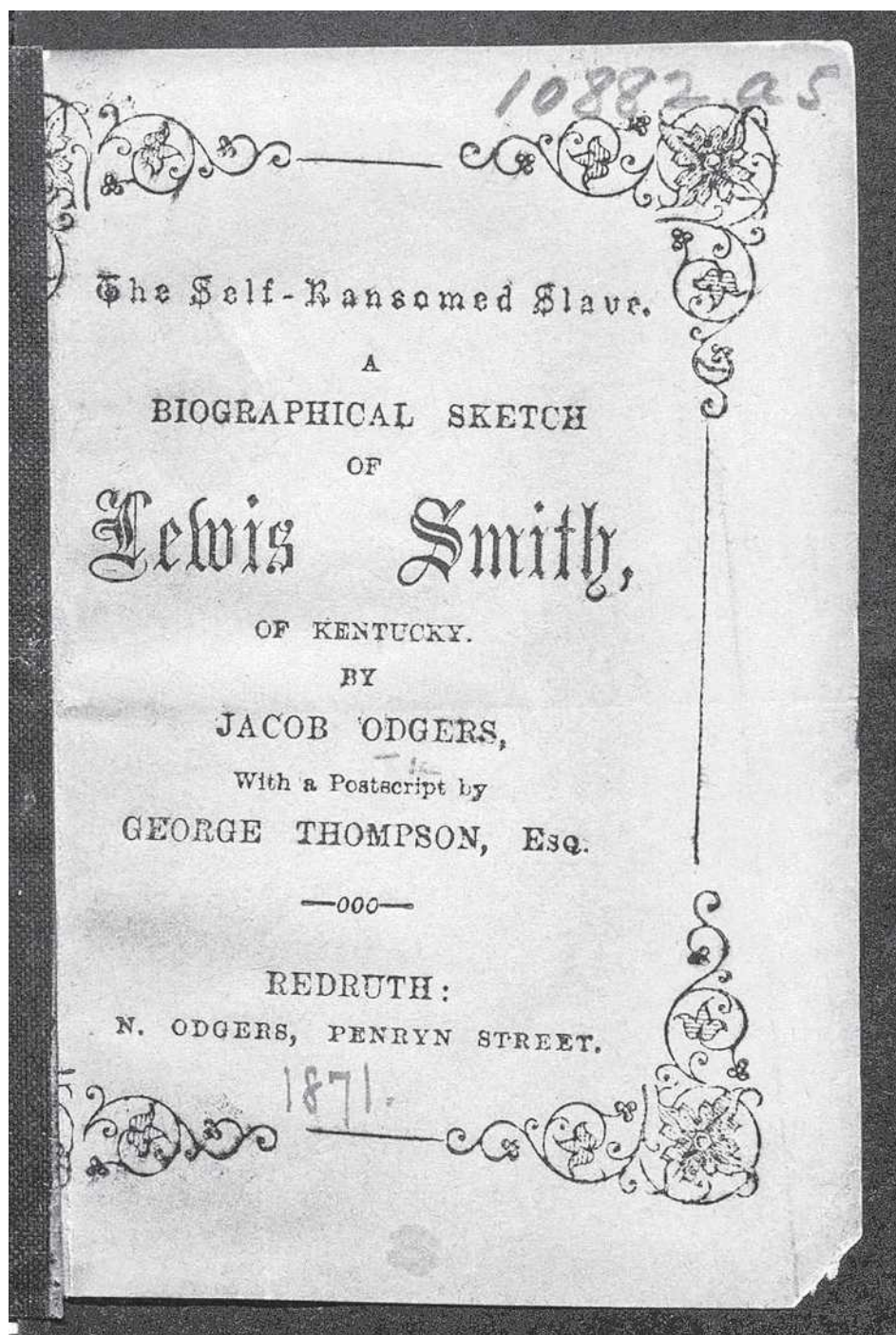


Figure 35 Title page from Lewis Smith and Jacob Odgers, *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith*. Redruth: N. Odgers, 1871. (The British Library Board, General Reference Collection 10882.a.5.)

LEWIS SMITH

(c.1824–1825–DATE UNKNOWN)

15 Jacob Odgers, *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith*. Redruth, Cornwall: N. Odgers, 1871.¹

Biographical History

See also 'Lewis Smith' in *Speeches*.

BLACK ANTISLAVERY CAMPAIGNER, inspirational educator, and important religious leader, Lewis Smith was born in 1824–1825 and experienced enslavement in Mason County, Kentucky. Many years following his self-liberation from enslavement, in 1871 white British religious author, Jacob Odgers, self-published Smith's autobiographical history under the title, *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith* in the town of Redruth, Cornwall. While research is ongoing into Odgers' personal biography, many of his religious and educational tracts survive.²

At the same time that readers of Lewis Smith's narrative are faced with very real difficulties in any and all attempts to gain unmediated access either to his voice or to his life story due to the powerful role played by Jacob Odgers as his white amanuensis. *The Self-Ransomed Slave* begins with a letter of introduction authored by world-renowned self-liberated Black activist, writer, and orator Henry Highland Garnet (see the Garnet entry in *Speeches*, Speech Nos 27–28). An unequivocal testament to Smith's long history of antislavery labours in the freedom struggle written by a celebrated Black political leader, Garnet endorses his life's work within the centuries-long history of African American-originated and -led liberation movements. Beginning with Smith's earlier success in securing his family's liberation, Garnet confirms that he 'visited England a few years ago, and through British generosity redeemed his wife and children from slavery' in order to lend further political weight to his current mission. As Garnet summarises, Smith 'now comes to ask assistance in building a Church and School-house in Ohio for his needy people'. In a deliberate act of speaking back to white power, it is Garnet's and not Smith's white amanuensis who testifies to his exceptionalism by categorically stating, 'I know Mr. Smith to be a man of excellent character, and reliable, and worthy of any kindness you may bestow upon him.'

In an emotionally harrowing beginning, at the start of *The Self-Ransomed Slave, A Biographical Sketch of Lewis Smith* Odgers foregrounds the terrible grief and heart-breaking loss Smith experienced as a child in his separation from his family following the death of his white enslaver. Odgers writes, 'whatever endearments might have existed between parents and children, Lewis and his sister must now be torn away by a merciless hand from the embraces of their mother to be employed for the gain, and at the caprice of a new and insolent master'. As a child growing up amidst the atrocities and abuses of enslavement, Smith not only experienced the unimaginable personal pain in the loss of his family but he endured in his own body 'the withering privations and intense sufferings of one born a slave'.

All his life, Smith was burdened by the traumas he experienced from enduring his own 'intense sufferings' and from witnessing the torturous violence committed against enslaved people by their white enslavers. Black people of all genders and ages were 'stripped bare' and 'flogged until the skin hung like reddened tape on their backs'. While he does hard-hitting justice to the murderous brutality they endured, Smith was equally at pains to communicate their death-defying resistance strategies. As Odgers reports, enslaved people 'have been hunted down in the swamps, who have been nerved with an inspiration and a resolution for freedom' with the horrifying and traumatising result that they have been 'dragged back to the plantations' where 'they have bled, and swooned, and died'. As Smith remembers, enslaved people were tortured and murdered in a refusal to surrender their 'liberty or death' 'resolution for freedom'.

'Lewis Smith became united in marriage to a slave girl, of whose virtues and affections he speaks with tender reminiscences', Odgers writes, confirming, 'She became the mother of nine children, inspired her husband in his struggles for freedom, gaining the sympathy and co-operation of her master to help him, and bore her willing part in the weary and wasting rounds of this changing life.' Here Smith lays bare his determination to memorialise the unknown heroism of an unnamed enslaved woman: his wife. A hard-hitting testament to Black female agency, she is the freedom fighter who makes his 'struggles for freedom' possible. Her role in his self-liberation is all the more heartbreaking given that she lives and dies in enslavement. As Smith remembers, 'She died, and vanished down the grave from the vision of mortals'. He endures the pain not only of her death but of the loss of his children as Odgers confirms, 'The brutalizing system of slavery separated him from his darling children' as 'He could not prevent their sale to the cruellest masters, or their transport to the most unhealthy climes.'

Powerless to save his family, Smith survives the horrifying tortures inflicted on his own body in his repeated attempts to secure his self-liberation. Finally, he succeeds in buying his own freedom. Living a new life as an antislavery campaigner, he toured the northern states on his activist mission. As Odgers confirms, Smith 'made a rout in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and New York' where 'he told his tale which strangely affected the hearts of the people' and '700 dollars were collected' and 'his personal liberty was obtained'. All too painfully aware of the unending suffering

endured by his family members who were still living in enslavement, Odgers writes, ‘Smith turned his attention to procure the emancipation of his wife and 7 children.’ Living with the devastating experience that his first wife, an unnamed ‘slave girl’, had ‘died, and vanished down the grave’ and that he was powerless to ‘prevent’ the ‘sale’ of ‘their nine children’ to ‘the cruellest masters’, Smith sacrificed everything he had to save his second family.

Smith travelled to Britain alongside Black freedom fighter Tabb Gross to fundraise the remaining amount, and they worked with white British George Thompson and other white abolitionists to orchestrate a lecturing tour.

In 1861, a family portrait was published in *The Band of Hope Review* to help the Smith family solicit donations. This family portrait shows Lewis Smith, his wife, Kezia and three of their children. Four children tragically remained in enslavement while their parents worked relentlessly and tirelessly for their legal liberation. It is possible that this image was based on a daguerreotype, as in some antislavery meetings Smith circulated an image of his family to encourage donations for his remaining children’s legal freedom. After their relentless campaigning, in June 1861 the London press announced the self-liberation of Lewis and Keziah’s family and that they had settled in Ohio.³ The intergenerational freedom fighters included: Kezia ‘aged about 36’; Winfield Scott Smith (17); America Smith (15), Dinah Smith (11), Alfred Smith (9), James Smith (7); Elijah Smith (3). Both Lewis and Keziah Smith were determined to pay tribute and return their ‘sincere thanks to the generous gentlemen and ladies of England’, emphasising that their children ‘will never forget the warm sympathy of the “Sunday-school Children of England” who contributed largely towards setting them free’.

Tragically, however, their courageous acts of self-liberation were overshadowed by an unspeakable loss: one of the Smith children (who is unnamed) died ‘a week before they got home’ in Ohio. As a letter from Tabb Gross informs us, their child may have died ‘in a free land’, making all too real the inspirational words of the pioneering Black civil rights leader, activist, liberator, and poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, ‘Make me a grave where’er you will . . . but not in a land where men are slaves.’

Over a decade later, Lewis Smith was again on a ‘mission of mercy’ in England. This time, he sought funds to ‘to purchase a Chapel and School-house’ to replace the building that had been destroyed by white proslavery ‘rebel slave-holders’ during the Civil War. Arriving into Britain with Alfred, ‘a fifth child about fourteen years of age, an intelligent and steady lad’ beside him, his unspeakable suffering as a father was far from over. As ‘one’ of the children ‘for whose liberation he made his appeal to English friends’ in 1860, Smith had succeeded in securing his son’s liberation. Over ten years later, however, Smith was powerless to save his son from dying a premature death ‘in the metropolis of England surrounded by strangers’.

Lewis Smith was no isolated freedom fighter. Each of his family members living in enslavement and liberation endured untold struggles, sacrifices, and sufferings in their individual and collective life and death battles for liberty.

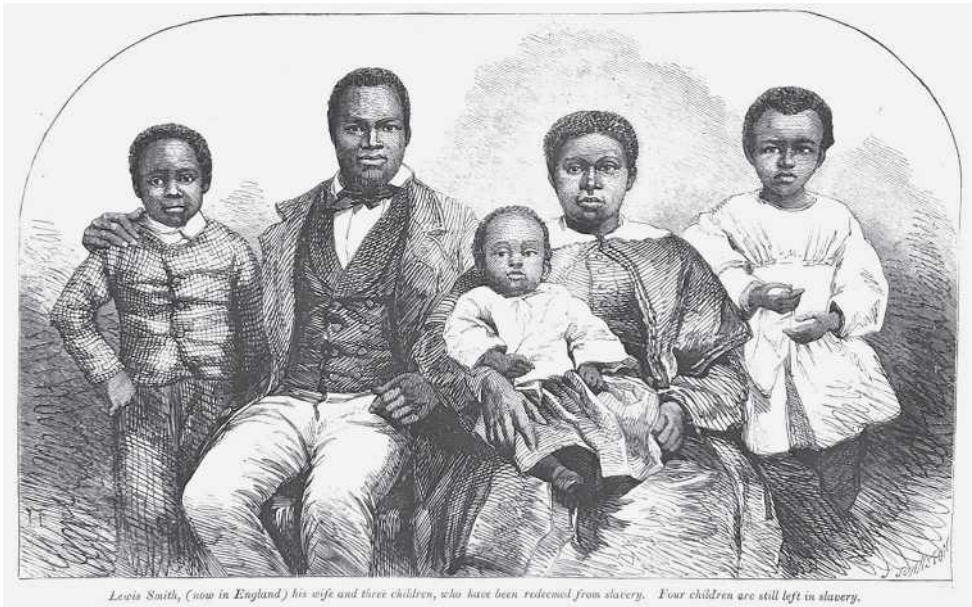


Figure 36 Lewis Smith and Kezia Smith, with three of their children. (*The Band of Hope Review*, 1 January 1861, p.4, with thanks to Michelle Shorney.)

Further Reading

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THE SELF-RANSOMED SLAVE.

A Biographical Sketch
 of Lewis Smith,
 of Kentucky.
 By
 Jacob Odgers,
 With a Postscript by
 GEORGE THOMPSON,³ Esq.

REDRUTH:
 N. ODGERS, PENRYN STREET.
 1871.⁴

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
 NEW YORK, August 27, 1868

‘Rev. Dr Massie,
 ‘Rev. and Dear Sir, –

I have taken the liberty to introduce to your kind attention Mr. Lewis Smith, of Ohio, United States. Mr. Smith visited England a few years ago, and through British generosity redeemed his wife and children from slavery. He now comes to ask assistance in building a Church and School-house in Ohio for his needy people. I know Mr. Smith to be a man of excellent character, and reliable, and worthy of any kindness you may bestow upon him.

‘You will remember, sir, that you were to speak at my church in New York [Shiloh Presbyterian] on the evening of the day in which the dreadful riot commenced in 1863,⁵ and that you called upon me in company with the good Dr. Asa D. Smith. Since that time, thank God, slavery has been abolished by law, and the land is free.

‘I am yours truly and obliged,
 ‘HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET,⁶
 ‘President of Avery College, Alleghany City,
 ‘Pennsylvania’

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
 OF
 LEWIS SMITH

KENTUCKY is the theatre where have been acted out the abominations of slavery. Here slavery has had its firm adherents; – the crack of the whip has often terrified the jaded slave; and the scenes of misery and woe that have been witnessed on this territory, rival the productions of romance. Although the physical features of the country present an aspect grand and imposing to behold – its fertile landscapes stretching away in beauty – its sloping hills and smiling dells – its limpid streams and majestic rivers; yet its verdure has been the harvest reaped from the rotten bones of myriads of slaves. Those wooded glens have been the retreat of the scarred and trembling fugitive, when pursued by the prancing horse and the bloody hound; and those rolling streams have been fed by a tide of tears wrung from hearts distracted with despair.

Prior to the civil war in America, in the State of Kentucky alone, more than 225,000 human beings were liable to be exposed for sale on the Auctioneer's platform, to aggravate devillish traffic in human blood. And where could this mass of human beings turn their eyes to behold a hand that could smite their fetters asunder; or one to alleviate their miseries, and wipe the tears of the slave for ever away? They might dream of freedom, and the soil untrodden by the slave; they might gaze above them, and sigh for a home of liberty and rest beyond the stars; and these were nearly all they could do. By day they were almost paralyzed with the insufferable heat of the sun, tortured with the lash of the whip, and exposed to the withering curses of the drivers. The night, with its silvered moon and golden stars, brought no bliss or gleam of joy – the clank of the chains could be heard at the midnight hour, mingling with the imprecations of the oppressed, and the shrieks, and the distorted writhings of the flogged, still bleeding, ghastly and pale.

If they appealed to the Senate for assistance, they saw the same hands that framed their laws, tighten their fetters, and lacerate their backs to the very bones. If they looked to the pulpit in order to redress their grievances, those who could assist them, were hand in glove with the owners of the plantations; and those who would, were forbidden to speak on the abolition of slavery.

Thus Kentucky became a pandemonium – the dwelling-place of devils rather than men – where the basest lust and the fiercest passions gained the ascendancy, where religion and education were excluded from the slave, and that beautiful land became a field of blood.

Some years ago, a fugitive slave, panting and breathless, reached the banks of the Ohio. The crescent moon was sinking in the far west; and the sky seemed like azure velvet sprinkled with dust of pearl. The winds were rustling among the trees; and the waters of the Ohio were rolling, deep and wide, along the glade. His pursuers had not tracked him; nor the dogs scented their prey. Everything was still, save the throbings of his heart; and, with a breast agitated by a thousand fears, he lay him down to sleep.

And as he slept, he dreamed that he descended a narrow valley; and as he advanced, the darkness grew deeper and blacker, while at intervals, lurid flashes of light shot through the gloom, rendering the infernal scenes distinctly visible. He saw, on Lethe's deadly stream, hundreds of slave-holders, frightened, raving and furious, tormented by thousands of ghosts which haunted them like spectred demons, and lashed them with venomous thongs till the deadly waters became crimsoned with their blood. The slave instantly awoke – the horses were upon him – and with a desperate leap he plunged into the Ohio, and reached the opposite bank in safety.

LEWIS SMITH was born on a slave plantation, in Mason County, in the State of Kentucky. Divine Providence blessed him with an affectionate mother, in whose heart had been ingrafted the elements of true religion; and whose life was the evolution of those grand principles which shed a lustre on the prince, as well as the slave. She was a member of the 'Disciples' or 'Campbellites,' the glowing ardour of whose piety cast that of her husband into the shade. She also taught her children submission to parental authority, and the dark dispensations of heaven: and she pointed her offspring to the shining track, whither the prophets and the martyrs had escaped to rest, and to 'behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.'⁷ Although her mind had been moved by heavenly influences, yet this did not unmanacle her fetters, or free her from the servitude of the slave. She mingled in the congregation of worshippers, with whom her master was identified, who, like many of that abominable race, deemed the commandments of men more binding than the law of God.

Lewis Smith was ushered into life surrounded by the unmitigated horrors of slavery; nor did he escape the withering privations and intense sufferings of one born a slave. The thongs, perhaps, were never lashed on his own back; but he has seen the poor niggers stripped bare, flogged until the skin hung like reddened tape on their backs, and then 'go to the devil' thrown back in their teeth, into the bargain. They have been hunted down in the swamps, who have been nerved with an inspiration and a resolution for freedom, dragged back to the plantations amid a volley of villainous curses: and beneath the agonies of their punishment, they have bled, and swooned, and died.

Under maternal care, the young Smith advanced in years, and consequently increased in market value.

Lewis was only twelve years of age when his original owner died; and then followed a change in the distribution of the slave-holder's property. But a change more dreadful far, was now to pass on the family of Lewis – a type of thousands such scenes that have been witnessed in the land of slavery. There stood his father, with prayers and entreaties, to save his child from such inhuman separation. There also stood his mother, a monument of grief – a modern 'Rachel weeping for her children,'⁸ wringing her hands in the very consummation of agony. There stood Lewis,

'His brow was sad; but his eye beneath
Flashed like a faulchion from its sheath.'⁹

Tall in stature, ebony hair and his face shining like a negro's beneath an Afric sun. Whatever distractions might have been in that mother's breast or whatever endearments might have existed between parents and children, Lewis and his sister must now be torn away by a merciless hand from the embraces of their mother to be employed for the gain, and at the caprice of a new and insolent master. Abominable slavery! – a daring and damning infringement on the social rights of humanity, beating into gold the blood and sinews of a nation of slaves to satiate a masters lust! Let Heaven curse it! Let earth through all her dominions expel and cry the infernal evil down! And let hell receive her monstrous offspring, type of her own distortions and misery.

New scenes and new horrors were the allotment of this sable youth. Under the iron hand of his cruel despot he was goaded on with unremitting toil. Away from the fountains of a mother's love, and the tender throbbings of a mother's heart.

No home to charm with love's endearing wile – No father's eye to catch his beam-ing smile. The sacred hours of the sabbath, which ought to be employed in devotion, were employed in the drudgery of the field at the end of the driver's whip, and under an impious tyrant's frown. Long was the struggle between light and darkness between hope and despair, till, at length, the noble youth inspired by some Divine impulse, broke the spell of the devil, and the spell of his frowning master. God created the sabbath for rest; and rest Lewis would have, notwithstanding the tyrant should spit vengeance, or burn with fury. 'Get you into the field, you blasted niggers, or, I'll reef your cursed backs to the bones,' was the cruel mandate; for masters rarely make any compromise with their slaves. Lewis, with all the manliness of a man, rebuked the foul blasphemer, and reminded him that if he persisted in the wrong, there might be a failure in his crops, which were destroyed one year by frost; and the next year hail destroyed his splendid tobacco.

His end was sad. While inebriated with drink, and his brain fuddled and confused, he fell from a drying-chair, and nearly broke his neck – fitting recompense for actions so impious and foul.

Through the instrumentality of a godly mother, Lewis was enabled to confide the interests of his soul in Christ; and, to the surprise of his owner, he mingled in the assembly of saints; and as he advanced in life, his piety became more healthy and vigorous: and, amid the woes and disasters of this distracted life, he could sing:

'My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here:
Then why should I murmur when trials are near?'¹⁰

Smith now began to feel the degradation of being a slave. He became miserable and discontented with his lot; and sighed for freedom, until the glorious idea brightened into hopes of deliverance.

Lewis Smith became united in marriage to a slave girl, of whose virtues and affections he speaks with tender reminiscences. She became the mother of nine children, inspired her husband in his struggles for freedom, gaining the sympathy and co-operation of her master to help him, and bore her willing part in the weary and wasting rounds of this changing life. She died, and vanished down the grave from the vision of mortals; but her spirit, borne on the silvered plumes of an angel's wing, reached that shore, where sorrow, and death, and tears, are forever unknown.

The brutalizing system of slavery separated him from his darling children; nor was it in his power to impart to them any kind of religious or secular instruction. He could not prevent their sale to the cruellest masters, or their transport to the most unhealthy climes.

Smith's master was so fond of his glass, and his whiskey drinking that he incurred heavy debts on the spirit merchant, which he could not liquidate. In 1854 he became so hopelessly involved that he mortgaged Lewis Smith for 1090 dollars to a villain who had no sympathy for the slave. Suspicious that Smith might take refuge across the Ohio, he sent a sheriff who seized him as he would a beast, and thrust him in gaol, and there he lay in a cold damp cell until his limbs became as frigid as an iceberg. In this most wretched and pitiable condition, he did not forget his God; neither did his God forget him.

At midnight the song and the prayer rose to heaven on faith's triumphant wing; God saw and heard his prayer, and sent the angel delivered him.

The villain who cast him into prison, was terribly agitated by the visions of that night. The storms were howling furiously around his dwelling, and the incumbent darkness added terror to the scene. A demon had been sporting in his brain all the evening: and with the fumes of his cigars and influence of his whiskey, he could see double; and half awake, and half asleep, he scrambled into bed. He had not been there long, when, in the pauses of the storm, he heard his bed-room door smash open; and fifteen black slaves entered, accompanied by a grim, horrid-looking spectre.

His brain began to boil with fear; and his teeth to chatter; and the floor shook with the tremor of his limbs. The spectre advanced towards him, stripped off the bed-clothes, and with a sabre, quartered him.

He then took out his soul, gave it to the niggers, who pierced it with red-hot pokers until it became a frightfully distorted thing: and his carcase was placed in a chaldron of whiskey, and boiled to a jelly. Under the torment of these dreadful apparitions, he awoke – the sweat oozing by agony from every pore: and his limbs weary with the frantic distortions of that wretched but memorable night; and, on the spur of the moment, resolved to reform his miserable life.

While Smith was suffering in gaol, his wife, like a ministering angel, pleaded and laboured for his release. She gained the sympathy of her master, who agreed to purchase him at the price for which he was mortgaged.

Smith consented to acquire the amount by working over-time, and promised not to attempt an escape until this was done. His only security was the wife of his youth and seven darling children. The money was paid by the wife's master; and a deed was prepared, conveying Smith to him as his property.

Although they were still slaves, yet what joy must have thrilled the pulses of that family to find themselves clustered around one hearth-stone, with their hands clasped in the dearest friendship, and in all the rapture of joy exulting in their meeting!

Not long after his freedom was purchased, Smith crossed into Ohio, to visit some gentlemen who had assisted him.

No sooner had he planted his feet on this new soil than an attempt was made to drag him again into slavery. In order to accomplish their purpose more effectually, a coloured man, with a soul half human and half demon, admitted him freely into his house. At midnight, four white men, armed with bludgeons, entered the apartment, and declared that he was a villain fugitive from his master's plantations, and resolved to trip him back across the Ohio, and to sell him again into slavery. Like a man, Smith stood butt against them, with a heart braced with Spartan courage, and with an eye flashing fire mingled with holy vengeance – their limbs became palsied, and the hearts of the wretches failed. On this occasion Smith remembers God's interposing hand – that hand which is always near to save – and his benefactors successfully interposed to save him from the tyrant grasp of slavery.

Smith's master, a very lenient slave-owner, about eighteen months after his purchase, offered to grant him his freedom on the repayment of the 1000 dollars at once, or if he could obtain security that it should be paid at a specified time.

With the thought and prospect of freedom looming upon his view, his pulses began to throb with new life; and his heart began to beat with high inspiration; and the faculties and powers of his being, acquired an impetus ever before unknown.

He now became a slave for freedom. With his pick and spade, night and day, he sank wells, drifted dykes, until he had accumulated 300 dollars; and then obtained security for 700 more, to back the price of his emancipation. New blood now began to float in his veins – his iron shackles fell clanking to the ground, never more to gird his muscles and stretch his sinews; and in the broad light of heaven, with his fetters beneath his feet, and the crystal atmosphere ‘fanning his temples, and stirring his hair,’ he could stand up, and say, ‘I also am a man.’

In those arduous labours he was stimulated and nerved by his beloved wife, who was always at his elbow’s end to cheer and to console; and another slave named Gross¹¹ who also aspired to freedom, assisted him to obtain that liberty which is now his blissful heritage. He made a rout in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and New York – he told his tale which strangely affected the hearts of the people – 700 dollars were collected, and he returned and paid this sum for his security: – thus his personal liberty was obtained. The following is a legal certificate of his emancipation:

‘Commonwealth of Kentucky,
Bracken County,

‘I, Richard J. Hughey, Clerk of the County Court, for the Court aforesaid, do certify that Lewis Smith, late a slave of George Humblong, and who is of the following descriptions: – about thirty-two years old, five feet eleven inches high, dark complexion, with a small scar on his chin, is a free person of colour, duly emancipated and set free by George Humblong, by his deed for that purpose duly acknowledged in said court, and upon which this certificate was ordered to issue by the said court, the said George Humblong having executed bond to the commonwealth of Kentucky, with Daniel Byers as his security conditioned according to law, pursuant to the statute in such case made and provided.

‘In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and affixed the seal of said County Court at Brooksville, this 27th day of October, A.D. 1856.

‘Richard J. Hughey, Clerk,
‘Bracken County Court.’

After this, Smith turned his attention to procure the emancipation of his wife and 7 children, whose astonishing price was no less than 6,000 dollars. Unforeseen circumstances soon after occurring to the master, he added to the contract his condition, ‘that the money must be paid by the 4th of May, 1861, and if not forthcoming at that time, the bargain should be void.’ The wife and children must be then sold by auction, and separated from each other, perhaps for ever.

He, with another friend, set to work with all the energy imaginable; and the ministers of different denominations in the States, very kindly opened to them their pulpits, by which means they collected the sum of 1,200 dollars, 300 of which were collected at one Meeting alone, which was held at the Chapel of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher,¹² Brooklyn, New York.

After all these successes, Smith felt he might still fail to raise so large a sum; and though enjoying the bliss of freedom himself, yet he could not endure to see the shackles on his wife and loved ones, and hear their groans beneath the foot of the oppressor.

The large sum of 4,800 dollars – about £1,000 in English money – was lacking to equal the price of emancipation for his wife and children. In order to raise this money, Smith came to England. And what will not parental love prompt a man to do? He will cross oceans rocked in the very cradle of the storm, and migrate into climes where exhale the poisonous miasma. He will bound over broken ice, and climb the fantastic crags of iceberg. He will cross the chilling and dooming snowdrift, and hazard the awful avalanche. He will descend the perpendicular ladder, with yawning dangers above and below him; he will venture in the deadly rifts of battle where the bullets are flying, and the swords are flashing in hellish grandeur – all because he loves those at home with a love unchanging, and with an affection that will never die.

Smith, prompted by the same principle, reached England in July, 1860, bringing satisfactory testimonials from America. He obtained an introduction to Mr. George Thompson, and was received with much kindness.

The whole amount required was contributed; and among the benefactors, were Lord and Lady Shaftesbury, who spoke of Smith in the highest terms, and thought him worthy of every consideration. Thomas Farmer, the Budgetts, Corderoys, Buxtons, Gurneys, Dr. Hoole and his family, Rev. W. Arthur, M.A., Dr. Osborn, Samuel Morley, the Jacksons, Dr. William Chalmers, Dr. McCrie, and others, contributed the required amount.

With a heart flowing with gratitude, Smith returned to Kentucky, and, by the advice of his friends, settled down at Ripley, Ohio, gathering his emancipated family around him, and endeavoured to promote their happiness relative to this world, and to that which is to come.

He united himself to a coloured Wesleyan congregation, worshipping at Ripley. While the war¹³ furiously raged between the slave and the free states in America, the congregation at Ripley being coloured, it was supposed they sympathized with freedom and the North; consequently their temple of worship was utterly destroyed by a band of rebel slave-holders. They continued their worship in the schoolroom; but some fiendish Irishmen, wishing success to the rebels, placed a keg of gunpowder under the building, and blew it to atoms, only a few minutes after the scholars had dispersed.

His success on behalf of his family prompted him to comply with the importunities of those in connection with the negro church at Ripley, Ohio; and he has again come to England, to solicit money to purchase a Chapel and School-house, instead of the one destroyed, and for which near £1,000 is still required. What disinterestedness must have characterised his proceedings! He has sacrificed his own property, a little estate of ten acres, by means of which he earns a livelihood, in order to compensate the loss of the chapel. He deprives himself of the luxuries, and even the comforts of life, so that he may obtain money sufficient to rear the house of God. He has brought with him his fifth child about fourteen years of age, an intelligent and steady lad, one of those for whose liberation he made his appeal to English friends in 1860.

Since that time, this intelligent lad has died. In the metropolis of England surrounded by strangers, in the midst of the world's magnificence and grandeur, he finished his earthy career. His father had gone to Scotland on his errand of mercy, and he returned a few minutes ere the soul of his son broke her mortal crysalis and escaped to rest. After a short attack of bronchitis they discovered symptoms of his coming end. His fevered pulse struck faster and faster, and wild muscular distortions evinced him to be in the paralysis of death. His speech failed him; and while they were gazing on his

youthful form in awful suspense, just like nature holds her breath between the flash of lightning and the crash of thunder; then an angel came and rested on his folded wings beside the dying boy, and with celestial fingers wiped the flowing tears away. Then he stopped his heart from swinging and his pulse from beating, and said to him; – ‘now my loved one, place that arm around my neck, and weave thy fingers in the flowing ringlets of my hair, and rest thy weary head on the softest plume of my wing:’ and when all was ready, amid weeping friends, the angel rose, and with expanded wings soared away beyond the sun and beyond the stars to that land where is never heard the clank of slavery’s chain. And as they neared the portals of the sky, they heard the music ringing, and saw the glory of heaven flashing in refulgent beauty. They entered the gates and amid the exultations of joy, the ransomed boy received a crown starred with gold, and a palm plucked from the unfading amaranths of heaven.

While wandering along one day by heaven’s gate he saw a slave-holder who had been a preacher of the gospel on earth, gazing sadly through the chink-holes of the door, and listening to the undying songs that came floating on the mellow breezes, but an angel stopped him from entering the city. The same celestial being that conveyed Alfred Smith on his wings, bound the slave-holder hand and foot, then carried him to the brink of a yawning precipice, and dashed him head-long into outer darkness. Such was the doom of this white-washed hypocrite.

Although the friends of Alfred Smith lament their loss; yet they rejoice because he is saved from the evil to come.

Mr. Smith, his father is still engaged in his mission of mercy, and if faithful to his trust God will bless his efforts and his enterprises.

His credentials have been examined by many eminent persons; and Dr. Massie, George Thompson, Esq., and the United States Consul, vouch for his integrity and worth.

When he returns to his native country he will undoubtedly spend his energies to promote the interests of the negro people.

