

Nineteenth-Century
African American
Speeches in
Britain and Ireland

Edited by
Celeste-Marie Bernier and Hannah-Rose Murray

Nineteenth-Century African American Speeches
in Britain and Ireland

NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AFRICAN AMERICAN
SPEECHES IN BRITAIN
AND IRELAND

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER AND HANNAH-ROSE MURRAY

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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,



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>)

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 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



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

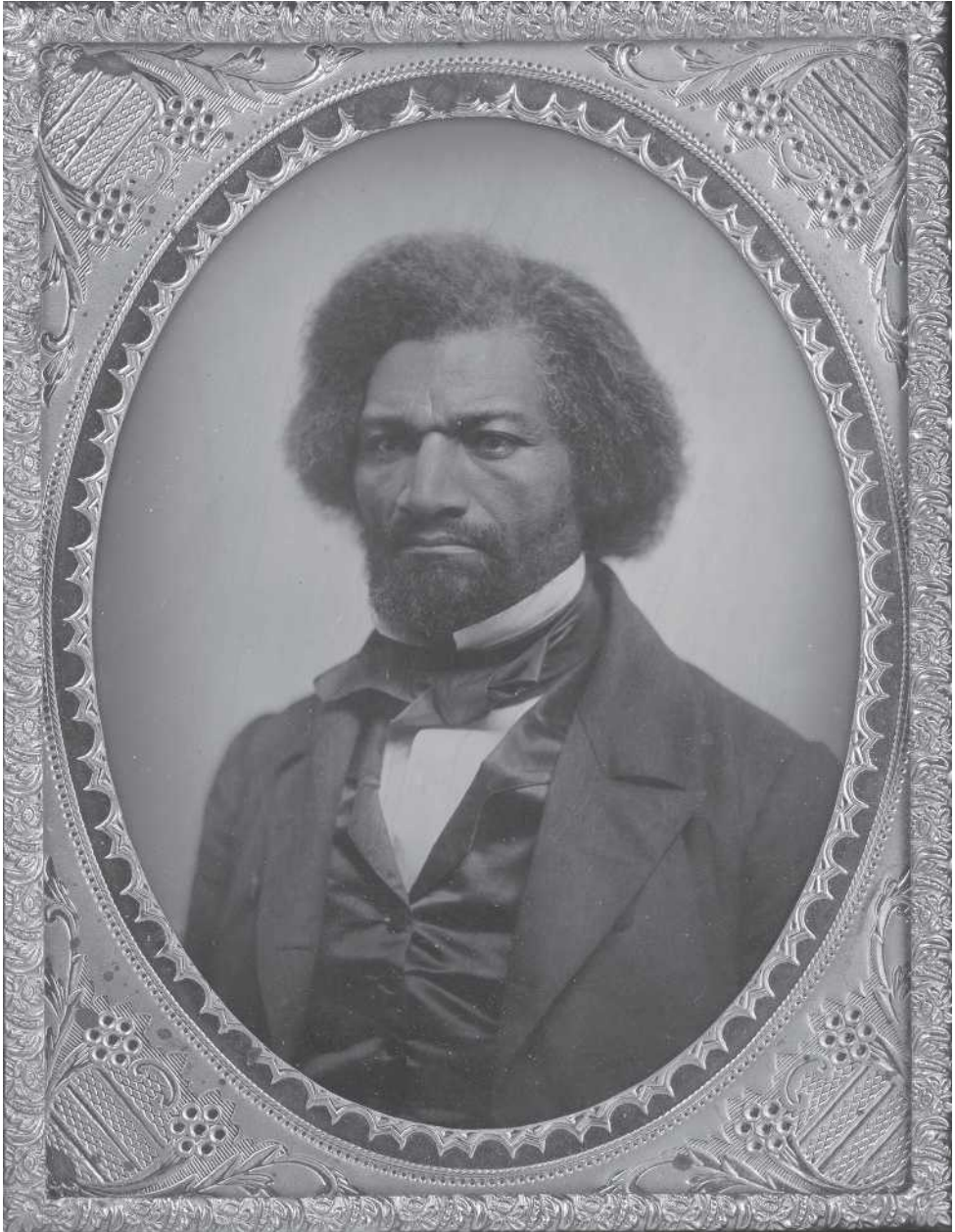


Figure 3 Frederick Douglass, c.1856 by unidentified photographer. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor.)

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.

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 heartbreaking 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’ (*Narratives*, 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



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.)

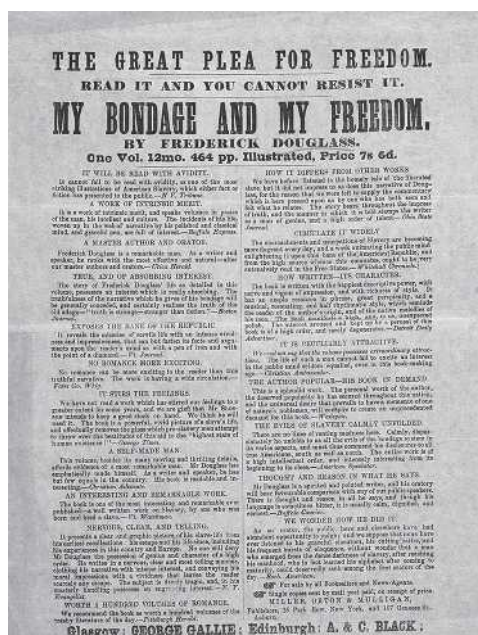


Figure 5 Advertisement for Frederick Douglass' second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 1855. (The Copyright of The University of Manchester.)

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

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

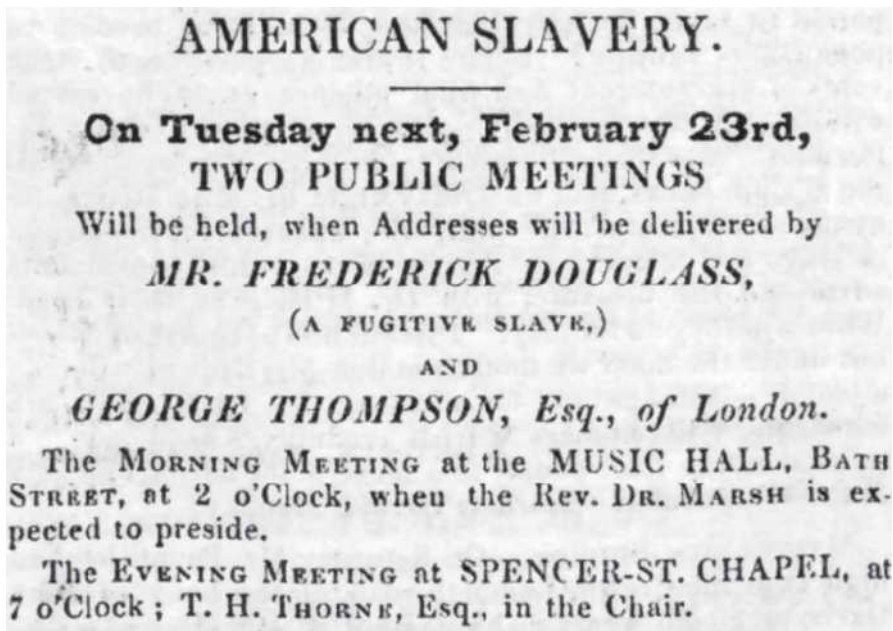


Figure 6 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Frederick Douglass. (The British Library Board, *Leamington Spa Courier*, England, 20 February 1847, p.2.)

Crompton Chisley/William Jones, *A Short Narrative of Benjamin Crompton Chisley/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* (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 Wriothsley 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' (*Narratives*, 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) (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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: The True Story of Dinah, An Escaped Virginian Slave* 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. (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 4). While the vast majority of the nineteen narratives included in *Narratives* have been digitised and/or survive in hard to find



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

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 (*Narratives*, 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 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, or 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 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 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* (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 standalone publication but as a poster a year later in 1861 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 onto 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 (*Narratives*, 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 Wriothsley 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 (*Narratives*, 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* (*Narratives in*, 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* (Narratives, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 Black 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 (*Narratives*, 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, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 onward. 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’ (*Narratives*, 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.

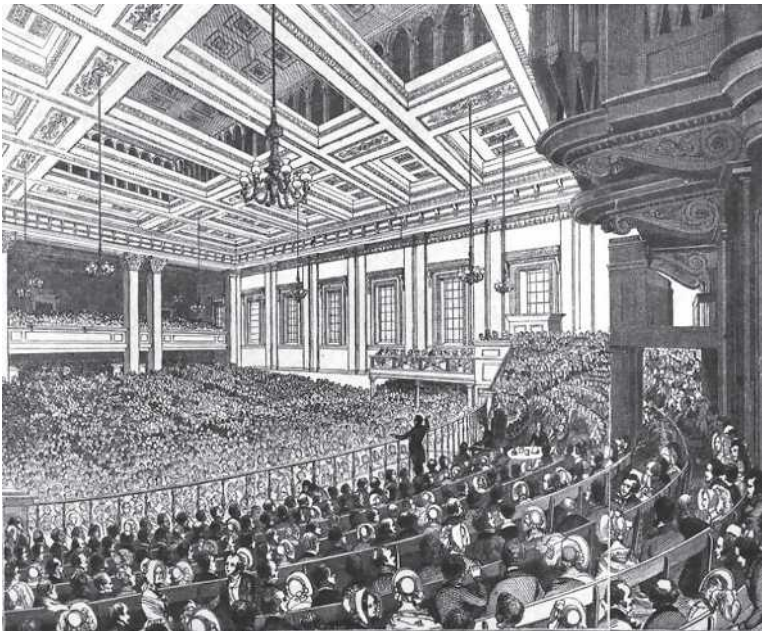


Figure 8 Anti-Corn Law League meeting at Exeter Hall, the famous venue on the Strand, London, where many abolitionist meetings were held, 1846. (Wikimedia Commons.)

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; 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*, 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

4-76.

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.)

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 genders 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

**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.)

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.

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 misrecorded 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' (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' (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' (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's 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 incidents. In every transcription of every speech by every orator we include in *Speeches*, categorical confirmation of each unnamed white reporters' 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' (*Narratives*, 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 (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 on their labour camps (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 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 semi-nally 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 analyse 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 (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' (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' (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' (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'. Dedicating his life 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' (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' (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' (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



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.)

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?' (Speech No. 19).

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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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’ (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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 (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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' (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 (*Narratives*, 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' (*Narratives*, 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 (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’ (*Narratives*, 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’ (*Narratives*, 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 (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’ (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’ (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!’ (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 (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 14). Benjamin Crompton Chisley/William Jones notes his successful attempt at freeing his mother (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 8). Many activists barely knew their family. Charles Freeman, John Hart, John Williams, William Craft, (*Narratives*, Narrative Nos 1, 2, 5, 6; 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' (*Narratives*, 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' (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 11). Lewis Smith speaks of the 'withering privations and intense sufferings of one born a slave' (*Narratives*, 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' (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' (*Narratives*, 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!' (*Narratives*, 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' (*Narratives*, 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 (Speech No. 60). James Alfred Johnson writes of his own attempt to die after witnessing the brutal torture of an enslaved woman named Rebecca (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 16). As James Watkins poignantly and powerfully declares 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 (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 (*Narratives*, 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' (*Narratives*, 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' (*Narratives*, 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 (Speech Nos 14, 15, 16, 17).³² Edward Irving recounts his perilous flight, too, from bloodhounds during his fight for self-liberation (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 (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' (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 (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 19; Speech No. 61; *Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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' (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' (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' (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 (Speech Nos 60, 21, 45).

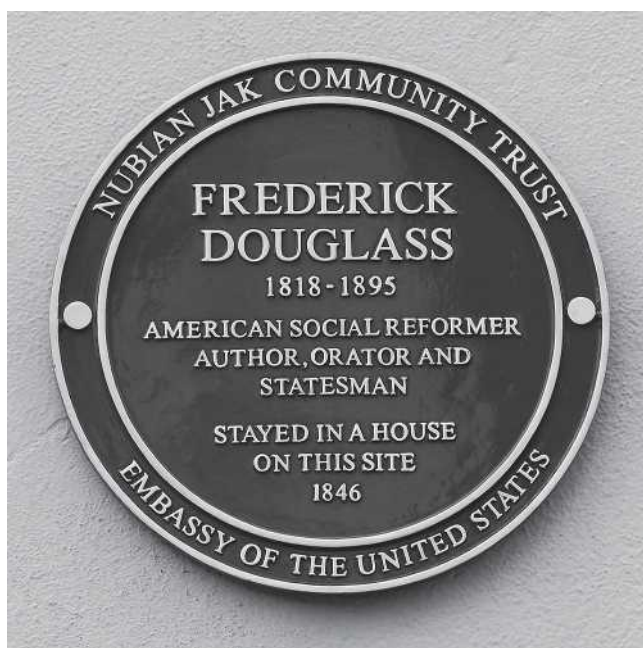


Figure 13 Heritage plaque to Frederick Douglass, 5 Whiteheads Grove, South Kensington, the former site of British abolitionist George Thompson's house, London, England. (Author copy.)

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' (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' (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' (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' (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 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 (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’ (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’ (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 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’ (*Narratives*, 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 (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 (*Narratives*, 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' (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' (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' (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' (Speech No. 75). Henry Highland Garnet urgently demands that the British nation take 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' (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 (*Narratives*, 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 (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 (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 (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 8). Sarah Parker Remond champions her mother, Nancy Remond, who fought for her daughter's education on the grounds of equality (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 11). James Cheeney Thompson memorialises the bravery of an unnamed and incarcerated Black woman who helps him escape the prison yard (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, 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 (*Narratives*, Narrative No. 19). William Wells Brown mentions the heroism of his own mother who tries to join him in his self-liberation journey (Speech No. 8). William M. Mitchell recounts the bravery of his wife who helped freedom seekers secure their self-liberation on the Underground Railroad (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 (*Narratives*, 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 unforgivable 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 reads 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, 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

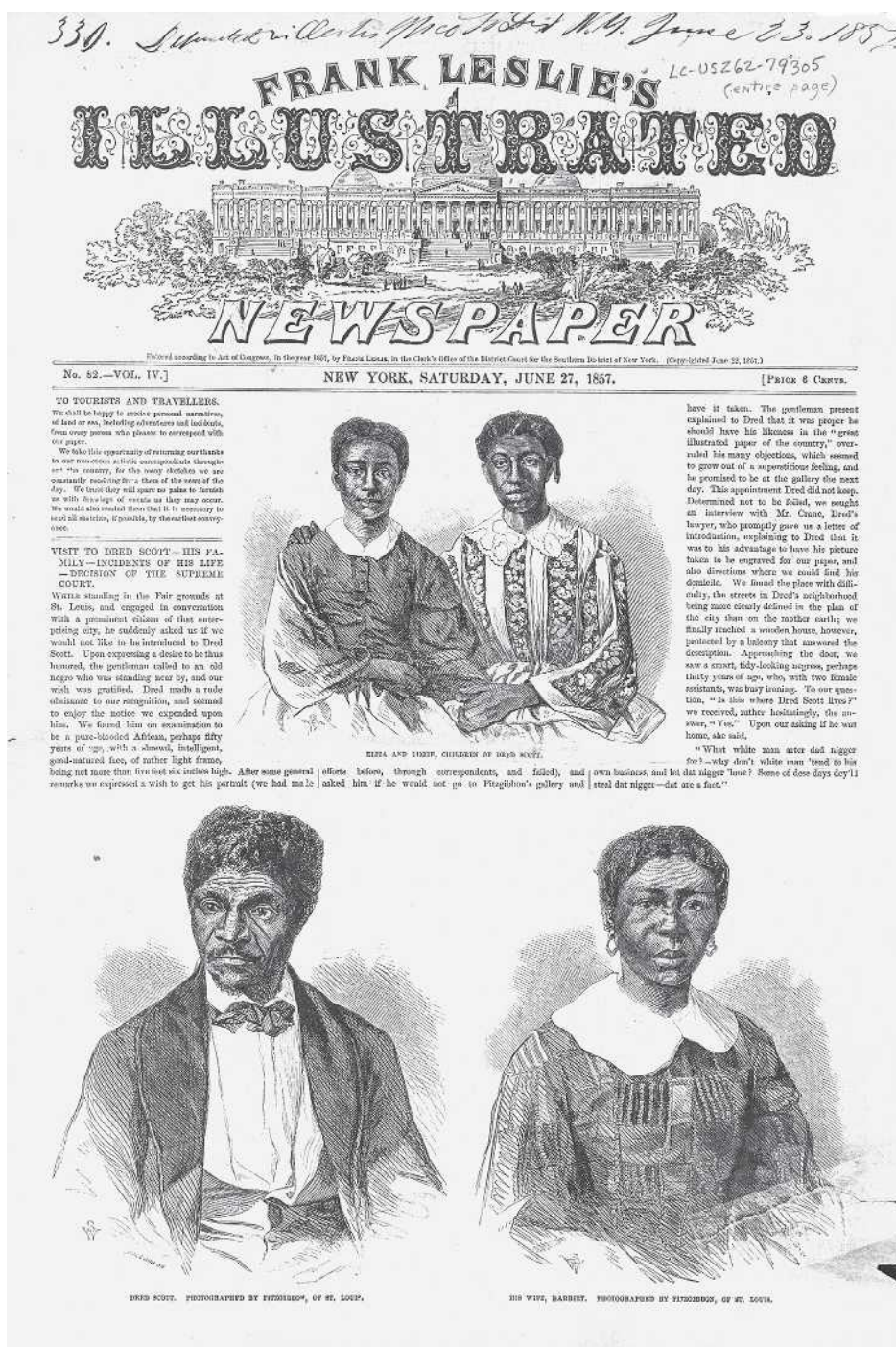


Figure 14 Dred and Harriet Scott, with their children Eliza and Lizzie, 1857. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

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' (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 stood 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, 1846; 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.
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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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BENJAMIN WILLIAM BROWN

(1841–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO ‘BENJAMIN William Brown’ in *Narratives*.

Benjamin William Brown experienced enslavement in Maryland. He repeatedly fought to secure his self-liberation before finally succeeding in 1861, the first year of the Civil War, when he joined a Union Army regiment stationed near Washington DC. After the war, Brown married Jane Brown, another survivor of enslavement. 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.

An activist family dedicating their lives to social justice campaigns, in 1881 the family travelled to the British Isles and lectured for nearly three decades on US enslavement and its persecutory and discriminatory legacies, temperance, and religion. They raised funds for Black churches, communities, and schools in the US and on the African continent, and Brown wrote an autobiographical tract, *Life in Slaveland*, which appears to have been first published in 1890 by Henry Hughes in London. Subsequent editions were published, including the volume printed in *Narratives*, in 1902 in Burnley, England (Narrative No. 19).

On their lecturing tours, Jane Brown and their children often sang alongside Benjamin William Brown, with Jane, an inspirational singer and musician, sometimes giving her own performances or renditions of the hymns and spirituals that had been composed by enslaved people over the centuries. Brown preached the gospel in towns across Britain, and always highlighted his mother’s birth in Guinea, his grandparents’ kidnapping from the same region, and his own experiences as a survivor of enslavement. Brown, together with some of his children, also used visual performative techniques such as the Magic Lantern, an optical viewing device that projected photographs or prints. The date and circumstances of his own and Jane Brown’s deaths are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce two speeches delivered by Benjamin William and Jane Brown, and their children, in London in 1888 and Kent in 1890.

Further Reading

Primary

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1

Anon., 'An Ex-Slave at Tufnell-Park', *The Islington Gazette*,
Islington, London, England, 22 August 1888, p.3.

THE PULPIT AT Tufnell-Park Congregational Church was occupied on Sunday at the morning and evening services by the Rev. B. W. Brown, a coloured minister and an American ex-slave. Mr. Brown is travelling in this country, so he states, under the auspices of the Biblical Institute of Baltimore,¹ Maryland, U.S.A., and seeks to secure the sympathy of Englishmen with the effort now being made to send coloured missionaries to Africa. He seeks also to arouse additional interest in the work of suppressing the slave trade in Africa. Already he has met with a gratifying degree of success. Some of the leading Nonconformist churches of the metropolis have opened their doors to him and given him liberal financial aid. He is under engagement to speak at Hornsey-rose Chapel (Dr. Duncan's), at New-court Chapel, Tollington-park, and at other prominent chapels in North London. He is accompanied by his wife and their two children. Mrs. Brown is a capital singer, and aids her husband with vocal contributions. It is a part of the coloured minister's programme to put before his audiences as distinct a picture as possible of life in the Southern States of America prior to the war of 1861, and the abolition of slavery by Abraham Lincoln.² In doing so, the negro plantation music is brought forward by him, described fully, and then illustrated by Mrs. Brown and himself in solos and duets. Mr. Brown informed the representative of the *Gazette* that his two children – now aged eight and ten apparently – would, if their lives were spared, be trained to go to Africa as missionaries. The children are handsome and intelligent, and already take no small part in the songs and chants given by their parents. Mr. Brown is evidently very deeply interested in his enterprise. He has left a flourishing church in America for the sake of this mission.

On Sunday afternoon, Mr. Brown conducted a 'special Gospel service' at Tufnell-park Church, and delivered an address on 'Religious Life in Slave-land,' skilfully adopting his remarks to the comprehension of the children, who made up the greater part of his audience. The attendance was large, and close attention was paid to the proceedings throughout. The Sunday-school children having sung the hymn, 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun,'³ Mr. and Mrs. Brown chanted the Lord's Prayer as they 'used to do it in slave-land,' producing a not unmelodious though strange and weird effect. Mr. Brown then read from the tenth to the twenty-third verses of the sixth chapter of Daniel, the story of Daniel in the den of lions; after which he and Mrs.

Brown sang the story as they ‘used in slave-land,’ where hymn-books were a great rarity and Bibles very few. The song was in part as follows: –

Daniel in the lions’ den,⁴
He prayed both night and day;
An angel came from heaven above,
And drove the lions away.

CHORUS.

O, my lord delivered Daniel,
My Lord delivered Daniel,
My Lord delivered Daniel,
Why can’t He deliver me?

He delivered Daniel from the lions’ den,
And closed the lions’ jaws;
The Hebrew children from the fiery furnace,
And why not every man?

CHORUS

O, my lord delivered Daniel,
My Lord delivered Daniel,
My Lord delivered Daniel,
Why can’t He deliver me?⁵

The Rev. Mr. BROWN then spoke as follows: – Dear friends and children of the Sunday-school, – I shall speak to you this afternoon for a few moments only before my wife sings again. I am here to give you a simple testimonial of the power of the Gospel in the land from which I come. I have been deprived of the glorious privileges you enjoy in this great country; and while sitting here my mind has wandered back to the days of slavery, and I have been trying to compare that old period of slavery and its conditions with the liberty and progress I see around me here. My tongue fails utterly to describe to you the contrast. You cannot conceive how great it is. But one thing I can say and do say with all my heart, that whereas once I was blind, now I see. Once I was in slavery, now I am free. Once my spirit was in bondage now I rejoice in the liberty whereby Christ makes free indeed. (Applause.) There was a time, you know, my dear friends, when Christian missionaries went into slave-land to preach the Gospel to the poor and down-trodden and enslaved negro. Well, at first, these missionaries met with fierce opposition on all sides. The slaves and the slave-owners would have nothing to do with missionaries. The poor slaves could not understand what the missionaries wanted to tell them; they feared the white missionary, saying of him ‘kith, kath,’ which was the same as saying ‘The Englishman, the white man, only comes to sell and buy us.’ There were, of course, no churches where the missionaries could preach; they had to hold their meetings in the deep woods. The slave-owners forbade the missionaries to preach to the slaves, and they forbade the slaves to go to hear them. They threatened the slaves with severe whippings if any of them went to hear the missionaries. But black people are like some other people –

they do not always do what they are told to do, and they sometimes do what they are told not to do. So some of us used to go and hide in secret places and hear what the master missionary had to say. In this way many of the slaves heard the Gospel and believed the glad tidings, and went back to tell the others in the old cabin. Many were whipped – whipped cruelly, but the slave-owners could not stop the Gospel in that way. Then they began to tell the slaves strange stories. They said the black people could be saved only on one condition – that they feared and obeyed their master, and were satisfied to remain in their condition as slaves. Of course, many of us could not read the Bible, and we asked many funny questions and had many funny ideas. One little girl said she was going to write a letter to Massa Jesus to tell him how the slave-owners whipped them. We thought, to be sure, that we could send a letter to the Lord through the Post-office. Old Aunt Sally asked her mistress what kind of a house heaven was, and what kind of work would have to be done ‘up dar.’ Her mistress told her that folks did not have to work in heaven – only to sing. Then Aunt Sally said, ‘Missy, will the white folks and the black folks be together up dar?’ ‘Oh, no,’ said the mistress; ‘the white folks will be in the parlour, and the black folks in the kitchen.’ (Laughter.) When Aunt Sally heard this, she said, ‘Then I don’t want to go to heaven at all, for I’ve had kitchen enough in this world.’ (Laughter.) However, I was much better off than some. I had a praying mother, and a Christian father. I hope I may never grow too old to forget the prayers of my dear old mother. No matter what his nationality, a child will always watch his mother; and I watched mine. She used to pray three times a day – at breakfast time, dinner time, and supper time. Half the time allowed for meals my mother used to spend in prayers. I used to hear her often sing the old sacred slave songs. I shall never forget it. But I did not understand it until one morning, when, waking early, I saw my mother kneeling by the fireside in the old cabin. I crept softly to her side, and I heard her say, ‘God bless my children, and keep them together,’ and then she commenced to cry. I thought the slave-owner was going to sell my father. I asked her why she wept. She told me her cup was full, and running over. I did not understand it then. I do now; and, as I go through this land, strange to me and mine, I often go in secret to my Lord and yours, and my cup, too, gets full. Well, mothers generally know what is best for their children, and when mine saw I was interested, she began to tell me about heaven. I was very dull-minded, and did not understand at first. So she said to me, ‘Do you remember your little brother Charley who died? He is buried in the cold ground; but, though his body is there, his soul is singing with the angels in heaven. If you are a good boy and love the Lord, you will see him again by and bye.’ Naturally, I felt anxious to see my brother again, and thus my boyish thoughts were turned to things above. Since that time, my father and mother have both entered the blessed country; but I feel yet, and always hope to feel, the influence of their teachings and example drawing me towards them. You remember the case of the boy who was flying a kite so far out that he could not see it. A gentleman passing said to him, ‘Why do you hold the cord when you cannot see the kite? Perhaps the kite is not there.’ The boy replied, ‘I know I cannot see it, but I can feel its pull.’ Just so with me. I cannot see them, but I feel their holy power drawing me upwards and onwards. I feel the peace which passes understanding.¹⁶ Concluding his address, the rev. gentleman said, ‘My object in coming to England is to increase, if I can, your interest in the welfare of the black race. In America, we cannot go to the same schools the white children go to; we cannot ride in the same tram-cars or

worship in the same churches. Americans are not just, like English people. They liked the black people well enough while they could buy and sell us, but when slavery was abolished they did not like us any more. We want churches and schools of our own in which to educate our children to be sent out to Africa as missionaries. There is a loud call to Africa to-day. We want to do something to carry help there. We want to inspire Christian nations with a holy desire to abolish slavery in Africa, and place freedom in the place of it. Many of you who are children [may] not be able to do much in the way of money, but children can pray. The black children prayed for freedom in the days of American slavery, and did not God answer the prayer gloriously? I beg of each one of you, that after you have given us such help in money as you can afford, to pray unceasingly that Ethiopia may not much longer stretch out her hands in vain for freedom and salvation.⁷

Mrs. Brown then sang very effectively, 'Flee as a bird to your mountains';⁸ after which Mr. and Mrs. Brown sang a song entitled 'The Gospel Train,'⁹ which the former said was a specimen of what would be sung on the following Wednesday evening. The song rang about as follows: –

The gospel train is coming,
I hear it just at hand;
I know I hear it coming,
And thundering thro' the land.

CHORUS

O get on board, children,
O get on board, children,
O get on board, children,
For there's a room for many a more.

'Tis nearing now the station;
O, sinner, don't delay;
Come, come, and get your ticket,
Be ready for the train.

CHORUS

O get on board, children,
O get on board, children,
O get on board, children,
For there's a room for many a more.

The fare is cheap, you all may go;
The rich and poor are there;
No second-class on board this train,
No difference in the fare.

CHORUS.

Get on board, children, &c.

The singing of this ‘specimen song,’ which was the source of no little amusement to the children of the school, who seemed to regard the chorus as addressed to them specifically, brought the service to a close; and a collection having been taken, the proceedings terminated.

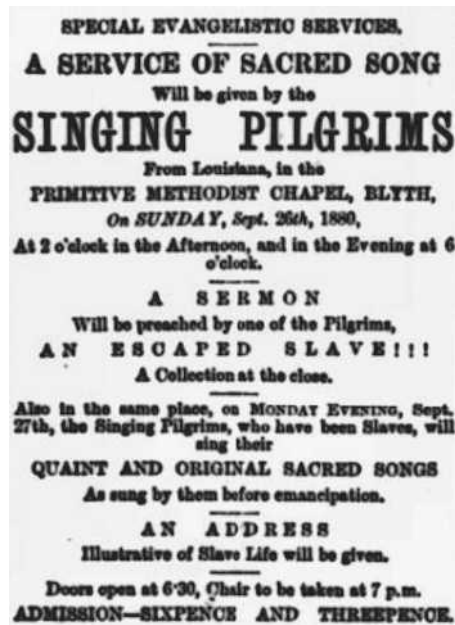


Figure 15 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Benjamin William Brown and Jane Brown. (The British Library Board, *Blyth News*, England, 25 September 1880, p.2.)

Notes

1. The Biblical Institute of Baltimore was almost certainly one and the same as the Centenary Biblical Institute originally founded in 1867 to train male students as religious ministers. Just two years later in 1890 this educational institution changed its name to Morgan College and it continues today as Morgan State University, a world-leading, public, historically Black research university.
2. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
3. The hymn, ‘Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun’, was authored by white English composer Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and is reproduced in full online at: https://hymnary.org/text/jesus_shall_reign_whereer_the_sun
4. Daniel 6:22.
5. Mrs. Brown is singing a version of the spiritual sung by enslaved people over the generations and popularly known as ‘Didn’t My Lord Deliver Daniel’. The full lyrics of the song and further information on the history of African American spirituals are available online: <https://africanamericanspirituals.com/African-American-Spirituals-020.htm>
6. Philippians 4:7.
7. He is referring to Psalm 68:31: ‘Great ones shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall quickly stretch out her hands unto God.’

8. 'The Gospel Train' is a nineteenth-century African American spiritual that originated as a song created and sung by enslaved people living in enslavement and which was later popularised to reach mass transatlantic audiences by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a world-famous Black performance group founded in 1871 by students at Fisk University, a historically Black institution established in 1865 and incorporated in 1867 in Nashville, Tennessee. Their explicit mission was to go on fund-raising tours to support this higher education institution. For further information see G. D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers and Their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollars* (Boston MA: Lee and Shepard, 1873).
9. For access to the complete lyrics and a recording of this song, see 'The Gospel Train', available at: <https://www.ncpedia.org/media/audio/gospel-train>



Anon., 'Scenes in Slave-Land', *Gravesend and Dartford Reporter*,
Gravesend, Kent, England, 25 January 1890, p.4.

AT THE WINDMILL-STREET Baptist Church, on Sunday evening last, the Rev. B. W. Brown, a coloured minister, formerly a slave, of Maryland, U.S.A., conducted a special gospel service, which was well attended, when he delivered a very interesting and impressive address on 'Religious Life in Slave-Land.' On Monday evening, Mr. Brown gave an able and graphic lecture on 'Scenes in Slave-Land,' which was listened to with the deepest attention. The Rev. F. Tuck (pastor) occupied the chair. The lecturer, in his opening remarks, said in depicting to them 'Scenes from Slave-Land,' he would tell them his life history. He was a slave until the year 1863, when a proclamation¹ was issued by which 4,500,000 of his race were set free. His father was a free man long before that, made so by a good master, who had been converted through the excellent example and assistance of a missionary. His (the lecturer's) mother, however, was a slave, and all her children were slaves; there were only 12 of them (laughter). The lecturer here gave a most able description of the various departments in a slave home, the children's cabin being largely touched upon. One old woman, who attended them, he could remember, needed to impress on the youngsters that she was the best friend they had. This old lady, who used to walk with a stick, always made them say the Lord's Prayer before going to bed, but whether they said it right or wrong she gave them a 'lick' with her stick before they got through it (laughter). When he was removed to another cabin, he used to be awake and listen to some of the conversation that was going on around. One night he heard it remarked that if any of them could get to the other side of the Niagara River, and on to British soil they would be free, and the speaker resolved to attempt this. During the war² between North and South, Mr. Brown said he could call to mind an interview a runaway slave, who was re-captured, had with a colonel who favoured the South. When asked by the latter the reason he ran away – if he was whipped – the man answered in the negative, and the colonel expressed astonishment at the man's conduct. 'Well, colonel,' said the man, 'the place is vacant, and if you like it why don't you go and take the place.' He (Mr. Brown) related two or three unsuccessful attempts he made to become free, and gave a thrilling recital of the horrors attending a slave market, where the nearest and dearest are separated and sent far away from one another. A mother and her babe were placed upon the auction block to be sold together, but, at

the suggestion of one of the bystanders, it was resolved to put them up in two lots, and they were knocked down to two separate purchasers. Who could adequately describe the scene that followed, when the babe was torn from its mother's breast, the child seeming to understand the situation, for it clung to her and cried 'Mamma, mamma.' This was not so in America now, but the slave trade was still carried on in Africa, and he alluded to the help needed at the establishment at Baltimore, where coloured ministers were trained to go forth and preach the gospel. When he was first free he hardly knew where to go, but eventually got a place on a steamer running up and down the North river. On one occasion, soon afterwards, he saw a lot of men congregated together at one end of the vessel, and he was told by one of the deck hands that they were on strike. 'What does "on strike" mean?' he asked. 'why,' said the man, 'they want more money.' 'Then I'll go on strike' said the lecturer, and he went and joined the men. When asked by the captain to explain their behaviour, the men said 'We want more money.' 'Yes,' said the lecturer, 'We want more money' (laughter). Some of them said 'Here's a man on strike before he has commenced work' (renewed laughter). However, they got their demands. Mrs. Brown and her son (Joe Hamma Zimm Begga Wiggoa) gave some pleasing renderings during the evening, the lecturer assisting in one or two instances. The chairman thanked the lecturer for his excellent discourse, which was full of romance, scenery and incident, and also thanked those who had attended that evening to help forward the work which was so much needed in the dark continent of Africa. The church was crowded, and, doubtless, the two collections amounted to a considerable sum.



Figure 16 21st Century Image of the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Windmill Street, Gravesend, England. (Author copy).

Notes

1. 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 available at: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
2. The US Civil War (1861–1865).



HALLIE QUINN BROWN

(c.1850–1949)

Biographical History

BORN LEGALLY FREE in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Hallie Quinn Brown grew up in a family dedicated to the cause of freedom and social justice. Her parents experienced enslavement and used their home as a station on the Underground Railroad, the liberationist network of safe houses and routes dedicated to ensuring enslaved people made it safely on their journey from enslavement to liberation, which, along with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, greatly impacted Brown's life and career. She attended Wilberforce College in Ohio, the first privately run historically Black university built near Xenia, Ohio, in 1856, and named for white British politician and campaigner William Wilberforce. She graduated in 1873 and travelled to Mississippi to teach newly legally freed people. She moved to South Carolina, and taught at, and served, as the Dean of Allen University. She was also briefly the Dean of Women at Tuskegee Institute. She then crossed the Atlantic to undertake a speaking tour of Britain in the mid-1890s to raise funds for Wilberforce College. At the same time, she lectured on the importance of elocution for the African American community. Ever a social justice campaigner, in her hard-hitting speeches she powerfully protested against the barbaric savagery of white racist lynching mobs as well as the racist injustices, atrocities, and persecutions committed by the US as a white supremacist nation intent on safeguarding the country 'for whites only'.

A deeply committed community organiser, Brown worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), one of the oldest US civil rights organisations, campaigned for an anti-lynching bill, and she wrote several groundbreaking volumes. These include (listed in full below in the further reading): *The Beautiful: A True Story of Slavery* (1924); *Our Women: Past, Present and Future* (1925); *Tales My Father Told and Other Stories* (1925); and *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (1926), a pioneering work of revisionist history in which she detailed the lives of revolutionary Black female freedom fighters, authors, and radical reformers. She also wrote extensively on her theories of elocution in *Bits and Bobs* (1880) and *Elocution and Physical Culture* (1908).

Later during her lifetime, Hallie Quinn Brown again travelled to the British Isles and campaigned against lynching, racial injustice, and segregation. She also demonstrated



Figure 17 Hallie Quinn Brown, by F. S. Biddle, c.1875–1888. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

her skill with elocution, a performance developed through her study of French and classical theories of oratory, gesture, and voice, and she orchestrated a performance for white British monarch Queen Victoria. She served as a professor of elocution at Wilberforce College between 1893–1923, and in her work as a lifelong feminist she was a founding member of the National Association of Colored Women: an organisation for which she served as president between 1920–1924.

In the three speeches reproduced here, Hallie Quinn Brown speaks in Sheffield, England, in 1895, Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1896, and Rhyl, Wales, in 1898, during her multiple visits to the UK.

Further Reading

Archives

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Anon., 'The Education of Freed Slaves', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, 27 February 1895, p.6.

MISS HALLIE Q. BROWN, a coloured lady, mistress of science and elocution of Wilberforce College,¹ Ohio, U.S.A., visited Sheffield yesterday with the object of raising money for the building and furnishing of a new 'Frederick Douglass'² library for that institution. The college, it was explained, has been established as a means of educating teachers for the millions of freed slaves, who at the time of their emancipation were without schools, and considered as practically incapable of education. A meeting was held last evening in the Montgomery Hall in support of the movement, and the hall was crowded to its utmost extent. Mr. A. S. O. Birch presided, and in introducing Miss Brown gave a short sketch of his early connection with the anti-slavery agitation. – Miss Brown, in a brief address, gave a most interesting description of the formation and objects of Wilberforce College. As early as 1856, she said, a number of white Southern planters who were desirous of educating their children, whose mothers were coloured, found it necessary to send them away from the Southern States, where to educate the negro was a crime punished by imprisonment. After much consideration a piece of land in Ohio was purchased by the white Methodist Episcopal Church, and here a college was established with some 75 pupils. All went on smoothly till the outbreak of the war,³ when all communication with the South was cut off, the college declined, and the church found it necessary to dispose of it. An endeavour was made by the Roman Catholic organisation to purchase it for a State Catholic asylum, but ultimately the estate was purchased by Daniel A. Paine,⁴ one of the greatest negro educators the world has ever seen, and taken over by the African Methodist Episcopal Church,⁵ on whose behalf she appealed to them that night. It continued to do a great and noble work on behalf of the negro race, until at length the United States Congress recognised its value, and voted 25,000 dollars towards the erection of extensions. This was followed by a grant of 10,000 dollars from the State of Ohio, in which the college was situated, and now they had a magnificent educational establishment, which no man or woman was prevented from entering, whatever their race, colour, or previous condition. They had on their books numbers from the West Coast of Africa, and over a score from the islands of the sea, Bermuda and Hayti, who were being educated with the object of returning to their native land and lifting their race out of the degradation in which they now existed. Miss Brown continued to

describe the conditions of the millions of freed blacks at present living on the cotton plantations in the South, and the efforts which were being made to free them from the bondage in which they were still held. Later in the evening she charmed her audience with a selection of plantation songs and recitations. The collection taken at the close realised a goodly sum. In the course of the meeting the following resolution was unanimously passed: – ‘That this meeting of 1200 citizens of the city of Sheffield, met under the auspices of the original Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (a brotherhood movement),⁶ Mr. A. S. O. Birch, one of the founders of the movement, in the chair, desires to express its great sympathy with the negro race in the loss they have sustained by the death of their head man or natural leader, Frederick Douglass, and further extends its most hearty sympathy and sincere welcome to Miss Hallie Q. Brown, who has been appointed special representative for the Wilberforce University, Ohio, U.S.A., and who possesses the fullest confidence of its committee and officers for the soliciting and collecting of subscriptions in Europe, Great Britain, and elsewhere, from the general public, for the purpose of erecting the Douglass Free Library Hall in connection with the above-mentioned University, to perpetuate the memory of its noble founder, Frederick Douglass,⁷ and it likewise wishes to place on record its horror and detestation of the cruel and unjust sacrifice of negro life in America by lynching, and pledges itself to do all in its power by moral force and other legitimate means to raise its voice against it, and prays that the Blair Bill,⁸ now before the House of Representatives in America, dealing with this abomination may speedily become law.’

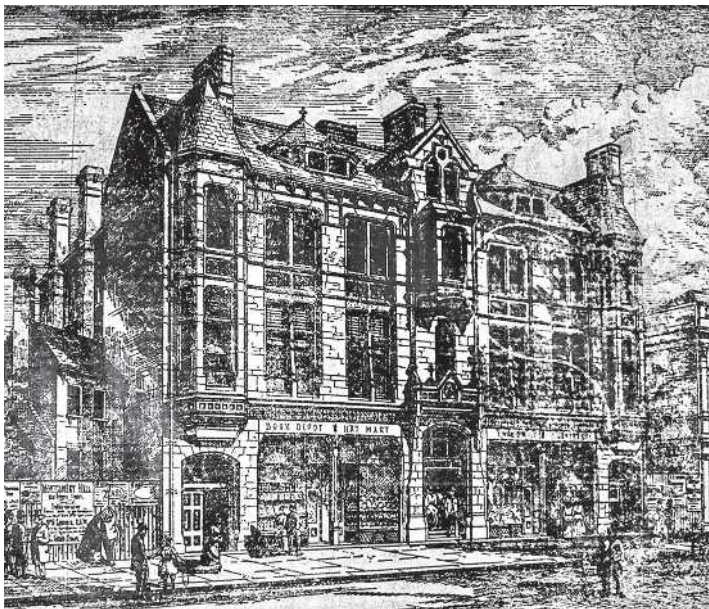


Figure 18 Print of Montgomery Hall, Surrey Street, Sheffield, England, 1884. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. Wilberforce University was built near Xenia, Ohio, in 1856, and was established by the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The institution's name is indebted to white British politician and antislavery campaigner William Wilberforce (1759–1833), and it was the first privately run historically Black university. In 1885, B. W. Arnett and S. T. Mitchell authored the pioneering history, *The Wilberforce Alumna. A Comprehensive Review of the Origin, Development and Present Status of Wilberforce University* (Xenia, OH: The Gazette Office, 1885). Available online: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/lcrbmrp/t0d14/t0d14.pdf>
2. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See 'Frederick Douglass' in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
3. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
4. Daniel Alexander Payne Murray (1852–1925) was a Black bibliographer, librarian, researcher, historian, and scholar. See Robert L. Harris, Jr, 'Daniel Murray and The Encyclopedia of the Colored Race'. *Phylon*, 37.3 (1976): pp.270–282; Elizabeth Downing Taylor, *The Original Black Elite: Daniel Murray and the Story of a Forgotten Era* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017).
5. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a Protestant religious denomination originally founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1816, by Black religious leader, educator, social justice campaigner, and renowned political leader Richard Allen (1760–1831). For further information, see James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
6. For further information on the religious Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement, see David Killingray, 'The Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement: Revival in the West Midlands, 1875–90?' *Studies in Church History*, 44 (2008): pp.262–274.
7. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See 'Frederick Douglass' in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
8. Henry William Blair (1834–1920) was a white New Hampshire-born Republican senator. The Blair Bill was an educational reform bill which would have resulted in huge amounts of funding going into the southern educational system and which sought to end the segregationist and persecutory inequalities facing African American students but it failed to pass into legislation on its final attempt in 1890. See Jeffrey A. Jenkins and Justin Peck, 'The Blair Education Bill: A Lost Opportunity in American Public Education', *Studies in American Political Development* (2020): pp.1–25. Daniel W. Crofts is in no doubt that, 'The most politically promising alternative to federal noninterference discussed during this period was the Blair education bill', emphasising that 'The Blair bill depended upon, and would have reinforced, certain minimal standards of fair treatment for southern blacks.' See Crofts, 'The Black Response to the Blair Education Bill'. *Journal of Southern History*, 37.1 (1971): pp.41, 42–43.



Anon., 'The American Negro. His Aspirations and Grievances',
The Edinburgh Evening News, Edinburgh, Scotland, 14 January 1896, p.4.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE *Evening News* yesterday afternoon had a conversation with Miss Hallie Q. Brown, Lecturer on Elocution in the Wilberforce College,¹ Ohio, U.S.A., the leading American institution for the education of young Black people. Miss Brown, of whom we give a portrait,² is the daughter of an emancipated slave. She is making a tour of this country to secure sympathy and assistance for the education of her compatriots in the United States, and to-morrow evening gives a recital in the Literary Institute. Our representative found Miss Brown eager to lay before the public the case of the American negro, whose troubles are far from having been ended by the mere process of emancipation. 'You see,' she said, 'our race history only really began 30 years ago.' At the time of emancipation³ the negroes in the United States numbered some four millions. Now they number fully seven millions. What has been done towards educating this great population? Thanks to the Christian agencies of the North, schools were set up in the cities and great towns, and in these you find a great degree of intelligence among the negroes. Thirty years ago practically none of the negroes could read or write. It was a crime to teach them. After helping to make the material wealth of America, they were turned adrift, without even the advantages the Russian serfs⁴ had when liberated. They got no land, most of them had not even homes, or, if they had, it was poor cabins, with the rudest furniture. When General O.O. Howard⁵ went down to the South, and carried through a measure legalising the teaching of the blacks, it was no uncommon sight to see grandmother, mother, and daughter seated on the same bench, trying to pick up the rudiments of education. Now the negro illiterates number some 60 per cent, and, remember, the 40 per cent gain has been made in the one generation. There are three-quarters of a million negro children in the schools to-day. Wilberforce College sends out teachers and lecturers all over the country, but the need there is may be guessed from the fact that a knowledge of carpentry is included in the necessary training, for the teacher in many an out-of-the-way locality has to be school architect and builder as well.

THE COLOUR LINE.

Pausing to discuss the racial question in American society, Miss Brown had some striking facts to narrate of the enmity of the white population towards their black

brethren. The feeling, of course, is most bitter in the Southern States – the old slave centres. Even in the North, however, it manifests itself. ‘I have travelled and conversed with educated people of the well-to-do class, who the moment they discovered that I had a drop or two of negro blood in me, got out of the way, looking as though they could have kicked themselves for having even unwittingly fallen into such company.’ In many districts, a negro who went into a white man’s church and took a seat there would promptly be invited out, and, if he did not go, would be hustled out by the police. ‘I am bound to say,’ she added, ‘there is one church in America which recognises no distinction of colour – that is the Roman Catholic.’ In some quarters, even of a city like New York, a negro purchasing property would find his neighbours using all their influence to thwart him from settling beside them. Again, on their railways, the negro must travel in one miserable car only, the ‘Jim Crow car,’⁶ in which all people of colour, refined or not, are expected to travel. They may pay first-class fare – it is all the same. And in the rougher districts of the South, a negro who did so far forget himself as to travel in any other compartment would speedily be hauled out and subjected to mob violence. A negro daren’t as much as look at a white woman. On the other hand, there is no prescription against the meanest of the white travellers entering the ‘Jim Crow’ compartment, and molesting or insulting negro girls and women travelling unprotected there. Miss Brown mentioned that on several occasions, while travelling in the Southern States, she had been warned to change the seat she occupied in the train, or to leave it altogether. The retort that she was a British subject, however, was an effectual stop to demonstrations of this kind. To the credit of Mr. Pullman be it said, that on his cars the provision is honourably maintained that a seat paid for, whatever the race of the traveller, is his beyond question. Again, in the hotels, a like system of petty persecution is in vogue. A negro finds there is no room for him, or prices go up to a preposterous figure. There is no objection to the negro as a waiter. But to sit bedside white folks at table, oh, dear no! You will find advertisements in Southern papers inviting people to settle or sink their money in investments in certain desirable localities, in which the negro ‘knows his proper place.’ There are towns where a negro dare not enter the public parks or places of amusement; where, if he travels on a street steam car, the front portion, besides the engine, is the only place for him.

THE NEGRO IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Of course, negro labour is predominant in the Southern States. There are numerous ways in which the white takes advantage of the poor black. One of these is the ‘check system,’ very much like your ‘truck system’ in this country. On many plantations the black labourers may work for years without touching a penny. Instead, the owner of the estate gives them checks, in return of which they obtain, at a little store belonging to himself, such supplies of maize, meal, bacon, molasses, tobacco, and whisky, as they need – usually of the worse quality, and reckoned at two or three times their normal value. And such proprietors thus living on the sweat of their black labourers do absolutely nothing for their men’s higher interest. Another wicked practice is the exploiting of negro prison labour. You have young negro boys and girls, convicted of trifling offences, which in Britain would be dealt with in a reformatory, sent to the workhouse. That is a very different institution to the workhouse of this country. It

is really a jail. These young offenders are taken out to work by day at building, or road making, or so forth, and locked up again at night. 'I have seen myself,' Miss Brown said, 'girls of 12 chained to hardened criminals, going out to break stones on the roads.' This system, she went on to explain, cuts in two ways. In the first place, it affords a ready means of disfranchising the negro. In the second place, it gives the ruling class a supply of cheap convict labour. You must remember that the negro is physically a fine specimen of humanity. Then there is what is called the 'convict lease system' – the hiring out of prison labour. The desperate rioting by the miners in Tennessee⁷ lately was a protest against the competition of convict labour. Miss Brown detailed one very interesting experience in this respect. She visited a new Agricultural College⁸ in course of erection – a college for white lads, of course – being built by the labour of some hundreds of young black prisoners. The armed warders in charge would have taken effective steps to prevent communication with their convicts had they realised the visitor's descent. Miss Brown, however, was equal to the occasion. Assuming a broken French articulation, she was allowed to converse with the prisoners. She found them under sentences in no cases less than nine months in duration, while the cases were chiefly trifling thefts. One man, indeed, had committed an assault upon a white – a marvellous piece of forbearance it must have been that the offender was not lynched there and then. Another infamous plan of exploiting negro labour is what is known as the 'mortgage system.' A white proprietor advances ground and seed to a negro. But he demands security. It may be a horse or waggon is offered, but that is not enough. The negro mortgages his own labour, that of his wife, and of his children. And so whole families lapse into a condition really worse than that of slavery – worse because they have not even the element of protection which pure selfish care for his property called out on the part of the old slave owner.

LYNCH LAW ATROCITIES.

Miss Brown, who has herself been a witness of the atrocities of a lynching mob, drew a scathing picture of the attitude of the United States Government in this matter. When negroes were cruelly murdered, 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. As an element of anarchy striking at all civilised life, it was to be rejoiced at that at least one State Governor had now intimated his intention of putting down lynching with a strong hand. The one stock excuse for lynchings in the Southern press was the alleged prevalence of assaults by negroes upon white women. It is very strange, said Miss Brown, that up to the emancipation period the qualities chiefly heard of in the negro were his patient labour, his docility, and an almost doglike devotion when well treated. 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. Miss Brown had travelled through long tracts of Southern country, attended by a single negro, and never been molested. Was it to be supposed that the low-class white was above such a simple ruse as blackening his face? All that the negroes asked for was the opportunity of a fair trial, but that the white mobs refused them.

JUGGLING THE NEGRO VOTE

A question by our representative as to the influence of political hatred in accentuating the race war led Miss Brown into an interesting account of the methods by which the negro vote is juggled by unscrupulous politicians. An educated negro, entering the polling booth first, would find the boxes of the various candidates arranged in a particular order. After depositing his own vote, he would go out and instruct his illiterate brethren as to the position of the box which was to receive their 'plumpers.' Meanwhile, however, the astute electioneers would alter the position of the boxes, with unexpected results upon the declaration of the poll. In these latter days the effort was being made to exclude the negroes wholesale by an educational test, which, however, was not presumed to apply to the most ignorant white. The most illiterate Irishman on arrival was a valuable element in politics, but the 'naygurs,' as he soon learned to call them, were political outcasts as well as social lepers. In connection with the general adaptability of the negro under proper training, Miss Brown cited the case of a swampy miasmatic island off the coast of Carolina, where a negro population of 5000 souls lived absolutely without one agency for their improvement, and where, after 27 years' work by two ladies, Miss Murray, of Frogmore, near Windsor, and Miss Town,⁹ the community had risen to possess two churches, two temperance halls, a co-operative store, and not one single serious crime or offence to be reported. It is for the white people, Miss Brown said in conclusion, to help the negro race up to citizenship in the land to which they had been forcibly taken. What Britain can do in the matter is to express such an opinion upon the treatment of the coloured people as America cannot mistake. America is wonderfully sensitive to

Entertainments.
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TO-NIGHT. TO-NIGHT.
 AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPANY.
 The Great BROTHERS HARLOW, JENNIE DOVER,
 ALLAN M'ARRELL, SISTERS ELY, ESMAY, J.
 T. DANIELA, DEXTERIA GBO, DOUGLAS, GBO,
 FREDERICKA, and the Great JAMES ASCHEN.
 Prices from 2d to 5s.

VOLUNTEER HALL, BROUGHTY
FERRY.
 THIS EVENING, AT 8,
 Miss HALLIE Q. BROWN
 IN HER
 UNIQUE DRAMATIC AND HUMOROUS RECITAL,
 T. S. ROSS, Esq., FARMING.
 Tickets at FATHERSON'S, Bookbinder, and Hall Door—
 2s (Reserved), 1s, and 6d.

KINNAIRD HALL, THURSDAY, FEB. 20TH.

THE QUEEN OF RECITERS.
 KINNAIRD HALL, FEB. 20.
MISS HALLIE Q. BROWN
 IN HER UNIQUE
 DRAMATIC AND HUMOROUS
 RECITAL,
 INTRODUCING NOVELTIES IN DIALECT,
 HUMOROUS, AND COSTUME PIECES,
 ASSISTED BY
 Miss ETHEL BOWDEN,
 the New Soprano,
 AND
 Mr W. F. W. JACKSON,
 Mus. Bac., Organ.
 Tickets at FATHERSON'S, Reform Street, and Hall Door.
 Prices—2s (Reserved), 1s, and 6d.
 "ONE OF THE FINEST FEMALE ELOCUTIONISTS
 IN THE WORLD."

Figure 19 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Hallie Quinn Brown. (The British Library Board, *Dundee Courier*, Scotland, 18 February 1890, p.5.

British opinion, war¹⁰ scare or no war scare. And you may be sure of this, that it is not the negroes in America who are inclined for a war with Britain, a country they regard as the friend and liberator of their race.

Notes

1. Wilberforce University was built near Xenia, Ohio, in 1856, and established by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The institution's name is indebted to white British politician and antislavery campaigner William Wilberforce (1759–1833), and it was the first privately run historically Black university. In 1885, B. W. Arnett and S. T. Mitchell authored the pioneering history, *The Wilberforce Alumnae. A Comprehensive Review of the Origin, Development and Present Status of Wilberforce University* (Xenia, OH: The Gazette Office, 1885). Available online: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/lcrbmrp/t0d14/t0d14.pdf>
2. This newspaper article was accompanied with an image of Brown, likely reproduced from a photograph.
3. 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 available at: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
4. The 1861 Emancipation Reform act succeeded in abolishing the system of serfdom in the Russian Empire. 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).
5. Oliver Otis Howard (1830–1909) was a white US Civil War general for the Union Army. After the war, he was appointed as the head of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. See William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedman* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1994).
6. '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 car'.
7. For further information on 'the desperate rioting by the miners', see the following: James B. Jones, Jr, 'Convict Lease Wars', 2017, *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, available online: <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/convict-lease-wars/>; Pete Daniel, 'The Tennessee Convict War'. *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 34.3 (1975): pp.273–292.
8. For further information, see John R. Wennersten, 'The Travail of Black Land-Grant Schools in the South, 1890–1917'. *Agricultural History*, 65.2 (1890): pp.54–62.
9. Laura Matilda Towne (1825–1901) was a white U.S. abolitionist, teacher, and educator who taught in freed people's schools in St. Helena Island, South Carolina. See Kurt J. Wolf, 'Laura M. Towne and the Freed People of South Carolina, 1862–1901'. *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 98.4 (1997): pp.375–405.
10. There are several possibilities that may explain Brown's 'war scare' comment. She is perhaps referring to the Venezuelan Crisis of 1895, or how British public opinion played a significant role during the US Civil War (1861–1865).



Anon., 'Miss Hallie Q. Brown at Rhyl', *Rhyl Record and Advertiser*, Rhyl, Denbighshire, Wales, 10 December 1898, p.8.

MISS HALLIE Q. BROWN, who had a hearty reception then addressed the meeting. Taking for her subject 'Slaves in America and elsewhere,' she traced the origin of slavery in America from the introduction of 19 slaves taken out of Africa by a Dutch ship and landed in Virginia.¹ During the 250 years there sprang from these 19 slaves four millions of slaves who for 250 years were under the lash of the overseer and treated as mere brutes held in subjection, and it was only a little over 30-years ago² since they were set free. She gave a vivid description of emancipation day when four millions of people marched from slavery into freedom. There had been many

RETURN VISIT OF
Miss Hallie Q. Brown
 (Afro-American) from Wilberforce College, Ohio,
 Mistress of Science and Elocution), U.S.A., who
 will give
 TEMPERANCE LECTURES as follows :
 Wednesday, December 7th, in the Town Hall,
 "Some Classes in America and elsewhere."
 Thursday, December 8th, in the English Baptist
 Chapel, Sussex Street, which is kindly lent, "The
 Trail of the Serpent." Admission, Front Seats
 (either evening), 6d. Other seats free. Doors
 open at 7.30. To commence at 8 prompt.
 A TREAT — DON'T MISS IT.—On FRIDAY
 EVENING, December 9th, in the TOWN HALL,
 Miss HALLIE Q. BROWN will give a GRAND
 REPERT of pathetic and humorous pieces, Negro
 Melodies, &c. For further particular see handbills.
 Tickets, Reserved Seats, 1s. 6d. Front Seats, 1s.
 Second Seats, 6d. Doors open at 7.30. To Com-
 mence at 8 prompt

Figure 20 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Hallie Quinn Brown. (The British Library Board, *Rhyl Record and Advertiser*, Wales, 3 December 1898, p.4.)

brilliant pageants since then but never such a pageant as that when these people marched from ignorance, darkness and bondage, into the heights of freedom, and of manhood and womanhood (applause.) Describing the agitation of the abolitionists and the war of the North and South she said that the only class of people who held aloof from war were the publicans, they stayed home and coined money. The Government then stepped in and claimed some of the money and in 1863 they imposed the liquor tax. So, simultaneously with the liberation of the slaves the people became slaves to the drink traffic. From this circumstance she built up a powerful temperance address in which she gave some dramatic instances of the ruin caused by drink, and made an impressive appeal for total abstinence. In conclusion, Miss Brown gave an old plantation melody and a recitation. On Thursday she lectured at the English Baptist Chapel, Sussex Street, on the ‘Trail of the Serpent,’³ and to-night (Friday) she gives a recital at the Town Hall.



Figure 21 Photograph of Rhyl Town Hall, Rhyl, Wales. (History Points and Rhyl History Club.)

Notes

1. ‘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/>
2. 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 here: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>

3. Genesis 3:14.



JOHN BROWN

(c.1818–1876)

Biographical History

JOHN BROWN EXPERIENCED enslavement in Southampton County, Virginia. He was legally sold by white US enslavers to the southern state of Georgia when he was ten years old. He attempted to secure his self-liberation several times: he used his ingenious skill to construct a raft and floated to Tennessee and then onto Ohio, but he accidentally took passage on a steamer heading to New Orleans. As part of his deliberate survival strategy, he allowed himself to be re-enslaved and was forcibly taken to Mississippi where he used his sailing skills yet again to reach Arkansas, then painfully walked 2,000 miles to Michigan. He finally reached Canada, where he joined with a group of Cornish miners who together all worked at Lake Superior in 1847. He was employed by a mining company there for a year and a half, and travelled to Redruth, England, to seek white British Captain Joseph Teague, who had promised him some support, though tragically Teague had died by the time Brown arrived in Redruth.

During his lectures in the British Isles, Brown was a strong supporter of the Free Produce Movement, a campaign to import free-grown products from India or the African continent instead of importing goods produced by enslaved people from the US South. Brown sang songs, exhibited drawings and instruments of torture, and worked with other Black men on British soil including fellow freedom fighter and temperance activist, Benjamin Benson. Across his many writings and speeches, he related the story of John Glasgow, a Black British sailor who had been seized during a voyage to the United States and legally sold into enslavement, and he also recounted hideous acts of torture he experienced under a white racist ‘doctor’ in Virginia. In 1854, Brown published *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, and settled in London. He married a white English woman whose name we do not know and undertook new labours as a botanist and herbalist.

Here we reproduce John Brown’s ‘Lecture on Slavery in America’ which he delivered in Bristol, England, in 1852.

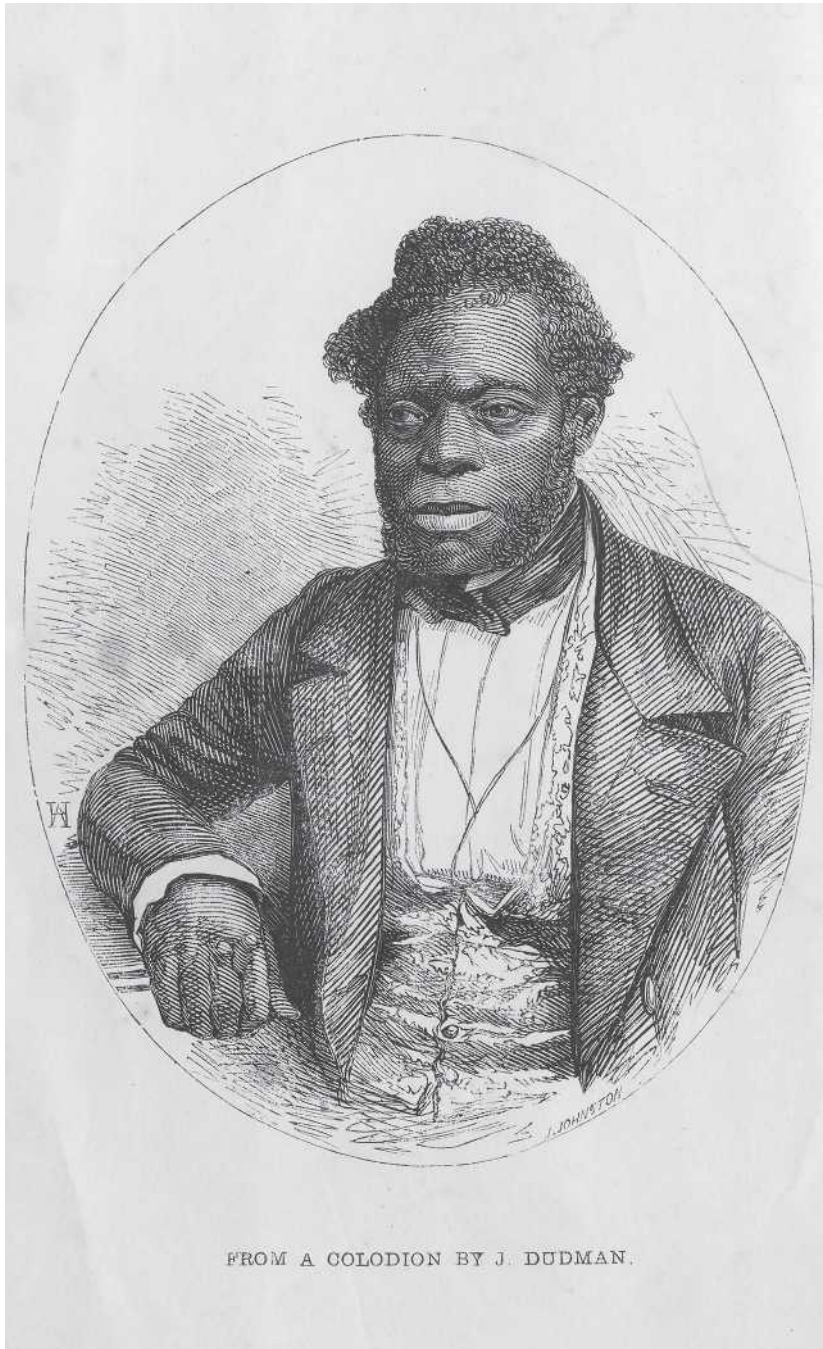


Figure 22 John Brown, author portrait from Brown and ed. Louis Alexis Chamerovzow, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England*. London: W. M. Watts, 1855. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Further Reading

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Secondary

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Anon., 'Anti Slavery Lecture', *Bristol Times*,
Bristol, England, 25 September 1852, p.3.

ON TUESDAY EVENING, Mr. John Brown, a fugitive Slave, delivered a Lecture on Slavery in America at the Tailor's Hall, Broad-street. Mr. T. SAUNDERS, occupied the chair.

The LECTURER commenced by apologising for his rough and uncultivated language. He confessed that he was wholly uneducated; he had been a slave and in America it was a crime to educate a slave. He could neither read nor write, and there were millions of his countrymen in the same condition. The mass of them did not know their right hand from their left. Their masters knew that if a Slave were educated their power would be gone, and hence every effort was made to keep the Slaves in ignorance. But, however faulty his speech might be, he hoped to be able to convey to their minds some faint idea of American Slavery as experienced in his own person. In America as they were perhaps aware, there were upwards of 3,000,000 slaves, whilst the slave holders did not number but a small portion of the population, and were not indeed so numerous as the ministers of religion. He had been a slave in Georgia, and as doubts had been expressed upon this point, and it had been hinted that he was an imposter, he would remark that he could prove by a number of witnesses now living in England that what he said was perfectly true, since they knew him as a slave, and knew also the name and residence of his master. He had then been a slave in Georgia; had experienced many of the horrors of slavery, and had moreover, a father and mother, and brothers and sisters still in the same condition. 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. At such times it was customary to see the best and strongest slaves for field hands, the young and aged being left behind as unfit to till the land. This necessarily caused much separation betwixt the various members of families. It was on one such occasion as this that he was sold and separated from his relatives. He was chained and handcuffed, and in that condition he had to travel seven hundred miles. At night they rested by laying down in the public highways. 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. The widow of Morgan was unable to have his master punished

for the murder, because there were no witnesses to the deed. It was true that the man fell dead into his (Mr. Brown's) arms, but that mattered not; a slave was unable to give evidence against his master, who might commit any crime with impunity, provided that he had only slaves as witnesses of his deeds. It so happened that his master fell ill and was attended by Dr. Hamilton. This Dr. Hamilton had the good fortune to cure his master, who, as a mark of gratitude, lent him a slave for nine months to experimentise upon. That slave was himself. The Dr. wished to try the strength of his constitution, and for that purpose he dug a hole 3 feet by 2 feet, covered it over, and having exhausted the air there from, placed him in it to keep him there till he nearly fainted. This was renewed again and again, the Dr. giving him each time various drinks in order to see which sustained his strength the longest. Cayenne pepper tea was found to answer the purpose best. The Dr. discovered by this experiment that this treatment was a good remedy for rheumatism, and if any one doubted it, he was at liberty to try the experiment for himself. Dr. Hamilton next made a series of experiments upon his skin, with the view of ascertaining what caused the difference of colour in men. Subsequently his master again became ill and lost his speech, and he had to wait upon him, and convey messages to and fro to his mistress. The slaves all prayed that their master might die; he wished it and thought that as he had not taken his speech from him he would not help him. He did not give the messages to his mistress, and so his master died. The slaves were all glad of it, for he was a cruel master; he may have done wrong in letting him die, but at the time he thought that He who had taken away his master's speech knew what he was about. His master's executor was even worse, and he (Mr. B.) then began to entertain the idea of getting over to England. He had heard of England from John Glasgow,¹ who was a coloured British subject. John Glasgow had lived in England, and had a wife and two children living there, but being a black man, he had been seized on his return to America and sold. John Glasgow had told him that in England a black man, if honest and industrious, was as much esteemed as a white man, and this made him long to come to England. Mr. Brown then proceeded to narrate the manner of his escape and the trials to which he was subjected. He was recaptured once, but escaped again to New Orleans, when, finding himself destitute, he gave himself up as a runaway slave, and was sold to a new master for 1200 dollars. His object in giving himself up was to provide himself a home till some favourable opportunity of escape should present itself. This soon offered, and he succeeded in getting to Canada. There he fell in with a party of miners from Cornwall in England, under the command of Capt. Jones. He worked with this company for sometime as a carpenter, and subsequently by Captain Jones' advice and promise of assistance, he came to England, but upon reaching Redruth, in Cornwall, he learnt that Captain Jones had unfortunately died in Boston just before he left. This loss left him completely destitute, and finding that the British were much his superiors in handicraft, he was unable to obtain a livelihood at his trade, and was compelled to throw himself upon the kindness of the public. Mr. Brown concluded by remarking that although England had paid £20,000,000² for the freedom of the slaves in the West Indies, that money in reality remained in England. It was given to English merchants and planters, and none of it went to the poor slave. But England having given this large sum with the view of abolishing slavery, was now upholding that system by the market she offered for slave-grown produce, which was found to be cheaper than free-labour. He could not understand this policy. He may be pardoned for speaking

out; some allowance must be made for his feelings as he had relatives still in slavery. He did, then, say it was dishonest to use slave grown produce, because it was the produce of roguery. 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. This was the truth, and he was bound to tell the truth. He spoke not for himself alone, but for his brethren in America. He did not say that all masters were cruel; they differed. Nor were the local laws of all the States alike. Some of them were very inhuman. For instance, if a slave struck a white man, he might have his right arm cut off as close to the shoulder as possible. He himself had seen a master throw a stone at a woman and break her ribs. No punishment was awarded for this. He denied that the condition of the slaves was better than that of the working classes of this country, and hoped the latter would be spared from trying the experiment. It was true, however, that since the abolition of slavery³ in the West Indies the condition of other slaves had much altered for the worst. At the conclusion of his lecture, Mr. Brown sang one of the songs selected from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁴

Notes

1. For further information on John Brown's relationship with John Glasgow, see Ikuko Asaka, 'Different Tales of John Glasgow: John Brown's Evolution to *Slave Life in Georgia*'. *Journal of Black Studies*, 49.3 (2018): pp.212–234; Jeffrey Green, '133: John Brown and John Glasgow, 1855', available online at: <https://jeffreygreen.co.uk/133-john-brown-and-john-glasgow-1855/>
2. For further information on this 'compensation money', see 'Context' included as part of the 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership: University College London', available online at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/context/>
3. For further information, see Olwyn Mary Blouet, 'Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies, 1823–33: The Role of Education'. *History of Education Quarterly*, 30.4 (1990): pp.625–643.
4. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.



WILLIAM WELLS BROWN

(c.1814–1884)

Biographical History

ONE OF THE most prolific African American writers of the nineteenth century, William Wells Brown experienced enslavement in Kentucky. Resolving to secure his self-liberation after he witnessed the brutal, barbaric, and murderous treatment of his fellow enslaved individuals, Brown's first self-liberation attempt which he undertook with his mother resulted in tragedy: he and his mother were severely punished by their white enslaver. In 1834, he successfully secured his self-liberation to Ohio – this time on his own – and became a world-leading antislavery activist and a soldier in the fight for social justice. Over the decades, he was a leading conductor on the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses where freedom seekers could secure their self-liberation from enslavement to the northern states and beyond. He also spoke regularly on behalf of white US abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison's radical antislavery organisation, the American Antislavery Society, based in Boston and founded in 1833.

In 1847, Brown published his first autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, and travelled to the British Isles for five years to inform British audiences on the horrors of enslavement. He published a travel narrative detailing his experiences across Britain and France, entitled *Three Years in Europe: Or, Places I have Seen and People I have Met*, printed in London in 1852; an expanded edition followed in Boston three years later. He also published a fictional work, *Clotel; Or the President's Daughter*, widely regarded as one of the first novels to be published by an African American author, and which centred on the tragedies and traumas experienced by two women, Clotel and her sister Althesa, the enslaved daughters of Thomas Jefferson, a white US enslaver and third US President (1801–1809).

By his own estimation, Brown travelled over 25,000 miles in Britain and Ireland and spoke in large cities as well as rural or fishing villages along the coast, exhibiting his great Panorama of Slavery, a large painting on canvas depicting the horrors of the slave trade, the Middle Passage, and enslavement in the United States. He was often accompanied by fellow freedom fighters and survivors of enslavement William Craft (1824–1900) and Ellen Craft (1826–1891, see 'Ellen Craft; William Craft' in this volume). In Newcastle, the white UK abolitionist and Quaker family Henry, Ellen, and Anna Richardson purchased his legal freedom and he returned to the United States a legally free man. After he returned to the US, he wrote and performed two plays; the first in 1856 entitled

Experience; or, How to Give a Northern Man a Backbone, and the second *The Escape; or A Leap for Freedom* in 1858, a semi-autobiographical work. Brown accompanied both plays with his antislavery lectures to great acclaim and lasting success.

Brown was also a revisionist historian of Black histories and cultures and corrected white racist narratives by publishing his pioneering historiographical volumes, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* in 1863, followed by *The*

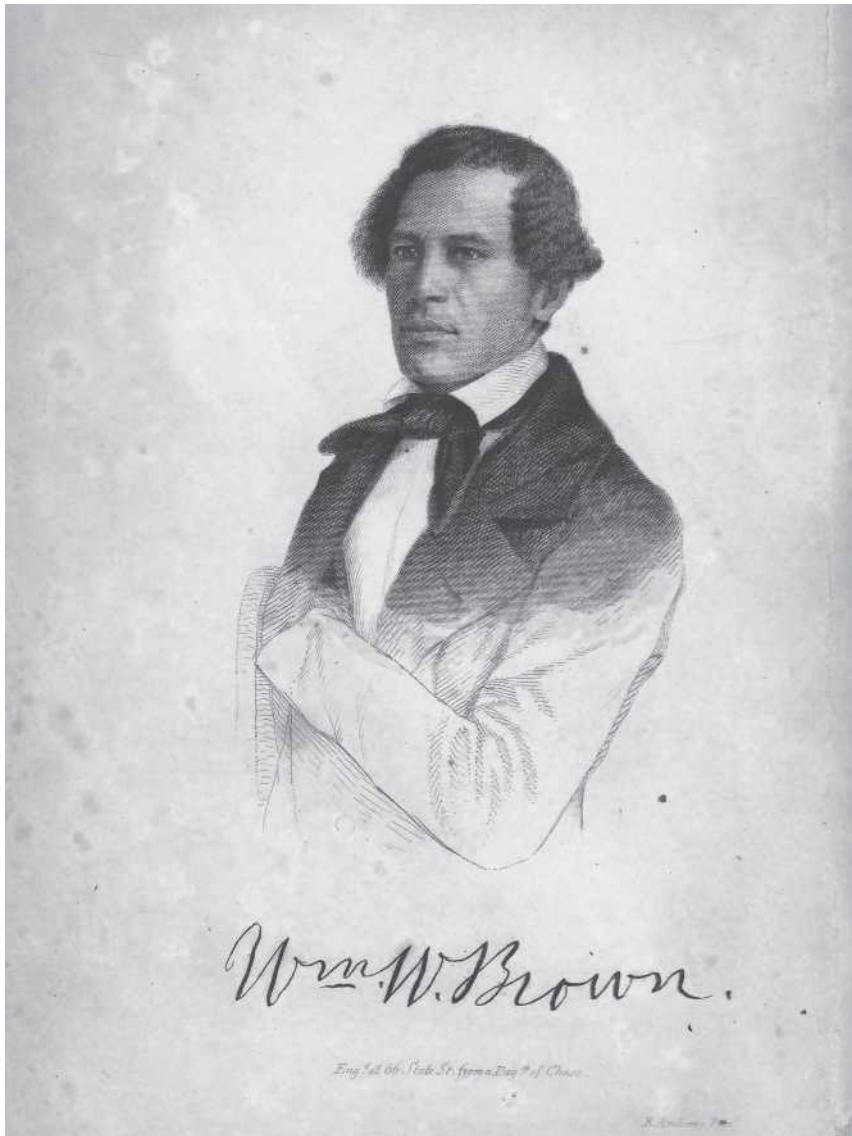


Figure 23 William Wells Brown, author portrait from Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave. Written by Himself*. London: Charles Gilpin, 1852. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Negro in the American Revolution in 1867. During the US Civil War, he campaigned for African American men to enlist in the Union Army as combat soldiers and continued to advance the temperance cause and equal rights until his death in 1884 in Massachusetts.

Here we reproduce speeches William Wells Brown gave in England: in North Shields and Leeds in 1850; and in Carlisle and Nottingham in 1851.

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Anon., 'William Wells Brown', *North and South Shields Gazette*,
North Shields, England, 4 January 1850, p.5.

W^{M.} WELLS BROWN, a fugitive slave, delivered two addresses on the subject of American Slavery, in the Lecture Room, North Shields, on Thursday and Friday, 27th and 28th ult. Alderman Mease presided on both occasions, and the meetings were numerously attended by respectable audiences. The chairman, after a few appropriate observations on the demoralizing effects of slavery both on the slaves and on the owners, introduced Mr. Brown to the meeting, who gave many interesting details relative to the condition of the slave, and the present aspect of the anti-slavery movement. He stated that many slaves were not distinguishable in colour from the whitest Europeans, and cited an instance where two highly educated young ladies, daughters of a physician, who had redeemed his wife (their mother) from slavery, were dragged back by the ruthless creditor of their father, who had died insolvent, into a state of bondage. The Congress of the United States have, within the last few years, passed an iniquitous law, according to which any free man of colour found in Washington or in the district of Columbia, without the evidences of his freedom upon him, may be immured in prison until he is able to produce proof of his freedom. If these evidences of his freedom are produced, and he is yet unable to pay his goal fees, which amount to 5s. per day, he is liable to be sold into slavery at the expiration of six months, when the balance of the money received for him, after paying the goal fees, is carried to the United States exchequer. What are called negro pens, places in Washington where negroes are received, who are brought to the city for the purposes of sale, are the property of government, which lets them out to the highest bidder. As a specimen of the garbled religious instruction which is given to the slaves, where any attention is paid to the subject, he instanced the teaching of his own master. His slaves were regularly assembled for the purpose of religious tuition, when he read to them portions of Scripture, and encouraged his slaves to ask for explanation of what they did not understand. On one such occasion, soon after Mr. Brown, alias 'Sampe,' had returned to him after having been hired out for a year, many of the slaves asked questions on various points, when the master turning to him said 'Sampe, have you any questions to ask?' 'Yes sir, I have.' 'Well, what is it?' 'Pray, masser, what does this mean, "what thing soever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them?"' 'Sirrah, where did you learn that?' 'I heard it when

I was hired out massa.’ ‘Strange thing that we cannot hire out a nigger man a day without his being spoiled; however, I’ll explain it to you. If you were a white man you would be a white man, wouldn’t you?’ ‘Yes, sir.’ ‘And if I were a black man and your slave, you would wish me to be very good and obedient to you, wouldn’t you?’ ‘Yes, sir.’ ‘Well then, as you would wish me to be, so you are to be obedient and do every thing I tell you. But now, sir, you are only to ask questions about what I read to you, and if you ever ask me such a question again, I’ll give you a right good harruping. I’ll teach you not to go up and down hunting for what Scriptures you choose to question me upon.’ In regard to the progress of public opinion in America, in consequence of the abolition movement, his statements were cheering, and furnished a satisfactory answer to those who doubt the utility of any impression of sentiment in England on the subject. The Americans are exceedingly sensitive on this point, and to that may in fact be attributed the entire disappearance of negro pens from the churches, and of ‘Jim Crow cars’ from the railways, throughout the whole of the New England States. In the city of Boston, when, 15 years ago, Wm. L. Garrison,¹ was on the point of being subjected to Lynch law, the halter being actually placed around his neck, for no other reason than that he had ventured to meet a few ladies to give information respecting slavery, in that city, the negroes are now placed on a footing of almost perfect equality with the white people. Indeed they receive much the same treatment which they would meet with in any of our English cities. The condition of the slaves has also been in some degree ameliorated, and their escape from slavery facilitated. The lectures closed after a resolution had been unanimously passed deprecating slavery, and pledging each individual to use his influence to abolish it. A vote of thanks to the chairman and lecturer was likewise passed.

Note

1. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879).



Anon., 'Slavery in America', *The Leeds Mercury*, Leeds, Yorkshire, England, 19 January 1850, p.7.

MR. BROWN, WHO spoke with much effect, and in a style of great perspicuity, said the subject he had come there to lay before them was one that he had no need to say should commend itself to the hearts of the English people, as it was one in reference to which they had shown by their past acts that it not only commended itself, but that they duly appreciated it. He occupied that evening a strange position, or it might seem so to some. He was here from the United States of America, the country of his nativity. People were so accustomed to speak highly of the institutions under which they had been bred and reared, that it might seem strange that one from the boasted land of liberty, one from 'The Land of the free and the home of the brave,'¹ should arraign the Government of that people before the British public. (Hear, hear.) He came there not for the purpose of misrepresenting, of praising, or of speaking against the Government of America, but he came there as the representative of the three millions of slaves of America, and of the anti-slavery movement of that country. 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; he chose rather to send his own representative, one who had himself worn the chain of slavery. He should therefore speak of slavery as he had seen it, and as he knew it to exist in the slave holding states of America. (Hear, hear.) Though the question of slavery had often been discussed, and had again and again been brought before the people of this country, and they had read in the public journals accounts of slavery in America, yet the great mass of the people had but a very faint idea of what American slavery is. (Hear, hear.) In the United States, amid all their republicanism, with all the glorious institutions which were to be found in that country, to the great shame of the American people and Government, it must be said, that no less than three millions, or one-sixth portion of the people of that country, were clanking the chains of slavery. (Hear, hear.) Almost all civilized nations in the world had abandoned slavery as infamous; the good and the wise throughout the world looked upon chattel slavery as something which belonged to the dark ages, and as something which ought not to exist amongst civilized people; and yet strange it was that amidst all the discussions going on in favour of freedom, and all that was said in favour of the elevation of man and of bettering the condition of the human

family, the professed Republicans of America were at the present time holding more slaves, and were doing more to perpetuate slavery, than any other nation in the world. (Hear.) No one could certainly conceive of what chattel slavery was, or of the injury which it inflicted, unless he had seen it as it existed in the United States. The slavery in the United States was worse, he believed, than in any other part of the world; he knew of no place where slavery was to be found, that laws existed to keep it in existence so odious as had been enacted by the Government and the people of the United States. In America the law had defined what slavery was. According to this law, a slave was a chattel, a thing, a piece of property belonging to the master. (Hear, hear.) The slave could own nothing, acquire nothing, but what was the property of his master. The master might sell him, give him away, beat him, or do what he liked, the slave could have nothing to say – he had no voice whatever, but was under the absolute control of the man who claimed his body and soul as his property. (Hear, hear.) The American slaveholder, knowing that slavery was founded in ignorance, and that nothing but ignorance could keep the slave in his present condition, every effort was made to degrade and keep from him education and intelligence, and everything calculated to develop the man. And the more effectually to keep the slaves in this degraded condition, they had enacted laws in the United States of such a character that the people of the civilized world would scarcely believe to have been passed by any nation. In most of the States there was a law inflicting a penalty of £100 upon any one teaching a slave to read and write; for the second offence, in some of the States, the penalty was death, in addition to the fine; and in other States it was imprisonment of not less than one or more than ten years at the discretion of the Court. These laws had been rigidly enforced by the Government of America. The slave under such circumstances could expect no protection whatever except such as the master pleased to extend, for it was a settled question in the United States that there should be no higher appeal for the slave than the mere will of the tyrant who claimed him for his property. It was a common opinion in this country that the slaves were well cared for, well fed, and taken care of; and it was urged that as an Englishman cared for his horse, so would a slaveholder care for a good valuable slave. There was some force of reasoning in this. But look for a moment, a slave, though a slave, was a man, a horse was but a horse. In England they had no laws to protect them against an insurrection of horses – (hear, hear, and laughter) – no law to protect them against a horse kicking them. But in America there was a law to protect the master against the insurrection of the slave, and against the slave attempting to acquire his liberty, because they well knew that without such laws, the slave would attempt to get his liberty, as did the Americans in 1776.² (Applause.) In Louisiana the penalty for a slave striking a white man was death. It might be asked, would a master enforce the infliction of such a penalty against a valuable slave, if he thereby should lose what was worth perhaps £100? No, he would not, but this law was passed in order to create terror in the minds of slaves; and another law was passed to compensate the owner for the loss of his slaves in such cases, who was entitled to receive pay for his slave out of the treasury of the state; thus every man in that state was taxed for the purpose of compensating the slaveholder for the loss of the slave executed. (Hear, hear.) But in his opinion the worst feature in that institution was that which beastialized the slave, kept him in a state of degradation, which would not allow the mind to develop itself, for the slave holder knew very well that if the slave population could

only receive the light which was falling upon the human mind, and they could be placed in the more favourable circumstances which surround the people throughout the world, they could not be kept in chains and bondage. Hence if a slave was content to be degraded, he was considered to be a good servant, but if he attempted to elevate himself he was tied up, and his body lacerated, in order to teach him that elevation was not for him. In illustration of this law, he stated that some years ago a missionary, who had given a slave a Bible and a tract in New Orleans was taken into custody for so doing, and when he pleaded in defence that he was spreading Christianity, Judge Baldwin, who tried him, said he must bring forward some other plea than that, as the Americans had an institution, that of slavery, which was dearer to them than the Gospel itself. (Hear.) In the end the missionary pleaded his ignorance of the law, and was permitted, on payment of costs, and promising never to give another Testament or tract to a negro in the State, to depart. It had been said both in America and in this country that the labouring people of England were worse off than the slaves of America. Now he would not so insult his audience or the labouring people of this country, as to compare the condition of the latter to that of the slaves. The chattel slave of America could be bought and sold, and he could not protect himself, his wife or his children. A labouring man in England might not have as good wages as men in a similar condition in America, but he was a free man. (Hear, hear.) A labouring man here might not have a good suit of clothes, but a chattel slave was not only unable to own a good suit of clothes, but he was not able to own even himself. (Hear, hear.) Then again, the labouring people of this country gave the warmest reception to a fugitive slave, whilst the slave was not allowed to welcome one of his poor fugitive brethren on his way to Canada or any where else. (Hear, hear.) The slaveholder was to be found amongst the highest and almost the lowest in America; no man was too elevated and no man was too low to own a slave, if he could raise the money to purchase one. He was amused a day or two since, whilst reading the Message of the American President³ to the Congress, to find him speaking of the African slave trade as a barbarous traffic in human flesh and bones, the President being a man who himself had a cotton plantation, with over 300 slaves upon it, with a negro driver to drive them out in the morning and back again at night with a long whip; and this was the man to call the African slave trade a barbarous traffic in human flesh and blood, which ought to be put down, and this too in addressing American citizens, themselves deeply engaged in the slave trade. (Hear, hear.) The slave trade of America had been called one of its worst features, for more than 100,000 slaves were annually carried from the slave rearing to the slave consuming states; taken too without any regard to the tenderest feelings of husband and wife, or brother and sister. In order to give them some idea of the slave trade, he would just inform the audience that he (Mr. Brown) was once sold for £80 to a man who sold him again for £100; the man who paid £100 sold him again for £130; and from the man who paid £130 for him he ran away. (Applause.) He then proceeded to state that the abolition question had made greater progress during the last two or three years than at any period during the last twenty years, and that a great and glorious development of it had taken place by the escape of fugitive slaves. He thought too that the ingenuity displayed by the slaves who escaped from the slave to the free states of America, was of itself a refutation of the absurd doctrine of his old friend, Thomas Carlyle,⁴ who had asserted the inferiority of the negro race. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Some of the modes by which slaves

had effected their escape would do credit to any person whatever, no matter how intellectual he might be. Only think of a man getting himself nailed up in a box 3 feet 2 inches long, 2½ feet wide, and 2 feet deep,⁵ then getting iron bands put round it, prior to his being packed off to the free states, and living in that box for twenty-six hours during his passage, and breathing God's pure air through a gimlet hole. (Hear, hear.) Now that a slave should make his escape in that way spoke volumes against the institutions of the country which compelled a man to undergo such treatment in order to gain his liberty. And here he must be allowed to remark that of all the support slavery got in the United States, no institution gave it more than the religious institutions of the country. (Hear, hear.) The slaveholder hid himself behind the pulpit, and put forward the Bible as his text book, professing to gather from that book the right and authority to enslave his fellow-man; he hid himself behind the religious, the social, and the commercial and other institutions of the country. It appeared strange to him that with slavery thus entrenched behind these institutions, so much progress had been made during the last ten years by the Anti-Slavery movement in that country, but nevertheless a great warfare had been carried on and a great work accomplished. True, slavery had not been annihilated, but the slaveholder was trembling because they saw the day was not far distant when the scepter would fall from their hands. But slavery, he said was not confined to colour, and he related how a white woman contrived to escape with her husband,⁶ a man of colour from the Slave State of Georgia to the Free States. Having obtained a suit of man's clothing, she travelled as a southern gentleman, taking her husband with her, he passing as her servant or slave, and thus they both reached the free States in safety. Mr. Brown next mentioned several instances of members of the Society of Friends, who for feeding and harbouring fugitive slaves had been fined and ruined by legal proceedings taken against them for so doing, the fine for every such offence being £100. One Quaker (Mr. Garrett)⁷ was fined £900 for having harboured some slaves, and though he had all his property seized to pay the same, he afterwards declared to his accusers that his door should never be shut against any slave escaping from slavery. He (Mr. Brown) never spake of slaveholders without thinking of his old master. He liked to speak of him because he was his uncle. (Laughter.) This old gentleman, who brought him up, and who he called his uncle was one of the most pious-appearing men in the neighbourhood where he resided; one of the leading men in the denomination to which he was attached. (Hear, hear.) If any clergyman of his denomination came into that part of the country where he resided, they were sure to hunt out Dr. Young, for he had a fine house, a great many servants, and horses and carriages to convey his visitors from place to place without the cost of a single penny to them. He always said his slaves were better than other people, because he always was particular in giving them instruction in what he believed to be the light and truth of Christianity. If he tied a slave up to flog him, he also read Scripture to him to satisfy him that he had been made for a slave. He was an excellent hand at explaining Scripture, that was, such portions as he read to his slaves, for he was constantly reading such passages as 'Servants be obedient to your masters,'⁸ 'He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'⁹ (Hear, hear, and laughter.) His master once asked him if he did not want to ask a question; if he did not want something explaining. Now, he had not been accustomed to ask his master any questions, because he had no confidence in his explanations, but since he had invited him he thought he

would ask him one question, and he said 'Master, what does that passage of scripture mean which reads 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them?''¹⁰ (Hear, hear, applause, and laughter.) He replied, 'Where did you learn any thing of that kind; did I ever read any thing of the kind to you?' Oh, no, sir, you never read any thing of the sort to me. Then said he, where did you hear it? In the city, said I. Oh, said he, a man cannot now send his slave into the city without his being spoiled. 'Sandford,' said he, for that was the name given me, 'I will explain that to you, but mind you never ask me such questions again, or I will *lallap* (flog) you well.' And when he said this he always was as good as his word; he was a Christian in that respect, he never lied. He said I will tell you what it means. If you were a white man you would be a white one, would you not? Very likely I should, said I. Well, said he, and if you were a white man and I was your slave, you would want me to obey you. Yes, said I, I should. Well, replied he, whatsoever you would that I should do to you if I were your slave so you must do to me, you being my servant. (Laughter.) I thought I had the old gentleman in a close corner, and I wanted to have further discussion, but it would not do, for a slave must not ask a second question without permission. Mr. Brown next proceeded to urge the importance of the English people aiding the anti-slavery movement, by discouraging the slaveholders in every possible way. In fact, by acting as O'Connell¹¹ once did, when Mr. Stevenson, the American minister to this country, wanted to be introduced to him. O'Connell asked what state he came from, and whether he was a slaveholder. The Minister replied that he came from Virginia and was a slaveholder. Then, said O'Connell, you cannot shake my hand, Sir. (Applause.) From that moment, O'Connell, who had been a great favourite with the people of America, lost caste with the slaveholders. Now, continued Mr. Brown, let me give you an account of the escape of one more fugitive slave, from the city of St. Louis, on the Missouri. At the age of seventeen, he attempted to make his escape with his mother. But after travelling some 200 miles, they were both arrested and carried back into slavery. The mother being afterwards sold to a negro trader, and carried off to a cotton plantation in Louisiana, and her son was sold to a gentleman in the city, and after a lapse of three years he again attempted to get his liberty. He travelled by night, laid away out of sight in the day and for fourteen days did not put his head into a house, but travelling thus, in the cold season of the year, and being without food, he was necessitated to seek safe shelter at the house of a Friend. Travelling from thence, he came on to Cleveland, Ohio, found himself in that town at noonday, not having had anything to eat for forty-eight hours, and not having a penny in his pocket; he walked up and down the streets to see if he could get work, and finally he was hired for his board. After working some two or three weeks he purchased a spelling book, and getting the children of the family to teach him how to read, he kept on striving for education. Finally he found himself in the city of Buffalo, where he commenced a temperance movement amongst the coloured people of that place, and improving himself by his own exertions he soon found himself upon the anti-slavery platform pleading the cause of his enslaved countrymen, remembering that he had a mother, three brothers, and a sister, still in slavery. Last summer, seeing the importance of the peace movement, he was induced to join the Peace Society, which selected him as a delegate to the Peace Congress¹² lately held at Paris. He left America, came to this country at his own expense, went to Paris, where he was the first to raise his voice in favour of the American anti-slavery movement, and against the laws which

keep three millions of his countrymen in bondage. (Hear, hear.) From Paris he went to London, then to Newcastle, from whence he came to your town, and here he stands before you. (Loud and repeated cheering.) In conclusion, he appealed to the audience for their sympathy, and said – Let meetings be held, let them agitate the question here, and show that Englishmen were not satisfied with unchaining their own slaves in the West Indies,¹³ and would not be satisfied till slavery was abolished throughout the world. (Applause.) And when the last chain should fall from the limbs of the American slave, he would rise up and bless those who had helped to emancipate him, and thus the good and the wise in this country would receive their reward, not only from the slave, but also from their Maker. (Applause.) (Mr. Brown concluded a most thrilling and eloquent address, which occupied an hour and a half in the delivery, amidst loud and repeated plaudits.)¹⁴

... Mr. Brown said – It is not a pleasant task for one to speak in a foreign land against the laws and people of his own country. It savours too much of a wish to cater to the feeling of the people with whom you are. But the cause of my enslaved countrymen demands that I should not consult my own private feelings, or those of the haters of my race in the United States. Three millions of the people of Republican America are held in the most degraded state of servitude of any people in the world. A slave is a chattel, a thing, a piece of property; he can own nothing, possess nothing, but what shall belong to his owner. It denies him manhood, and dooms him to a position in point of law with the beast of the field. The slave may be taken from one of the slave-raising to a slave-consuming state, and there worked up, in five or seven years, just as it may suit the caprice of the man who claims him as property. He may be separated from his wife and children – his wife or daughter may be punished in his presence, his own back may be lacerated, and yet he has no remedy – it is all in accordance with the laws of Democratic Republican America. (Cries of ‘shame!’) But with all the degradation attendant upon the condition of a slave, with a law upon the statute-book prohibiting the slave being taught to read, and surrounded by everything possible to remind him that he is a slave, he still knows that he has a right to his freedom; for the slaveholder has said – ‘You may place the slave where you please, you may dry up to your utmost the fountain of his feelings, the springs of his thought; you may close upon his mind every avenue to knowledge; you may yoke him to your labour as the ox which liveth only to work, and worketh only to live; you may put him under any process, which without destroying his value as a slave will crush and degrade him as a rational being, – you may do all this, but the idea that he was born to be free will survive it all; it is allied to his hope of immortality; it is the ethereal part of his nature, which oppression cannot reach; it is a torch lit up in his soul by the hand of the Deity, and never meant to be extinguished by the hand of man.’ Thus the slaveholder admits that he is conscious that his victim is aware that God had created him free. (Applause.) Slavery is interwoven into all the American institutions. Everything in the United States is made to bend to the ‘Peculiar Institution.’¹⁵ The religion of Jesus Christ is love to God and to mankind. The religion of America is slaveholding. They have a slaveholding theology. Their Churches deal in the bodies and immortal souls of men. And for fear of being charged with exaggerating on this point, I will read you the following from the *Savannah Georgia Republican* of the 13th of March, 1845: – ‘Will be sold at public auction, the following negro slaves, – viz. Charles, Peggy, Antonnett, Davy, September, Maria, Jenny, and Isaac, levied on as property of

Henry T. Hall, to satisfy a mortgage, fl. fa. issued out of M'Intosh Superior Court, in favour of the board of directors of the Theological Seminary of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, against said H.T. Hall. Conditions, cash, C.O. Neil, Deputy-Sheriff.' And now I will read to you an advertisement of the executors of a deceased Doctor of Divinity, from the *Charleston South Carolina Courier*: – Notice: on Monday February next, will be put up at public auction, before the Court House, the following property belonging to the estate of the late Rev. Dr Purman: – 'A plantation near the waters of the Black River, a lot of land in the town of Cornden, a library of a miscellaneous character, chiefly Theological, twenty-seven negroes, some of them very prime, two mules, one horse, and an old wagon' (Prolonged laughter.) I think, Mr. Chairman, and Ladies and Gentlemen, that I have made good my charges against the religion of the American slaveholders. I have here, on the platform, a book of 119 pages, approving of the infamous Fugitive Slave Bill,¹⁶ and trying to prove that the Bible sanctions slaveholding, and that slavery is compatible with Christianity. The book to which I refer is from the pen of Moses Stuart,¹⁷ late a Professor in Andover Theological Seminary, in the State of Massachusetts. It is not to be wondered at that the abolitionists are calumniated by the clergy of America, who are connected so closely with slavery. They are called infidels because they have espoused the cause of the slave, and in so doing have exposed the pro-slavery churches of that land. Much has been said, Mr. Chairman, about the bravery and magnanimity of the Americans, and the beauty of their institutions; and there are some noble friends of the oppressed in that country – men and women – whose hearts beat warmly for the down-trodden of every country and clime; but the great body of the people of America are downright cowards. Twenty-two millions of whites have banded themselves together to keep in slavery three millions of blacks. They are afraid to permit the negro to be educated in a slave state, for fear that the little spark of the fire of freedom may kindle into a flame and melt from his limbs the chains which bind him to his degradation. It is against the laws in any of the southern States for a coloured person, man or woman, to have in his or her possession any weapon. These pretended lovers of liberty are not willing to trust these injured and outraged people with the means of defence. I admire the magnanimity of the people of this country, for they will even give to an enemy fair play. Then away with the idea that the Americans are brave and generous. The free States are as much responsible for the existence of slavery in the United States as the slaveowners themselves. The north has compromised the matter, and has agreed not only to help to keep the slaves in their chains by public opinion, but has bargained to return him to his master should he escape; and after he has been sent back to his prison-house, if he should attempt to get his liberty by force, the people of the non-slave states are bound by solemn compact to suppress any such attempt. The passage of the infamous Fugitive Slave Bill, which has been so eloquently alluded to by the gentleman who preceded me, is fresh testimony of the willingness of the free states to aid the tyrant in his nefarious work. Nothing has done so much to blacken the American character in the opinion of the people of countries as slavery, and especially the passage of the Fugitive Bill. The Americans are the most inconsistent people in the world. In their declaration of independence¹⁸ they say that 'All men are free and equal,' and yet they enslave one sixth of their own citizens. There is not a rood of territory over which the 'Stars and Stripes' fly on which William¹⁹ and Ellen Craft²⁰ or myself could be protected by law. Wherever the American flag is seen flying on

the continent of the New World it points us out as slaves; and we enjoy to-night a degree of freedom in your town that we could not if we were in the land of our birth. It should be a humiliating thing to the people of the United States that the English Government furnishes the only asylum on the American continent for the poor and oppressed negro and I hope for one that that place of refuge will never be broken up as long as the system of slavery continues. Let there be one spot in America where the slave can be free, if it must be furnished by monarchical England. (The speaker concluded his eloquent address in the midst of great applause.)



Figure 24 The Briggate, Central Leeds, England by James Valentine, c.1880. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Notes

1. William Wells Brown 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>
2. He is referring to the American War of Independence (1775–1783). In 1776, the US government issued 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>
3. He is referring to the 4 December 1849 'First Annual Message' delivered by white US President Zachary Taylor (1784–1850) in which he informed congress, 'Your attention is earnestly invited to an amendment of our existing laws relating to the African slave trade with a view to the effectual suppression of that barbarous traffic.' A full transcription of

- his message is available at: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-4-1849-first-annual-message>
4. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) was a white Scottish author. A lifelong racist and white supremacist, he published his viciously discriminatory and morally unforgivable essay, ‘Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question’, to which Brown is referring and in which he articulated his ‘absurd doctrine’ in 1849. This infamous essay is available online at: <https://cruel.org/econthought/texts/carlyle/carlodnq.html>
 5. He is referring to the method of self-liberation used by Henry Box Brown (c.1815–1897). For further information on his life and works, 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 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).
 6. He is referring to the method of self-liberation used by Ellen Craft (1826–1891) and William Craft (1824–1900). See ‘Ellen Craft and William Craft’ in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
 7. Thomas Garrett (1789–1871) was a white US antislavery radical and leading figure on the Underground Railroad. See James A. McGowan, *Station Master of the Underground Railroad, the Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Co., 2005).
 8. Ephesians 6:5.
 9. Luke 12:47.
 10. Matthew 7:12.
 11. Daniel O’Connell (1775–1847) was a white Irish political leader, orator, social reformer, and advocate of Roman Catholic rights.
 12. For further information on the Peace Congress which met in Paris in August 1849 with white French author and philanthropist Victor Hugo (1802–1885) as president and at which William Wells Brown lectured against enslavement, see *Report of the proceedings of the second general Peace Congress, held in Paris on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of August, 1849. Compiled from authentic documents under the superintendence of the Peace Congress Committee* (London, Charles Gilpin, 1849). Available online at: <https://archive.org/stream/reportproceedin02goog#page/n5/mode/2up>
 13. 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>
 14. After a brief interlude where several ministers lectured, William Wells Brown was once again introduced to the platform.
 15. 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.
 16. 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

17. Moses Stuart (1780–1852) was a white US scholar and spiritual thinker.
18. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
19. William Craft (1824–1900). See the entry on ‘Ellen Craft and William Craft’ in this volume.
20. Ellen Craft (1826–1891). See the entry on ‘Elle Craft and William Craft’ in this volume.



Anon., 'Slavery in the United States', *Carlisle Journal*, Carlisle, England, 14 March 1851, p.2.

ON THE EVENINGS of Tuesday and Wednesday last, William Wells Brown and William Craft, fugitive slaves from the United States, delivered lectures in the Athenaeum in this city, to crowded audiences, on the subject of American Slavery. They were accompanied by Ellen Craft, wife of William Craft, also a fugitive slave, 'who effected her own escape and that of her husband by assuming men's apparel and travelling above a thousand miles through the slave states.' Mr. Brown occupied the attention of the audience on Tuesday night by a preliminary discourse on the abominations of slavery as it exists in America, and by the exhibition and explanation of a series of panoramic views of cotton, tobacco, and other plantations, and various scenes illustrative of the condition of the negro.¹ Mr. Brown, who is a fluent advocate of the cause of his race, denounced in good set terms the Fugitive Slave Bill and the authors of the 'iniquitous' measure, and intimated his belief that the feeling it had aroused would hasten the emancipation of the negro, and lead to the speedy downfall of slavery. In pointing out its horrors and dilating upon his own personal experience, he availed himself of the liberty of speech by recommending his hearers to treat all slaveholders who might visit the Great Exhibition,² after the same fashion in which the brewers of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins treated General Haynau;³ for Haynau, said he, was only the flogger of a few women in the streets of Vienna, whilst the slaveholders were the floggers of millions; and he exhibited a *bona fide* slave-driver's whip, made of untanned bullock's hide, to impress upon the audience the nature of the chastisement inflicted. This attempt to incite to a breach of the peace did not appear to be relished by the bulk of the listeners – much to their credit. The 'pictures' of slaves bound for the market, the sale of slaves, the city of New Orleans, W. W. Brown caught, &c., were of a much more diverting and less objectionable character in every point, except an artistic point of view, and the highly spiced anecdotes *à la* Baron Munchausen, with which his description of them was interspersed, afforded excellent entertainment – alternately moving to demonstrations of sympathetic indignation and incontinent laughter. Mr. Brown and Mr. Craft concluded by singing a duet, whilst Mrs. Craft sat by their side and excited the wonder of all around, by the purity of her Creole blood, which renders it difficult to distinguish her face from an Englishwoman's. The lecture by Mr. Craft, and the panoramic entertainment by

Mr. Brown, on Wednesday evening, were of an equally diverse and diverting character; and we have no doubt that, what with the sale of Mr. Brown's Narrative of his escape, written by himself, and the receipts at the lectures, the fugitive slaves made a good thing of the exhibition.

Notes

1. This is a reference to William Wells Brown's antislavery panorama. See William Wells Brown, *A Description of William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave, from His Birth in Slavery to His Death or His Escape to His First Home of Freedom on British Soil*, London: 1850, in C. Peter Ripley, ed. (with George E. Carter, Jeffery S. Rossback, Roy E. Finkbine, 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.191–225.
2. The Great Exhibition in London, held at Crystal Palace in 1851 was the first of the World's Fairs. 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.
3. Julius Jakob Freiherr von Haynau (1786–1853) was a white Austrian general who fought to suppress revolutions in Italy and Hungary.



Anon., 'Three Fugitive Slaves in Nottingham', *Nottingham Review*, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England, 4 April 1851, p.3.

DURING THE PRESENT week, a course of three lectures has been delivered at the Exchange Rooms, in this town, on the subject of American Slavery, by Wm. Wells Brown and Wm. Craft,¹ formerly slaves, who were accompanied by Ellen Craft,² a white woman, the wife of the latter, but like her companion, a fugitive slave.

The first lecture was delivered on Monday evening by Mr. W. Brown, and was principally descriptive of a series of picturesque views illustrative of American slavery, from sketches taken for the purpose in the United States. The lecturer stated that the utmost care had been taken not to misrepresent or exaggerate the subject in the least degree; in fact, that several sketches had not been transferred to canvas lest they might be deemed liable to such a charge. It was more important now to bring the question of slave-labour before the people of this country than at any former period since the commencement of the anti-slavery movement. The passing of the Fugitive Slave Bill³ in the American legislature, and the efforts of slave-holders and their friends to perpetuate and spread slavery over the new territory of the United States, on the one hand, and the efforts of the abolitionists on the other, to try to do away with slavery, had excited not only the interest of that country, but of the entire world. The expression of the opinion of the people of this country at this time would aid the cause of emancipation in America, and he regretted they had not had a public meeting in this town for the expression of this feeling, the same as had been the case in York, Newcastle, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley, Perth, Aberdeen, &c. The room was then darkened, and Mr. Brown commenced exhibiting a very interesting and highly graphic series of views illustrative of the scenery in the slave-growing and slave-consuming states of the American union, depicting many characteristic incidents in the escapes and re-captures of slaves, their mode of labour, their prisons, the kidnapping of free and coloured men without their free papers, &c. The lecturer was rendered the more entertaining by the very amusing and truthful explanations of the lecturer, some of his anecdotes raising the sympathy and visibility of the audience to the highest possible pitch.

The lecture was not concluded till a quarter-past ten.⁴

THE THIRD LECTURE was delivered on Wednesday evening. Mr. Brown, besides giving another description of his interesting views, delighted the company with

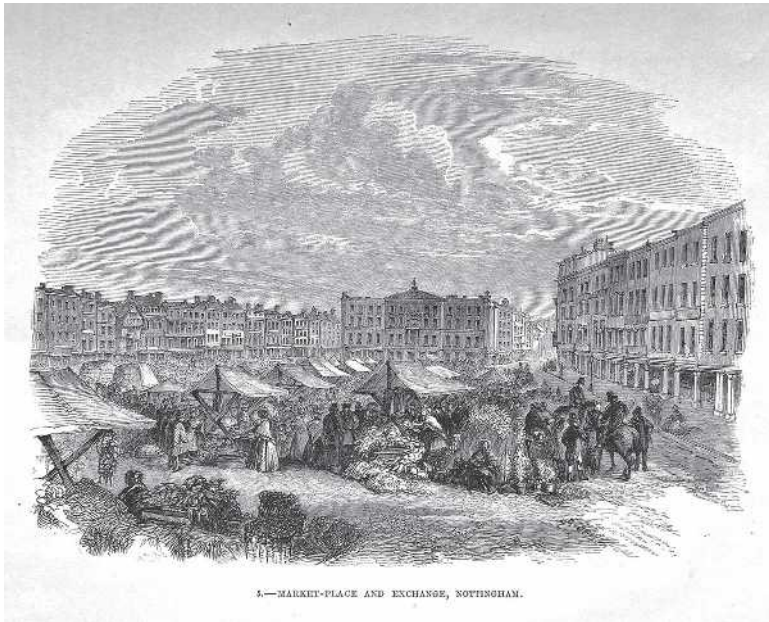


Figure 25 Print of Market Place and Exchange, Nottingham, England, 1848. (Author copy.)

detailing the incidents connected with his own toilsome escape from the thralldom of slavery, interspersing his narration with many graphic comments on American life and manners.

Notes

1. William Craft (1824–1900). See the entry on ‘Ellen Craft and William Craft’ in this volume.
2. Ellen Craft (1826–1891). See the entry on ‘Ellen Craft and William Craft’ in this volume.
3. 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
4. Brown spoke again on the third consecutive night of antislavery lectures while William Craft gave a speech in the previous evening.