POSTSCRIPT

Harrowgate, February 11th, 1869.

I shall sincerely rejoice if the circulation of that interesting sketch of the life – in bondage and in freedom – of my excellent friend, Lewis Smith, written by Dr. Massie, should contribute towards the achievement of the object which has brought Mr. Smith a second time to the shores of England. That object is in the highest degree, a praise-worthy and Christian one; and has special claims on those who are anxious for the education and religious improvement of the emancipated population of the United States.

In Mr. Smith’s integrity and sincerely devout character, I have the utmost confidence. I, at the same time, entertain the warmest admiration of the disinterested zeal and devotedness he has displayed in the cause of the injured, and (until recently) enslaved race to which he belongs.

Mr. Smith has my earnest and heart-felt wishes for the entire success of his philanthropic and pious mission.

GEORGE THOMPSON.

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Notes

1. Lewis Smith's autobiography is held in the General Reference Collection 10882.a.5., British Library, London, England.
2. These include *The Philosophy of War* (N.p.: n.p., The Observer No. 2 [Printed and Published by the Author]) and *The Ghost of John Wesley* (n.p.: n.p., The Observer No. 1 [printed and published by the author]), both published a year earlier in 1870.
3. *The Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*, 12 June 1861, p.5.
4. George Thompson (1804–1878) was a white British antislavery campaigner who served as a Member of Parliament.
5. 1871 is included on this title as a handwritten notation by an unknown hand.
6. He is referring to the traumatising atrocities and murderous abuses committed by inhumane mobs of racist whites against Black people of all genders and ages during the New York City Draft riots which took place between 11 and 16 July 1863 at the height of the US Civil War. As Leslie M. Harris writes, a few months earlier in March of that same year, 'a stricter federal draft law' was passed stipulating, 'All male citizens between twenty and thirty-five and all unmarried men between thirty-five and forty-five years of age were subject to military duty' with the following powerful exception as mandated by prejudicial legislation: 'Blacks, who were not considered citizens, were exempt from the draft.' During the days of violence and murder, Harris writes the white mobs 'turned to attacks on black people, and on things symbolic of black political, economic, and social power' with tragic results. As Harris summarises: 'in all, rioters lynched eleven black men over the five days of mayhem'. For further information see Leslie M. Harris, 'The New York City Draft Riots of 1863', available online at: <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/317749.html&title=The+New+York+City+Draft+Riots+of+1863&desc=>
7. Henry Highland Garnet (1815–1882) secured his self-liberation from enslavement in Kent County, Maryland, via the Underground Railroad. He was an inspirational antislavery orator, author, civil rights campaigner, religious minister, and social justice activist. See Henry Highland Garnet, *A Memorial Discourse; By Rev. Henry Highland Garnet. With an Introduction, by James McCune Smith, MD* (Philadelphia PA: Joseph M. Wilson, 1865). See the 'Henry Highland Garnet' entry in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 27–28).
8. John 1:29.
9. Jeremiah 31:15.
10. These two lines appear in the poem 'Excelsior' authored in 1841 by white US poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882).
11. These two lines are included in the 'The Lion of Judah', a hymn authored by white Scottish author, Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847). In Lyte's version 'murmur' reads 'tremble'. Further information is available at: https://hymnary.org/text/my_home_is_in_heaven_my_rest_is_not_here
12. For further information on the life and activism of Theodore Gross, see Theodore Gross' speech dated 3 October 1860 and published in the *Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser*, available online at: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=2053&item_id=2402
13. Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) was a white US religious minister, social reformer, and antislavery campaigner.
14. The US Civil War (1861–1865).



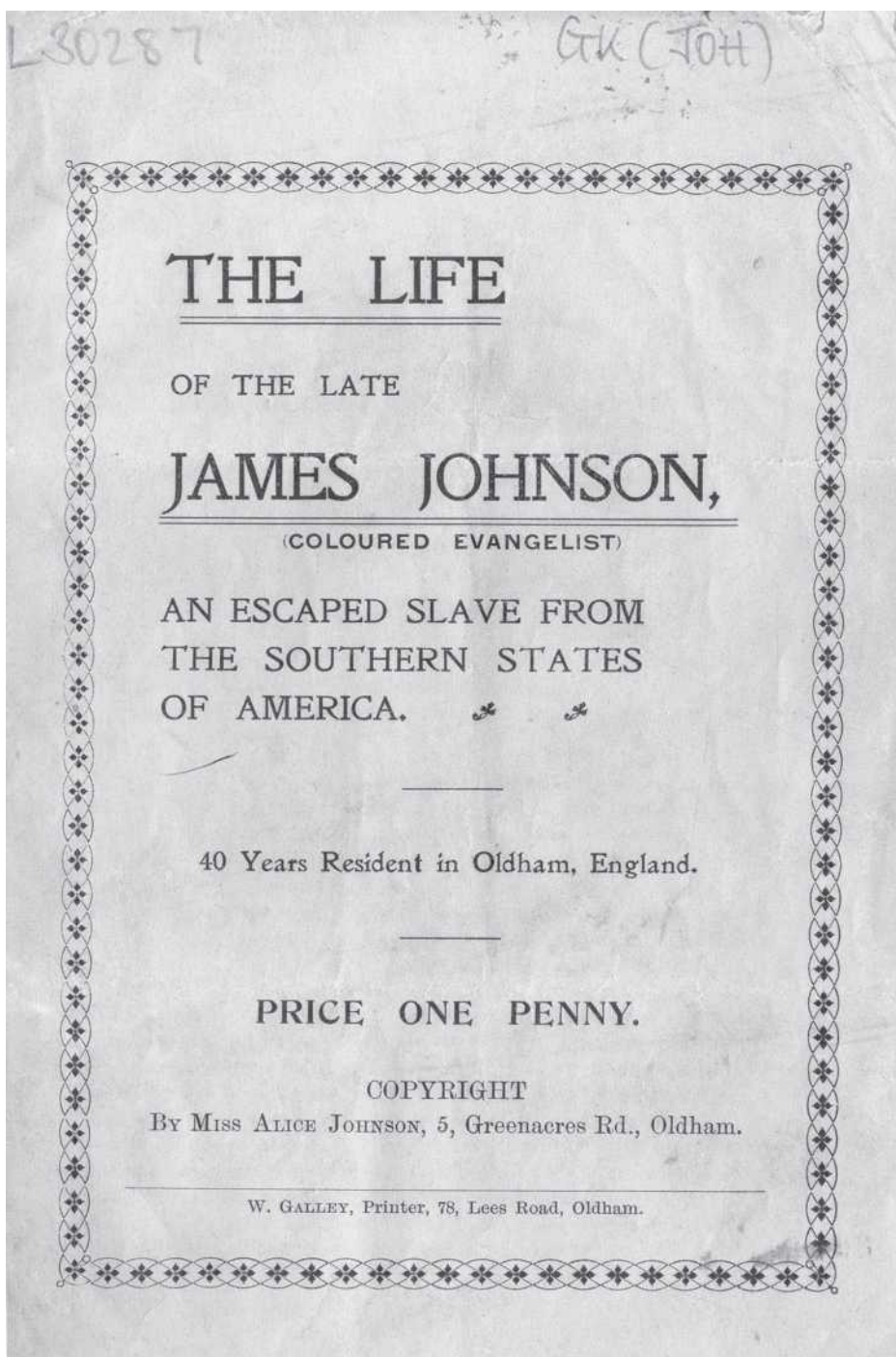


Figure 37 Title page from Alice Johnson, *The Life of the Late James Johnson (Coloured Evangelist), an Escaped Slave From the Southern States of America, 40 Years Resident in Oldham, England, c.1877–1878*. Oldham: W. Galley, 1914. (Oldham Local Studies and Archives.)

JAMES ALFRED JOHNSON

(1847–1914)

16 James Alfred Johnson, *The Life of the Late James Johnson (Coloured Evangelist), an Escaped Slave From the Southern States of America, 40 Years Resident in Oldham, England, c.1877–1878*.
Copyright: Alice Johnson. Oldham: W. Galley, 1914.¹

Biographical History

JAMES ALFRED JOHNSON experienced enslavement in the town of Smithfield, near Wilmington, North Carolina, US. He effected his self-liberation and went on to live a new life fighting for all freedoms in the UK. In circa 1877 or 1878 at approximately thirty years of age, he made the powerful decision to author his autobiography, *The Life of James Johnson An Escaped Slave, From the Southern States of America*. Lying unpublished at the time of writing, his personal narrative was printed decades later in 1914, shortly after his death, by Alice Johnson under the title *The Life of the Late James Johnson (Coloured Evangelist), an Escaped Slave From the Southern States of America, 40 Years Resident in Oldham, England*. As Alan Rice summarises, Johnson's 'brief autobiography was published posthumously in 1914' and 'lay almost completely unread until its rediscovery during the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave-trade commemorations in 2007'.² The 'rediscovery' of the only surviving copy of Johnson's autobiography in the Oldham Archives and Local Studies Library in Oldham, Greater Manchester, was the trailblazing work of the 'Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery' project.³ While scholars had long thought that Alice Johnson was his daughter, Jeffrey Green confirms, 'In late 2020 Susan Smith of the Oldham archives contacted me to advise that Johnson had no children by either wife.' Instead, Smith's research reveals that the 'Alice Johnson of the 1914 book was born Mary Alice Cook, and married Edgar Berrett in 1927'.⁴

'I was born at Smithfield, about 46 miles from Wilmington, in the State of North Carolina, March 20th, 1847', Johnson authoritatively begins his autobiography only to immediately admit to an absence of any personal knowledge regarding his parentage: 'As to who my father or mother were I do not know; I have no recollection of them.' Whereas many formerly enslaved narrators share the terrible pain of the experience of family separation, Johnson communicates the unending grief presented by a traumatising reality in which he was denied even the memory of a family.



Figure 38 James Alfred Johnson (?). (Oldham Local Studies and Archives.)

At the heart of Johnson's autobiography is his determination to condemn the barbaric and murderous savagery of his white enslavers not only for annihilating his rights to a family but for committing violence against his person. Writing of his earliest memories when he was just twelve years old, Johnson testifies to his repeated experiences of physical and psychological abuse. As he recalls, his white torturer 'flogged me unsparingly' while 'calling me many cruel names'. In the chapter of his autobiography which immediately follows, he names and shames the atrocities he endures at the hands of his next white enslaver by confirming that 'he flogged me until the blood streamed down my back, and then ordered some of the other negroes to wash me in salt and water'. As he explains, his white enslaver was motivated not by human compassion but by monetary greed. Johnson is under no illusion that his white torturer sought 'to cure my lacerated back as soon as possible, not that he cared what I suffered, but I could not work so soon if this was not done'.

For any and all white audiences who presumed to know, appropriate, or commodify his story for their own emotional and spiritual betterment, Johnson expresses his heart-felt conviction that they will necessarily fail. He is candid regarding the failures of language when it comes to representing his personal experiences of atrocity by confiding, 'the suffering endured by such a proceeding can only be felt, it cannot be described'. Yet more powerfully, Johnson readily pre-empts the criticisms that were repeatedly made by ignorant whites against enslaved and free Black people by exposing the unsubstantiated and mythic foundations of their white racist stereotypes. 'Friends, the allegation has often been brought against negroes that they are naturally sly, deceitful, and prone to stealing', he declares only to voice his emphatic protest that brooks no dissent in the following rhetorical question: 'I would ask what race of men without education, degraded in abject bondage, half-fed, hard-worked, very often seven days a week, could help becoming of that character, more especially when they saw their tyrannical master living on the fat of the land?' A lifelong freedom fighter, Johnson cuts to the jugular vein of white enslaving injustices and immoralities by condemning enslavement as a barbaric institution in which enslaved people were denied all the essential needs for human existence, let alone all educational and labour rights.

At pains to narrate the physical and psychological atrocities suffered not only by himself but by enslaved women, including the heartrending violence committed against an enslaved woman named Rebecca, Johnson experiences such unbearable distress that he feels he has no choice but to take his own life. 'I became so down-hearted at what I had endured myself, and saw poor Rebecca suffer, that I tried to put an end to my miserable existence by eating the leaves of a poisonous plant', he remembers. As he painfully recalls, his white enslavers would not allow him to die. Johnson writes, 'the doctor was brought and the stomach-pump applied, but I was ill for a long time afterwards'. And yet, his period of suicidal depression was far from over. 'I went nearly mad, and ate clay to destroy myself, upon which my master got spirits of turpentine and clay mixed together, and forced it down my throat, in order that I might be sickened of it, and sick and heart-sore I was', he poignantly informs his readers. Within the pages of his narrative, Johnson does hard-hitting justice to enslavement as a centuries-long institution of individual and collective emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual destruction.

Finally, Johnson succeeded in securing his self-liberation to New York City where, as Alan Rice writes, 'he was misused' and maltreated 'by a boarding-house master who

trafficked him (keeping his wages for himself) as a sailor on the ship *Blenheim* bound for Liverpool.⁵ On the transatlantic voyage, he experiences physical abuse. He poignantly refers to himself in the third person and subversively interrogates the white racist terminology of the day to confide, “‘Darkie’ got kicked about a good deal all the way to Brunswick Dock, Liverpool.’ No mythic land of opportunity or equality, Johnson arrives destitute in Britain with ‘no money, no friends, nothing’. Suffering from severe mental health problems and enduring extreme physical deprivation, Johnson remembers, ‘I was sad and downcast. I slept in outhouses, water-closets, timber-yards, &c., and each morning I roamed about the ashpits for bits of bread, potato peelings, anything I could eat for my breakfast; sometimes I managed to beg an odd meal.’ Living a life of homelessness and near starvation, Johnson fought not to live but to survive. ‘Footsore, cold, hungry, and weary I lived, or shall I say existed, a fortnight’, he writes.

‘One day I saw a man with a piece of bread, and I could not help asking him for it. He gave it to me – about a quarter of a pound’, Johnson remembers only to recall, ‘some lads “set” on me, took my bread away, pulled my hat off, and ill-used me’. In a bold departure from white supremacist, mythic, fantasy descriptions of Britain as a land of equality, freedom, and justice – and as performatively, knowingly, and subversively used by a number of African American activists as a political strategy to denounce white US injustices – Johnson unflinchingly exposes the nation’s shocking and cruel social and political realities. Writing of a woman who seemingly offered him kindness by advising him that he should ‘pawn my boots instead of starving’, he soon realises she had taken the opportunity to steal them away ‘for nothing’. As a result, his destitution reached new depths: ‘I was now worse than ever – cotton stockings and a pair of slippers in bleak December, friendless and homeless, roaming the streets of Liverpool.’ Across his narrative, Johnson not only protests against the abuses and atrocities committed by white US enslavers but he also names and shames British society as a society undergirded by inhumanity and inequality.

Never one to surrender to his despair or give in to the overwhelming difficulties of his destitute situation, Johnson made a way out of no way. As he writes, he survived by travelling ‘on to Wigan, Huddersfield, Leeds, York, Beverley, and Hull, where I took to singing, dancing, and rattlebones, which I found was easier and pleasanter than begging’. A wonderfully gifted singer, talented musician, and exceptional dancer, Johnson tours the UK “‘busking” at the public-houses, &c.’ Across his journeys, he shares African American musical and dance traditions with audiences around Britain. A pioneer of Black performance traditions, he plays a key and defining role in the nineteenth-century history of Black music and dance in Britain: an area of ongoing research.

Writing in the final pages of his autobiography of his new life fighting for all freedoms, Johnson informs his readers, ‘I was married in 1869 to Sarah Preston, through whose instrumentality and patience I have acquired the blessed boons of being able to read and write.’ Shedding further light on Johnson’s life with Preston, Jeffrey Green confirms, ‘The registration of the marriage of Sarah Ellen Preston to James Johnson was in Oldham, and the 1871 census records their presence in the town.’ While very little is known of Preston’s biography, Green’s pioneering research reveals, ‘She was 29’ and ‘a cotton reeler born in Oldham’.

Living a relatively short and almost certainly a very hard life labouring as a ‘cotton reeler’, Preston died in the ‘early summer 1886, aged 44’.

Decades later, and again according to Green's findings, the 1891 census records Johnson 'at 39 St Mary Street, Oldham – with the middle initial "A" and listed as 'a widower born in "America" aged 45'. In that same year, on 13 December 1891, the very same "James Alfred Johnson", a 44 year old striker of Rock Street, Oldham, married Mary Ann Cook at the parish church of St Stephen, Oldham'. Green confirms, 'She was 38, a widow, and also lived in Rock Street. Illiterate she signed the register with a cross.' On this same document, 'the registration declares his father to have been an "American Slave" named Tom Johnson (deceased)'. No further information has yet been found on the identity of Johnson's father. Johnson began his autobiography by confirming he had no personal knowledge of him. There may also have been a possible connection between Mary Ann Cook and Mary Alice Cook: it is likely they may have been the same person, or at least, a close family relative. Mary Ann Cook is noted as 'illiterate', but this may have changed in 1914. If they were the same person, Johnson's wife could have made the decision to publish Johnson's pioneering work after his death to serve as a long-lasting memory to his courage and heroism.

As one among many areas of ongoing research in the life of James Johnson, as recently as 2017, Christine Widdall, the archivist at the Oldham Photographic Society, 'discovered' a c.1860s–1870s portrait of an unknown man taken by white English photographer, William Thorpe.⁶ According to David Ceceski, both Widdall and Sean Baggaley, a Gallery Oldham curator, 'believe this may be a portrait of James Johnson'. While Thorpe chose to include no backdrop to this portrait of a young man who, as Alan Rice writes, 'is dressed smartly and sports a large Afro haircut',⁷ the young man



Figure 39 James Howe Carse, 'Oldham from Glodwick'. Oldham, England, 1831. (Wikimedia Commons.)

himself made the powerful decision to hold an ‘unidentified object’. According to the researchers at Gallery Oldham, this ‘large iron implement may be a slave collar’. ‘Although unlikely to be one from America,’ they suggest, ‘it could have been made (by James himself?) in a local foundry as a prop to illustrate his story.’⁸ David Cecelski takes the same view. He argues that this young man is holding ‘an iron slave collar’: an interpretation that lends further weight to his persuasive argument that, ‘the portrait would have made an especially compelling frontispiece’ to Johnson’s narrative.

An emotionally hard-hitting photograph, this as yet unidentified young man holds this white-invented and white-created barbaric implement of torture very close to his body while he wears a psychologically charged and thoughtful facial expression. Living on as a powerful ‘sorrow image’, whether the subject of this portrait is or is not James Johnson, he is inarguably a man who believed that the ‘suffering endured’ by a Black person ‘can only be felt, it cannot be described.’⁹

Further Reading

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Oldham Archives and Local Studies Library, Oldham, Greater Manchester, England.

Oldham Photographic Society Collection, Oldham Archives and Local Studies Library, Oldham, Greater Manchester, England.

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THE LIFE
OF THE LATE
JAMES JOHNSON,
(COLOURED EVANGELIST)
AN ESCAPED SLAVE FROM
THE SOUTHERN STATES
OF AMERICA
40 Years Resident in Oldham, England.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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THE LIFE
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FROM THE
SOUTHERN STATES OF AMERICA.

PRICE ONE PENNY

THE LIFE OF JAMES JOHNSON,
AN ESCAPED SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

I was born at Smithfield, about 46 miles from Wilmington, in the State of North Carolina, March 20th, 1847. As to who my father or mother were I do not know; I have no recollection of them.

The first distinct remembrances I have are when I had attained 12 years of age, at which period it was my duty to pick up sticks in the woods for fire-wood, my immediate mistress being Maria, the old cook. My Master's name at that time was Uriah Moss; he was a boat-builder by trade, and failed soon after the period at which my story begins. He mortgaged me to William Galloway, a store-keeper at Smithfield, for a term of six months, at the end of which he came for me; but my life at the store had been so much happier than with my master, I did not want to go back, and showed unmistakeably my great objection to doing so, whereupon he flogged me unsparingly, calling me many cruel names, and said, 'You young villain, you will have to go with me; I will teach you better manners than this.' I was compelled to return with him, and spent six months longer in abject bondage, at the end of which he failed a second time, and was irretrievably ruined. I was consequently sold to a planter named Jesse Drew, who lived at Orton, which is situated upon the 'old river' between Smithfield and Wilmington. With this man I stayed about two years.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE under Jesse Drew, it was my Sunday task to go into the fields and scare the birds from the Indian corn and rice. During the winter I had to up-root and gather the sweet potatoes or yams, and rake straw. In the summer, to plough the ground for the reception of Indian corn, cotton, peas, and sugar-cane. During the autumn season, to strip fodder for the horses and cattle from the Indian corn stalks.

During this period my life was comparatively pleasant, and nothing of much importance took place; but my readers must understand that even with the best of masters slavery is a dreadful and intolerable yoke. May God in His infinite mercy soon banish it from our world.

CHAPTER III.

JESSE DREW sold me, as previously stated, when I had been in his service about two years, to a master named George Washington for 825 dollars. While with him it was my lot to act as coachmen and ostler; and when not required in either of these capacities, to go and work with the other negroes in the plantations, of which there were two – one at Green Swamp, and the other at a seaport named Five Points; they were about five miles apart.

By this master I was often treated very harshly, and often suffered for mere accidents – for instance, one day while engaged in ploughing, my ploughshare broke,

which I could not help; it had, no doubt, been in use a long time. I told him it was quite an accident, and begged him to excuse me, for I saw he was very angry; but it was of no avail; he led me to a tree, tied me hand and foot to it, with my face towards the tree, rolled up my shirt (this long coarse shirt being the only garment lads were allowed until about eighteen years of age, when they were granted the privilege of trousers of the same character); having rolled up my garment about my neck, he flogged me until the blood streamed down my back, and then ordered some of the other negroes to wash me in salt and water, in order to cure my lacerated back as soon as possible, not that he cared what I suffered, but I could not work so soon if this was not done; but the suffering endured by such a proceeding can only be felt, it cannot be described.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT twelve months after the events related in the last chapter, the civil war¹⁰ broke out in America, and George Washington's¹¹ son¹² was called upon to bear arms, of course in the Southern interest, and I was taken into the house to take charge of the store-house. By this means I got to know more of my master's ways, and being constantly about the house, having my eyes and ears open, was able to gather information as to his opinion of the other negroes, and gave valuable hints to them quietly, which, no doubt, saved them many a flogging 'bastinadoing.' The latter punishment is, if anything, more horrible than flogging. It is inflicted by means of a flat board, with holes bored up and down it about the size of a marble. The negro to be punished is laid flat on his back, tied hand and foot, then he is 'paddled' with this 'paddle' or 'bastinacio' until his back is completely lacerated. I have myself seen a man 'paddled' until the skin came away with the 'paddle' at every stroke. Let my readers thank God that they were born in a free country.

After awhile, my master seeing that I took very great notice of all he read from the newspapers, ordered me to go out when he read to his family, and was more especially particular to do so before he read any news concerning the tide of events at the seat of war; but I was too cunning for him. The house was a log-built house, and I knew of a chink between the logs, so that by going outside and putting my ear to it I could hear distinctly all that he read, which proved of great value to me afterwards.

CHAPTER V.

THE allowance of food to each negro on Washington's plantation was 5lbs. of meat, one peck of Indian corn meal, and a print of molasses per week. This is a very scanty allowance for hard driven people. Towards the end of one week some of us had been so hungry that we ate all our provisions before the time, and asked master for more; but we were told we had received our quantity, and that no more would be given to us. My master had a lot of nice pigs which it was part of my duty to feed, so I said to my buddies (brothers), 'If massa won't give us any more meat we'll just kill a little pig,' and so the night following we ticed one away into the woods until we got it into the swamp – threw a sack over its head so that it could not squeal – knocked it down – stuck it – threw it into the water – took it out – dug a hole in the ground and covered the pig over with mud – lit a fire on the top of the mud. By this means the

hair and outer skin of the pig were easily removed. Then we got a stew-pot, cut up the pig and boiled some of it, the rest we hid away. But, alas! it proved very tough and unpalatable, so I said, 'Buddies, this pig ain't at all good, we'll have something else,' and we arranged that on the following night we would kill a calf – for Mr. Washington had a large quantity of cattle. So we drove one out of the shippon¹³ to the swamp, on which was a small island about half a mile from the house. We managed to get it on to this island, hauled it off its legs by means of a rope slung over a branch of a tree, then one of us struck it with an axe; but being somewhat frightened lest we should be discovered, we did not make a very successful job of it, consequently the calf bellowed very loudly, and set the crows in the shippon bellowing too. We were all very frightened indeed, and ran away, when one having more courage and presence of mind than the rest of us cried out, 'Don't run away, buddies, 'cause massa find us out.' So we caught hold of the rope again and pulled it up, got it killed, hid its head, hide, entrails, &c, in the swamp, made a huge fire, boiled a portion in a large stew pan, and as it was very savoury, we enjoyed it very much. Next day we were all summoned before the master and interrogated respecting the calf which was missing; but although terribly frightened, we managed to keep our self-possession so far as not to be discovered, and told him we knew nothing about it at all – it must have strayed. Rebecca the cook, however, somewhat startled me one day by asking me if it was true that a number of us had killed and eaten the missing calf. After a good deal of equivocation I confessed that we had, but found out that my master knew nothing of the affair, but she gave me to understand that if I did not do as she wanted me at any time, she would 'split' about myself and companions. The first thing of much importance for which she required my services was in a pilfering expedition, which led to very serious consequences, and which I will relate in the next chapter.

Friends, the allegation has often been brought against negroes that they are naturally sly, deceitful, and prone to stealing; but I would ask what race of men without education, degraded in abject bondage, half-fed, hard-worked, very often seven days a week, could help becoming of that character, more especially when they saw their tyrannical master living on the fat of the land?

CHAPTER VI.

ONE day Rebecca ran short of her allowance, or wanted a change, so she called me inside, and reminding me of my former escapade with the calf and my promise to obey her, said she wanted me to help her in stealing a German sausage and a side of bacon out of the smoke-house at midnight of the same day, to which I agreed. So at twelve o'clock she and I climbed as quietly as possible upon the top of the roof, and managed to force up one of the shorter boards of it, which was entirely composed of wooden planks nailed down. I then held up the board while she got through, and let herself down inside the smoke-house. Having secured a suitable piece of bacon and a good German sausage, she handed them up to me, then having got out, she went down, and I threw the two articles, one at a time, into her lap. However, a soldier happening to come by in want of provisions, Rebecca sold the bacon and sausage for seventy-five cents, with which she very unadvisably no doubt, and very unfortunately, too (but anyone knows if a woman takes a fancy to any article of apparel she will have it if possible at whatever risk or cost), purchased a gingham dress. Now, it

was not the custom of the masters to provide the female negroes with anything else than their upper under garment and a plain linen gown, so that, as might have been anticipated, master soon noticed the unusual smart appearance of his cook. On making inquiries from her, she stated it was a present from her sweetheart, a young man who lived on a plantation about ten miles off; but being dubious about this reply, he rode over and asked the young man if it was true that he had given Rebecca the dress. However, she had calculated on that, and arranged with him to say – ‘Yes;’ but still being dubious he returned, and asserted she must have stolen it from someone, and that he would make her tell, using much foul language to her, which it would not benefit my readers to repeat. He then stripped her down to the waist, tied her hands and feet, and lashed her until blood streamed down her back, and saturated her garments, but she would not say a word more; no doubt he would have known she could not have stolen the bacon and sausage alone, and then I would have been implicated; but alas! I had to suffer too, for master, seeing me in tears at her agony, flogged me as well. Master’s wife, being angry at the ‘stupidity’ of Rebecca, took the gingham dress, of which she had been divested, and threw it into the fire, whereupon Rebecca’s indignation became so great that she called her mistress some very hard names, the consequence of which was that she was flogged over again, which Rebecca took so badly that she fled, and got as far as Shallot, North Carolina, where, after a long chase with bloodhounds, she was ‘hunted down,’ brought back, beaten again, put in irons, kept in a barn for a week, and fed on bread and water; her back was so lacerated that her under garment stuck into the wounds while she lay at night, so I stealthily got some pure lard, without salt, and rubbed her back all over with it, by which means she got it off and had it washed; but every night, while in this miserable and pitiable condition, did that hard-hearted master order her to be rubbed down with salt and water. I became so down-hearted at what I had endured myself, and saw poor Rebecca suffer, that I tried to put an end to my miserable existence by eating the leaves of a poisonous plant, but the doctor was brought and the stomach-pump applied, but I was ill for a long time afterwards. I went nearly mad, and ate clay to destroy myself, upon which my master got spirits of turpentine and clay mixed together, and forced it down my throat, in order that I might be sickened of it, and sick and heart-sore I was. God in His mercy watched over me and kept me, although at this time I was ‘without God and without hope in the world.’ How sad that I was a slave, bodily and spiritually too – double bondage.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE day I overheard my master say to his family, ‘Don’t say a word to these niggers about those Men of War out in the harbour, for if you do they may get away, and if they reach them, they will be as free as we are.’ Free! Free! Free! What a charm that word had for me; how it resounded in my heart – thrilled me through and through. I studied my escape for a week, when I called three of my ‘buddies,’ William, Fernie, and Pleasant, and told them what I had overheard master say about getting to the Men of War. I then laid down my plan of escape, which was that we should take horses from the stable, yoke one into the wagon, muffle the wagon wheels with straw, go down to Green Swamp, on which my master had a boat, go into the boathouse, get the boat upon the wagon, and drive straight down to the Creek, dismount, let the

horses go, get into the boat, and row for our lives to the Men of War. To this they all agreed, so at twelve o'clock that night, with watchful eyes, open ears, stealthy steps, and beating hearts, we wended our way to the stable. Every whistle of the wind made us quiver; every stir of a leaf caused us to start, but all was managed successfully; we opened a large Indian cornfield gate, and went on right through it to the Creek, as quick as we could make the horses go. When we got to the side of the Creek, the tide was out, and as we had to cross (it would not do to go down the Creek for fear of detection), we were sore dismayed, for there was about fifteen yards of mud before we could reach the stream, and another strand of mud on the other side; but we managed to get the boat on the mud. Three of us go into it, and another pushed it out till got up to his waist in the mud; then we pulled him into the boat. Another of us got out and pushed it further, so on till we got to the stream, rowed across over the mud on the other side, till we reached the solid ground, scraped ourselves as best we could of the mud on our bodies, hoisted the boat on our shoulders; but, before doing so I crept to the shore to see if any of the coastguards were about, and found that we were mid-way between two of them, stationed about 100 yards apart, so we had to be careful lest we should attract attention. We got about five yards from the shore, when bang! went a gun from one of the guards; bang! went another one from the other guard; both bullets whistled over our heads and 'hissed' into the water. I told two to lie down in the bottom of the boat while two of us rowed. Bang! bang! and the bullets whistled past us while we rowed for life and liberty with a desperation and power well-nigh supernatural, till exhausted – one of those lying down came up and rowed instead – and so on till out of the reach of the gun shots. Of course, the darkness somewhat shrouded us, and God, in His mercy, protected us. Like the children of Israel of old, when flying from the cruel bondage of Egypt, the good Lord caused the clouds of darkness to cover us from our enemies.

The morning began to dawn, and on we rowed till we could be seen by one of the sloops (which proved to be the 'Stars and Stripes,' Captain Cook, of Philadelphia), when I tore a piece off my shirt, and, fastening it to the end of an oar, waved it as a signal. Soon we had the joy of seeing the sloop steaming towards us and the delight of being taken on board. Then the captain ordered us to wash ourselves, throw our clothes – 'those filthy rags,' as he called them – overboard, and we were clothed in a comfortable navy suit, were paid at the rate of ten dollars a month, and, blessed be God, free!

We stayed on that coast six weeks, where poor 'Pleasant' fell ill, and although succumbed to scarlet fever, and was buried with all the ceremony of 'burial at sea.'

CHAPTER VIII.

WE steamed from Five Points to Beaufort, Norfolk, and on to Philadelphia, where the 'Stars and Stripes' had to undergo repairs. The captain told us we could remain on service; only William did so. Fernie and myself landed, and I left him. Another coloured man offered to accompany me on the way to New York, but first wanted to show me round Philadelphia, and then took me to a lodging-house, where we drank, and then went to bed. On waking in the morning my friend had gone, and my money and my shoes too, so I obliged to walk barefoot in the bitter cold of December. I started off to walk to New York, which, not knowing the direct way, took me over a week, sleeping in sheds, under haystacks, and living by begging, eating turnips, &c.