THOMAS MORRIS CHESTER

(1834–1892)

Biographical History

THOMAS MORRIS CHESTER, an African American war correspondent, soldier, educator in Liberia, journalist, orator, civil rights campaigner, lawyer, and freedom fighter, undertook a human rights lecturing tour of Britain during the US Civil War. As R. J. M. Blackett writes in his pioneering volume on his life and works, Chester was a leading ‘figure in the effort to win international support for the Union during the Civil War’ as he laboured tirelessly in radical and powerful opposition to the white enslaving, racist, discriminatory, and persecutory armed forces of the southern Confederacy.¹

Chester worked alongside Henry Highland Garnet on the Garnet League, a society founded to provide an access to education, and financial and practical support, for Black people who had been legally liberated following the end of the Civil War but who endured financial destitution, white racist persecution, violence, and disenfranchisement and dehumanising systems of segregation. By early 1867, the League funded six teachers in Tennessee and two in North Carolina, and regularly published a monthly newspaper in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.²

According to John Mitchell’s ground-breaking research, Chester ‘was Called to the Bar by the Middle Temple on the Saturday 30 April 1870’ and ‘was probably the first African American to become an English barrister’.³

Here we reproduce two speeches Chester delivered in 1864. In the first speech, Chester called out ‘one very great mistake made in England’ which was committed by ‘many men who sympathised with the South’ who ‘endeavored to throw slurs upon the friends of the North’. While he did not shy away from the fact that there were ‘occasional circumstances arising’ in which ‘black men had been . . . badly treated’ in the northern states, he was in no doubt that the ‘influence that caused it came from the South’. Here he holds white Southern enslaving states solely responsible for the ‘oppression of the black man’ and condemns the immoral barbarities committed by southern whites ‘who still clung to the institutions of slavery’. He allows no dissent from his authoritative opinion by categorically stating that ‘he, as a negro, was the best judge as to who was the negro’s friend’. In his second speech, Chester summarises the Civil War as a ‘contest between slave labour and free labour, or, in other words, a contest between slavery and freedom

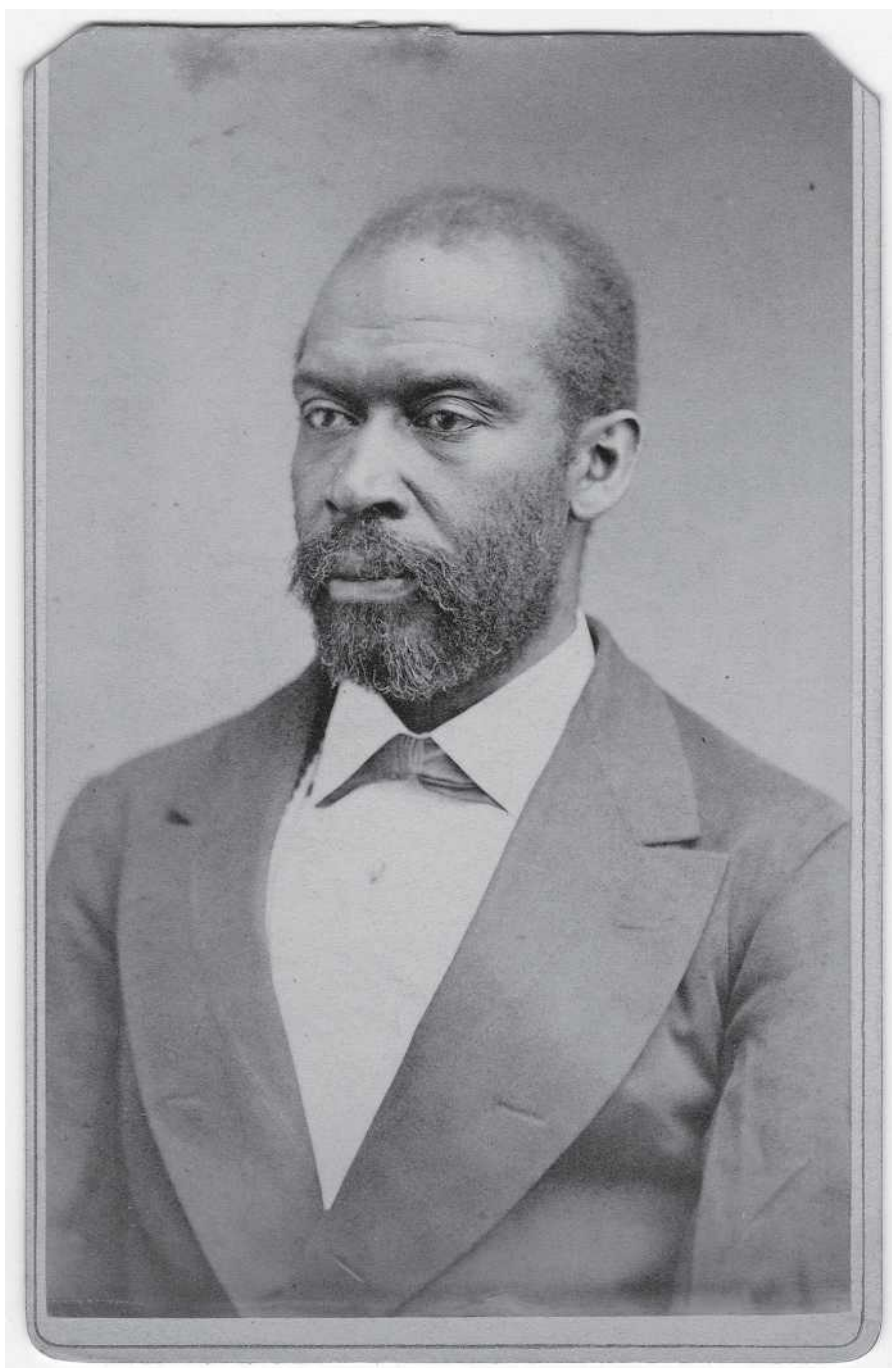


Figure 26 Thomas Morris Chester, by D. C. Burnite, 1870. (The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

upon the American continent'. Here he celebrates the hidden history of Black combat heroism in the Civil War by honouring the distinguished military careers of African American soldiers following their enlistment in the Union army. He does powerful justice to the fight they hand on their hands as they fought 'for their own liberty, for their wives and children, and for their future, as well as for the cause of the Union' as they were 'impelled onwards by the wrongs of 200 years, by the glory of emancipating their brethren from bondage, and by the prospect of bequeathing to their children liberty upon the American continent'.

Notes

1. R. J. M. Blackett, *Thomas Morris Chester, Black Civil War Correspondent: His Dispatches from the Virginia Front* (Baton Rouge LA: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1989), p.ix.
2. Anti-Slavery Papers, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 18, C39, 80a-d, Letter from T. Morris Chester, 3 January 1867 and 13 October 1866. Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
3. John Mitchell, 'Thomas Morris Chester (1834–1892) – The First African American to Become an English Barrister', an essay 'edited and read in Master Mitchell's honour by Master Andrew Hochhauser and Mass Ndow-Njie', 23 June 2021, available online: <https://middletemplar.org.uk/thomas-morris-chester-1834-1892-the-first-african-american-to-become-an-english-barrister/>

Further Reading

Primary

- Blackett, R. J. M., *Thomas Morris Chester, Black Civil War Correspondent: His Dispatches from the Virginia Front*. Baton Rouge LA: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1989.
- Coddington, Ronald S., ed., *African American Faces of the Civil War: An Album*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.
- Stephens, George E., *A Voice of Thunder: A Black Soldier's Civil War*, ed. Donald Yacovone. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
- Yacovone, Donald, ed., *Freedom's Journey: African American Voices of the Civil War*. Chicago IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 2004.

Secondary

- Mitchell, John, 'Thomas Morris Chester (1834–1892) – The First African American to Become an English Barrister, edited and read in Master Mitchell's honour by Master Andrew Hochhauser and Mass Ndow-Njie', 23 June 2021, available online: <https://middletemplar.org.uk/thomas-morris-chester-1834-1892-the-first-african-american-to-become-an-english-barrister/>
- Willis, Deborah, *The Black Civil War Soldier: A Visual History of Conflict and Citizenship*. New York: New York University Press, 2021.



Anon., 'Condition of the Negro', *The Manchester Weekly Times*, Manchester, England, 23 January 1864, p.3.

ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT a lecture on the progress of emancipation and the condition of the negro race in America, was delivered at the Temperance Hall, Grosvenor-street, by Thomas Morris Chester, a coloured gentleman, who has been a resident magistrate in Liberia, and is at present a captain in the Federal army. Mr. J. E. Nelson presided, and there was a good attendance. The lecturer said it gave him great pleasure to meet the good people of Manchester, and to assure them that the noble work for which they had been borne so much privation was progressing. (Applause.) While the people on the other side of the Atlantic were endeavouring, both by moral sentiments and by force of arms, to crush the influence of slavery upon the American continent, the people in Manchester were endeavouring to prevent the recognition of the Confederacy, by hearing the privations incidental upon the civil war in America. It was a mistaken idea that this question began three years ago, when the rebels opened fire upon Fort Sumter.¹ It began with the very existence of the republic. A band of men once landed upon Plymouth Rock.² They carried with them the Bible for their guide, they encouraged churches and schools, established printing presses and encouraged every virtue that legitimately belonged to free institutions. At the same time another set of men landed at James river,³ where they proposed to found a different civilisation. They suppressed the Bible, discouraged churches and schools, prostituted the press, denied that men, made with the image of their Maker, had any right to the disposal of their bodies or their souls; and they attempted to build a constitution on the suppression of every liberty and principle. These two elements, usually called North and South, but, more graphically speaking, he would term them freedom and slavery – (cheers) – began the contest. Upon the side of the North there was moderation, forbearance of spirit, and brotherly love; upon the side of the South there was arrogance and impudence – (loud cheers), and they had as much love for their Northern brethren as Cain had for Abel.⁴ The North, conscious of superiority, and seeing the grand results flowing out of the application of their doctrines as far as they could try them, attempted and resolved to resist the unblushing encroachments of the advocates of injustice, cruelty, and oppression. (Hear, hear.) These two elements, as time progressed, met in hostile attitude. The North, in that spirit of compromise which had ever characterised it, frequently receded from her

anti-slavery opinions for the purpose of conciliating the South, and the friends of liberty throughout the world were grieved under their prostration, and departure from their glorious principles. They gave more concessions to the South than they had a right to under the constitution, thus doing justice to their feelings, their education, and traditions. (Hear, hear.) The Southerners chuckled over their triumphs, which gave additional extent to slavery. Long and patriotic was the struggle until it culminated in the present war. There was one very great mistake made in England. Many men who sympathised with the South endeavoured to throw slurs upon the friends of the North and upon the noble acts that they had recently done on behalf of freedom, by pointing the finger of derision at them, and saying that the North was as bad as the South, and that the blacks were equally as badly off in the North as they were in the South. An Englishman who made such an assertion was to be pitied for his ignorance, and the American who uttered such a misrepresentation was to be condemned for his falsehood. (Hear, hear.) There was no comparison. It was well known that everything that could be done in the North for the elevation and encouragement of the black man was done by those honest and noble friends of freedom who had been battling for them since the foundation of the country. ('Hear, hear,' and applause). If there were occasional circumstances arising in which black men had been, as they occasionally were, badly treated, all was attributed to the North; but the influence that caused it came from the South. (Cheers.) It was what the Southerners demanded from the Northern 'dough-faces,' and these men did these things to show that they were still faithful to their principle – the oppression of the black man. There were instances in which black men were not allowed to enter a car or a hotel; but that was caused by those who still clung to the institutions of slavery, and wished to show their willingness to obey their behests of their Southern masters. They would generally find that these men were interested in the Southern Confederacy. They were united to the Southerners by family ties, they had invested in Southern plantations, or they were married to Southern ladies. (Hear, hear.) There were no worse taskmasters to the poor black man than men from our own midst, – men who went to the Southern States, and became converts to slavery. They were more embittered against the slaves, and louder in their advocacy of slavery than the men who were born upon the plantations. Such men felt it their duty to do it, and to give unceasing proofs of their faithfulness to the institution, as it was demanded from them. In order that he might be more clearly understood, and for the purpose of correcting much that seemed to be misty in the minds of Englishmen, he would say that by North he meant education, a pure church, a printing press, free speech, an unfettered Bible, a spirit of enterprise, the consecration of the Western territories to freedom, the promotion of the rights and liberties of all men. By South he meant ignorance, 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.⁵ He was happy to inform them that a great change had taken place, and that the South, long as they had ruled the North, were now in a minority; the very means they had taken to extend their institution being the means by which the North would be able to wipe out slavery from the American continent.

(Loud cheers.) The South would not surrender one jot of its principles except at the cannon's mouth. He thought he, as a negro, was the best judge as to who was the negro's friend, and to whether the black man would take up arms for the South. (Hear, hear.) When peace was restored, and the Northern arms had triumphed, there would be plenty of cotton, and the negroes would work in freedom with a will that they could not work with when they were in bondage. (Applause.) After the lecture had been delivered, a resolution favourable to the lecturer was unanimously passed.

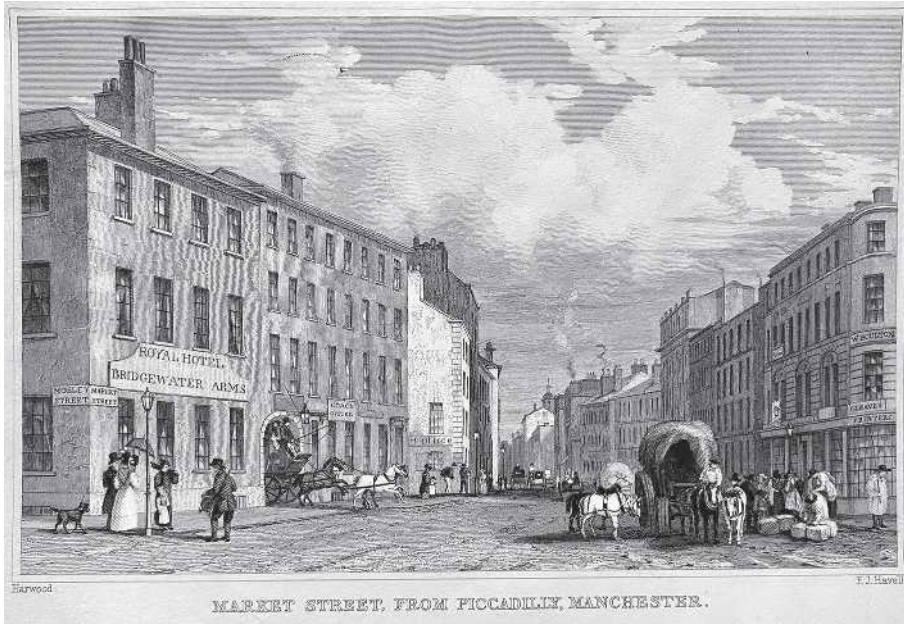


Figure 27 A print showing Market Street, Manchester, England, 1830. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. Fort Sumter is a sea fort in Charleston, South Carolina, and the site of two battles during the Civil War: The First Battle of Fort Sumter took place in April 1861, and The Second Battle of Fort Sumter occurred in September 1863. Finally, the fort was evacuated by the Confederates when white US Union Army General William Tecumseh Sherman (1820–1891) marched through South Carolina in February 1865.
2. He is referring to Plymouth Colony, the first settlement founded in 1620 by white English Puritan believers at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts.
3. In 1619, the ‘First Africans’ had arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. ‘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 at: <https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans/>
4. Genesis 4:1–16.

5. 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).



Anon., 'Captain Chester on the American War', *The Ashton Weekly Reporter and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle*, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside, Greater Manchester, England, 30 January 1864, p.3.

AN INTERESTING LECTURE was delivered on Tuesday evening in the large room of the town hall, Ashton-under-Lyne, by Captain Chester, a coloured gentleman, and resident magistrate of Liberia. The attendance was not very numerous, owing no doubt to a charge being made for admission.

Mr. Councillor WINSTANLEY occupied the chair, and briefly opened the proceedings, hoping the meeting would allow the captain a fair and patient hearing.

Captain Chester, on rising was received with loud applause. He said it gave him great pleasure to meet them that evening, and to be the bearer of glad tidings from a distant land. The contest between freedom and slavery upon the American continent was well nigh ended, and the people in this district would yet be rewarded for the patient manner in which they had borne their part – gallantly borne it – in this great struggle, in which the working man had so great an interest. (Hear, hear). This American war did not begin when the rebels opened fire on Fort Sumter,¹ but it began at the very foundation of the American Union. It was a contest between slave labour and free labour, or, in other words, a contest between slavery and freedom upon the American continent. The good people who went from this country – the good old Puritanical stock – carried with them the blessings of religion and liberty, and sought to plant them upon the soil of the American continent. They carried with them the Bible as their guide. They encouraged schools, planted churches, multiplied printing presses, possessed a deep respect for the rights of all men, and in fact, encouraged every virtue that legitimately belonged to free institutions. About the same time another set of men, landed upon the James River,² where they proposed to found and foster a different civilisation. They discouraged schools, corrupted the churches, persecuted the press, denied that man made in the image of his God had any right to his body, or even the control of his immortal soul, and attempted to build up a future upon the prostitution of virtue, humanity, and the principles of free institutions. (Hear, hear). These two elements – the North and the South, as they were understood, but, more graphically speaking, freedom and slavery – began with the existence of that young republic; upon the side of the North there was always moderation of a feeling of motherly kindness. Upon the side of the South there was annoyance,

with a strong mixture of impudence, and that kind of love for their Northern brethren which Cain manifested for Abel.³ The North, conscious in the superiority of its institutions, grew more determined on each succeeding year, until finally the friends of freedom began to resist the encroachments of those unblushing advocates of injustice, cruelty, and oppression, and as the star of the North rose in the ascendancy the tighter became the fetters of the negro race. From the beginning of the contest between these two elements down to the present time, they, to a great extent, had been unfortunate sufferers, as the South had robbed them of their rights, and also sought to beat out their manhood. Every part of the government seemed to be corrupted by these unholy influences. Even the president, the supreme court, the halls of national legislation, even politicians and political parties, it mattered not how they wrangled on other questions, they could always harmonise for the oppression of the negro race, and the brutalising of their manhood. But there was a little band of men, the descendants of those good men who went from this country, who never could be corrupted by these influences, and who were always true to the principles of religion and liberty; and step by step they kept onward in the right course, fully believing that they eventually must triumph in the grand struggle between freedom and slavery – an event which was now taking place. (Hear, hear.) The question naturally suggested itself, what was the cause of this great international struggle on the American continent. It was because the South, in defiance of the civilisation of the age, was attempting to erect a slave power, where Almighty God only intended the principles of liberty should be preserved. (Applause.) Down to the breaking out of the rebellion the history of the negro race had been dark and painful, full of misery, torture, and death. They had prayed long and earnest that their sky might brighten, and that their bonds might be broken, but it did not please Providence to answer their prayer until about the year 1861, when Father Abraham⁴ became the ruler in all the land thereof – (Loud applause.) And immediately he started on a long journey, even unto the land of Washington. Now, therefore, the spies of Abraham said unto him, go not by the way of Baltimore publicly, for there are men lying in wait to slay thee. And Abraham hearkened unto the words of his spies, and went through Baltimore in secret. Then straight away he went to Washington; even went he into the palace of the chief ruler, and all the people cried ‘Amen.’ – (Laughter and cheers.) Then came the grand struggle for freedom upon the American continent. The clouds that seemed to overshadow the horizon began to dispel themselves, and the negro race forgot all the miseries of the past by the great prospects that seemed to be looming up in the future. They only asked the government to give them an opportunity, under the circumstances, to test their manhood. – (Hear, hear.) And when they were satisfied that the helm of the old American ship was shifted, that the ship was put about, and that Captain Lincoln was standing due North, they cried louder than the thunders of the artillery, ‘Place us at the post of danger where we may have an opportunity of showing our devotion to the principles of free institutions, and manifesting our devotion to the good cause by never giving up the ship.’ – (Hear, hear.) Whatever might be the cost of the American civil war, or however much they might regret the expenditure of blood and treasure, the grand results that had come out of the contest were more than equivalent for the sacrifice. The negro, who had completely changed his moral and political status – he whom the South had endeavoured to rob of his rights and manhood – had once come up from his crouching position to the full stature of nature’s nobleman, stepped into

the ranks of the government at the call of the president, and now, to the astonishment of his former master, kept step to liberty and the music of the Union. – (Applause.) While the slavehunters, with their dogs and guns, were prowling through the swamps of the South for victims, the hunted and almost excited fugitive, seeing in the distance the banners of the Union, rushes beneath their spangled emblem and arms himself as a soldier of the Republic to fight for God, humanity, and the emancipation of his brethren. – (Cheers.) Before this war, the negro was a chattel in one section of the country, and had no rights which white men were bound to respect. But now he was a citizen and a soldier, acknowledged so by the highest legal authority known to the government at Washington. – (Loud applause.) When the South opened fire upon Fort Sumter they certainly mistook the medicine for their complaint. – (Laughter.) They were now beginning to find that fact out. If Englishmen would only hold out a little longer, the North would gratify them by the final subduing of those bad men who had attempted not only to corrupt America, but if they had succeeded there, their influence would have been felt in England. – (Cheers.) Let Englishmen urge upon their government to be neutral. – (Hear, hear). A short time ago Jefferson Davis⁵ issued a proclamation in which he promised to hang all the black men who took up arms to fight for their own liberty. Well, in that proclamation as he made no provision for catching them, they did not seem to fear it. – (Laughter and applause). Nothing did these Southern slaveholders fear more in their rebellion than bringing into this contest the strong black iron hand to crush them in their unholy purposes. They knew that when the negro took up arms there would be no treason in their camp. – (Cheers, and laughter.) They knew that the Copperhead species would not sprout there, but that they would be honest and earnest in behalf of the principles of liberty and in the cause of the Union. – (Applause.) In the face of that proclamation, with many of their negro brethren incarcerated in Southern prisons, and with that threatening document hanging over them, they were still marching up to meet those rebel hordes, and would continue to do so until the end of the war – (hear, hear), and until the fetters were broken from every man in the Southern States. – (Applause.) They had been waiting for that grand opportunity, and they never intended to let it pass by until they made a history for themselves – such as one would command respect and admiration, not only of the American people, but of the world. The good time had at last come, and they intended to make the best use of it. When the American government placed a United States buckle round their waist, put a blue uniform upon them, strapped a knapsack on their backs, placed muskets in their hands, and 40 rounds of ammunition in their belt, then they would break the last fetter which bound an American slave. – (Applause.) That act sounded the death warrant of slavery for ever upon the American continent. No man who had ever marched to the tune of ‘Yankee Doodle,’ and the inspiring music of the Union, and armed with this implement, would ever again be fitted to be an American bondsman. – (Hear.) The good work was progressing; and if there were a few states in which slavery was not legally interfered with, yet they were gratified by the fact that it was morally dead. Now what had been the character of those men who had attempted to establish the Confederacy? It began by oppression, not only by the oppression of the negro race, but the iron hand was equally felt upon the whites in the South. It had so blighted the Southern country as to make it an unfit residence for any white man who wished to live by honest industry. In the midst of the discussion on the American question the advocates of the

South had – he was going to say, the impudence, to stand upon an English platform, and declare themselves to be the friends of the negro race, that the black man in the South was better treated than in the North, that he was only kicked and cuffed about in the North, while in the South they were his guardians and overseers, and would do anything they possibly could to promote his interest and his happiness, and that he was in as excellent a state as he desired to be, under all the circumstances. Now, if ever they heard an Englishman make such a statement as that they should pity him for his credence; and if they ever heard an American say so they should condemn him for his falsehood. – (Hear, hear.) It had never been any part of the Southern policy to recognise an atom of manhood in the negro. – (Hear, hear.) The whole institution had been to crush him, and make him feel that he was an inferior being, without a soul. The clergy had also partaken of this feeling, and they had endeavoured to preach the same ungodly doctrine. – (Shame.) They had promised the slaves that if they would only obey their masters and mistresses, some day they would be received up into the kitchen of heaven. – (Laughter and applause.) And whenever they were going to preach, the negroes always understood where the text was about to come from. It was generally, ‘Servants obey your masters,’⁶ or some such text as that, and the negroes got pretty well filled with it. – (Laughter.) Now, what effect had this upon the blacks? Why, it had the influence of making many of them infidels; and to think that if these were Christian men, they wanted nothing to do with any such Christianity. – (Hear, hear.) There was that instinct within their breast that told them that the South had been taking an unjust advantage of their weakness, robbing them of their rights, and then calling upon heaven to sanction them in their iniquity, and they said that if that was Christianity they would have nothing to do with it. It was gratifying to know that in their ignorance, the negroes were able to go down beneath this kind of sophistry, and that in their lowly cabins, and in their mountain retreats, and in the dismal swamps, they had sent up their petition to heaven on behalf of their oppressed race, praying that the day would come when their bonds might be stricken asunder, and when they would be able to stand before the world as they now really were – free men and women. – (Applause.) There was a dodge going the round just now in order to influence the English people in reference to this question – an attempt to cause them to change their opinions with regard to the negro race. Certain scientific gentlemen had been endeavouring to deceive the public in reference to their capacity. In other words, they had been denying the intellectual equality of the negro with the European. They had gone into a long argument to prove the total unfitness of the negro for political or social equality; and if they could get the English people to believe this, the very next step would be to prove the connection between the negro and the gorilla. – (Laughter.) That plan had already been advocated, but it proved to be a little too strong for the English public. – (Laughter.) And when these men persuaded them, as they hoped to do, that the negro was the connecting link between the man and the monkey, why, of course, they would have no objection to keep in proper submission a race of animals, even if they were of the higher order – that they would not then be oppressing men, but only holding under proper control a few animals. – (Laughter.) When he found those persons advocating the sending of missionaries to the monkey tribes – (laughter), with a view to their intellectual improvement, why then he would have some confidence in their faith. – (Laughter.) Certainly if they had sprung from the monkey tribes, the people ought to do all they could towards raising

those who were not quite so high up as they were. – (Laughter.) They had no fear, however, on that score, for at this late day no one would be gulled by such nonsense. – (Applause.) Now what had been the working of the American government since Mr. Lincoln came into office? Why there had been a better state of affairs; they had laid better foundations; there was a brighter future before the Americans, and what was better than all, the men who were the true friends of England were now at the head of the government; and the English and the Americans could be united together in future in the bonds of peace, in the common interest and in the common cause. – (Applause.) The Southern party was always the enemy of the English people, because the English were always anti-slavery, and they hated them for their moral influence against that institution. – (Applause.) But since the South had got themselves into trouble they had rushed to the English for assistance, after abusing them for a lifetime, demanding, in the first instance, recognition, and prophesying that if they did not recognise their independence the streets of Manchester, and those of the surrounding cotton manufacturing districts would run with blood, that there would be terrible denunciations against the government, and that the Queen⁷ would be obliged to fly to some petty German state for protection. – (Laughter.) Failing in the realisation of what they wished, they now came humbly begging of England to acknowledge their independence, and were willing to pay Englishmen to advocate their broken-down cause. – (Cheers.) The South told them they were fighting for independence. Well, they had no doubt often heard of men who were oppressed rising up against the government, and those men had generally carried with them the sympathy of the people in all lands; but this was the first instance on record of the oppressor – the ruling classes of America – rising up against those whom they oppressed – (laughter), for the audience must bear in mind that the Southerners always ruled the American government. Now one of the very first acts which indicated the policy of the government at Washington, after it had fairly got into working order, was the acknowledgement of the independence of Liberia⁸ – an act which Southern influence had always prevented, its friends beforetime being unable to accomplish that result. This act broke the fetters of the slave in the district of Columbia, and raised the negro from a chattel to be a soldier and a citizen. It had emancipated him in every slaveholding state of the Union, and by a stroke of policy it had now taken all the able-bodied negroes in the Border States, and was placing them in the army. Slavery, therefore, was practically dead. And what was really gratifying was that wherever the black race of America had been called upon, in whatever capacity they had been tried, they had made a noble stand, and had been found equal to the emergency. – (Loud applause.) What did they do at Fort Hudson?⁹ Men who never before had dared to touch a gun were taken from the plantations, and muskets placed in their hands, and they were asked to march up to the entrenchments of the rebels. They did so with a firmness and a steadiness that was surprising to the old soldiers; and though the shot and shell fell thick around them, they continued to charge closer and closer without breaking their lines, until they crossed steel with their former masters. – (Loud applause.) And still amid this clashing of steel their officers urged them on, and when they came so close that they could no longer use the bayonet, they threw down their guns, took hold of their former masters with their hands, and commenced chawing them up with their teeth. – (Laughter and cheers.) It was the fire, and the determination on the part of the black man that had caused those Southern scamps to issue

such a proclamation as they had done to prevent them taking up arms. They knew that when the negro went into this contest they would have to fight for several objects – for their own liberty, for their wives and children, and for their future, as well as for the cause of the Union, and that they would be impelled onwards by the wrongs of 200 years, by the glory of emancipating their brethren from bondage, and by the prospect of bequeathing to their children liberty upon the American continent. – (Loud cheers.) Then again at Fort Wagner,¹⁰ the free blacks of the North were required to try their bravery, and to see if they would meet the Southern rebels with as much gallantry as their slave brethren did. What was the result? They were placed in the advance, as the others had been, and they marched up gallantly to that fort, stood upon the parapets, and fought bravely and to the death with the rebels. Not a man quivered, or moved from his position until he was ordered; and when the retreat was sounded they came back in order. But the most gallant act was that of the ensign,¹¹ who, when carrying the flag of the Union, was struck down by a bullet, and fell upon his knees, but still held up the stars and stripes, and upon his knees he carried them up to the parapets, and stayed there, holding them up, though lying on the ground bleeding; and when the retreat was sounded, he carried those stars and stripes back to the hospital, crawling on his hands and knees, and said, ‘Boys, the old flag never touched the ground.’ (Loud cheers.) But the English Southern friends said, ‘What a pity to put the negro in advance; they only place him there in order that he may be shot at; there is no humanity in placing him in such a position: it is objectionable, and must not be tolerated. And they as Englishmen were asked to frown down upon that conduct on the part of the Federal government. The negroes, however, took a different view of the matter. They said there was no place so fitting for the black man in this contest, in which he had so much at stake, as the post of honour and of danger. – (Loud applause.) They only asked to be placed where they could have a fair opportunity of testing the metal which had for some time been concealed – (cheers and laughter); and they would be able to show their friends in this country, as well as the friends of the cause of human freedom everywhere, that in labouring for the elevation of their race they were labouring for people who were worthy of their efforts. – (Cheers.) As he said before, they did not fear Jefferson Davis’s proclamation;¹² he might send his men to catch slaves, but he would find them armed in a holy and just cause. – (Applause.) On the part of the North he (the lecturer) was enabled to say that they never intended to disband their armies, nor to put down their muskets, until the last rebel was subdued, and the last slave was freed. – (Cheers.) This war had given to the American people, as well as those of other lands, an opportunity of testing the character of the negro, especially those who are willing to accept the vituperation of their enemies, as illustrating their ability; and they thought that if ever there was a people living under a government who could possibly have been justified in rebelling against the constituted authorities, they were the American blacks, who had been stripped of every right, and denied every privilege of man. They had seen their wives lashed before their faces, and their daughters snatched away for the vilest of purposes, yet they bore all these things patiently, fully believing in ‘the good time coming;’ and through the agency of this war things have turned out more gratifying than they could possibly have hoped for in their day, and in their generation. – (Loud applause.) It was faith alone that sustained them in their trying emergency, and enabled them to bear patiently their sufferings, until the

emancipation proclamation,¹³ through the agency of Abraham Lincoln,¹⁴ broke the shackle from their limbs, and now they stood before the bar of American public opinion as free men, acknowledged citizens, and, what was better than all, as fighting soldiers. – (Applause.) In conclusion he remarked that there was no hope whatever of the South conquering. The resolution was taken in the North that freedom must and should prevail, and that they would never cease in this grand struggle until the stars and stripes, which were now the emblems of liberty and justice, should float over every Southern fort and every Southern state which now disputed their onward progress. He would, therefore, urge upon the people of this country to stand by the cause of the Union. – (Loud cheers.)

Several questions were asked, and satisfactorily answered by the lecturer, after which votes of thanks were passed to the lecturer after which votes of thanks were passed to the lecturer and chairman, and the proceedings terminated.

Notes

1. Fort Sumter is a sea fort in Charleston, South Carolina.
2. In 1619, the 'First Africans' had arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. '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/>
3. Genesis 4:1–16.
4. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
5. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889) was a white US enslaver and president of the Confederacy, the southern enslaving states that had risen in opposition to the northern free states during the Civil War.
6. Ephesians 5:6.
7. Queen Victoria (1819–1901) was the white British monarch of Britain and Ireland from 1837–1901.
8. The Liberian Declaration of Independence was issued on 26 July 1847 and resulted in the Republic of Liberia.
9. During the Civil War, the Siege of Port Hudson, Louisiana, took place in May–July 1863. 'On the morning of May 27, 1863, under Maj. Gen. Banks, the Union army launched ferocious assaults against the lengthy Confederate fortifications. Among the attackers were two regiments of African-American soldiers, the 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guards. They were the first black soldiers committed to combat in the Civil War.' See 'The Siege of Port Hudson', 8 July 2021, available online at: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-siege-of-port-hudson-forty-days-and-nights-in-the-wilderness-of-death-teaching-with-historic-places.htm>
10. There were two Battles of Fort Wagner, in South Carolina, which took place on 10–11 July and over a week later on 18 July 1863. While both were white southern Confederate victories, the 54th Massachusetts Black combat regiment became widely renowned for its heroism.
11. The name of the 'ensign' is William Harvey Carney (1840–1908), a Black combat soldier, liberator, and freedom fighter. He experienced enslavement in Norfolk, Virginia, and he went on to enlist as a combat soldier at the rank of sergeant in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. He fought in the Battle of Fort Wagner with such heroic distinction that he was awarded the Medal of Honor because he marched forward with the US flag

- regardless of his extensive and terrible wounds. See C. W. Whitehair, *William H. Carney & The 54th Massachusetts Infantry* (n.p.: C. W. Whitehair & Rhonda-Lee, 2018).
12. The 'Proclamation by the Confederate President', Jefferson Davis (1808–1889), a white US politician, issued on 24 December 1862, from Richmond, Virginia, reads in part 'That all negro slaves captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities of the respective States to which they belong to be dealt with according to the laws of said States.' The full text is available online at: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/pow.htm>
 13. 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 available at: <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
 14. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).



NELSON COUNTEE

(c.1833–1834–1886)

Biographical History

NELSON COUNTEE EXPERIENCED enslavement in Virginia. He secured his self-liberation and settled in Canada, where he helped fellow freedom seekers secure their self-liberation and fight racial injustice before travelling to the British Isles. He lectured on US enslavement and temperance, sometimes for the benefit of local English charities or to raise funds for Black churches or communities in the United States and Canada. Countee became a minister and preached in England until the 1880s, settling in Birmingham. According to the pioneering research of Jeff Green, Countee married a white Englishwoman named Maria and together they had five children: Charles William, Louisa Maria, Mary Ann, Lucy, and Florence. Occasionally Countee employed his family to lecture or sing beside him. Countee died in 1886.

Here we reproduce Nelson Countee's speech that he gave in Portsmouth, Hampshire, in 1876.

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Figure 28 High Street, Portsmouth, England, c.1838. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Anon., 'Lecture by a Runaway Slave', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, 19 July 1876, p.4.

MR. NELSON COUNTEE, a converted slave from South America, gave a second lecture at the Primitive Congregational Hall Commercial-road, on Friday evening, when the chair was taken by Mr. Salt. The lecturer referred to the time when he was held in bondage in Virginia by a person named Cordell, and said that with conversion his troubles commenced. Mr. Cordell, Mrs. Cordell and the Devil had each been his master, but he gave them all 'leg bail.' (Laughter.) Being in the house as servant it was his duty to clean the silver and knives, and one day his mistress was about to beat him over the head with the handle of the carving knife. He put up his arm to evade the blow, and owing to his mistress declaring that he had struck her he was heavily flogged. For that he made up his mind to run away, but no opportunity came for two years, and then he was only 19 years old. No one could describe what he suffered from hunger for 14 or 15 days, on two of which he lived on apples and water. He was, however, eventually taken by two men, one of whom dragged him on horseback with a rope 8ft. long while the other drove him; and that was in Christian America, where the people talked of their liberties more than any other nation upon the face in the globe. (Cries of 'Shame.') After a few weeks' incarceration in gaol he was handed to his master, hauled several inches from the ground, and after he had been soundly beaten with a raw hide his back was rubbed with salt and water. ('Shame.') For five subsequent years he was building castles in the air as to escaping, and about that time he obtained a pass to attend a camp meeting between Charlestown and Harper's Ferry,¹ his master telling him that if he were not back by Monday morning he would whip him; but he hadn't been back yet, and he didn't intend to go. (Loud laughter.) In two nights he, his brother, and a couple of companions had travelled 15 miles, now and then scouring a good goose, milk, bread, and bam. The meeting might call that stealing, but he termed it only 'taking.' (Laughter.) Eleven weeks they were grovelling in the woods to obtain liberty, not daring to travel openly as white men, and eventually three of them got to Canada, that home of British freedom (applause); and he felt that he was now treated as one of God's human beings. (Applause).

Note

1. Harper's Ferry is located in present-day West Virginia.



ELLEN CRAFT

(1826–1891)

WILLIAM CRAFT

(1824–1900)

Biographical History

THE CRAFTS' DEATH-DEFYING liberation from enslavement in which they undertook a widely celebrated journey of 'one thousand miles to freedom' rested on the unique and radical performance of Ellen Craft who made the courageous decision to impersonate a white male enslaver. Ellen Craft and William Craft experienced enslavement in Georgia. They both resolved to secure their self-liberation and raise their future children in freedom. Crossing the boundaries of race, gender, and class, Ellen Craft assumed a powerful disguise and undertook a personal performance to take herself and her husband to Philadelphia in 1848. Travelling by train and steamboat, they succeeded in reaching the northern states as a direct result of Ellen Craft's skilful performance. After briefly settling in Boston, they were forced to flee due to the passage of the nefarious and notorious 1850 Fugitive Slave Act,¹ and with the support of the transformative activism of the local Black community they travelled to England. For nearly two decades, the Crafts lived in Britain and toured the country campaigning for abolition, racial justice, and equal rights. Fellow freedom fighter William Wells Brown (see 'William Wells Brown' in *Speeches*, included in this volume) briefly joined their lecturing tour and exhibited his *Panorama of Slavery*, consisting of a large painting on canvas unveiled and unravelled at meetings to give the impression of movement. Typically, Brown and William Craft would speak while Ellen Craft accompanied them both on the platform; she would often stand at the end of the lecture so the audience could see her. Across her performances, she purposefully used her near whiteness, which was the direct result of her mother Maria's rape by her white enslaver, to offer a silent and self-evident commentary on the barbarities of enslavement. Her likeness in the disguise in which she secured her self-liberation from US enslavement was often circulated at antislavery meetings.

The Crafts lived in Britain for nearly two decades, attended or led antislavery and reform meetings, and challenged the power of the proslavery Confederacy during the US Civil War (1861–1865). Together they turned their home into a hub of Black activism by inviting fellow lecturers including Sarah Parker Remond to stay (see 'Sarah Parker Remond' in both *Speeches*, included in this volume, and in *Narratives*). Ellen Craft famously refuted the libel of her former white US enslaver in 1852, who printed a letter published on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean that declared she had become 'bored' of freedom. Outraged and incensed at yet another instance of white racist persecutory ignorance and

discrimination, she immediately penned the powerful line, ‘I would rather starve in England, a free woman, than be a slave for the best man that ever breathed upon the American continent.’ From their home in London, Ellen Craft developed kinship networks and protected fellow survivors of US enslavement. Like other freedom fighters based in Britain, the Crafts collected donations to legally free their own enslaved family members in the US. During this same period, William Craft travelled to the African continent twice to encourage the British government and the King of Dahomey (modern-day Benin) to grow and import free-grown products to Britain instead of relying on the importation of goods grown by enslaved labourers living and dying in the US South in their millions. He established a school in a former building used to sell enslaved people. During the 1860s in Britain, William Craft also exhibited magic lantern views, maps, and smaller models not only of features of their death-defying liberation from enslavement, but also of events that depicted the cruelty of enslavement and the Confederacy during the US Civil War. In 1860, the Crafts published *Running a Thousand Miles For Freedom* in London, which retold their miraculous journey of self-liberation to transatlantic audiences.



Figure 29 Ellen Craft. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)



Figure 30 William Craft. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

In England, the Crafts raised five children: Charles Estlin Phillips, William Ivens, Stephen Brougham, Alice Isabella Ellen, and Alfred. A sixth child, Mary, tragically died as an infant.

The Crafts returned to the US in 1869 and founded the Woodville Co-operative Farm School in Georgia to teach formerly enslaved people.

Here we reproduce the lectures that William Craft gave in the presence of Ellen Craft in Newcastle and Nottingham, England, in 1851, and lectures by himself in Buckinghamshire in 1859 and London in 1862.

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Note

1. 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



Anon., 'Anti-Slavery Meeting in Newcastle', *Newcastle Guardian*,
Newcastle, England, 15 March 1851, p.4.

ON THURSDAY EVENING, a public meeting was held in the Lecture Room, Nelson Street, to hear addresses from Mr William Craft and Mr William Wells Brown, two fugitive slaves. Considerable interest was excited from the fact that Mrs Craft, who was a white slave, escaped with her husband by disguising herself in male attire, and travelling through the country, attended by her husband as a negro servant. At the request of the chairman Mrs Craft took a seat upon the platform by the side of her husband, and was loudly cheered. The room was crowded, and the audience testified their abhorrence of American slavery by the hearty and enthusiastic receptive they gave to the fugitives. – Mr Dr. OLIVER was called to the chair, and after a brief address introduced[.]

Mr. W. CRAFT, who, on rising, was loudly applauded. After expressing the pleasure he felt in appearing before a Newcastle audience, and asking the indulgence of the meeting whilst he addressed them, as previous to his escaping from slavery about two years ago he was unable to either to read or write, he observed that the first thing an intelligent being sought to make him happy was liberty, and that unconditional on the ground that it was a God-given right. He knew a great deal was said about slaves being happy and contented, but he denied it. The position he and his wife were placed in was better than that of hundreds and thousands around them, but he was never for a moment contented with his condition. He then narrated two or three instances of cruelty to slaves which had come under his own observation, and proceeded to refer to his own history. He and his wife were born slaves in the state of Georgia, one of the most cruel slave states in America, where they had resided till within the last two years. Before and after their marriage they thought of many plans of escape, but on account of the great distance they would have to travel they dare not trust any but the one in which they ultimately succeeded. He proposed that his wife should dress herself in gentleman's clothing, and come off as a sick slaveholder, attended by him as a slave. She at first thought it would not be possible to travel a thousand miles thus disguised, but after discussing the subject some time she consented to attempt it, and run the risk. The articles to disguise his wife he purchased with the money he had earned at the cabinet maker's trade. His first master, in order to make his boys more valuable to him, had them taught a trade, and he was sent to a cabinet maker. Whilst engaged learning the trade his master became a

bankrupt, and was compelled to sell off some of his slaves. His mother was sold to one man and his father to another; at another time two of his brothers were sold, and on another occasion two of his sisters, all to different parties. There were then only remaining himself, sixteen years of age, a younger brother of fourteen, and two or three other slaves. As he stood upon the auction stand to be sold, his sister was being carried away in a cart, and he was not allowed even to bid her farewell, and had never seen or heard of her since. He at that time resolved that on the first opportunity he would escape. The man who purchased him allowed him to finish learning his trade, and his master gave him work to do over hours, so that by working early and late for many years he accumulated sufficient money to enable him to escape. After deciding to run away they knew it would be better not to do so without leaving everything smooth at home, otherwise the slaveholders would soon be on their track with the blood hounds, so they thought it necessary to get permission to be gone a few days. His wife, who was a house servant, asked her mistress to allow her three or four days, to see an aunt twelve miles off; she however, refused, but as his wife appeared to make a great trouble of it, she at last consented. He told his master that his wife's aunt was sick, and also asked for permission to be absent four days. His master told him he might go, but as he was very busy he must be back as quick as possible; he promised to do so, but had not yet found it convenient (laughter). He then went to the house where his wife resided, previous to which he purchased a pair of large green spectacles so as partly to conceal her face. His wife could neither read nor write, and as in America all persons with slaves have to sign their names with the description of the slave at hotels and at the custom house when travelling, she made a couple of poultices, wrapped her hand in one, and put it in a sling, and wrapped the other over her head and face, so that no one might detect her to be a female. He then cut her hair short behind, and when she was fully dressed he asked her to step on one side, and let him look at her, and he thought she answered very well for a gentleman (laughter). The train started at five o'clock in the morning, and as no one was up they walked out of the yard without being seen. He walked to the station as fast as he could, and got into a railway carriage, and his wife took a longer way round, and on arriving at the station asked for two tickets, one for herself and one for her servant. The reason he did not get the tickets was because the ticket seller knew him, and a slave could not get one without a special pass from his master. On arriving at Charlestown he procured a cab for his master, and inquired for the best hotel, on arriving at which the landlord came out, and assisted his wife into the hotel, she being still disguised as a gentleman, and walking lame from inflammatory rheumatism (laughter). He immediately got a couple of fresh poultices made for his master, and took them up to her, but they lay several hours before they were put on, for his wife found she could rest better without the poultices when no one was looking at her (applause). He was sent into the kitchen, but having to run up and down stairs to wait on his master, he had frequent opportunities of seeing his wife. On going down to the custom house she inquired for a ticket for herself and one for her slave, and when his name, age, size, and complexion had been put down, she said her hand was bad, and the captain of the boat signed her name which she gave as 'William Johnson.' Whilst travelling between Wilmington and Richmond, in Virginia, an old gentleman and two young ladies got into the carriage, and entered into conversation with her. The old gentleman said he knew what inflammatory

rheumatism was, but if he did, he knew a good deal more about it than the person to whom he was speaking (laughter). The young ladies made a pillow for the gentleman's head, and one of them said, 'father, that's a very nice young man' (laughter), and the other said, 'I never felt so much for a young man in all my life,' but he (Mr Craft) thought she had fallen in love with the wrong man that time (cheers). His wife rode in a first-class carriage, and in a second, the slave not being suffered to ride in the same carriage with his master, but whenever the train stopped he could go in and see if anything was wanted. At five o'clock in the morning of the fourth day they arrived safely at Philadelphia, got a cab, and went to one of the hotels. They told the landlord who they were, and his wife then threw off her disguise (loud cheers and applause). He there met Mr William Wells Brown, who with other friends advised them to go to Boston, and they accordingly went. At that place they remained quietly for nearly two years until the fugitive slave bill was passed, and had it not been for the passing of that law they might have remained there in safety to the present time. When that bill was passed their old masters sent on to Boston after them, and warrants were issued for their apprehension, but at that time there was such an excitement that they could not succeed, and he and his wife at last thought it best to escape to England (applause). He had not time to enter into the particulars of the Boston affair on the present occasion. He hoped the audience would not think that he and his wife gloried in such deception, even to obtain their liberties, but he thought they might be excusable. If there was anything wrong about it, it should not be charged to them, but to the cursed institution which compelled them so to act in order to gain their God-given rights, and place themselves in a position where they might worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. The speaker resumed his seat amidst loud applause.

Mr. W. W. BROWN was next called upon, and as on former occasions, most enthusiastically received. It was his good fortune, he said, to meet Mr and Mrs Craft the first day they arrived in Philadelphia, only four days after they had left their masters in the State of Georgia. They were put under his care by the friends of freedom in that place, and went on with him to New England, in the State of Massachusetts, and on account of the anxiety of the people to hear their story, they were induced to attend a few meetings in that State, where before the fugitive slave bill was enacted, they appeared to be secure from the grasp of the slaveholders. A few months since he heard that his friends were about being seized in Boston, and that an attempt was being made to drag them back to slavery, and since their arrival in this country he had attended meetings with them in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other large towns in Scotland, where they were greeted in the most enthusiastic manner. They were the first who had been driven from their country by the fugitive slave bill, and their case had excited more feeling against that bill in the New England States than almost any that had occurred, simply, he presumed, because Mrs Craft was so much fairer than most slaves who escaped. Although persons there might be slaves without regard to complexion, still there was more sympathy there for one who was white than for any other. Every mail that came from the United States brought fresh accounts of the working of the iniquitous slave law, and every newspaper was loaded with accounts of the recapture of fugitive slaves. Still while they looked on the one hand and saw a dark cloud overshadowing the country, on the other hand they saw that the cause of the

slave was going onwards, and the cause of freedom prospering. The last steamer brought the intelligence of the arrest of a fugitive slave in Boston, and on the door of the court-house where he was confined, being opened, a number of people rushed in, and rescued him. Every attempt was now being made by the authorities to re-capture him, and arrest those who should be found harbouring or concealing him. In a recent election in the state of Massachusetts, the friends of freedom had triumphantly carried into office a man holding different principles to Daniel Webster,¹ who was formerly their representative in the senate, and this showed that the people were right against the fugitive slave bill. There were now in Canada about 30,000 runaway slaves, who are almost entirely destitute of education, and it was his opinion that if manual labour schools could be established in the British colonies, so that slaves might get education by the sweat of their own brows, they would soon be prepared to take a right standing in the country. A proposition had now been started to establish a manual labour school in Canada on a large scale, where they might educate fugitive slaves, who from that institution might go out into different parts of the colonies, and become teachers and missionaries among their own people. In Scotland this proposition had been responded to, and he had no doubt it would also throughout this country. He had resolved to do what he could to get this school established, and if the people of this country would only place at their disposal the means of getting it into operation, they could make it self-supporting. Whilst supporting this proposition, he hoped the people of England would also keep in mind the free labour movement, and do all in their power to further it. They were about to have a great exhibition² in London, and it was said that 8,000 or 10,000 persons were coming from the United States, and a number of those would be slaveholders. If they could exhibit some of the fugitive slaves now running away from the United States, and two or three slaveholders with their negro whips, he thought the English would have as much curiosity to see such persons as anything produced by Yankee ingenuity. Mr Brown concluded by saying that he hoped the time was not far distant when he could not only appear in England as a free man, but when he could feel free to return to his country. At the present time neither he nor his friends Mr and Mrs Craft, could return to any part of republican America, for if they did, they would be liable to be seized and dragged back again into slavery.

Mr. G. CHARLTON proposed a resolution expressing sympathy for the fugitive slaves in the British possession, and pledging the meeting to support Mr Brown's scheme for the establishment of a manual labour school in Canada West, which is not to be confined to agriculture, but to embrace some of the mechanical branches, so that mechanics may be employed at their trades. - Mr JONATHAN PRIESTMAN seconded the resolution, which was unanimously carried.

The CHAIRMAN announced that in other towns treasurers had been appointed, and Mr Henry Richardson³ and himself would be happy to receive contributions.

Mr. BROWN and Mr. CRAFT then joined in singing a negro melody, after which Mr CHARLTON proposed that in order to give an unmistakable proof of their love of freedom, a tea party be got up, and the proceeds given in aid of the Manual Labour School. The resolution was carried, and the meeting fixed for next Tuesday.

A vote of thanks was then passed to the Chairman, and the meeting separated.

Notes

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. Henry Richardson (1807–1885) was a white British Quaker and abolitionist who, along with his white British wife, Anna, and sister-in-law, Ellen Richardson, was integral in raising the donations with which to purchase the legal freedoms of both Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown.



Anon., 'Three Fugitive Slaves in Nottingham: Tuesday – The Second Lecture', *Nottingham Review*, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England, 4 April 1851, p.3.

TUESDAY – THE SECOND Lecture was much more fully attended than the first, the spacious room being filled with a most respectable and attentive audience. At a few minutes after eight, Mr. Craft came forward, accompanied by his wife, an interesting and intelligent-looking white woman, of small stature. While her husband was speaking she sat in a chair, facing the audience, who scanned her with considerable interest, while her husband was narrating the details of their wonderful and providential deliverance from slavery. After some preliminary observations in condemnation of the system of slavery, he commenced his narration by stating, that himself and wife was born and brought up in Georgia, one of the most cruel of the slave states, and where they had continued up to within a very few years ago. He had tried to think of many schemes of effecting their escape, but was deterred from making the attempt from the knowledge that there were men who trained bloodhounds and horses for the sole purpose of hunting after and capturing run-away slaves, and that if caught, and carried back, they would be separated, severely punished, and secured in such a manner that they would never have an opportunity of getting away again. He at last resolved to make a trial, and devised the expedient of his wife dressing herself in gentlemen's clothing, as a sick invalid. On account of the distance they would have to travel – about one thousand miles – she was with great difficulty prevailed upon to fall in with the plan. On at last determining to go, 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. She knew, moreover, that a life of slavery was not a life to depend upon. As he had learnt the trade of a cabinet maker in his youth, he contrived to accumulate a sum of money by working late at night and early in the morning, sufficient for the purpose of making their escape. He purchased her disguise at different times, and in different parts of the town. When all was ready, his wife asked her mistress to spare her for two or three days, to go and see her sick aunt. She at first said she could not spare her, but she relented, and gave the required permission, when Mrs. Craft burst into tears, as if in great distress. He then asked his master for permission to accompany

her, and it was with very great difficulty he was prevailed upon to spare him. His master made him promise he would get back as soon as possible, but he had never had an opportunity of getting back since. (Laughter.) He then procured his wife some green spectacles, and as he knew she could not write so as to register her name according to custom on the journey, and sign the requisite documents, he poulticed and bound up her right hand, and put it in a sling. He also put another poultice on her face, and cut her hair short enough that she might pass for a gentleman. At a proper time, before day-light, they left the house, locked the door, and got out into the street, and when they arrived at the railway station, she took tickets for herself and slave. It was necessary to do this, as no slave could go any distance without a special pass certificate from his master, the company being responsible for the value of any slave who might escape by travelling on their line. They reached Savannah, a distance of two hundred miles, by eight o'clock in the evening. They put up at the first hotel in the place, he representing that his master was of the first class, and that he was afflicted with the inflammatory rheumatism, and could not get along unless he helped him about. The greatest attention was paid at the hotel to the supposed invalid, and two poultices were prepared for him, but when the people had retired, they were laid upon the mantel piece, as master could do very well without the poultices, when nobody was looking at him. As was the custom, he was told to go into the kitchen, but contrived to get up to his master as much as possible. When they went to the cab, he took hold of master's arm; and at the quay, master was asked the usual questions by the officers, 'Where are you going?' 'Is that your slave?' Mr. Johnson – such was her assumed name – said, 'We are going to Philadelphia; that boy belongs to him.' When the officer asked him to sign his name, he pointed to his hand, and asked him to sign it for him. He said that was against the rules, and they fully concluded they should have to stop. The captain, however, came to their relief, and said he would sign the gentleman's name. Master thanked him very kindly, and they proceeded on their journey, and next arrived at Wilmington, in North Carolina. Here Mr. Johnson was joined in the same compartment of the carriage by an old gentleman and a couple of daughters. A conversation commenced between him and Mr. Johnson: – 'You seem to be afflicted, sir; what is the matter with you?' 'Inflammatory rheumatism.' 'Oh, it is very bad; I can sympathise with you, as I know what it is.' If he did, he knew a great deal better than master did. Mr. Johnson was then prevailed upon, by the old gentleman, to lie down, and when they thought he was fast asleep, one of the young ladies said, 'That's a very nice young man.' The other said, 'I never felt so much for a young man in my life.' Soon afterwards the young ladies took their refreshments out of a basket, and asked master to partake with them; so they enjoyed themselves finely. As he (Mr. Craft) appeared very attentive to Mr. Johnson, the old gentleman came to him and asked him some questions, – first his name, and then where he was going. To Philadelphia, to be cured of inflammatory rheumatism, by his uncle, who was Doctor James Johnson. 'I know him, like a buck,' said the old gentleman. Before the gentleman and his daughters left the train, they left their address, and obtained a promise from Mr. Johnson that he would pay them a visit on his return back to the south, saying, they were sure mother would be delighted. They then proceeded, in a similar manner, to Baltimore, where they experienced the same difficulty as before, from Mr. Johnson not

being able to sign his name. Having got off again, they arrived at Philadelphia at three o'clock in the morning, the whole journey of 1000 miles having occupied four days. Before the passing of the fugitive slave law, a master could not get his slave out of a free state; they therefore settled down in Philadelphia, he carrying on business as a cabinet-maker, and she with her needle so that they got a handsome and comfortable living. When the above-named measure was passed, an agent was sent down to arrest them; but such was the strong feeling in the city in favour of the abolition movement, that the attempt proved unsuccessful. The President¹ was then appealed to, and as he expressed his determination of upholding the law, and concentrated troops in Boston harbour, he knew that resistance would be in vain; so he and his wife, without loss of time, settled their affairs, took a train to Halifax, whence they proceeded by steamer, and arrived at Liverpool, and were now, he trusted, protected by British laws. He hoped the audience would not think they gloried in the deceptions they had practiced in order to gain their liberties. When it was considered that they were formerly nothing more than chattels, subject to be sold at any moment, they perhaps might be excused; and if anything was wrong, it was hardly fair to charge it to them, but to the accursed institution of slavery.

Mr. W. W. Brown² then described his beautiful series of views, painted on two thousand feet of canvass, narrating many highly amusing and characteristic incidents of American and negro life, which were listened to with the most intense gratification and delight, and elicited the warmest applause.



Figure 31 Heritage plaque to William and Ellen Craft, on the site of their former home at 26 Cambridge Grove, Hammersmith, London, England. (English Heritage.)

Notes

1. He is referring to the nefarious actions of white US President Millard Fillmore (1800–1874) who endorsed the Crafts’ enslavers’ determination to return them both to enslavement. See Richard J. M. Blackett, ‘Fugitive Slaves in Britain: The Odyssey of William and Ellen Craft’. *Journal of American Studies*, 12.1 (1978): pp.41–62.
2. Here William Wells Brown is displaying his antislavery panorama for which only the text survives. See Brown, *A Description of William Wells Brown’s Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave, from His Birth in Slavery to His Death or His Escape to His First Home of Freedom on British Soil*, London: 1850, in C. Peter Ripley, ed. (with George E. Carter, Jeffery S. Rossback, Roy E. Finkenbine, Fiona E. Spillers, Debra Susie), *The Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol I: The British Isles, 1830–1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp.191–225.



Anon., 'Freedom in the United States', *Bucks Herald, Uxbridge Advertiser, Windsor and Eton Journal*, 26 November 1859, p.5.