Arrived at New York, I spent the first night at a police station, where I laid me down with swollen and lacerated feet, as it had been both snowing and freezing hard. Next day I was hailed by a 'runner,' or boarding-house master, who asked me if I wanted to go on board a ship. On my replying that I did, he took me to his house, and gave me something warm to eat and drink. The following day he showed me a shipping office, and told me to say 'yes' to all they asked me. So I went; and in answer to all questions I replied 'yes,' among which were, 'Do you want a ship?' 'Are you an able-bodied seaman?' &c., &c. I got 47 dollars as my pay, which the boarding-master claimed from me for lodgings, an oil-skin coat, a pair of sea boots, and a sou'-wester, which transaction of course was a complete swindle. However, we set sail, the vessel being 'The Blenheim,' Captain Bates, bound for Liverpool. By and bye the captain ordered me aloft to reef the top royal sail, at which command I stared first at the top of the mast, and then at him. He again ordered me aloft, but I shook my head; I had never been up a mast in my life, and dare not go. He then asked me if I did not engage as an able-bodied seaman, to which I told him the 'runner' had instructed me to say yes to all I was asked, and it would be right. He then called the second mate, who showed me round the vessel, and told me the names of the ropes, &c., and when I forgot any of them he took the rope and end to me. He then brought me to the foot of the mast and ordered me up, but of course I would not go; so he took the rope to me until I did go, and chased me up to the top, beating me all the way. I ran up, got to the top, dodged to the other side of the mast, and, slipping down a rope, ran into the men's cabin in the forecabin, where I was safe, as the sailors would not allow him to come in. I got to know the ropes, &c., better after awhile, but 'Darkie' got kicked about a good deal all the way to Brunswick Dock, Liverpool. We were twenty-eight days on the voyage from New York. Although I did not know where Liverpool was when I set sail, the good Lord took care of me and directed me.

CHAPTER IX.

LANDED at Liverpool, a boarding-house master came on board and took the baggage of most of the sailors, so I slung my few odds and ends into the cart, and got in too. By and bye he asked me if I had any money. I said, 'No.' 'Well,' said he, 'I can't take you into my house.' He then sold by auction my few traps for a shilling, and told me he required that for the carriage. Here I was (December, 1862) – no money, no friends, nothing. Now I know of the dear friends in heaven – the Lord Jesus – but I didn't then, so I was sad and downcast. I slept in outhouses, water-closets, timber-yards, &c., and each morning I roamed about the ashpits for bits of bread, potato peelings, anything I could eat for my breakfast; sometimes I managed to beg an odd meal. Footsore, cold, hungry, and weary I lived, or shall I say existed, a fortnight. One day I saw a man with a piece of bread, and I could not help asking him for it. He gave it to me – about a quarter of a pound – but some lads 'set' on me, took my bread away, pulled my hat off, and ill-used me. A policeman got my hat back, but no bread. I asked two policemen for a trifle, they told me they could lock me up. I said I could not help asking, I was starving, so they gave me twopence halfpenny, with which I bought some meal. I asked a woman to allow me to cook it, which she did. She suggested I should pawn my boots instead of starving, and she lent me a pair of slippers while she went out with them. As she was a long while away I went out to

look for her, and when I came back her door was locked, and my seaboots were gone for nothing. I was now worse than ever – cotton stockings and a pair of slippers in bleak December, friendless and homeless, roaming the streets of Liverpool. I walked over to Southport, and finding nothing to do, walked by Ormskirk to St. Helens, on to Warrington, thence to Manchester; again on to Wigan, Huddersfield, Leeds, York, Beverley, and Hull, where I took to singing, dancing, and rattlebones, which I found was easier and pleasanter than begging. From Hull I came through Sheffield, &c., to Swansea, went on board a vessel, as cook, to Alicante, in Spain; came back, sailed to Glasgow, and spent my money in drinking, &c., tramped again through Whitehaven, West Hartlepool, Sunderland, Bristol, Worcester, Yarmouth, Oxford, Cambridge, Nottingham, Leicester, Birmingham, Walsall, to Sheffield, where I picked up with Chuckey Harris's Boxing Tent, where I met with the celebrated fighter, Bendigo.¹⁴ It was my place to be the sparring man – otherwise be the butt for anyone to spar at, and becoming sick of the ill-treatment and boxing I got, I left it. I may just state here that, having had practical experience of boxing tents, &c., they are the most abominable places, and the language used, the life led, and the scenes enacted, are of the most detestable character. I wandered about once more 'busking' at the public-houses, &c., until I reached Oldham in September, 1866. I looked about for work, and went to Messrs. Dawson & Stanier, Flat Top Foundry. Mr. Stanier gave me one shilling to go on with, and I worked there for six months. I next went to Messrs. Platt Bros. & Co.



Figure 40 Map of Hull, England, from W. G. Blackie, ed., *The Imperial Gazetteer*, London, 1874. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

CHAPTER X.

WHILE working at Messrs. Platt's, a man named Taylor drew my attention to the fact that the Sheffield Hallelujah Band was in Oldham, and said, 'Don't you think it's time you began to lead a different life?' I replied, 'I'm right enough.' He and his wife kneeled down and prayed for me there and then that I might be saved. They asked me to go to a meeting of the Band that night – it was Saturday. I never saw anything like it before. Men singing, and praying, and shouting 'Glory be to God,'¹⁵ &c. On coming back he prayed and asked me to pray. I told him I did not know what to say. He asked me to repeat after him, 'Our Father which art in Heaven,'¹⁶ &c., which I did. On the Monday there was a 'fellowship' meeting. Taylor asked me to go with him; I would not. He left me in charge of his shop. After he had gone I locked the door, and kneeled down and prayed, and wept, and determined I would find out this 'great joy,' and 'blessed peace,' 'perfect rest,' &c., so I prayed over and over again the prayers I had been taught by Taylor, but this 'glorious joy' did not come to me that night, although I felt quite satisfied about saying my prayers. Taylor asked me to pray, after he had done so, before going to bed, and I did my best. They wanted me to go to their 'fellow-ship' meetings. I went once; but as I could not read, everyone stared at me, and I told them I would not go again to be like a 'dummy,' and more especially as the men at the shop began to call me 'Hallelujah Jim.' I came to the conclusion that instead of 'peace' this sort of work was causing me a 'very deal' of trouble.

I started attending the Oldham church, occasionally going to meetings of the Hallelujah Band at the Co-operative Hall. At last I slipped into the Town Hall services, conducted by Mr. Street, where light began to dawn more fully into my soul; and one night, in the after meeting, I heard them singing, 'Oh, the Lamb, the bleeding Lamb,'¹⁷ when I realised that 'The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleansed "me" from all sin.'¹⁸ Oh, gladsome day, when I was able to say, Free from the slavery of the master in America – the master of my body. But what a still more glorious one when I realised I was free from the soul-master – the devil. Now I am free, body and soul; praise the Lord for His goodness. For six years I sat and never opened my mouth for the Lord. The first time I spoke for the Lord of Life and Glory was about four years ago, in the Old Court-Room, Ashton. Since, at many places in and around Oldham, many souls have professed to find peace, while I have told, 'The old, old story of Jesus and His love.'¹⁹

I was married in 1869 to Sarah Preston, through whose instrumentality and patience I have acquired the blessed boons of being able to read and write.

Dear reader! in conclusion, are you a born free-man and yet a slave – a slave to sin – a slave to that hard task-master – the devil. If so, I entreat of you to 'Come to Jesus just now.' He will make you free through the blood of His cross, for 'He was wounded and bruised for our transgressions, and by His stripes we are healed.' If you are a Christian – 'Freely you have received, freely give.'²⁰

'HALLELUJAH FOR EVER. AMEN.'

Notes

1. The only extant copy is held in Oldham Archives and Local Studies Library, Oldham, England (reference: L30287). We gratefully reproduce the narrative here with their very kind permission.

2. See Alan Rice, 'Vagrant Presences: Lost Children, the Black Atlantic, and Northern Britain', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 65.2 (2017), p.4 Available online at: http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/18084/1/18084%2009_Rice_Vagrant%20Presences_AVM_RZ_compl%20%28002%29%20%28AR3%29.pdf p.4
3. The 'Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery' project is available online at: <http://www.revealinghistories.org.uk/home.html>
4. See Jeffrey Green, '135: James Johnson of North Carolina and Oldham 1847–1914', available online: <https://jeffreygreen.co.uk/135-james-johnson-of-north-carolina-and-oldham-1847-1914/>
5. See Alan J. Rice, 'Johnson, James Alfred (1847–1914)', in *Oxford National Dictionary of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, forthcoming).
6. This portrait is held at the Oldham Archives and Local Studies Library in Oldham, England, and is available online at: <https://davidcecelski.com/2017/12/20/a-portrait-from-oldham-england/>
7. See Alan J. Rice, 'Johnson, James Alfred (1847–1914)', in *Oxford National Dictionary of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
8. See 'Is this James Johnson?', *Gallery Oldham*, available online at: <https://galleryoldham.org.uk/is-this-james-johnson/>
9. For further information on the theory and political philosophy undergirding the 'sorrow image', see Celeste-Marie Bernier, "'A Faithful Representation of the Man:" Pre-Civil War Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture, and Sketches of Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Essay', in Celeste-Marie Bernier and Bill E. Lawson, eds, *Pictures and Power: Imaging and Imagining Frederick Douglass* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).
10. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
11. George Washington (1732–1799) was a white US enslaver, Founding Father, military general, and first President of the United States (1789–1797).
12. For information about Washington's children, see Davis Roos, 'George Washington Raised Martha's Children and Grandchildren as His Own', 7 February 2020, available online: <https://www.history.com/news/did-george-washington-have-children>
13. This word is reproduced as per the original spelling.
14. William Thompson (1811–1880) was a white English heavyweight champion boxer whose nickname was 'Bendigo' in the mainstream press. Further information is available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/nottingham/content/articles/2005/02/14/features_people_2005_02_bendigo_and_forest_tavern_feature.shtml
15. White Scottish author, Horatius Bonar (1808–1889), wrote the hymn, 'Glory be to God the Father!' available online at: https://hymnary.org/text/glory_be_to_god_the_father_glory_be_to
16. Matthew 6:9.
17. The full text of the hymn, 'Oh the Lamb, the Bleeding Lamb!', is available online at: https://hymnary.org/text/o_the_lamb_the_bleeding_lamb
18. 1 John 1:7, 9.
19. The full text of the hymn, 'I Love to Tell the Story', is available online at: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/1064>
20. Matthew 10:5–8.





Figure 41 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Garrity, c.1893. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.)

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT

(1862–1931)

17 Ida B. Wells (Ida B. Wells-Barnett), *United States Atrocities*, with an Introduction by S. J. Celestine Edwards. London: 'Lux' Newspaper and Publishing Co. (Ltd), 1892.

Biographical History

See 'Ida B. Wells-Barnett' in *Speeches*.

A WORLD-RENOWNED BLACK social justice advocate, author, orator, philosopher, journalist, editor, and radical reformer who was at the forefront of the transatlantic anti-lynching campaign, among many more human rights initiatives, Ida B. Wells-Barnett experienced enslavement in Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1862. After her parents, James Wells and Elizabeth Bell Warrenton, died of yellow fever when she was just sixteen years of age, she worked as a teacher to care for her family. In 1884, she sued the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad company for their white racist acts of persecution and discrimination when she was violently and forcibly removed from a first-class carriage by a white conductor to the vicious applause of equally prejudicial and discriminatory white travellers. Following her legal campaign, she sued the company for damages and won. However, the company appealed to the State Supreme Court with the terrible, immoral, and unjust result that they overturned the original decision.

A few years later in the 1890s Wells-Barnett's career took a different turn when her friend, Thomas Henry Moss, Sr, together with Calvin McDowell and William Stewart, successful business owners and community builders, were lynched in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1892. In the immediate aftermath, she penned an editorial in her newspaper the *Memphis Free Speech* denouncing the inhumane barbarity and terrible injustice of their murders at the hands of white racist killers, torturers, and persecutors. She warred against these white persecutory acts of barbaric torture and murder, and after receiving death threats from white lynch mobs she was warned not to return to Memphis for her own safety.

Dedicating her life to social justice activism, Wells-Barnett first published her revolutionary human rights work dedicated to anti-lynching protest, *United States Atrocities*, in

the US, which was then published in a British edition with an introduction by Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards (c.1857–1894), a Black orator, author, journalist, philosopher, political commentator, editor, religious leader, scholar, freedom fighter, human rights activist ‘born either in the British colony of Domenica, or in Antigua,’¹ in London, England, in 1892.²

Wells-Barnett’s revolutionary protest work opens with a letter by Frederick Douglass in which he voices his admiration and awe for her heroism by expressing his heartfelt determination to ‘give you thanks for your faithful paper on the lynch abomination now generally practised against coloured people in the South’, as he is no doubt that, ‘There has been no word equal to it in convincing power.’

In the introduction Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards writes to *United States Atrocities*, a work he publishes with ‘Lux’ Newspaper and Publishing Company – the same publishing company that printed *Lux: A Weekly Christian Evidence Journal*, a periodical for which he was the ‘first Black person’³ to assume the editorship – he issues a powerful denunciation of ‘the white man’s deadly hatred for the Negro’. He asks, ‘why do white men murder, torture, and lynch the Negro in the South as they do?’ only to answer: ‘the *real* cause lies . . . in the fact that slavery was abolished by force – physical force, and without compensation to the slaveholder’. He issues a powerfully rallying cry to his transatlantic audiences: ‘I do not ask for cantish sympathy for the Negro, but justice – the common birthright of every man.’ He sheds light on his own and Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s activist rationale for publishing *United States Atrocities* in the UK, by confirming that, ‘the object of her present pamphlet is to create a strong public feeling against injustice, and to awaken the right kind of sympathy for a people who under the most provoking circumstances have on the whole, shown much more forbearance than many other races would have done under like circumstances’. As Edwards further summarises, ‘It is believed that by giving this pamphlet to the English people, it will not only direct attention to a condition of things which have been allowed to continue too long, but it will, I hope, awaken the love of fairness in the mind of every Englishman, so that influence – moral and religious influences – will be brought to bear upon the American Government.’

Writing in the pages of her revolutionary essay, Ida B. Wells Barnett quotes the words she wrote when she was the editor of *Memphis Free Speech*, the radical newspaper she published in the city of Memphis, ‘Nobody in this section of the country believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women.’ ‘Since my business has been destroyed, and I am an exile from home because of that editorial, the issue has been forced, and as the writer of it I feel that the race and the public generally should have a statement of the facts as they exist’, she declares. As emphasised by Edwards, Wells-Barnett is under no illusion that ‘the whole matter is explained by the well-known opposition growing out of slavery to the progress of the race’, stating further that the reasons for these torturous and murderous acts of white ‘United States Atrocities’ are to be found in white supremacy and ‘the oft-repeated phrase – “This is a white man’s country and the white man must rule.”’

A brilliantly incisive political theorist, moral philosopher, and social justice campaigner, Ida B. Wells-Barnett is all too painfully aware that, ‘The South resented giving the Afro-American his freedom, the ballot-box, and the Civil Rights Law’ with the devastating consequence that, ‘Her white citizens are wedded to any method however

revolting, any measure however extreme, for the subjugation of the young manhood of the dark race.’ She testifies to a traumatising reality according to which ‘They have cheated him out of his ballot, deprived him of civil rights or redress in the Civil Courts thereof, robbed him of the fruits of his labour, and are still murdering, burning, and lynching him.’ At the same time, she denounces the atrocities committed by white barbaric murderers she endorses heroic feats of Black radical resistance. ‘The only times an Afro-American who was assaulted got away has been when he had a gun, and used it in self-defence’, she writes, readily informing her readers that, ‘The lesson this teaches, and which every Afro-American should ponder well, is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honour in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give.’

As we see in *Speeches*, Ida B. Wells-Barnett travelled widely across the British Isles in 1893 and 1894 to campaign against white supremacist legislation and the violence, abuses, tortures, persecutions, and murders committed by white supremacist and white racist mobs that were responsible for lynching untold numbers of Black people of all genders and ages. Upon her return, she lectured across the United States on anti-lynching, segregation, and racial injustice. A world-renowned human rights campaigner and activist, she was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, one of the oldest US civil rights organisations. She died in Chicago in 1931.

Further Reading

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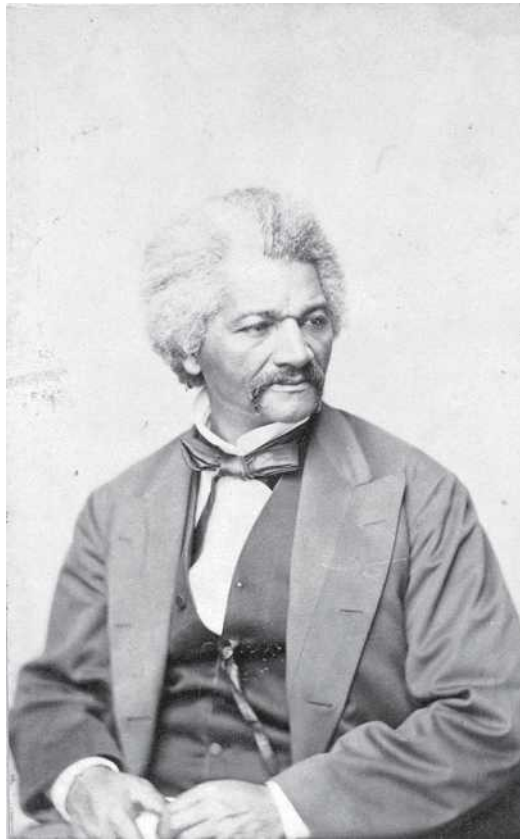


Figure 42 Frederick Douglass, by George Francis Schrelber, 1870. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

UNITED STATES ATROCITIES
BY IDA B. WELLS
(*A Coloured Woman of Tennessee*)

With an Introduction by S. J. Celestine Edwards⁴
(*Editor of LUX and FRATERNITY*)⁵

Price 6d. net. Post Free, 7d.

'Lux' Newspaper and Publishing Co. (Ltd.),
18, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

HON. FREDERICK DOUGLASS⁶ LETTER.

DEAR MISS WELLS,

Let me give you thanks for your faithful paper on the lynch abomination now generally practised against coloured people in the South. There has been no word equal to it in convincing power. I have spoken,⁷ but my word is feeble in comparison. You give us what you know and testify from actual knowledge. You have dealt with the facts with cool, painstaking fidelity, and left those naked and uncontradicted facts to speak for themselves.

Brave woman! you have done your people and mine a service which can neither be weighed nor measured. If American conscience were only half alive – if the American

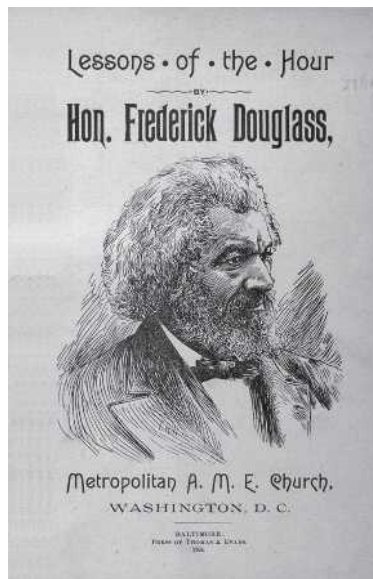


Figure 43 Front cover of Frederick Douglass, 'Lessons of the Hour', speech delivered in Metropolitan AME Church, Washington DC. Baltimore MD: Press of Thomas & Evans, 1894. (Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

Church and Clergy were only half Christianized – if American moral sensibility were not hardened by persistent infliction of outrage and crime against coloured people – a scream of horror, shame, and indignation would rise to Heaven whenever your pamphlet shall be read.

But alas! even crime has power to reproduce itself and create conditions favourable to its own existence. It sometimes seems we are deserted by earth and Heaven – yet we must still think, speak, and work, and trust in the power of a merciful God for final deliverance.

Very truly and gratefully yours,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Cedar Hill,⁸ Anacostia, D.C.,

October 25th, 1892.

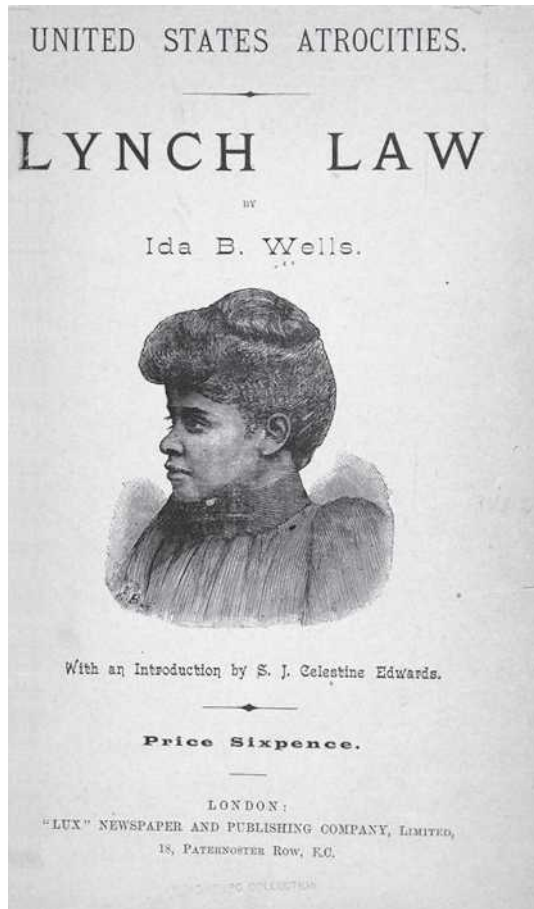


Figure 44 Title page, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *United States Atrocities*, with an Introduction by S. J. Celestine Edwards. London: 'Lux' Newspaper and Publishing Co. (Ltd), 1892. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

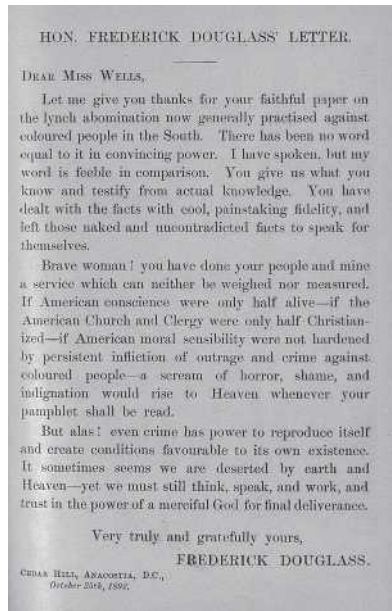


Figure 45 'Hon. FREDERICK DOUGLASS' LETTER.' In Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *United States Atrocities, with an Introduction by S. J. Celestine Edwards*. London: 'Lux' Newspaper and Publishing Co. (Ltd), 1892.

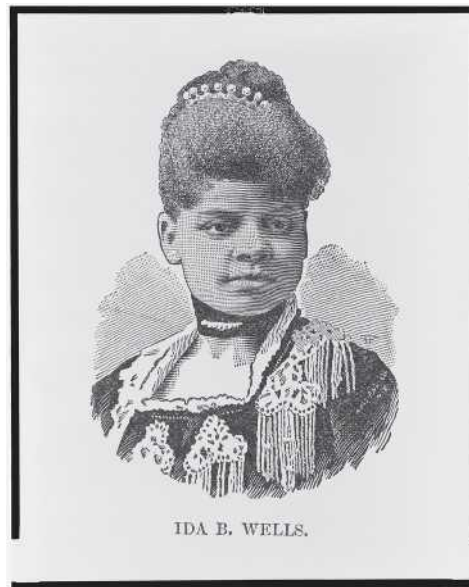


Figure 46 *Ida B. Wells*, in I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press, and Its Editors* (Springfield, M.A.: Willey & Co, 1891). (Library of Congress, Washington, DC.)



Figure 47 S. J. Celestine Edwards, 1894. (The National Archives UK, Flickr Commons.)



Figure 48 S. J. Celestine Edwards, 1894. (The National Archives UK, Flickr Commons.)

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH this is neither the time nor place to make an exhaustive defence for the unfortunate Negro race – in the United States of America – for the highly-coloured charges brought against him by the ‘mean whites,’ and those who are influenced by their prejudices, I will assume that all the charges are true, and that the Negro ‘difficulty must last till the way has been found out by which the Ethiopian may change his skin, or till either the white man or the black man departs out of the land.’ In the meantime, the white man’s deadly hatred for the Negro is so great that Mr. W. Laird Clowes⁹ observed in 1891 that, ‘If the racial crimes and outrages which are of daily occurrence in the Southern States were taking place in a semi-civilised part of Europe, and were only half as well advertised as the events in Bulgaria were, the public sentiment of

Europe would at once insist upon, and would within six months secure reform, even at the cost of war. Such a situation as sullies the South is a disgrace to the fair name of Anglo-Saxon civilisation.' As every effect is said to have a cause, it is only proper that the reader should ask, why do white men murder, torture, and lynch the Negro in the South as they do? If the white man was just and straightforward he would not make the answer which Mr. Laird Clowes has put in his mouth, viz., that it is 'Because no white woman is safe from hour to hour in the black country district,' because he would have sufficient common sense to know that the chastity of white women is perfectly safe in every country where the Negro is in the majority, and that the *real* cause lies, not in the Negro's fondness to outrage white women, but in the fact that slavery was abolished by force – physical force, and without compensation to the slaveholder. Seeing that he cannot wreak his vengeance upon those who suddenly sprang upon him and forced the Negro's freedom at the point of the bayonet¹⁰ – seeing that he received no compensation, and, therefore, was left a mere pauper to struggle for existence alongside the ex-slave, whom the United States constitution placed upon the same political level as himself, the white man, who aforesaid fared sumptuously upon, and at the moral degradation of the Negro, brings, for pure spite, foul charges against him, in the hope that he will once more enslave or exterminate the Negro. Besides, the white man, who boasts of superior mental power, must know that the immoral tendencies which he attributes to the Negro of to-day is greatly due to himself, because for three hundred years he kept him like a horse and bred him as a pig. Is it likely, therefore, that the vice which he so carefully sowed in his nature should be erased by twenty-six years of freedom? Where is the race or nation that was ever regenerated in the same time, or anyway near it? Is it not expecting too much from a people who are said to be ever so much inferior to the white man? How is it we do not find similar charges brought against the West Indian Negroes, as the trumped-up stories of rape and outrage in the southern states? How is it that missionaries in Africa do not impeach the Negroes who are much more savage than those in the South? Moreover, if it is true that Negroes thus misconduct themselves, what right have white men to withhold a fair trial in a Court of Law, or brutally Lynch men who could be easily convicted, if the charges are true? That their ruthless barbarity will not go on for ever is obvious, for already some Southern whites are crying shame upon the reckless lynchers, and justice for the Negro. Mr. W. Laird Clowes was good enough to publish the following in 1891, which appeared in the *Augusta* (Georgia) *Chronicle* of January 5th, 1890: –

'Laws are powerless either to prevent the commission of crimes or to punish criminals, unless public sentiment forbids the one and commands the other. Where there is little regard for human life, and we fear this is the case in many portions of our country, the Courts are often to blame for not hanging those who slay their fellowmen. Is it not a fact that it is almost impossible to convict a man of the crime of murder who has any social position or means to defend himself. Fortunately, crimes of this sort do not often occur, but if they did, public sentiment is so demoralised that the Courts would fail of conviction. This is true as to white men who kill their equals. If a Negro kills a white man, he is pretty sure to be lynched or hung; but if a white man slays a Negro, he is in no danger of being lynched, and as to his being hung for the crime, there is no such probability.'

There is not a word said about a Negro outraging white women here; it is a mere statement of the evil effects of racial hatred in the South. If a white man thinks that a Negro has offended him, that is quite enough; he kills the Negro with perfect impunity; and the more it is done without punishment, the more it will be done. I do not ask for cantish sympathy for the Negro, but justice – the common birthright of every man. What a hubbub there would be in Europe if the Africans were to turn upon the whites in any part of Africa, under similar pretence, and kill white people without their having the option of defending themselves. Let a Turkish Pasha issue an edict against American missionaries and see how the United States and other representatives will busy themselves in endeavouring to secure justice for the white man and Christian. The Negro did not go to America by choice, he had very little to say in securing his freedom, his moral character has been formed for him by the slaveholder, which character suffered in consequence of the condition in which he lived; the Negro has adopted his religion and language, his tastes and habits, the same as the English copied somebody else's. In short, the Negro is exactly what the slave system made him; is it likely that in the short period of emancipation he should become a better man than the ex-slave-holder? Is not the life of a Negro as precious to him as the white man's is to himself and his friends? If the Negro abuses the law under which he lives, he should be tried and punished according to that law, and conversely, because the white man violates the law of the country by murders, lynchings, and other outrages, he, too, should be tried and punished accordingly. The Negro asks for nothing more than justice. He does not require another Civil War to settle the vexed racial question, because experience has taught that 'Peace hath her own victories, no less renowned than war,' and the object of her present pamphlet is to create a strong public feeling against injustice, and to awaken the right kind of sympathy for a people who under the most provoking circumstances have on the whole, shown much more forbearance than many other races would have done under like circumstances. It is believed that by giving this pamphlet to the English people, it will not only direct attention to a condition of things which have been allowed to continue too long, but it will, I hope, awaken the love of fairness in the mind of every Englishman, so that influence – moral and religious influences – will be brought to bear upon the American Government, as it was their good fortune to bring upon the Turks, and thereby ameliorated the condition of the Bulgarians and Egyptians, and conferred untold blessings upon a people who will ever be grateful to England. I know how grateful the Negroes of Canada and the West Indies are to English people, and it is certain that those of the United States will be equally so, if this nation will use her mighty moral and religious influence on their behalf. In collecting her facts, Miss Ida B. Wells has taken the greatest possible care, and, knowing the strong hatred of the race, and their general disabilities in the South, I trust that her pamphlet will have a very wide circulation, and awaken public sympathy, such as will tend to secure justice for the poor down-trodden Negro, on whose behalf it is written.

S. J. CELESTINE EDWARDS.
(Editor of *Lux*.)

18, Paternoster Row,
London, E.C.

CHAPTER I THE OFFENCE

On Wednesday evening, May 25th, 1892, the city of Memphis, Tennessee, was filled with excitement. Editorials in the daily papers of that date caused a meeting to be held in the Cotton Exchange Building; a committee was sent for the editors of the *Free Speech*,¹¹ an Afro-American journal published in that city, and the only reason the open threats of lynching that were made were not carried out was because the editors could not be found. The cause of all this commotion was the following editorial published in the *Free Speech*, May 21st, 1892, on the Saturday previous: –

‘Eight Negroes lynched since last issue of *Free Speech*, one at Little Rock, Arkansas, last Saturday morning where the citizens broke (?) into the penitentiary and got their man; three near Anniston, Alabama, one near New Orleans; and three at Clarksville, Georgia, the last three for killing a white man. Given on the same old racket – the new alarm about raping white women. The same programme of hanging, then shooting bullets into the lifeless bodies, was carried out to the letter. Nobody in this section of the country believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women. If Southern white men are not careful, they will overreach themselves and public sentiment will have a reaction; a conclusion will then be reached which will be very damaging to the moral reputation of their women.’

The Daily Commercial of Wednesday following, May 25th, contained the following leader; –

‘Those Negroes who are attempting to make the lynching of individuals of their race, a means for arousing the worst passions of their kind, are playing with a dangerous sentiment. The Negroes may as well understand that there is no mercy for the Negro rapist and little patience with his defenders. A Negro organ printed in this city, in a recent issue publishes the following atrocious paragraph: “Nobody in this section of the country believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women. If Southern white men are not careful they will overreach themselves, and public sentiment will have a reaction; and a conclusion will be reached which will be very damaging to the moral reputation of their women.” The fact that a black scoundrel is allowed to live and utter such loathsome and repulsive calumnies is a volume of evidence as to the wonderful patience of Southern whites. But we have had enough of it. There are some things that the Southern white man will not tolerate, and the obscene intimations of the foregoing have brought the writer to the very outermost limit of public patience. We hope we have said enough.’

The *Evening Scimitar* of same date, copied the *Commercial*’s editorial with these words of comment: ‘Patience under such circumstances is not a virtue. If the Negroes themselves do not apply the remedy without delay, it will be the duty of those whom he has attacked to tie the wretch who utters these calumnies to a stake

at the intersection of Main and Madison States, brand him in the forehead with a hot iron, and perform upon him a surgical operation with a pair of tailor's shears.'

Acting upon this advice, the leading citizens met in the Cotton Exchange Building the same evening, and threats of lynching were freely indulged – not by the lawless element upon which the devilry of the South is usually saddled, but by the leading business men, in their leading business centre. Mr. Fleming, the business manager and owner of a half interest in *Free Speech*, had to leave town to escape the mob, and was afterwards ordered not to return; letters and telegrams sent me in New York, where I was spending my vacation, advised me that bodily harm awaited my return. Creditors took possession of the office and sold the outfit, and the *Free Speech* was as if it had never been.

The editorial in question was prompted by the many inhuman and fiendish lynchings of Afro-Americans which have recently taken place, and was meant as a warning. Eight lynched in one week, and five of them charged with rape! The thinking public will not easily believe freedom and education more brutalising than slavery, and the world knows that the crime of rape was unknown during the four years of civil war,¹² when the white women of the South were at the mercy of the race, which is all at once charged with being a bestial one.