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING a lecture on Slavery was delivered in the Castle-street School-room by Mr. W. Craft, 'a man of colour,' formerly a slave of Georgia, one of the blood-red stripes which disgrace the flag of the 'model republic of the dis-United States' . . .¹

Mr. Craft observed that if the United States Government were doing anything for the purpose of abolishing slavery, and cleansing their escutcheon of this foul blot, there were no people in the civilised world who would more rejoice than the true-hearted inhabitants of this free and glorious island, but so far from that being the case, the system was encouraged and upheld, and the slaveholders of America were much irritated against this country for the exertions used in opposition to the African slave trade. When he found ministers of the Gospel, with but a few honourable exceptions, lacerating the pages of Holy Writ by preaching and writing in favour of the disgraceful system, it was enough to make every humane heart swell with indignation, and to induce all Christian people to use their utmost exertions to wipe out the curse of slavery. The Americans said that England had no right to interfere with the subject as far as their country was concerned, and even some English pro-slavery men contended that this country had nothing to do with slavery in America. No country in the world exerted so much moral influence as England, and he invoked that influence in behalf of those who sought for the abolition of slavery, feeling convinced that the time would come when the moral power of her example would prevail, and the injured and degraded slaves be set free. Having explained the slave laws – under which he had existed nearly twenty-three years – and their effects on the social condition of the Southern States, he gave an account of his escape in conjunction with his wife from Macon, in the State of Georgia, in December, 1848. It would appear that William Craft and his wife, while in the condition of slaves, were exempt from many of the most objectionable employments which as a general rule may be considered as almost inseparable from that condition; still they formed part of the live stock of their owner, and were let to masters for a compensation. The husband, having been taught the trade of a cabinet-maker, was hired by a person in that line at £44-year; the wife became a lady's maid. The couple having matured their plan of escape, obtained leave of absence for a holiday, and at an early hour on a certain morning they bid farewell

to Macon, the wife disguised as a young gentleman in ill-health, wearing green spectacles, her hands poultice and bandaged, being for the occasion affected with inflammatory rheumatism; the husband as the slave of the invalid. When a traveller presents himself at a custom-house he has to register his own name as well as that of his servant or slave, if one accompanies him, in a book; but as Mrs. C. had not been taught the art of writing, the expedient of having her hands bound up as described was adopted to enable her to meet the difficulty: her supposed disabled state excited the sympathy of a ship captain, who performed the duty at her dictation, her name being entered as William Johnson, and the slave as Nathan Johnson. The fugitives reached the railway station by different roads, the young gentleman taking a seat in the first class saloon, the slave in the carriage assigned to persons of his class. The narrative of the journey, through a thousand miles of slave country, by rail and river, from Georgia to Philadelphia, disclosed a variety of incidents, both startling and amusing, at one time exciting deep sympathy, at another eliciting considerable laughter. From the latter city they proceeded to Boston, where they remained until the passing of the Refugee Law, when they were compelled to quit America for England, in which country they had resided to the present time. In conclusion, the lecturer threw out suggestions for lessening the evils of slavery. He hoped the people of England would continue their opposition to the slave trade, and lose no opportunity of appealing to the sympathies of their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic. He stated that one of his objects in giving lectures was to raise money sufficient to emancipate his sister, his mother being already emancipated, and explained that, having a share in a London business, for which he travelled, he was not going about the country for the purpose of lecturing for a livelihood. The lecturer was loudly applauded at the close.

Thanks were also given to the chairman, after which the meeting terminated.

Note

1. Here, the chairperson of the meeting, Mr John Gibbs, introduced William Craft to the audience and denounced US enslavement.



Anon., 'Running One Thousand Miles for Freedom',
East London Observer, 22 March 1862, p.2.

ON TUESDAY EVENING, in the lecture hall, Three Mills Lane, Bromley, Mr William [Craft]¹ gave his thrilling account of the escape of himself and his wife from American slavery. Were the incidents of Mr Craft's story fiction instead of fact they would be sufficiently exciting to create general interest in their narration, but when we know all to be a truthful account of the perils which the man who stands before us adorned with talents and education, encountered in his emancipation from the bonds of a cruel and degrading slavery, our interest, our indignation, and our sympathy become intense. So admirably does Mr Craft depict the romantic incidents of the perilous escape which under the guidance of Heaven was so successfully achieved by his wife and himself, that as he tells of each succeeding obstacle which rendered itself upon their flight, the anxiety of the audience is as manifest as when some great sensations scene in an Adelphi drama reaches its culminating point. We need scarcely add that the denouement, or in other words the final and triumphant escape of William and Ellen Craft to the shores of Britain is hailed with tremendous and enthusiastic applause.

Mr Craft illustrated his lecture with some very beautiful dissolving views, descriptive of the route through which he passed on his flight from slavery.

The cities of Washington, Baltimore, New York, and Boston, are faithfully and artistically represented. The interior of a railway carriage shows Mrs Craft in her disguise as an invalid gentleman seated by the side of a friend of her master's who, however, luckily fails to detect her. Another scene shows as Mr Craft sold by auction at the mart, and separated – perhaps for ever – from his only sister!

On Tuesday evening a highly respectable audience welcomed Mr Craft to Bromley. Joseph A. Horner, Esq, F.S.S., occupied the chair, and in introducing the lecturer, spoke of the high opinion in which he was held by the Abolitionists of this country, and alluded to the disinterested aid which he had given to the National Antislavery League.

At the conclusion of Mr Craft's affecting story.

The chairman having eulogised the eloquence and talent which had afforded them so much intellectual entertainment that evening, drew attention to the fact that there was a poor refugee from slavery – a 'Contraband of War' from the United States, – then in the room; and as he had arrived in this country in a state of great

destitution he would ask their excuses for making a slight appeal to the meeting on his behalf (cheers).

The fugitive (John Smith) then stood forward and stated that he had formerly been a slave at Baltimore and was usually hired out as cook to hotels in the town. He had often thought of trying to escape, but never had a favourable opportunity until the outbreak of the American war, when he and some others determined to make an effort for their freedom, which, after many perils and hardships, they succeeded.

Mr Herbert Thompson proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Craft, and took the opportunity to recommend the case of Mr Smith to the sympathies of the benevolent.

The Rev. J. J. Kelly (a native Indian minister recently arrived from Canada) seconded the resolution which was carried unanimously.

Mr Craft having made a suitable reply, a collection was made for the fugitive slave, and a vote of thanks to the chairman terminated the proceedings.

Note

1. This and other subsequent names were originally spelled 'Croft'.



ALEXANDER CRUMMELL

(1819–1898)

Biographical History

BORN LEGALLY FREE in New York City in 1819, Alexander Crummell graduated from Oneida Institute in 1839, a white-founded radical antislavery educational establishment located in Whitesboro, New York, in which Black male students enrolled. He became a minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church and preached sermons focusing on antislavery and anti-racism across the eastern United States. Crummell travelled to the British Isles in 1848 and remained until 1853 after graduating from Queens College, University of Cambridge. He was a prolific writer, orator, and preacher on social justice and antislavery activism. After finishing his degree, he moved to Liberia as a missionary, and worked with Liberia College in Monrovia – present day University of Liberia – until 1872, when he returned to the US to preach at St. Mary's Episcopal Mission in Washington DC. In the same city he served as pastor and helped found St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which became a National Historic Landmark in 1976.¹ He published numerous writings and sermons, including *The Future of Africa* (1862) and *The Greatness of Christ* (1882). Towards the end of his life, he lectured at Howard University in Washington DC, a historically Black college, and helped found the American Negro Academy in Washington DC, an organisation established to support African American academics.

Here we reproduce Alexander Crummell's speech that he delivered in Preston, England, in 1849.

Note

1. Further information on St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Washington DC is available at: <https://www.nps.gov/places/st-lukes-episcopal-church.html>

Further Reading

Archives

Alexander Crummell Papers 1837–1898. New York: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. The Finding Aid available at: <http://archives.nypl.org/scm/20572>

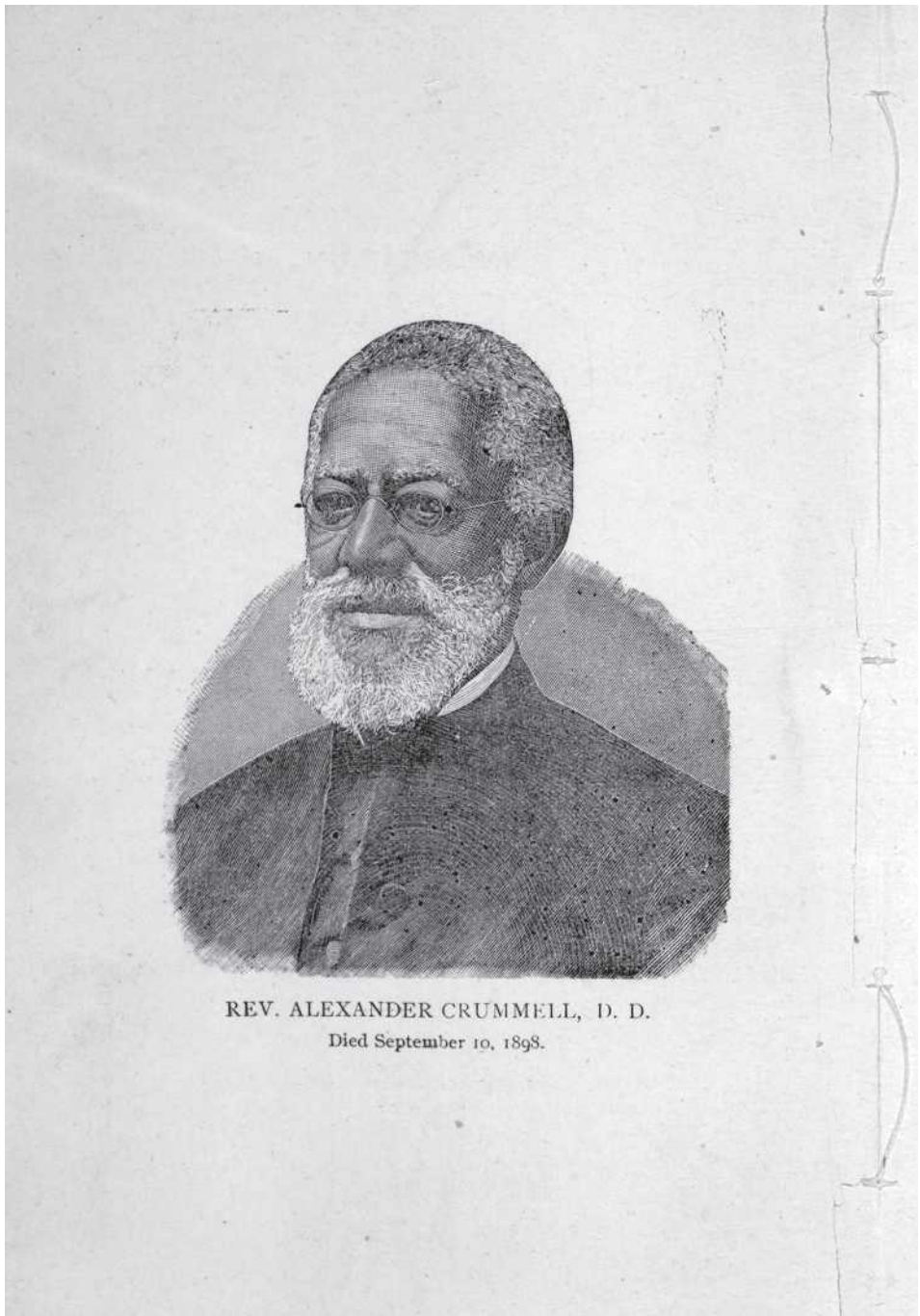


Figure 32 Rev. Alexander Crummell, c.1899. (Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection, African American Perspectives, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

Primary

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Anon., 'African Episcopal Church', *The Preston Chronicle*,
Preston, Lancashire, England, 15 September 1849, p.5.

THE REV. ALEXANDER CRUMMELL next presented himself to the meeting, and was received with great cheering. He said that if he should be indifferent to the kind reception he had met with in the town, he would be doing injustice not only to himself but to all. He was thankful for the large gathering that night; and he would detail to them as plainly as possible his case, which was a simple one. The rev. gentleman then gave an account of the reason and object of his mission, of which the following is an epitome. He was pastor of an African congregation, in New York, amounting to upwards of 30,000 people. They were all free, having received their emancipation in 1829.¹ 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. His congregation had been in existence 10 years, during which time it had had two ministers besides himself. The other two ministers had been obliged to leave their ministrations from various causes, and went to Africa, and he, on account of the congregation not being able to support him was intending to follow them, when he determined to come to England and state his case there. He accordingly went on board an American vessel where he was treated unjustly and unhumanely, for although he paid cabin fare, he was not allowed the right of a cabin passenger, no matter how inclement the weather, and this treatment continued until he arrived at Liverpool, where, for the first time in his life, he felt himself a free man. – (Loud cheers.) He then proceeded to London, where he got letters of recommendation from the Bishop of Llandaff, and others, and which had been of great service to him. The rev. gentleman then reviewed the treatment which the slaves generally received, and denounced the system as one of cruelty and murder. He hoped that the English would fall upon their own resources plant the cotton tree in India, and thus slavery would be materially lessened, if not entirely discontinued. – (Cheers.) After thanking them for the kind reception he had received, he sat down amid loud cheering.

A collection amounting to £9 10s 3d was then made, and a vote of thanks having been passed to the chairman, the meeting separated.

Note

1. A copy of the original manuscript and transcription of the Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in New York which was passed in 1799 can be found at: <http://www.archives.nysed.gov/education/act-gradual-abolition-slavery-1799>



WILLIAM HOWARD DAY

(1825–1900)

Biographical History

BORN LEGALLY FREE in New York City, William Howard Day became an author, orator, community activist, abolitionist, teacher, and newspaper editor, Underground Railroad Conductor, and co-organiser within the colored conventions movement. He was greatly influenced by his mother Eliza Day who helped found the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. He worked with Black radical abolitionists Henry Highland Garnet (see ‘Henry Highland Garnet’ in *Speeches*, included in this volume) and David Ruggles (1810–1849), a legally free-born renowned freedom fighter and activist, and matriculated at Oberlin College in Ohio, one of the first colleges to admit African American students, where he graduated in 1847. He edited *The Alienated American*, the first African American newspaper based in Cleveland, Ohio, and taught at a local school there, as well as serving as the secretary for the National Negro Convention in 1848. Day travelled the US as a teacher before settling for a short time in Canada where he dedicated his labours to educating freedom seekers who had secured their liberation from enslavement.

Day toured the British Isles in 1859 initially to raise money for a local school in Ontario, only to remain during the US Civil War motivated by a determination to campaign against the Confederacy and to work with legally free-born abolitionist, author, activist, physician, and soldier Martin Robison Delany (1812–1885) and the African Aid Society, a British-based antislavery organisation that he had helped to found and that was established with the aim of increasing the material wealth of the African continent. Upon his return to the US, Day worked with the Freedmen’s Bureau, an organisation founded in 1865 by the US Congress to aid formerly enslaved African Americans in the wake of legal abolition, and moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1867 to work as an inspector-general for local schools. Two years later, he travelled to Wilmington, North Carolina, to help African American citizens register to vote and throughout the 1870s and 1880s he served on school boards in Pennsylvania.

Here we reproduce Day’s speech he delivered in May 1861 in Hull, England.

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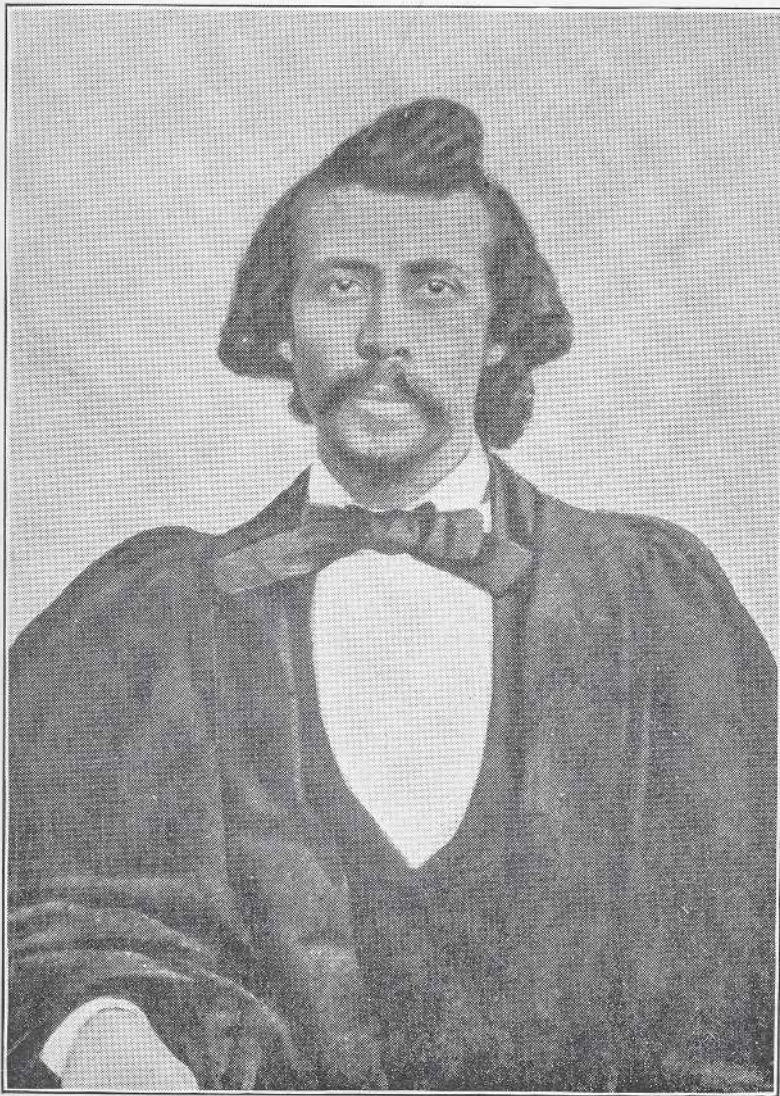
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WILLIAM HOWARD DAY
BAPTIZED BY JAMES VARICK

Figure 33 William Howard Day, from Rev. B. F. Wheeler, *The Varick Family*, Mobile, 1906. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'The Fugitive Slaves in Canada', *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, Hull, Yorkshire, England, 10 May 1861, p.6.

A PUBLIC MEETING WAS held at the Royal Institution, Albion-street, on Monday evening last, when William Howard Day, Esq., M.A., of Chatham, Canada West, advocated the claims of the fugitive slave to the Bible, the school, and the press. Mr. Councillor EYRE occupied the chair, and the attendance was a large one. The meeting having been opened by the Rev. JOHN DECK, M.A., with singing and prayer. The CHAIRMAN in introducing Mr. Day, commented upon the difficulties and dangers which attended the education of the coloured people in the United States. He believed that in some of the states, – in one half of the slave-holding states, – it was almost death to educate the slave. The object of the funds they were raising was, that the slave, after being exposed to the perils and dangers attendant upon making his escape into Canada, might through Christianity and education become really free. There was a good work going on amongst these people, and as their object was a noble one, he felt that they would become more deeply interested in it after this evening. He believed there was a strong desire among the slaves in the states to get to Canada and be free men, and the present crisis would facilitate their means for doing so. He hoped many thousands of them would be enabled to find their way to the free country, and become respectable members of society. He then introduced Mr. DAY, who was received with much applause. Before going into his subject, he referred for the purpose of illustrating his remarks, to a map on the wall, showing the relative positions of the free and slave states, the large preponderance in extent of the latter, and the position of the capital (Washington) between the two slave states of Maryland and Virginia. He said he should not endeavour to harrow the feelings of his audience by relating instances of horrible cruelty that was practised upon the slaves, but would endeavour to show that there was, amid all the gloom of the present, a prospect of future liberty for the coloured man; and that the poor slave was looking forward to rest from the oppression under which he was placed. He however, corroborated the chairman's remark as to the penalty of educating the slave. The law of Louisiana declared, that if anyone did this by a sign, or a word dropped, the first offence was to be visited with imprisonment, and the second offence with death; and he narrated an instance where this sentence had been carried out. Even in Washington, there were once open marts for negro traffic, and although the disgust which had

been created in the minds of the European representatives had caused an alteration to be made so that the sales were carried on privately, public opinion at that place was certainly against the slave. Mr. Day then said he would consider a question which had occupied their attention at a previous meeting, – the question of bondage – how it was to be settled, – and whether it was to be settled at all. After depicting briefly the character of slavery – how the unfortunate ‘blacks’ were taken down south to be ‘worked up’ because the masters had decided that it was better to work their slaves to the full extent of their power than to let them work easily, he said if they could stand where he had stood, and put on their limbs as he had the chains which bound the captive, taking a last farewell of his wife and little ones, with the feeling that you must go or die, they might then impersonate the American slave. He might be told of the despotism that existed in other countries, but in those cases it was the despotism of one man only, but this was the despotism of millions. It could, therefore, better be realised why the slaves looked for a prospect of liberty here as well as hereafter, and he said it would no doubt be interesting to know that the veritable Uncle Tom,¹ the famous history of whom was made up out of several true histories,² was still living, and had escaped some year since to English protection in Canada. He also, in his remarks, mentioned an advertisement in an American paper, of which he had a copy, stating that ‘a negro’s head had been found, which the owner could have on application, and paying the expenses.’ This showed the position of the negro as a chattel, for the owner would only want the head that he might have proof of the damage he had sustained in his property to recover against his insurers. He then proceeded to consider whether there could be any prospect of liberty for the slave in America, where every rood of earth seemed to be the ground of some wrested right, and where in portions of the land the very air was choked with the sighs of the millions dropping down in despair. He would answer that there was. He referred to the spirit of liberty as shown in the history of the great nations of old – Egypt, Sparta, the ancient Britons and Caractacus, France and the time of Charles Martel,³ the Caledonians, the glorious independency of Switzerland, and the spirit of liberty which caused Tell to drop his bow when about to aim at the soaring eagle. He thought he might also refer, at this distance of time, to the Pilgrim Fathers,⁴ who, with an indomitable spirit of liberty left their native land for a strange country, amidst the greatest difficulties and dangers; and at the end of this attenuated thread of the heroes of liberty, he would place those fugitives who encountered the perils of the forest and the bloodhounds to get free, having showed that God had implanted in man an instinctive love of liberty, the lecturer proceeded to answer the objection raised by some that the slave would not have liberty if it was offered to him. He would ask why were there, then, 40,000 fugitives in Canada? But even if it were so, it showed what a crushing system slavery must be to dehumanise man so; and if it were not the case, it proved to what base means men would resort in order to maintain slavery. Another prospect for liberty was, that they could appeal to men’s thoughts. Mind was made to govern matter, and the age of mind was the age of freedom. For that reason they wished to educate the slave, and to put the Bible into his hands. The lecturer also showed that the minds of the coloured people were also being aroused, and they had sent a deputation into Africa,⁵ which had been most cordially received; and even where Dr. Livingstone⁶ had been refused admission, the deputation had been welcomed as brethren, because they were of a kindred colour. The deputation found a

cotton-growing country ten times larger than that of the United States. They found that, whereas in America the cotton was planted every year, in Africa it was not planted for several years; and in America they got but one crop in a year, while in Africa they had four, in America the labour was done by slaves, in Africa by free and willing hands. He read an extract from an original treaty which the deputation had made with the King of Aberkuta,⁷ by which the king agreed that all the land needed would be given free of charge to those who would go and teach the culture of cotton, with permission to spread the light of the gospel in that country, and to trade in palm oil and ivory. He then alluded to the present state of America. There would be three months' supply of cotton in the states, but the first impulse of the slave would be to fire the cotton and stop the supply, and what would become of the four millions whose interest literally hung upon a 'cotton thread.' Or if the sluices of the Mississippi were opened the country would be inundated, and the flocks, &c., swept off with the bosom of destruction. These were the elements that were now gathering in the slave states, and it was the interest of this country to see how this element was rising, and to guard against the consequences. He deplored these scenes, should they occur, but they would be the result of the oppression and ignorance under which the bondman was kept. One other point in favour of the movement was, that God was on the side of the bondman. God does not dishonour Himself nor His image; everything in nature denied it, and the punishment of death had been of old the penalty for stealing a man. The lecturer then instanced the prejudice which existed among some of the public functionaries and among many of the people, even on the borders of Canada, against the slave, and the attempts that were sometimes made to kidnap



Figure 34 Royal Institute, Albion Street, Hull, England, by Cuthbert Brodrick, 1852. (Wikimedia Commons.)

coloured people, and to recover fugitives, even on British ground and in conclusion he urged that a collection might be made worthy of the cause. A collection was then made, amounting to about £4, and a vote of thanks passed to the chairman. Mr. Day also acknowledged the kind sympathy which he had met with from the press of Hull. The proceedings then terminated.

Notes

1. He is referring to Josiah Henson (1789–1883), a self-liberated activist and social justice campaigner born in Maryland and claimed by white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) as the inspiration for the character of her title protagonist, Tom, in her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). See 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
2. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston MA: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1853).
3. Almost certainly Charles Martel (c.688–741), a white military general and political figure who was born in Belgium and died in France.
4. He is referring to the white English immigrants who boarded the ship, the *Mayflower*, in 1620 to start new lives in a region they named the Plymouth Colony, present day Plymouth, Massachusetts. Just a year earlier in 1619, the 'First Africans' had arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. '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 at: <https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans/>
5. For further information on this African American 'deputation to Africa', see Richard J. M. Blackett, 'Martin R. Delany and Robert Campbell: Black Americans in Search of an African Colony'. *The Journal of Negro History*, 62.1 (1977): pp.1–25.
6. David Livingstone (1813–1873) was a white Scottish missionary and physician who undertook repeated visits to, and had a long-standing and complex relationship with, the African continent. See Benedict Greening, 'African Nationalist or Imperial Agent – David Livingstone Analysed', 23 April 2013, available online at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2013/04/23/african-nationalist-or-imperial-agent-david-livingstone-analysed/>
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ISAAC PERRY DICKERSON

(c.1850–1852–1900)

Biographical History

ISAAC PERRY DICKERSON experienced enslavement in Virginia. He secured his self-liberation after the US Civil War when he moved to Tennessee and worked as a waiter and teacher. He narrowly escaped violence by racist and murderous whites in Memphis in 1866 when a mission school was deliberately burned, and during his time as a teacher and educator he faced constant racism and death threats by the local white community. In 1867, he attended Fisk University, a historically Black college founded in 1866, and became part of the world-renowned choir, the Fisk Jubilee

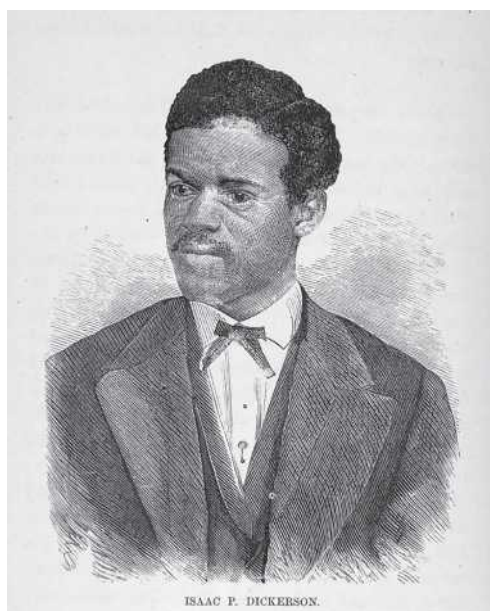


Figure 35 Isaac P. Dickerson, ‘The Jubilee Singers, and their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollar’s Collection’, 1873. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

Singers, which travelled to Britain in 1873 to raise funds for the University.¹ The tour courted immense success, and the group performed at Westminster Abbey in front of Queen Victoria and the Duke and Duchess of Argyll. He did not return to the United States, choosing to study and prepare for the ministry at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. During his lifetime, he undertook several lecturing tours around the British Isles, France, Italy, and Palestine. In the late 1890s, he spoke on behalf of the British Women's Temperance Association and raised funds for community churches. Dickerson spoke on US enslavement, temperance, and social justice, often singing 'plantation melodies' and describing scenes he had witnessed while living under enslavement. He died in London in 1900.

Here we reproduce Isaac Perry Dickerson's speech that he delivered in Trowbridge, England, in 1897.

Note

1. Fisk Jubilee Singers, a world-famous Black performance group founded in 1871 by students at Fisk University, a historically Black institution established in 1865 and incorporated in 1867 in Nashville, Tennessee, with the explicit mission of going on fund-raising tours to support this higher education institution. For further information see G. D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers and Their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollars* (Boston MA: Lee and Shepard, 1873).

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Anon., 'Successful Temperance Mission', *The Wiltshire Times*,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England, 20 November 1897, p.5.

A VERY SUCCESSFUL TEMPERANCE mission has been held during the week under the auspices of the Abstainer's Union, the meetings being addressed by Mr. I. P. Dickerson, an emancipated slave. The first gathering was held in the Wesleyan Chapel on Sunday afternoon, when the audience consisted of members of the Wesleyan, Congregational, and Baptist Bible classes, and scholars from the Adult School, with friends. The promoters very wisely allowed admission only by ticket, but, notwithstanding this precaution, the chapel was crowded. Mr. Alfred Stratton, leader of the Wesleyan Bible class, presided, and Mr. Dickerson gave an impressive address. In the evening Mr. Dickerson spoke in the New Hall, and again attracted a crowded audience, the chair being occupied by Mr. W. L. Philip. Meetings have since been held nightly in the New Hall, which has been crowded on each occasion. The chairman on Monday evening was Mr. A. G. Smith, on Tuesday Mr. L. J. Bigwood presided, on Wednesday the proceedings were under the conductorship of Mr. W. Wallis, on Thursday evening Mr. A. Stratton filled the chair, and last evening (Friday) Mr. R. H. Sainsbury (Trowbridge) was announced to do so. Mr. Dickerson was, of course, the principal speaker on each occasion. He has previously visited Melksham, and might consequently be regarded as in some degree a favourite in the town. His vivid descriptions of incidents in his life proved both instructive and entertaining, and additional interest was given to the proceedings on some occasions by the exhibition of a number of views. Advantage was also taken of the opportunity afforded by Mr. Dickerson's visit to celebrate, on Wednesday afternoon, the jubilee of the Band of Hope movement.¹ A procession of members of the Bands of Hope connected with the three chapels first took place, the children carrying lanterns, and the Town Band leading the way. It may be here mentioned that a promising Band of Hope is conducted at each place of worship, the total membership being something near 200, who took part in the proceedings on this occasion. A meeting was held in the British schoolroom prior to the adult gathering in the New Hall. Mr. Dickerson delivered a suitable address, and at the close of the meeting each member of the Bands of Hope was presented with a Jubilee medal. The week's meetings have been looked upon with great interest by temperance workers, and will no doubt result in a substantial addition being made to the number of total abstainers, both old and young.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

(1818–1895)

Biographical History

FREDERICK DOUGLASS EXPERIENCED enslavement in Talbot County, Maryland. He secured his self-liberation from the ‘hell black sin’ of human bondage at just over twenty years of age. He went on to become a world-renowned freedom fighter, social justice campaigner, philosopher, orator, author, essayist, newspaper editor, political thinker, and statesperson. A prolific writer, he repeatedly authored his life story, including his first, second, and third autobiographies titled as follows: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written By Himself* (1882, 1892). His first family-run antislavery and human rights newspaper, *The North Star*, was published in 1847, and he also wrote an inspirational fictional work titled *The Heroic Slave* in 1853. He gave an incalculable number of lectures throughout his career and was renowned on both sides of the Atlantic for his inspiring, powerful, and legendary oratory. He was the most famous human rights philosopher, author, orator, and campaigner in US history. During the US Civil War (1861–1865) he campaigned for Black men to join the Union Army, and post-war he served as a member of the US Commission to the Dominican Republic. He later held the positions of Recorder of Deeds for the District of Columbia, US Marshal, and US Minister to Haiti. He also served as President of the Freedman’s Saving Bank and as a trustee of Howard University. He undertook repeated visits to Britain and Ireland (1845–1847, 1859–1860, 1886–1887) in which he gave untold numbers of antislavery and social justice lectures to audiences in their hundreds and thousands. White UK transatlantic contacts and friends helped to sustain Douglass’ social justice work in the US, and continued to circulate his speeches and written works into the 1890s. Douglass married Maryland-born renowned liberator, philosopher, freedom fighter, and family builder Anna Murray in 1838, and together they had five children – Rosetta Douglass Sprague, Lewis Henry Douglass, Frederick Douglass Jr, Charles Remond Douglass and Annie Douglass – all liberators in their own right. Every member of the Douglass family fought for Black liberation until the day they died.

Here we reproduce speeches Frederick Douglass gave in England during his multiple visits to the UK, in Carlisle in 1846, Leeds in 1859 and Bridport in 1886.

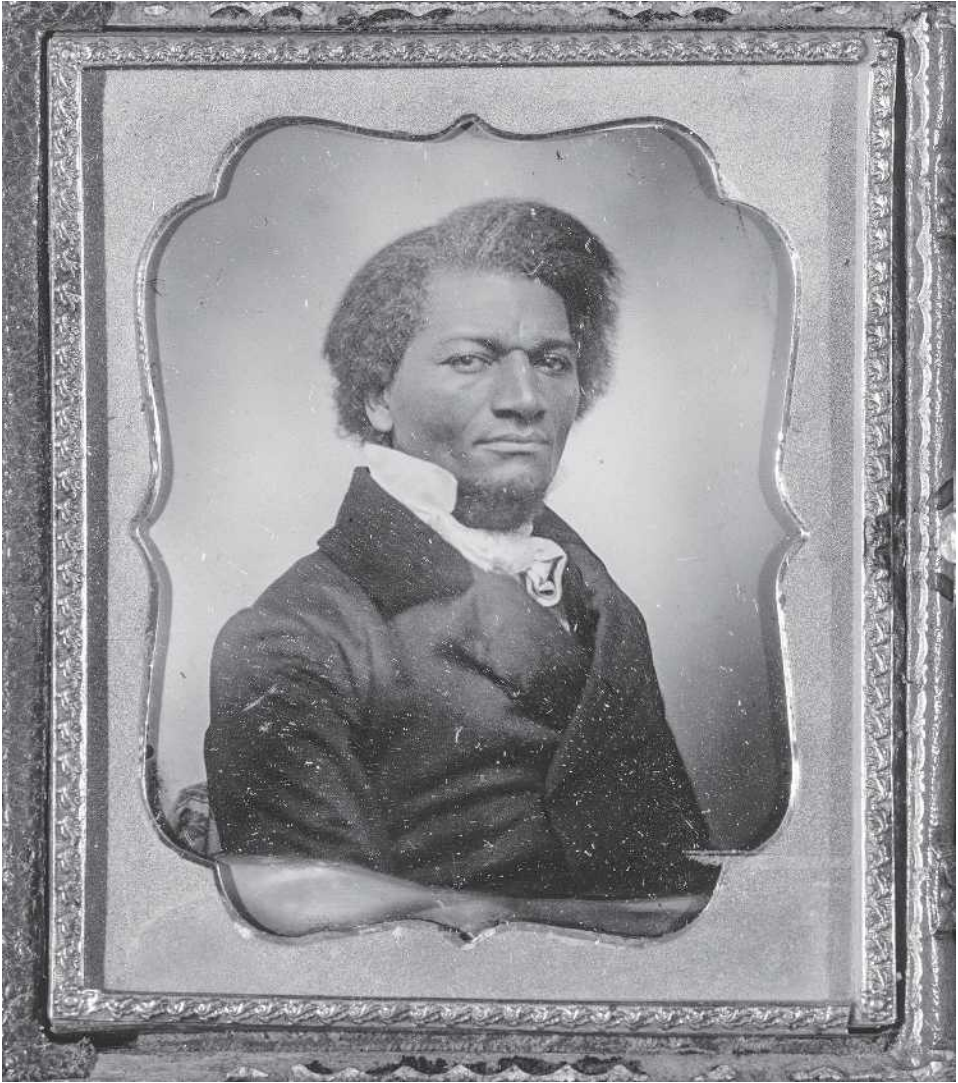


Figure 37 Frederick Douglass, c.1855. (The Rubel Collection, Gift of William Rubel. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)

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Anon., 'Mr. Frederick Douglass's Lectures on American Slavery',
Carlisle Journal, Carlisle, Cumbria, England, 22 August 1846, p.4.

MR. FREDERICK DOUGLASS, the American Slave who, having escaped from bondage in the 'land of liberty,' has come over to England to get up an agitation against slavery, delivered a lecture on the subject, on Friday night last, in the athenaeum in this city, to a numerous audience. The lecturer entered the room soon after eight o'clock. For a negro, he has an intelligent and even a pleasing face, and he had not been long before the meeting until he gave unmistakeable signs of extraordinary talent, – his impassioned eloquence taking the majority of his hearers, to whom he was a stranger, by surprise. His voice is deep-toned and powerful, and his style of speaking much resembles that of George Thompson.¹ With the pronunciation of the English language and with its grammar he displayed an intimate acquaintance; and when warmed with his subject he spoke with great force, as well as propriety. The great length of his discourse precludes the possibility of our giving a full report of it; but the rapid sketch of the chief points of it, which we subjoin, will serve to indicate the topics upon which he dwelt.

JOSEPH FERGUSON, Esq., of Fisher Street, who presided, having introduced him to the meeting, Mr. FREDERICK DOUGLASS came forward and said he made no pretensions to learning, never having had a day's schooling. All the knowledge he possessed had been 'stolen,' as it were, during his enslavement. The question of American slavery was becoming well understood throughout England: and it would soon become the all-engrossing topic throughout Christendom – arousing the attention of the wise and good of every nation, as a foul blot upon common humanity. There were fifteen slave states, and thirteen free states in America. Each state had its own constitution, and made its own laws, being considered sovereign in itself, so far as all within its own boundary were concerned. But all the states were parties to the Federal Government, which regulated commerce, declared war and peace, levied taxes, and provided for the common safety. The individual states, however, had the power to create and abolish institutions – slavery, for instance – peculiar to their own locality, the Federal Government having no power over them. Now, slavery had been represented as an institution peculiar to the south; but the crime connected with its support was shared in by the whole country: for there was a clause in the Federal constitution by which the slaveholder could summon the whole physical force of his district to suppress revolt among the negro population; and fugitives were, by another clause, doomed to slavery

wherever they went – the whole land being literally made hunting ground for the foul kidnappers of the south, who found an unerring detective police in well trained blood-hounds. He (the lecturer) when in America was liable to be dragged back into slavery, for wherever he went – whether to Bunker's Hill,² or to this or that place where the battle of freedom had been fought, he was amenable, under the star-spangled banner, to the state regulations by which man-stealing was legalised. The extent of the execrable institution of slavery in the United States was astounding. There were 3,000,000 slave-holders, and 3,000,000 slaves. These slaves were men equally powerful, physically speaking, with their masters, – if anything, more powerful than they; and they *could*, under certain circumstances, gain their freedom by force. He was not there, however, to encourage insurrection amongst them; but it was notorious that the power of redemption was with them, if they had nothing to contend with but their masters, who confessed that such was the fact. In the event of a foreign invader in the north, it was openly confessed in congress, the slave would rally round the flag of emancipation; and without the northern states the slave-holders of the southern would not hold their slaves in bondage. For how could one man make slaves of ten men? And there were ten slaves to every slave-holder. They could run away and take their freedom, and they would butcher their masters if it were merely a contention between the slaves and the slave-holders; but public opinion was in favour of slavery, which received a moral support from the people, a civil support from the government, and a physical support under the constitution of the country – and that was the secret of its prolonged existence. And what was slavery? it was that by which one man enforced a right in the body and soul of another man. It was the reducing a human being, by another human being, to the condition of a brute; compelling him to find companionship with the ox and the horse; making him a marketable commodity; driving him before the lash; withdrawing him from the natural relation with his God and his brethren; and making him a thing to be governed, guided, and directed just as his master wished, in eating, working, and thinking. That was slavery as it existed in the United States, – as it was, had been, and would always be. It was sin in its conception, sin in its progress, and sin in its ultimate results. Well, it might be asked, what could be done in England to operate against an evil existing in a land three thousand miles distant? He was there to tell the audience. England was but fourteen days sail from America, and any word written or spoken against slavery was heard and appreciated in Boston and in New York in a fortnight. So much for the achievements of science, which gave Englishmen the power, by means of public opinion, rapidly conveyed through the medium of steam and the press, to alarm the consciences of the slaveholders and to cheer the hopes of those who were now living in bondage, and kept in subjection by the whip, the scourge, the thumb-screw, and the manacle. The lecturer next warned the meeting to beware of the plausible sophistries of forty-five gentlemen who had come over to this country from the United States, as delegates to the Temperance Convention³ in London, and who in advocating the cause of temperance, were insidiously using their eloquence for the purpose of perpetuating slavery, with an apparent ingenuousness that would appear to spring from true philanthropy, these persons advocated principles which enthralled mankind. It had become his duty lately, in Covent Garden Theatre, boldly to condemn their opinions and to denounce their conduct; and should they visit Carlisle he warned the audience to take heed of them. It was just in proportion to the effect of the exposures of the system abroad that America yielded; and he instanced the case of

John L. Brown,⁴ who was sentenced to be hanged for assisting the escape of a slave: the discussions on the circumstance in the British Parliament had the effect of commuting his punishment to public whipping; and even that commuted punishment was not carried into effect, in consequence of a petition, numerously signed, from ministers of the Church of Scotland, and others. He also instanced the case of Jonathan Walker,⁵ whose sentence for a like offence was remitted in consequence of a demonstration of public opinion in England. The moral influence of England, he believed, was necessary for abolitionizing the United States, and that once enlisted in favour of the slave, slavery could no longer exist. Physical means of attaining this consummation he repudiated: he relied upon the force of truth, which would prove all potent, for so long as one voice was raised against the system, and the finger of scorn was pointed against its upholders, their consciences would be touched, and their minds be ill at ease. After a graphic description of slavery as it exists in the southern States of America, and after reading a number of advertisements from the American newspapers, detailing the scars and disfigurements of runaway slaves by the lash, he said that those descriptions revealed the utmost apathy to horrors – such as the branding by hot irons, the cutting off of ears, and the stripes of the scourge – the bare revelation of which caused a shudder in lands where liberty existed. And this abominable system found supporters and advocates – ay, the strongest of its supporters and advocates – in the clergy of the United States. Religion and slavery in America went hand in hand; and his object was to excite such an interest in the subject as to induce Christians in England to speak out against so disgraceful a state of things. Children were sold to buy communion service, women to buy bibles, and men to send the gospel to the heathen! The lecturer then proceeded to denounce the connection between the Free Church of Scotland⁶ and slavery in the United States; describing the visit of the deputation who collected the contributions, and who accepted the ‘blood-stained money’ in spite of the remonstrances of the Abolitionists, who met them when they landed on the shores of America, and protested against their mixing themselves up with the sins of slaveholders and slavery. But, notwithstanding these remonstrances, they visited the slave-holding districts, slept in slaveholders’ houses, preached in their pulpits, pocketed their money, took it to Scotland, and carried it into their ‘Sustentation Fund.’ They had thus proclaimed fellowship with man-stealers, men to whom the titles of thieves and robbers applied equally with highwaymen and pirates, for they lived and had their being, and amassed their wealth by plunder – by the unpaid toil of the slave. And the Free Churchmen proclaimed their fellowship knowingly – styling those who traded in the bodies and souls of men, ‘brethren,’ ‘Christians.’ He condemned them for justifying their conduct by appeals to the Gospel of Christ. What, then, must the Free Church do? (Several voices – ‘Send back the money.’) Ay, let them send back the money – (applause) – because by sending it back an agitation might be produced in the United States which would give slavery a blow that would send it reeling to its grave. (Cheers.) Would the Free Church do this? That depended upon the people of England. They, and especially the Dissenters, should speak out, and din into her ears, ‘Send back the money;’ saying, in the language of Dr. Campbell, of London, that their honestly-gotten money and the money of the American slaveholders should not clink in the same treasury – and that if the Free Church did not cut the connection with slavery, they would cut the connection with her. (Applause.) That was the plan to be pursued – the only effectual plan. Dr. Chalmers⁷ endeavoured to draw a distinction between the system and its upholders – he had discovered a *free*

mode of upholding the system by making a distinction between the character of the sin and the character of the sinner; and this was the last heresy of the Free Church of Scotland. (Cheers and laughter.) It was really lamentable that Drs. Chalmers, Candlish,⁸ and Cunningham⁹ should have stultified themselves by becoming the apologists of so heinous a system. Dr. Cunningham defended it on the plea that the laws of the country legalised the thing, and made the legislators of the country, and not the slaveholders, the parties responsible for it. ‘The sum of all villainies, the compendium of all crimes,’ as John Wesley¹⁰ had called slavery, had thus found upholders in the Free Church men of Scotland. But the alliance must be undone, and it was only to be undone by the instrumentality of the people of England. The reputation of the slaveholder, as given to him by these men, must be undone. (Applause.) Here, continued the lecturer, he might speak thus boldly in safety but for uttering these principles in Scotland he had been condemned as an ‘infidel.’ (Laughter.) Now, to the slave-holding, woman-whipping, cradle-robbing religion of slavery he did boldly proclaim himself an infidel – for such a religion had no principles in common with the beautiful precepts of Christianity. The lecturer, after dilating eloquently on this head of his discourse, announced that he was connected with the Old Abolition Society¹¹ of the United States, which held annually, in Boston, a bazaar,¹² the proceeds of which were used for the purpose of publishing pamphlets and sending out lecturers to inform and influence public opinion on the slavery question. He then referred to the efforts of Maria M. Chapman,¹³ who is at the head of the anti-slavery ladies in America, and by whose indomitable perseverance the greater part of the funds are collected, by which the anti-slavery agitation is carried on; and he indicated the progress of the agitation by stating that whilst in 1830 there were no lecturers or newspapers in favour of it, they were now most numerous, and

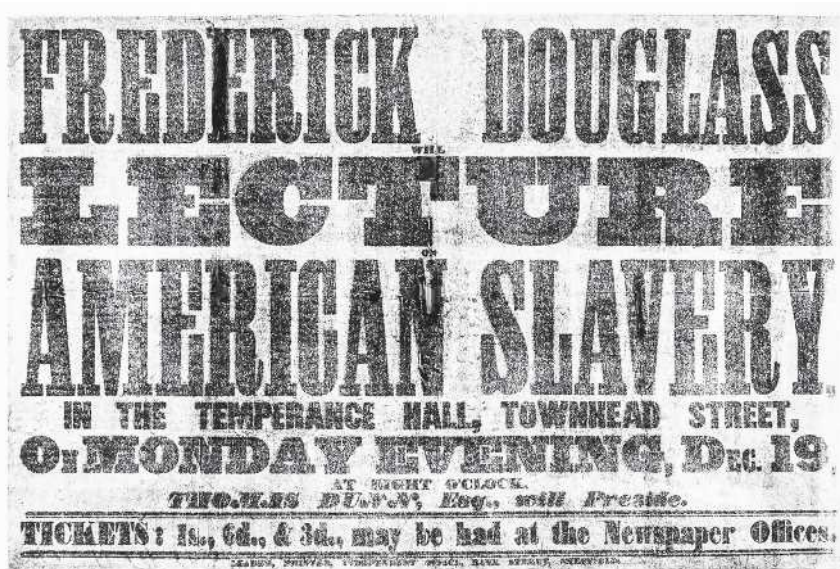


Figure 38 Advertisement for a lecture by Frederick Douglass. (The Copyright of The University of Manchester.)

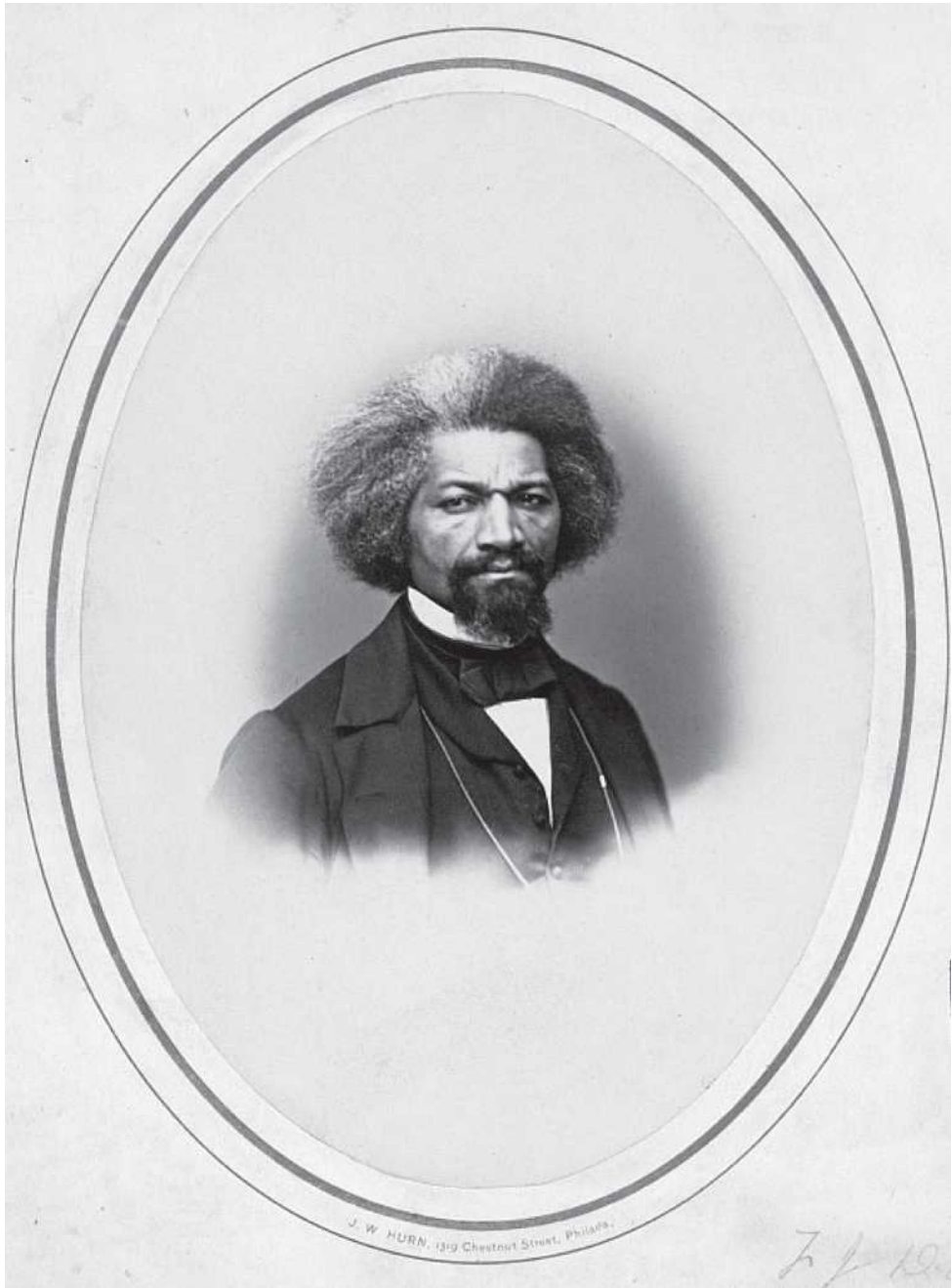


Figure 39 Frederick Douglass, by J. W. Hurn, 1862. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

those who were formerly treated with scorn and contumely, were now respected and countenanced and applauded in many of the northern states of America. He concluded by inviting contributions to the bazaar from the ladies of Carlisle.

The CHAIRMAN then expressed the pleasure he had experienced in listening to the lecture of Mr. Douglass, and moved a vote of thanks to him. This was carried by acclamation, the whole company rising; and the lecturer having acknowledged the compliment, proposed that the thanks of the meeting should be given to Mr. FERGUSON for presiding so ably. The resolution was passed amidst applause, and Mr. FERGUSON having returned thanks, the meeting separated, at half-past ten o'clock, the lecture having lasted upwards of two hours.

Notes

1. George Thompson (1804–1878).
2. The Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown, Massachusetts, commemorates the Battle of Bunker Hill, a major military conflict which took place between British and United States troops on 17 June 1775 during the American Revolutionary War.
3. For further information on the World Temperance Convention held in Covent Garden, London, in 1846, see Hannah-Rose Murray, 'The World Temperance Convention', available online at: <http://frederickdouglassinbritain.com/journey/WorldTemperanceConvention/>
4. John L. Brown was a white abolitionist who was imprisoned for aiding freedom seekers to secure their self-liberation. See W. Caleb McDaniel, 'The Case of John L. Brown: Sex, Slavery, and the Trials of a Transatlantic Abolitionist Campaign'. *American Nineteenth-Century History*, 14.2 (2013): pp.141–159.
5. Jonathan Walker (1799–1878) was a white US abolitionist and radical liberator of enslaved people. See Alvin F. Oickle, *The Man with the Branded Hand: The Life of Jonathan Walker, Abolitionist* (Yardley PA: Westholme, 2011).
6. The Free Church broke away from the established Church of Scotland in 1843 and became the centre of abolitionist controversy on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean during Frederick Douglass' first visit to Britain and Ireland (1845–1847), after the Church accepted donations from white enslavers. See Alasdair Pettinger, 'Douglass in Scotland': <https://www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/>
7. Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) was a white Scottish religious minister and professor.
8. Robert Smith Candlish (1806–1873) was a white Scottish religious minister.
9. William Cunningham (1805–1861) was a white Scottish religious minister.
10. Here Douglass is quoting – with some variation – from the powerful words, '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).
11. He is referring to the American Anti-Slavery Society, a white-led antislavery organisation founded by William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) and other white abolitionists in 1833 and disbanded in 1870.
12. For further information on the antislavery fairs that were held to raise funds for abolitionist campaigns, see the following: Kelsey Gustin, 'The Anti-Slavery Fair', Boston Public Library, available online at: <https://www.bpl.org/blogs/post/the-anti-slavery-fair/>; 'National Antislavery Bazaar', Cornell University, available online at: <https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/abolitionism/strategies/Bazaar.htm>
13. Maria Weston Chapman (1806–1885) was a white US antislavery campaigner.



Anon., 'Mr. Douglass', Leeds Young Men's Antislavery Society,
Leeds Mercury, Leeds, Yorkshire, England, 24 December 1859, p.7.