Since my business has been destroyed, and I am an exile from home because of that editorial, the issue has been forced, and as the writer of it I feel that the race and the public generally should have a statement of the facts as they exist. They will serve at the same time as a defence for the Afro-American Samsons who suffer themselves to be betrayed by white Delilahs.¹³

The whites of Montgomery, Alabama, knew Mr. J. C. Duke sounded the key-note of the situation – which they would gladly hide from the world, when he said in his paper, *The Herald*, five years ago: 'Why is it that white women attract Negro men now more than in former days? There was a time when such a thing was unheard of. There is a secret to this thing, and we greatly suspect it is to the growing appreciation of white Juliets for coloured Romeos.' Mr. Duke, like the *Free Speech* proprietors, was forced to leave the city for reflecting on the 'honour' of white women, and his paper was suppressed.

The editor of the *Free Speech* has no disclaimer to enter, but asserts instead that there are many white women in the South who would marry coloured men if such an act would not place them at once beyond the pale of society, and within the clutches of the law. The miscegenation laws of the South only operate against the legitimate union of the races; they leave the white man free to seduce all the coloured girls he can, but it is death to the coloured man who yields to the force and advances of a similar attraction in white women. White men lynch the offending Afro-American not because he is a despoiler of virtue, but because he succumbs to the smiles of white women. Before leaving Montgomery Mr. Duke signed a card, disclaiming any intention of slandering white women, but the truth remains that Afro-American men do not always violate white women without their consent.

CHAPTER II THE BLACK AND WHITE OF IT

The *Cleveland Gazette*,¹⁴ of January 16, 1892, publishes a case in point. Mrs. J. S. Underwood, the wife of a minister of Elyria, Ohio, accused an Afro-American of

rape. She told her husband that during his absence in 1888, while stumping the State for the Prohibition Party, the man came to the kitchen door, forced his way in the house and insulted her. She tried to drive him out with a heavy poker, but he overpowered and chloroformed her, and when she revived her clothing was torn and she was in a horrible condition. She did not know the man, but could identify him. She pointed out William Offett, a married man, who was arrested, and, being in Ohio, was granted a trial.

The prisoner vehemently denied the charge against him, but confessed he went to Mrs. Underwood's residence at her invitation and was criminally intimate with her at her request. This availed him nothing against the sworn testimony of a minister's wife, a lady of the highest respectability. He was found guilty, and entered the penitentiary, December 14, 1888, for fifteen years. Some time afterwards the woman's remorse led her to confess to her husband that the man was innocent.

These are her words: – 'I met Offett at the Post Office. It was raining. He was polite to me, and as I had several bundles in my arms he offered to carry them home for me, which he did. He had a strange fascination for me, and I invited him to call on me. He called, bringing chestnuts and candy for the children. By this means we got them to leave us alone in the room. Then I sat on his lap. He made a proposal to me and I readily consented. Why I did so I do not know, but that I did is true. He visited me several times after that, and each time I was discreet. I did not care after the first time. In fact I could not have resisted, and had no desire to resist.'

When asked by the husband why she told him she had been outraged, she said: – 'I had several reasons for telling you. One was the neighbours saw the fellow here; another was, I was afraid I had contracted a loathsome disease; and still another was that I feared I might give birth to a negro baby. I hoped to save my reputation by telling you a deliberate lie.' Her husband, horrified by the confession, had Offett, who had already served four years, released, and secured a divorce.

There are thousands of such cases throughout the South, with the difference that the Southern white men in insatiate fury wreak their vengeance without intervention of law upon the Afro-Americans who consort with their women. A few instances to substantiate the assertion that some white women love the company of the Afro-American will not be out of place. Most of these cases were reported by the daily papers of the South.

In the winter of 1885–6 the wife of a practising physician in Memphis, in good social standing, whose name has escaped me, left home, husband, and children, and ran away with her black coachman. She was with him a month before her husband found and brought her home. The coachman could not be found. The doctor moved his family away from Memphis, and is living in another city under an assumed name.

In the same city last year a white girl in the dusk of evening screamed at the approach of some parties that a Negro had assaulted her on the street. He was captured, tried by a white judge and jury, that acquitted him of the charge. It is needless to add if there had been a scrap of evidence on which to convict him of so grave a charge he would have been convicted.

Sarah Clark, of Memphis, loved a black man, and lived openly with him. When she was indicted last spring for miscegenation, she swore in Court that she was *not* a white woman. This she did to escape the penitentiary, and continue her illicit relation undisturbed. That she is of the lower class of whites does not disturb the fact that she

is a white woman. 'The leading citizens' of Memphis are defending the 'honour' of *all* white women, *demi-monde* included.

Since the manager of the *Free Speech* has been driven from Memphis by the guardians of the honour of Southern white women, a young girl living on Popular Street, who was discovered in intimate relations with a handsome mulatto, Will Morgan by name, stole her father's money to send the young man away from that father's wrath. She has since joined him in Chicago.

The Memphis *Ledger* for June 8th has the following: –

'If Lillie Bailey, a rather pretty white girl, seventeen years of age, who is now at the City Hospital, would be somewhat less reserved about her disgrace there would be some very nauseating details in the story of her life. She is the mother of a little coon. The truth might reveal fearful depravity or the evidence of a rank outrage. She will not divulge the name of the man who has left such black evidence of her disgrace, and, in fact, says it is a matter in which there can be no interest to the outside world. She came to Memphis nearly three months ago, and was taken in at the Women's Refuge in the southern part of the city. She remained there until a few weeks ago, when the child was born. The ladies in charge of the Refuge were horrified. The girl was at once sent to the City Hospital, where she has been since May 30th. She is a country girl. She came to Memphis from her father's farm, a short distance from Hernando, Mississippi. Just when she left there she would not say. In fact, she says she came to Memphis from Arkansas, and says her home is in that State. She is rather good-looking, has blue eyes, a low forehead, and dark-red hair. The ladies at the Woman's Refuge do not know anything about the girl further than what they learned when she was an inmate of the institution; and she would not tell much. When the child was born an attempt was made to get the girl to reveal the name of the Negro who had disgraced her, she obstinately refused, and it was impossible to elicit any information from her on the subject.'

Note the wording: – 'The truth might reveal fearful depravity or rank outrage.' If it had been a white child, or if Lillie Bailey had told a pitiful story of Negro outrage, it would have been a case of woman's weakness or assault, and she could have remained at the Women's Refuge. But a Negro child, and to withhold its father's name and thus prevent the killing of another Negro 'rapist.' A case of 'fearful depravity.'

The very week the 'leading citizens' of Memphis were making a spectacle of themselves in defence of all white women of every kind, an Afro-American, M. Stricklin, was found in a white woman's room in that city. Although she made no outcry of violence, he was jailed, and would have been lynched, but the woman stated she bought curtains of him (he was a furniture dealer), and his business in her room that night was to put them up. A white woman's word was taken as absolutely in this case as when the cry of outrage is made, and he was freed.

What is true of Memphis is true of the entire south. The daily papers last year reported that a farmer's wife in Alabama had given birth to a Negro child. When the Negro farm hand who was ploughing in the field heard it, he took the mule from the plough and fled. The despatches also told of a woman in South Carolina who gave birth to a Negro child and charged three men with being its father, *every one*

of whom has since disappeared. In Tuscumbia, Alabama, the coloured boy who was lynched there last year for assaulting a white girl told her before his accusers that he had met her there in the woods often before.

Frank Weems, of Chattanooga, who was not lynched in May only because the prominent citizens became his bodyguard until the doors of the penitentiary closed on him, had letters in his pocket from the white woman in the case, making the appointment with him.

Edward Coy, who was burned alive in Texarkana, January 1, 1892, died protesting his innocence. Investigation since as given by 'Bystander' in the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, October 1, proves: –

1. The woman who was paraded as a victim of violence was of bad character; her husband was a drunkard and a gambler.
2. She was publicly reported and generally known to have been criminally intimate with Coy for more than a year previous.
3. She was compelled by threats, if not by violence, to make the charge against the victim.
4. When she came to apply the match, Coy asked her if she would burn him after they had "been sweethearting" so long.
5. A large majority of the "superior" white men prominent in the affair are the reputed fathers of mulatto children.

These are not pleasant facts, but they are illustrative of the vital phase of the so-called "race question," which should properly be designated an earnest inquiry as to the best methods by which religion, science, law, and political power may be employed to excuse injustice, barbarity, and crime done to a people because of race and colour. There can be no possible belief that these people were inspired by any consuming zeal to vindicate God's law against miscegenationists of the most practical sort. The woman was a willing partner in the victim's guilt, and being of the "superior" race must naturally have been more guilty.'

In Natchez, Mississippi, Mrs. Marshall, one of the *crème de la crème* of the city, created a tremendous sensation several years ago. She had a black coachman who was married, and had been in her employ several years. During this time she gave birth to a child whose colour was remarked, but traced to some brunette ancestor, and one of the fashionable dames of the city was its godmother. Mrs. Marshall's social position was unquestioned, and wealth showered every dainty on this child which was idolised, with its brothers and sisters, by its white papa. In course of time another child appeared on the scene, but it was unmistakably dark. All were alarmed, and 'rush of blood, strangulation,' were the conjectures, but the doctor, when asked the cause, grimly told them it was a Negro child. There was a family conclave, the coachman heard of it, and, leaving his own family, went West, and has never returned. As soon as Mrs. Marshall was able to travel she was sent away in deep disgrace. Her husband died within the year of a broken heart.

Ebenezer Fowler, the wealthiest coloured man in Issaquena County, Mississippi, was shot down on the street in Mayersville, January 30, 1885, just before dark by an

armed body of white men, who filled his body with bullets. They charged him with writing a note to a white woman of the place, which they intercepted, and which proved there was an intimacy existing between them.

Hundreds of such cases might be cited, but enough have been given to prove the assertion that there are white women in the South who love the Afro-American's company, even as there are white men notorious for their preference for Afro-American women.

There is hardly a town in the South which has not an instance of the kind which is well-known, and hence the assertion is reiterated that 'nobody in the South believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women.' There is, therefore, a growing demand among Afro-Americans that the guilt or innocence of parties accused of outrage be fully established. They know the men of the section of the country who refuse this are not so desirous of punishing such an action as they pretend. The utterances of the leading white men show that with them it is not the crime, but the *class*. Bishop Fitzgerald has become an apologist for lynchers of the rapists of *white* women only. Governor Tillman,¹⁵ of South Carolina, in the month of June, standing under a tree in Barnwell, S.C., on which eight Afro-Americans were hung last year, declared that 'he would lead a mob to lynch a *negro* who raped a *white* woman.' So say the pulpits, officials, and newspapers of the South. But when the victim is a coloured woman it is different.

Last winter in Baltimore, Maryland, three white ruffians assaulted a Miss Camphor, a young Afro-American girl, while out walking with a young man of her own race. They held her escort and outraged the girl. It was a deed dastardly enough to arouse Southern blood, which gives its horror of such an action as excuse for lawlessness, but she was an Afro-American. The case went to the Courts, an Afro-American lawyer defended the men, and they were acquitted.

In Nashville, Tennessee, there is a white man, Pat Hanifan, who outraged a little Afro-American girl, and, from the physical injuries received, she has been ruined for life. He was committed to gaol for six months, discharged, and is now a detective in that city. In the same city, last May, a white man outraged an Afro-American girl in a drug store. He was arrested and released on bail at the trial. It was rumoured that five hundred Afro-Americans had organised to lynch him. Two hundred and fifty white citizens armed themselves with Winchesters and guarded him. A cannon was placed in front of his home, and the Buchanan Rifles (State Militia) ordered to the scene for his protection. The Afro-American mob did not show up. Only two weeks before Ephraim Grizzard, who had only been *charged* with rape upon a white woman, had been taken from the gaol, with Governor Buchanan¹⁶ and the police and militia standing by, dragged through the streets in broad daylight, knives plunged into him at every step, and with every fiendish cruelty a frenzied mob could devise, he was at last swung out on the bridge with hands cut to pieces as he tried to climb up the stanchions. A naked, bloody example of the blood-thirstiness of the nineteenth century civilisation of the Athens of the South! No cannon nor military were called out in his defence. He dared to visit a young white woman.

At the very moment when these civilised whites were announcing their determination 'to protect their wives and daughters' by murdering Grizzard, a white man was in the same gaol for outraging eight-year-old Maggie Reese, an Afro-American girl. He was not harmed. The 'honour' of grown women who were glad enough to

be supported by the Grizzard boys and Edward Coy, as long as the *liaison* was not known, needed protection – they were white. The outrage upon helpless childhood needed no avenging in this case – she was black.

A white man in Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory, two months ago inflicted such injuries upon another Afro-American child that she died. He was not punished, but an attempt was made in the same town in the month of June to lynch an Afro-American who visited a white woman.

In Memphis, Tennessee, in the month of June, Mr. Ellerton L. Dorr, who is the husband of Russell Hancock's widow, was arrested for attempted assault on Mattie Cole, a neighbour's cook; he was only prevented from accomplishing his purpose, by the appearance of Mattie's employer. Dorr's friends say he was drunk and not responsible for his actions. The grand jury refused to indict him and he was discharged.

CHAPTER III THE NEW CRY

The appeal of Southern whites to Northern sympathy and sanction as well as the adroit, insidious plea made by Bishop Fitzgerald for suspension of judgment because those 'who condemn lynching express no sympathy for the *white* woman in the case,' falls to the ground in the light of the foregoing.

From this exposition of the race issue in lynch law, the whole matter is explained by the well-known opposition growing out of slavery to the progress of the race. This is crystallised in the oft-repeated phrase – 'This is a white man's country and the white man must rule.' The South resented giving the Afro-American his freedom, the ballot-box, and the Civil Rights Law.¹⁷ The raids of the Ku-Klux¹⁸ and White Liners¹⁹ to subvert reconstruction government, the Hamburg,²⁰ and Ellenton, South Carolina murders;²¹ the Copiah County, Mississippi, and the Lafayette Parish, Louisiana, massacres, were excused as the natural resentment of intelligence against government by ignorance!

Honest white men practically conceded the necessity of intelligence murdering ignorance to correct the mistake of the general government, and so the dark race was left to the tender mercies of the solid South. Thoughtful Afro-Americans, with the strong arm of the government withdrawn and with the hope to stop such wholesale massacres, urged the race to sacrifice its political rights for sake of peace. They honestly believed the race should fit itself for government, and when that should be done, the objection to race participation in politics would be removed.

But the sacrifice did not remove the trouble, nor move the South to justice. One by one the Southern States have legally (?) disfranchised the Afro-American, and since the repeal of the Civil Rights Law nearly every Southern State has passed separate car laws, with a penalty against their infringement. The race sneered at as regardless of advancement is penned into filthy stifling partitions cut off from smoking cars. All the while, although the political cause has been removed, the butcheries of black men at Barnwell, South Carolina; Carrollton, Mississippi; Waycross, Georgia; and Memphis, Tennessee; have gone on; also the flaying alive of a man in Kentucky, the burning of one in Arkansas, the hanging of a fifteen-year-old girl in Louisiana, a woman in Jackson, Tennessee, and one in Hollendale, Mississippi, until the dark and bloody record of the South shows 728 Afro-Americans lynched during the past eight years. Not 50

of these were for political causes. The rest were for all manner of accusations, from that of outrage of white women to the case of the boy Will Lewis who was hanged at Tullahoma, Tennessee, last year for being drunk and ‘sassy’ to white folks.

These statistics compiled by the Chicago *Tribune*, were given the first of last year (1892). Since then not less than 150 have been known to have met with violent deaths at the hands of cruel bloodthirsty mobs during the past nine months.

To palliate this record (which grows worse as the Afro-American becomes intelligent) and excuse some of the most heinous crimes that ever stained the history of a country, the South is shielding itself behind the plausible screen of defending the honour of its women. This, too, in the face of the fact that only *one-third* of the 728 victims to mobs have been *charged* with such an offence, to say nothing of those of that one-third who were innocent of the charge. A white correspondent of the *Baltimore Sun* declares that the Afro-American who was lynched at Chestertown, Maryland, in May, for assault on a white girl was innocent – that the deed was done by a white man, who had since disappeared. The girl herself maintained that her assailant was a white man. When that poor Afro-American was murdered the whites excused their refusal of trial on the ground that they wished to spare the white girl the mortification of having to testify in court.

This cry has had its effect. It has closed the heart, stifled the conscience, warped the judgment, and hushed the voice of Press and Pulpit on the subject of lynch law throughout this ‘land of liberty.’ Men who stand high in the esteem of the public for Christian character, for moral and physical courage, for devotion to the principles of equal and exact justice to all, and for great sagacity, stand as cowards who fear to open their mouths before this great outrage. They do not see that by their tacit encouragement, their silence acquiescence, the black shadow of lawlessness in the form of lynch law is spreading its wings over the whole country. Men who, like Governor Tillman,²² start the ball of lynch law rolling for a certain crime, are powerless to stop it when drunken or criminal white roughs feel like hanging an Afro-American on any pretext.

To the better class of Afro-Americans themselves the violation of women is so revolting that they have too often taken the white man’s word, and given Lynch Law neither the investigation nor condemnation it deserved. They forget that a concession of the right to lynch a man for a certain crime, not only concedes the right to lynch any person for any crime, but – so frequently is the cry of outrage now raised – it is in a fair way to stamp us as a race of bestial desperadoes. They have gone on hoping and believing that general education and financial strength would solve the difficulty, and are devoting their energies to the accumulation of both.

But the mob spirit has grown with the increasing intelligence of the Afro-American. It has left the out-of-the-way places where ignorance prevails, has thrown off the mask, and with this new cry it stalks in broad daylight in large cities – the centres of civilisation – and is encouraged by the ‘leading citizens’ and the Press.

CHAPTER IV THE MALICIOUS AND UNTRUTHFUL WHITE PRESS

The *Daily Commercial* and *Evening Scimitar* of Memphis, Tennessee, are owned by leading business men of that city, and yet, in spite of the fact that there had been no

white woman in Memphis outraged by an Afro-American, and that Memphis possessed a thrifty, law-abiding, property-owning class of Afro-Americans, the *Commercial* of May 17th, under the head of 'More Rapes, More Lynchings,' gave utterance to the following: –

'The lynching of three Negro scoundrels reported in our dispatches from Anniston, Alabama, for a brutal outrage committed upon a white woman will be a text for much comment on "Southern Barbarism" by Northern newspapers; but we fancy it will hardly prove effective for campaign purposes among intelligent people. The frequency of these lynchings calls attention to the frequency of the crimes which causes lynching. The "Southern barbarism" which deserves the serious attention of all people North and South, is the barbarism which preys upon weak and defenceless women. Nothing but the most prompt, speedy, and extreme punishment can hold in check the horrible and bestial propensities of the Negro race. There is a strange similarity about a number of cases of this character which has lately occurred. In each case the crime was deliberately planned and perpetrated by several Negroes. They watched for an opportunity when the women were left without a protector. It was not a sudden yielding to a fit of passion, but the consummation of a devilish purpose which has been seeking and waiting for the opportunity. This feature of the crime not only makes it the most fiendishly brutal, but it adds to the terror of the situation in thinly settled country communities. No man can leave his family at night without the dread that some roving Negro ruffian is watching and waiting for this opportunity. The swift punishment which invariably follows these horrible crimes, doubtless acts as a deterring effect upon the Negroes in that immediate neighbourhood for a short time. But the lesson is not widely learned nor long remembered. Then such crimes, equally atrocious, have happened in quick succession, one in Tennessee, one in Arkansas, and one in Alabama. The facts of the crime appear to appeal more to the Negro's lustful imagination than the facts of the punishment do to his fears. He sets aside all fear of death in any form when opportunity is found for the gratification of his bestial desires. There is small reason to hope for any change for the better. The commission of this crime grows more frequent every year. The generation of Negroes which has grown up since the war, has lost in large measure the traditional and wholesome awe of the white race which kept the Negroes in subjection, even when their masters were in the army, and their families left unprotected except by the slaves themselves. There is no longer a restraint upon the brute passion of the Negro. What is to be done? The crime of rape is always horrible, but to the Southern man there is nothing which so fills the soul with horror, loathing, and fury as the outraging of a white woman by a Negro. It is the race question in the ugliest, vilest, most dangerous aspect. The Negro as a political factor can be controlled. But neither laws nor lynchings can subdue his lusts. Sooner or later it will force a crisis. We do not know in what form it will come.'

In its issue of June 4th, the Memphis *Evening Scimitar* gives the following excuse for lynch law: –

'Aside from the violation of white women by Negroes, which is the outcropping of a bestial perversion of instinct, the chief cause of trouble between the races in the South is the Negro's lack of manners. In the state of slavery he learned politeness from association with white people, who took pains to teach him. Since the emancipation came and the tie of mutual interest and regard between master and servant was broken, the Negro has drifted away into a state which is neither freedom nor bondage. Lacking the proper inspiration of the one and the restraining force of the other, he has taken up the idea that boorish insolence is independence, and the exercise of a decent degree of breeding toward white people is identical with servile submission. In consequence of the prevalence of this notion there are many Negroes who use every opportunity to make themselves offensive, particularly when they think it can be done with impunity. We have had too many instances right here in Memphis to doubt this, and our experience is not exceptional. *The white people won't stand this sort of thing, and whether they be insulted as individuals or as a race, the response will be prompt and effectual.* The bloody riot of 1866,²³ in which so many Negroes perished, was brought on principally by the outrageous conduct of the blacks towards the whites on the streets. It is also a remarkable and discouraging fact that the majority of such scoundrels are Negroes who have received educational advantages at the hands of the white taxpayers. They have got just enough of learning to make them realise how hopelessly their race is behind the other in everything that makes a great people, and they attempt to "get even" by insolence, which is ever the resentment of inferiors. There are well-bred Negroes among us, and it is truly unfortunate that they should have to pay, even in part, the penalty of the offences committed by the baser sort, but this is the way of the world. The innocent must suffer for the guilty. If the Negroes as a people possessed a hundredth part of the self-respect which is evidenced by the courteous bearing of some that the *Scimitar* could name, the friction between the races would be reduced to a minimum. It will not do to beg the question by pleading that many white men are also stirring up strife. The Caucasian blackguard simply obeys the promptings of a depraved disposition, and he is seldom deliberately rough or offensive toward strangers or unprotected women. The Negro rough, on the contrary is given to just that kind of offending, and he almost invariably singles out white people as his victims.'

On March 9th, 1892, there were lynched in the same city three²⁴ of the best specimens of young Afro-American manhood since the war. They were peaceful, law-abiding citizens and energetic business men. They believed the problem was to be solved by eschewing politics and putting money in the purse. They owned a flourishing grocery business in a thickly populated suburb of Memphis, and a white man named Barrett had one on the opposite corner. After a personal difficulty which Barrett had sought by going into the 'People's Grocery' and drawing a pistol and getting thrashed by Calvin M'Dowell,²⁵ he (Barrett) threatened to 'Clean them out.' These men were a mile beyond the city limits and police protection; so on hearing that Barrett's crowd was coming to attack them on Saturday night, they mustered forces and prepared to defend themselves against the attack.

When Barrett came, he led a *posse* of officers, twelve in number who afterward claimed to be hunting a man for whom they had a warrant. [Why twelve men in citizen's clothes should think it necessary to go in the night to hunt one man who had never before been arrested, or made any record as a criminal, has never been explained.] When they entered the back door the young men thought the threatened attack was on, and fired into them. Three of the officers were wounded, and when the *defending* party found it was officers of the law upon whom they had fired, they ceased firing and got away. Thirty-one men were arrested and thrown in gaol as 'conspirators,' although they all declared more than once they did not know they were firing on officers. Excitement was at fever heat, until the morning papers, two days after, announced that the wounded deputy sheriffs were recovering. This hindered rather than helped the plans of the whites. There was no law on the statute books which would execute an Afro-American for wounding a white man, but the 'unwritten law' did. Three of these men, the president, the manager, and the clerk of the grocery – 'the leaders of the conspiracy' – were secretly taken from gaol and lynched in a shockingly brutal manner. 'The Negroes are getting too independent,' they say, 'we must teach them a lesson.' What lesson? The lesson of subordination. 'Kill the leaders, and it will cow the Negro who dares to shoot a white man, even in self-defence.'

Although the race was wild over the outrage, and the mockery of law and justice which disarmed men and locked them up in gaols where they could be easily and safely reached by the mob, the Afro-American ministers, newspapers, and leaders counselled obedience to the law which did not protect them. Their counsel was heeded, and not a hand was uplifted to resent the outrage; following the advice of the *Free Speech*, people left the city in great numbers.

The 'dailies' and associated press reports heralded the dead men to the country as 'toughs' (roughs) and 'Negro desperadoes who kept a low dive.' This same press service printed that a Negro who was lynched at Indianola, Mississippi, in May, had outraged the sheriff's eight-year-old daughter. This girl was more than eighteen years old, and was found by her father in this man's room, who was a servant on the place! Not content with misrepresenting the race, the mob-spirit was not to be satisfied until the paper which was doing all it could to counteract this impression was silenced. The coloured people were resenting their bad treatment in a way to make itself felt, yet gave the mob no excuse for further murder, until the appearance of the editorial which is construed as a reflection on the 'honour' of the Southern white women. It is not half so libellous as that of the *Commercial* which appeared four days before, and that which has been given in these pages. They would have lynched the manager of the *Free Speech* for exercising the right of free speech (if they had found him) as quickly as they would have hung any scoundrel guilty of outrage, and been glad of the excuse to do so. The owners were ordered not to return, as *Free Speech* was suspended with as little compunction as the business of the 'People's Grocery' had been broken up and its proprietors murdered.

CHAPTER V THE SOUTH'S POSITION

Mr. Henry W. Grady, in his well-remembered speeches in New England and New York, pictured the Afro-American as incapable of self-government. Through him and

other leading men the cry of the South to the country has been 'Hands off! Leave us to solve our problem.' To the Afro-American the South says, 'The white man must and will rule.' There is little difference between the Ante-bellum South and the New South. Her white citizens are wedded to any method however revolting, any measure however extreme, for the subjugation of the young manhood of the dark race. They have cheated him out of his ballot, deprived him of civil rights or redress in the Civil Courts thereof, robbed him of the fruits of his labour, and are still murdering, burning, and lynching him.

The result is a growing disregard of human life. Lynch Law has spread its insidious influence till men in New York State, Pennsylvania and on the free Western plains feel they can take the law in their own hands with impunity, especially where an Afro-American is concerned. The South is brutalised to a degree not realised by its own inhabitants, and the very foundation of government, law, and order are imperilled.

Public sentiment has had a slight 'reaction,' though not sufficient to stop the crusade of lawlessness and lynching. The spirit of Christianity of the great M.E. Church was sufficiently aroused by the frequent and revolting crimes against a powerless people, to pass strong condemnatory resolutions at its General Conference in Omaha last May. The spirit of justice of the grand old party asserted itself sufficiently to secure a denunciation of the wrongs, and a feeble declaration of the belief in human rights in the Republican platform at Minneapolis, June 7th. A few of the great 'dailies' and 'weeklies' have swung into line declaring that Lynch Law must go. The President²⁶ of the United States issued a proclamation that it be not tolerated in the territories over which he has jurisdiction. Governor Northern and Chief Justice Bleckley,²⁷ of Georgia, have proclaimed against it. The citizens of Chattanooga, Tennessee, have set a worthy example in that they not only condemn Lynch Law, but her public men demanded a trial for Weems, who was accused of outrage, and guarded him while the trial was in progress. The trial only lasted ten minutes, and Weems chose to plead guilty, and accept twenty-one years sentence, rather than invite the certain death which awaited him outside that cordon of police if he had told the truth and shown the letters he had received from the white woman in the case.

Colonel A. S. Colvar, of Nashville, Tennessee, is so overcome with the horrible state of affairs that he addressed the following earnest letter to the *Nashville American*: — 'Nothing since I have been a reading man has so impressed me with the decay of manhood among the people of Tennessee as the dastardly submission to the mob reign. We have reached the unprecedented low level; the awful criminal depravity of substituting the mob for the Court and jury, of giving up the gaol keys to the mob whenever they are demanded. We do it in the largest cities and in the country towns; we do it in mid-day; we do it after full, not to say formal, notice, and so thoroughly and generally is it acquiesced in that the murderers have discarded the formula of masks. They go into the town where everybody knows them, sometimes under the gaze of the governor, in the presence of the Courts, in the presence of the sheriff and his deputies, in the presence of the entire police force, take out the prisoner, take his life, often with fiendish glee, and often with acts of cruelty and barbarism which impress the reader with a degeneracy rapidly approaching savage life. That the State is disgraced but faintly expresses the humiliation which has settled upon the once proud people of Tennessee. The State, in its majesty, through its organised life, for which the people pay liberally, makes but one record, but one note, and that a criminal falsehood, *was hung by persons to the jury*

unknown. The murder at Shelbyville is only a verification of what every intelligent man knew would come, because with a mob rumour is as good as a proof.'

These efforts brought forth apologies and a short halt, but the lynching mania has raged again through the past twelve months with unabated fury. The strong arm of the law must be brought to bear upon lynchers in severe punishment, but this cannot and will not be done unless a healthy public sentiment demands and sustains such action. The men and women in the South who disapprove of lynching and remain silent on the perpetration of such outrages are *particeps criminis* – accomplices, accessories before and after the fact, equally guilty with the actual law-breakers, who would not persist if they did not know that neither the law nor militia would be employed against them.

CHAPTER VI SELF HELP

In the creation of this healthier public sentiment, the Afro-American can do for himself what no one else can do for him. The world looks on with wonder that we have conceded so much, and remain law-abiding under such great outrage and provocation.

To Northern capital and Afro-American labour the South owes it rehabilitation. If labour is withdrawn capital will not remain. The Afro-American is thus the backbone of the South. A thorough knowledge and judicious exercise of this power in lynching localities could many times effect a bloodless revolution. The white man's dollar is his god, and to stop this will be to stop outrages in many localities.

The Afro-Americans of Memphis denounced the lynching of three of the best citizens, and urged and waited for the authorities to act in the matter, and bring the lynchers to justice. No attempt was made to do so, and the black men left the city by thousands, bringing about great stagnation in every branch of business. Those who remained so injured the business of the street car company by staying off the cars, that the superintendent, manager, and treasurer called personally on the editors of the *Free Speech*, and asked them to urge our people to give them their patronage again. Other business men became alarmed over the situation, and the *Free Speech* was suppressed that the coloured people might be more easily controlled. A meeting of white citizens in June, three months after the lynching, passed resolutions for the first time condemning it. *But they did not punish the lynchers*. Every one of them was known by name because they had been selected to do the dirty work by some of the very citizens who passed these resolutions! Memphis is fast losing her black population, who proclaim as they go that there is no protection for the life and property of any Afro-American citizen in Memphis who will not be a slave.

The Afro-American citizens of Kentucky, whose intellectual and financial improvement has been phenomenal, have never had a separate car law until now. Delegations and petitions poured into the Legislature against it, yet the Bill passed, and the Jim Crow Car²⁸ of Kentucky is a legalised institution. Will the great mass of Negroes continue to patronise the railroad? A special from Covington, Kentucky, says: –

'Covington, June 13th. – The railroads of the State are beginning to feel very markedly the effects of the separate coach Bill recently passed by the Legislature.

No class of people in the State have so many and so largely attended excursions as the blacks. All these have been abandoned, and regular travel is reduced to a minimum.'

A competent authority says the loss to the various roads will reach 1,000,000 dols. this year.

A call to a State Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, last June, had delegates from every county in the State. Those delegates, the ministers, teachers, heads of secret and other orders, and the heads of families should pass the word around for every member of the race in Kentucky to stay off railroads unless obliged to ride. If they did so, and their advice was followed persistently, the Convention would not need to petition the Legislature to repeal the law or raise money to file a suit. The railroad corporations would be so affected they would, in self defence, 'lobby' to have the separate car law repealed. On the other hand, as long as the railroads can get Afro-American excursions they will always have plenty of money to fight all the suits brought against them. They will be aided in so doing by the same partisan public sentiment which passed the law. White men passed the law, and white judges and juries would pass upon the suits against the law, and render judgment in line with their prejudices, and in deference to the greater financial power.

The appeal to the white man's pocket has ever been more effectual than all the appeals ever made to his conscience. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is to be gained by a further sacrifice of manhood and self-respect. By the right exercise of his power as the industrial factor of the South, the Afro-American can demand and secure his rights, the punishment of lynchers, and a fair trial for members of his race accused of outrage.

Of the many inhuman outrages of this present year, the only case where the proposed lynching did *not* occur, was where the men armed themselves in Jacksonville, Florida, and Paducah, Kentucky, and prevented it. The only times an Afro-American who was assaulted got away has been when he had a gun, and used it in self-defence. The lesson this teaches, and which every Afro-American should ponder well, is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honour in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give. When the white man, who is always the aggressor, knows he runs as great risk of biting the dust every time his Afro-American victim does, he will have greater respect for Afro-American life. The more the Afro-American yields and cringes and begs, the more he has to do so, the more he is insulted, outraged, and lynched.