MR. DOUGLASS WAS then introduced to the meeting, and was most warmly applauded. He said he had great pleasure in attending that meeting, and especially so under the presidency of one so much esteemed and honoured as their Chairman, not only in England but also in the United States, and whose kindly words, and reproofs, and rebukes, and remonstrances, and appeals would be heard with all the more respect on account of the mildness with which they had been urged on that and other occasions. (Applause.) It was true that America was great in her wealth in her enterprise, in her industry, in the breadth and comprehensiveness of her institutions, but no part of her greatness resulted from the existence of slavery. (Hear.) They were indebted not to the slaveholders for anything that gave America respectability. Slavery, like an incubus, was weighing down that great nation, whilst the stern rebukes and reproofs from this side of the Atlantic tended to increase and strengthen all that was great and noble. He then adverted to the visit to Leeds of 'that eminent hypocritical divine, Dr. Pomroy,' who, he stated, had been recently suspended from his office of secretary to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, on account of immorality, and continued by observing that he had not come there to argue the question whether he was a man or not, for to do so would be to forget that he was addressing English men and women, amongst whom, on his visit 14 or 15 years ago, he was first impressed with a sense of his full and equal humanity. They were apt to estimate themselves somewhat after the estimate formed of them by those with whom they were surrounded, and as in the United States negroes were, in the language of the law, 'deemed, reputed, and adjudged to be property to all intents and purposes and constructions whatsoever,' some of them had taken rather degrading views of themselves; but in England they discovered that whatever their opinion of themselves, the people of this country regarded them as men, and he had never heard from an Englishman the slightest word, or the least indication of doubt as to his humanity. (Applause.) Nor was he about to argue the question of his or the negro's right to liberty. The poorest, the most downcast, the most ignorant and whip-scarred bondsman was entitled to this right, and to argue the question was to insult humanity. No laws, no statutes, no agreements, no constitutions, no governments, however time-honoured and sacred, could abrogate this right for one moment. They might pile statutes to heaven against this right, but it still belonged to every man, and he was bound on all favourable

opportunities to assert it in whatever manner and at whatever time he had a reasonable hope of securing it. (Applause.) He (Mr. Douglass) was exceedingly glad to hear the reference of the Chairman to that dear old departed saint, John Brown.¹ (Loud cheers.) He had read in the *Leeds Mercury* a notice of John Brown's execution, in which he (Brown) was spoken of as having entered upon a criminal career, and as deserving a criminal's doom. He was glad, therefore, to hear the chairman say that the crime of which John Brown was guilty was merely a technical crime. It was a crime according to form, but not according to substance. It might be a crime for one on board a pirate ship, against the rules and regulations, to strike down the captain and take possession of the ship, in order that it might be carried into port where the victims of piracy might be set at liberty. In no other sense than this did he hold that John Brown's act was a crime. (Hear.) English people were apt to regard John Brown as a man entering into a quiet and peaceable locality, where men and women were observing the laws, and where morality, justice, liberty, and social order prevailed; but this was merely a picture of the fancy. John Brown entered no such neighbourhood as that; he entered Virginia, not when she was at peace, but when in a state of war, – for he undertook to say that no state of war could exist more real and more bloody than that which prevailed in the Southern States. Slavery itself was an insurrection, and the slaveholders were a band of armed insurgents against the just rights and liberties of their fellow men. (Hear, hear, and applause.) He knew that they appealed to the laws which gave them a legal right to traffic in the souls and bodies of men; but there were persons in the United States who held to a higher law than that of slavery, and the Hon. W. H. Seward,² one of the candidates for the presidency, he was happy to say, was one of these. Having paid a tribute to the profound Christian piety of John Brown, Mr. Douglass said the Chairman did no more than justice when he said that although he (Brown) had the noble purpose of emancipating the slaves of Maryland and Virginia, he did not enter those States with the object of bloodshed or carnage; his motives were as pure and his defence as perfect as that which could be made for Moses himself entering the land of Egypt to conduct the exodus of a liberty-loving people.³ He (Brown) went there for the purpose of conducting such persons in the Southern States as the cruel laws had kept ignorant of the honourable means of gaining their liberty into a state of freedom, but there was no use disguising the fact that he was prepared to defend himself, even to blood, if any attempt were made to prevent the success of his enterprise. He did not ask them to express their approval of any armed opposition to slavery, but when a man in such a cause had disinterestedly laid down his life, it was due that he should be spoken of in a manner which should leave no tarnish on his memory. (Hear, hear.) John Brown went not as an insurgent against peaceable men, but against an armed band of insurgents. Blood was there already – blood, drop by drop wrung from the hearts of poor defenceless people deprived of every means of freedom. He interfered; he saw a strong man in the act of beating out the brains of a weak man, and he interposed himself between. They might say that it was a mad and reckless, a daring and audacious thing to do; that he was imprudent. Yes, would to God there was a little more imprudence in the United States! (Hear, hear.) Prudence was an excellent thing, but it had seldom made heroes or martyrs. Success made an enterprise wise, and failure made it foolish; success made it prudent, and failure made it imprudent. Had George Washington⁴ who unsheathed the American sword against the British government, been vanquished and hanged by the neck

instead of being regarded as the father of his country, he would have been called a rash and reckless criminal, a rebellious subject, and worthy to expiate his crimes on the gallows. John Brown failed, Louis Kossuth⁵ failed, and other noble men had failed, in their struggle for freedom, but their names would be no less glorious or less precious to the lovers of liberty for that failure. (Applause.) Since his arrival in this country he had received numerous letters, reading him long lectures on the subject of peace. His answer was, that he was really a lover of peace, but his theory of peace had a preface to it – first pure, then peaceable, was the Scriptural order of his peace principles.⁶ (Hear, hear.) He held it to be true, that the men who did the most to establish justice did the most to establish peace on the earth; and he held, further, that there could be no real peace where there were oppression and injustice. The slaveholders and their abettors could not be allowed the benefit of the doctrine of peace. He was for peace such as the Bible spoke of, but no peace to the wicked. (Applause.) The slaveholders had been crying for peace for a long time; what they wanted was to be let alone; but if all the organisations which were agitating for the abolition of slavery were put down to-morrow, the slaveholder would have no peace, for deep down in his own soul God had planted the accuser which was ever saying to him that he was guilty concerning his brother. He would not proclaim a millennium for tyrants, by telling them that their slaves had no right to strike them down or to endeavour to gain their freedom. The slaveholder, by his conduct, invited every form of assault; and if he were struck down, and weltered in his blood, he had only his own crimes to thank for his punishment. (Hear.) With regard to the prospects of the anti-slavery cause, it was in a very hopeful condition in America, and although there was a very powerful body in the States who advocated and sustained slavery, there was also a large and growing party opposed to it. Fourteen years ago there was hardly a Member of Congress opposed to slavery; now there were more than a hundred. (Applause.) Fourteen years ago they had no Senator on their side, while they had now twenty-four. Then it was almost impossible to speak on the subject of slavery at Washington; but now they had two anti-slavery papers published there, and their Congress, moreover, was converted into a grand anti-slavery debating society. (Applause.) These were hopeful signs, and the States were now in a very healthy state of agitation. (Hear.) Mr. Douglass then answered three or four questions which had been put by Mr. W. Firth, of Farnley, with reference to the value of slaves, and the connection of the Wesleyan body in America with the slave trade, after which he referred to the suggested possibility of the dissolution of the American Union. Of this, he said, he had no fear, for the Southern States had not the power to obtain, and the Northern States had not the will to consent to, the separation. The abolitionists had no desire for the dissolution of the Union, but they wished that the government should be carried on according to the constitution of the States. The constitution and the Declaration of Independence⁷ were good enough, and what was needful was, that the principles of the constitution should be applied to the existence of the curse of slavery. (Applause.) The constitution of the United States in no form sustained slavery; the Declaration was an anti-slavery document from beginning to end; and the reason slavery existed was, that they had made void the law by their traditions. The declaration was interpreted with limitations. It said, ‘all persons shall be free and equal;’ but the advocates of slavery added, ‘except negroes.’ Why make this and other similar exceptions? He would admit nothing in favour of slavery until it was proved; and he would not allow that the constitution of the States supported

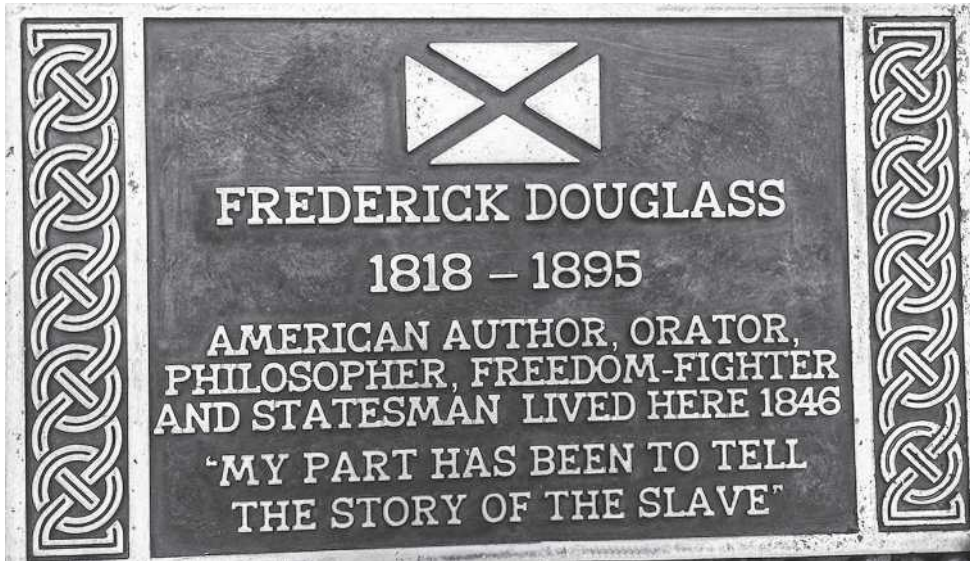


Figure 40 Heritage plaque to Frederick Douglass, 33 Gilmore Place, marking the site where Douglass stayed when he visited Edinburgh, Scotland. (Author copy.)



Figure 41 Interior of the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, Scotland. Frederick Douglass lectured here many times during his stay in the city. (National Library of Scotland.)



Figure 42 21st Century Image of the Exterior of the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, Scotland. (With kind permission from Andy Green.)

slavery, simply because the slaveholders said so. They were ready to take the constitution in their hands, and by acting in accordance with it, they believed they could not only abolish slavery, but secure also the glory of the American nation. (Mr. Douglass resumed his seat amidst loud cheering.)

Notes

1. 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).
2. William H. Seward (1801–1872) was a white US anti-slavery advocate, senator, and statesman.
3. See Moses and the Exodus in Exodus 4:14.
4. George Washington (1732–1799) was a white US enslaver, Founding Father, military general, and First President of the United States (1789–1797).
5. Louis Kossuth (1802–1894) was a Hungarian-born freedom fighter, political leader, and author.
6. James 3:17.
7. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>



Anon., 'A Distinguished Coloured Visitor', *Bridport News*,
Bridport, Dorset, England, 22 October 1886, p.1.

THE HON. FREDERICK Douglass, formerly United States Marshall, D.C., and leader of the coloured race in America, being on a visit to the Rev. R. L. and Mrs. Carpenter,¹ at Coneygar, consented to address a meeting in Bridport, and when he appeared at the Town Hall, on Friday evening, a large audience awaited him. Mr. Douglass is a finely built man, standing more than six feet, with white bushy hair on his head and black and white whiskers. He is of coloured skin, but not black, and told his audience that he is of blood partly Ethiopian, partly Caucasian, and partly Indian. An 'Autobiography' he published some years ago, revealed what his address here indicated – a history of unbounded interest. Born in slavery, he afterwards escaped to the Northern States of America, and there carried on the agitation for the emancipation of his brethren from the thralldom which the Civil War released them. His aim is now is to break down the prejudice which still prevails in America against the coloured people, and he thinks this object may be attained in a measure by speaking to the English people who have so many friends in the United States, and who may themselves go there some day. Mr. Douglass talks in a rather leisurely way, what the *Spectator* calls our West Country take-it-easy style, in simple, but good English, free from Yankee slang. He spoke of having appeared in England two or three times in different qualities, but the expression, though unfamiliar, was not incorrect. The Mayor was chairman of the meeting, and he had alongside him the distinguished visitor and the gentlemen who also addressed the meeting subsequently. Very few words were needed from his Worship by way of introducing Mr. Douglass. The latter declared that, he was a stranger and sojourner in Bridport, but he was not an entire stranger to England. Some 41 years ago, he had the pleasure and privilege of standing on British soil and enjoying for the first time to the full extent the liberal spirit of this great country. Then he came as a fugitive slave, next in the character of an exile, and now by the ordering of an all-wise Providence and the efforts of good men and good women in the United States, and of good men and women in Great Britain, he stood forward in the quality of a man, of a man among men, and as an American citizen. It was thought by Mr. Carpenter, who had been his friend for 40 years and more, that the relations between England and America made it quite appropriate for him, representing five or six millions of people whose advancement and liberty be sought, to

talk to a Bridport audience about his recollections of slavery and anti-slavery. So far as the law and Government of the United States were concerned there was already freedom for the slave, but the abolition of the moral sentiment of the nation was another thing. Yet he came not as a croaker, for the progress of liberty was always slow, and he had no doubt, that presently his people would be rightly treated. Asked as he often was in England how they had got on since emancipation, his reply was that they had got on a great deal better than might have been expected, when were remembered the conditions under which they obtained their freedom. Never was a people released from bondage under less favourable circumstances than were these slaves. They were literally turned out under an open sky. When the Israelites were liberated they were told to spoil the Egyptian to get possession of their jewellery, and they had been getting possession of jewellery ever since (a laugh). The wonder was the negro was alive and kicking, but he increased more rapidly in the United States than had the old master class. A tribute was paid to the anti-slavery leaders in England. Speaking on this extinct system now seems something of an anachronism, but having drunk deeply in the cup of slavery, he must talk on the subject, and indeed that was the way he could be of use in the world. His own individual freedom was procured in this way: he was in England and some of his friends here thought he could be of more service in the United States speaking against slavery, and so correspondence was opened with the man who claimed him as his slave, and the man being out of his possession, he was willing to take a very small price for him (laughter) – £150. For that he gave these friends a bill of sale on his person. Many people here got the money together and made him a present of himself to himself (more laughter). They also gave him 2,000 or 3,000 dollars to go back and establish a printing press, and in this he advocated the anti-slavery movement. The striking incidents in the history of the war were mentioned, and proof of some progress of the negro class were afforded by the fact that coloured men are now lawyers, doctors, ministers, and editors. Generous tribute was paid to President Lincoln² for the wisdom with which he conducted the war, so as in the end to secure emancipation. At Lincoln's second presidential inauguration he was introduced as Abe's friend, in the presence of a company of a thousand of the elite, the elegance and beauty of the country. Mr. Douglass predicted the further and advancement of his people in the ladder of civilization, and said, in conclusion, that it had been a great satisfaction to him to speak in Bridport. – The Rev. W. J. Bain, in moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Douglass, expressed his admiration for the visitor, whom he described as forming a link between a former state of degradation and misery, and a present state of Christian hope and of progression in the future. – Mr. T. A. Colfox seconded the proposal, and took the opportunity of thanking Mr. Douglass for the great hospitality he showed him at Washington, on the 4th July, two years ago. He had a good many pleasant experiences when travelling abroad, and one of the greatest pleasures was on that occasion. It was Independence-day, and Mr. Douglass had in his house a number of people all or nearly all of whom were coloured. Among his friends that day was a senator, and there were other gentlemen of distinction. He heard a story about their host's house.³ The grounds and the house formerly belonged to a man who had a great hatred of coloured people, and who was a speculator in land, made it a rule never to sell or let land to any coloured person or to an Englishman (laughter). However, he lived a little too fast, and getting in monetary difficulties, the house

passed into other hands, and from those people it came to Mr. Douglass. It seemed to him there was a sort of poetical justice in that later history (a laugh). Mr Douglass had told the meeting of the feeling which existed against the black people, and he corroborated this by a personal experience. On a Mississippi steamboat he was shown an inferior department, which he was told was for the blacks. The man who showed him over said that was a rule rigidly enforced, ‘and,’ he added ‘I very much doubt whether Fred. Douglass himself would be allowed to travel in the saloon’ (laughter). Mr. Colfox did not think American citizens yet possessed that freedom of which they boasted, nor would they as long as the Chinese were looked upon as an inferior race, and were not politically enfranchised. – The vote of thanks was then carried, and thanks were also given to the Rev. R. L. Carpenter, whom it was mentioned had not only got Mr. Douglass to address a Bridport audience, but had borne the expenses of the meeting. – Mr. Douglass replied, acknowledging the interest he felt in Mr. Colfox’s story of the ownership of his little home on Cedar Hill, and moved a vote of thanks to the Mayor. – The Revs. R. L. Carpenter, H. P. Bryan (Symondsburry), and E. Francis each also said a few words, Mr. Carpenter reminding the audience of the local connection with the anti-slavery movement through the Forster’s, and saying he was anxious Mr. Douglass should speak here, because we heard of persons going to America – nearly 30 went only last Monday – and he hoped English emigrants would stand up for the coloured people.

Notes

1. The extended white British Carpenter family were among Douglass’ longest and most dedicated British allies and included white British Unitarian minister Russell Lant Carpenter (1816–1892) and his wife, white British antislavery advocate Mary Browne Carpenter (1824–1898).
2. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
3. Cedar Hill is the Douglass family home in Washington DC – the present-day Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. Further information is available online at: <https://www.nps.gov/frdo/index.htm>

WASHINGTON DUFF

(c.1827–1829–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

THE SON OF Thomas and Oney Duff, Washington Duff experienced enslavement in Kentucky. At the age of seven, his father was legally sold away from his family and was never seen again. Upon hearing rumours that he was to be forcibly transported to the Deep South, Duff secured his self-liberation to Canada in (as yet) an unknown year and worked on a farm with another unnamed freedom fighter and formerly enslaved man. He visited the British Isles in 1861 alongside two other freedom seekers – identified in the report below only by the surnames Jackson and Howell – in order to make a living abroad. Jackson may be fellow freedom fighter Benjamin Jackson, who also gave lectures in his own right at this time. Duff may have parted ways with Jackson and Howell, as in the 1861 England and Wales Census he is recorded as a labourer and living in a boarding house in Lowestoft, Suffolk. It is noted there that he is a naturalised British citizen and was born in the US in 1827. So far, a narrative or pamphlet authored by Duff is yet to appear, so it is possible that he rejected white western literary practices and instead relied on radical visual strategies to inform transatlantic audiences about US enslavement, including the display of paintings, panoramas, and lantern views, which he very likely designed or even painted himself. In most of his lectures to wide-ranging audiences that included working-class communities and children's groups, Duff recounted the torture he personally experienced or witnessed, his separation from his sister (as yet unnamed in newspaper reports) and the white supremacist and barbarous practices of the Confederacy during the US Civil War. One newspaper report notes Duff's tribute to Black female heroism and liberation, as Duff and his sister planned their journey of self-liberation to the northern states *together*, eventually succeeding when they reached Ohio. The paintings he exhibited to vast audiences across England paid tribute to her life and experiences, as well as scenes of torture, incarceration, and their liberation. Very little biographical information is available about his life; he remained in Britain until at least 1868 but the circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce a speech that Washington Duff gave in Cambridge, England, in 1865.

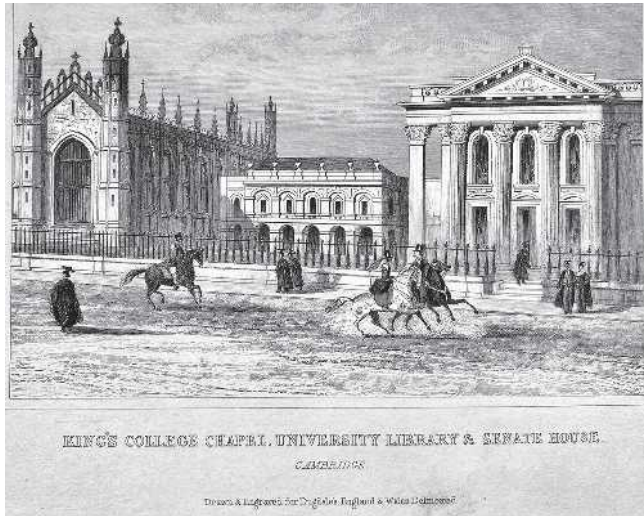


Figure 43 Print of King's College Chapel, Library and Senate House, Cambridge, England, 1845. (Author copy.)

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Anon., 'Slavery', *The Cambridge Independent Press*,
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England, 28 January 1865, p.7.

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, illustrated by Dissolving Views,¹ showing the various cruelties practised on slaves by their owners, to which he himself was also a victim and martyr. A statement was made, and the views exhibited at a meeting before the lecture, to the children of the Band of Hope,² and the children of the Union Workhouse, amounting together to 200, who were admitted at one penny each. The children were astonished at the representations. The lecturer was introduced to the second meeting by the Rev. J. Brown, co-pastor of Bunyan Meeting. Washington Duff, the son of Thomas and Oney Duff, narrates that he was born in the year 1829, in the state of Kentucky, in the United States of America. At the early age of seven years, his father was sold away from his family down South. The Duff slaves were the domestic slaves of General Dabney, who kept a tavern at Simpson's Vills. When his mistress wanted any domestic work done, it was her custom to sit by him, and if he did not do it to her mind, she would severely strike him with the cow hide. While Washington was quite young the general died, and the widow married again to a person named Hughes. The severe treatment through which Washington had to pass, both from Hughes and his wife, was illustrated by the views in his magic lantern, and the circumstances under which his punishment was inflicted was described by the lecturer, which were of a trifling nature, and sometimes from caprice and cruelty. At the age of seventeen, Washington was sold to Mr. Noah Howell, who was of a more amiable disposition, though a slave dealer. Washington was here employed in the cultivation of the land, on which they grew large quantities of hemp and Indian corn. Though not in any way cruelly treated, he felt himself still in bondage. After the death of his master, his mistress was exceedingly kind, and his privileges increased. He had the use of three acres of land, on which he grew hemp and corn, the proceeds of which enabled him to buy Sunday clothes and other little comforts. The neighbours complained that this kind lady was treating her domestic slave too well, and persuaded her to sell him down South. Having heard of the intentions of his mistress, he made his escape into Canada, where he worked on a farm with another escaped slave. Four years since, Washington resolved to cross the Atlantic to England, with Jackson³ and Howell,

two other fugitive slaves. Arrived in England, they immediately had an interview with the Rev. Dr. Barns, of New Church-street Chapel, Edgware-road, London, who, after hearing their statements, and obtaining satisfactory information from America, gave them substantial help by soliciting the contributions and sympathies of the public. The lecturer produced printed certificates of good character from Dr. Burns, Mr. Macgregor (Temple, London), and from J. D. Birch, Esq., of the Phoenix Saw and Planing Mill, Cumberland Basin, Regent's Park, London. He now lectures through the country in the winter, and works at rough painting in the summer. The thanks of the meeting were voted to the lecturer. The room was crowded. The negro, Jackson, was present, who announced that he should deliver a lecture in the Baptist Chapel, Cauldwell-street. This meeting accordingly took place, and the lecturer described the cruel torture himself and others experienced as cotton slaves in South Carolina. The chapel was well filled.

Notes

1. These 'Dissolving Views' were a form of magic lantern: see Joss Marsh, 'Dickensian "Dissolving Views": The Magic Lantern, Visual Story-Telling, and the Victorian Technological Imagination'. *Comparative Critical Studies*, 6.3 (2009): pp.333-346.
2. For further information on the Band of Hope Movement, a temperance and religious movement that was especially dedicating to ameliorating the devastating impact alcoholism had on children and young people and which began in Leeds in 1847, see 'History of Hope UK', available online at: <https://www.hopeuk.org/wp-content/uploads/History.pdf>; and Lilian Lewis Shiman, 'The Band of Hope Movement: Respectable Recreation for Working-Class Children'. *Victorian Studies*, 17.1 (1973): pp.49-74.
3. This could refer to Benjamin Jackson, who was travelling around England at the same time.

FRANCIS FEDRIC

(c.1806–1810–c.1870)

Biographical History

FRANCIS FEDRIC EXPERIENCED enslavement in Virginia and Kentucky. He was raised in part by his grandparents who ‘were stolen from Africa’ by white enslavers and traders. He was forcibly taken to Kentucky when he was fourteen years old and worked in the house owned by his white enslavers. He resolved to liberate himself after he was brutally beaten by his white enslavers for joining a prayer meeting. After several attempts, he finally secured his self-liberation by successfully joining forces with conductors on the Underground Railroad, a series of safe houses transporting freedom seekers from enslavement to the northern states and beyond, with the result that he reached Canada when he was fifty years old. On his arrival, he was employed by



Figure 44 The Strand, London, England, c.1890. (Wikimedia Commons.)

the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, a prominent abolitionist organisation in Canada formed in 1851. He immediately dedicated his labours to what he described as ‘a most heart-rending occupation’: the work of caring for freedom seekers who had secured their liberation from US enslavement.¹ Fedric married a white Englishwoman whose name is yet to be identified and who lived in Toronto but who was originally from Devon, England. In 1857, they both moved to England. During these years, he travelled across the British Isles lecturing on enslavement and temperance, particularly in the Midlands in England and across Scotland. He eventually settled in Manchester to open a lodging business. In 1859, he published *Life and Sufferings of Francis Fedric*, and a revised edition followed four years later titled *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky*. Fedric hoped to open a temperance hotel and collections were made towards his future business in some of his antislavery meetings. In the 1861 Scotland Census, Fedric lists his birth year as 1806 and is a boarder living in Montrose, with a profession of ‘Lecturer’. The dates of his death are conflicting, and the circumstances of his later years are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce two speeches that Francis Fedric delivered in London, England, in 1862.

Notes

1. Francis Fedric, *Life and Sufferings of Francis Fedric While In Slavery* (Birmingham: Tonks and Jones, 1859), p.111. Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/fedric/fedric.html>.

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Anon., 'Lecture on American Slavery', *The West Middlesex Advertiser and Family Journal*, London, England, 8 March 1862, p.2.

ON TUESDAY EVENING last, Francis Fedric, an escaped slave from Virginia, related an account of his sufferings and privations, and also those of his fellow creatures while in the bonds of slavery. The subjoined is a short account of his narrative: I was born in Ole Virginny; my mother belonged to one plantation and my father to another. All the family belonged by law to the owner of the mother. The shameful way they were fed was thus: A large piece of meat about a foot long was boiled and thrown into a trough, some Indian meal was then thrown into water, stirred up, and emptied on the meat. The adult slaves came one at a time with their small wooden basins, and, after they were served, all the young'uns scrambled round the trough and sucked up its contents like pigs. Their sleeping room was a wooden hut, round the sides of which the women slept on straw, covered with a coarse quilt; and in the middle of this hut a quantity of straw was thrown, and among this all the children crept, each one striving like pigs to gain the centre place. When the masters thrashed their slaves they said, 'the slave that knows his master's will and does it not shall be beaten with many stripes.'¹

One day when sitting by a fire that was made to dry a quantity of cotton he lit it with the intention of putting it out again directly, but it all blazed up, and he ran out of the place and began shouting fire. A number of the niggers rushed to his help, and by their aid the fire was soon extinguished. A few days after his master's wife took him into her house, and by treating him to some bread and butter and molasses she managed to get him to confess that he had set the cotton on fire. As soon as she heard this she got up and took a whip made of raw cow's hide, and laid it about his face and hands in such a manner as to make great gashes in his flesh, the marks of which can be seen now. His prayer when in slavery used to be, 'O Lord come down and see poor nigger, you may soon go back again.' The first time he attempted to escape, he wandered about through the swamps and the bush for nine weeks, and the only food he could obtain during that period was a ham bone and a loaf of bread that he managed to get by stratagem. When he laid down in the bush vipers and rattle snakes crawled over his body, but God protected him. After a deal of suffering he was compelled to return, through hunger and weakness, and then he was beat till he could stand, and brine rubbed in his sores. He at last escaped by the kindness of a person

who took him in a waggon to a town on the Ohio, from whence he took his passage to Canada, where he learned to read.

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, and we hope to crowded audiences.

Note

1. Luke 12:47.



Anon., 'The Horrors of Slavery', *The West Middlesex Advertiser and Family Journal*, London, England, 17 May 1862, p.3.

I WAS BORN IN Old Virginia. My parents were both slaves, my grandmother and grandfather being stolen from Africa. Our family consisted of 7 boys and 2 girls. Many horrible recollections come vividly before me when thinking of the time of bondage. My master used to say he liked to see a nigger-driver look upon his slaves as if he would cut them in two. At the death of his nigger-driver my uncle was placed in his office, when the first slave that ever I saw whipped was my grandmother, and by her own son she received 40 lashes with a raw cowhide; a few days after she received 25 more lashes, simply because she could not perform her task. Our meals consisted principally of Indian meal broth, which was poured into a trough, and we had to go down upon our knees to eat it like pigs, by putting our heads in the trough, there being no ladles of any kind allowed. We were kept so short of victuals that one day being so pressed with hunger, I stole one of my companion's meals, for which my uncle came to me at night and flogged me most unmercifully. Shortly after this master died, and his son who came into possession of the property was still more cruel than his father had been. Being very dissipated, he would come to us when intoxicated, and beat us for nothing at all. Having been taught to speak the English language, I got to learn to read, and by degrees we managed to hold a few prayer meetings, which my master found out, and as one of the girls who was present told him I opened the meeting by singing, I received 30 lashes. Three times I was flogged for doing the same thing. My persecution at this time was still worse than it had ever been before, and I ran away. The hounds were set after me, but I escaped to the bush, where I roamed for 9 weeks, feeding on nothing but berries and herbs. At night when I laid down, the vipers crawled over my body, wolves and bears came roaring close to me, and never was I in greater danger, but God preserved me. At length, being exhausted, I was obliged to return to my brutish master; I was so ill, that I was on a sick bed for several weeks. Notwithstanding my long illness, my master did not forget me, for as soon as I had recovered he called all the household together to see me flogged, and I thought I should never have survived it, after which I was taken to witness the punishment of another fugitive slave, who had just been caught. The man's arms were tied to a post, high above his head, his feet were next secured and the man was then told that he was going to be flogged to death! He was to receive one thousand lashes, and at the end of every hundred, his master, who sat by, ordered his

glass to be filled with brandy, and smoked his cigar with the utmost unconcern, while his slave-driver rested his arms from the bloody execution! The poor man was dead before the whole of the punishment could be given. After this we were cautioned not to run away, lest the same fate should befall us, and then dismissed. I remained for 10 years after this with my master, but being subject to the most brutal treatment, and being kept almost in a state of starvation, I spoke to a friend, who took pity on me, and conveyed me away in his van, ultimately sending me to Canada, where I was taken notice of by some kind Christian friends, who sent me to England.

HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET

(1815–1882)

Biographical History

HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET experienced enslavement in Maryland. He secured his self-liberation with his family, including his parents George and Henrietta Trusty, while he was a young boy and grew up briefly in Pennsylvania before settling in New York City. He was a member of the African Free School and briefly worked at sea before attending the First Colored Presbyterian Church in New York.

Garnet travelled to Britain in 1851 in support of the Free Produce Movement, an initiative which campaigned to cease the importation of goods produced by enslaved people particularly from the US South. During this time, he organised an extensive lecturing tour in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and spoke alongside William Wells Brown and William Craft. In 1852, he solicited British donations to liberate John Weims, his wife, and their seven children from US enslavement. He settled briefly in Jamaica before travelling back to the US. He visited Britain once again in 1861, but like many other Black freedom fighters, Garnet returned to the US and campaigned for African American men to enlist as combat soldiers in the Union Army regiments during the US Civil War. By 1864, he was pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington DC.

After the War, Garnet continued to be an educator and preacher: he worked alongside Thomas Morris Chester on the Garnet League, a society founded to provide access to education and financial and practical support for Black people who had been legally liberated following the end of the Civil War but who endured financial destitution, white racist persecution, violence, and disenfranchisement and dehumanising systems of segregation. He was also President of Avery College in 1868 and was appointed Minister to Liberia in 1881 by President James A. Garfield.

Henry Highland Garnet was married to Julia Williams Garnet (1811–1870), a leading antislavery activist, radical educator, and social justice campaigner in her own right and, according to Samantha De Vera's pioneering research, a co-author of his world famous 'Address to the Slaves'.¹

Garnet died in 1882 in Liberia.

Here we reproduce speeches that Henry Highland Garnet delivered in Worcester and Hereford, England, in 1851.

Note

1. For further information on Julia Williams Garnet's life and works, see Samantha De Vera, 'Julia Williams Garnet: Author', available online at: <https://coloredconventions.org/garnet-address-1843/julia-williams-garnet-author/>

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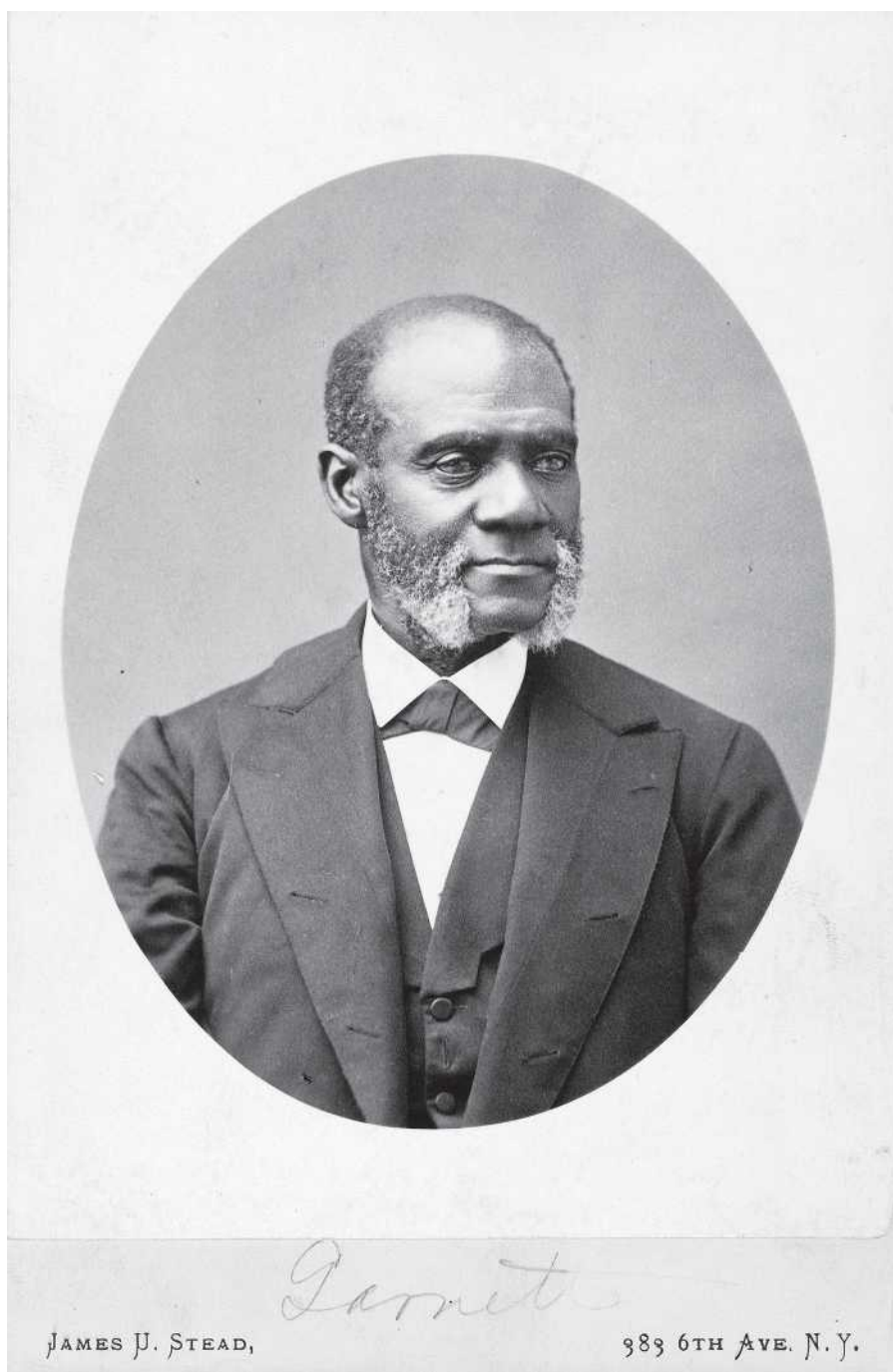


Figure 45 Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, by James U. Stead, c.1881. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.)

Anon., 'Anti-Slavery and Free Labour', *Worcestershire Chronicle*,
Worcester, Worcestershire, England, 26 March 1851, p.8.

ON MONDAY NIGHT a meeting was held at the Natural History room, J. W. Lea, Esq. (in the unavoidable absence of the Mayor) in the chair, for the purpose of hearing an address on the above subject from the Rev. H. H. Garnet, a man of colour from America. The room became crowded in the course of the evening.

The Rev. W. CROWE, before the delivery of the address, put a few practical questions to Mr. Garnet, as to what security could be given that goods sold under the name of free-labour productions were not really imported from slavery countries, whether free-labour goods would not be much dearer than those that were slave-grown, and if so, how that difficulty could be got over, &c. He put these questions not from a motive of opposition, but in order to facilitate the discussion, and to put the question in a practical light.

Mr. GARNET then came forward, and said he had to call the attention of that meeting to the effects of slavery on the happiness and lives of the millions of fellow creatures who had suffered and were suffering in consequence of it; but before doing so he would say something as to the motives and designs of the promoters of the present movement. Great Britain had abolished slavery in her own territories,¹ but she was quite as much interested in the abolition of it in America, for if some signal visitation of Providence were to overwhelm that country for its great national sin of slavery, there were but few in Great Britain who would not feel and deplore it, as being done to their own relatives and friends, who formed the bulk of the emigrants to that country. Christians and advocates of freedom in all parts of the world should feel an interest in the question, for the progress of Christianity and of social liberty were alike concerned. The most astonishing part of the American slavery system was that it was carried on under the pretended sanction of Scripture, but the falsity of this gross counterfeit he exposed in a most effective manner, and asserted that such conduct had induced thousands in America to believe that religion altogether was a sham, and thus the spread of infidelity was occasioned. The physical suffering endured under the slavery system, he thought, was not its greatest evil; the destruction of the human mind and of the intellect – the fair gift of God – was unquestionably the most to be deplored; and when he considered that there were three millions of slaves in America, and that only *ten* individuals who had made their escape had

succeeded in obtaining a liberal education, he contemplated with horror this great waste of the human mind, and asked himself the question – Who knows what has thus been lost to the world, and how many bright ornaments to science, literature, and the arts, have by this abominable system been kept in a state but little superior to the beasts that perish? He then dissected the Fugitive Slave Law, passed by the legislature of the United States last autumn, showing its brutal, cruel, and oppressive operation, by means of a net-work of vigilant and heartless slave-catchers and a jury of ‘twelve honest slaveholders,’ whose hard hearts recognised none of the claims of humanity or of generous feeling. His pictures of the horrors of the plantation and the miseries undergone by slaves, particularly those who had made ineffectual attempts to regain their freedom, were horrifying but not exaggerated. His practical remedy for this state of things was to recommend the people of Great Britain to encourage the growth of free-labour goods, such as cotton, sugar, rice, tobacco, &c., in all and any parts of the world rather than in the slave states of America, and he rejoiced to say that in one article, cotton, the free-labour article had so much increased that last year no less than 300,000 bales had been imported from India. The success of the present movement principally depended upon the ladies, who should reiterate upon the ears of their tradesmen the moral necessity for procuring free-labour goods, as the only mode of securing their custom. The lecturer then gave some painful anecdotes of the bereavement of friends and relations by the traffic in human flesh, and concluded by reciting in a very impressive manner some eloquent and touching verses put into the mouth of a poor blind boy,² whose mother (his only resource) was sold into slavery.

Notes

1. Henry Highland Garnet is referring to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of enslavement in the British Empire by the end of 1838. For further information see ‘Abolition of Slavery’, *The National Archives*, available online at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/slavery/about.htm>
2. This is possibly a reference to ‘The Blind Slave Boy’, a poem circulated amongst abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic and printed in William Wells Brown’s *The Anti-Slavery Harp* (Boston MA: Bela Marsh, 1848). See: <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/absoww-bahp.html>

Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Hereford Times*, Hereford,
Herefordshire, England, 3 May 1851, p.7.

MR. GARNET, AFTER a few introductory observations, said that, from the early associations of his life, he had become intimately acquainted with the working and effects of American slavery. The first nine years of his life were passed as a slave: his ancestors, from the days of his great-great-grandfather, who was kidnapped from Africa, had all suffered in slavery and had died in that degraded condition; and even now, according to the laws of the country in which he was born, he was not a free man, for a recent law¹ of the American senate, having a retrospective operation, empowered any slave-owner to capture and detain any slave whom he could show to have been his property. It was sometimes asked why it was necessary for any person to come from America to England to present the cause of American slavery before a British audience: and this was asked by persons who could not be regarded as possessing an unkind feeling towards the African race – nor by those who had not heretofore done much for the cause of liberty – but from the sincerity of their hearts many persons made this inquiry, in the remembrance that Britain had, at a great expense, emancipated the slaves in her own colonies. Wherever the British power was felt, mankind could plead for mercy and justice; and one of the principal inducements operating upon his mind in bringing the cause of the American slave before a British audience arose out of the fact that Britain had done justice to the bondsmen in her own colonies, and therefore it was believed that she would be the first to lead in an enterprise that looked towards the disenthralment of the African race throughout the world. (Hear, hear.) It was remembered also, that in days long past, Britain had engaged largely in the enslaving of the African race; and, indeed, among some of the very first who resorted to the coast of Africa to kidnap men and to carry them across the ocean to make them slaves, might be numbered inhabitants of Great Britain. (Hear, hear.) This country, therefore, 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 – till means should have been taken to give them the light of the Gospel, and to aid them in the course of civilization. (Applause.) The American people should be the very last in the world to hold millions of their fellow-creatures in slavery, for they professed to be freer, more democratical, more liberal, and to know more than

any other people. And yet, what was the system of slavery that existed in America? It was more cruel than any other system. As compared with Brazilian slavery² – where there was no boast of democratical and republican institutions – it was in every respect far worse and more cruel. The people in Brazil did not pretend to believe that all men were created equal; but America, in her Declaration of Independence, asserted that all men were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that all were equal. To the Brazilians, having made no such declaration, it did not seem to be necessary to make any show of reason for oppressing their slaves, the Americans, having made such acknowledgements of the equality of mankind, hold millions of their black fellow-creatures in slavery – thus, by their practice, contending that the blacks are an inferior race to themselves, made for that purpose by the Creator, and that their slavery is in perfect consistency with religion, republicanism, and democracy. (Hear, hear.) As far as possible, they tried to blot out the image of God from the slave: they led him to market and trafficked in him as an article of merchandise, holding the principle that the man who owned nothing could have nothing. Their object was not to improve the minds of their slaves, but to keep them in the dark as much as possible, knowing that if the minds of their slaves should become enlightened they would bring powerful arguments against the system of slavery – that they would qualify themselves to make a struggle for liberty, which could not be defeated. (Hear, hear, hear.) When the slave, therefore was reduced so low that he did not want his liberty, the greatest triumph of the slave-owner was achieved. Sometimes it was asserted that the slaves were happy and contented, and that they would not accept their liberty if it were offered to them. He had certainly met with a few of this character; but in the midst of that dark prison-house of three millions of slaves, only one man here and there could be found who, if the door of slavery were thrown open and he was told to go free, would refuse the opportunity of gaining his liberty. The slave-holder, having got his slaves to hug their chains, conceived he had established the strongest argument in favour of slavery. But it was not so. When the slaveholder brought forward what he considered the most powerful argument in favour of slavery, he would tell him that it was the same time the most powerful argument against the system. Man was made but little lower than the angels, with a mind capable of improvement: by slavery he was brought down so low that on one side he heard but the lowing of the ox, and on the other but the neighing of the horse. (Hear, hear.) Different people, in looking at slavery, saw different features of it; after minute observation and large experience, he had come to the conclusion that the physical sufferings of the slave were not the worst features of the system. To deprive a man of his rights, to make him a beast of burden, to whip him, to separate him from his family, to sever all the tender relations of life, were cruel practices, which the most eloquent man would fail in truthfully depicting, but they were not the most cruel features of the system. He regarded the vast amount of intellectual destruction, so to speak, the entombment of the minds of three millions of his fellow-creatures, deprived of the privilege of expanding their intellects, of reading the Bible, and of drawing near to the bosom of God, as the most horrible and heart-rending features of American slavery. (Hear, hear.) It was to him a matter of deep astonishment that men, calling themselves Christians, could take a mere empirical view of the question, and become the apologists of slavery. He was at a loss to conceive how religion or morality could bring forward anything in the form of an apology for a system that debased the mind and degraded all the better feelings of humanity.

(Hear, hear.) The Americans were a missionary people, and sometimes a complaint might be heard of the paucity of labourers to spread abroad the blessings of religion and civilization. How many labourers might have been given from this very class, if they had been afforded ordinary opportunities of cultivating their minds? Would it be too much to say that, among three millions of slaves, there might have been thousands who would have been willing to have taken the Bible in their hand and have travelled forth in the spirit of the Redeemer? From this vast resource the most valuable aid might be brought to the missionary cause. And was it too much to say that among three millions of people many would be found who, in a different condition, would adorn every station in life, whether that of the statesman, the divine, the tradesman, or the artisan? (Hear, hear.) The lecturer passed on to express his belief that the English, as a nation, were interested in everything that concerned the welfare of mankind, whether spiritual or temporal; and to remark upon the strong ties that existed between England and America. The domestic ties that bound England to America were so numerous that he believed he had never addressed a British audience that was without, in a greater or lesser degree, some dear friend in America. Denouncing the atrocities of slavery as directly antagonistic to a pure and holy religion, and believing that he who ‘soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind,’³ he asked his audience to picture themselves the fearful effects of a day of retribution, in which every institution in that vast continent should be shaken to its centre, and their own friends and relatives involved in ruin. The celebrated Thomas Jefferson,⁴ himself a slaveholder, contemplating the day when three millions of slaves might take a fearful retribution upon their oppressors, said, ‘I tremble for my country.’⁵ (Hear, hear.) Again, if he supposed that the time would come when America should be what she now professed to be – when common-sense, humanity, reason should have triumphed – when the dark cloud of slavery should have rolled away – when Africa should have received her rights, and justice should have been meted out to her long-oppressed sons – when, in short, America should become that which it is not at the present time, the land of liberty – would not the English people, as friends of progress, of civil government, of humanity, be interested in so vast a change? (Hear, hear.) America presented a more powerful obstacle in the way of the improvement of civil government than any other nation in the world, because, while it professed so much, it in reality performed so little. While tyrants and despots were entreated to let go their hold of the necks of their fellow-men, and to give them more liberty, America – the highest specimen that could be adduced of democracy and republicanism – led the ban in the oppression of three millions of human beings. He could fancy an American going to the Emperor of Russia and bidding him remove the galling tyranny from his countless serfs⁶ – with what withering scorn would that proud despot tell him to go home to his much-vaunted land of freedom and emancipate three millions of slaves. (Applause.) The lecturer next noticed the present condition of the United States, which he said, as regards the cause of freedom, had never been so deplorable in the history of the country – the slave-power being now triumphant. There are sixteen free states and fifteen slave states, and the most corrupt practices are resorted to by the slaveholders to procure a majority of the members of the senate favourable to slavery. The darling thing in America is the ‘Union:’ she dreads the separation of the Union, and there are thousands, nay millions of men, who would not hesitate for a single moment to disobey the plainest commandment of God if it were required, in order to sustain that Union. He next presented before his

hearers some of the milder features of slavery, noticing some recent laws passed by the senate giving almost unlimited power to the slaveholder, and remarking that, though slaves were no longer imported from Africa into America, there was a large and regular traffic in slaves carried on between the slave-breeding states of Maryland and Virginia and the South, where they only lived ten or twelve years. In the free northern states there are now about 40,000 slaves who have run away from the south: by a law of the senate, every one of these slaves, though he had been absent thirty or forty years, was liable to be seized by a slaveholder who claimed him, and to be heavily fined and imprisoned; if a woman who had escaped from the south should have had children, those children, even to the third and fourth generations, were by this retrospective law considered to be slaves; for in America the child followed the condition of the mother and not that of the father, as in England. Formerly in the north, a captured slave could take his ease before a jury, and no twelve men had there been found to declare a fellow man to be a slave. But that law was alleged to be unconstitutional, and a Board of Commissioners – at which only the worse and basest of men could be induced to take a seat – had been substituted. If a slave should be condemned, the commissioner got ten dollars; but if he should be declared free, the commissioner got only five dollars – thus directly holding out a premium of five dollars to the commissioner to condemn as a slave every fugitive before him. The law prohibited any other trial than that of ascertaining whether the warrant under which the alleged slave had been taken was properly made out. In the south, however, the slave could demand trial by jury – but who were his jurymen? Twelve honest slave-holders! It was very much like trying a horse-stealer before twelve of his fellow horse-stealers. No black man dare go to the South to give evidence in another's favour, for he would certainly be seized and sold; and no white man would go, for he would soon be shot. Every one who should attempt to resist a slave-holder in capturing a slave rendered himself liable to a fine of 1000 dollars, and another 1000 dollars for the violation of the laws of his country, or six months' imprisonment; if any one who had been mulcted in a fine possessed property, it would be sold under the hammer of the auctioneer. Any person affording shelter to a fugitive slave was liable to an equal punishment. The lecturer passed on to notice the fact that some of the most distinguished ministers of America had attempted to justify slavery by the Bible: among these were Dr. Samuel Cox,⁷ who was called 'the spirit of the Evangelical Alliance,'⁸ who had preached from many pulpits in this country, and who had argued that the slaves would be worse off if they were emancipated, and that their condition was not so bad as had been represented; Dr. Gardiner Spring,⁹ the author of 'The Bible of God, not of man,'¹⁰ and several other works, who had said that, if one prayer would emancipate every slave in America, he would not dare to utter that prayer. (Cries of 'Shame.') After eloquently denouncing the conduct of these men and others of the same class, the lecturer asserted that such pretended friends of truth and religion did more to injure the cause of the Bible than the whole phalanx of open and professed enemies. (Hear, hear.) Some of these men had been over to England, and might come again, for the greatest anxiety was entertained to get England to sanction the views that they propounded: he exhorted all Christians, therefore, to afford them no opportunity of uttering such views from the pulpits of this country. (Hear, hear.) At the forthcoming exhibition,¹¹ a flood of the raw materials of America would be poured in – there would be cotton, rice, sugar, tobacco, but the 'raw hide' of the slave who had helped to produce those materials would not be seen there. The

exhibitor would be heard to talk in a smooth, hypocritical tone, perhaps he would talk religiously, and crocodile tears might perhaps be seen flowing down his lean and cadaverous cheeks; but all who saw or heard him would bear in mind by what agency his materials were produced. (Hear, hear.) He did not, however, wish to show any ill-will towards America, bad as she had used him and his brethren; he wished not that the vengeance of heaven should alight on her, but rather that she should repent. (Applause.) The Americans were greatly swayed by opinion and if the opinion of England was poured upon the gross inconsistency of her practices and professions, much good would be accomplished. After noticing how the population of the slave-breeding states of Maryland and Virginia had at one time fallen away materially, and that now, new plantations having been struck out in the south, there was an increased demand for slaves, the lecturer confessed himself totally incapable of conceiving any difference between slavery on the coast of Africa, on the banks of the Senegal and the Gambia, and slavery on the banks of the Mississippi and the Missouri: indeed, if there were any difference, it was worse in the United States, because a man necessarily felt the loss of liberty more acutely as he became acquainted with the sweets of liberty. (Hear, hear.) In Virginia, slave-dealers reared children for the market the same as farmers in England reared cattle, and used all their skill to make them look as well as possible. What did such men care, though a thousand hearts were broken by their traffic? One of the most horrible features of this horrible system was the selecting of beautiful young women for the purposes of a life of infamy and dishonour. In one instance that had come to his knowledge, a fine young woman, the daughter of a Mrs. Cartwright, who was about being sent from Virginia to the south, wrote to her widowed mother, begging her to get some gentleman to purchase her, promising to work for him all the days of her life, so great was her dread of being sent to the south. A humane gentleman travelled six hundred miles for the purpose of purchasing the daughter, being commissioned by the mother to give the high price of 1000 dollars rather than not purchase her daughter. Upon the day of sale, the gentleman offered 1000 dollars for the girl. 'No,' said the slave-dealer, 'Emily is the finest girl in the States – cotton is high, and therefore slaves are high.' 1200 dollars were offered, but the slave-dealer would not take less than 1800. Was this girl worth 1800 dollars to pick cotton? No; but because she was a fine girl she was destined by the inhuman dealer for a life of dishonour. Thus every slave-mother in America who sees her daughters to grow up fine young women is forced to contemplate with the most poignant grief their almost inevitable doom. The girl of whom he had spoken, Emily Cartwright, not being purchased, was sent with others towards the south: on the journey it pleased the Lord to lay his hand upon her, and the slave-dealer who had refused 1200 dollars for her stood over the corpse of the poor girl, tearing his hair, stamping with rage, and cursing himself as a fool for not having taken the money. (Sensation and cries of 'Shame, shame.') After detailing other affecting incidents arising out of the slavery system, he came to the question of what could be done to remedy these evils. First, much good, as he had remarked, could be done by public opinion, and by holding – as he was glad to learn there was an intention of doing here – slave-owners and their advocates at a distance. (Hear, hear.) Secondly, in a commercial way, vast good could be done. His object was to advocate the free labour movement, which embraced the using, as far as possible, all free-labour productions rather than those which were produced by slave labour. These articles, which were largely consumed in this country, were mainly cotton, rice, sugar,

and tobacco. Just in proportion as the demand for these articles increased, the demand in the slave market sustained a corresponding increase. By ascertaining the price of cotton in Manchester, he could at any time form a pretty correct estimate of the price of slaves in America. (Hear, hear.) By encouraging the free labour productions, we should be benefiting our own possessions in India, the West Indies, and Australia, as well as Africa, where most of the articles produced by slaves in America could be grown. These countries were more favourable to the growth of cotton than America, and could produce two crops in the year instead of one, since the frosts were not injurious, as in America. Slave labour could not compete with free-labour, it having been satisfactorily demonstrated that what 'Mr. Lash' had failed to accomplish, 'Mr. Cash' had done successfully – in other words, that the man who was paid for his labour, even though at a low rate, would do nearly double the amount of work in a given time to the man who was urged on only by the application of the whip. He was glad to perceive that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had sent a deputation to India for the purpose of inquiring whether cotton could not be advantageously grown there. The advantages which the lecturer conceived would result from the consumption of free-labour products in this country, were strikingly set forth. He argued that the man who produced cotton or sugar by slave-labour for the consumption of 20 families was nothing more than agent for those 20 families; and that it rested with them to determine when that agency could cease. (Hear, hear.) After some eloquent remarks upon the efforts which had been made by different illustrious men to advance the cause of freedom and civilization, and the coldness and indifference with which their labours had, for a time, been regarded, the lecturer noticed the fact that various societies, to aid the free-labour movement, had been established in different parts of the country, – and which he hoped would soon receive numerous additions. 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. (The lecturer was warmly applauded.)

The Rev. E. WHITE moved a vote of thanks to the lecturer, and expressed his hope that they would unite in an endeavour to substitute the products of free-labour for those of slave-labour, and also testify their abomination of those American clergymen who had attempted to justify slavery by the Bible, who should be hailed with that shout of indignation that they so richly deserved. Such men should be given to understand that the English people knew the difference between speculative and practical religion. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. JOSEPH MORGAN seconded the motion, and also thanked Mr. White for allowing the lecturer the use of his chapel.

Mr. GARNET briefly returned thanks, and the meeting separated.

Note

1. 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
2. For an in-depth history of the centuries-long system of enslavement in Brazil, see Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
 3. Hosea 8:7.
 4. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826).
 5. See ‘Query XVIII: Manners’, in Thomas Jefferson’s work, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, first published in 1785 and available online at: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/notes-on-the-state-of-virginia-query-xviii-manners/>
 6. 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).
 7. 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).
 8. Samuel Hanson Cox (1793–1880) was a white US minister based in New York who travelled to Britain in 1846 for the World’s Temperance Convention and the Evangelical Alliance.
 9. For further information, see Dwyn Mecklin Mounger, ‘Samuel Hanson Cox: Anti-Catholic, Anti-Anglican, Anti-Congregational Ecumenist’. *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 55.4 (1977): pp.347–361.
 10. Gardiner Spring (1785–1873) was a white US religious minister and writer.
 11. Gardiner Spring, *The Bible Not of Man; or, The Argument for the Divine Origin of the Sacred Scriptures* (New York: American Tract Society, 1847).
 12. The Great Exhibition in London, held at Crystal Palace in 1851 was the first of the World’s Fairs. 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.

JACOB D. GREEN

(1813–c.1866)

Biographical History

JACOB D. GREEN experienced enslavement in Queen Ann's County, Maryland, and Kentucky. He secured his self-liberation and went on to become a leading antislavery campaigner, author, orator, and transatlantic civil rights campaigner. He briefly settled in Toronto before travelling to Britain in 1862, working as a brickmaker south of Manchester before commencing a lecturing tour between 1863–1866. In 1862, he married white Englishwoman Ellen Booth in Manchester Cathedral and briefly settled in Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire. While he was living and labouring as an activist and freedom fighter in the UK, he authored and published his autobiography *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* in Huddersfield, England, in 1864. In these pages, he poignantly and powerfully writes of the pain and suffering experienced by his family by writing of his early life lived in enslavement when 'my mother was sold to go to, not one of us knows were, and I am left alone, and I have no hope of seeing her again.'¹ He is also candid regarding the physical abuses and violence he experienced at the hands of his white enslaver by remembering, 'When I was fourteen years old my master gave me a flogging, the marks of which will go with me to my grave, and this was for a crime of which I was completely innocent.'²

During these years, Jacob D. Green gave numerous antislavery and civil rights lectures in the UK and campaigned against the Confederacy during the US Civil War (1861–1865). Here we reproduce two speeches Green delivered in 1863 and 1866. In the first speech he delivered at the Working Men's Institute in Bradford, England, during the US Civil War, he condemned white southern religious hypocrisy and the mind-body-soul-destroying reality that, 'A slave had no religious life, because the law made him a chattel.' He was all too powerfully aware that, 'No minister dared christen a black child, because it would be admitting its manhood.' He informs his audiences that 'All black people were denied marriage' and 'slaves had no political rights.' In his second address he delivered in 1866, a year after the end of the Civil War, he named and shamed white religious hypocrisy and racism by categorically declaring, 'there was only one race of mankind, and that was the human race.'

Here we reproduce two speeches Green gave in Bradford, England, in 1863, and Chester, England, in 1866.

Notes

1. Jacob D. Green, *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: Henry Fielding, 1864). Available online: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/greenjd/greenjd.html>
2. *Ibid.*, p.10.

Further Reading

Primary

- ‘Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 to 1938’, ‘Vol. 7, Kentucky, Bogie-Woods’, Library of Congress Digital Collections, Washington DC. Available online: <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn070/>
- ‘Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936 to 1938’, ‘Vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks-Williams’, Library of Congress Digital Collections, Washington DC. Available online: <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn080/>
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Secondary

- Andrews, William L., *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Lee, Julia Sun-Joo. Adapted by Jennifer Mojica Santana. ‘Jacob D. Green’, *People of the Historical Slave Trade*, available online: <https://enslaved.org/fullStory/16-23-126839/>. The full article is available at: https://projects.kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/16-23-126839/Green-Jacob_AANB.pdf



Anon., 'The American War and Slavery', *The Bradford Review*,
Bradford, England, 12 September 1863, p.5.

ON THURSDAY EVENING, a lecture was delivered at the Working Men's Institute by the Rev. Jacob Green, a runaway slave from Kentucky. The chair was taken by the Rev. W. Hubbard, who introduced the lecturer with an expression of cordial welcome.

Mr. Green began by commenting upon slavery in its political and religious aspects. He referred to the law, made of late years in the Southern States of America, which made it necessary for the trustees of all churches and chapels to appear before a surrogate to acknowledge slavery as a divine institution. That law also made it necessary for all ministers of the gospel to acknowledge the same thing under penalty of being prohibited from preaching. In consequence of this, there was in 1860, not a pulpit in the Southern States from which the divine authenticity of slavery was not propounded. A slave had no religious life, because the law made him a chattel. No minister dared christen a black child, because it would be admitting its manhood. All black people were denied marriage, because two persons legally joined together in matrimony could not be separated, and this would have been inconvenient for the slaveholders, who had always had the power of selling their slaves whenever they liked. As a proof that the slaves had no political rights, he referred to the Dred Scott decision of 1859.¹ The law prescribed that a negro who struck a white man should be punished with death, and that there should be a fine of one thousand dollars for teaching any slave to read. These facts showed the political condition of the negroes in America, and proved slavery to be a system which prevented the negroes from advancing one step in civilisation and intelligence. The speaker has pointed out some of the worst moral evils connected with the slave-sales. Referring to the relative position of the States to each other, he said that there was a clause in the constitution of the United States to the effect that all men are born equal, but each State was left to judge for itself who were men, and who were not. (Hear, hear). Every State was allowed to make its own laws, and the Southern States to suit their convenience lowered the negro to the level of a horror. No person had a right to disturb slavery in the Southern States because it was in all of them a local institution. On the other hand the South had no right to extend slavery beyond the boundaries of the slave states; and the cotton planters saw that if slavery continued to be confined to their own states it would die out. They, therefore, desired an extension of territory, but the North said

they had no constitutional right to it. This was the cause of the present quarrel. It was no tariff grievance as some people said. Whose words were they to believe? Were they to take those of Mr. Barker and his party, or those of the Southerners themselves? (Applause.) Mr. Green here quoted the Confederate President's² resolution which was submitted to Congress, and the rejection of which was the cause of the secession. It was to the effect that property in slaves should stand on the same footing as all other property. That very proposition was, in fact, an admission that the right they claimed was nowhere to be found in the Constitution, or if it had been in the Constitution it would have been quite unnecessary for them to pass any set before exercising it. (Applause). The Northerners had a right to do as they liked with regard to slave property in their own States; but Mr. Davis's proposition was an attempt to take away the constitutional privileges of the Northern States. (Hear, hear). If a slave-owner visiting New York for a week were allowed to retain possession of his slaves, the term might be extended to a month; and if for a month why not for a year, and for a year why not for ever? (Hear, hear). The lecturer here read a statement of the avowed sense of Georgia's accession, in which statement there was not a word about tariff grievances. Mr. Jefferson Davis said before the outbreak of the war that if the opinions of the North with regard to slave property were not dispelled a dissolution of the Union was inevitable. Mr. Green then read statements to prove that slavery was the cause of the secession of Louisiana and South Carolina. The speaker alluded in a sarcastic manner to the friends of the Southern Confederacy in this country. Amongst the most foremost were Mr. Roebuck, Mr. Lindsay, the Lord Mayor of London, Mr. Laird, of Birkenhead, Mr. Spence of Liverpool, the *Times* newspaper and the *Manchester Guardian*. He contended that any man who supported the Southern Confederacy must support slavery because the latter was the life of the former. He had observed that Mr. Barker in his lecture, carefully avoided saying that the South had a right to secede, although he defied any one to prove that the North had a right to compel the South to return to the Union. He (Mr. Green) contended that the North had a right to suppress the rebellion because secession was an unconstitutional act.

The CHAIRMAN remarked, that Mr. Baker, when he censured the North for being too hasty in its attempt to abolish slavery, admitted that slavery was the cause of the war.

Mr TATE moved a resolution to the effect that the meeting sympathised with President Lincoln, and wished success to the Northern army.

This resolution on being seconded, was carried unanimously.

A Lancashire man made a speech, in which he gave his views on the American question.

Mr MACINTOSH read a clause to prove that the Constitution of the United States prohibited secession. He moved, that to sympathise with the South is to despise justice, hate mercy, and deride and ridicule everything sacred to religion and to man.

This resolution on being seconded, was also unanimously carried.

After a vote of thanks to the chairman, the meeting was brought to a close.

Notes

1. 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).

2. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889).



Anon., 'The Human Race, from the Creation to the Nineteenth Century',
The North Cheshire Herald, Chester, England, 6 January 1866, p.2.

THIS WAS THE subject of a lecture delivered in the Temperance Hall, George-street, on Wednesday evening, by Mr. Jacob Green, of Heckmondwike,¹ a runaway slave from Kentucky, America. Mr. R. Fulkes was elected chairman, and briefly introduced the lecturer, who said he thought, of all the studies that were now practised in the world, the study of man was one that ought to be the most closely pursued. It was very seldom indeed we heard speak of a man who knew and understood himself thoroughly, and the ideas and assumptions in the world in reference both to man and the different species of mankind were very varied. To his great sorrow he had found out that all men were not considered equal, for they would observe that because of his complexion and the country that gave him birth, he was once considered as much the property of the man who owned him as the hat he wore on his head. Now he was not there that evening to discuss the question of the human race with the infidel; he was not there to hold an argument with him at all. His address was intended for the Christian portion of the meeting, for that portion of the community who believed in the Old Bible and the New Testament. To those who did not believe in the Scriptures his lecture was nothing, and therefore his arguments, which were principally based thereon, were nothing. Those who believed in the Bible believed that one God made all men alike. He first created Adam, and out of Adam a woman whom he called Eve. That was an admitted fact by all who believed in Bible history, because it was what the Bible really taught. But whether a fact or not, we, as Christians believed it. This, then, was his stand-point. All creation at first was in Adam, the first man, and all the human creation that now existed on the face of the earth was in him also; but the question here arose, how was it that the people were of many colours, like Joseph's coat?² Look at the Chinese, look on the coast of Africa, look on the continent of America, and in other parts of the world, and they would find the complexion of the people varied, nevertheless, all this creation was once in Adam, and he could not be of more colours than one. Adam was either a white man, a black man, or a red man, and, as he had said before, it was a moral impossibility that he could be more than one colour. But in order to give them a reasonable idea of the complexion of Adam, he had to use both Bible history and geography. The lecturer then went on to describe the situation of the garden of Eden, into which Adam was placed, and where he dwelt after the fall, and said had the creation of Adam been according to

our notion of creating things, common sense would lead us to suppose that he was of the complexion of the ground, and white clay was never found in the ground, hence it followed that if he was of the same complexion as the clay out of which he was created, we could not call him black, neither could we call him white. And again, if they would take the Hebrew language, and examine the meaning of the word Adam, they would find it signified 'red clay,' so that it was impossible he could have been a white man. He would, however, leave these considerations with them for what they were worth, and turn to the geographical accounts of the complexion of the people of different counties. His argument upon this point was that it was solely the effect of the climate that changed the colour of man, and he gave several instances of Englishmen who had gone to various parts of the world, changing colour, and said that if a colony of blacks were to be imported into England, and not allowed to amalgamate with white people, the fifth generation of those blacks would be whites like ourselves. If Adam was originally a white man, supposing the Bible account to be true, and the first people whites, then the blacks were the children of the whites, who were their 'daddies,' and for white people to enslave their own offsprings was unnatural; but if Adam was originally a black man, and they were his descendants, then the blacks were the 'daddies' of the whites, and the Bible said 'Honour thy father and thy mother.'³ Why, then, said the lecturer, do not you white people honour me? He defied any man to prove more than one race of mankind, unless he could prove a second creation; but no one could do this; there was only one race of mankind, and that was the human race. The inspired men who wrote the Bible never spoke of men as different races; they never spoke of men as different races; they spoke of them as different nations and different tongues, but never even hinted at different races. Some people argued that the descendants of Cain were black, and that the curse upon him was a divine curse, consequently slavery was a divine institution. He utterly repudiated this view of the subject, and went on to speak of the word 'negro,' as defined by Webster,⁴ who said that a negro had a black face, woolley head, flat nose, crooked legs, and long heels. The lecturer remarked, with the exception of the woolley head and black face, he could find many 'negroes' in England, that was, men who had the required flat nose, crooked legs and long heels. Speaking of Christ, he could not tell why he 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; and so with St. Paul. But although the Redeemer was not a white man he was just white enough to save all present from their sins, and black enough to save Jacob Green, the runaway slave, and he was as much his (Mr. Green's) Jesus as he was theirs.

The lecture was a very interesting one, and showed that Mr. Green had studied the question very minutely. His arguments were clear and forcible, and seemed to have their full weight upon the minds of the audience. We understand that Mr. Green delivers another lecture in the same place on Monday evening, when he intends resuming the subject, and we would advise all who have an hour or two to spare to avail themselves of the opportunity of hearing him; they will thus be adding to their own knowledge, as well as assisting a poor black, who is now going about the country giving these lectures with the object of obtaining money sufficient to carry him to his native country, in order to recruit his failing health. [Since going to press we have received a note from Mr. Green stating that owing to unforeseen circumstances he will not be able to deliver the lecture on Monday evening.]



Figure 46 Chester Bridge, Cheshire, c.1783. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Notes

1. Heckmondwike, Kirklees, West Yorkshire, England.
2. Genesis 36–37.
3. Exodus 20:12.
4. Noah Webster (1758–1843) a white US lexicographer, educator, and author.

WALTER HAWKINS

(1809–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

WALTER HAWKINS EXPERIENCED enslavement in Maryland. He secured his self-liberation with the support of agents on the Underground Railroad, including two Black female liberators whose names we do not know, and who accompanied him on a train from Baltimore. Upon reaching Philadelphia, he worked as a shoemaker and settled in cities including New York and New Bedford, until the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 caused him to flee with his family to the relative safety of Toronto, Canada, where he could live without fear of recapture into US enslavement.¹

On his arrival, Hawkins became ordained in Canada, preaching for the British Methodist Episcopal Church that regularly aided other freedom seekers who had liberated themselves from enslavement. During this period, he became well known for his oratory and singing voice, regularly performing hymns and songs he had composed himself to his congregations and on his lecturing tours of Canada when raising money for the church. In 1890, the Church voted him Bishop for eight years, and in 1891 he travelled to the British Isles to raise donations for Black churches in Ontario and to promote the cause of temperance. In doing so, he worked with Black British activist, S. J. Celestine Edwards, who penned his biography to coincide with his lecturing tour titled *From Slavery to Bishopric or the Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins* and published in 1891. During his lectures in Canada and Britain, Hawkins lambasted white US enslavers who purported to be Christians at the same time that they committed repeated acts of persecution, torture, violence, and murder against enslaved people and villainously broke apart their families, all the while using the Bible to justify their inhumane cruelty.

Here we reproduce two speeches that Walter Hawkins delivered in Exeter and Bristol, England, in 1891.

Note

1. 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

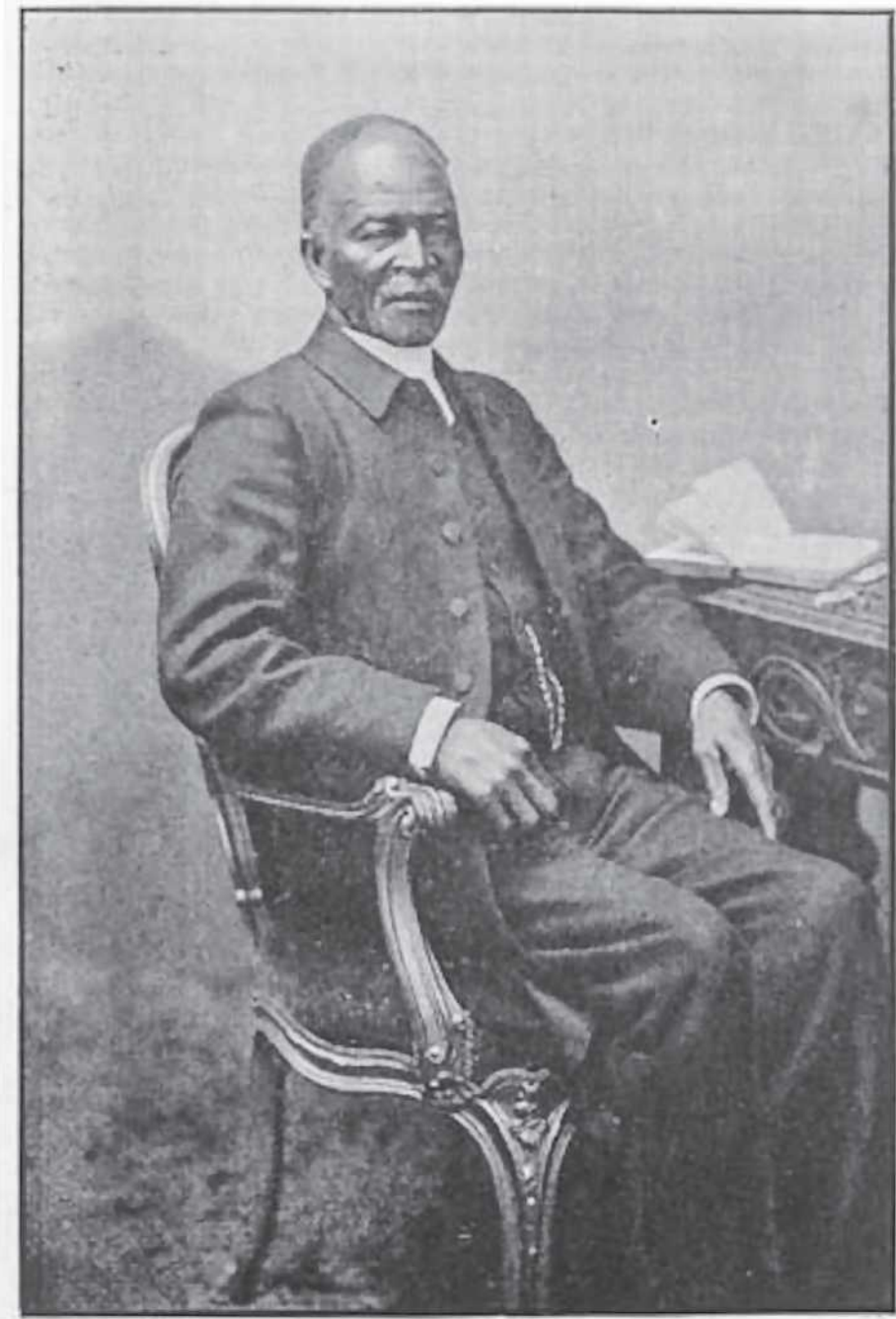


Figure 47 Bishop Walter Hawkins, author portrait from S. J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to Bishopric, or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada*. London: Kensit, 1891. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

government. A transcription of this legislation is available online: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp

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Anon., 'The Negro Bishop in Exeter', *The Western Times*,
Exeter, Devon, England, 6 August 1891, p.3.

BISHOP HAWKINS, ON rising to speak, met with a cordial reception. His lordship – if that be the right designation for a Canadian Bishop – is at home on the platform, for he has great readiness of address, an entertaining style, and plenty of energy for a man of his years. With these qualifications and ample material to fall back upon, the Bishop attracted and kept the attention of his hearers in telling the story of his life, or rather the first instalment of his slavery experience, which he undertook to continue and finish in the other two days of his visit. Addressing the assembly as brothers, the lecturer, in the course of his narrative, said he was born in the district of Columbia, Washington City, where they made the laws for the great American nation. They were a great people, it must be admitted. There were a great many good people over there; there always had been. But there were also a great many bad ones; that must be admitted. They were so bad they he could not stay with them. When he was born it was a crime for a man to be black, so much so that a law was made for him because he was black, and if they could have blacked him over again they would have done it. He was proud to be a black man. He would not whitewash his face for all the money in the country, and he wondered why white men could get so low as to blacken their faces, and wondered still more that people had no better sense than to go and look at them – (hear, hear). He stated that slavery had never been removed from the United States and existed there now. He was born a slave and the child of slave parents in 1811.¹ He was brought up with stripes, to work sixteen hours a day with no other hope than that given them by the lady who imparted religious instruction to them, who said that if black girls and boys were good God would put them in His kitchen when they got to Heaven. He (the Bishop) had been asked since he came into England if he had read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'² Why he read it before Mrs. Stowe³ dreamt about it. He read it on his back, upon his head and shoulders, and into his very soul. The hero of Mrs. Stowe's work, Uncle Tom,⁴ was a slave in a neighbouring State with him, and he (the Bishop) knew him long before the authoress took down the story of his sufferings. There were two classes of slaveowners – the cruel and the indulgent – and he happened to be the slave of a master who was rather cruel. He was not in a plantation, but in a town called George Town. He was brought up with a lady who often prayed for him, but gave him too little to eat and taught him to lie to serve her ends. One afternoon, hungry and famished, he broke into his mistress's

store-room and brought out some of the best provisions. And didn't he make them fly. He ate and ate till the buttons got tight – (laughter). And then he felt splendid. He did not know when he had had such a square meal before then. Before stating when and under what circumstances he escaped from a scene of slashing and cutting, and killing and selling and buying, he said he would sit down with an appeal to his hearers to pray for him, and he concluded by singing the hymn, 'Steal away to Jesus.'⁵

A collection was then taken, the proceeds of which, after paying expenses, were given to the Bishop for his cause in Canada. The meetings have been arranged by Rev. J. Pitkin and Mr. C. E. Hopping (secretaries, together with the respective Committees).

Notes

1. This unnamed newspaper correspondent misreports Hawkins' birthplace as Washington DC and his birth date as 1811 in a disrespectful act that provides hard-hitting confirmation of the repeated errors that were endured by freedom seekers and survivors in the white mainstream dissemination of their individual biographies and that had very real consequences for their lives. According to Celestine Edward's biography, *From Slavery to a Bishopric, or, the Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada* (1891), Hawkins was born in Maryland in 1809: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/edwardsc/edwards.html>
2. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
3. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
4. Josiah Henson (1789–1883). See 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
5. 'Steal Away to Jesus' is an African American spiritual originally composed by Wallace Willis, a man who experienced enslavement in Oklahoma, and popularised by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a world-famous Black performance group founded in 1871 by students at Fisk University, a historically Black institution established in 1865 and incorporated in 1867 in Nashville, Tennessee, with the explicit mission of going on fund-raising tours to support this higher education institution. For further information see G. D. Pike, *The Jubilee Singers and Their Campaign for Twenty Thousand Dollars* (Boston MA: Lee and Shepard, 1873). For further information, see Judith Michener, 'Willis, Uncle Wallace and Aunt Minerva', *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma Historical and Culture*, available online: <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=WI018>



Anon., 'Bishop Hawkins On His Slavery Days', *The Western Daily Press*, Bristol, England, 21 August 1891, p.5.

BISHOP HAWKINS, in the course of his interesting address, mentioned that he was born at Washington City, where 'the world's conference'¹ was shortly to be held. In his country it was a crime to be black; the law sanctioned it, and black men were subjected to every insult, wrong, and cruel thing that could be imagined. Well, he was born black, and he could not get it off – (laughter) – and he did not want to, either. It was good enough because God made it. (Applause.) It would not fade every day in the week – (laughter) – he had been wearing it for eighty years, and it was just as good as ever. (Laughter.) Underneath the black skin, however, there was a soul white as snow. (Applause.) His race had suffered terribly. The Irish complained, but their complaint was only a bubble in the great ocean compared with that of the black men. The latter, however, had cause to say, 'God bless the Union Jack and bless those that carried it.' (Applause.) Touching upon Mrs. Beecher Stowe's² book, the Bishop said he could not bring himself to read it now; it took him back to the dark ages. Proceeding to recount in quaint style many of the experiences of his slavery days, the speaker said that once a month, for 20 years, he attended a service to slaves, at which the minister always took the same text – 'Servants obey your masters'³ – and preached always the same sermon. In the concluding portion of his address, Bishop Hawkins mentioned incidentally some of the cruelties which were practised upon the slaves, and dealt with incidents attending his escape.

Notes

1. 'Bishop W. Hawkins' is listed as one of the delegates for the 'British Methodist Episcopal Church' of 'Chatham, Ontario', (p.xix) who was in attendance at the 'Second Ecumenical Methodist Conference' (p.iii) held in the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church at Washington DC in October 1891. See William Arthur, *Proceedings of the Second Ecumenical Methodist Conference* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892). Available online: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/155821062.pdf>
2. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
3. Ephesians 6:5.

JOSIAH HENSON

(1789–1883)

Biographical History

JOSIAH HENSON EXPERIENCED enslavement in Maryland. After suffering from the manipulation and betrayal of his white enslaver – who promised to liberate him if he raised enough money to purchase his legal freedom, and then renegaded, doubling the amount – Henson travelled hundreds of miles on foot with his wife Charlotte and young family to secure their liberation in Canada, where he founded a settlement for other freedom seekers in Dawn, Ontario. He found fame as a world-leading author, orator, soldier, educator, community activist, political leader, and social justice campaigner in Canada, the United States, and the British Isles. In 1849, after the publication of his *Narrative of the Life of Josiah Henson*, white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe reportedly based the leading enslaved character named Tom from her infamous novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852 and one of the best-selling books of the nineteenth century, on Henson's life story.¹ While Henson exploited the novel's success to his advantage, using it as a platform from which to inform audiences about the realities and brutalities of enslavement of which Stowe – as a white American – had little understanding and no first-hand experience, this connection with a character heavily born from white racist stereotypes and dehumanising caricatures and adopted on the minstrel stage on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean gave him very real misgivings and very serious cause for concern. In a speech reprinted in this volume, he renounces the name of 'Uncle Tom' and boldly reaffirms his identity as Josiah Henson, a liberator and survivor unlike the character who eventually dies in the novel.

In 1851, Henson travelled to the British Isles and was the only Black person to present at the first in a series of World Fairs, the Great Exhibition, and at the same time he undertook antislavery lecturing tours throughout England.² In 1876, he returned to the British Isles alongside his second wife Nancy to raise the sum of his mortgage for his estate in Ontario and befriended white British social reformer John Lobb, editor of the London-based journal *The Christian Age*. Lobb revised Henson's previous works into a new work titled, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life* (1876) and also published a children's edition, *The Young People's Illustrated Edition of Uncle Tom's Story of His Life* (1877). Both publications were extraordinary successful and were translated into numerous languages; together the books sold a quarter of a million copies, resulting in another US edition in 1879. Henson combined his visit with an extensive lecturing tour and spoke to half a million people in six months. He received an invitation in March 1877 to visit

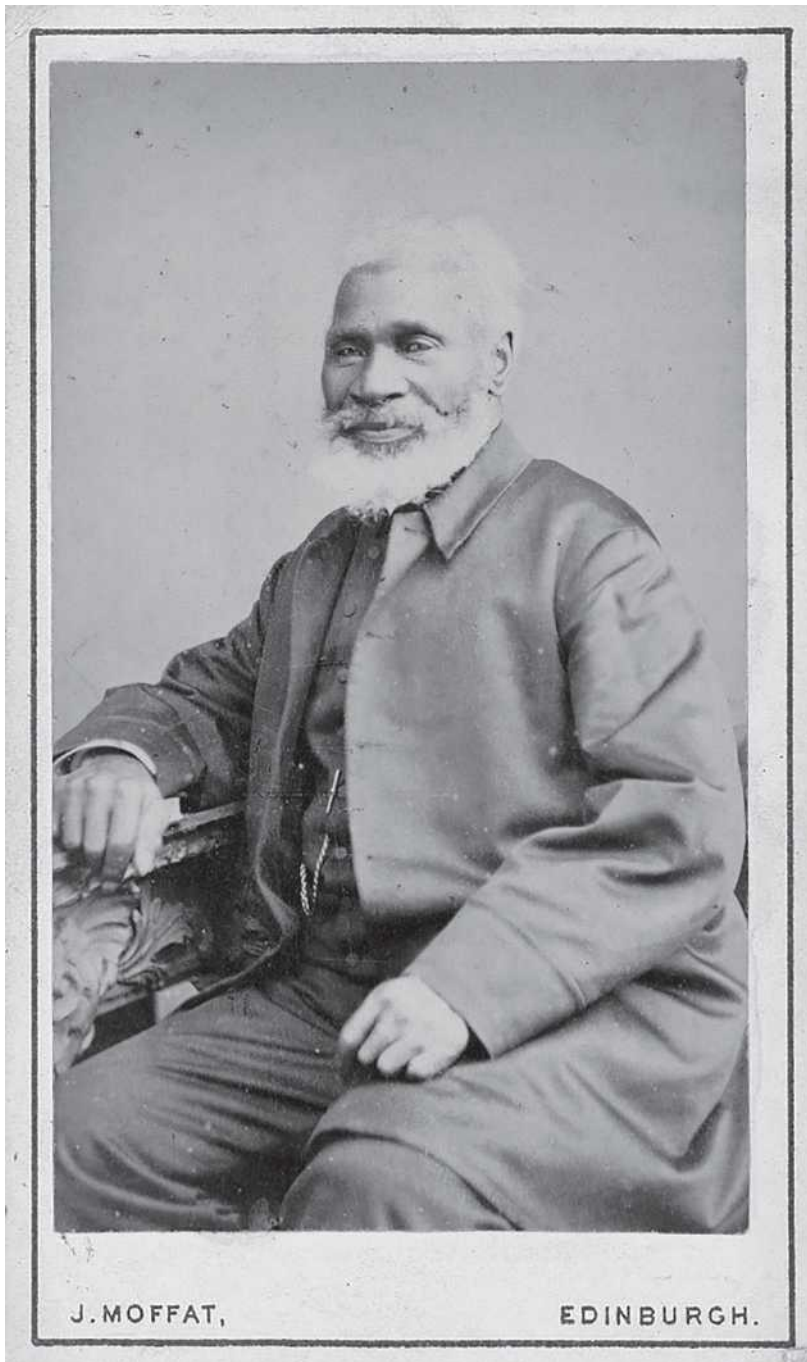
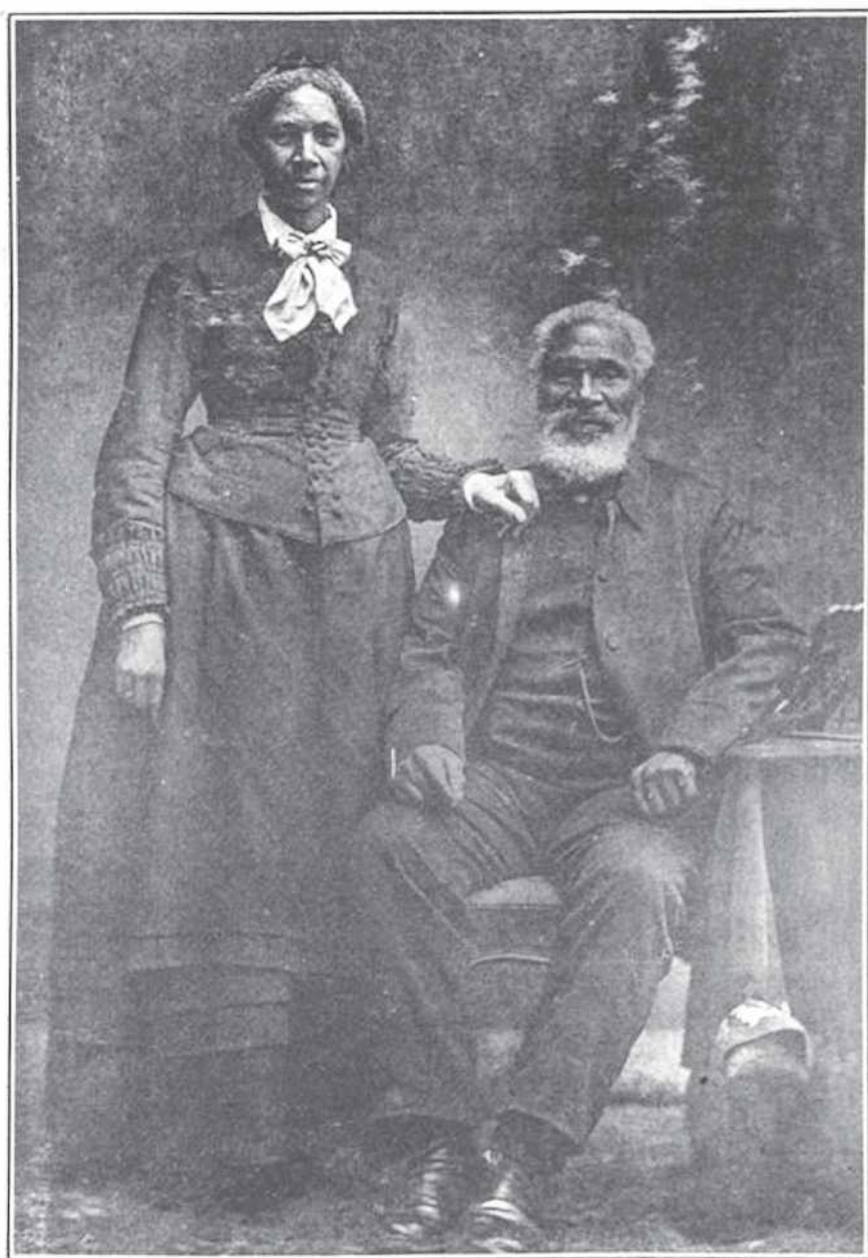


Figure 48 Josiah Henson, by John Moffat, Princes Street, Edinburgh, 1877. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)



REV. JOSIAH HENSON AND WIFE.
The original "Uncle Tom." Dresden, Ont.

Figure 49 Rev. Josiah Henson and Nancy Henson, Dresden, Ontario, 1907. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

white British monarch Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, while a bust of his likeness was placed in the Royal Academy. In a move that was almost very likely without his permission, he was immortalised in wax at Madame Tussauds' exhibition, the infamous wax museum, in central London. Henson died in 1883.

Here we reproduce speeches Josiah Henson gave in Portsmouth in 1876 and Sheffield in 1877, both in England, and two speeches he delivered in Dundee, Scotland, in 1877.

Notes

1. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
2. The Great Exhibition in London, held at Crystal Palace in 1851 was the first of the World's Fairs. 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.

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Anon., “‘Uncle Tom’ in Portsmouth”, *Hampshire Telegraph & Sussex Chronicle*, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, 23 September 1876, p.8.

MR. HENSON, in commencing his address, said when he left home it was not his intention to speechify; but it seemed necessary that he should endeavour to do so, and nothing had encouraged him more than the expressions of kindness he had received since he came to England. The hearts of his friends in England had always been right on certain subjects. He remembered, too, the names of such heroes as Wilberforce¹ and Clarkson,² who had nobly stood forward, and, at the risk of their reputation, battled with the monster slavery, until the cry of England was, ‘Down with it!’ (Hear, hear.) Englishmen might move slowly; but it was surely. When they took a case in hand they wanted to be sure they were right, and then they went at it with all their might. Mr. Henson then proceeded to say that he was born a slave, his dear old mother being a slave before him; and she suffered everything that a human being could suffer. He need not exaggerate anything to gain the sympathy of his audience, for he believed he had that already. Those who had read Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s³ book would know all about the matter. Some believed that her statements were facts, and some that they were rather romantic; some thought they were true, and some that they were not. Sometimes people did not believe what they heard, and were even doubtful about what they saw (a laugh); but a man believed what he felt. Now he felt very keenly about slavery, because he had worn the manacles on his wrists, had had the iron in his own soul, and slavery had done for him that which nothing in the world could repay. ‘Uncle Tom’ then gave some incidents of his slave life, stating that he never saw ‘his dear old father’ to know him but once, and then he saw him fastened to the post and flogged, his skin being cut off his back, down which it hung in pieces. Some time after his father had been sold, he (Mr. Henson) was sold, with his mother and another child, in consequence of the death of his master, who was said to be one of the best in the country. He was a doctor, and was guilty of what used to be thought a very little thing. He would take a little – in America they call it ‘fuddle’ (a laugh – well, the only name for it was that he used to get drunk. (Laughter.) His brother was sold first, then his mother, and he (Mr. Henson), being the youngest, was brought up last. It was said that he was going to be a very smart fellow; and it had turned out to be true. (Laughter.) His mother begged the man who had bought her to purchase ‘her baby’ for her, and to let her have one child. He kicked her, and she crawled away. He was bought by an old Scotchman, as he was called a great man,

who had about 80 slaves. In the course of a year or 18 months he felt ill, and was likely to have died. The result was that the man who bought his mother bought him also; and his mother came and took him away. God blessed her labours for his restoration, and in a few months he was on his feet again. Having stated that his mother was ‘a woman of prayer,’ Mr. Henson gave an account of his ‘conversion’ while listening to the first Gospel sermon he ever heard preacher, by Mr. John McKenny, whom they used to call a ‘Methodist.’

Dr. KENNEDY MOORE said Archbishop Whately, in writing of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*⁴ in one of the *Reviews*, said in the case of every other novel people judged it as fiction; but the speciality of the book was that those who attacked it did so not because it was ‘a pack of lies,’ but because the book was substantially true. The sensation which the book produced arose partly from the interest of the book, and partly from the fact that the leading facts were taken from the lips of the principal person in the scenes described; and what they had heard that day only confirmed what they had read. If, as the Americans said, the English introduced slavery into America; they had lived, thank God, to see a better day.

The meeting closed with prayer by the Rev. Mr. HOLLAND, Primitive Methodist minister, and formerly a missionary.

At the meeting in the evening, which was more numerous attended, the CHAIRMAN (after singing and prayer) again attempted to dispose of any misgivings as to the identity of Mr. Henson, and stated that he was as well known in Canada as the veritable ‘Uncle Tom’ as Mr. Spurgeon was known in London as the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. He also expressed a hope that before the November fogs they would be able to bid adieu to their friend, with the whole of the 1000l they were now seeking to raise. – The Rev. Mr. HENSON, in the course of his address, said when he contrasted the kindness with which he had been received in England with his past life, he had to ask whether he were really himself. The publications had excited some curiosity with regard to himself; and he was glad of it. He had been asked whether he were not sorry that he was a coloured man (a laugh); but he would not be anything else for the world. It did not matter, however, what he would be – this, that, or the other. He was what he was. He did not wonder at people asking if he were the veritable man; and he left them to say what they pleased, as they would do about great men: (Laughter) What a row they had about Mr. Gladstone⁵ and Mr. Disraeli!⁶ (Laughter). And when they heard a row about ‘Uncle Tom,’ it was because he was a great man. (Renewed laughter.) He had (he said) lived, groaned, and bled like an animal chained to the stake. He had poured out his tears while other men had drawn out his blood, and, looking up to God, he had been told to ‘be of good cheer, for there was a better time coming.’⁷ But he had had to bear the chains for 42 years in the corn, tobacco, and cotton fields; and now he had to stand up before an English audience! His heart swelled like a great fat ox. (Laughter.) Mr. Henson then narrated some of the horrors of slave life, and stated that from the time he was ‘converted’ he had been an Abolitionist. He also gave an amusing account of the manner in which he had, after he had obtained his freedom, been taught by his son to read. Referring to the Educational Institute,⁸ he said God had blessed it, and it was now self-sustaining, and one of the finest in Canada. Had he been 20 or 30 years younger he should not have come to England for assistance, but should have fought the battle out himself. He had a home⁹ in Canada, with 200 acres of the finest land there, and

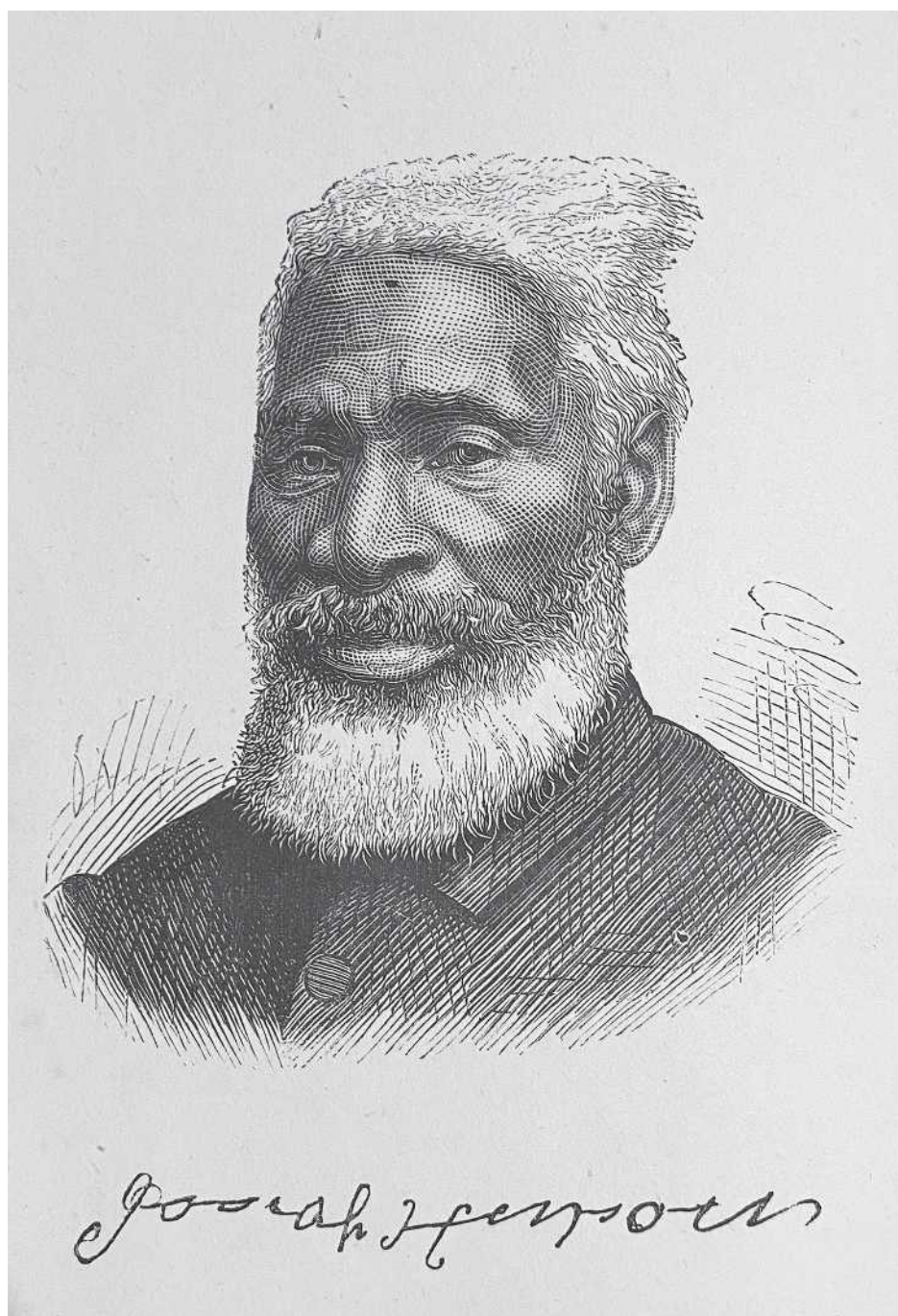


Figure 50 Josiah Henson, author portrait from Henson and John Lobb's revised edition of *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: From 1789 to 1876*. London: Christian Age, 1876. (Author copy.)

he had raised his children in the best way he could. He had 10 children, 44 grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren (laughter); and he made it a point to have them all at his home on Christmas Day. (Renewed laughter.) He also gave a humorous account of an interview he had on his last visit with the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Sumner),¹⁰ who in the course of their conversation, asked him in what University he was educated? ‘In the University of Adversity,’ he replied. (Laughter.) ‘Where is that?’ The Archbishop asked. (Renewed laughter.) Thinking he was going a little too far with a gentleman of that cloth, he said he meant he was educated under adverse circumstances. (Laughter.) On leaving, the Archbishop hoped ‘the Lord would bless him,’ and gave him 50l. Mr. Henson concluded by singing one of the slave songs. – After addresses by the Rev. Mr. SLEEMAN and the Rev. Mr. BATT, the CHAIRMAN stated that Mr. Henson some years ago bought his brother, who was now living with him, and was nearly 92 years of age. – The meeting closed with the Doxology and the Benediction.

Notes

1. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
2. Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846).
3. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
4. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, in 1852.
5. William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898) was a white British politician and statesman. He was elected as UK Prime Minister between 1868–1894.
6. Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) was a white British politician. He was elected as UK Prime Minister between 1874–1880.
7. John 16:33.
8. He is referring to the British American Institute, an educational organisation Josiah Henson founded in 1842, located at the heart of the Dawn Settlement, Dresden, Ontario, a newly formed community of self-liberated African Americans citizens who had successfully left enslavement in the US. For further information, see Boulou Ebanda de B’béri, Handel Kashope Wright, and Nina Reid-Maroney, eds, *The Promised Land: History and Historiography of the Black Experience in Chatham-Kent’s Settlements and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
9. The Josiah Henson home located on Uncle Tom’s Road in Dresden, Ontario, is still standing and is a historic site run by the Ontario Heritage Trust. Further information is available at: <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/properties/uncle-toms-cabin>
10. John Bird Sumner (1780–1862) was the white British Archbishop of Canterbury.



Anon., 'Uncle Tom at the Royal Albert Hall', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, 3 February 1877, p.11.

ON MONDAY AT the Albert Hall, the Rev. Josiah Henson, popularly known as 'Uncle Tom,'¹ told the story of his 42 years' slave life in America, with an account of his escape into Canada. The first meeting was held at twelve o'clock, and notwithstanding the hour and the inclemency of the weather, the hall was filled in every part. The Rev. Canon Blakeney presided.

The Rev. JOSIAH HENSON, who was received with loud cheers, said: It has been announced I would give the details of my 42 years' slave life, allow me to say that it would be almost impossible for me to do that at one or two, or even a dozen meetings. If I had physical strength and mental ability, I could talk, I suppose, while I live and then not reach the end. (Laughter and cheers.) It has been assumed and said that the book that Mrs. Stowe² wrote was a fabrication, a falsehood – that there was no truth in it – that nothing of the kind ever occurred. She was challenged to present a key³ to it; and as an author I suppose she felt herself bound to do that for the general information of the people. In that key Mrs. Stowe tells you who was the hero of the book; and if you will get that key you will find from pages 37 to 57⁴ what Mrs. Stowe says about me. My name is Josiah Henson. My parents had not the honour of naming me; I was named by master, and my parents had to submit to it. My master was a young man, a physician; and as I was the first little negro born on his place, he gave me his name, Joshua; the Hensons being relatives of his. He was rather proud of me, and said I would be a fine fellow, and I don't think he was much mistaken. (Laughter and cheers.) He used to pat me on the head like ladies pat their little dogs. (Renewed laughter.) He said when I was born that my head was so peculiar that it was in two parts, and had to be tied together with a napkin. (Great laughter.) One day when in the old cabin I heard a row, and on going out I saw some men dragging along a poor old fellow whose hands were tied behind him. On getting nearer I saw it was my father they were pulling along! They took him to where there was a sign post, and suspended him by his arms until his toes just touched the ground. A man then pulled his clothes from his back; took a cowhide and began to beat him, every blow making the flesh to fly and the blood to run. (Sensation.) I have never been able to restrain my feelings when I have thought of that scene. (Hear, hear.) When the man commenced you might have heard my father's screams two miles off; but he grew weaker and could not groan. They gave

him what they called a ‘hundred lashes,’ and then the man went to him and said, ‘Will you ever do the like of that again?’ My father replied, ‘She was my wife!’ and that was all they could make him say. The man pushed his ear against the post, took a tack, and drove through it, and then cut it off, leaving his ear on the post. (Sensation.) They took him to gaol, and he was sold away into Alabama, and I have never seen him since. (Renewed sensation.) That was a red letter day in my history; for the events of it burnt themselves into my very soul. When I grew old I inquired what was the crime my father had committed. Francis Newman who owned my father, and Joshua Macpherson who owned my mother, had adjoining farms, and one day my father heard my mother screaming. He ran and saw a man brutally assaulting my mother. 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. (Loud cheers.) For that crime he was punished as I have told you, and I have never seen him since. 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. (Loud cheers.) A man who would not risk or lose his life for his wife is not worthy to have a wife. (Cheers.) Now the young gentleman who owned me and my mother, and who was never known to hurt a slave in his life, used to get a little ‘muddled,’ or ‘fuddled,’ or ‘a brick in his head,’ or a ‘little top heavy in the upper storey,’ as people would say. (Laughter.) One night, when returning home, he was thrown from his horse and killed; and eighteen months later my mother and her family were put upon the block to be sold, one by one. My brothers and sisters were sold, and I have never seen but one of them since. I, as the youngest, was put up last, and my mother, whose heart had been wrung with agony, went to the man who had bought her, fell on her knees, and said ‘Oh, master, buy my babe! All the rest have gone; let me have my babe.’ He kicked her away, and asked her how she dared to take such a liberty. (Sensation.) The master who bought me was a bad man; I’ll say no more of him than that. His name was Adam Robb, and he was a Scotchman – (great laughter) – and when an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a Scotchman gets into a bad way he is no better than any one else. (Laughter and cheers.) My master took me home to his own farm and put me in with the rest of the negroes. I now compare my condition at that time to a little pig among a lot of overgrown hogs. (Laughter.) I was soon taken ill, and grew so weak that I could not crawl across the cabin to get a drop of water. My master, thinking I should die, sold me a bargain to the man who had bought my mother, and under her tender care I recovered. One Sunday morning, when my mother had combed my hair – and as it was only combed once a week it was rather hard work – (laughter and cheers) – she asked me to go and ask my master to let me go to meeting. I refused, not because I did not want to go to meeting, but because I did not want to go to my master. As I have said, he was a bad man – one of those long-nosed, blue-eyed fellows, you know. (Great laughter and cheers.) I afterwards went to him, and when he had tantalised me a long time he said I might go to meeting. I went, and heard that which led me to resolve to become a Christian, and before I reached home that night I had given my heart to God. (Cheers.) As I went along I leaped and skipped and praised God. I suffered for it afterwards. One day when I was praying in the stable my master came and said ‘What you doing there?’ I said,

'I was praying.' 'Who are you praying to?' he asked. 'Praying to the Lord,' I answered, 'to save my soul.' 'You think you got a soul?' 'Yes, sir,' I said. He answered, 'You have got no more soul than a dog. Let me catch you praying; I'll pray you.' I got up and he walked off grumbling like a bear with a sore head. (Laughter.) I said to myself, 'Well if I have got no soul, I know religion makes my body happier.' (Loud laughter and cheers.) I lived with that master until he was convinced that there was a reality in religion. (Cheers.) Master had on his farm some fifteen or twenty women, and they had to go into the fields to work just like the men. At times some of them would be ill, and not able to do their share of work, and then master would beat them with a raw hide until their backs were raw. I used to run away and hide, for I could not endure the sight. I could not help them, but I adopted another plan. I was a smart fellow, and could do as much work as any two or three other men; so I used to select a row between the rows of these poor women, and now help one a bit and now another, and so helped them to keep up with their work. (Cheers.) When these poor creatures returned to their cabin at night there was nothing for them to eat but a little bread and herring, although there was plenty on the plantation that was going to waste. I had to feed the horses – and a horse is not like a man, he does not swallow everything he gets into his mouth. (Laughter.) Some of the corn would drop, and the chickens would pick it up. Now and then, one would get hurt, and to put it out of its misery I used to wring its neck. I would then strip off its jacket, get some potatoes, and make a big potful of chicken soup and potatoes. (Laughter.) In the dead of the night I would go round and give the soup to these poor women, and then stand on guard while they eat it. (Laughter and cheers.) I think in doing that I did right; because I never was suspected and I never was detected. (Loud laughter and cheers.)

The hall was crowded again in the evening to hear the conclusion of the story. Mr. Henson continued: The chickens were often missed, and the missis used to come looking about, and ask me if I had seen anything of them. I used to say, 'May be there has been a fox round here mam.' (Laughter.) If she had seen the fox she would have seen it was a black one. (Renewed laughter.) Although my master was a bad man, I did my duty by him, as I wanted to gain his confidence and earn a dollar to put in my pocket. He got involved in a law suit arising out of a good stiff family quarrel; lost his case, and one day he came and told me that all his negroes would have to be sent to Montgomery Court-house to be sold. He asked me to run away, take the other negroes with me, and go to his brother's in Kentucky, about 300 miles away. I did not want to be sold, so I gave him my word that I would go and deliver up his people to his brother. There was myself, my wife, and two children, and eighteen others. He directed me what route to take, and we started. Several times on the road people wanted me to sell the horse and wagon, and all of us escape, but I had pledged my word before God that I would go, and that was enough for me. (Cheers.) I kept my word, and delivered up myself and the other negroes to my master's brother. He promised to come to us in two years, but he did not come. He had married a lady who if she had not a mind to do a thing would not do it, and nobody could make her. (Laughter.) He would have come, but she would not accompany him, and he had to knock under. (Laughter.) In the year 1828, he sent out an agent to sell all his slaves except me and my wife and children; we were to stop and work for his brother. Two years later he sent a man to take me down

to New Orleans to be sold. When I stood on board the boat, and saw my wife and children weeping on the shore, and thinking we should never meet again, then, for the first time since I became converted, I lost the image of God in my heart. There were three men on board the boat, and I resolved the first opportunity I had I would kill them. One night I was left on watch, and taking an axe I went to where they were sleeping, raised it, and was just about to kill the first, when I seemed to hear a voice – ‘What! You do murder, and you a Christian? Have you not heard that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?’ I replied, ‘No, Lord, I would not do murder for all the world,’ and I crept away and wept bitterly. (Cheers.) We reached New Orleans, and on the day I was to be sold my young master was taken ill, and he begged me to return with him, and not to let him die there and be buried on the river side. You may be sure I was glad enough to do that – (cheers and laughter) – and I returned with him, and great was the joy when I met my wife and children again. In a little while I began to lay my plans to run away; but I could not get my wife to agree with me. ‘Well,’ I said, ‘if you won’t go you must stay, but I am going to go’ – (laughter and cheers) – and when she found I was going to take the children with me she said, ‘Well, I shall have to try to go to.’ (Laughter). On a Saturday night I put my two youngest children into a knapsack, and slung them on my back; the two eldest were able to walk, and with my wife we were ferried across the river. We took to the woods and travelled 600 miles before we struck Lake Erie. (Cheers.) We suffered much from hunger and thirst, but the hope of freedom sustained us. (Cheers.) One day when my children had been crying for water I left them and started in search of it. I found a well, but I had nothing in which to carry water. I first thought of saturating my shirt in water, and taking it and wringing it in their mouths. I hit upon a better plan. I washed out my shoes and carried them full of water and they drank of it. (Laughter and cheers.) We passed tribes of Indians and they helped us and gave us food to eat. We reached Lake Erie, and there saw a vessel being laden with grain. I left my wife and children in the woods, and went down to where the men were at work. The captain was a Scotchman, and he set me to work, and when he found out that I wanted to go to Canada he offered to take me. (Cheers.) I told him I should like to go if I could get ready. (Laughter.) Said he, ‘What have you to get ready?’ I told him I should like to take my wife and children. ‘How long will it take you to move down?’ said he. ‘Not long,’ I replied. (Laughter.) He sent three men to help me to bring down my wife and children, and when she saw us coming she thought I had been detected, and they fled into the woods. I asked the men to stop a little bit while I went and got my wife tame. (Laughter.) I went to her and told her all, and we went on board the vessel, and he took me down to Buffalo, and then we dropped down to within a short distance of the Canadian shore. He paid the ferry-man to take us across; gave me a dollar; put his hand on my head, and told me to be a ‘good fellow!’ (Cheers.) I have tried to be good; and the Lord has abundantly blessed me. (Cheers.) He then gave an interesting account of his interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury,⁵ and told how his Grace slipped a £50 note into his hand when leaving – (cheers) – and concluded by singing a slave song and a farewell hymn. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Henson for his interesting story. – This was seconded by Mr. PEACH under whose care Mr. Henson had come to Sheffield. – The motion was carried with loud cheers.



Figure 51 'General View of Sheffield from the East' by J. R. B., Sheffield, England. Originally from *The Graphic*, 1874. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Notes

1. He is referring to Josiah Henson (1789–1883), a self-liberated activist and social justice campaigner born in Maryland and claimed by white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) as the inspiration for the character of her title protagonist, Tom, in her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). See 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
2. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
3. See Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston MA: J. P. Jewett & Co., 1853).
4. Ibid.
5. John Bird Sumner (1780–1862).



Anon., 'Uncle Tom in Dundee', *Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder*, Dundee, Angus, Scotland, 9 March 1877, p.6.

MR. HENSON, WHO was introduced by the Chairman, and was received with great applause, said it gave him great pleasure to be permitted to be present. He felt he was hardly able to find language to express his deep sense of gratitude to God and to the assembly before him. He was still scarcely able to realise the fact that he was permitted, after all the trials of his past life, to see in the latter days of his life the Sun of Life and Righteousness shining upon the evening of his life. (Applause.) He hardly knew what course he should adopt in speaking to them, for there had been so much said about him, so much written about him, so much thought about him, and so many tears shed over him. They would remember the good Book told them that they were to weep with those who wept, and to rejoice with those that rejoiced. He had had the weeping, they had the singing, and now the Lord had permitted them to meet, and they all rejoiced together. (Applause.) At this moment his head, instead of being like a library, was like a beehive full of bees, and every bee with a hum of its own. (Great laughter.) Time would fail to tell them all he felt inclined to tell them, and so he would only be able to give them a few details. Some of their friends might wonder how 'Uncle Tom'¹ could be still alive, since it was said that he was dead. Well, they could say he was alive, and that they had seen the poor old man himself – (laughter) – it made little difference what they called him. (Renewed laughter.) Mr. Henson then gave a thrilling account of the hardships of slave life, the dreadful cruelties which slaves suffered, and the inhuman treatment to which they were subjected. He spoke of the cruelty inflicted on his father in receiving 100 lashes, and being afterwards cast into prison, because he endeavoured to protect this wife from assault by his master. Then he (Mr. Henson) was only a boy, four or five years old, and he had never seen his father since. His life since then, until he made his escape into Canada, he rapidly sketched, and in narrating many trials and sufferings through which he and his mother and brothers and sisters had passed many in the hall were moved to tears. The narrative of his escape was thrilling, and was listened to with rapt attention. In concluding, he said, on Monday I had the honour of taking off my hat and appearing before Her Majesty, Queen Victoria.² (Applause.) She received me with a heart of kindness and love, and wished me all the blessings of life, and treated me as a Christian. My wife and I and Mr. Bowden were introduced to her by Sir Thomas Biddulph, and she received us with much coolness, calmness, candour, and firmness

as I have ever seen in any lady in this world. After I had the honour of speaking to Her Majesty she stepped aside to her daughter and brought to me a daguerreotype, a gold gilt one – a beautiful thing, and when she handed it to me I thanked her most graciously. God bless her! And she gave me a good dinner into the bargain. (Laughter and applause.) I tell you, my friends, that was worth coming to England for, though I had not got any thing more. (Applause.) My home is in Canada, and my little property³ is there. The Lord has blessed me with 10 children, 44 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren, and so I am not so bad off after all, am I? (Great laughter and applause.) I do not know if I will ever speak to you again; should I do not, I hope we will all have the unspeakable happiness of meeting in a better world, where we will rejoice together in everlasting life. (Great applause.)

Notes

1. He is referring to Josiah Henson (1789–1883), a self-liberated activist and social justice campaigner born in Maryland and claimed by white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) as the inspiration for the character of her title protagonist, Tom, in her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). See 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
2. Queen Victoria (1819–1901) was the white British monarch of Britain and Ireland from 1837–1901. For further information, see Jan Marsh, 'From Slave Cabin to Windsor Castle: Josiah Henson and "Uncle Tom" in Britain,' *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 16 (2002): pp.3–50.
3. The Josiah Henson home located on Uncle Tom's Road in Dresden, Ontario, is still standing and is a historic site run by the Ontario Heritage Trust. Further information is available at: <https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/properties/uncle-toms-cabin>



Anon., 'Uncle Tom in Dundee', *The Northern Warder and Bi-Weekly Courier and Argus*, Dundee, Angus, Scotland, 13 March 1877, p.3.