The assertion has been substantiated throughout these pages that the Press contains unreliable and doctored reports of lynchings, and one of the most necessary things for the race to do is to get these facts before the public. The people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the Press.

The Afro-American papers are the only ones which will print the truth, and they lack means to employ agents and detectives to get at the facts. The race must rally a mighty host to the support of their journals, and thus enable them to do much in the way of investigation.

A lynching occurred at Port Jarvis, New York, the first week in June. A white and a coloured man were implicated in the assault upon a white girl. It was charged that the white man paid the coloured boy to make the assault, which he did on the

public highway in broad day time, and was lynched. This, too, was done by 'parties unknown.' The white man in the case still lives. He was imprisoned, and promises to fight the case on trial. At the preliminary examination, it developed that he had been a suitor of the girl's. She repulsed and refused him, yet had given him money, and he had sent threatening letters demanding more. The day before this examination she was so wrought up, she left home and wandered miles away. When found she said she did so because she was afraid of the man's testimony. Why should she be afraid of the prisoner? Why should she yield to his demands for money if not to prevent him exposing something he knew? It seems explainable only on the hypothesis that a *liaison* existed between the coloured boy and the girl, and the white man knew of it. The press is singularly silent. Has it a motive? We owe it to ourselves to find out.

The story comes from Larned, Kansas, October 1st, that a young white lady held at bay until daylight, without alarming any one in the house, 'a burly Negro,' who entered her room and bed. The 'burly Negro' was promptly lynched without investigation or examination of the accuracy of the statement.

A house was found burned down near Montgomery, Alabama, in Monroe County, a few weeks ago – also the burned bodies of the owners and melted piles of gold and silver. These discoveries led to the conclusion that the awful crime was not prompted by motives of robbery. The suggestion of the whites was that 'brutal lust was the incentive, and as there are nearly 200 Negroes living within a radius of five miles of the place the conclusion was inevitable that some of them were the perpetrators.' Upon this 'suggestion' probably made by the real criminal, the mob acted upon the 'conclusion,' and arrested ten Afro-Americans, four of whom, they tell the world, confessed to the deed of murdering Richard L. Johnson and outraging his daughter, Jeanette. These four men, Berrell Jones, Moses Johnson, Jim and John Packer, none of them 25 years of age, upon this conclusive, were taken from gaol, hanged, shot, and burned while yet alive, the night of October 12th. The same report says that Mr. Johnson was on the best of terms with his Negro tenants.

The race thus outraged must find out the facts of his awful hurling of men into eternity on supposition, and give them to the indifferent and apathetic country. We feel this to be a garbled report, but how can we prove it?

Near Vicksburg, Mississippi, a murder was committed by a gang of burglars. Of course only Negroes could have committed the crime, and Negroes were arrested for it. It is believed that the two men, Smith Tolley and John Adams, belonged to a gang controlled by white men, who feared exposure, so on the night of July 4th they were hanged in the Court House yard by those interested in silencing them. Robberies since committed in the same vicinity have been known to be by white men who had their faces blackened. We strongly believe in the innocence of these murdered men, but we have no proof. No other news goes out to the world save that which stamps us as a race of cutthroats, robbers, and lustful wild beasts.

So great is Southern hate and prejudice, that they legally (?) hung poor little thirteen-year-old Mildrey Brown at Columbia, South Carolina, October 7th, on the circumstantial evidence that she poisoned a white infant. If her guilt had been proven unmistakably, had she been white, Mildrey Brown would never have been hung, the country would have been aroused and South Carolina disgraced for ever for such a crime. The Afro-American himself did not know as he should have known, as his journals should be in a position to have him know and act.

Nothing is more definitely settled than that he must act for himself. I have shown how he may employ the 'boycott,' emigration, and the Press; and I feel that by a combination of all these agencies stamped out. 'The gods help those who help themselves.'

SUMMARY

The following details of lynching from 1882 to 1891 inclusive, is proof of all that has been said in the preceding pages. During these years the South has had full control of the political, legislature, judicial, and executive machinery. With the judges, juries, and prosecuting attorneys all Southern white men, no Negro has ever been known to escape the penalty of the law for any crime he commits. It is only the wealthy white man, with money and influence, who fails of conviction for his crimes. There is not, and never has been, any fear by the mob that a Negro would not receive full punishment for all crimes of which he is convicted. But if this state of affairs did prevail, as the Rev. Thos. Dixon falsely declares it does, clearly the laws or those who are paid to enforce them are at fault. Hence, those who make such inoperative laws, or the officials who fail to do their duty, and not the criminals, should be lynched. But the reverse is true. The gaols, penitentiaries, and convict farms are filled with race criminals who are too poor and weak to avert such a fate. Yet of this race there were lynched in –

1882 . . . 52	1886 . . . 73	1889 . . . 95
1883 . . . 39	1887 . . . 70	1890 . . . 100
1884 . . . 53	1888 . . . 72	1891 . . . 169
1885 . . . 77		

Of this number only 269 were charged with outrage; 253 with murder; 44 with robbery; 37 with incendiarism; 32 with reasons unstated [not necessary to give a reason for lynching a Negro]; 27 with 'race prejudice'; 13 with quarrelling with white men; 10 with making threats; 7 with rioting; 5 with miscegenation; 4 with burglary. One of the men lynched in 1891 was Will Lewis at Tullahoma, Tennessee. The reason given for his lynching was that 'he was drunk and saucy to white folks.' A woman was one of the 73 victims in 1886. She was hung at Jackson, Tennessee, because the white women for whom she cooked died of poisoning. A *post mortem* examination revealed traces of arsenical poisoning. A search at the cook's house resulted in finding rat poison, and on this evidence (?) solely she was arrested and thrown into gaol. When the mob, led by the husband of the poisoned woman, got ready for her, this poor coloured woman was dragged out of gaol, every stitch of clothing torn from her body, and she was hung in the public court-house square in sight of everybody. That white woman's husband has since died in the insane asylum a raving maniac, and his ravings show that he, and not that poor cook, was the poisoner of his wife! A woman, Lou Stevens, was hung at Hollendale, Mississippi, in the fall of 1891 by a mob. She was hung from a bridge by the side of a male companion of her own race. She was charged with being an accomplice in the murder of her white paramour, who had abused her. The coloured man who was hung with her was accused of the murder.

At Clinton, Alabama, a mob hung a coloured man charged with murdering a white boy for 25 cents. Afterwards the mob ranged itself under the body of the man before it was cut down, and had its picture taken. This picture, which is reproduced in the beginning of this pamphlet, was sent to Judge Tourgee by 'the committee' with the words, 'Here's Your Martyr,' underneath, and a very insulting and obscene message on the back.

The following is the lynching record of the Southern States from January 1st, 1892, to January 1st, 1893: –

'Chicago, Illinois, January 27th. – Judge Lynch²⁹ has been very busy during 1892. The record is a dark one for this country, and if steps are not soon taken to check the blood-thirsty brutes in the South the people of the United States will be looked upon, and rightly too, as a nation of murderers. The judgment of the remainder of mankind all over the civilised world cannot be otherwise, when it is honestly rendered. I have watched carefully all during 1892 in my travels, and gathered all the information possible as to the number of persons lynched in the several States in 1892. I have just finished going over 194 clippings, which I have gathered from January 1st, 1892, to December 31st, 1892. I dislike very much to bother the good reader with figures, but they are necessary in this case to explain the truth and to convey an everlasting idea. A large number of lynching of coloured men during 1892 was the most brutal, the most savage, and the most hellish the world has ever seen. I made many personal investigations of the lynchings, and many of them surpass the hotpotting ceremonies in the story of 'She,' by H. Rider Haggard.

'Of the many coloured man, women, and children that were lynched and murdered in cold blood by the Christian (?) white people of the South there were several cases that no white man or woman in the North would believe. On February 20th, 1892, a coloured man, Edward Coy, was tied to a stump of an old tree, a great pile of sticks and small brush was piled on and around him. Coal oil was then poured all over the sticks, and a civilised woman struck a match and ten thousand (estimated) white men stood around and saw the victim burn up to a small pile of ashes! Mrs Jewell applied the match, and the citizens of Texarkana supported her in doing so. She is still living at Texarkana, Arkansas.

'At Jonesville, Louisiana, lived a small family, consisting of father, son, and young daughter. On November 1st, a white man was killed. It was laid on the Hastings family, which is the family referred to above. The father only was accused, but on November 2nd, the best white citizens took the fourteen-year-old girl and a boy sixteen out and swung them up to the nearest limb and shot their bodies full of holes. November 5th, Mr. Hastings was served likewise. So the whole family was wiped out without judge, trial, jury, or witness; two of them were not even accused of any offence.

'Here is the record: –

Alabama	...	...	22	Montana	...	...	4
Arkansas	...	...	25	New York	...	...	1
California	...	...	5	North Carolina	...	...	5
Florida	...	...	11	North Dakota	...	...	1
Georgia	...	...	17	Ohio	...	...	3
Idaho	...	...	8	South Carolina	...	...	5

Illinois	...	...	1	Tennessee	...	28
Kansas	...	...	3	Texas	...	15
Kentucky	...	...	9	Virginia	...	7
Louisiana	...	...	29	West Virginia	...	5
Maryland	...	...	1	Wyoming	...	9
Mississippi	...	...	16	Arizona	...	3
Missouri	...	...	6	Oklahoma	...	2

'There were 241 persons lynched in 1892. There were 159 Afro-Americans among the victims. Four of this number were lynched in the North. One at Oxford, Ohio; 1 at Port Jervis, New York; 1 at Larned; and 1 at Hiawatha, Kansas. One was reported as being lynched at Millersburgh, Ohio, but that was evidently an error.

'The South claims 206 of the victims, and the North 25. There were 80 whites, 1 Indian, and 5 women. The South has claimed that they only lynched coloured men for committing rape upon the white women of that section. But unfortunately, the record is against them. Here it is: -

Rape	...	40	Suspected robbery	...	4
Murder	...	58	Larceny	...	1
Rioting	...	3	Alleged rape	...	1
Race prejudice	...	6	Self-defence	...	1
No cause given	...	4	Insulting Women	...	2
Incendiarism	...	6	Suspected rape	...	1
Robbery	...	6	For being desperadoes	...	6
Assault	...	1	No offence, boy and girl	...	2
Attempted murder	...	2	Fraud	...	1
Attempted rape	...	9			

'The above figures do not include the four coloured men lynched in the North. Louisiana lynched 29. The population of the State is, 1,118,587, dividing that by 29, it shows that one person in every 38,572 in that State took part in a lynching. Although the whites have entire control of the machinery of the law.

'If coloured men were in control, the world would hear an awful howl about Negro inferiority and his incapacity to govern. Another thing is very clearly shown and that is only about one-fifth of the men lynched in the South were charged with the crime of rape. Probably 190 of the number murdered by mobs in the South were entirely innocent of any crime. Mobs are not organised to find out whether a man or woman is guilty or innocent, but they are organised for the sole purpose to condemn and kill.

'There is no doubt but that not less than 400 coloured persons were murdered in the South in 1892. In many cases it is worth a man's life to send one line from certain sections of the South about any ordinary or a private killing, especially when the victim is a coloured man. I had several cases to come under my personal observation in Texas during October and November.

'Early in October a coloured man was picking cotton near Wiley, Texas, several young white men went out and shot him dead for pastime, and told the telegraph operator to say nothing about it, if he did they would run him away.

'Near Temple, Texas, a Mr. Baker on November 2nd, shot a coloured man dead whom he said insulted his wife. Nothing was said about it.

'It is a shame and a disgrace to any civilised government to allow any such doings to go on without putting a stop to it. Talk about Hayti, but Hayti is far and away ahead of us when it comes to respect for law and justice. Every Sheriff that permits a prisoner to be taken out of his charge and murdered ought to be punished for it. And every man that is a member of the mob is a murderer just as much as if an individual did it alone.

'Afro-Americans what are you going to do about it?

'M. W. CALDWELL.'

Of the five coloured women lynched, in 1892 one was a fifteen-year-old girl, at Rayville, Louisiana. She was lynched on the same charge of poisoning as the woman at Jackson, Tennessee, and with no greater proof of guilt. South Carolina distinguished herself in October of this same year by legally (?) hanging thirteen-year-old Mildrey Brown on the same charge. Governor Tillman refused to interfere. A young woman, twenty years old, was also executed in this same State.

The year 1892 had over 150 Negro victims to lynch law, and the year 1893, though only three months old (April 1st), has already written twenty-five names on Judge Lynch's death-roll. The most shocking and horrible of them all was the case of Henry Smith at Paris, Texas, February 1st. This man was charged with murder and outrage of the four-year-old daughter of Policeman Vance. Nothing has been given to the world which proves this man's guilt. When he was captured in Arkansas great preparations were made in Paris, and it was publicly announced that he was to be burnt at the stake. No efforts were spent in proving the man's guilt, but great preparations for his execution. A scaffold was built ten feet high, so everybody could see, a float was prepared on which the doomed man was drawn through the streets of the city on exhibition. Schools were dismissed that the children might witness the sight, and crowds gathered from the country round. At every stop made by the train which carried the prisoner to Paris, he was forced to show himself to the crowds who gathered to see him; special coaches were put on, and a free ride given to everybody who wanted to go to see the sight. When the train reached Paris – but let the *New York Sun* of February 2nd, tell the rest of the horrible story: –

'Smith seemed indifferent to his fate at first, and could not be brought to understand that fearful vengeance would come upon him. When he was told that his death was inevitable, and would come by the most cruel manner human ingenuity could devise, he weakened and begged the officers to save him.

'He first asked to be spared, and then sought any other death than burning. He was told that this was impossible, for the people last night at a mass meeting had determined on his fate. He said he wanted to be shot. When asked if he was willing to have Mr. Vance shoot him, he said he was not, and asked that Marshall Shanklin might do that work.

'He was told that Mr. Shanklin could not and would not kill him. His next choice of his executioner was Mayor Cate. He finally asked that Colonel C. M. Ragland be allowed to shoot him, but the citizens insisted that he must die at the stake.

'When the train pulled up at Texas Pacific Station 15,000 persons were there to receive him. Hundreds of people had poured into the city from the adjoining country. The word had been passed from lip to lip that death by fire was to be the penalty.

'Curious and sympathising alike came on trains and waggons, on horse and on foot, to see the sight. Whisky shops were closed, unruly mobs were dispersed, and schools were dismissed by a proclamation from the Mayor.

'When the train stopped District Attorney H. B. Birmingham of the escort made a brief address. He said: -

"Fellow Citizens: There is not an officer now on this train who has any control over the prisoner, Henry Smith. Twenty-five of your citizens went in reply to telegrams from your County Attorney to meet him, and see that the prisoner was protected and delivered here without injury. We have done that thing; we have not deceived or misled you; we are not officers, but merely citizens; we have no authority to hold the prisoner against you or any one, and shall make no effort to do so. As citizens we merely wish to surrender the prisoner. We believe you will do what is right. Whatever may be done, let it be done as the people of Lamar county have done everything, in a law-abiding, peaceable, and patriotic way. We cannot, if we would, resist the thousands assembled here. The prisoner has admitted his guilt in the presence of a dozen good and true men. This is all we can say."

'Smith was placed upon a carnival float in mockery of a king upon his throne, and, followed by the immense crowd, was escorted through the city so that all might see the monster. He was firmly lashed to the seat.

'The line of march was up Main Street to the Square, around the Square, down Clarksville Street to Church Street, thence to the open prairie, about 300 yards from the Texas and Pacific Station.

'Here a scaffold, ten feet high, had been erected. Around this was a surging throng a hundred and fifty yards in each direction. A cold, drizzling rain was falling, that froze as it fell.

'The cowering wretch was forced up the steps, when he was pinned to a stake. His coat and shirt were torn off piece by piece, and thrown to the crowd, where they were eagerly seized as relics.

'When stripped to the waist, Henry Vance, the father of Smith's victim, Vance's son, and two uncles of the child gathered around him and began to thrust red-hot irons under his feet. Every contortion of his body and every groan that escaped his lips brought forth shouts of approval.

'Vainly he begged for mercy; vainly he protested that he did not know that it was Vance's child he killed. The red-hot irons burned into his flesh deeper and deeper. He uttered terrible cries. Finally the irons were rolled up and down the abdomen and on the back and arms. The crowd kept shouting its approval to the torturers.

'The climax was reached when the irons were thrust into Smith's eyes, burning them out. Then the irons were thrust down his throat. The Vances then declared their vengeance satisfied.

'The combustible material was placed under the scaffold, oil was poured over Smith and the platform, and a match applied. For a time he was enveloped in smoke. As this disappeared and the flames shot up, Smith was seen to sway back and forth.

'Then he became still, and all thought he was dead. The fire burned the ropes that bound him, and he fell upon the burning platform. He then began to roll about the platform. It seemed impossible that anything could live in that furnace.

'To the surprise of all, with a desperate struggle he pulled himself up by the railing of the scaffold, stood up, passed his hand over his face, and then jumped from

the scaffold, and rolled out of the fire below. Men on the ground thrust him into the burning mass again, and life became extinct.

'Hundreds had turned away in horror from the spectacle, but thousands shouted with satisfaction and with demonstrations of delight. People were here from every part of this section. They came from Dallas, Forth Worth, Sherman, Denison, Bonham, Texarkana, Fort Smith, Arkadelphia, and a party came from Arkansas, where Smith was captured. Every train that came in was loaded to its utmost capacity.

'There were demands at many points for special trains. When the news reached here yesterday of the arrest it spread through the country like wildfire. At every country town anvils and bells were sounded. People poured in here a constant stream all night and day on horseback. After the execution the throng dispersed quietly.

'On Thursday last Smith picked up little Myrtle Vance near the residence of her father, Policeman Henry Vance, and giving her candy, carried her through the central portion of the city to Gibbon's pasture, just within the corporate limits.

'He was asked by several persons what he was doing with the child. He replied that she was Mr. Williams' little girl, and he was taking her to the doctor. Arriving at the pasture he assaulted the babe, and then literally tore her in pieces.

'It was in revenge, because her father had arrested him recently. Covering the body with leaves and brush, he lay down and slept the night by the side of his victim. About seven o'clock on Friday through morning Smith awakened, and went to the house of his wife, and compelled her to cook him breakfast. She asked him what had become of that white child.

'He replied: "I ain't seen no white child, and don't have nothing to do with white folks." He ate his breakfast, and was not seen any more until his capture.

'About two o'clock on Friday a mass meeting was called at the Court House, and captains were appointed to search for the child. As soon as the body was discovered the Railroads put up bulletins offering free transportations to those who would join in the search.

'Posses went out in every direction. Smith was tracked to Detroit on foot, where he jumped on a freight train, left for his old home in Hempstead County, Arkansas. To this country he was tracked and captured. He denied everything at first, but blood stains revealed the crime. Then he confessed.'

According to Press reports written by mob sympathisers nearly every one confesses the crime for which the mob murders him. 'Blood stains' were sufficient evidence of guilt to these lawless men. The following week, in no way deterred by Governor Hogg's message and threats of punishment of the lynchers, the mob lynched Will Butler, the nephew or step-son of Henry Smith. The only reason alleged in the dispatches was that 'he had made himself notorious during the search for Smith by professing to know Smith's whereabouts which he refused to reveal.' In the Texas Legislature immediately after receiving Governor Hogg's message, in which he implored that something be done to punish the lynchers, a Bill was offered in that body to legalise lynching!

Commenting on Governor Hogg's telegram to the County Attorney and Sheriff next day after the burning, in which he urged the arrest of every person connected therewith, the Dallas (Texas) *News* of February 2nd, said: –

'The telegram of Governor Hogg to County Attorney Sturgeon to get the names of all who participated in the affair and prosecute them is looked upon as a joke. It is not believed that he means it.

‘The fact that he telegraphed Sheriff Hammond at one o’clock yesterday, after the Negro was actually in the hands of the mob, offering to aid him in protecting Smith, looks as if he was winking at the whole affair. Where was the Governor to get men to help the Sheriff at that hour who was trying to do his duty? They were certainly not here, and it is doubtful if a corporal’s guard could have been obtained within fifty miles of Paris. Everybody knows he must have been joking in what appears to be a scrupulous devotion to the letter of the law, else he would have used all precautions several days ago to save the life of Smith. Ever since 3.30 last Friday, when Myrtle Vance’s mutilated body was found, everybody here has known that Smith would be publicly burned. It was stated in Sunday’s *News* that Smith’s execution only awaited his capture. No protest against that, so far as the public knows, ever came here from the Governor. Tuesday’s *News* said it was the general sentiment that Smith would be burned at the stake.’

An equally cold-blooded, though not so barbarous, lynching, took place in Shelby County, Tennessee, February 11th, in this year of grace 1893, and again the account taken from their own papers is given. In the Memphis (Tennessee) *Daily Scimitar* of February 13th, occurs the following statement: –

‘As the *Scimitar* stated on Saturday, the Negro, Richard Neal, who outraged Mrs. Jack White near Forrest Hill, in this county, was lynched by a mob of about 200 white citizens of the neighbourhood. Sheriff M’Lendon, accompanied by Deputies Perkins, App, and Harvey, and a *Scimitar* reporter, arrived on the scene of the execution about 3.30 o’clock in the afternoon. The body was suspended from the first limb of a post oak tree by a new quarter-inch grass rope. A hangman’s knot, evidently tied by an expert, fitted snugly under the left ear of the corpse as the great pleasure, of the National Government to pay a satisfactory indemnity. Moreover, the President’s instructions carry with them the hope that the transaction of to-day may efface all memory of the unhappy tragedy; that the old and friendly relations of the United States and Italy may be restored; and that nothing untoward may ever again occur to disturb their harmonious friendship.

‘JAMES G. BLAINE.’³⁰

Having thus established the precedent that the whole people should be taxed to pay for the wrong-doing of those of one State (over which the General Government has no control), it may have to be done again. Lynching is still going on, though most if the victims are coloured people who are citizens of this country. They ask for no indemnity; they only ask that a fair [trial for] life and liberty be granted those charged with crime.

Shall they have it? It is for Christian, liberty-loving civilisation to answer.

Notes

1. Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History* (London: Penguin Random House, 2022): p.193.
2. For a detailed biography of Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards’ life and works, see Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History*, 193ff.
3. Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History*, p.195.
4. Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards (c.1857–1894), a Black orator, author, journalist, philosopher, political commentator, editor, religious leader, scholar, freedom fighter, human rights activist.

5. Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards (c.1857–1894) was the editor and publisher of *Lux* (1892–1895), a Christian weekly religious newspaper, and *Fraternity* (1893–1897), a monthly human rights journal. See Douglas A. Lorimer, ‘Legacies of Slavery for Race, Religion, and Empire: S. J. Celestine Edwards and the *Hard Truth* (1894)’. *Slavery and Abolition*, 39.4 (2018): pp.731–755.
6. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See the speeches delivered by Frederick Douglass in *Speeches* (Speech Nos 21–23).
7. Frederick Douglass’ many powerful anti-lynching speeches include ‘Lessons of the Hour by Hon. Frederick Douglass, Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C.’ (Baltimore MD: Press of Thomas Evans, 1894). Available online: <https://archive.org/details/09359080.4757.emory.edu/page/n1/mode/2up>
8. Cedar Hill is the name of the final home of the Douglass family located in Anacostia, Washington DC.
9. William Laird Clowes (1856–1905), a white British newspaper journalist and author.
10. Following the end of the US Civil War (1861–1865), the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution was passed. According to this legislation which Congress passed on 31 January 1865, and ratified on 6 December 1865, ‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.’ The full text is available online at: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=40>
11. The *Memphis Free Speech* was an African American newspaper established in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1881, edited by Reverend Taylor Nightingale and J. L. Fleming, and located at the Beale Street Baptist Church. In 1889, Ida B. Wells-Barnett became the editor. For further information, see David M. Tucker, ‘Miss Ida B. Wells and Memphis Lynching’. *Phylon*, 32.2 (1971): pp.112–122.
12. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
13. Judges 16 NIV.
14. The *Cleveland Gazette* was a weekly African American newspaper published in Cleveland, Ohio, between 1892 and 1949. Among the African American founders and editors was Harry Clay Smith (1863–1941).
15. Benjamin Tillman (1847–1918), a white South Carolina-born Democrat politician. He served as Governor of South Carolina between 1890–1894. He was elected as a senator from 1895–1918. He was a white supremacist and advocate of racist hate. He endorsed lynching and he fought against civil rights for all African American citizens.
16. John P. Buchanan (1847–1930), a white US politician and governor of Tennessee between 1891 and 1893.
17. The Civil Rights Act passed on April 6, 1866 read: ‘Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States; and such citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall have the same right, in every State and Territory in the United States, to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens, and shall be subject to like punishment, pains, and penalties, and to none other, any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, to the contrary notwithstanding.’ Full text of the Act is available online at: <http://web.mit.edu/21h.102/www/Primary%20source%20collections/Reconstruction/Civil%20Rights%20Act%201866.htm>
18. The Ku Klux Klan is a white US supremacist hate group that was originally founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, on 24 December 1865, by Confederate Army officers and its weapons

- are violence, murder, torture, and all forms of physical and psychological persecution. For further information, see Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Shawn Lay, ed., *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
19. 'White Liners' is a reference to white supremacists.
 20. The 'South Carolina Murders' very likely refer to the Hamburg Massacre, an atrocity which tragically took place in Hamburg, South Carolina, in July 1876. A white supremacist, Matthew Calbraith Butler (1836–1909), defended two white farmers in court to demonstrate his support for their unfounded and fabricated complaint that they were denied access to Main Street, Hamburg, when a local chapter of the Black militia of the National Guard held their parade during the town's fourth of July celebrations. The work of a white murderous mob, more than 100 white men attacked and murdered innocent Black National Guard service men. No white men were prosecuted for their villainous barbarism and inhumane killings. For further information, see Anon., *A Centennial Fourth of July Democratic Celebration: The Massacre of Six Colored Citizens* (July 1876).
 21. The Ellenton massacre in which approximately 100 Black people were killed by white racist murderous mobs took place in Aiken County, South Carolina, in September 1876.
 22. Benjamin Tillman (1847–1918).
 23. The Memphis massacre took place between 1–3 May 1866. Black people of all genders and ages were killed, attacked, tortured, and sexually assaulted by white murderous mobs. See Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2013).
 24. The three men were Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and William Stewart. For further information, see Nathaniel C. Ball, 'Uplift Memphis, Uplift the Nation: The Blog for Community Engagement: Memphis and the Lynching at the Curve', *The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change at the University of Memphis*, 30 September 2015, available online at: <https://blogs.memphis.edu/benhooksinstitute/2015/09/30/memphis-and-the-lynching-at-the-curve/>
 25. See 'Lynching in America: Remembering Calvin McDowell, William Stewart, and Thomas Moss', available online: <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/explore/tennessee/calvin-mcDowell-william-stewart-thomas-moss>
 26. Benjamin Harrison, 23rd President of the United States 1889–1893.
 27. Logan Edwin Bleckley (1827–1907), a white US lawyer, confederate, and white supremacist.
 28. 'Jim Crow' was originally a white racist fictional character created by white US performer, Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808–1860), in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the decades that followed and on through to the present day, the phrase 'Jim Crow' has become synonymous with white persecutory systems of legal racial segregation. Due to white US systems of racist persecution and prejudicial exclusion, African American travelers were prohibited from using all methods of transportation apart from the 'Jim Crow car'. See Mia Bay, *Traveling Black: A Story of Race and Resistance* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).
 29. Possibly a reference to Charles Lynch (1736–1796), a white US enslaver and judge who ran unjust, illegal, persecutory, and discriminatory trials in the state of Virginia and which has led many to argue that the word 'lynching' and the phrase 'lynch law' are a reference to his surname.
 30. James G. Blaine (1830–1893), a white US political leader.



FREED, BUT NOT
FREE.

THE GRIEVANCES OF THE
AFRO-AMERICAN.

BY
D. E. TOBIAS.

London :
S. H. BURROWS & CO.,
22, FURNIVAL STREET, E.C.

1898.

Figure 49 Title page from D. E. Tobias, *Freed . . . But Not Free. The Grievances of the Afro-American*. London, S. H. Burrows, 1898. (The British Library Board, General Reference Collection 8157.bbb.14.)

D. E. TOBIAS

(c.1870–DATE UNKNOWN)

18 D. E. Tobias, *Freed . . . But Not Free. The Grievances of the Afro-American*. London: S. H. Burrows, 1898.¹

Biographical History

See 'D. E. Tobias' entry in *Speeches*.

BORN IN SOUTH CAROLINA in circa 1870 to a 'mother and father' who 'were slaves', D. E. Tobias published his powerful autobiography and social justice tract, *Freed . . . But Not Free. The Grievances of the Afro-American* with the publishing company, S. H. Burrows, in London in 1898.

On the first page, Tobias informs his readers of the human rights principles undergirding his determination to publish *Freed . . . But Not Free*. 'In presenting this pamphlet to the public it seems to me advisable that I should make some brief mention of myself, and why I desire to devote my life and efforts to prison reform work in my native country, the Southern States of America', he explains. For Tobias writing at the end of the nineteenth century, a hard-hitting narration of the struggles he and his family experienced in their lives as lived in the immediate aftermath of enslavement is a first urgent priority. Here he bears witness to the sacrifices he and his family personally endured as a means to lay bare his lifelong conviction that, decades after the legal end of bondage in 1865, Black people of all genders and ages were still 'not free'. Dedicating his life to 'prison reform work', he is unequivocal in his protest against one of the many new systems of enslavement: 'The Convict Lease System'. A nefarious and persecutory system which was 'so prevalent in the Southern States', Tobias is unequivocal in his damning indictment that it 'is a true relic and consequence of the old system of slavery with ten times its severity'.

For Tobias growing up with the powerful knowledge that his enslaved mother and father 'could neither read nor write' as they had been inhumanely denied all access to any form of an education, a determination to assume the role of an educator defines his early life. 'My first ambition was to gain sufficient intelligence to teach in the coloured school in my native county', he confides. Living in a post-emancipation era in which white supremacists maintained, policed, controlled, and dominated all areas of U.S. society, African

American rights to an education were a terrifying and terrible battleground. And yet, despite the difficulties of having 'no educational advantages whatever', Tobias confirms he soon 'learned my letters and could read a little'. Saving 'all the money' he could from his back-breaking agricultural labours, he moved to a nearby city, 'where educational advantages for a coloured boy were fairly good', before eventually relocating to the northern states, 'where I have been blessed to meet Americans who have encouraged and assisted me in my struggles for an education'.

In emotionally unequivocal and politically unflinching ways in *Freed . . . But Not Free*, Tobias assumes the role not only of an autobiographer and an educator but of a historian in his determination to trace the centuries long history of US enslavement. 'In 1619, one year before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, a Dutch trading vessel anchored at Jamestown, Virginia, and exchanged fourteen good-natured and obedient Africans for food and supplies,' he writes. As he powerfully summarises, it was in this barbaric way that 'African slavery was first introduced into American life'. Condemning enslavement as an 'awful fate', Tobias exposes centuries of white US barbarism, savagery, and racism by confirming that 'the minds of the whites became so thoroughly warped by the institution of human slavery, and men became so sordid after this world's goods, that they willingly sacrificed their own lives and even ventured to see the nation totally annihilated rather than relinquish – what was to them their lawful and rightful claim to the free services of the blacks'. No less damningly, he bears witness to the mind-body-and-soul-destroying reality that the Thirteenth Amendment which legally abolished enslavement in 1865 at the end of the US Civil War, was 'followed by the monstrous treatment which the blacks have, and are still receiving at the hands of the whites'. At the heart of this 'monstrous treatment' for Tobias was the 'Convict Lease System': a nefarious system he denounces not only as 'a curse and shame to the people of the U.S.A' but as an immoral institution which 'clearly shows that slavery still exists in America'.

'In 1869 the South adopted the deplorable and disgraceful practice of convicting thousands of blacks on the most flimsy charges, and farming them out to the highest bidders for human flesh,' Tobias declares. At pains to inform his readers regarding the very real ways in which enslavement was far from over in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, he poignantly confirms, 'Prisoners are driven to a place in each State known as the stockade, and are sold from the public auction block, just as slaves were in ante-bellum days'. Condemning white legally mandated torturous practices, he expresses his moral outrage, shock, and horror that, 'Great crowds of people are attracted to these degrading scenes, to see human beings sold into bondage more horrible than the worse form of the old *régime* of slavery.' Tobias is under no illusion regarding the atrocities and abuses, no less than the violences and violations, that are horrifyingly, wilfully, and indiscriminately committed against Black people of all genders and ages as a result of this system. 'In hundreds of cases the convicts are absolutely worked to death,' he confirms, powerfully stating, 'In some camps convicts are whipped with a leather strap, and sometimes they are nearly strangled with cold water.' 'All convicts are punished in the presence of each other,' he writes as he relies on graphic language to confirm, 'They are whipped over the shoulders and back, getting from fifteen to fifty lashes, or as many as the white "bosses" choose to give them.' All too heartbreakingly aware of the failures of language even to begin to do justice to the traumatising experiences endured by 'all convicts' but

by Black female prisoners in particular, Tobias observes, ‘The actual treatment of female convicts in mining camps in the South is so horrible, revolting and inhuman as to be beyond putting in *print*.’