ON FRIDAY THE REV. Josiah Henson delivered a lecture in Free St Andrew's Church, which was filled by a large and appreciative audience. Rev. James Ewing presided, and introduced the lecturer to the meeting. Mr. Henson, after referring to the pleasure it gave him in again addressing a Dundee audience, said if he had known that he was to address them on two occasions he would have been better prepared, but his friends, who seemed to know better than he himself what he could speak upon, had advertised that he was to address them upon a variety of things, which it would take even a Philadelphia lawyer two or three hours to get over. (Laughter.) He did not know why they called him Tom.¹ His name was Josiah Henson, and never was Tom, and without his consent no person had any right to call him 'Uncle Tom.' He was a privileged negro in being called after his master and his uncle, and said this was probably owing to his being a very handsome negro, at least his mother said so. He said negroes were considered not entitled to be designated 'Mr.' and the word 'Uncle' was used instead, as the former title appeared to confer an honour upon the negro, and that might be the reason why he was called 'Uncle.' Mr. Henson then spoke of his conversion, which he attributed to the prayers and entreaties of his mother, after which he dwelt upon the cruelty to which the slaves, especially the women, were subjected, and stated how he helped the females with their work, so that they might not be beaten, believing that his being converted materially helped him to do this. A humorous account of his interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury² was next given. That dignitary asked the name of the university at which he graduated, and on being told that it was the university of 'adversity' appeared much perplexed, until he (the lecturer) informed the Archbishop that he was brought up in adverse circumstances. He also gave numerous and interesting particulars regarding his experiences as a slave, his working for the Lord, his education, his first spelling book, and how he learned to read. In conclusion, he spoke about the principal characters in Mrs. Stowe's³ novel – how little Eva,⁴ whom he saved from drowning, had nursed him when ill; of George Harris,⁵ who was alive and well when he left America; of Eliza,⁶ who died some time ago, of St Clair,⁷ who had been converted, and after setting his slaves free, had gone to Indiana; and of Legree,⁸ whose real name was Bryce Lytton, who so beat him that he has not been able to raise his hands to his head nor wash himself. Regarding this man, Mr. Henson's brother⁹ stated he had lived like a hogg and died like a dog. Mr. Henson, before resuming his seat, sang a negro hymn, the audience joining in the chorus. Hearty votes of thanks were awarded to Mr. Henson and the Chairman before the audience dispersed.



Figure 52 Josiah Henson and John Lobb, by Bradshaw & Godart, London, c.1876. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

Notes

1. He is referring to Josiah Henson (1789–1883), a self-liberated activist and social justice campaigner born in Maryland and claimed by white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) as the inspiration for the character of her title protagonist, Tom, in her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). See the 'Josiah Henson' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
2. John Bird Sumner (1780–1862).
3. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
4. Eva is the name of a white female child character in Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
5. George Harris is the name of a self-liberated male character in Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
6. Eliza is the name of a self-liberated mother in Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
7. St. Clair is the name of a white male adult character in Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
8. Samuel Legree is the name of a white male enslaver, persecutor, and torturer in Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
9. The research into Henson's brother's biography and his life in the UK is ongoing. Jared Brock writes, 'Henson used the publication of Stowe's books to agitate for change in the United States. He re-published his memoir and used the funds to purchase his brother's freedom.' See Brock, 'The Story of Josiah Henson, the Real Inspiration for "Uncle Tom's Cabin"', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 16 May 2018. Available online: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/story-josiah-henson-real-inspiration-uncle-toms-cabin-180969094/>

JOSIAH? HUGHES

(c. 1815–1818–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

REVEREND J. HUGHES, whose first name may have been Josiah, experienced enslavement for forty-three years in Baltimore, Maryland. Varying newspaper reports note that he secured his liberation from enslavement sometime between 1858 and 1860, first travelling to Canada and then on to Britain. He lectured against enslavement, the Confederacy, the cultivation of cotton in the South, British greed for enslaved produce, and temperance. He often sang antislavery melodies during these lectures and exhibited weapons of torture. One newspaper report alludes to donations being collected to support Hughes' intention to open a temperance hotel in Belfast. The date and circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce Hughes' speech given in Bedford, England, in 1864.



Figure 53 High Street, Bedford, England, c.1891. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Further Reading

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The Hamilton Advertiser, 15 February 1862, p.2.

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Anon., 'The American War', *Bedfordshire Mercury*, Bedford, Bedfordshire, England, 21 May 1864, p.4.

A VERY INTERESTING LECTURE was delivered on the above subject on Wednesday evening, at the castle rooms, by the Rev. J. Hughes, a gentleman of colour. Mr. Usher was called to the chair, and, after a few remarks, introduced the lecturer to the audience. As Mr. Hughes was a slave for 43 years in the state of Maryland, he gave some valuable information with reference to the diabolical customs of the slaveholders by whom he had been surrounded. He detailed the manner of his clever escape from the custody of his owner, and stated that ten years had elapsed since he last saw that gentleman. Mr. Hughes gave instances of the laws concerning slavery in the various slave states and challenged any person to deny his statements. He also drew a comparison between the North and South with reference to their efforts for the improvement of negroes – not one school being erected by the North; even the head lawyer¹ in the city of Boston being a coloured man. Mr. Hughes briefly explained the mode of growing cotton, – 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. He expressed his warmest sympathy with the government of Abraham Lincoln,² and his firm faith in the triumph of the Federal cause. With reference to the war, he strongly denounced the *Times* newspaper as untruthful, and the *Telegraph* was nearly as bad as the *New York Times* – the audience showing their approbation by loud cheering. If the Lord Mayor had known as much about the Messrs. Mason and Slidell³ as he himself, he felt assured that his lordship would not have entertained those disreputable persons as he had done (cheers). We regret that our space will not allow a more lengthy notice of the lecture, which was listened to by a highly respectable audience. An invitation to discuss any point that had arisen was not accepted, although several sympathisers of the Confederacy were present. At the conclusion of the lecture, Mr. Hughes exhibited a beautiful table, made by a slave boy with a penknife. – a vote of thanks to the lecturer was moved by Mr. Hill, and seconded by Dr. Coombs, and carried with applause.

Notes

1. Hughes is very likely referring to Robert Morris (1823–1882), a Black radical antislavery campaigner and a renowned and pioneering lawyer who had a distinguished career in the

city of Boston. For an in-depth examination into Morris' biography and activism, see Laurel Davis and Mary Sarah Bilder, 'The Library of Robert Morris, Antebellum Civil Rights Lawyer and Activist'. *Law Library Journal*, 111.4 (2019): pp.461–508. Available online: https://www.aallnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/01_LLJ_111n4_davis_bilder.pdf

2. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
3. He is referring to white US confederate supporters, James Murray Mason (1798–1871) and John Slidell (1793–1871). On 8 November 1861, in the first year of the Civil War, the US Navy forcibly removed Mason and Slidell from a British ship and thereby sparked a diplomatic controversy between both nations. See Francis M. Carroll, 'The American Civil War and British Intervention: The Threat of Anglo-American Conflict', *Canadian Journal of History*, 47.1 (2012): pp.87–116.

EDWARD IRVING

(DATES UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

EDWARD IRVING EXPERIENCED enslavement in New Orleans. He secured his self-liberation and travelled to the British Isles to campaign against enslavement and the Confederate States of America, an alliance of eleven southern states that sought to uphold and expand the institution of enslavement across the US during the US Civil War (1861–1865). Lambasting British audiences for their dependency on cotton produced by enslaved people working on labour camps, he urged them to support the Union, a coalition of largely northern states that fought the Confederacy, and to reject all fellowship with any pro-Confederate supporters in Britain who were trying to stir up support for the South. During his speeches in the British Isles, he recounted the

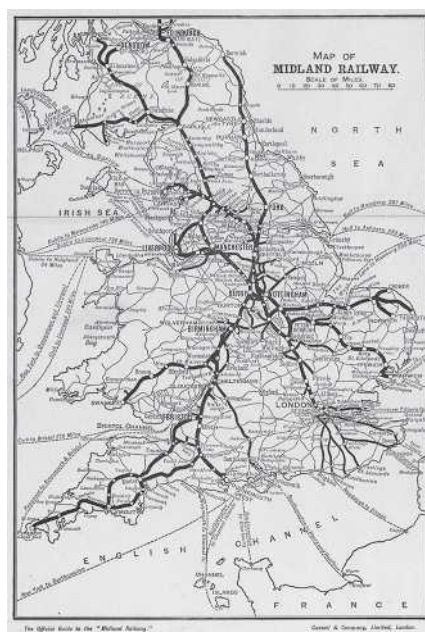


Figure 54 Map of Midland Railway, 1896. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

brutal trials he endured in order to be legally free of his white enslaver: he suffered from torture and in particular from attacks by bloodhounds (dogs owned by enslavers that were raised to hunt freedom seekers) who briefly caught up with him, tore his flesh, and left him with numerous scars. After fighting back, his teeth were kicked out by a white enslaver's horse until he managed to hide and secure his self-liberation via the swamps of Louisiana. The date and circumstances of Irving's life and death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce Edward Irving's speech he gave in Cheltenham, England, in 1864.

Further Reading

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Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery by an Escaped Slave', *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 22 October 1864, p.4.

Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery by an Escaped Slave', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 25 October 1864, p.2.

Anon., 'Slavery and the American War', *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 15 April 1865, p.4.

Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery', *Coventry Herald*, 2 June 1865, p.2.

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Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery by an Escaped Slave', *The Cheltenham Chronicle*, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England, 25 October 1864, p.2.

ON MONDAY NIGHT, Edward Irving, an escaped slave of New Orleans, who has been bought and sold three times, and branded on each occasion with a red-hot iron, gave a lecture in the Working Man's Institute 'On the War in America¹ and its Wisdom amongst the Cotton Merchants of England.' Irving is a short, middle-aged man, with some white blood. He is going through England lecturing on the war, with the view of arousing sympathy for the North in connection with the abolition of slavery. He seems to be self-educated. His pronunciation and grammar are imperfect, and his voice is unimpressive, but his earnestness is great, and his illustrations forcible, though homely. He intends staying here some weeks. Mr. J. Sessions had promised to take the chair on Monday night, if he could be present, but he was engaged, and the meeting was conducted without a chairman. The lecturer remarked that the real secret of England's sympathy with the Southern States was found in the cotton trade. But it was wrong to pray for peace until the foundation-stone of liberty and right had been laid. The slaves were made to earn that which educated the sons and daughters of the slaveholders, which supported the Copperheads² and their tribe, and which had enabled seven and a half millions of Confederates to carry the sway in the Government. England, blinded by the distress of her operatives, had forgotten the principles of Wilberforce³ – principles for which she had sacrificed so much, and was encouraging theft in buying that which was the result of a dishonest system. But he could say that out of every score persons in England nineteen were against the Confederates (applause). And England was wise in holding herself neutral in this question. The blacks in England and Canada blessed and trusted Lincoln,⁴ for they felt that he was their friend (applause). Long had the Northern States wished to get an anti-slavery President, and now they had got one, and the negroes rejoiced. Referring to the results of the war, the speaker said that already hundreds of thousands of slaves had been liberated, and Butler⁵ in New Orleans, the much maligned Butler, had set every slave free in that city, and ploughed up the market place where he (the speaker) had been three times sold (cheers). Another blessing of the war was that the slaveholder had now no time to torture his slaves. People said that the slave was as well treated in the South as in the North, but did any one ever hear of a black man escaping from the North into the South? He could tell them what he had suffered in his heart and on his back –

things that would cause an Englishman's or Scotchman's blood to boil, and would make an Irishman jump out of his skin (laughter). A further blessing of the war was that Abraham Lincoln had preached the funeral sermon of the accursed Fugitive Slave Law.⁶ With reference to England, the lecturer remarked that the Southerners would succumb at once were it not for the gold of rich English sympathisers, and he blamed the cotton manufacturer for not looking to free countries for his supply. On Tuesday night Mr. Irving narrated his own perilous escape from slavery; told how he hid for days in the swamps; his upper teeth were kicked out by the hoofs of the slaveholder's horse; how he was lashed, and bitten by the bloodhounds.

Notes

1. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
2. 'Copperheads' was the popular description of the white US Peace Democrats, a subgroup in the Democratic party, who were against the Civil War and in support of an immediate peace settlement with the Confederate rebel forces.
3. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
4. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
5. Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818–1893).
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: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp

JOHN ANDREW JACKSON

(c.1825–c.1899)

JULIA JACKSON

(c.1832–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

JOHN ANDREW JACKSON experienced enslavement in South Carolina. He secured his self-liberation and went on to become a leading abolitionist, author, orator, and community activist. After witnessing horrendous cruelty and experiencing the separation from his wife, Louisa, and their child, Jackson secured his self-liberation in 1846 by travelling on horseback to Charleston. He stowed away on a ship and eventually arrived in Massachusetts. He received aid from Harriet Beecher Stowe, the white US author of the infamous antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in 1852, and from abolitionists working on the Underground Railroad who helped him settle in Canada after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. He married his second wife Julia Jackson, another freedom fighter who had secured her self-liberation from North Carolina.

The Jacksons travelled to the British Isles in 1856. John Andrew and Julia Jackson lectured across the country with the help of white British abolitionist campaigner Julia Griffiths.¹ In their speeches, both Jacksons focused on the horrific barbarities they had personally experienced or witnessed and on their self-liberation, and during the US Civil War (1861–1865) they encouraged British audiences to support the northern Union cause instead of the coalition of southern states, the Confederacy, that sought to uphold US enslavement. They also solicited donations to purchase the legal freedom of John Andrew Jackson's father, and his sister's children, after his sister was brutally murdered by a white enslaver. In the 1861 England and Wales Census, both John Andrew Jackson and Julia Jackson were living as lodgers with the Hutching family in London. Julia Jackson is recorded as a 'ladies maid'. The following year, in 1862, Jackson wrote his autobiography, *The Experience of a Slave in South Carolina*, printed in London, and distributed his narrative at the end of antislavery meetings. A year later he published a discourse detailing the discrimination and paternalist treatment he experienced at the hands of the infamous white London-based preacher Charles H. Spurgeon. Both John Andrew and Julia Jackson had been members of Spurgeon's congregation, but Spurgeon previously agreed then later reneged on his promise to help Jackson free

his enslaved family. After the US Civil War, Jackson returned to the United States and continued to lecture on the legacies of enslavement, raising donations for Black schools and churches.

Here we reproduce a speech that both Jacksons gave in Gravesend, England, in 1860.

[1867] circa 1867



JOHN ANDREW JACKSON,
 A colored teacher, who has labored some months under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau, in the work of education among the blacks of the South, will speak
AT *On Board the S.S. "Alliance" Jan'y 5th*
6th & 7th Laying in the Salem Harbor **EVENING,** *At 7.30 P.M.*
 he is endeavoring to secure funds for the erection of a school house in Darlington, South Carolina.
 There will be Singing on the occasion.
 (Mr. Jackson was a resident of Salem in 1849-50, and was obliged to flee here on account of the Slave law.)
 A friend of the Freedmen will occupy the chair.
ADMISSION 25 CENTS.
 Lecture will commence at *10.30 am* **7 1-2 o'clock.**
R.M.

Figure 55 Handbill for a lecture by John Andrew Jackson. (American Antiquarian Society.)

Note

1. Julia Griffiths Crofts (1811–1895).

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Anon., 'Lecture By A Fugitive Slave', *The Gravesend Reporter*,
Gravesend, Kent, England, 1 September 1860, p.4.

ON MONDAY EVENING, a lecture, descriptive of the horrors of slavery in the United States, was given in the Town Hall by John Andrew Jackson, a fugitive slave, who has been making a tour through Great Britain, giving lectures in order to raise a sum to purchase his father and the two children of a murdered sister from slavery. The Rev. E. S. Pryce took the chair. Mr. Jackson is a man of powerful natural eloquence, though speaking in the usual dialect of the coloured population, and his 'photographic' descriptions of the scenes he had witnessed were most heart-rending; stripes and blows he himself had had innumerable. Slave owners he described as very demons. He escaped on a pony which had been ordered to be shot and which he had obtained from a slave on another estate; this he kept on the swamp and having made his escape, proceeded to Charleston, where he found a vessel on the eve of sailing for Boston, and on which after some difficulty he succeeded in hiding himself, having before going on board procured seven loaves and a bottle of water, which he secreted under a large cloak which he had also purchased. His supply of water, though used sparingly, became exhausted, and suffering much from thirst he was compelled to call for water – his voice coming from such an unlikely place startling both passengers and captain. He was taken out and beseeching the captain to aid him, he was landed near Boston, and he was then enabled to reach British Territory and eventually England. He married in the free states. Mrs. Jackson¹ addressed the audience after her husband had concluded. She speaks English very well, somewhat in a peculiar American tone, but had the advantage of being brought up in the house and had been a lady's maid. She expressed herself very grateful for the sympathy shown in behalf of her husband and felt very anxious to get funds to free his father and the two children. She said that the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon had received her husband into the church and was kind enough to manage their affairs. The money received at these lectures was always forwarded to him to be put by for the purpose intended.

Note

1. Julia Jackson.



Figure 56 Photograph of the Town Hall, Gravesend, England. (Author copy.)



Figure 57 21st Century Image of the Town Hall, Gravesend, Kent. (Author copy.)

WILLIAM ANDREW JACKSON

(c.1832–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

WILLIAM ANDREW JACKSON experienced enslavement north of Richmond, in Hanover County, Virginia. Here we reproduce the newspaper report of a speech he delivered in Bury, Lancashire, England, in 1863. Here he informs his British audiences that he ‘continued to live on the same plantation until he was thirteen.’ Shining a light on his enslaved ancestry, he painfully confides, ‘His father and mother were slaves, and his relations were slaves as far back as he was able to trace them.’ At thirteen, he was repeatedly ‘hired out’ for years at a time, and enslaved to a white US doctor in Richmond, a tobacco manufacturer, and to an official at the courthouse, where he bravely and clandestinely taught himself to read and write. Among the many experiences of his life as lived in enslavement, Jackson confirms that he held the position of ‘coachman’ to white US enslaver and Confederate President, Jefferson Davis.¹ Finally, Jackson secured his self-liberation from enslavement: he wrote himself a passport, only using it ten miles outside of Richmond where he was not recognised as Davis’ coachman, and relied on the secret, powerful, and covert intelligence network among enslaved people who gave him directions north and knowledge of how to avoid Confederate picket lines. He was helped by agents of the Underground Railroad and eventually made it to the Union Army regiments encamped in Fredericksburg, Virginia, where a white US military general informed him that ‘he was free for ever.’

Following his self-emancipation, Jackson recalls that, ‘Mr. Harper, the publisher of an illustrated paper called “Harper’s Weekly” requested ‘his photograph’ with the result that ‘the photograph was taken.’² On 7 June 1862, *Harper’s Weekly* did indeed publish a portrait of Jackson. Revealingly, his picture accompanied an article an unnamed reporter wrote on Jackson in which they refer to him as an ‘ex-coachman of Jeff Davis, who recently entered our lines at Fredericksburg’ and as ‘an extremely intelligent man’ who ‘reads and writes’ and ‘converses in a manner which shows he has been used to good society.’³ Seemingly basing their statements on an interview this unnamed journalist personally held with Jackson himself, they inform their readers, ‘He [Jackson] says that the negroes at Richmond and throughout the South have long foreseen the present state of things, and look anxiously for the coming of the Union armies.’ ‘He says that the rebels dare not trust the negroes with arms; and as to relying upon their

fidelity, they are well aware that every negro at the South prays earnestly for the success of the Union armies', the author further confirms. According to Jackson's testimony as recorded by this journalist, 'He adds that notwithstanding the care taken by the slave-owners to conceal the news from the negroes, and to deceive them as to the purposes of the Northern men, they are generally well acquainted with the course of events.'⁴ This unnamed reporter also provides further information on Jackson's biography by summarising his early life as follows: 'He is or was owned in Richmond, but was hired out by the year by his owner. For some years, he was a messenger in one of the courts; he drove a hack for a couple of years, and latterly, as we said, he drove the rebel President. He has a wife and three children, all slaves, in Richmond.'

Jackson migrated north, where the white US showman and entertainer P. T. Barnum tried to 'engage him' but Jackson – presumably knowing Barnum's reputation for horrific exploitation – point blank refused to work with him. He travelled to Britain and worked closely with white abolitionist and politician George Thompson for over a year and returned to the US in 1863 to continue lecturing against the Confederacy.

As of our writing, research into the many lives of William Andrew Jackson and his 'wife and three children' in enslavement and liberation is ongoing.

Notes

1. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889) was a white US enslaver and president of the Confederacy, the southern enslaving states that had risen in opposition to the northern free states during the Civil War.
2. Fletcher Harper (1806–1877) was a white US publisher and founder of *Harper's Weekly*, *A Journal of Civilization*, a magazine dedicated to politics and printed in New York City between 1857–1916.
3. This article is available online at: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/june/jefferson-davis-coachman.htm>
4. Ibid.

Further Reading

Primary

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Secondary

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Figure 58 William Andrew Jackson, c.1862. (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.)

Anon., 'Anti-Slavery Meeting At the Bury Athenaeum: Address of Mr. Andrew Jackson, Late Coachman to Mr. Jefferson Davis', *The Bury Times*, Bury, Lancashire, England, 21 February 1863, p.2.

MR. WILLIAM ANDREW JACKSON, a fugitive slave, and formerly coachman to Mr. Jefferson Davis,¹ the President of the Confederate States, was called upon to support the resolution, and was received with cheers. After speaking of the ability with which the motion had been moved and seconded, he said he was one of the oppressed race. Ten months ago he was a slave in the city of Richmond. He thought it would be well to give a little of his own history, and thus lay a good foundation to build upon. He was born 37 miles from Richmond, and continued to live on the same plantation until he was thirteen years of age. He had made the best use of his time in trying to learn common sense. – (Hear, hear.) The first thing his mother taught him after sucking at the breast was to work. His father and mother were slaves, and his relations were slaves as far back as he was able to trace them. His mother worked on the farm out of doors, and at night when she came home she could generally find something for the children to do till eleven o'clock. They all had tasks to do. Each had his own work to do. There were four children, and there were five potatoes regularly put in the fire to roast, and the one that had his work done first got the extra potato. – (Laughter.) William generally got the extra potato, but if they supposed that that was because he was a great eater they were mistaken, for his only object was to keep ahead of the others with his work. He begun working at the farm by attending to the cows and sheep; sometimes he had to pick apples, and work in the garden. Another post which he occupied was to go with the children to the school, and one day while engaged in this duty he proposed to a little miss that he would very much like to learn his A, B, C. He was at that time eleven years of age, and she was ten. She told him she had heard mamma say that it was against the law to teach black people to read. He told her that if she would teach him he would not let it be known, and on that condition she consented. Having learned the letters he went on to the a, b, ab. His teacher grew up and was married, and he devoted as much time to learning as he could, and was not tired yet. He was not very old yet, for he was only born in 1832.² The husband of the young lady was a fast slaveholder, for they called a person a 'fast' man when he drank whisky, smoked cigars, and went to horse races. These were too many things for a man to do and remain good. He (Mr. Jackson) did not do

anything of that kind, and he was sure that he was no worse for it, for he enjoyed very good health. His master got into debt, and his property had to be sold. He (Mr. Jackson) had been sold twice; some of the other children had to be sold thirteen years ago, and he had never seen them since. Last year but one he saw his mother, and she asked him if he knew anything of the other children, but he could only answer her with a low voice, saying that he had not heard of them. His mother cried, for although it was thirteen years since she saw them they were still dear to her, for she had as much feeling as other mothers could have under similar circumstances. After he was sold, he was hired out by the year, which was very commonly the case in Virginia, and he had not lived with the master who owned him for many years. Mr. Jefferson Davis hired him from Mr. Geo. W. H. Tyler, of Richmond. During four years he was employed in the coachhouse, and his master received £50 a year, and had all expenses paid. Mr. Jefferson Davis engaged to return him on the 25th of last December, but he (Mr. Jackson) was in London on that day. – (Laughter.) – He thought he would behave honourably to Mr. Davis, so he sent him a letter five weeks before the time when his service was to expire, telling him where he was. – (Renewed laughter.) The letter had reached him, for he had seen an account of it in an anti-slavery paper. He (Mr. Jackson) was a cab driver during two years, and he was also employed for a similar period at a tobacco factory. He was with Dr. John Dow, grand secretary of the Masons' lodge, one year, and for some time he was employed as a messenger, having to summon the common council men of the city, and the different committee men, and had generally plenty of work to do, but he had not as much to complain about as many persons had who were in slavery. It grieved him often to see his countrymen beaten until the blood came, and although he had not to suffer as much as the others, yet he thought freedom was the right of every one, and he preferred having it if he could get it, for he held the opinion that he had as much right to freedom as Mr. Jefferson Davis. – (Laughter.) He believed that he had been as well treated as any slave in America, for he had only been whipped twice, once for burning his shoes, and another for letting the horse run away with the buggy, when he was so young that he was overjoyed to see the horse running away. He had lived amongst the best society in the South, but knowing that he was a slave, and liable to be sold, he preferred having liberty if he could obtain it. He lived with Mr. Jefferson Davis nine months and a half. During the first five months Mr. Davis hired him by the month, and then he hired him for twelve months, and the time was to expire at Christmas last. Mr. Davis gave a bond to Mr. George W. H. Tyler, but it was only for half as much as it would have been if Mr. Breckenridge³ had been elected president instead of Mr. Lincoln,⁴ for this caused the price of slaves to fall so much that he (Mr. Jackson) was only valued at 800 dollars. The 27th of April last year was on the Sunday, and on that day he made his escape from slavery. He was accustomed to attend the Court House, and it was a rule with him to make use of his spare time in learning to write. It was usual for some slaves to be furnished with a monthly pass, and he (Mr. Jackson) had been furnished with a monthly pass for the last fifteen years. He often took out his pass and tried to copy it, so that he might be able to make a pass similar to the one in his possession, and having succeeded in what he thought was a decent pass, he decided to go from Richmond to John Joseph Anderson, who was a member of the common council when he was a messenger there. He knew that the poor whites in the Southern States of America would track the slave if they had the power, but he also knew

that they were very badly educated, and some of them had not half the sense of the negroes. – (Laughter and Cheers.) He believed he was able to write his pass in such a manner that these men would not be able to detect it, and having made it all ready he put it in his shoe – a curious place to put a pass in. He did not eat much breakfast that morning, and when asked why he ate so little, he said he did not feel very well, and he thought he would go home. He asked a man to attend to the stable for him, saying that he did not think that he should return that night. The fact was he did not intend to return that night, or on Monday night either. The distance from Richmond to Fredericksburg was only 62 miles. The ‘underground railway’⁵ had been shortened very much since President Lincoln’s election, for formerly it was 1,800 or 2,000 miles from Richmond, but now it was only 62, and sometimes the ‘underground railway’ was so much shortened that it was not more than five miles. When he left Richmond it was in the daylight, for ‘if any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light.’⁶ He had read of many good things being done on the Sabbath day, and he thought that one of the best things he ever did in his life was to escape from slavery. He prayed that God would take care of him, and he believed that he did so, for there were persons on his right hand and on his left who would be glad to have caught him, but God had enabled him to spy his enemies at a distance. He took a walk from Richmond to Fredericksburg, but he had no luggage to carry, for he took no provisions with him, but he was enabled to get water and food from slaves as he passed along, who also gave him instructions how to escape the pickets. On the Sunday after he left Richmond he arrived at Fredericksburg, and when he had been there about two hours he went on the Rappahannock, where Burnside⁷ made the blunder. When he got to the river he watched the signs of the times, to see whether it would be safe to make a venture, and he soon let people know he was from the land of Dixey. He told the Federals who he was, and who he had been working for, and when he mentioned Jefferson Davis⁸ he was immediately taken to General McDowell,⁹ with whom he had a conversation. The General asked him if he understood anything about maps, and he told him that he had seen the lawyers have maps in Richmond, and when they left the court he used to examine them. He pointed out to the general the roads leading in and out of Richmond. He remained there till the following Tuesday, and when the general had got all the information from him he could, he told him he was free for ever. The general asked him if he would like to see Washington, and he told him he would. He asked him if he would like to see President Lincoln,¹⁰ and he told him he had seen the other president, and he would not like to see them all. – (Laughter and cheers.) He stayed two weeks at Washington, and then he was sent on to New York, where he saw different newspaper editors, and amongst the rest Mr. Harper,¹¹ the publisher of an illustrated paper called ‘Harper’s Weekly.’¹² Mr. Harper wanted his photograph, but he told him that it would make a bad-looking picture, but he insisted upon having it, so the photograph was taken, and Mr. Harper gave him a guinea for it, which he thought was a good price for his likeness.¹³ – (Laughter.) He remained in the Northern States five months before he started for England, and during that time he saw many things which he did not like to see. Amongst other things, he observed an omnibus with a notice intimating that coloured people were not to ride in it. These omnibuses belonged to the democratic people – the pro-slavery party – and he asked how long this had been going on, and was told that it had existed for some time, but the prejudice was now fast dying away. With respect to the

railway cars in the North, he found that coloured people could go into any car which they liked, and he (Mr. Jackson) never found any difficulty in travelling in the Northern States, for if he paid first-class fare he rode in a first-class carriage. It was not usual in America as it was in England to have first, second, and third-class carriages, for he only knew of two lines having first and second-class carriages, one of which was the Fall River and the other the Massachusetts line. Formerly coloured persons were not allowed to go to first-class hotels, but now, since the South had lost its power, they could go to first-class hotels same as other people. The children of coloured people could now go to the same schools as the children of white people, with the exception of Providence, in Rhode Island, and it was thought that if the war went on much longer the exclusion would be removed, and there would be no distinction made. Since the South lost its influence in the North there had been a very rapid change made in the treatment of the negro. When he left Richmond on the 27th April last, provisions were selling at a very high rate; sugar was 6s. a pound, butter 6s. 6d., beef 1s. 6d., ham 5s., and coffee 21s. per pound. Tea was from 20 to 25 dollars a pound, a sum equal to £4 or £5. Everything else was very dear. Salt was 4s. 6d. a pound. Poor people were suffering dreadfully for want of things which they had not the means to purchase; even the aristocracy were suffering, because they could not get the things they wanted. Jefferson Davis was living 25 per cent lower than he was used to do, not because he had not money to purchase things, but because they were not to be had. The slaves could eat corn bread, or a little fat bacon, and pork, but the ladies could not eat such things, and therefore they suffered. He proceeded to describe scenes that he had witnessed with his own eyes at the auction sales, where wives and husbands and children had been separated from each other. He had seen women whipped until the blood had come. Having been a slave twenty-nine years and six months he ought to know something of what slavery was. Every slaveowner did not whip his slaves to death, for if he did there would be fewer than there were. When a master wished to sell his slave he greased his face, in order that he might look well, and sell for more money; but the good treatment was not because the slave was loved, but for the love of the almighty dollar. There was no law against a slaveholder whipping his slave to death if he liked; but if he beat a horse in the same way he might be punished for it. According to law a slave was not permitted to be married. Another law was that the testimony of a free coloured man could not be received in a court of justice; so that if a man had a dark skin his word would not be taken. He thought that if he (Mr. Jackson) had as black a soul as many of the slaveholders he would feel it his duty to go on his knees before that audience, and pray for the forgiveness of his sins. – (Applause.) He had received a letter from a gentleman who had prayed for the Lord Mayor of London that he might be forgiven for having entertained Mr. Mason,¹⁴ the author of the fugitive slave law. In the Southern States they could not find a free school for the education of children. There were no bands of hope nor chapels for poor people. The Sabbath was spent in hunting, gambling, and drinking whisky, which showed that the poor whites needed education as well as the four millions of slaves. He entertained no fears about the consequences which might result from immediate emancipation. ‘This is the day of salvation.’ He would like them to be free to-day, even if they died to-morrow; for he would rather that the slaves should have liberty and die than that the four millions of slaves should be made into eight millions. If the slaves were set at liberty he had no doubt they would be quite willing to

work for wages, and they would be willing to work for small wages until they could get larger; and they would work all the harder when they knew they would receive wages for what they did. It was said by some people that the American struggle was not a slaveholding rebellion, but was entirely a tariff question. He had no doubt that it was a tariff question, but it was a tariff that could walk on two legs. – (Laughter.) If they would only read what Vice-President Stephens had to say upon the subject, they would find that the new constitution was to have slavery as the chief corner stone. Mr. Jackson proceeded to give a list of all the presidents who had held office in the United States, showing that previous to the election of Mr. Lincoln all were slaveholders with the exception of three, and all of them put together had not done as much in the cause of freedom as Mr. Lincoln. In the year 1700, slavery extended over 250,000 square miles, but in 1860 it extended over 851,000. In 1700, three years after the establishment of the Union, the slaves numbered three quarters of a million, and in 1860 they numbered 4,500,000. If it could be shown that the South had ever done anything for the removal of slavery, then the meeting would be justified in sympathising with the South during the present struggle. It was said that the South was striving for its independence, but it was only for the independence of the aristocracy. The fact was, the South was fighting to keep up slavery, and he never heard of any other object until he came to England. When John Brown¹⁵ was hung for the part which he took in the insurrection at Harper's Ferry,¹⁶ the slaves said that his spirit would walk about in Virginia until there was not a slave to be found. Referring to the last election of the president, he said the Southerners would have tarred and feathered a man if he had gone to poll for Abraham Lincoln. But notwithstanding all the opposition that was raised, Lincoln beat the three other candidates, and was carried into office by a larger majority than any other president ever had. Previous to that election the Democrats had been in power, and it was the election of Mr. Lincoln that turned those scoundrels out, and therefore it was enough to make them fight. When Lincoln went to Washington after his election he had to go in disguise, because arrangements had been made to mob him on the way; and when he got to the White House it was declared that he would not be permitted to remain there sixty days. He (Mr. Jackson) did not believe that Jefferson Davis would ever again be permitted to see Washington, unless he was taken there in irons. – (Cheers.) Mr. Lincoln had done everything which he possibly could for the removal of slavery since he came into office, and if he had attempted to do more he would have succeeded in doing less. Some people supposed that he ought to have proclaimed his emancipation order¹⁷ at first, and then he would have had the sympathy of England on his side; but what advantage would this have been to him if he had had America against him? The constitution of America required that twenty-four states should agree to abolish slavery; and therefore if the proceedings adopted had been in accordance with the constitution it could not have been expected that the slaves would now have been liberated; but now, by the course which he had taken, he had been enabled to issue the glorious proclamation of liberty. – (Loud cheers.) He had a right to issue that proclamation, and he (Mr. Jackson) would tell the meeting why he had the power to do this in the rebel states, and not in the loyal states. The seceding states had something to do with the framing of the constitution, by which they were enabled to hold in bondage nearly four millions of slaves as their property. They were sworn to support the constitution, and therefore they had no right to secede. If they seceded, Mr. Lincoln had

then the right to tell them that he possessed the legal power to confiscate their property; and no man could dispute the fact that he had a perfect right to say to the two legged tariff – ‘Now, tariff, you use your legs and walk.’ He had done so, and when he (Mr. Jackson) left New York there were about 250,000 who had obtained their freedom. Others had got their freedom in the same way that he got his, and persons were obtaining their freedom every day. The great body of the slaves were only waiting for the signs of the times, and they were sure to obtain their freedom. The freedom of the district of Columbia had been declared, and at Baltimore slave-pens were no longer to be found, for there was not a slave-holder in the district. So far as he was concerned he would let the South have as many kings and queens as they liked, only he would make it a condition that they should set their slaves free first. Mr. Lincoln would not accept Western Virginia into the Union until they agreed that all children born in 1861 and afterwards should be free. Referring to the condition of the coloured population in the Northern States, he said that they could vote at the election of officers in every state except New York, and they could do so in New York if they could show that they were worth £50. There were persons in the North who did not like coloured men, but he had only been insulted twice there, and it was by Irishmen who were afraid that if the slaves obtained their freedom they would do the work which

JEFF. DAVIS'S COACHMAN.

Mr. WILLIAM A. JACKSON,
 Who reached this City a few days ago, will give his experience while in the services of the notorious Rebel, on

Wednesday Evening, May 28
AT THE
ZION BAPTIST CHURCH,
Sullivan-Street, between Prince and Houston Sts.

THE LECTURE WILL COMMENCE AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.
Mr. ROBERT HAMILTON has consented to assist in the
Exercises by Singing Anti-Slavery Songs.

ADMITTANCE - - - - 10 Cents.

Figure 59 Handbill for a lecture by William Andrew Jackson, New York, 1862. (Boston Athenaeum.)

the Irish had been accustomed to do. This was a great mistake, for if the slaves were to be set free they would never want to come across the Potomac, for they never came North, except to escape from slavery. He expressed his satisfaction that according to a statement in the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, the republic of Liberia had been acknowledged.¹⁸ He contended that it was the duty of all persons who wished to see slavery removed to express their sympathy with the movement now going on for the emancipation of the negro race; for if they kept back their sympathy till the war was over, their sympathy would then be of no value, for it would not be needed. He had no doubt that the great meeting which had been held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, had exercised a great influence on the elections in America. The proclamation met his view exactly, both in what it did and what it omitted to do. – After other observations he remarked that if there was any person in the room willing to discuss the question with him, he would gladly stay till three o'clock in the morning, if the people would remain so long.

On the conclusion of his address, which occupied an hour and forty minutes, Mr. Jackson was greeted with tremendous cheers, which continued for some time. – The motion on being put to the meeting was carried unanimously, and a vote of thanks to the chairman terminated the proceedings.

Notes

1. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889).
2. In this speech, Jackson notes 1832 as his birth year, which conflicts with some biographical information we have on record. There are numerous problems generated by the white persecutory violence repeatedly committed against enslaved people in the white supremacist records and according to which they were denied any and all knowledge of their birth date. In this book, we honour Jackson's testimony regarding his birth date and dismiss all other records.
3. John C. Breckinridge (1821–1875) was a white US confederate supporter and Democratic politician. He was elected as Vice-President from 1857–1861.
4. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
5. 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).
6. John 11:9.
7. He is referring to the Battle of Fredericksburg which took place in December 1862 in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in the second year of the US Civil War. During this conflict, white US Union General Ambrose E. Burnside's attempts to cross the Rappahannock River met with disastrous consequences by resulting in catastrophic Union casualties. See Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
8. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889).
9. Irvin McDowell (1818–1885) was a white US Union Army general.
10. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
11. Fletcher Harper (1806–1877).
12. See previous note.
13. William Andrew Jackson's photograph appeared in the 7 June 1862 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, available online at: <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/june/william-jackson.htm>

14. James Murray Mason (1798–1871).
15. 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).
16. John Brown (1800–1859).
17. 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>
18. For further information on US President Abraham Lincoln's formal recognition of Liberia in 1862, see Michael Vorenberg, 'Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization'. *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 14.2 (Summer 1993): pp.22–45; Alexander Crummell, *The Relations and Duties of Free Colored Men in America to Africa: A Letter to Charles B. Dunbar, M.D., Esq., of New York City* (Hartford CT: Case, Lockwood and Company, 1861).

R. M. JOHNSON

(DATES UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

A MAN NAMED JOHNSON whose first name we do not currently know experienced enslavement in Kentucky. He was enslaved by a white US minister, James Fishback. His mother's tragic death was the catalyst for his self-liberation. He journeyed to freedom with a fellow unnamed freedom fighter; he travelled to Cincinnati by 'steamer', as he recounts in one lecture. He secured his liberation via the Underground Railroad and travelled to the British Isles in 1857, where he lectured on his experiences of enslavement and the white persecutory practices of southern religious institutions. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, between 1857–1861 and he became



Figure 60 Colchester, England, by Mary Benham, c.1874. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

a member of the Royal College of Surgeons shortly afterwards. He was known to Frederick Douglass and the white abolitionist Julia Griffiths Crofts: in April 1859, Crofts made reference to 'our colored friend JOHNSON' in a letter to *Douglass Monthly*, a periodical publication edited and printed in Rochester, New York, by the Douglass family, and noted how he had 'been working so hard at College in Edinburgh' despite having experienced a recent accident. Johnson contemplated travelling to Canada as a medical missionary, but he was still lecturing in Britain until at least the 1860s; this ambition may have been deferred as he was still hoping to leave Britain with his family, although there are few records about his wife or children. The full circumstances of Johnson's life and death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce a speech he delivered in Colchester, England, in 1865.

Further Reading

Primary

Anon., 'Slavery', *The Norfolk News*, Norfolk, England, 13 May 1865, p.2.

Drew, Benjamin, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: Or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Related by Themselves*. Boston MA: John P. Jewett and Company 1856.

Griffiths, Julia, 'Letters from the Old World, LXIV', *Douglass Monthly*, April 1859, p.57.

North Cheshire Herald, 7 March 1868, p.2.

Still, William, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records: With a Life of the Author*. Philadelphia PA: William Still, 1886.

The Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express, 20 March 1867, p.2.

Secondary

Blockson, Charles L., *The Underground Railroad*. New York: Berkeley Books, 1994.

Green, Jeffrey, *Black Americans in Victorian Britain*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Limited, 2018.



Anon., 'Lecture on American Slavery, by an Escaped Slave', *The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, Colchester, Essex, England, 27 January 1865, p.3.

MR. JOHNSON, AFTER expressing his gratification at the sympathy and interest shown in the cause he was about to advocate by the number and character of the audience before him, remarked that in all his travels in the United Kingdom for the last 7 years he had only met with one person who pronounced slavery innocent of the charges alleged against it, and that person stood in a relation to the system which made it difficult for him to speak otherwise – he had through the medium of a legacy been himself a slave owner. His object that evening would be to speak of slavery in its general, not its universal, effects; in its natural tendencies, not its unfailing results. There were the same natural differences among the enslaved as among the free: the house slave, associated with the family circle, was more civilised than the common field slave; and there were also those, as among the free, to whom nature seemed to have been partial. But the fact of there being exceptions did not determine the general character of the institution. Among the evils of slavery the first rank must be given to its moral influence. 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. The instinctive knowledge that his condition was itself a wrong vitiated all ideas of duty; and it was a natural thought that if the master might steal a man, it was of very little consequence for a slave to help himself to what he could belonging to his master. In his case, as under ordinary circumstances, force generally led to fraud. Idleness, again, was the slave's paradise – not so much because he was naturally idle, as the feeling that it did not pay him to work. He lacked the great motive to labour – the hope of reward. A slave's labour brought him no dignity; and if he had children it did not increase their comfort or improve their condition. The motive from which he worked was the whip; and working under the menace of the whip annihilated the better and nobler feelings of human nature. They were told that blows were not often inflicted: he wished it were so; but that did not affect the question: the argument was, not the suffering but the influence upon his character; not the endurance but the dread of the lash, and its being substituted for the higher motives of human exertion. A blow given to one slave was a wound in the soul to all who saw it; and the sufferer himself was either fired with a thirst for revenge or he was made more degraded and brutalised than before. Under this system the slave did as little as possible: he could speak to its

being so in his own case, but, from what he had done since he got out of slavery, he did not think it arose from laziness; and the friends who had assisted him in his education had never accused him of being lazy. (Applause.) He was never at a loss for a plan to get out of work; and in that respect he was but an example of the majority. The slave did as little as he could; but it did not follow that that little was done easily. The slightest labour was a burden to the man who had no motive for performing it. How tedious a task imposed by another! and imposed, as he might imagine, wrongfully. A slave never had done, and never would do, the work of a free man: he had not a free man's spirit or a free man's energy: he worked as a machine, and in the great majority of cases he made up his mind that it should be a labour-saving machine (Laughter.) They were told that the slave was freed from all care and sure of future support; that when he became old, instead of being banished to a workhouse, he was clothed, fed, and taken special care of by his master. That was poetry and fine talk which he had never seen in practice; but, admitting it to be true, there was nothing to be gained by violating the rights of nature. Had a slave no care who lived under the constant apprehension of the whip or of being sold from his wife and family? But, suppose him to have no care, what then? God created man to provide for his own future, and they could not free him from that without doing injury to his moral life. It was an attribute given to him for his own use, and not to be transferred to another. But if a slave's future was not haunted by spectres of poverty, it was not illuminated by the brightness of hope. And this brought him to another great evil of slavery – its social and domestic influence. By slavery the domestic relations were virtually poisoned, the most sacred duties of life violated, and the best affections outraged. Of the tender ties of home ordained by the Almighty equally for all men the slave was wantonly and cruelly deprived: he could not protect his wife or his daughters from insult; and there was bitterness in the very love of his children, for he could do nothing to improve their condition; he had no voice in their disposal; and they were generally sent where he could not reach them or know anything more of them, as was the case with his own brothers and sisters. But, suppose the parental ties could be thus separated without a pang, what a curse must slavery be, that could sink the human mother below the brute in affection for her offspring!

Mr. Johnson then related the history of his own family as illustrating the remarks he had made. His mother was a little Kafir girl, stolen from the coast of Africa, and taken to America as a slave. In the family she was sold and became a favourite with the owner's daughter, and on that daughter marrying she accompanied her, and she was advanced to the position of house-keeper. She married and had seven children, who as they grew up filled various positions in the household. Their mother had had some education herself, and knew the value of it for her children; but their mistress alone knew of their being instructed; their master, although a clergyman, would have objected, for he said the more a slave learned the more miserable he became himself, and the more miserable he made those around him – an admission which showed the cruelty of slavery; and that many masters were only cruel because the necessities of their position obliged them to be so: they could only keep their slaves in subjection by keeping them in ignorance. While their mistress lived they had great privileges and every possible kindness, but her death brought upon them the common lot of slaves; within six months at different and distant lands. Not more than 20 minutes' walk from their master's estate was a slave market, where every day human beings were offered for sale, from the old man of 60 to the babe. It was a place his mother always dreaded, and her

sleep had been made bitter by dreams of it; and there she took her last long leave of five of her children, for her own death occurred 8 months afterwards. The youngest son (the lecturer himself) was taken into the house, but the master's wife was very different to the former mistress, and he soon resolved to get away. It was one of the lessons his mother taught him: 'stop while mistress lives; but when she dies – break.' Most slaves escaped by way of the 'wilderness' as it was called – exposing themselves to snakes and alligators, and living for months on nuts and wild fruit; but he knew he could not endure the hardships of such a flight as that, and the plan he fixed upon was to travel as a coloured gentleman. It took him two years to save about £3, and to get secret instruction in reading and writing and the geography of his route to the Free States. At last he got to Frankfort, where he was kindly received by one of the managers of the 'Underground Railway,'¹ as those who favoured the escape of negroes were called, and by him sent on by steamer to Cincinnati, having got out of one peril on board by the habit his mother had taught him of looking straight at any person speaking to him, instead of cowering and dropping the eyelids, as was the ordinary custom with a slave, the remark being made to one who suspected he was a fugitive that 'he never saw a slave look like that.' At Cincinnati, although there was no Fugitive Slave Law,² he found a very strong prejudice against the coloured race, and having been mobbed out of one Institution in the North he soon made his way to Canada, where his case was generously taken up, and he was sent over to Scotland, where he had been educated; and he hoped ere many months were over to return to Canada, where he should endeavour, as a medical Missionary, to be of some service to his poor brethren, the fugitive slaves there but wherever he might go he should never to his dying day forget the kind friends he had met with in England and in Scotland. All honour to the nation that was doing so much to give to the world civil and religious liberty; all honour to the nation whose shores a slave had but to touch to become that moment free; and all honour to the nation which in the year 1838,³ according to the dictates of humanity, knocked the chains and fetters of slavery from 800,000 of their fellow creatures in the West Indies, and established in practice what other nations only recognised in theory – that all men were born free and entitled to liberty as an inalienable right⁴ (Applause.)

Notes

1. 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).
2. 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
3. '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' passed in Britain on 28 August 1833 and took effect from 1 August 1834. The full text is available online at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/6-7/98/enacted>
4. He is partially quoting from the 1776 US Declaration of Independence, a full transcription of which is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

EDMOND KELLEY

(1817–1894)

Biographical History

EDMOND KELLEY, AN African American religious leader, freedom fighter, author, orator, and social justice campaigner, experienced enslavement in Columbia, Tennessee. He secured his self-liberation from the southern to the northern states via the Underground Railroad and lived in New Bedford until the Civil War. In the 1850s, Kelley travelled to Britain for the purpose of raising the necessary funds to repay the final £200 he had borrowed in order to secure US\$3,500, the sum of money he had single-handedly raised and which made it possible for him to purchase the legal freedoms of Paralee Kelley, his wife, and their four children: Dolly Ophelia, Robert Edmond, William Dempsey, and Alfred Kelley. Like other freedom fighters on British soil who fought for the liberation of their family, Kelley distributed images of his family unit in a circular to encourage donations. While labouring in the UK, Kelley was not only working to secure this final instalment for the liberation of his family but ‘the passing of the fugitive slave law bill having¹ made it dangerous for him to return’, to the US, ‘he was advised to endeavour to raise the sum necessary to purchase himself’, and so he was working to secure the amount required for his legal freedom: ‘£166 13s 4d.’

Here we reproduce two speeches Kelley delivered in 1853 on this transatlantic anti-slavery lecturing tour during which he was working to raise the money for the ‘purchase of his own freedom’ so that he could go home to his family and continue his life’s work as a freedom fighter. In the first speech, Kelley spoke to Sunday School children ‘upon the question of slavery’. He also shared his autobiographical history by giving ‘a few particulars of himself, and the object of his coming to this country’. His speech made a powerful impression on his audiences as it was not only ‘listened to with much attention by the children’ but the ‘teachers made a collection’ to add to his fund for his liberty. In the second speech, Kelley spoke to an audience in a Baptist chapel. This time he tells his listeners that he had just succeeded in securing the ‘whole of his own purchase-money’, the ‘price of his own freedom’ which meant he was able to ‘return to his own country and to his family’. In his address he moved his audiences and inspired them to future acts of antislavery activism by sharing ‘a sad account of the wretched condition of the slaves in the southern states of America’.

In the post-war years he returned to live as a preacher and school educator in Virginia and Tennessee before spending his final years in Massachusetts.

Note

1. 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

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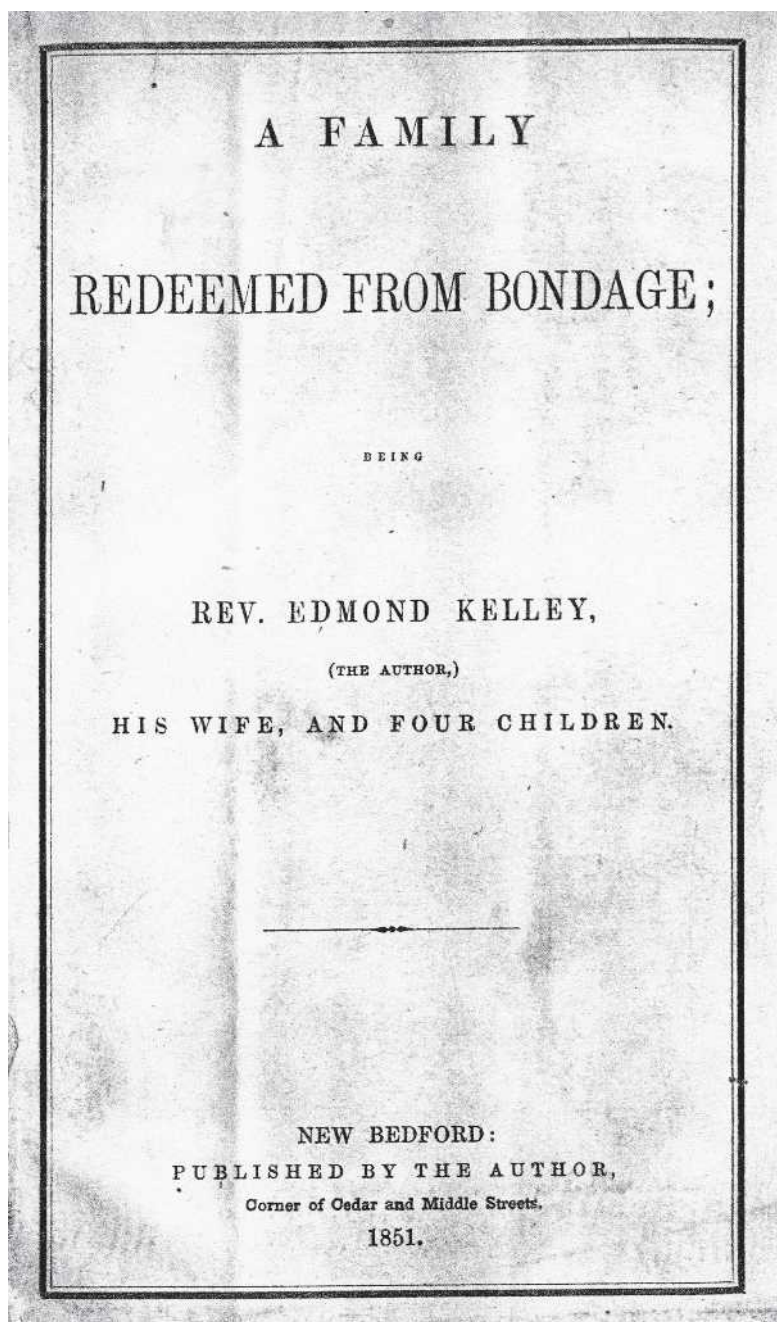


Figure 61 Title page from Edmond Kelley, *A Family Redeemed From Bondage; Being Rev. Edmond Kelley, (the Author,) His Wife, and Four Children*, New Bedford, 1851. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'Slavery', *Bristol Times*, Bristol, England, 26 February 1853, p.6.

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, the Rev. Edmond Kelley, formerly a slave in Columbia, addressed the children of King-street Sunday school upon the question of slavery. He afterwards gave a few particulars of himself, and the object of his coming to this country. It appeared that Mr. Kelley was ordained a minister of the gospel in October 1843, at which time he was, although a slave, chosen pastor of the coloured church in Columbia. Soon after this he married, and he has now a wife and four children. A year after his ordination, at the desire of the associated brethren, he entered upon missionary labours, going from place to place as opportunity offered among the down trodden African race. During this time, out of collections which he took up, he paid £2 a month as compensation to his owners for the liberty of thus labouring, and with the remainder supported himself and paid his travelling expenses. While thus engaged at Louisville, he received a communication from his owners informing him of their insolvency, and requesting him to remove to the State of Ohio to prevent his being taken and sold for debt. The reason was that he had offered to redeem himself for the sum of 800 dollars, which would be lost to them if he should get into the hands of their creditors. They designed, therefore, to settle matters with their creditors without any reference to him, and when, led by family ties and affection, he should return to Tennessee, they counted on retaining him still as their slave, or receiving ultimately the price of his ransom. He went to Ohio, and while there he received a letter stating that the creditors had bought a suit, and the court had ordered that he should be sold to pay the debt on the estate. Being thus transferred to his new owners, he employed an agent in Columbia to ascertain whether they would relinquish their claims on him for a reasonable sum. This they refused, assigning as a reason that his family was there, that he should return, and they would put him up to auction. All prospects of returning to Columbia as a free man being taken away, he then wrote to the owners of his wife and children to ascertain if they were willing to release them, and on what terms. Three years elapsed before he received any answer. At length they wrote to say he might have his wife and children for 2,800 dollars, if paid in 12 months, with all other expenses, amounting in all to 3,500 dollars. Several cases of kidnapping having occurred in Ohio State, he went to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Here he was the pastor of a coloured church for nearly three years, and during this time received the above letter from his owners. He immediately set about raising the money, and obtained in the course of twelve months 2,500 dollars. This

left £200 yet to be raised, which sum, as the time specified was about to expire, he was obliged to borrow from benevolent individuals who had already assisted him. The money having been paid and the deeds secured, his wife and children are now free and residing in New Bedford. The £200 which had been borrowed for the release of his wife has been collected. This was the only object of his visit to this country; but the passing of the fugitive law bill¹ having made it dangerous for him to return, he was advised to endeavour to raise the sum necessary to purchase himself, and which is said to be £166 13s. 4d. Mr. Kelly states, in a circular which he has issued: – ‘Did I not deem it my duty towards God to resume my labours amongst the oppressed in America, I should render such efforts unnecessary by at once placing myself beyond the reach of the fugitive slave law, but believing that a solemn obligation rests upon me to devote myself to the promotion of the spiritual and eternal interests of the colonial population in America; I earnestly and affectionately appeal to the kindness and liberality of those who are the friends of the down-trodden, to enable me to return under such circumstances as shall secure me against the above iniquitous enactment.’ The address of Mr. Kelly was listened to with much attention by the children, and at its close the teachers made a collection amongst themselves, the amount of which was handed to Mr. Kelly as a donation towards the purchase of his own freedom.

Note

1. 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.aspto



Anon., 'Lecture on American Slavery', *The Evening Freeman*,
Dublin, Ireland, 8 April 1853, p.4.