At the same time that Tobias provides a blistering, hard-hitting, and traumatising narration of white racist acts of torture, persecution, and murder in *Freed . . . But Not Free*, he bears witness to his determination to celebrate Black acts of progress and prowess as realised against death-defying odds. As he confirms, ‘the coloured people have not only astonished the American people, but wherever their strides in education, morality and other advancements have been made known, people have been lost in wonder, and think of what the race has accomplished in so short a time, considering their disadvantages and the obstacles against which they have had to fight’.

As one among the many millions who ‘though freed’ are ‘not yet free’ but who have made inspirational ‘strides’ against all ‘obstacles,’ D. E. Tobias urges the responsibilities belonging to those of ‘us who have had the priceless benefits of education.’ Working tirelessly and unceasingly, Tobias is one of millions of Black social justice campaigners and revolutionary reformers who have and continue to dedicate their lives ‘to work till the complete emancipation of the Afro-American race is a glorious reality’.

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FREED . . .
BUT
NOT FREE.

The Grievances of the Afro-American.

D. E. Tobias

SIXPENCE.

FREED, BUT NOT FREE.

FREED, BUT NOT
FREE.

THE GRIEVANCES OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN.

BY
D. E. TOBIAS

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22, FURNIVAL STREET, E.C.
1898

‘The negro’s grievance is that the discriminations made against him are more and more unbearable the better public citizen he tries to be; that they are impediments, not to the grovelling of his lower nature, but to the aspirations of his higher.’²

G. W. CABLE.³

‘For a’ that and a’ that,
It’s coming yet for a’ that,
That man to man the world o’er
Shall Brothers be for a’ that.’⁴
ROBERT BURNS.⁵

FREED, BUT NOT
FREE.

CHAPTER I. MY EARLY LIFE AND FUTURE HOPES.

In presenting this pamphlet to the public it seems to me advisable that I should make some brief mention of myself, and why I desire to devote my life and efforts to prison reform work in my native country, the Southern States of America.

My mother and father were slaves, and received their freedom as a result of the Great Civil War in the U.S.A. from 1861 to 1865.

I was born in the State of South Carolina, about twenty-eight years ago. I say about, because there are no authentic records to show definitely the year of my birth. The only information I have of my age is that transmitted to me from the memory of my parents, who could neither read nor write, and who, having a large family, could not remember all of our exact ages.

The first seventeen years of my life were spent on a farm, where I had no educational advantages whatever, and hence never learned my letters until I was fourteen.

My mother died when I was between seven and eight years old, and left my father to struggle with and bring up a house full of little ones, which he did for several years. Three years after I had learned my letters and could read a little, father died, leaving three boys, of whom I was the eldest – the large family having dwindled away through death and marriage. At that juncture I decided upon a new career, having one pound, saved from spending money which father used to allow me. My first ambition was to gain sufficient intelligence to teach in the coloured school in my native county.

In order to seek better opportunities for learning, I remained in the county, and worked on the farm for six months, and saved all the money I could. Then, through the advice of an uncle, and with a little financial assistance from him I went to the City of Columbia, S.C., where educational advantages for a coloured boy were fairly good. Then I came under the influence of Dr. B. B. Babbitt, a missionary from

the North, who, like many noble-hearted Christian men and women, went south at the close of the Civil War and carried the gospel to, and established schools for the education of the coloured race. Our meeting proved beneficial to us both. Mrs. Babbitt, who had been a faithful worker in the mission with her husband, had been called to rest a few years before, and Dr. Babbitt's stay in the Mission was exceedingly unpleasant at times. He was a descendant of the sturdy stock of Puritans who settled in New England in the early sixties, many of whom believed in freedom of body and mind for all mankind. Dr. Babbitt's sentiment did not accord with that of ex-slaveholders, and because he persisted in living among and teaching the coloured people, the whites absolutely ostracized him, and the newspapers throughout the State, religious and otherwise, did not scruple to upbraid him with opprobrious epithets. Dr. Babbitt's methods of elevating the coloured race in the South differed largely from those of other missionaries from the North. Each denomination established its own missionary schools, and worked principally upon denominational lines. The idea seemed rife that the mission of Christians from the North was to Christianise the blacks – once that was done the mission of the churches would be largely accomplished.

Dr. Babbitt had a larger and broader policy. While he adhered to the creed of his own church in the main, his doctrine was that of Practical Christianity. He held that so long as disabilities and strictures, placed upon the blacks by the whites, continued, Christian development of the race would be hindered in a large measure. Realizing the injustice practiced in the law court, against the coloured race, and how they were sent to prison in large numbers for the most frivolous offences, Dr. Babbitt spent much time in visiting the goal and State penitentiary which were located in Columbia. He frequently preached against the working of prisoners on the streets, chained together like dumb beasts. His idea was, that young coloured men should be educated to denounce the wrongs done their race, and work for the reform of all laws that operated against them.

As a result of meeting this courageous Christian white man, I entered the Mission and placed myself under Dr. Babbitt, that he might prepare me for some future usefulness among my people in the South. For eighteen months we lived together in the Mission, often occupying the same room. He was pleased to have someone to whom he could tell his plans and hopes in the future of the coloured race, for he was the most sanguine at all times. Nothing daunted his courage. It was in his Mission and under Dr. Babbitt that I learned the essential lesson of endeavouring to stand for right, regardless of what consequences might follow.

It was from frequent counsel with that dear good man, and the practical efforts which he put forth in his mission, for the true elevation of the coloured population, that I gleaned a pretty clear idea in the early stages of my efforts for an education, as to the real condition of my race, which has led me to make this vast and intricate problem the one study of my life.

After the death of Dr. Babbitt, I left the South and went North, where educational advantages are far better, and where I have been blessed to meet Americans who have encouraged and assisted me in my struggles for an education.

From personal experience and observation in the States in general and in the South in particular, I am frank to say that emancipation has not made the coloured race a free people in the U.S.A.

'The Convict Lease System' so prevalent in the Southern States is a true relic and consequence of the old system of slavery with ten times its severity. I shall devote a chapter in explaining the reasons for the existence of such an institution and show how human beings are treated under it.

I trust that whoever may chance to see this pamphlet will read the chapter on the farming-out of prisoners in the South with particular care. In it I purpose to show how this institution operates upon the coloured race with particular demoralizing affects. It merits special attention.

CHAPTER II. SLAVERY IN THE COLONIES.

The history of man is both peculiar and hard to understand. In the history of the early settlers in America, we read that: 'All the Colonists professed to come to the New World and spread the Gospel.'

Fortunately, perhaps, the word Christianity was left out, and so the word Gospel may be made to mean almost any other propaganda.

It certainly must be understood to mean something different from the reading in the good BOOK: 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you.'⁶ Instead of promoting the welfare of man and doing that which would advance society, the early settlers in the New World antagonised each others' interests in the most shocking manner. In New England religious tolerance was the burning question.

Each religious society or denomination claimed to have the only right method of serving God, and so trouble among the settlers continued for a long while.

According to history the settlers in the Colonies of Virginia and the Carolinas were a totally different class of people. They were a pleasure-seeking people, who possessed some wealth, though, perhaps, not enough to rank with the best society people in England. Consequently, they went West, where they might form their own society and enjoy pleasure and an easy time and quiet life. They had no religious grievances whatever; the Church of England was their Church, and they gloried in its doctrine and creed; their particular desire was to have others to wait on them and do their biddings, and that they were determined to have. They accordingly introduced slavery into the Southern Colonies, by making slaves of white convicts from English prisons, who, by the way, did not make good servants.

In 1619,⁷ one year before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, a Dutch trading vessel anchored at Jamestown, Virginia, and exchanged fourteen good-natured and obedient Africans for food and supplies; thus, African slavery was first introduced into American life. Now, the pleasure-seeking settlers were elated, they had someone to wait upon them, and till their tobacco farms without a single grumble. They could hunt, fish, sleep, and enjoy all the pleasures that their imagination had led them to believe they would find in the New World.

The African was quite unlike the white slaves had been; he did not object to menial servitude, neither did he envy his master that peculiar pleasure and easy life which he so much desired.

The good-natured African accepted his lot willingly, and went about his task as though he had been born to serve others. He was thus doomed to an awful fate from his very earliest experience in the New World, from which he is still suffering.

FOUNDATION STONE OF THE SOUTHERN COLONIES.

The quickness and readiness of the African to submit himself to the dictate of the white man, and the peculiar ability which he displayed in performing whatever task that was assigned to him, soon caused African slavery to become the very corner stone of the Southern Colonies, which in the outset was destined to ultimately ruin that section of the New World. The system of slavery became so thoroughly ingratiated into the entire structure of Southern life that even ministers of the Gospel did not scruple at accepting human beings in payment for ministerial duties performed.

For two and a-half centuries, African slavery was the staple commodity of the South, and entered into every phase of life there. Religiously, socially, politically and educationally, the minds of the whites became so thoroughly warped by the institution of human slavery, and men became so sordid after this world's goods, that they willingly sacrificed their own lives and even ventured to see the nation totally annihilated rather than relinquish – what was to them their lawful and rightful claim to the free services of the blacks.

That fact needs no further comment than the events of the Civil War, with their deplorable results to the entire American Nation, which have since been followed by the monstrous treatment which the blacks have, and are still receiving at the hands of the whites. As to the usefulness of the blacks in the States, I shall venture to make no further mention than that the white man's grim desire to hold on to them adequately explains the case. In a following chapter I shall enter slightly into the details of 'the Convict Lease System' of the Southern States, which is a curse and shame to the people of the U.S.A. This system clearly shows that slavery still exists in America.

CHAPTER III. A GENERATION OF STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

It is thirty-three years since the edict went forth that four millions of slaves in the United States of America had gained their freedom as a result of that fierce contest in which the Americans were engaged for four of the most important years they had or have ever witnessed.

The history of the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 is still of paramount interest and points out a peculiar fact concerning the people of the United States. In all matters that relate to the welfare of the whole country – save the momentous race problem within the States – the nation has always maintained perfect unity when the final crisis came.

It was absolutely true before the Civil War and it has been none the less true since.

But about this intricate 'Colour' problem the question is to-day as it has always been – What will the nation do? To many the question is an unimportant one. People prefer to explain away matters by saying the coloured people in the States have been freed and now it rests with them to advance, stand still, or go backward.

I admit that any people who have a fair show in the race of life, and fail to make the most of it, deserve but little consideration. But the question I am discussing is, that the coloured population in the States are not a free people, and do not enjoy the

same privileges as they would, if they possessed no more intelligence and wealth than they do, but belonged to a different race.

The emancipation proclamation did declare freedom for the race, but that is the one thing coveted as much today as it was at the close of the war.

A manifesto is one thing, but a practical carrying out of it, is entirely another. It is contrary to facts that occur daily in America, to say that, because the civil war was fought, and the slave-holders were defeated; the coloured people enjoy full freedom in the U.S.A.

Actual slavery, of course, has been abolished, and in a number of the ex-Slave states – a school-house or a church now occupies the spot where the slave mart once stood. That in itself speaks well for the progress of the country in a single generation, and is much to be proud of. Moreover, in many instances the coloured people have not only astonished the American people, but wherever their strides in education, morality and other advancements have been made known, people have been lost in wonder, and think of what the race has accomplished in so short a time, considering their disadvantages and the obstacles against which they have had to fight.

Somehow, many people profess to believe that the main solution of the new problem in the States is to be found in the education of the blacks alone; which is by no means true.

However, the tonic of education is good, and works with telling effects upon my people when rightly applied.

The illiteracy of the coloured race does stand in the way, and must be removed before the much desired development will or can be realised. But we must also admit, that the prime factor in the solution of social difficulties is common sense and its right use, which must be supplemented by a form of modern education for both races in the South. I am inclined to think that the whites had better be looked after first.

By which I mean, the whites need to understand the true relation which law bears to society, and that they cannot continue to outrage and degrade the coloured race without seriously affecting their own moral standing; a thing that they have never learned. Once the people of the South learn that very important fact, we shall see a change for the better.

HAS THE RACE DESERVED FREEDOM.

In the pure light of fairness and reason the question needs no further answer than that exhibited in the history of the race since emancipation; not only has the race, as a whole deserved freedom, but I hold that, if the word magnanimity means anything, the coloured people in America, have proved themselves more than magnanimous during this first generation of freedom.

Webster⁸ says magnanimity is ‘Greatness of mind that elevates, or dignity of soul which encounters danger and trouble with tranquility and firmness; which raises the possessor above revenge, and makes him delight in acts of benevolence; which makes him disdain injustice and meanness, and prompts to sacrifice at personal loss, interest, and safety for the accomplishment of useful and noble objects.’⁹

I offer no words of praise for my people when I say they have done more than is mentioned in the above quotation. Where does history show a single example of a people, who, when outraged as the coloured have been since emancipation, have

acted so calmly and displayed so much firmness of character? I venture to say, such a history cannot be found.

In the midst of all their troubles, my people have never been INCENDIARIES, ANARCHISTS, and other outlaws. Neither have they sought to revenge the whites for shooting them down like beasts, and hunting and gunning them to death in various ways as if they were ferocious animals. On the contrary, they have remained true and steadfast to the country and the nation, when to have played traitors would have caused the American people great loss of life and property in time of the most serious wars. At the close of the Civil War, when freedom was announced to the coloured people, instead of attempting acts of violence upon the whites, for injustice which they (the coloured people) had suffered, they received it with that grace and peculiar spirit of mind which characterised the Saviour of the world when He said: 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'¹⁰

Following emancipation, the right of franchise was conferred upon the freedmen, and some of them became lawmakers in the Southern States. Whatever may be said against 'the NEGRO GOVERNMENT' during that period, this can be said to its credit. The foundation for free government was laid, and the free school system established, which marked the dawn of a new era in the South, and made it possible for the poor whites, as well as the blacks, to receive an education. Before the Civil War the condition of the poor whites was but little better than that of the slaves.

Ever since the blacks were in power the poor whites have had a showing before the law, all of which goes to show that the coloured people have merited their freedom which the whites continue to withhold from them. To-day the coloured schools, churches, and all institutions for the improvement of mind and morals are open to all comers, and the whites are made the most welcome. The coloured people have never drawn and do not now draw the 'colour' line against the whites, thus showing that they are freer and much more Christianlike than their white brethren.

CHAPTER IV. A BARBAROUS SYSTEM. THE FARMING OUT OF PRISONERS.

The Emancipation Proclamation¹¹ issued by President Abraham Lincoln, ¹² January 1st, 1863, abolishing slavery in all parts of the U.S.A., and General Lee's¹³ surrender of arms to General Grant, ¹⁴ April 9th, 1865,¹⁵ which marked the downfall of the Southern Confederacy, were supposed to remove slavery from American soil. How far this is actually true, is seen in the management of prisoners in the South at the present time.

This infamous institution can only be briefly outlined in such a slender volume as this. To enter into full details of this inhuman method and to treat the subject exhaustively, would require several carefully prepared and well written volumes.

Prior to the close of the Civil War in America, no one realised the possibility of a *system* – other than slavery – by which the coloured population in the South might be held under restraint. For two hundred and fifty years the blacks were the property of the whites, who had absolute sway over them. In those days the imprisonment of a slave meant financial loss to slaveholders which they would not sustain.

For disobedience and trivial offences, the 'cat' was accordingly brought into play and the slaves received a sound thrashing for any misdemeanour. Moreover, slaves

were not amenable to the law for petty larceny, with which thousands of freedmen have been charged during the past thirty-three years, and for which they have paid, and are still paying, long and hard sentences on ‘The Convict Lease System’ under men who know no mercy for the unfortunate.

THE SYSTEM INAUGURATED.

The Lease System of managing State convicts, was instituted in the South, soon after the right of franchise had been conferred upon the freedmen – a right which professed to make them the equal of the whites before the law. In 1866 the Federal Government passed ‘The Civil Rights Bill,’¹⁶ placing the ballot in the hand of the coloured man – as a weapon of defence – that he might protect himself against the intrigues of men, who had sacrificed life-blood and money to keep him in fetters. Ex-slave-holders took no notice of any measure that said the rights and privileges of the coloured race should be respected by the whites. In 1869 the South adopted the deplorable and disgraceful practice of convicting thousands of blacks on the most flimsy charges, and farming them out to the highest bidders for human flesh; a system which is entirely contrary to the spirit and policy of the Civil War.

It would not be altogether true to say that prejudice of the whites against the blacks is the sole cause for the existence of such an institution, which is a disgrace to the South, and gives the lie to the boast of American free institutions; the reason for this iniquitous lease system is revealed in the following clause, which was introduced into the legislation of the South.

‘A fixed revenue is assured to the State under the lease plan, as against an annual outlay under State management.’

The result of this abominable condition of things is that the penitentiary that yields the largest amount of money to the State treasury annually is considered to be the best managed institution of its kind, regardless of the moral or physical effect on the prisoners. Another reason that leads the South to use prisoners for a financial profit, is that the whites have been long schooled in the idea that the blacks must be used by them and for their personal benefit. The downfall of the old *régime* of slavery by no means eradicated that idea. The cruelty of wringing profits from the sweat and muscles of the coloured race, as slaves, was abolished, but it is still carried on in disguise by sending them to prison, which is done in the South on the slightest provocation.

THE CONTRACT SYSTEM AND THE LEASE SYSTEM.

Some States in the Union have what is called the Contract System of managing State convicts. Under this system convicts are for the most part worked within the prison walls, and are directly under the control and in the charge of State officials. If they are ever worked beyond the walls of the prison, they are always in the custody of State officials and guards, subject to regular State inspection. States that adopt the CONTRACT SYSTEM provide prisoners with good clothes, shoes, and a doctor when ill, and in every case religious and moral instruction is provided, a prison chaplain being furnished and paid by the State. In such cases and under such management

extreme abuse is prevented. Nowhere in the Union, save in the Southern States, are men, women and young criminals kept in daily association and at night herded in small bands to sleep on the bare ground like the cattle of the fields and the beasts of the forest. It is difficult to adequately explain the CONVICT LEASE SYSTEM of the South, as it varies according to the custom of the different States. Some States lease the whole of their penitentiary convicts to lessees for terms ranging from five to twenty years for a monetary consideration.

Thus delegating the responsibility of the State to men whose only object is to wring all they can out of the poor victims at any cost. In hundreds of cases the convicts are absolutely worked to death.

The lessees have power to work the prisoners where and how they desire, and also to administer such punishment as they see fit. They have the option of sub-leasing prisoners to others. The hardships of the convicts are thus increased in proportion to the increased profits they have to earn for their semi-official task-masters.

Under this iniquitous system there are no State officials, and hence no inspection is made from one year to another. Whatever suffering the prisoners endure, no one but God and themselves ever know. In some States, there are three classes of prisoners, divided in the following manner:

- (1) 'The felony convicts sentenced to the penitentiaries and confined under the State Lease System, and regularly inspected by the State Penitentiary Department.
- (2) 'Misdemeanour or county (such as insulting (?) a white man, for example, refusing to travel in a 'Jim-Crow' or special car for the coloured people), convicts employed on public works, either by the county in which they were convicted, or one county may lease prisoners to another county.' In such cases the convicts are subject to no State inspection, nor are they in the custody of State officials. Any county may convict and lease out as many persons as it likes.
- (3) 'Misdemeanour or county convicts, leased by the county authorities to private individuals,' which is a direct violation of the State law, but the offenders are white men, and who is to prosecute them? Though they make the law they are in some instances the first to break it. Particularly is this the case in Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, and most of the Southern States.'

Unfortunately no out-side person is allowed to know what goes on within the penitentiary. In 1879 the Georgia Legislature leased the first class convicts, for a term of twenty years, to Convict Lease Camps, which lease does not expire till April, 1899. Between 2,000 and 3,000 prisoners are employed in these camps. To show the rate at which criminals are manufactured for the market in the South, the first year Georgia enacted the method of leasing out convicts for State profit, 350 persons were convicted, within two years the number had doubled. There were fifteen coloured to one white prisoner, though in that State the white population far outnumbers the coloured people. But, of course, the whites do not commit crime! only the miserable coloured people are *bad*! Similar conditions obtain in other Southern States, for Georgia is by no means the only sinner. The South Carolina prison records show the proportion of coloured persons sentenced to the whole coloured population is one to every 1,488; that of the white population is only one to every 15,644.

Such is a mere suggestion of how justice is measured out in Southern Courts. In following chapters I shall explain that fact more in detail.

HOW PRISONERS ARE TREATED.

The thousands of unfortunate victims to Southern avarice, who are convicted and hired out annually to the highest bidders, work on large cotton, corn and wheat farms; other convicts are worked in turpentine distilleries, saw-mills, brick-yards, phosphate mines, coal and iron mines, making railroads and doing all and every kind of public work, even to cleaning the streets of Southern cities. In some States one man has an absolute monopoly of this human traffic, and all the convicts whom he does not work himself are sub-leased by him to other employers, who may desire cheap labour.

In many of the camps, women and boys and girls of tender years undergoing punishment for *the first offence*, work in the ditches, side by side with men hardened to crime and all occupy the same sleeping quarters at night. Instances are known where women are compelled to wear men's clothes, in order to disguise this Southern barbarism. Convicts are marched daily through the principal streets of Southern cities, to and from their work under a guard of men carrying Winchester rifles. In some cases bloodhounds are kept for the capture of escaping convicts. It is a frequent sight to see anywhere from fifty to two hundred and fifty convicts chained together, marching to and from work. After a hard day's labour, often from sixteen to twenty hours in duration – the wretched victims are driven to the yards of the stockades, to find nothing to eat prepared and no fire to dry their clothes when wet. Each prisoner is given rations which he must cook as best he or she can on little fires on the ground, with the ball and chain about their limbs. The food consists of corn-bread and fat bacon. Sometimes, the convicts are given chunks of raw beef and horseflesh, which they must cook themselves or eat it raw. In some camps convicts are obliged to eat rotten food, and of that, even, they do not get enough. In some county camps sixty and more convicts – men, women, and children – sleep in rooms eighteen feet square and seven feet from floor to ceiling, without windows and adequate means of ventilation. Most of the camps have neither bunks nor mattresses, and the convicts are obliged to sleep on the bare ground.

Many lessees fail to provide the prisoners with clothes and shoes and never give them fires or heat of any kind in winter. Convicts frequently wear their clothes till they drop off of them.

In some camps convicts are whipped with a leather strap, and sometimes they are nearly strangled with cold water. Women and girls are treated in the same manner as the men and boys. All convicts are punished in the presence of each other. They are whipped over the shoulders and back, getting from fifteen to fifty lashes, or as many as the white 'bosses' choose to give them. Naked females are whipped in the presence of men and boys.

In Wilkes County, Georgia, an old coloured man was whipped so savagely last year that he died from it. Exhausted from the loss of blood, he fell upon the ground and said, 'Boss, is you going to kill me?' 'Yes,' said the 'white boss.' The poor old man begged to be killed at once. After beating his victim almost to death, the 'white boss' chained him up to a tree, where death came and freed him from his agonies.

In the same State and county, a young girl was made to put on men's clothes and dig ditches side by side with the men convicts. For failing to comply with the requests of 'white bosses' she was beaten on her bare back in presence of the men convicts. The actual treatment of female convicts in mining camps in the South is so horrible, revolting and inhuman as to be beyond putting in *print*. As a result of the commingling of men and women in the camps, hundreds of children have been born and brought up and schooled in the grossest crimes. The sanitary condition in the camps is vile – dirt and vermin abounding. Many of the convicts never wear the regular prison uniform, but are made to use the clothes which they were wearing when convicted. The death rate in the camps is enormous – one out of every four prisoners dies from punishment and ill-treatment. Even when sick no doctor is summoned. As for religious or moral instruction, that counts for absolutely nothing; convicts frequently have to work on Sundays. Boys and girls of tender years are arrested on the most frivolous charges, and sold into bondage for ten, fifteen, and even twenty years. After long association with hardened criminals – if they live to come out – they are much worse than when they went in.

Once poor boys fall in the South there is no hand of mercy extended to them, nor is any Christian effort made to restore them to right course of living. On the contrary, these poor unfortunate little victims of childish habits are ushered off to prison, and placed on public works with grown convicts in the financial interests of individuals, and a source of profit to the States. It is intensely pathetic to hear an ex-convict relate the tortures inflicted upon prisoners in the mining camps. The worn expression upon the face of an ex-convict exemplifies the horrid treatment and still harsher punishment meted out to prisoners in mining camps. It may seem incredible that such an inhuman institution as the Convict Lease System of the Southern States should be allowed to exist in a free country like the U.S.A.; but these facts – and they are facts – reveal the actual condition of affairs in the country which so recently sent its soldiers into Cuba,¹⁷ and embarked on a costly war in the cause of humanity and freedom.

A MONEY-MAKING SYSTEM.

The farming out of prisoners in the South is purely a money-making institution, yet it is supported by executives of States and by the local and national law-makers. United States senators, and members in the United States Congress from the South, support this *baneful system*, and grow rich from the sweat and muscles of the unfortunate negro convicts. Some States reap an annual income of from \$21,000, \$100,000 to as much as \$250,000 per annum.

Of course, the States receive these sums after the lessees, sub-lessees, and all the other convict-sweaters' have been satisfied with huge profits. An able-bodied convict is worth \$70 per year to work on a farm in Georgia, and for making railroads, from \$150 to \$180. A lessee in Georgia, B. G. Lockett, has produced as many as 1,200 bales of cotton, with 100 convicts, in one year, besides enough corn, peas, potatoes, &c., to support them.

Mr. Lockett has cleared as much as \$25,000 to \$30,000 per annum from convict labour. Some men have grown enormously rich by leasing prisoners in the Southern States, and have built up a tremendous political influence through the same.

The State of Georgia has not realised as much gain by leasing convicts as some other States, the reason being that State officials, from the Governor down, have been the principal lessees, and have looked after their own interest first.

In 1874, his excellency the Governor of Georgia¹⁸ submitted his message to the Legislature, from which I take the following extract:

‘The number of convicts is increased to 664; 90 are white, 574 are coloured; 1 white, 19 coloured women. I would suggest a longer lease term than two years. The profitable employment of so large a force would involve a heavy outlay on the part of the contractors. Of the convicts in the penitentiary, five to one are coloured persons, most, if not all, of whom, by reason of their ignorance and former habits of life, can never be profitably employed in any of the mechanical arts.’¹⁹

This is what the Governor of Georgia called a reform of the prison system. Through his recommendation the lease in that State was extended from two to twenty years.

I have penitentiary reports from the following States, which show amounts each received last year from this sale of human flesh. I find that Florida, made \$21,000, Texas, \$100,000, Tennessee, \$101,000. The same or even worse may be true of other Southern States if reports could be had, which are hard to get, as lessees are chary about sending reports outside of the States. I might mention that the only expense the States are put to is the cost of arresting and convicting persons for sale.

HOW CONVICTS ARE LEASED

Due advertisements are made through the newspapers ‘That on a certain day so many able-bodied convicts will be leased to the highest bidder desiring their labour.’

Prisoners are driven to a place in each State known as the stockade, and are sold from the public auction block, just as slaves were in ante-bellum days. The lessees have carefully prepared lists showing the age, physical condition, and temper of each man. Those desiring to purchase the labour of these miserable victims go from one to another, punching, prodding, and pinching them to judge the condition of their muscles. Convicts are made to run, jump, and lift heavy weights, and do other things to show their fitness for work. Great crowds of people are attracted to these degrading scenes, to see human beings sold into bondage more horrible than the worse form of the old *régime* of slavery.

On January 4th 1898,²⁰ the general drawing took place at Albion, Florida, when more than 800 human beings were sold into slavery. In that State there were 91 white men, 1 white woman, 21 coloured women, and 33 coloured boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen years. The general attitude in which the lessees regard the convicts is shown in a conversation which took place at the auction.

‘How long are you here for?’ asked a captain of a strong coloured convict charged with a trifling crime. ‘Six months!’ said the convict.

‘Six months!’ snarled the captain. ‘The judge who sentenced you ought to be turned off the bench. You ought to have had five years at least. What does a judge mean by sending a big, fat fellow like you here for *only* six months.’

The captain passed on to a puny little white man possessed of little strength and flesh, and asked him, 'How much did you get?' 'Five years,' was the reply. 'Five years?' said the captain. 'Five years; why you won't be able to earn your cornbread, let alone your bacon. The judge that gave you five years is no more fit for his place than you are for work. It's an outrage.'

Could anything be more outrageous than such action on the part of the captain and his co-workers?

The crime which a man commits has no consideration with the lessees, and but little more with the officials of the law (?). They are more concerned about his ability to work. Able-bodied coloured men go to prison in the South, and after serving for a time in phosphate mines they come out physical wrecks.

George Kennan,²¹ the well-known Siberian explorer, talking on the horrible Convict Lease System in the Southern States of America, while in Boston, February 12th, 1898, said:

'I suppose our good Americans would be incredible, would say I was a liar if I should say to them that right down in some of our Southern States I have seen some terrible sights. I have seen a string of twenty-five convicts – old, bent men and young boys – almost bound together by iron chains, a heavy iron ring around the neck of each. I have seen many things which have convinced me of the evils of the system of leasing out convicts to cruel and unscrupulous employers, and I think that system should be abolished. I saw some pretty bad sights in Siberia, but I am serious when I declare that I have seen worse sights in the South, and in this there is abundant food for reflection for the moralists and reformers of this country.'²²

I quote Mr. Kennan with perfect freedom, to show that I am not spasmodic nor eccentric in my endeavour to create some amount of interest in the abolition of an institution that is a sheer disgrace to modern civilisation. I must add that every public prisoner reformer in the U.S.A. knows about this damnable system and its particular baneful affects on the coloured race; but they treat it in the same apathetic manner as the system of slavery was treated. To interfere would insult the Southern whites, whose feelings deserve more consideration than humanity. But, as the world knows, the American nation has just waged a humanitarian war. Spanish mis-rule in Cuba and elsewhere was, without doubt, a disgrace to the civilisation of the present century, but if it exceeded the atrocities which the whites have heaped upon the blacks in the South ever since the Civil War, I am sure it would require a lightning calculator to discover it.

What I say about the convict lease system in the South is no dream – I have seen the working of that modern form of slavery with my own eyes.

So long as I know my right hand from my left, and God gives me the strength of voice, and I preserve the use of my pen, I shall speak out against this and other evils which are eating the life and manhood out of my race in the States; and shall most gladly welcome the advice and any assistance which those who are interested in the welfare of a portion of God's children may be moved to give. Not for my sake, not for the sake of the African race, because it is black – but for God and humanity's sake, let practical Christians help to wipe out this national stain and withering curse – 'The Convict Lease System' in the Southern States of U.S.A.

THE SOUTH'S APOLOGY FOR THE LEASE SYSTEM.

Poverty of the States at the close of the Civil War was the excuse urged for enacting the infamous method of leasing convicts. The prison buildings having been destroyed during the war, the people claimed to be too poor to rebuild immediately, and hence the lease system was adopted. *What is the remedy?* Regulated penitentiaries should take the place of the lease system for grown prisoners, and reformatory schools ought to be established for juvenile offenders. There is plenty of idle land in the South, so that each State could have a sort of 'Penal Colony,' where the convicts would be under the direct guardianship of the State officials, and at the same time large farms could be cultivated, and the prisoners made to produce more than enough to keep them. By all means should the sexes be separated, and thus save the South from an outrage which it has practiced on the coloured race during this first generation of struggle for life.

CHAPTER V. THE AMERICAN CASTE SYSTEM.

For a *whole* generation, Afro-Americans have had freedom (?), education, and the Christian religion on their side. Some have distinguished themselves by their extraordinary cleverness in the different professions of learning, some in politics, while others have honoured the nation – of which they are such a distinct part – in offices of trust in the Federal Government. Now the question we are asking is, Has this caused prejudice to die out, and if so, how is that seen? To be more definite, What is the Southern attitude toward the educated negro as compared to the attitude of the master toward the slave under the old *régime*? That is the main question to look at in order to understand whether or not emancipation of the slaves has proved that the coloured race in America are really a free people.

Under the old *régime* slaves were not allowed to go from one farm to the other without a pass bearing the master's signature. They were not allowed to ride in the railway carriages with the whites, save as body-servants.

In that capacity they rode not only in the same carriage, but shared the same seat with master or mistress as the case happened to be. The freedman can do so much to-day, but no more.

No white lady or gentleman, in the South, at the present time, is too *delicate* to ride in the same railway carriage with coloured servants, whether their own or some other white person's. Indeed, the whites will gladly share seats with the coloured lady (?) or gentleman (?) only the coloured people *must* be in the capacity of menials.

But someone will ask how far is such a practice carried and to what places does it apply? The answer is, such a practice obtains throughout the South, and is carried as far as the *whims* of the whites lead them to carry it. It applies to every public place and privilege. First of all, the *White Churches*, then on down to public libraries, schools, lecture-halls, steamer landings, railway platforms, theatres, *Young Men's Christian Associations*, Young People's Society of Christian Endeavourers; everything is on fire with racial distinctions. State universities and public libraries, which

are supported by taxation on white and black alike, close their doors in the face of coloured applicants. Are the doors closed on all coloured applicants? Oh! no. Only on those posing as men and women, and seeking a fair change²³ and decent treatment. In all these places coloured servants are employed. The bug-bear that causes so much race friction in the South, is found only in cases where the coloured people try to elevate themselves and become a recognised people.

How does the Christian Church draw the 'colour' line? During slavery, slaves were assigned to seats in the gallery or behind the organ. Today we find the Christian Churches in the South, rejecting any person or persons with African blood in their veins – no matter how little, or treating educated freedmen, identically the same as slaves were treated. Coloured people must accept seats behind the organ, or go into the gallery and occupy seats set apart for coloured people exclusively.

How can public libraries, which are furnished with books from taxation on both races alike, refuse Afro-Americans the use of reading-rooms, and not even allow them such civil advantages and privileges, as taking books home to read? They pay for these things and should have them. The answer is simple enough. The plain fact: Southern customs operate in that direction, and hence no educated Afro-American lady or gentleman is allowed the same privilege as the whites enjoy. Money cannot buy it, common sense cannot urge it, and reason never gets a hearing.

Everything that has the slightest appearance of elevating Afro-Americans to the position of man and womanhood, is disdained by Southern whites. It is not the appearance of coloured people in public places that cause disturbance. On the contrary, coloured servants in white families can draw books from public libraries, by taking a card bearing the name of the person desiring the book. A mere sacrifice of one's civil rights, buys what nothing else in the world will in the South.

But about travelling on the railway, surely that is different? Let us see! Under the old *régime*, the whites had the right to say, when, where and how slaves should travel. Under the new order of things freedmen travel from one State of the Union to the other. But sentiment of the whites forces them into special cars in the South called 'JIM CROW'S CARS,'²⁴ with an inscription over the door, 'FOR COLOURED PEOPLE ONLY.' 'Jim Crows' are dirty, miserable carriages, too intolerable for decent people of any race to enter, and so are the filthy *waiting rooms*, which are rarely swept. Still, Afro-Americans sit in the waiting-rooms and ride in the 'Jim Crows,' and pay railway companies as much for their tickets as other passengers pay for first-class accommodation. They do not ask for such treatment, but are forced by Southern laws to accept it. I am not referring to the masses of coloured people who till the farms in the South; they are barely removed from the old condition of slavery, but are patiently and slowly endeavouring to work out their destiny through fear and trembling, many having long since accepted their condition as being inevitable. But I refer to the educated young men and women who have graduated from institutions of higher learning, North and South, during this first generation of emancipation.

In all sincerity, I wonder if right-minded people really believe that emancipation of the slaves has made the coloured people in the United States of America a free people? That's the question that troubles me, I am seeking light and truth. That's all. If I go into an apothecary shop and pay a druggist for a bottle of *Bay Rum*, I want the bottle labelled *Bay Rum*. When I get to my room I want to find that the bottle contains *Bay Rum*. Not water. If the bottle has a label on it stating that it contains a

certain fluid, then let us have that fluid; not some other. The American nation declared freedom for the coloured race, and so I think we should have it absolutely; not half or one-third; but as much as any citizen in the Republic. The American nation is humane and stopped Spanish misrule, and I hope that good spirit will continue until Southern misrule at home has been put down. Humanity *is* humanity the world over.

CHAPTER VI. SOUTHERN JUSTICE.

The best test of the moral status of any community is to learn the attitude that inhabitants of it take on questions of law and order. If law-makers in any section seek to bring about wholesome conditions by endeavouring to suppress disorder and lawlessness the hand of justice generally reveals itself in some form. The full aim may not be accomplished, but, nevertheless, it is invariably true that those who oppose wrong-doing will, in some measure, make themselves heard, and they will become known. What we are anxious to know is, who are the supporters and who are the transgressors of the law in the Southern States? We frequently hear it said that a more amicable relation is being brought about between the better classes of the white and coloured races, and that the constant outrages are perpetrated by Hooligans and ruffians, who take the law into their own hands, while the better class oppose this lawlessness. But do we really find the heads of States, newspaper editors, ministers of the ‘Gospel,’ and men who mould public opinion and train young minds for future responsibility, taking their stand against the outrages perpetrated in the name of ‘Judge Lynch’? I shall devote this chapter to extracts from editorials in leading journals in the South, and from reports of law courts, &c., to show some views men in high official positions hold and promulgate on questions of law breaking.

NEWSPAPER DEFENCES OF LYNCHING

Let us commence by quoting from an editorial which appeared in the *Daily Commercial* under date of July 23rd, 1897, in defence of free and unlimited lynching. By the way, the *Daily Commercial* is supposed to voice the feelings of the best people in Atlanta, Georgia, and its editor the Hon. Benjamin M. Blackburn, was a candidate for the Japanese Mission under ex-President Cleveland’s²⁵ administration.

Under the heading of

‘LET GOD BE PRAISED,’

the *Commercial* gave its approval of lynching in these unequivocal terms: –

‘The good work seems to grow upon the cowardly crest of press denunciation. Another lynching in Georgia to-day, making two affairs of this kind this week. Georgians, continue to do your duty by your home. Ignore what a hypocritical democratic press says of you. Defy the spirit that expects protection from a Republican Administration. Laugh at the imbecile sternness of your courts. Shout defiance at the glitter of bayonets that would stab you in the hands of cowards. Pop your fingers at the puerile proclamation that put detectives at

your heels. Do your work in the broad sunlight of God's glorious daytime, and hang, yes, burn every brute who destroys your home. And every time you do it, get on your knees and pray that God may give you renewed strength and courage. Remember that home is dearer, and that one innocent child or woman is worth more than all the governors and judges in Christendom.'

Northern newspapers criticised Editor Blackburn's position, and said the better class of white people in Georgia were opposed to lynching; but the editor replied as follows: –

'The people of the North are bigger fools than we take them to be if they accept as a correct reflection of public sentiment in the South the professions of certain papers on the lynching question. The people of Georgia favour lynching. Those who contend that lynching is confined to the lawless element are a lot of infernal liars, who take the people of the South for a lot of fools. We might as well be plain and honest about the matter. If their contentions are true that the people forming such mobs are lawless and unrepresentative, why is it that these men, or some of them, are not some things punished? The governor offers rewards, but the oldest inhabitant never heard of one being claimed or paid. In the case of Griffith's lynching there was the most perfect order, and it is a well recognised fact that in the crowd there were graduates of the State university and some of the best people in Georgia, all of whom would compare well with the civilisation of any country on the face of the globe. There is nobody to prosecute these men, for it is impossible to get a grand jury in Spalding county to indict them.'

The following is a news despatch from Walterboro', S.C., February 26th, 1897, which appeared in all the leading dailies in the country: –

'The trial of Dr. W.B. Ackerman, a white physician, and four associates, for whipping to death a coloured man and woman, for the alleged offence of stealing a Bible from a church, ended at midnight last night in a verdict of acquittal. A party of white men took Hannah Walker, Rosa Kearsse and her husband, Isam Kearsse, all coloured, from their homes in Broxton Bridge, on December 2nd last, tied them to the backs of their buggies, and dragged them some distance to a swamp. They stripped them and flogged them unmercifully with harness traces. Rosa Kearsse was left tied to a tree, but she got loose, and after finding part of her clothing, she returned to her home. The dead bodies of the other two victims were found in the swamp a day or two later, and the autopsy showed that they had died of the shock from their whipping. Considerable testimony was given by coloured men, who stated that they had identified one or more of the accused as having been in the party that carried the coloured people away, but the jury acquitted the defendants.'

The Hon. Charles J. Bonaparte, a prominent lawyer of Baltimore City, Md., lecturing in Boston, Mass., February 17th, 1898, on 'Civil and Religious Liberty,' made the following remarks: –

‘The genius of our common institutions is to let each citizen work out his own happiness with little help from the State. Lynching is an expression of the will of the people. It has serious drawbacks, but its advantages are underestimated. Few lynchings are unjust.’

Such are the words of an able advocate of the law in the City of Baltimore, Md.

Rev. J. B. Helwing, one of the leading preachers of Ohio, and who was the Prohibition candidate for Governor of Ohio a few years ago, was a spectator of the lynching of Mitchell, a coloured man, at Abana, Ohio, June, 1897. In giving his views on the lynching to the *New York World*, under the date of June 5th, 1897, he said among other things – none of which condemned mob violence: – ‘If that had been my wife or daughter, what course would I have pursued with regard to the criminal?’

THE LAW COURTS

The following is an extract from an Alabama judge’s address to coloured people at Birmingham, Alabama, July 27th 1897. Three coloured men had been arrested and brought before a special court to answer to the old charge – ‘An attack (?) on a reputable white woman.’ The men were arrested on mere suspicion, and the coloured people attended the trial in large crowds to see what would be done, as the whites talked of lynching the men. Judge Banks, in charging the grand jury, instructed it to find a true bill at once if there was the slightest evidence to warrant it. After addressing the jury, the judge, turning toward the coloured people in the court-room, said:

‘You negroes must go home and keep quiet. When your services are needed to protect the prisoners you will be sent for. Again I tell you, go home. This is a white man’s country and a white man’s court. You may as well know this, and keep in your place.’

Mrs. A. A. Smith, a coloured lady of education and refinement, was arrested at Atlanta, Georgia, February, 1897, for violating the separate car regulations of the South. She entered the main waiting-room at the railway station and took a seat to wait her train; whereupon a policeman ordered her out, and she refused to go. Two other policemen were called and carried Mrs. Smith to the police station and locked her in a cell. When the case was tried Mrs. Smith said she refused to go into ‘the COLOURED WAITING ROOM,’ because it was too dirty and because she paid first-class fare which entitled her to go in the main waiting-room. The *Atlanta Constitution* published the following report of the trial:

‘Well, I’ll tell you right now that you can’t come down here and kick up any such racket,’ said the Judge Calhoun with some feeling. ‘I don’t think that waiting-room was a whit too dirty for you – not a bit, and if you can’t stay in your place when you come here, I’ll make you do it. You may be allowed to take such liberties in the North, but you can’t do it here.’

'Lawyer Malone made a short speech for his client, stating, if he had thought she had come here to reform Southern customs he would not have taken the case, but he was satisfied she had not intentionally violated any law. Judge Calhoun took this view of it finally, and announced he would turn the woman loose.

'Well, Judge,' she said, 'will you please make them clean that waiting room?' 'No, I won't,' replied the Judge quickly, 'but, if you ever go back into the white people's room, I will clean you out mighty quick, and don't you forget it.'

Mrs. Smith was from the North and had paid full first-class fare for a ticket to travel through the South, hence she did not know that she was violating a State law. Her lawyer was a Southern man, in full sympathy with the separate car law, and only represented the woman's case for the money she paid him. Had Mrs. Smith been a poor woman, without money to pay a lawyer, she would have gone to jail and doubtless been farmed out to a convict lessee. I am sorry space will not permit me to mention more such cases of 'SOUTHERN JUSTICE,' but those which I have quoted are perfectly authentic and speak for themselves.

CHAPTER VII. LABOUR UNIONS AND THE NEGRO IN THE U.S.A.

The problem of economics is the one vital problem of the hour; from every quarter of the globe comes important news as to the great unrest of the working masses. That just measures be taken in order to settle the troubles between labour and capital is of paramount importance, and the right solution of this problem concerns all sorts and conditions of peoples. The problem of solving the evils which afflict the working man is destined to occupy the prior place upon the platform of all social and political reform questions of the forthcoming century, and there is no country in all Christendom where the question is likely to be handled with greater difficulty than in America. As a citizen of the United States, I am profoundly interested in the struggle between labour and capital, and desire to cast my sympathy with all who are struggling to improve the conditions of labour. But how can I agree with those who refuse to acknowledge a man, as a man and a brother, for no other reason than that he has a coloured skin? In the constitutions and bye-laws of all labour movements in America it is plainly stated that the FIRST QUALIFICATION necessary to become a member is to be white. They claim their object is to improve the condition of the labouring man, and the very first thing they do is to exclude a distinct class of labouring people, because God sent them into this world with dark faces.

The coloured race in America has never had a fair chance in the race of life, and no organisations in the United States practise unjust means of oppression against them more than the labour unions. Most of the work in America is controlled by labour unions. The labour unions say to the coloured worker, We won't have you, *because* you are 'a nigger.' Will not the British trade unionists appeal to their American brother trade unionists to cease to be unjust to us in this particular? It is bad enough to ride in 'Jim Crow' cars, to be ordered out of church, &c., but to be refused the right to qualify for honest toil is the worst injustice of all. Who can have

faith in people who cry ‘oppression,’ when they are oppressors and discriminate against a people because they are weak and cannot help themselves? What right have labour or any organisations to exclude coloured people who have as much right to live as those who have white faces?

The man with African blood in his veins must go without work and take his chances at stealing or starving. The labour movement is losing ground in America. Whenever a strike takes place in the Middle or Western States, Capitalists go South and hire coloured men for the same price as union men got before the strike.

Coloured men who take the places of union men never know about the trouble until they arrive at the place of work. The result is when union men attempt to prevent coloured labourers from taking their places, force is called into play, and the union men often get defeated. This is a clear case of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. Justice must reign ere the solution of all hard problems. The coloured man is in America to stay. Race prejudice cannot clear out 10,000,000 people. If the labour unions *will not* have the coloured worker *with* them on equal terms, they will *force* him to take sides against them. If so deplorable a condition comes to pass who will be to blame?

THE END.

In closing this pamphlet, I wish to state that in attempting to say something on the present condition of my people in the United States, I have taken the view of a reformer, and have mentioned only that which needs to be reformed. Since emancipation was proclaimed much good has been done for and by the coloured race in the States. But though freed, we are not yet a free people. Some of us who have had the priceless benefits of education must continue to work till the complete emancipation of the Afro-American race is a glorious reality. What the coloured race need in the United States more than anything else, to determine the future, is a fair show in the competitions of life. When they have had that, if they live well, and if they die equally well, the history of the past speaks well of the future.

Notes

1. This pamphlet is held in the General Reference Collection 8157.bbb.14, British Library, London, England. This work is held in numerous additional collections including the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, both in Scotland, and Trinity Library, Dublin, Ireland.
2. George Washington Cable, *The Negro Question* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), pp.67–68.
3. George Washington Cable (1844–1925) was a white New Orleans-born novelist, essayist, and short story writer.
4. Robert Burns wrote the poem, ‘A Man’s A Man for A’ That’ in 1795. The full text of the poem is available online at: <https://poets.org/poem/mans-man>
5. Robert Burns (1759–1796) was a white Scottish poet and songwriter.
6. Leviticus 19:18.
7. ‘The Africans who came to Virginia in 1619’ had been ‘taken from Angola in West Central Africa’ and ‘captured in a series of wars that was part of much broader Portuguese hostilities against the Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms, and other states’. For further

- information see 'The First Africans', available online: <https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans/>
8. Noah Webster (1758–1843) was a white US educational textbook author, lexicographer, and editor.
 9. He is quoting from Noah Webster's definition of 'magnanimity', as published on p.336 of the 1828 edition of his dictionary, available online at: <https://m.egw writings.org/en/book/1843.578093>
 10. Luke 23:34.
 11. President Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, ordering the freedom of enslaved people in all areas of the Confederacy that had not already been returned to federal control. Further information on the history and the full text of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is accessible at: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
 12. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
 13. Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) was a white Virginian-born enslaver and military commander of the Confederate States Army.
 14. Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885) was a white US Union Army General, Republican politician, statesman, and he was elected 18th President from 1869–1877.
 15. For further information on the US Confederate forces 'surrender of arms' see 'Lee Surrenders', available online at: <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/april-09/>
 16. The Civil Rights Acts of 1866 'declared all male persons born in the United States to be citizens, "without distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery of involuntary servitude."' Further information is available at: https://ballotpedia.org/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1866
 17. He is referring to the 1898 Spanish-American War, a 'conflict between the United States and Spain that ended Spanish colonial rule in the Americas and resulted in U.S. acquisition of territories in the western Pacific and Latin America.' See 'Spanish-American War', *Britannica*, available online at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Spanish-American-War> For a general history of the war, including a focus on the experience of African American military units, see Brad K. Berner, ed., *The Spanish-American War: A Documentary History with Commentaries* (Lanham MD: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014).
 18. James Milton Smith (1872–1877) was a white US Confederate Army veteran and Governor of Georgia between 1872–1877.
 19. He is quoting from 'the Governor's Message for the year 1874' published in 'The Convict System of Georgia' and which appeared in Loretta S. Metcalf, ed., *The Forum* (New York: The Forum Publishing Co., 1886), p.485.
 20. He is referring to the 'Great Annual Sale of Convict Labor' which took place in Albion, Florida: on this date 'Many Hundred Men, Women and Children Are Practically Sold Into Slavery'. See Anon., 'Great Annual Sale of Convict Labor', *The San Francisco Call*, no. 61, 30 January 1898, available online: <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC18980130.2.150.10&ce=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>
 21. George Kennan (1845–1924) was a white U.S. traveller and adventurer.
 22. Kennan's speech is printed in Theophilus E. Samuel Scholes, *Britain's Duty to Her Colonies and Subject Races* (London: E. Stock, 1899), p.310.
 23. This word is reproduced as per the original document. It may possibly be the case that Tobias intended the word to read 'chance' instead.
 24. 'Jim Crow' was originally a white racist fictional character created by white US performer, Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808–1860), in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the decades that followed and on through to the present day, the phrase 'Jim Crow' has become synonymous with white persecutory systems of legal racial segregation. Due

to white US systems of racist persecution and prejudicial exclusion, African American travellers were prohibited from using all methods of transportation apart from 'Jim Crow cars'.

25. This name is reproduced as per the original spelling. He is referring to Stephen Grover Cleveland (1837–1908), a white US Democratic politician who served a presidential term between 1893–1897.



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SE444

CORONATION EDITION.



Life in Slaveland,

BY

B. W. BROWN.



BURNLEY:

NUTTALL AND CO., LTD., PRINTERS, KING'S MILL

1902.

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Figure 50 Title page from Benjamin William Brown, *Life in Slaveland*. Burnley, Lancashire: Nuttall & Co., 1902. (University of Southampton.)

BENJAMIN WILLIAM BROWN

(1841–DATE UNKNOWN)

19 Benjamin William Brown, *Life in Slaveland*. Burnley, Lancashire:
Nuttall & Co., 1902.¹

Biographical History

See also 'Benjamin William Brown' in *Speeches*.

AN AFRICAN AMERICAN human rights campaigner, radical reformer, and social justice author, Benjamin William Brown first published his autobiography, *Life in Slaveland*, with Henry Hughes, in London in 1890. Here we publish an edition printed by Nuttall & Company, in Burnley, Lancashire, England, in 1902.

Brown's narrative begins with an opening 'address' in which he informs his readers of his early life of suffering lived in enslavement in Maryland in 1841. As he painfully summarises, 'I fought my way up from Maryland, where, with hundreds of other live stock', poignantly confiding, 'I have shivered and suffered with hunger and cold.' Living all his life with the traumatised and traumatising memories not only of his own experiences but of the experiences endured by 'hundreds of other live stock' who fought to survive their enslavement, he issues a powerful appeal to 'every man or woman' who 'struck a stroke in our late great struggle'. Writing at the outset of his narrative he informs these men and women who struck for freedom that they 'ought to read this of a slave man, and give thanks to God that, even by the bitter suffering, they have been permitted to do something to wipe such a disgrace and wrong from the earth'. Writing his autobiography in 1902 from the perspective of his new life not as an actual but as a former 'slave man', Brown gives 'thanks to God' that in remembering the 'disgrace and wrong' that was enslavement he is able to 'speak in the past tense'.

'My mother was born early in the last century, and lived with her parents in Central Africa, until the family was captured by slave hunters, and carried to South America', so Brown writes of his mother's ancestral origins. As a person who was originally born in 'Guinea, Central Africa', Brown's mother was forcibly kidnapped and transported to 'South America' with the horrifying result that she necessarily would have endured the atrocities and abuses of the Middle Passage. As Brown remembers, his mother experienced further atrocities on her arrival into the Americas when she 'was sold at the

auction block when she was 16 years of age'. While his Maryland-born father 'belonged to the Mia race' and was a "free-born" man, Brown testifies to the heartbreaking reality that he and all the members of his family lived lives of very real destitution, deprivation, and destruction. As he hard-hittingly testifies, 'We were only given enough to keep body and soul together.'

In the pages of *Life in Slaveland*, Brown does powerful justice to his own experiences of physical violence that resulted from his life-and-death protests against his mind-body-and-soul-destroying treatment at the hands of his white enslaver. As he recalls, 'The cook told master that I was complaining of not getting enough of food. So he came to me and said my sickness was all make-believe, and he would cane me. So he took a cow-hide and whipped me with it until the blood ran down to my heels.' Suffering terrible pain as a result of his white enslaver's act of horrifying violence, Brown reaches the home of his father 'in such a state of fear and exhaustion that I could not tell what had happened'. While his exposure to shock and trauma due to his harrowing experiences left Brown unable to process let alone remember what he had endured, he recalls, 'My poor mother soon knew what was the matter when she saw my back covered with blood.' Not only was it the case that Brown's mother experienced direct violence as committed against her own body, but she was a painful witness to the traumas that were brutally enacted against her son.

'I shall never forget the scene when I entered the slave-market', Brown writes in *Life in Slaveland* in which he provides an emotionally powerful and graphically upsetting first-hand account of his traumatising experience. 'There were old men and young men, there were women and children', he recalls, confirming, 'Some were there because their masters were drunkards and obliged to sell their slaves to get more money to buy drink. Some were there because their masters had died. Not a few, like myself, was there because they had tried to make their escape, but had been overtaken.' Writing of the traumatising separation of a 'slave mother' and her child at this 'slave-market', Brown relies on hard-hitting language to describe the terrible moment 'when the buyer raised his hand to tear the child from its mother's breast' when 'it clung round her neck convulsively' until 'plucked from her arms, still crying "mamma, mamma!"' At the same time that Brown recalls the enslaved child's powerful cry, so he also remembers, 'The mother could not help screaming out: "Farewell my child; if I never see you again, I will meet you in Heaven"', which meets with immediate terrible reprisals. As he writes, 'The brutal slave-dealer then struck her across the face, and sternly asked her what she was crying about.' Speaking as a former 'slave man' whose traumatising memories were still living realities in 1902, Brown readily admits, 'Though slavery has been abolished for many years now in that country, still when I get talking about these things I can almost hear the cries of the child, and see the silent tears of the mother, and feel the suppressed grief of her spirit.' Living with the 'cries of the child' and the 'silent tears of the mother', their 'suppressed grief' becomes Brown own and weighs down his 'spirit' as he gives full vent to his past and present suffering by crying out, 'Oh, slavery is a terrible thing!'

Finally, Brown succeeds in effecting his self-liberation from enslavement during the US Civil War. Among his many wartime experiences, he joins a regiment in which, as he remembers, 'I became a favourite with the soldiers by telling them funny stories during this period of inactivity.' During this period of his life, he relies on his skills as a

powerful storyteller not solely to tell ‘funny stories’ but to testify to his own emotions and experiences during his years of enslavement. As he recalls, ‘When off duty, a crowd of soldiers, with officers as well, who were interested in me, would gather round to hear me tell of what I had seen and felt.’ Eventually, Brown succeeds in becoming a member of the Union Army with the result that, ‘I was put on soldier’s pay – 13 dollars per month with rations and clothing.’ During these months, he experiences the tragedies of war first hand by working to ‘bury the dead’ as ‘the soldiers were dying – many every day – from chill and fever’. As a former ‘slave man’ and a war veteran, Brown experiences the atrocities and traumas not only of enslavement but of military conflict.

Living a life burdened with the personal tragedies he experienced and to which he bore painful witness as a ‘slave man’, Brown was all too powerfully aware that the injustices and inequalities facing the ‘sons of Africa’ living in the US in a post-war era were the direct result of the centuries of enslavement. ‘The difficulties of the situation in the South are manifestly due to slavery,’ he declares. He draws attention to the traumatising reality that ‘the inability of the coloured people to bear the expense of schools, either public or private, are all results of slavery, and stand like a wall in the way of educational progress’. Writing of the plight of the ‘colored people who now eagerly and with uplifted hands implore the nation for what light which education alone can give’, Brown is categorical in his conviction that it is only by gaining access to an education that all ‘colored people’ can become ‘American citizens’.

For Benjamin William Brown, as it was for his fellow Marylander, Frederick Douglass, ‘education . . . means emancipation.’²

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CORONATION EDITION

Life in Slaveland,

BY

B. W. BROWN.

BURNLEY:

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1902

ADDRESS.

I HAVE had as far to climb to get to the spot where the poorest free white boy is born, as that white boy has to climb to take rank with the kings and judges of the earth. I fought my way up from Maryland, where, with hundreds of other young live stock, I have shivered and suffered with hunger and cold. I have often aroused the cows up early in the morning from their place of rest, in order to warm my feet that had been bitten by frost, like a little dog, and was often glad to find a sunny spot in the woods to lie down and warm my limbs (thanks to God, I speak in the past tense). Every man who struck a stroke in our late great struggle, every man or woman who made a sacrifice for it, every one conscious of an inward bleeding and craving, that never will be healed or assuaged for what they have rendered up in this great anguish, ought to read this of a slave man, and give thanks to God that, even by the bitter suffering, they have been permitted to do something to wipe such a disgrace and wrong from the earth. The cruelty of many of my fellow-slaves around me, and the terrible reports of wrong and outrage which came to my ears, together with what I almost daily witnessed, led me, when yet but eight or nine years old, to wish I had never been born. I used to contrast my condition with the blackbirds and crows, in whose wild and sweet songs I fancied them so happy. Their appearance of joy only deepened the

shades of my sorrow. There are thoughtful days in the lives of children, at least there were in mine. I was just as well aware of the unjust, unnatural, or to authorities, it was enough to accept God as a Father, to regard slavery as a crime.³

B. W. BROWN.

LIFE IN SLAVELAND

PARENTAGE

My father's ancestors belonged to a tribe called 'Toma Harekes,' or Red Indians, who inhabited an island called Kent Island, Queen Anne's County, until the white man came and drove them off to an adjacent peninsula. But there were some who could not make their escape, and were obliged to hide themselves in the swamps, where they lived by fishing and hunting, until the curse of slavery was introduced, when the aborigines mated with the coloured people. My father belonged to the Mia race, a tribe of Indians who would not be made slaves, hence my father was a 'free-born' man. My mother, oh! What magic there seems to be in that word mother. Who can say it, nay, who can think it, without recalling the happy days of long ago? But I must tell you about my mother. My mother was born early in the last century, and lived with her parents in Central Africa, until the family was captured by slave hunters, and carried to South America. The family name was Brown, and Elizabeth Brown – my mother – was a slave belonging at first to Mr. Roderic Ackerson. She had been sold at the auction block when she was 16 years of age, to Mr. William Joiner, who was a very kind master. She had been three years with this master when he allowed my father to marry his slave.

I do not know whether the fact that both were named Brown drew them together, but such was the case. Perhaps the name was given at first in allusion to their colour. Anyhow, there was no need to change her name at marriage, for Mr. Horace Brown, a young bachelor of 21, married Elizabeth Brown, spinster, aged 19.

Mr. Joiner allowed my father and mother to live in an old cabin apart from the other slaves. My father was not able to buy my mother all at once, but had to be content to have her on what is now known as the 'hire system,' paying a certain sum per year to her master. This was considered a great privilege. They were not allowed to go beyond 10 miles from the master's plantation, but they might work for anyone within this distance, and hire themselves out by the week or month, as the case might be. At the end of each engagement all their earnings were demanded by the master, either for hire, rent of cabin, or for the children's food.

It was on the 29th of August, in the year of grace 1841, that the subject of this little book first saw the light of day. Kent Island, Queen Anne's County, Maryland in the United States, was the place of his arrival, where the 'accident' of his birth took place. I say 'accident' because the 'accident of birth' plays many queer tricks. Some are born with silver spoons in their mouths, some have their bread buttered on both sides; mine was buttered on neither side.

Again, some are born to vast estates and mighty influences. I got none of these good things for making the trouble to be born, although, I suppose I gave as much trouble as the finest lord in creation, in fact, I am sure I did, as you shall hear by

and bye. But what of those that are ushered into a life of affliction, of suffering, of ignorance, or, perhaps, of slavery? The 'accident' of my birth is to be held accountable for all these, and which I will now try to show you. Of course, every baby has a pet name. Mine was 'Camp Meeting.' It was certainly rather a large name to give a negro, but it had the advantage of conveying a meaning or marking a period of time when the light began to shine, and the gospel of salvation begin to be preached in Slaveland. Yes, I was born in the month of a great religious revival. Hence my pet name.

My father was the preacher, and conducted the services in the woods, about five miles distant from the old cabin home, the place where I should have been born under ordinary circumstances, but as I told you, mine was an 'accidental' birth, I was not born at home. I used to cry every morning the moment I was awake, and my parents began to believe I had a tape worm, but the doctor who examined me pronounced me to be a consumptive subject. The superstitious coloured people said I had a devil, because it was generally believed among them that whenever the devil wished to take revenge of the minister who preached the gospel, whereby he – the devil – lost his clients, he would come, the evil spirit of the sinners, to enter into the minister's children. My friends were perhaps justified in thinking thus of me, because whenever they were singing, rejoicing, and praying, I was yelling, kicking or dancing.

My disposition was quite different to any of my brothers or sisters, and it was said that I had inherited a lazy spirit from my savage relations, who were not too particular as to what kind of food they eat, and would never refuse to dine off good English – human – beef, or any other white man. I was a very delicate child; in fact, I was almost a skeleton. Nevertheless, I would fight anyone who attacked me, big or little, black or white, brother or sister, and the dog and cat were not safe from me, for I would bite, kick, knock and scratch; and if I could get hold of a weapon I would use it with all my power; so that I was rather a dangerous customer to deal with. I, too, began to believe I had a devil. Notwithstanding all this, I loved and feared my father and mother.

EARLY BOYHOOD

I can well remember since I was three years old. At that age I went, during harvest-time, with my mother to the plantation, but when harvest was over, I returned to my father's cabin. I did not then know that I was a slave, as I was not old enough to be forced to work. But as my older brothers and sisters went to work on the plantation, I continued to go backwards and forwards until I was eight years old, when I seemed to be more with Massa Joiner, as we called him, than with my father. Thus I continued for four years more, when old Massa died, and I was sold or hired to a man named Edward Ringold.

I remained with Edward Ringold till the spring of 1854; but it happened that my master had got into debt to his brother, and to pay it off, I was sent to Samuel Ringold's to serve him. My first work was to be a 'scarecrow;' and I daresay some people in this country think that would just suit me. There would be no fear of crowds staying when I was about. Certainly if I could now appear in the dress I then wore, I should frighten some folks. Samuel Ringold had no wife. His father and mother had both died just before I went there. Here he was with a farm and slaves of his own

to look after; but he had an overseer – a coloured man – who was very hard on his fellow-slaves. He compelled me to rise before daylight every morning, and keep on working till dark in the evening, and allowed me only a few minutes to eat something at noon. An old slave was both housekeeper and cook; and she almost starved the younger slaves to please ‘Massa Sammy,’ as she called the master.

HARD FARE.

We were only given enough to keep body and soul together. The men had their allowance of bacon, Indian meal and molasses, so much – not *too* much – per week; but the boys had to feed on ‘*bough-nough-chough-nough*’ as their regular meal; getting perhaps once or twice a week some Indian meal as a great treat. I sometimes was able to purchase the privilege called

FISHING THE POT

The men had their bacon boiled, and sometimes a cabbage would be put in to boil along with it. After the cook had taken out the bacon and the cabbage, a few leaves might still remain. It was on the chance of this that we fished the pot for cabbage leaves as a great dainty. To meet the conditions, I had to carry a number of pails of water, and chop a quantity of wood for the cook. After the bargain was settled between me and the housekeeper, I was ready to sell shares to my companions if they would help me fulfil my engagement. There was some dissatisfaction occasionally when the time came for actually fishing the pot. The only means of getting to the bottom of the pot was with sticks; and each shareholder soon provided himself with his weapon. We very soon found that, even among the few leaves spared after the cook’s fork had done its work, all were not of equal size. The biggest was the envy of all, I being the owner of the property, contended that the largest share should be mine. There was once a great to do about this, so we agreed that no stick-fishing should be allowed, and that each shareholder should dip in his hand and fish out his share. The one who could bear the scalding longest had the best chance of getting the largest piece of cabbage.

CHASTISEMENT

Sometimes I had to eat pig’s liver, chitterlings and such like – all the inside, but none of the out. If I could come by anything finer my conscience never withheld me. For if the slaves took anything belonging to their master, they did not call that stealing; if it destroyed one bit of property it was only for the good of another. I should at that time have taken anything not bigger than myself. I was set to mind the cows, and sometimes to plough. But as the summer set in, I fell sick and began to complain of pains in my stomach. They asked me what I had been eating. I told them my illness was not from eating too much, but too little, as I had had nothing but *bough-nough-chough-nough*. The cook told master that I was complaining of not getting enough of food. So he came to me and said my sickness was all make-believe, and he would cane me. So he took a cow-hide and whipped me with it until the blood ran down to my heels. Cow-hide is a piece of cow-skin cut and twisted when green, and dried in the sun. It is a rough physic.

RUNNING AWAY.

I kept at work till dark; but as soon as the sun was down, and the cattle were all fed, I skedaddled, making for my father's house, which was many miles away. I never stopped till I came to a dark wood. There was a road through it but I was afraid to enter. I had often been told that if a slave made his escape to that wood, and were able to get away without being overtaken by the bloodhounds which were sent in pursuit, then the devil was sure to catch the black man. So I was halting between two opinions; and I said or thought to myself, 'If I go in there, the old pop will catch me; and if I stop out here my master will soon come and catch me.' The slaves always speak of the devil under the name of the 'pop.' Then I thought that the pop had never done me any harm as far as I knew, but I did know that massa had. So I made my choice. I chanced the devil and left massa behind. I went bang off at full speed. The woods were full of owls, and I was disturbing them, so that they were screaming dreadfully on all sides of me. This made me mend my pace, for I could not help thinking they were all devils and were coming at me, as my mind was full of nothing else just then. However, I resolved that whichever one caught me – or if the pop did get me at all – he would have to run for it. What with fright and fast running, I scarcely knew where I was dashing off to.

BROUGHT BACK.

I reached my father's house very soon; but in such a state of fear and exhaustion that I could not tell what had happened. My clothes – which were simply a calico shirt and pants of the same stuff – were wet with sweat. My poor mother soon knew what was the matter when she saw my back covered with blood; and I was laid down on the stair where I slept soundly till morning. Then I told my story, not omitting the terror in the wood. My father knew the law of the land, and by it no Negro was permitted to shelter or hide another slave – even if it were his own child – without incurring the direst penalties. So I was taken to Edward Ringold. He told my father I should be compelled to go back to his brother Samuel's, as the contract between them was not till the end of the year. There was no help for it! and I was taken back. Massa shut me up in a corn-house, where I had to shell corn. When he at length let me out to work as usual, he told me that if I should attempt to run away again I should get a more severe punishment than I had already had.

ANOTHER CHANGE.

I remained with my third master till Christmas, when I got permission to go and stay with my father and mother until New Year's Day. This little holiday it was customary to give to a hired slave; and these slaves had to be notified at that time who their future master was to be, two or three days before they were required to go to work again. Before the New Year came in, my marching orders came. I was informed that I had to go as hired slave to the Captain of an oyster boat, who wanted me as cook and sailor boy. So I began life on board ship on the 1st day of January, 1855. It was right in the depth of winter, and a very cold job indeed. I was exposed both to fire and frost. I had to cull oysters from early morning to mid-day – this was freezing

work. Then for an hour I had to cook by a very hot fire, eat what I could get, and wash up the dishes which had been used by the crew. What with work and fire, I think you will see that this was a hot job. Very often my hands and feet were so frosted that when I began to work at the fire at dinner-time, they were badly burnt, and I did not feel it till after. The sensation of burning and freezing is much the same.

LEFT BEHIND

When winter was over I had a very pleasant time as a sailor-boy and cook. During summer, the Captain made a contract to carry grain and fruit for the farmers around. When the vessel landed, just before we sailed, I was despatched to the surrounding farms to get their orders for provisions, which we could bring with us on the return journey. One day while I was on shore thus engaged, and happening to be delayed somewhat longer than usual, the wind came fair, and the Captain weighed anchor and set sail without me. And well it was for me that he did so! For as they were coming back there came a fearful thunder-storm, in which the vessel was capsized, and sunk to the bottom of the deep with all her freight. The Captain and mate were saved after swimming some time by a small boat. Had I been there, I should naturally have gone to the bottom with the rest of the crew, as I could not swim. But my hour was not yet come; God preserved me for something else He had in view. I then returned to the plantation, where I was allowed to stay for some time, much to my joy.

NOT FREE YET

My fourth and last master was named William Bryan. I must tell you how I came to be his slave. There was a law that, when a slave was found ten miles from his home he could be taken and put in the slave-pen, there to remain till claimed by his master. If not claimed he would be sold to defray expenses. Now, while I was away, it had come out that I was not quite content as a slave, and that I had heard and told of free countries; and it was known that I had tried to escape before. This made my old master believe or pretend to believe, that I must have run away again. So he put me in the slave-pen. He was afraid I should poison the minds of the other slaves; and he wanted to be rid of me. He said he would have no runaway darkies about him.

IN THE SLAVE MARKET.

I shall never forget the scene when I entered the slave-market. There were old men and young men, there were women and children. Some were there because their masters were drunkards and obliged to sell their slaves to get more money to buy drink. Some were there because their masters had died. Not a few, like myself, was there because they had tried to make their escape, but had been overtaken. Many of them had been found out by those ravenous beasts called 'bloodhounds,' which the masters used to send after the fugitives. It would make the blood of white people run cold to see these poor unfortunates in the slave-pen and in the market with the skin all torn by dogs. As a rule, the runaway was taken back to his master, thrashed severely, and then washed down with water in which was salt and cayenne pepper.

But when they were brought to the market they would get plenty to eat, and have their backs well greased, in order that they might be fat and in good condition. Yet one could see the traces of what cruel suffering they had endured.

THE SALE.

The auctioneer at length stood up, hammer in hand, and pointing to a big muscular man who stood on the block, cried out, 'How much for a strong hearty negro?' Then the slave-dealers began to bid. Some said 500 dollars. Then it rose to 1,000 dollars. The highest bidder secured the slave. *Secured* him! Yes, he was tied up on one side of the way as they tie up an ox in this country. The next lot to be sold was a relative of my own. The auctioneer said, 'This man must be sold as far as the wind and tide can carry him, because he has a wife and six children; and if he is not sold far away he may run back and try to see his family.' Then those who lived a long way off commenced to bid for this man, who had been taken out of the field unknown to any of his family, and sent to the slave-pen to be sold. No sentimental difficulty hindered the bidding; and soon he was knocked down to the highest bidder, and tied up till his owner came to take him away.

'BREAK THE LOT.'

There now stood on the block a slave-mother with a babe in her arms. The babe was ignorant of all that was going on; the mother, with her black eyes cast a beseeching look around. But the glance encountered the faces of hard, keen, business men only. Not a spark of kindly feeling in all that throng; no pity, no mercy there! 'How much?' said the auctioneer, 'For a strong hearty Negro woman and her baby?' There were two classes of buyers; those who bought only grown-up Negroes able to work, and those who bought babies. One dealer stepped up and asked the auctioneer if he would break the lot; he only wanted the woman, he cared not for the child. The poor little child almost seemed to understand the meaning of the unfeeling words 'break the lot,' for it clung closer to its mother's breast whilst big tears rolled down the mother's cheek. No one can tell the mother's feelings at that moment. Did she not love her child as fondly as any white woman? She did. Then let mothers try to understand the terrible wrench, the awful wrong done to her by the words of that wretch – 'Break the lot.' The lot was broken; and the auctioneer asked bids for a strong Negro woman without the baby. She was soon sold. The auctioneer requested her purchaser to let her stand with the baby in her arms until it too was sold. So the child was put up for sale, and realised 250 dollars. Then when the buyer raised his hand to tear the child from its mother's breast, it clung round her neck convulsively and in terror till the last moment, when it was plucked from her arms, still crying 'mamma, mamma!' The mother could not help screaming out: 'Farewell my child; if I never see you again, I will meet you in Heaven.' The brutal slave-dealer then struck her across the face, and sternly asked her what she was crying about. Though slavery has been abolished for many years now in that country, still when I get talking about these things I can almost hear the cries of the child, and see the silent tears of the mother, and feel the suppressed grief of her spirit. Oh, slavery is a terrible thing!

BEFORE THE ABOLITION

I was sold just before breaking-up time. I then saw a sight which few people would care to see often – the parting of those who were sold from one another. Each was ignorant of his future fate; there could be no communication between them; most likely they saw one another for the last time on this earth. I was taken off by my new master, William Bryan, who was a mean man, but with whom I managed to stay till the breaking out of the American War.⁴ Those were dreadful days. It makes me shudder to think of them now. The masters seemed to feel that the war would end in the abolition of slavery, and it made them wild. They put upon their slaves a double task of work to crush their spirits. They would not allow prayer-meetings or any meeting for worship, for fear that something might be said about freedom. To watch against these things, they appointed trusty slaves, constables or patrols. These men carried guns and pistols, and were attended by large bloodhounds when thought necessary. I have seen three ministers dragged from my father's pulpit, tied to a tree, and receiving 'forty stripes save one,' on their backs, because they were eleven miles from home, and preaching the Gospel. A black man, bond or free, if found after dark out of doors was tied up and whipped. On Sunday, if any coloured man was caught ten miles from home and attending worship, his punishment was equally severe. The free coloured people were all summoned to appear in the slave-market. Those who were unwilling to go into bondage were ordered to leave the State. Many had to let their children be taken into bondage though they were born free. Here again were many indescribable scenes – mothers going one way screaming, and their children being taken another way crying out 'mamma,' 'dadda,' till they were out of hearing; and so on.

FREE AT LAST

Sweet liberty! sweet liberty!
 When first I heard of thee,
 I was fast bound in slavery,
 In lands across the sea;
 But thou canst reach to every shore,
 Wherever man is found,
 And slavery shall be no more,
 Nor captives there abound.

Sweet liberty! sweet liberty!
 I will thy praises sing,
 Of faith, and hope, and charity,
 Which thy dear name doth bring,
 Man's holy birthright thou was given,
 From man to man must pass,
 To teach the way that leads to heaven,
 Where all are free at last.

Yes, free to sing God's praises for ever and ever!

W. H. F.

In 1861, I skedaddled from William Bryan's plantation to Baltimore. Slaves were making their escape by hundreds into the Northern army. But the slave-owners would rather see their slaves torn to pieces than let them go to the Northerners, and they therefore went from one plantation to another and put bloodhounds on the track of the escaped slaves. Many of these men had severe battles with their pursuers, and some lost their lives. After a slave-market had been held, many slaves would run away with the feeling that they would rather die than be separated from their families. One man bought by my master, said he would start for Canada, as he could not bear his new master. he went; and the bloodhounds were soon let loose on his track. I need not say that he had my best wishes and prayers. When the horn was blown to call us to dinner, I went to the fence and lay down with my ear to the ground, to find out if the dogs were still yelping! for I knew if they were, that they had not yet brought their quarry to bay. They hunted this man for about a week! and about a month after his escape the master received a letter to say he was on British soil and a free man. The master could only bite his lip and let it pass. I knew the risks I ran when I fled; but I got in safety to Baltimore, and there lived until March.

AT BALTIMORE.

I was not then in a free country; and had the country been in its usual state, I might soon have been brought back. But everything was unsettled by the war which was then breaking out. When Abraham Lincoln⁵ became President of the United States there was tremendous excitement. In the South, the slave-owners considered that the days of slavery were numbered, and so they rose in revolt; while the North remained true to the President and to freedom. The white people of Baltimore flew to arms and declared that no troops should pass through Maryland. So the first regiment that had to pass through on its way to the Capital, was attacked by the rebels; but the troops fought their way through, leaving six white and one black corpse to tell the result of the action of the rebels. On the following day more troops arrived from the North. They were stopped [at] a place called Snake Hill, outside the city, as many rebels had come up from Virginia to help those of Maryland. Baltimore was expecting to be a battle-field. Troops continued to arrive, but were kept outside, till one day, General Butler,⁶ all of a sudden and quite unknown to the rebels, landed a fleet at Fiddle Hill. Then, he with his men were at one end of the city, and many troops at the other end; and the poor rebels were closed in. They could not get out, neither could I. The General then issued a Proclamation that if Baltimore did not surrender in 24 hours, it would be burnt to ashes. Women and children were allowed and ordered to leave the city. I commenced to feel very funny, and only wished myself safely back in the old cabin home; I was right between two fires. The rebels gave up the city about the 22nd hour, and then I expected nothing but that I had only two more hours to live.

ESCAPE

UNDERGROUND RAIL. – A DEAR ROAD.⁷ – The reason this was called underground road was because many slaves escaped, and their track or road could not be traced until too late. Maryland was joining to Pennsylvania, the first free state of the U.S.A., and some of the early Christian inhabitants were the Quaker friends – friends

indeed to the black man. These Christians truly hated cruelty, and loved justice, and they resolved to do all in their power to encourage liberty and freedom. So if a slave could make his escape and get to Pennsylvania, and could only see a man dressed in old-fashioned Quaker style – broad hat and leggings – they were not afraid to speak to him. But whenever a slave was missing if the master had no hounds, he could hire them from someone who had trained them to hunt the black man. Many poor slaves have been captured by these dogs, but we rejoice to say that there has been no more slaves hunted since the Proclamation⁸ has been issued.

The communications were opened, and regiment after regiment went through playing ‘Yankee Doodle came to town.’ Some were singing ‘I am going to fight John Brown’s⁹ battle.’ This, you will know, alluded to John Brown, the famous hero and martyr of the cause of freedom. I thought I had better make a move on my own account; so I got hold of a soldier’s bag which was full of biscuits and fell in line as if I had belonged to the army all my days. I marched with them to the next station; when, lo! to my surprise, there were detectives waiting for me, and I was taken out of the ranks and made a prisoner as a runaway slave. Slaves were leaving their masters in every direction, but the army did not keep them if claimed. Many were found and taken back. They were usually severely whipped, locked up and almost starved to death; that was all they could do, for the war had paralysed the slave-trade so that they could not sell them as they used to do when they become discontented and had run away. When they came to identify me, it was found that I was not the slave they were looking for, and I was let go.

A SOLDIER.

And I did go. I never stopped going till I met with another regiment. I fell in with another haversack with some biscuits in it, which were a welcome sight. I joined the ranks like a man, keeping this time a good look out for detectives. We then marched and trained the distance of 81 miles, and the end of this journey encamped without food or tents. As we were expecting an attack from General Johnson, our provisions were left behind in case of a retreat. This was Harper Ferry, where several battles, had been fought, and where John Brown with his 90 black men had been taken prisoners. We remained here in camp for two days. I became a favourite with the soldiers by telling them funny stories during this period of inactivity. When off duty, a crowd of soldiers, with officers as well, who were interested in me, would gather round to hear me tell of what I had seen and felt. By and bye I was put on soldier’s pay – 13 dollars per month with rations and clothing.

BATTLE

In a few days our tents and provisions came. Then we received orders to fall back, as the rebels were just above us on the heights, 4,000 strong. They were so near that I could hear their drum. I took up a gun to march with the rest. We kept moving down the Potomac river, stopping one or two days together at times to arrange matters and to bury the dead, for the soldiers were dying – many every day – from chill and fever. When we came to a town near Washington, I got a pass to allow me to go to the Capital. Soon after I left, the division I had been in was ordered to go to Manassah

Gap; and near there in the valley a big battle was fought. Our Major was killed, the Colonel or Commandant was wounded and made captive, and when the roll was called there was only 97 men to answer out of 1,200. Strange to say, there were but two officers left; one was my Captain of Company B, the other of Company C. My Captain was promoted to the rank of Colonel in another regiment, and he wanted me to accompany him.

WASHINGTON.

I reached Washington in the evening, and forthwith searched for lodgings. Experiences of a disagreeable kind led me to think that I had escaped from the dangers of warfare only to be eaten up alive of mosquitoes before morning. But when at dawn I found myself in the land of the living, I felt thankful – not to the mosquitoes – and considered it wisdom to go to the station and buy a ticket for Baltimore. It was evident I had not got used to being away from home, and felt a little home-sick. However, as the city was under martial law, I could not have a ticket unless I could show a pass from the General; and this I had left behind. I saw plainly that my only chance of getting home lay in finding some way of taking ‘French leave.’

STOWED AWAY.

I looked about till I found some carriages which had been used for transportation of troops; and I quietly took my seat in one of them, and waited there till they should start. I knew this much, that when the engine started the wagons would move, and, if I could remain there, they would not leave me behind, so that I should soon get out of the city in one way or another. Well; my plan was successful, for off the train went, and I was glad to notice that it was making its way to Baltimore. About 30 miles on the way, the engine stopped to water up, and the conductor took the opportunity to examine all the carriages, so I got slyly out on the other side of the train, and making up to the engine-driver, asked him how much he would take to let me ride to Baltimore. He said he would give me a place for two dollars on condition that if the conductor did find me I should not tell how I got on the train. I agreed, and the bargain was struck. Immediately thereafter I was shut up in a coal box, where I remained till the train came to Baltimore; and then the coal-box somehow came open quite suddenly and out I came.

EMPLOYMENT.

I made at once for a relative of mine who lived not far from the station. The war was at its height, and all was in great disorder in the town. Nevertheless, I stopped in Baltimore to see if I could get anything to do. I did many odd jobs. At one time I got engaged in a large hotel, where they were fitting up a steam-table. When the contract was finished, they kept me on to look after and attend to this table. In this hotel there were several waiters who had been slaves and had been put there by their masters. Among these I soon came to be regarded as a great man, because I was clear of my master and I had seen a good bit of life, and had learned to read and write a little before I left home.

AFRICA.

Early in the last century my mother's parents lived in Guinea, Central Africa, so that I belong to the Negro race. Negro means black; this is the colour of a Negro's skin, it is the colour of mine. Negroes have high cheek bones; so have I. Their noses are somewhat flattened; so is mine. Their lips are thick, as mine are. Their heads are covered with what some people call wool; my hair is woolly. Therefore, I cannot disguise my origin.

NEGROES.

I am thankful I am among a people who think no worse of a man because of his nationality. Yet someone may think, 'Now that there are Negroes, we must not treat them badly; but it is a pity the poor things were ever born.' Well, I do not like to give my own views on this point, for you might think I am partial; but I will tell you something which Professor Hughes,¹⁰ of King's College, London, says in his big *Manual of Geography*.¹¹ It will show that Negroes are a good sort; and I think he is about right. –

'Their habits, however, are settled, and they are everywhere cultivators of the soil – the Negro being in this respect strikingly distinguished from many of the native races both of Asia and the New World.

'A light-hearted gaiety and love of amusement forms a strikingly marked characteristic of the Negro, and one which he preserves under all changes and circumstances, even of the most adverse kind. Music, the song, and the dance, are universal recreations, and during the hours of the evening and early night (after the heat of the day has passed) the whole of tropical Africa is a scene of festivity and rejoicing.

'The Negroes are generally fond of gain, and will undergo many hardships in its acquisition are also patient under misfortune, and meet affliction with fortitude. Frugality and temperance in eating generally prevail. They are naturally fond of oratory, and on occasions of strong excitement are capable of displaying much feeling and energy. The Negro is, however, in a much less degree the creature of impulse than the Indian of the New World; his temperament is more regular and equal, and his passions less violent.'

Another writer says this –

'They are a gentle race. The education of their youth is committed to females, and one of the first lessons which they learn is love of truth, which they generally practise. A strong affection usually exists between a mother and her children. The Negroes are a hospitable people; they are not savages, as they do not subsist by the capture of wild animals. They are even above the level of the wandering tribes, who subsist chiefly by rearing cattle. They are agriculturists, and live on the produce of their lands.'

I quote these words as I think they will help you to appreciate some of the things which follow.

CAPTIVITY.

And now I am going to describe a very painful scene; and as I cannot fairly do so in my own words, I am sure you will not grudge me the loan of one of your poets that I may give it in his language. It is the capture of one of those Negroes to be sold as a slave. Such was the fate of my grand-parents; –

‘Twas night: his babes around him lay at rest,
 Their mother slumbered on their father’s breast:
 A yell of murder rang around their bed;
 They woke – their cottage blazed! The victims fled;
 Forth sprang the ambush’d ruffians on their prey,
 They caught, they bound, they drove them far away;
 The white man bought them at the mart of blood;
 In pestilential barks they crossed the flood;
 Then were the wretched ones asunder torn,
 To distant isles, to separate bondage borne,
 Denied, though sought with tears, the sad relief
 That misery loves – the fellowship of grief.’¹²

THE SLAVE TRADE.

Do not think this horrible trade is a thing of the past. It was its enormous extent that touched the deepest feelings of that lamented hero, General Gordon.¹³ He struggled nobly to bring it to an end, thus arousing against himself the keenest enmity of those interested in keeping the slave-trade up. He writes thus: –

‘The sight of these 90 slaves was terrible. Few over 16 years of age – some of them had babies, some were little mites of boys and girls! Fancy, they had come over 500 miles of deserts, and were a residue of four times their number.

‘There were numerous skulls by the side of the road. What thousands have passed along here!

‘Now, fancy all this going on after all the examples I have made! Fancy that in less than 24 hours I have caught 70! There is no reason to doubt but that 70 a day have been passing for the last year or so. You know how many caravans I have caught – some 70 or 80; besides those 1000 I liberated at Kalaka. It is enough to cause despair.

‘It is much for me to do to keep myself from cruel illegal acts towards the slave-dealers; yet I think I must not forget that God suffers it, and that one must keep to the law. I have done the best I can, and He is Governor-General.’

AMERICA.

Thus many Negroes were carried to America to work on the plantations. Their lot depended altogether on the will of their master. If he was a cruel man, their lives were very bitter. It was but seldom that masters were very kind; for a very kind man would not be a slave-owner. In any case, the slaves were forbidden to speak of freedom or

free counties; and lest the desire for liberty should be enkindled by it, the masters did not like their slaves to know anything of the Gospel, and did all they could to put down preaching among them. But, as a rule, they would encourage them to sing what we call carnal songs; and songs they were – entirely composed by the slaves themselves. Where and how they got the music (if you call it *music*) no one knows but themselves; and if they were at work their hands always kept time with their songs, so the work would be accomplished with a more rapid speed. That was one reason the masters would tell them to sing – to hurry on with the work. And if not at work, in case of a Saturday afternoon holiday, the slaves used to meet together to have a dance, and the one that could cut most capers and keep time to the music was supposed to be a clever man; and when they had no banjo they would clap their hands and stamp their feet to make what we call music.

Once every year there was a season when the slave-owner would give what was supposed to be a grand treat ‘A Huskin Indian Corn Match.’ After the corn was gathered in and piled up in a long large heap, notice would be given to the adjacent plantations of farms that there was going to be a ‘Huskin Match,’ when there would be something to drink, and sometimes a promised supper at the close. Slaves were not allowed to drink spirits for fear they might rise against their masters, as the black people were more numerous than the white people. But on these occasions, as there was no other remuneration given, the man who was giving this great treat did not own any slaves as a rule, and his object was to contrive to get his corn ready for the market on the cheapest plan; so when he had nothing for them to eat, or did not want them to have what had been prepared for them, just before the time came for supper he would deal out a double dose of whiskey to make them sing quick and keep time with their songs; and very often a dispute would arise as to who had ‘chucked’ the most corn, and so the treat would terminate in a free fight. The moment the first blow was struck each one took the part of their fellow-servants of the plantation to which they belonged. This conduct was entirely against the rules of the masters, because the slaves often wounded each other so much that they were unable to work on the following day. If the conflict became very serious, the slave-owners and nigger-drivers would be sent for to make peace; but they took care not to come over until the spirit had died away and the fight was over. Those who had been so severely beaten that they could not make their escape would be taken home, tied and whipped, and put to work, and compelled to eat meal and water.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

St. Luke viii, 12.

A light broke in the eastern sky,
 The dawn of ages long ago;
 It was the light that shall not die,
 Shall never die for evermore
 And hosts of angels still do sing
 The glories of that light divine,
 And with their heavenly anthems bring
 The gladsome news to all mankind.

Behold that fair and fadeless light
 As it expands from pole to pole;
 And shall increase in power and might,
 While time in countless ages roll.
 All men shall surely see that light,
 And to the love and truth be brought
 Of Him who came the wrong to right.
 And works of darkness bring to nought
 That light of mercy still doth shine
 Across this dreary world of sin,
 And laden souls who will may find
 The everlasting life to win,
 By leaving all their cares behind,
 And looking to that gracious light,
 Which only can give peace of mind
 And save from dark and endless night.
 W. H. F.

THE GOSPEL.

You will, perhaps, think it very funny that all this time the masters reckoned themselves good Christians. The slaves had to drive them and their families to church, but must not go in. While waiting outside, many of them greedily listened to the Word of life, and enjoyed the songs. Then, returning from such an adventure, they would tell their brothers and sisters what they had heard. By and bye the good news thus carried would set fire to the whole plantation, so that in every cabin, and in each cotton field, the Negroes might be heard singing Gospel songs with the greatest enthusiasm, in their own peculiar style. Many were whipped for telling the Old Story, but that did not stop them from praying; so the Gospel spread from one plantation to another, and although my father was permitted to preach the Gospel, he was prosecuted. As the law was – if a free Negro was heard to say a word about freedom, he must be hung by the neck until he was dead. My father, on one occasion, mentioned in his prayers, ‘O that the time might soon come when we should all be free from sin,’ and for this he was summoned to appear before what they call a Justice of the Court. As a Negro was not allowed to speak in Court, our only source was to appeal to the great Advocate who is no respecter of persons, black or white – all are the same in the sight of God; so both my father and mother made it a subject of prayer. When the morning came to go the Court-house, just before his departure, my father called all us little ones together that were living in the cabin, and we bowed around the old arm-chair, and there prayed to the Lord, who has promised to deliver His people in the time of trouble, to spare our father; and when the prayer was ended he bid us ‘Good-bye,’ with a promise that we would be sure to meet him in heaven, where parting would be no more. To tell his own story, when he arrived at the Court-house, there were slave-owners from every direction to see that the law was carried out in full; and when the charge was read over, the Judge pronounced the sentence of death upon him according to the law of the State of Maryland, and then, turning to the audience, said if there were any present who

wished to speak on behalf of the convict, they were to speak then, or for ever hereafter to hold their peace. There was one stood up and addressed the Judge, saying, 'I have conversed with the prisoner, and I am sure, from what he has declared to me, that he is not guilty of death. It appears that he was praying that the slaves might soon be set free from sin, in order that they might become more obedient to their masters, and live happy, and it had been proved that since the Gospel had been preached among the slaves they were much more valuable to sell, more obedient, and more industrious for their masters, and it had all come about through the preaching of the accused Negro or the Mulatto.' Then the question was put to the House: 'All who believe this report or statement to be true say "Aye,"' and there were several voices cried 'Aye.' Then it was moved that all who were in favour of the prisoner being released were to signify it by saying 'Here!' and there went up many shouts – 'Here!' 'Here!' 'Here!' and my father, he cried 'Here!' at the same time knowing that his voice was not allowed to be heard, but it was among such a confusion of 'Here's!' that he took the opportunity of saying 'Here!' in thanksgiving to God for his deliverance. When he returned home to the log cabin, there were tears of joy went up that evening from the family altar. It was his custom to call all together every evening before retiring to bed to pray. That rule he ever kept up until he was confined to a death-bed.

LOVE-LETTERS AND PASSES.

They used to get me to write their love-letters, and funny ones they were; I cannot tell you how I spelt the words they told me to write. I know I always put the first letter right in each word, but how many others were right I should not like to say. Another thing I could do was to write passes. The free coloured people could not buy a ticket to travel by rail without having passes to show to the station master. These passes were supposed to be written by some slave-owner. I copied a pass which had been written by someone, but whom I don't know. From it I wrote out two passes, which were the means of setting my fellow-countrymen at liberty. One of them was for a slave who belonged to a parson. This slave boy gave me his master's name and address. He told me also that if I did not hear of his being captured in two days from the time he started, I might write to his reverend master, and say that his boy George was gone to the *free country*.

REVEREND WRATH.

According to my friend's recommendation, I wrote a letter to the reverend gentlemen, dating it from the hotel and signing it in George's name. This I posted on the afternoon of the third day; and much to my surprise, his reverence, boiling over with anger, came by the first train in the morning. Inquiries were made as to how George got away, but no one could tell. They were sure he must have got a pass, but they knew no one who could write, so that no suspicion fixed on anyone in the hotel. If they had known that I could write – and thought that I had written the pass – they would have hanged me according to law. At last they came to the conclusion that some Yankee had stolen George away; and I certainly did not try to disabuse their minds.

APPEAL

The difficulties of the situation in the South are manifestly due to slavery. The illiteracy of large masses of blacks and whites, the lack of familiarity with school organization, the indifference and hostility to education, the impoverishment of the late slave-holders, and the inability of the coloured people to bear the expense of schools, either public or private, are all results of slavery, and stand like a wall in the way of educational progress.

I do not debate the question who is responsible for slavery. It is perhaps enough to say that the Union and Constitution breathed into this nation the breath of life. To the Union and to the Constitution we are indebted for our present prosperity, power and prestige, and the still more inspiring future which lies before us. The Union and the Constitution, to which we owe all that we are and have been, contained and recognized slavery. All who took part in forming the Union or in framing the Constitution, all who maintained them down to the war which brought emancipation are in some degree and in some sense responsible for slavery. The only American citizens who are in no way responsible for slavery and its consequences are the sons of Africa. 'They are here by the crimes of our ancestors and the misfortunes of theirs.' And it is especially these coloured people who now eagerly and with uplifted hands implore the nation for that light which education alone can give, and without which they cannot discharge the duties which the Constitution requires by making them citizens and voters.

In the history of popular education nothing is better settled than this. In the South, by reason of slavery and its pernicious legacies, to provide for the free education of all by State authority is simply impossible. The coloured people were held in bondage, and consequently in ignorance, under the Constitution of the nation. They were set free and made citizens and voters by the most solemn expression of the nation's will, and now, therefore, the duty to fit them by education for citizenship and suffrage is devolved upon both the Christian and the whole people.

A LAST WORD.

Dear reader, I have now given you a short history of my life from the time when I first saw the light of day in a land of slavery until I set foot in your free country – dear old England. I am aware of the many imperfections in the book, but I trust you will receive it in the spirit in which it has been written, namely, to tell the truth, the unmixed truth of my Life in Slaveland.

If you have got any pleasure in reading the book, then I shall be pleased; and if you have learned anything from it, why then, I am thankful that I have been permitted to write it and you to read it, that God may be all in all.

Yours faithfully,

Easter, 1901.

B. W.

Notes

1. This book is held in many repositories including Hartley Library, University of Southampton (reference: Rare Books E444) and the Beinecke Library, Yale University (reference: JWJ Zan B810 901L).

2. See Frederick Douglass, 'Blessings of Liberty and Education', 3 September 1894, available online at: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/blessings-of-liberty-and-education/>
3. Brown is including unacknowledged quoting – with some amendments and variations – from Frederick Douglass' 1855 autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Douglass' original text reads as follows: 'The cruelty of Aunt Katy, the hunger and cold I suffered, and the terrible reports of wrong and outrage which came to my ear, together with what I almost daily witnessed, led me, when yet but eight or nine years old, to wish I had never been born. I used to contrast my condition with the black-birds, in whose wild and sweet songs I fancied them so happy! Their apparent joy only deepened the shades of my sorrow. There are thoughtful days in the lives of children – at least there were in mine – when they grapple with all the great, primary subjects of knowledge, and reach, in a moment, conclusions which no subsequent experience can shake. I was just as well aware of the unjust, unnatural and murderous character of slavery, when nine years old, as I am now' (pp.133–134).
4. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
5. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
6. Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818–1893) was a white US Union Army general, attorney, and Republican politician.
7. For further information on the Underground Railroad, see William Still, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records: With a Life of the Author* (Philadelphia PA: William Still, 1886).
8. President Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) issued the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863, ordering the freedom of enslaved people in all areas of the Confederacy that had not already been returned to federal control. Further information on the history and the full text of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is accessible at: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>. A full text of the Emancipation Proclamation issued on 1 January 1863 can be found at: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=34&page=transcript>
9. John Brown (1800–1859) was a white US antislavery liberator and leader of the revolutionary war on the government federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, a war he hoped would result in the arming of enslaved people and the end of enslavement but for which he and many of his men were executed at the hands of a white enslaving and white supremacist government. See Louis DeCaro Jr, *John Brown Speaks: Letters and Statements From Charlestown* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).
10. William Hughes (1818–1876) was a white English writer and geographer.
11. William Hughes, *A Manual of Geography, Physical, Industrial and Political* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, 1852).
12. He is quoting the poem by white Scottish poet James Montgomery (1771–1854) titled 'The West Indies. In Four Parts. Written In Honour of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade By the British Legislature, in 1807' and included in *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery*, Volume 1 (N.p.: J. Ball, 1850), p.36.
13. This is possibly a reference to Charles George Gordon (1833–1885), a white British Army officer who became Governor-General of the Sudan.