A LECTURE ON THE nature and influence of American slavery was delivered on Thursday evening in the Baptist Chapel, Abbey-street, by the Rev. E. Kelly, a man of colour, a minister of Baptist persuasion, and formerly a slave in the United States. The lecture was of a most interesting description, and, from the simple but very impressive and persuasive manner in which it was delivered, it appeared to produce great effect upon the numerous and highly respectable audience present.

The Rev. Mr. Kelly, who presents a highly intellectual and gentlemanly appearance, in the course of his address gave a short sketch of his own history. He stated that his father was an Irishman, but his mother being a slave all her children, according to the American law, became the property of the slaveholder who claimed her. When about sixteen years of age he was hired out to a schoolmaster, and being seized with a strong desire to learn, he induced some of the schoolboys by acts of kindness and small rewards to give him instruction, and so earnestly did he apply himself that at the end of twelve months he had learned to read and write. Having acquired a considerably amount of information he was engaged as a preacher by the Baptist body, of which he had become a member, and who paid, by way of compensation for his services, two pounds per month to the lady claiming him as her slave. After some time she became a bankrupt, and having received from her intimation of the fact, he proceeded to the northern states with the intention of remaining there until some arrangement could be effected with the creditors for his manumission. By his labours and strict economy he acquired nearly 500l, which, together with 200l advanced to him as a loan, he paid as a ransom for his wife and children. Eight hundred dollars, or 167l, was demanded as the price of his own freedom, and when he was preparing to make up this sum, the fugitive slave law came into operation, and he was compelled to fly to these countries. He has realised nearly the whole of his own purchase-money, which once made up, it is his intention to return to his own country and to his family. In the course of his address he gave, in feeling language, a sad account of the wretched condition of the slaves in the southern states of America. He referred to the first part of the third verse of the 18th chapter of Hebrews – 'Remember them that are in bond, as bound with them;¹' and went on to say that in this passage all Christians were called on to sympathise with and advocate the cause of all who were suffering in slavery. In order to do that it was necessary that they should be acquainted with the

condition of these slaves, and he proposed to give them some information respecting that class with which he was particularly identified, the slaves in the southern portion of the United States. Of the thirty-one states comprising the American union, sixteen were nominally free states, and in the remaining fifteen slavery was sanctioned by law. A large majority of the inhabitants of the union resided in the southern states, where slavery was prohibited. According to the last census there were in the southern or slave states, 300,000 slaveholders and 3,400,000 slaves, being nearly one-seventh of the entire population. – In open violation of the letter and spirit of the declaration of independence,² the right of the coloured race to be free was denied in the southern states, in which the practice and the declaration were as far asunder as the east from the west. – But that was not the only evil of which he had to complain, for there prevailed a wicked system of keeping the slave in absolute ignorance. A school had never been established in the southern states for the instruction of the slaves. Not only were they kept in barbarous ignorance, but their animal appetites and passions were cultivated and excited, so that they almost immediately became even more degraded than the beasts of the field. Having given a fearful account of the system of slave dealing, of a slave auction, and of the heartrending scenes he had witnessed on these occasions in the breaking of family ties, separating husband from wife, and children from parents, the reverend gentleman towards the conclusion of his lecture impressed upon all Christians the duty they owed humanity of assisting to effect the abolition of slavery. We understand that Rev. Mr. Kelly will deliver in a few days a second lecture on the same subject in some of the public buildings of the city.

Notes

1. Hebrews 13:3.
2. 'The Declaration of Independence'. Dated 4 July 1776, the original transcription is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

JOHN SELLA MARTIN

(1832–1876)

Biographical History

See also ‘John Sella Martin’ in *Narratives*.

INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED FOR his oratory and campaigns against US enslavement and the Confederacy, the coalition of southern states that seceded from the Union during the US Civil War (1861–1865), John Sella Martin experienced enslavement in North Carolina, Georgia, and New Orleans. He used false papers testifying to his status as a legally free person to secure his liberation from enslavement in New Orleans in 1856 to begin a new life in Chicago. He joined the ministry, settling in New York and then Boston to preach at the First Independent Baptist Church, also known as the ‘Abolition Church’ for its frequent antislavery meetings. He collaborated alongside the leading Black and white US abolitionists of the day including Harriet Jacobs, William C. Nell, Charles Lenox Remond, William Craft and Ellen Craft, as well as radical white abolitionist John Brown. He travelled to the British Isles several times throughout the 1860s to campaign against enslavement, speaking to vast audiences in England and Scotland. In a complete revocation of racial scientific theory – a white supremacist ideology developed by white persecutory scientists and proslavery defenders that erroneously and unforgivably claimed that people of African descent were biologically inferior – Martin repeatedly rejected such white supremacist claims and gave lectures championing the superiority and exceptionalism of African history and civilisation. In England, he also lectured against the Confederacy and challenged pro-Confederate sympathisers who were printing propaganda in Britain for the US southern cause, often speaking alongside the Union Emancipation Society in doing so. He also collected donations predominantly from working-class audiences to legally purchase his sister Caroline and her two children, Ada and Charles, from enslavement, and who eventually settled in Jamaica.

While living in London, he served as a pastor to a church in Bromley. He returned to Britain after the Civil War to fund-raise for the Freedmen’s Society, an organisation designed to offer help and support to recently liberated African Americans, and the American Missionary Association, an antislavery and religious organisation founded decades earlier in 1846. Throughout his life, he was a recognised orator, author, and poet, and he published his literary work *The Hero and the Slave* first in 1862 while subsequent editions were sold until 1870. He served as editor of the national newspaper the *New Era* in Washington DC and worked as an agent for the US Post Office.

Suffering from psychological difficulties for which he took laudanum to ease the emotional pain caused by 'his nerves', Martin tragically died from a suspected overdose in New Orleans, and his death was reported in the press as a suicide.

Here we reproduce John Sella Martin's speeches in London and Preston, both in 1863, Northampton in 1864, and Leicester in 1867, all in England.

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Anon., 'The Rev. Sella Martin's Welcome', *Daily News*,
London, England, 16 February 1863, p.3.

THE REV. SELLA MARTIN was received with great enthusiasm. Although weakened by protracted illness in America, he spoke with nearly all his old energy and fire, and with much of his natural humour. In speaking of the 'gains' of the year during his absence from England, he referred to the manner in which anti-slavery feeling in England had strengthened the hands of the anti-slavery and republican party in America. He showed that for eighteen months the North had tried to carry on the war under the old compromises of the constitution, by the appointment of democratic pro-slavery generals, who drove back the fugitive slaves and refusing the military aid of the negroes. But within the year just passed slavery has been abolished in the capital¹ of the nation, the negro States of Hayti and Liberia have been recognised, slavery has been excluded from those vast districts, equal to the whole of Europe, called the territories of the United States, an effectual treaty has been made with England for the suppression of the African slave trade, the great abolition proclamation has been issued, and is daily taking effect, negro regiments² have already been received into the United States services at Port Royal, and a bill³ has been favourably received in Congress for arming 150,000 more.

Notes

1. For further information on the history of legal emancipation in Washington DC, see Damani Davis, 'Slavery and Emancipation in the Nation's Capitol: Using Federal Records to Explore the Lives of African American Ancestors'. *Prologue Magazine*, 42.1 (2010), available online: <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/spring/dcsavery.html>
2. For further information on the experiences and histories of African American Civil War combat regiments, see Edwin S. Redkey, ed., *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African-American Soldiers in the Union Army, 1861–65* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Celeste-Marie Bernier and Andrew Taylor, *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family in the Walter O. Evans Collection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Deborah Willis, *The Black Civil War Soldier: A Visual History of Conflict and Citizenship* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).
3. For further information on this legislation, see John David Smith, 'The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky, 1863–1865'. *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 72.4 (1974): pp.364–390.



Anon., 'An Ex-Slave's Opinion of the War', *The Preston Chronicle*,
Preston, Lancashire, England, 5 September 1863, p.7.

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, a lecture was delivered in the Corn Exchange, by the Rev. Sella Martin, formerly an American slave, on the 'Treatment of the slaves in the South, and the negroes in the North.' There was not a very numerous attendance. Mr. Councillor Benson occupied the chair.

After a few remarks from the chairman on the horrors of the war now waging in America, and a brief allusion to the slavery question, he introduced.

The Rev. SELLA MARTIN, who said that he was sure all his hearers had heard enough of American slavery from persons who from time to time had come amongst them. It would be well, however, if they were made acquainted with all its gigantic endowments, and all its vices. Englishmen ought to be proud that they possessed such free institutions as they enjoyed. Whenever a slave puts his foot on English soil, he felt his liberty, no matter of what colour he may be, or whether he may have been born under an African or an Indian sun. Englishmen, he said, could not help being proud of this fact. They had heard much from the advocates of the South, but he took it for granted that those advocates had not yet been so successful as to blow sugar into their eyes, or cotton into their ears, and thus prevent them from seeing the horrors of slavery, and hearing the groans of the poor oppressed slave. The advocates of the South were not endowed with all the feelings of humanity. – (Hear, hear.) He took it for granted that no high-sounding phrases would be able to deceive them, although they might fall from the lips of a great man. They had been told that the North was fighting for empire, and the South for independence. They had been told the truth. The South was fighting for independence – independence to prevent others from becoming independent. The North was fighting for empire, the institutions of which were founded upon liberty, equality, and fraternity. If the North was fighting for empire, it was an empire the corner stone of which was liberty; it was fighting for freedom and equality at the ballot box, and the extension of the word of Jesus Christ. – (Hear, hear.) He was sure they would not be deluded by any such fallacious statements as those urged by the advocates of the South. He thought they would view the matter with a careful consideration. There was not only a war¹ in America with arms, but there was one of ideas. Any one who failed to look at this subject as it concerned them in this respect, failed to arrive at a proper conclusion on the question. – (Hear, hear.) The war in America was a war of ideas. Satan fought for

independence, in order that, like Jefferson Davis,² he might be able to gratify his ambition; like Jefferson Davis, he himself kept those who followed him in darkness. If they could go to-day and stand upon Bunker's Hill,³ where the greatest monument in America stands, and enquire what are the convictions of the people respecting this war, they would tell them that it was a war of ideas, a war between freedom and slavery, and a question of civilization and humanity. The South never dared to mention this subject. If they would go to South Carolina, and stand beneath the palmetto trees and ask what are the opinions of the people there, they would tell them that it was not a question of tariffs, but one of freedom or slavery. They were not to rely on the evidence of men three thousand miles away from the scene of action concerning the causes and circumstances of the war – men who gathered their information from one-sided newspaper articles and correspondence; but upon persons who had witnessed the atrocities of slavery. They had heard people give their opinion about it, and he wished them to allow him, as a slave – as an ex-slave – to give his – (Applause.) The war had its elements aroused in 1850 through the passing of the fugitive slave law.⁴ The Northern people were not at that time, and were scarcely now, in such a position as he would like them. The Southern States violated the constitution by seceding. They had the opportunity of submitting terms of secession; but they dared not submit them, even to their own states. They had no right to secede according to the constitution. If they were dissatisfied with the constitution, it was their duty to seek for its amendment, which could only be done by the sanction of two-thirds of the states, and ratified by three-fourths of the votes of the people. But this they did not think proper to do. When they went into secession it was quite enough for them to be content with the territory in their own boundaries; but they were not so; they laid violent hands upon the United States property; they robbed the United States treasury; they fired upon Fort Sumter⁵ – United States property. Well, then the war began, and a horrible war it was. It was the South who fired the first cannon, and the responsibility of the war alone rested upon the south. The North had done all it could do to keep out of the war; it was the South who wished to commence action. From the very hour that Fort Sumter was fired upon, there was a difference of opinion as to the dispositions of the South. The only hope in the North was the preservation of the Union, and the emancipation of slavery. It had been said that the North were not sincere in this respect; that they did not entertain the respect which they professed to do for the slave. The advocates of secession had done a good deal; but the fact was that the advocates of the South pleaded for interest, even if they did not know it; but there were some who did know it – they built ships for the Confederates, and others received benefit from the Confederate scrip. He constantly met with gentlemen who said that slaveholders were gentlemen, in all respects; that they were magnanimous. He would not deny that they were gentlemen of culture and education; but if his audience had about one hundred slaves, from whom they took their wages, and compelled them by force to obey their dictation, they would become magnanimous too. – (Applause.) The people of the North, however, were keen of money, but they learned to be so from the English. – (Hear, hear.) They had learned to be so from the English merchants in former years. He did not defend their covetousness. But what was the difference between the North and the South? The Southerners squeeze the slave to their breasts, and thus squeeze all the humanity out of him. – (Applause and laughter.) He is deprived of his

earnings, the comforts of his family, his freedom, and religious instruction. The north allows the negro his freedom, his earnings, and all the benefits of liberty. The slaveholders were surely not honourable men when they treated their fellow-beings in such a manner. Advocates had sprung up to defend the slaves; but how had they been treated? Charles Sumner,⁶ for instance, the great advocate for the freedom of the slaves, was assaulted from behind with a bludgeon in the senate, by a chivalrous gentleman from the South.⁷ – (Hear.) The lecturer then described the atrocities of the Confederates towards the coloured men who had fallen into their hands in various battles. He next addressed the position of the slaves in the South, and added that if the slaveholders were willing to be kind they could not. It was said that the slaves were contented in their bondage, but if the slaves were comparatively contented, they had no right to be so at the expense of white men. – (Hear, hear.) He, as an ex-slave, said they were not contented. It was all very fine for people who had an income of £1,000 a year, and who were protected with their families, to say that the slaves in America were contented. How could they know? Where did they learn it? He knew that they (the slaves) were not. As an instance to prove his statement that slaveholders could not help being cruel, the lecturer described two or three cases that had fallen under his own observation, when in the Southern States, of cruelty to slaves in order to enforce obedience and humility to their masters, and as warning to those who should disobey the commands of their superiors. Up to 1850, however, it was a fact that all through the Northern States there were negro carriages on the railways, negro seats in the chapels, negro burial grounds, &c. Why was this? It was all to please the South; slavery was then predominant. The lecturer said that that feeling was now being obliterated, and gave several instances where coloured men had been elected to high positions in the Northern States. He went on to show that black men were quite equal to white men, as respected either physical or moral attainments, but deplored that a great number were kept by their masters from the enlightenment of civilization. The lecturer drew attention to the election of President Lincoln,⁸ and to the arming of the coloured people in the Northern States. He said that the arming of the blacks had not been compulsory, but that it was done at their own wish, because they knew that if the Union was not maintained their lot would be a sad one; they knew that if the South gained its independence the gates of Africa would again swing open on its black hinges, and the slave trade with all its horrors would again be re-opened.

A vote of thanks to the chairman and the lecturer brought the proceedings to a close.

On Thursday evening, the Rev. Sella Martin gave a second lecture on the same subject, in the Corn Exchange. Mr. John Haslam occupied the chair. The audience was rather more numerous than that of the previous evening. After a few introductory remarks from the chairman, the lecturer said, that every movement had its rubicon, and some Caesar to cross it. The abolition movement in America had its Caesar, in the person of William Lloyd Garrison.⁹ Garrison, he said, had been the friend of the slaves; he had done much to spread their cry of claim for freedom, in a little paper¹⁰ he published in a garret, which had now become the winding sheet of slavery. He had suffered imprisonment on their behalf, and the more he was persecuted, the more he rose in estimation; he told the people of America that he was in earnest, and demanded to be heard, in his exclamations against slavery, and in his expressions of

sympathy for the slaves. Garrison had had as a right hand supporter Wendell Phillips.¹¹ He passed a high encomium upon their characters. He (the lecturer) was sure that Englishmen had done much to obtain their freedom; how much they ought to sympathise with and support the oppressed slaves, who were seeking to obtain that freedom which they enjoyed? The lecturer next spoke of the disturbances between the several religious denominations in America on the question of slavery and freedom. The North were wishful for the preservation of the Union and the abolition of slavery; but the slaveholders were in favour of the severance of the Union for the purpose of preserving slavery. He differed from those who imagined that there was more probability of the abolition of slavery if the South gained its independence, than there would be if the Union was maintained. People wrote to newspapers upon that question without understanding it. It was a moral duty that compelled them to look after the interests and rights of the slave; but people, in a crisis like this, were too apt to look more to national interests than to those of the slave. He asked why should the South abolish slavery, when they reap such large benefits from it, and by which they were enabled to indulge in all the luxuries of wealth? Was there any people who ever gave up their rights before they were taken from them? – (Hear, hear.) They were anxious to keep the South in the Union in order that they might shed a light upon its prisons by their free presses. – (Hear, hear.) If England did not use her influence now to blot out slavery in America, she would not be able to do it when the independence of the South was established. If the South got her independence how could they get slavery abolished? If the independence of the South was established, England could do no more than demand that she should abolish slavery; and if she persisted in her demand for abolition a war would be the result. Let the North, then, go on and accomplish their object, which they would do if they would give them time. – (Applause.) The lecturer then described the various societies in the North, the disposition of the Republicans with respect to the war, and the great interest the Democrats had in the preservation of the Union. He also alluded, at some length, to the atrocities committed towards the negroes in the South, which had fallen under his own observation when he was a slave, and detailed the various punishments which the law empowered to be exercised upon insubordinate slaves, and the penalties to which the parents of a white child were subject if the child was caught in the act of teaching a negro to read the Bible. The lecturer also described the great love which the negroes generally possessed for their families, the great affection they paid to localities, and the great amount of trust they placed in Providence. He said that the Negroes entertained an idea that Canada was a great country, and that there was a great sea between them, and that it required a ship to take them there. He denied that the slaves generally were contented, and gave several instances of the manner in which they had bought their freedom. He was sure that his audience could not sympathise with a slaveholding power. He was anxious for the time to come when he could go back to the place of his childhood, and tell them that there were people over the water who sympathised with them. – (Applause.)

Mr. BENSON proposed, and Mr. PENNY seconded, a vote of thanks to the lecturer, which was unanimously accorded; and acknowledged by the Rev. Sella Martin.

Mr. J. DUTHRIE proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, which was seconded by the lecturer, for his presidency, which, having been acknowledged, brought the proceedings to a close.



Figure 62 Photograph of bazaar inside the Public Hall (former Corn Exchange), Lune Street, Preston, England, c.1865. (Harris Museum, Art Gallery and Library.)

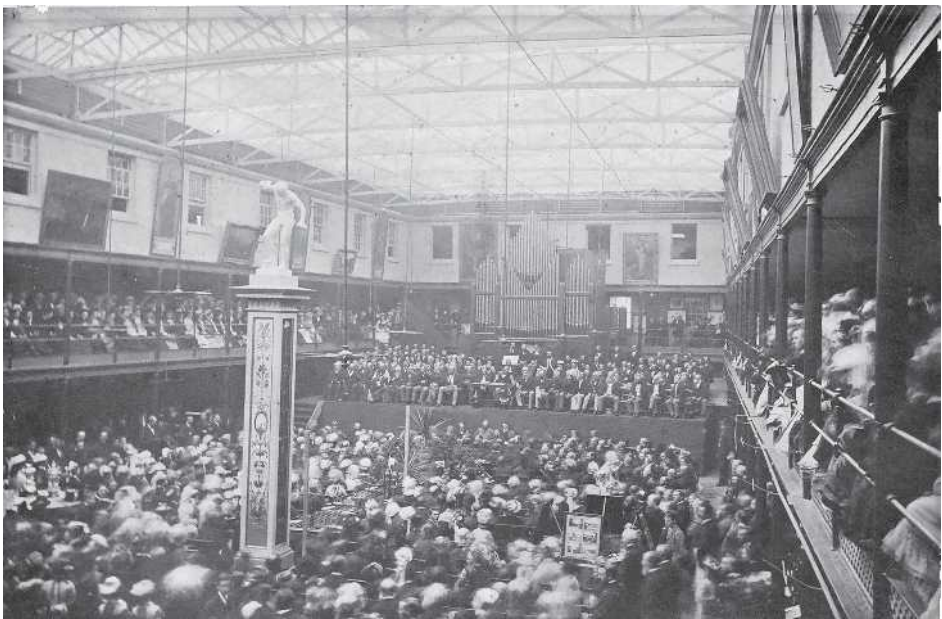


Figure 63 Photograph of opening ceremony of the Preston Arts and Science Exhibition, Public Hall (former Corn Exchange), Lune Street, Preston, England, c.1865. (Harris Museum, Art Gallery and Library.)

Notes

1. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
2. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889).
3. The Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown, Massachusetts, commemorates the Battle of Bunker Hill, a major military conflict which took place between British and United States troops on 17 June 1775 during the American Revolutionary War.
4. 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
5. Fort Sumter was a confederate military garrison located in South Carolina.
6. Charles Sumner (1811–1874).
7. 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.
8. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
9. William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879).
10. *The Liberator* was a white-edited antislavery newspaper published in Boston, Massachusetts, from 1831–1866.
11. Wendell Phillips (1811–1884).



Anon., 'The Experience of an Escaped Slave', *Northampton Mercury*, Northampton, Northamptonshire, England, 13 February 1864, p.5.

THE REV. SELLA Martin gave 'an account of his experience in slavery, and the manner of his escape from it,' on Wednesday evening, at the College-street Chapel, on behalf of the chapel building fund. There was a large attendance. The chair was occupied by the Rev. J. T. Brown, who, in a few remarks, introduced Mr. Martin to the meeting.

The Rev. SELLA MARTIN, after a few introductory observations, said, in speaking of himself he must first allude to his birth, as that was the most important event that happened in a man's life, except his marriage and his death. He was born in North Carolina, one of the Northern slave states, that was generally overrun at certain seasons of the year by negro traders, men who buy slaves for the purpose of selling them again in more Southern States at a great profit. One night, when he was six years of age, his mother's cottage was invaded by one of these negro traders, who told her that he had bought her. She doubted that this was the case, and demanded that she should have an interview with her mistress, but this the trader refused, and at last called two or three negroes whom he had brought for the purpose, who bound his mother, and took her, himself, and his sister, who was four years older than he was, and thrust them into the negro trader's prison, or what was called by the slaves in the South, the negro trader's den. The latter was the word which, of all others, should be used to describe the place where negro traders keep their slaves while they are making up their gang for the Southern market. It would be impossible for them to have an adequate conception of what sort of places these prisons were. All the women of a certain age were put together, and when there was room, the men, and boys, and girls were confined in separate parts of the prison. For about six or seven weeks during this time of the year, a brisk trade is transacted in buying and in selling slaves. He could well remember looking out the window of the prison in which he was confined, and seeing the auction block, on which were exhibited for sale women as fair as any in the present audience, children younger than any present, and men, no doubt, as manly and as pure as any whom he was now addressing. Many a time he had seen not only women separated from their husbands, but children of a year sold separate from their mothers, not because any one desired to purchase the children, but because the men who purchased the mothers wanted them to go immediately to work in the cotton field, and not to be incumbered with children. Many a

time he had seen children, under such circumstances, almost given away. The slave seller, if he desired to sell his slaves from the prison, compelled them to say that they were everything which he wished them to appear to be to the man who was about to buy them. For instance, if a man wants a good seamstress, one of the female slaves, who was perhaps a laundress, was compelled by her master to say that she was a sempstress, and if he wanted a good cook, one who knew nothing whatever about cooking was compelled to say she was a good cook. If such women did not tell lies according to their master's desire, at night, disregarding all usages of decency and civilization, they received 100 lashes from the master or from the overseer. The consequence of this was that the negroes did lie, and professed to be able to do things that they had never undertaken before; and after they had been bought and their new masters found out that they could not do what they professed, they got whipped. He had seen members of Christian churches come to these traders' prisons and examine women as if they were brutes; make men open their mouths in order to see how old they were, and go through all those terrible and disgusting examinations which must be seen before they could be properly reprobated. After he had been in the prison for about six weeks, he, together with his mother and sister, and a number of other slaves, started off for Georgia, which was about 400 or 500 miles from the town where the prison was situated. He could not remember himself much of the journey, but his mother and sister had told him some of the incidents connected with it, and he had since seen similar incidents in cases of other slaves. In consequence of there being few wagons, the women had to take their turns in riding. Many of the women had children, and when it was their turn to walk they had to carry their children with them; and when from sheer exhaustion on account of the walk, and also on account of their children taking away from them the strength that was necessary to sustain them, they lagged behind, the driver or his negro overseer never forgot to plough up the back of the young mother with his great whip, in order to make them keep up with the wagon. The consequences was that all along the road there was left many a drop of a mother's blood whilst bearing her own child into slavery. Many of the young children, too, had to take their turn in walking, and he was told that he had left marks of blood on the soil over which he passed, in consequence of the frost having cracked open his feet. On their reaching Columbus they were put into another trader's prison, where they suffered much hardship, but in a little time, very fortunately, his mother, himself, and sister were sold to one master. This, however, did not last long, for their master was a man given to vice and passion, and he soon became so involved that he was compelled to sell his mother. One day when he came into the house his mistress – and he had not any recollection of slavery more pleasant than the recollection of that mistress – said to him with a great deal of sorrow, 'You must not go into the kitchen, Sella.' He, however, forgot what she had told him, and went into the kitchen, where he saw a strange woman standing in the place where his mother used to stand. He asked her what she was doing there, and where his mother was, and she answered, 'Then, poor child, you do not know that your mother is sold away.' He fled to the house, and inquired of his mistress for his mother, and she, who was as much afflicted with slavery as he was, joined with him in shedding tears over the fact that his mother had been torn away from him, perhaps for ever. Mr. Martin then alluded to the grief which he felt at the loss which he had sustained, after which he passed on to say that, some time after this event, he was disposed of to a new

master. His new master did not want him, and had no particular occasion for buying him, but he was taken as a bad debt, and was soon installed in the office of page to an old bachelor. The speaker then passed on to advert to the difficulties which he had to encounter in learning to read, as persons were liable to a heavy penalty if they taught any negro to read or write. He, however, was a capital hand at playing at marbles, and after he had won all the marbles of the white boys that played with him, he gave some of them back to them if they would teach him his alphabet. By this means he managed to pick up his letters, and could read a little. About this time three coloured men came to him one day, and asked him if he would go with them to gather wild grapes. As it was an honour for an old slave to ask a younger one to go with him, he readily consented; and when they got into the woods, one of the men pulled a paper out of his pocket, and said, 'Here's something about the Abolitionists; I want you to read.' To his surprise, he could read the heading of the article, 'Henry Clay,¹ the Abolitionist.' He made out a good deal of the article, but he made much of it up out of his own head, and, when he finished, the article was considered to be so much in favour of the negroes, that he was voted to be a liar. Some few days afterwards, it had spread throughout the town that he could read and write as well as his master in the great house, for it was always supposed that those who could read could write as well. As this report spread, slaves came to him to ask him to write passes by which they could go and see their wives, who were living 10 or 12 miles from the city, without their masters knowing it. He, however, could not write, so he determined that he would learn. Just about this time he had a large stock of marbles, and he offered a white boy an instalment of 50 marbles a month if he would teach him to write. This plan, however, did not answer, and he had to think of another. One day, when he was out playing marbles, he won all that the white boys had, and after all the boys, except one, had gone, he said to him, 'I have been learning to write.' 'Who taught you?' was the answer, and he said, 'Oh, no, I shan't tell you that, as you will go and blow upon him; but I will bet you ten marbles that I can make a better A than you.' The challenge was accepted: a piece of board was obtained, and the boy made the letter A with a piece of chalk. 'Oh! I can beat that,' he said. The boy then made another, and he said he could beat that. He then asked the boy to make him a third, and on his doing so he said, 'I can't beat that, I will give it up.' Accordingly, he gave the boy the ten marbles, and then marched off with the board to his little room at the top of the house, where he laid flat on his chest, and worked away with all his might copying the A's that had been put on the board. By this means he obtained all the letters of the alphabet, and about this time his master fell sick, and it was his duty to stay in his bedroom and give him his medicine. He had always coveted to get some pens, ink, and paper, because a piece of chalk and a board were not the things that passes could be written with, and in his master's bedroom he found all these materials. Whilst his master was asleep, or was tossing on his bed with disease, he used to be on the blind side of the bed working hard with a pen, and many a pen did he wear out. As soon as he could write passes he began to have a tolerably good revenue, as some of the slaves would give him as much as a shilling each for a pass. He saved up his shillings till he had an opportunity of seeing some men who came to the same plantation where his mother was, and then he bought some things that he thought would be acceptable to her, such as coffee, calico, and sugar, and these he confided to the care of one of the men who were about to return to the plantation. Just about this

time complaints were made to his master that he wrote passes for slaves, and his master told him that if he ever wrote a pass for a slave again he would whip him within an inch of his life. He promised that he would not, but he did not intend to keep his promise. At this time he was not aware of the true Christian principle. The slaveholding system cultivated so much dishonesty and falsehood, that slaves were compelled to lie, and they in many cases did so without the least compunction. His master, however, in the present case, broke his promise first, as one day he asked him to read the newspaper to him, and after this he used to read to him every morning. He remembered that just about this time he read the whole of the *Waverley Novels*,² and *Reynold's Mysteries*³ of the Court of London. His master, too, became more kind to him, taught him a little grammar and geography, and gave him smattering notions of literature. Mr. Martin then described his running away from this master, in order that he might go and visit his mother, who was at a place about seventy miles distant. He managed to get to the place where his mother was at about 11 o'clock at night, and, seeing a coloured man outside the fence, he asked him to direct him to his mother's cottage. This man, he afterwards found, was a runaway slave. He would not allude to the meeting between himself and his mother. The hour indeed was a blessed one, and was like a vision of the happy world in that dark, dark year of slavery. After they had been some hours together, his mother said, as the day was Sunday, it would be better for him if he went out and hid himself in the woods, as some slaves might perhaps come into her cottage during the day he would then be discovered, and they would both get into trouble. Accordingly, he went into the woods, where he slept soundly, as he had walked seventy miles, but, about midday, he was awakened by some slaves digging a grave near him. On returning to his mother, he found that the grave was dug for a slave who had belonged to the same plantation as she did. On that morning he was killed by his master, a minister of the Gospel, who had given him 407 lashes whilst he was suspended from the earth, and then, when he was taken down, had stuck a knife into his foot to see whether he was dead. The same morning the master went nine miles to preach to his congregation, and during his sermon he impressed upon his congregation that the devil would bring about terrible consequences if they cherished any evil passions in their breast, and then he went on to say that one of his slaves had that morning died whilst he was on a fearful passion. There was one old negro who dared to go into Court and give a different account of how the death of the man was caused, but no judge would think of weighing the evidence of a negro against that of his master, and so this reverend minister of the Gospel continued to preach to his congregation and to break to them the bread of life, and, for aught he knew, he was preaching to them now. On the following morning his mother was speaking to him about going back to his master, when they heard footsteps approaching her cottage. She, thinking it might be Mr. Terry, her master, desired him to hide himself in a rude kind of wardrobe that stood in the room, and, no sooner had he secreted himself, then a knock came to the door, and, on the door being opened, her master, the minister, said, 'Where is that boy of yours?' His mother was a Christian woman, and therefore had some scruples about telling an untruth, so she said, 'How do I know where my boy is; you won't let me go and see him.' He said that he was sure she knew where her son was, and added, 'If you don't tell me where he is, I will knock you down.' His mother did not answer, and he then heard a heavy blow given on the head, and he afterwards found that the blow was struck with a

bludgeon which the slaveowner had in his hand. Forgetting that he was but a boy, and that he had a man to deal with, he burst open the door of the wardrobe, and as the man was standing just in front of the wardrobe, the door, opening quickly, knocked him down. He then turned to look after his mother, who was on the floor, with a fearful gash on one eye, from which blood was flowing down her face, and, whilst he was tending her, his master struck him with the same bludgeon a blow on the head, which rendered him insensible. When he came to himself he found that he was handcuffed, and that his feet were tied. An old coloured man was keeping watch over him, and when he saw him come to his senses, he said, 'A pretty mess of trouble you have got your mother in by coming here.' Whilst he was talking to him he heard the lash going, and the old man told him that it was his mother being beaten. His agony on that occasion was something fearful. To think that his mother was in the smoke house being beaten and he had no power to help her! This was his second realization of slavery, and the first was as nothing compared with the second. The next morning he was put into a wagon and taken back to his master. He begged and prayed to his mother's master to be allowed to see her before he was separated from her, but the request was refused, and he never saw his mother again till about three weeks before she was laid in her grave. He was put into the prison at Columbus, for although his master had no intention of punishing him severely, he thought putting him in prison would intimidate him, and he must confess that after he was in prison his courage began to ooze out of his fingers ends. Some of his fellow-prisoners were a number of coloured men and women, some of whom were free, but who could not produce their free papers. Every morning they were stretched out on the stocks and received 39 lashes, the number allowed by law. Mr. Martin then alluded to the fact that there were two white men in the prison named Cribb and Green, and one night he heard them making their escape. He compelled them to take him with them, and they left the prison and travelled together till they came to a town, when it was arranged that the white men should go through first, and that he should follow them in the course of an hour, and meet them at a certain place. He had some suspicion that they intended to leave him, but he was compelled to fall in with the arrangement, as it was not considered safe that they should be seen in the town together. He was at the spot agreed upon at the time appointed, and after waiting for his companions for about three hours, he concluded they had given him the slip, which in reality they had. It was a piece of folly for them to give him the slip, because they had bargained that the two white men should sell him for about 100 dollars, and in a little time return for him, and then go on their journey, repeating this process as often as they wanted money. He was caught and was again taken back to gaol, and after he had been there a week or two, he heard a noise in the yard, and on looking out of his window he saw Cribb and Green brought back to their old quarters. Cribbs was afterwards tried and was acquitted, but Green was kept in prison for a long time; and it was from him that he learnt about the Northern States of America, about Abolitionists, and about the English nation, who were against slavery. This was the key which unlocked the door of his slavery. Green was a native of Boston, and it was in Boston after (the speaker's) escape that he preached his first sermon as pastor of a chapel. The man whom he belonged to last, for he belonged to ten men altogether, allowed him to hire out his time for £8 per month, with the privilege of having himself all the money he could make over that amount. Once he hired himself out to an

hotel-keeper in Mississippi. He, however, fell out with him, and the hotel-keeper said he would flog him. He told him that no man had ever done that yet, and he did not intend that any should do it now. He then wrote himself a pass, and in a short time was on board a steam boat on his way back to his master. The hotel-keeper followed him in about three hours, and told his master that he had sauced him. His master met him at the Post-office, and said, 'This man has been over here, and he tells me that you have sauced him.' He denied that he had sauced the hotel-keeper, but he admitted that he had dared him to flog him. His master then said to him, 'Suppose you had been killed, I should have had to lose you.' He answered if that were the case he should have had to lose himself, and that would have been of far more importance. At last his master did not like to chance the risk of his being killed, and therefore losing the value of him, and it was determined that he should be given a month to endeavour to find out a person who would buy him. Mr. Martin then explain that in the State of Louisiana, if a coloured man had been born in that state and desired to live in it, free papers to this effect were given him, and he was allowed to live in the state; but no coloured man, if he was known not to have been born in that state, was allowed to live in it. A coloured man who had been born in Kentucky wished to live in Louisiana, so he got two white men to swear that he was born in the latter state, and by this means he obtained his free papers. Not being anything of a scholar, the man brought his papers to him and desired that he would look over them to see whether they were all right. These papers cost about £20 or £30. They were at this time on a steam boat, and he desired the man to leave the papers with him a little time, and he would look after them. A thought came into his head that by means of these papers he could make his escape. When the man returned for the papers he said, 'Are they all right?' He answered that they were. The man then asked him where the papers were, and he said they were on the table. However, on a search being made, the papers could nowhere be found, and as the window of the place in which they were sitting was open, he suggested that they might have blown out. 'Of course they have blown out,' the man said, 'if you put them on the table without having fixed them with something,' and he then fell into great lamentation. He, however, consoled the man by telling him that, when he got to New Orleans, if he went to the Recorder and told him the facts of the case, he would give him another set of papers. On their arrival at New Orleans, he accompanied the man to the Recorder's, who gave him a duplicate of the missing papers, which were carefully sewn up in his (Mr. Martin's) coat. With these papers he was determined to effect his escape, so he went down to a steamboat, and offered himself for a vacant situation. The man to whom he applied asked him whether he was free, and, in answer to this question, he pulled out the free papers, obtained the situation, and, in about eight days after that date, he set his foot firmly on the free soil of Illinois. Mr. Martin then went on to allude to his being met, four days afterwards, in Chicago, by a gentleman of considerable political influence, who desired him to lecture on the way he made his escape, as he considered that the facts would be of considerable influence to the anti-slavery cause. This he did, and lectured there for about four or five months. One day, whilst he was writing, he felt that some person was standing over him, and on looking up, he saw his master of New Orleans. This was a critical position to be placed in, but he noticed that his master trembled, and looked pale, so he determined to be calm. After some conversation, his master asked him if he would like to go back with him, but he said he had

no desire whatever to go back, so his late master was compelled to leave for New Orleans without him. Mr. Martin then briefly alluded to his coming over to England, where his friends provided him with sufficient money to redeem his sister and her two children, after which he concluded amid much applause.

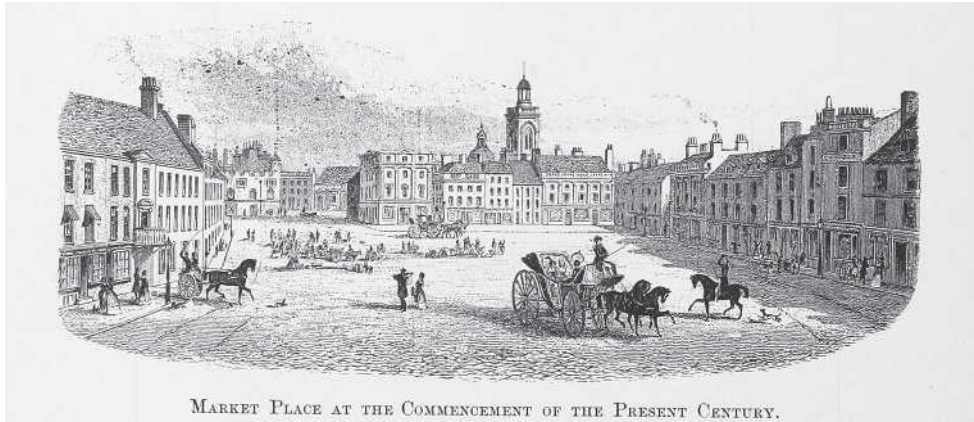


Figure 64 'Market Place at the Commencement of the Present Century', Northampton, England, c.1891. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Notes

1. Henry Clay (1777–1852).
2. The Waverley novels refers to the series of novels by white Scottish author, Walter Scott (1771–1832).
3. *The Mysteries of London* is a novel written by white British author George W. M. Reynolds (1814–1879) in 1844.



Anon., 'The Freedmen of America', *The Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, Leicester, Leicestershire, England, 16 February 1867, p.8.

REV. SELLA MARTIN (of New York), next addressed the meeting. He said he had had occasion in visiting various parts of Great Britain, to feel profoundly sad at some evidences furnished in them of the diminution of the anti-slavery feeling in the country which had enjoyed the reputation of being the protectress of the negro race, and that night was unfortunately no exception to that feeling. When he heard their worthy chairman undertaking to justify the wisdom of God in the abolition of slavery, undertaking to enunciate principles which he thought were synonymous with the English name – he confessed it made him feel sad. He knew the feeling of the negro with reference to the English people – he knew the picture the negro drew in his imagination of the free liberty-loving people of England, but he feared that when he returned to America he should have to say that the name of England was anti-slavery, but that rich, cultivated, aristocratic, fashionable England was pro-slavery. Why should men like their chairman be compelled to meet objections? When England sent over to America copies of her newspapers every morning, containing the most marked disapproval of slavery, when 40,000 English women signed an address¹ to the women of America, expressing their sympathy with the slave and their hopes for his deliverance – now that slavery was got rid of – now that God had answered the prayers of the people of this country – they turned their backs upon their own work, and said 'Oh, we were very sorry for you when you were in bondage, but we won't help you now you are set free.' He had seen a letter from a gentleman who said that the Freedmen's Aid Society² ought to be called 'The Society for the Promotion of Vice, Ignorance, and Sedition amongst the Negroes.' But that gentleman referred his friend to the *Times* for the truth of the opinions he expressed. He had heard it said in England that, whatever might be said of the Yankee, it could not be denied that he was on a level with the Englishman in making a bargain. They never denied that an American was a keen man of business, but they said he was fond of money. Well what did they think of those men – those keen businessmen – those lovers of money – establishing a bureau³ which cost them a million pounds a year, to prevent the negroes from starving? (Applause.) Did they think those men who were so shrewd in business would lay out that money, if they did not think that they was need for it? (Hear, hear.) He thought, under urgent

circumstances, they need not stay to ask for particulars as to whether those freedmen needed assistance; they might take that for granted. He never stood before an English audience to ask for their money. He simply stated the case to them, and left it to their own judgment to do what they thought proper. He should not refuse to take anything – (a laugh) – but he did not feel it his duty to come to them and ask them. He simply stated the facts, and left it to them to give what they thought well. There were two grounds on which he thought the negroes had a claim on their help and support. One was that they had participated in profits of slave labour and therefore ought not to repudiate the consequences which had arisen. The other was that by the future blessings which would be the result of the freedom of the slave money they laid out would prove to be a good investment. They had continued to enjoy the blessings and comforts produced by the slaves – they had continued to use the rice, the sugar and the cotton which was grown in the negroes' blood and watered by his tears. They had never refused to wear slave grown cotton – they never could get them up to that. (Laughter). Remembering that their large towns such as Manchester, Liverpool and Bradford had been built upon the results of the cotton and other commerce with America, it was their duty to assist these people, as far as lay in their power, now that they were no longer chattels. (Hear, hear.) They had doubtless seen some strange accounts in the newspapers. Well now, a newspaper correspondent always moved, of course, in 'well-informed' circles, and his articles were written according to the information he received. If he were in the habit of moving amongst anti-slavery men, his articles were written accordingly. If, on the other hand, he moved among pro-slavery men, he received his information from them, and his articles were pro-slavery. He said this without the slightest reflection on the veracity of newspaper correspondents, for he knew they were a 'peculiar race.' (Laughter.) The most objectionable defence ever set up for the system of slavery was that it was a religious institution. A shareholder once told one of his slaves that the negro race was cursed in the days of Noah,⁴ – that the curse had remained on them ever since, – and that was the reason of his being a slave. The nigger replied that he could not read himself, but he had heard him (his master) read that the Almighty would visit the sins of the father on the son, to the second, the third, and *even* to the fourth generations. He guessed it was about a hundred generations since old Uncle Noah lived, and he thought it about time the curse had run out. (Laughter). It had been said that the negroes did not like work – well, he had seen a good many white men who were not very fond of it. (Laughter). He did not think there were many white men who loved work for its own sake, but considering that the negroes had been denied all the results of their labour – considering that they had been driven to it by the lash – and considering that they had not been taught the obligations and duties of labour, they had worked in a remarkable manner, for as the result of the employment of the first number of freed slaves, there was a clear profit of £100,000 when all expenses had been paid. (Applause.) Mr. Martin then described the injurious nature of the way in which the slaves were compelled to work, and said Mr. Deboe, the statician, had stated that the average time of labour of a slave on a rice plantation was seven years, and on a sugar plantation nine years. Considering this, he said there would be amongst the four millions of men set free, at least 200,000 who would be unfit to work from their age and the effects of their life as slaves on the plantations. There was no comparison between an uneducated working man in England and an uneducated negro. The former knew what his labour was worth, and

when and how to make the best of it. All such knowledge as that was crushed out of the negro. He had no chance against the whites, who employed him as he was ignorant of figures, and of the laws and customs of labour. Some people seemed to be getting tired of the negro. They thought he was a great bother, and the best thing to be done was to get him out of the road. He quite agreed with that idea. Undoubtedly it was time to get him out of the way. Give him the same chance as others and he would soon be out of the way. Place him on the same footing as his fellowmen and he would not be any trouble to them much longer. (Hear, hear.) But so long as there was injustice done to the negro, so long as he was trampled upon and treated as being inferior to his fellow men, there would be in the nature of things the same difficulties to grapple with, there would always be noble men enough to be found who would not allow him to be content to live in a state of degradation and misery. (Applause.) After alluding to the conduct of the negroes in the late war, in not molesting the wives or families of their late masters, when they were ultimately at their mercy, and also to the bravery they displayed in the Northern army, Mr. Martin proceeded to speak of their capabilities to learn, of the talents displayed by many of them. He instanced Frederick Douglass,⁵ the President⁶ of Hayti, and others. He said an Irishman once went to hear Mr. Douglass, in Philadelphia, and remarked that he had never heard a nigger spake like that man in his life. An American, who sat next to the Irishman, indignantly remarked that Douglass was not a real nigger, that he was only half one, he was a mulatto. 'Well,' said Pat, 'If half a nigger can spake like that, what could a whole one do?' (Laughter.) It had been said that they were contented in slavery. Well, if that were true, then he contended that that was the greatest proof of the evil of the system. If, under the system of slavery, a man could sink so low as to lose all his affection for his wife and his friends, could lose his self-respect, and lose his mind, too, then what greater-proof could they want of the evil of the system? Then, a word as to the investment. There could be no doubt that America would hold her place as the greatest cotton market in the world. He did not think that any other country would ever be able to supply the same quality. And then, who were better able to cultivate it than the negroes? They were accustomed to it: they were accustomed to the climate – they were already acclimatised, and in their new position as free men, receiving reward for their labour, they would produce the cotton better than they have done before. (Hear, hear.) They would take an interest and a pride in their work, and would aim to produce more and better cotton than they previously had done. Then the English people would have the advantage of having made a profitable investment, and at the same time making some reparation to the negro race for the injustice they had done them in times past. (Applause).

Notes

1. For further information on white British female antislavery campaigns, see Elizabeth Crawford, 'Women: From Abolition to the Vote', available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/abolition_women_article_01.shtml
2. After the Civil War, the Freedmen's Aid Society was established with the purpose of founding 'schools and colleges for African Americans in the South'. The *Freedmen's Aid Society Records* are held in the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlantic University Center, Atlanta, Georgia. The Finding Aid is available online at: <https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.038%3A0001>

3. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was an institution founded in 1865 by the US government with the explicit purpose of providing essential support and aid to formerly enslaved people facing destitution in the aftermath of enslavement and the Civil War. The Freedmen's Bureau records are housed at the National Archives in Washington DC and the Finding Aid is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau>
4. Genesis 9:20–27. See Noel Rae, 'How Christian Slaveholders Used the Bible to Justify Slavery', *Time*, 23 February 2018, available online: <https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/>
5. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See 'Frederick Douglass' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
6. Born in Cap-Haitien, Sylvain Salnave (1827–1970) served as President of Haiti between 1867–1869.

WILLIAM M. MITCHELL

(c.1826–c.1879)

Biographical History

BORN LEGALLY FREE with indigenous parentage in North Carolina, William M. Mitchell was apprenticed to work with a white enslaver after his parents died when he was still a young child. Witnessing first-hand the violence experienced by enslaved people from white murderous and persecutory enslavers, and often himself being forced to oversee the torture of Black people of all ages and genders and the separation of families, he became a radical activist who campaigned for the abolition of enslavement. Along with other African American freedom fighters in Ohio, he actively prevented the recapture of freedom seekers and used his own home as a station on the Underground Railroad. In response to the testimonies given by liberators, he penned the radical work, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, published in London in 1860. Collecting eye-witness accounts from formerly enslaved people of all ages and genders, Mitchell proceeded to demonstrate the cruelties of enslavement and the courageous resilience of Black families who risked their lives to secure their own freedom, as well as to share the life stories and experiences of the individuals he had personally helped to secure their liberation.

In the early 1850s, Mitchell moved to Toronto, Canada, and preached on behalf of the Christian missionary organisation, the American Baptist Free Mission Society. During this time, he also served as a pastor for the Coloured Regular Baptist Church and worked with African Canadians on the Association for the Education and Elevation of the Colored People of Canada, an organisation dedicated to members of the Black community who practised the philosophy of self-help and elevating an individual's position in society regardless of their circumstances. He travelled to the British Isles in 1859 when he lectured alongside William Troy (see 'William Troy' in *Speeches*, included in this volume). Both freedom fighters campaigned and raised funds for the American Baptist Free Mission Society and worked closely with the Glasgow Emancipation Society, the antislavery organisation based in Glasgow, Scotland. A few years later, Mitchell again returned to the British Isles during the US Civil War (1861–1865) to raise funds for African American and African Canadian communities in the US and Canada, as well as speaking out against the Confederacy, the coalition of eleven US southern states that had seceded from the federal government in order to protect and uphold the brutal institution of enslavement. He also encouraged his audiences to purchase free-grown cotton, relayed stories of the Underground Railroad, spoke of the popularity of white

US author Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and solicited donations for the erection of Black churches and schools.

Here we reproduce William M. Mitchell's speeches that he delivered in England: in Bristol and Cheltenham in 1861 and in Leicester in 1862.

Further Reading

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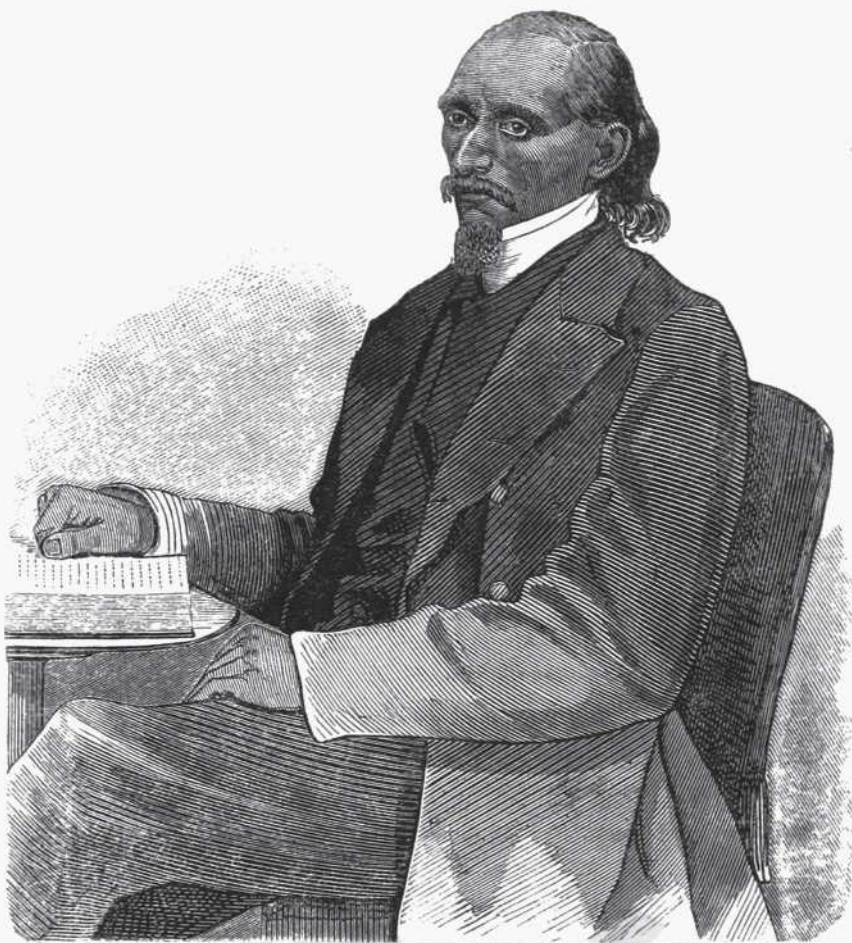
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Rev W M Mitchell

Figure 65 William Mitchell, from Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*. London: William Tweedie, 1860. (Wikimedia Commons.)

Anon., 'Lecture on America, Last Night', *Western Daily Press*,
Bristol, England, 7 March 1861, p.3.

LAST NIGHT, Mr. W. M. Mitchell, a Colonial minister and a man of colour, author of the 'Underground Railway,'¹ delivered a lecture at the Broadmead Rooms, on 'American Slavery and the present position of affairs in the States.' There was a very numerous attendance, the room being crowded in all parts. Mr. Robert Charleton presided. He was supported on the platform by many Dissenting ministers and other gentlemen. Dr. Gotch having offered up prayer.

The CHAIRMAN said the subject about which they were convened was interesting at all times, but at present it possessed features of peculiar and great interest. They had no doubt heard of the remarkable events that had been taking place in the United States of America, in connexion with the subject of slavery and the secession of the Southern States from the union or confederacy. Without going into even a brief sketch of those transactions, he would say that what in the present state of things was mostly to be feared by the friends of the Anti-Slavery cause was, that in the conflict between the Northern States and the slave power in the South, in order to prevent the withdrawal of the Border States of Virginia and Kentucky, and those in the north of the Cotton States, and to recall if possible those extensive Southern States that had already seceded, some compromise would be made which would give great pain to the friends of the slave. It was feared there might be a more definite and distinct recognition of slavery than there hitherto had been by the Government, and that there might be re-enacted the Fugitive Slave Law,² with additions that would render it yet more stringent. But even if their fears in this respect were realised they might still cherish the hope that the healthful tone of public sentiment on the subject which had been of late awakened in the Northern States – and which he trusted and expected would be a permanent feeling – would cause any such regulations, if enacted to have little true effect, and to remain to a large extent a dead letter. They must also be satisfied, he thought, that that exhibition they had had of the true character of slavery in what had been said and written within the last few months, by men who had taken a prominent part on the side of slavery in the Southern States – that exhibition of gross brutality, savage barbarity, and extreme reckless of human life – would tend to open the eyes of the world to the true condition and character of slavery more than perhaps anything else could have done. (Applause.) So might it be – and let them earnestly pray and desire it might be that 'the Almighty will make the wrath of men to praise

Him.³ It did not become them, however strongly they might feel on the subject of slavery, to indulge in denunciation of the men, as perhaps had they been in the same situation themselves they would not have done better; it was the atrocious character of the system itself they should condemn. Events that had lately occurred tended to prove clearly that the essential and vicious principle of slavery – the position of one man holding irresponsible power over another – was not only opposed to all the teachings of our holy religion, but was utterly inconsistent with the moral and mental wellbeing of man. (Cheers.) He then introduced The LECTURER, who was much cheered on presenting himself before the audience. It was expected, from the announcement of his lecture, he said, that he should treat of the following topics: – First, the secession of the Southern States from the Federal Government; second, the line of policy it was most likely and most to be hoped the President⁴ would pursue in reference to the nefarious and inhuman chattelism; third, the present position of the Slave States; fourth, the condition of the fugitive slaves, including the Anderson⁵ case, and the escape of ‘Eliza,’⁶ whom he had the privilege of assisting on her way to Canada. (Great cheering.) He would only be able to touch upon these various matters, each of which afforded matter for a complete lecture. In regard to the secession of the Southern States, 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 subterraneous 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. The sentiments so active in the North were such as all present endorsed; they held it to be a self-evident truth that all men are free and equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which were health, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To secure those rights governments were established, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed.⁷ All agreed in those noble sentiments, and they formed the basis of the Republic of America. It was the policy of the Republic that had been used for the promotion and perpetuation of the system of slavery, not the theory of the Government. (Cheers.) However, during the past 10 or 15 years there had been various political enactments that had hastened the outbreak of the pent-up feeling, one of which was the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law,⁸ in Sept., 1850, thereby opening all the territory of the Northern States, which had previously been sacred to freedom, as a hunting-ground to the slave-seeker to chase his slave upon, even to the very hearths of the inhabitants. The vigorous enactments of that law roused the minds of the Northerners to an opposition to slavery that would never die out, but widen as time passed on. He then adverted to other obnoxious measures, and went on to say that the North had elected for the first time a President⁹ opposed to slavery – (cheers) – one who denied the right of property in man, and therein followed the footsteps of many noble-hearted Christian statesmen who had gone before him. In the case of Somerset¹⁰ it would be remembered when before an English court of law, the question being, did the laws of England recognise property in man, Lord Mansfield¹¹ said, ‘Whatever the result may be, we cannot say that the laws of England recognise property in man; therefore the black must be free.’¹² (Loud cheers.) And what said Lord J. Russell?¹³ ‘Tell me not of the right of property in man. I deny the right.’ (Cheers.) Well if they did not deprecate such sentiments, the slaveholders of the South condemned the President for endorsing and carrying them out; and while the North by the gradual

accumulation of power had been enabled to elect such a man, seven of the Southern States, with South Carolina at their head, declared that he did not represent them, and that they would set up a separate Confederacy. The South ought to be as submissive, when overruled by a popular vote, as the North for sixty years had been; it was just once for the South to be overruled in sixty years. When the secession movement first attracted public attention the important question of its constitutionality arose. The confederacy having been formed upon perfect agreement by both sections of the country, it could not be dissolved without the consent and mutual agreement of the parties who entered into the confederacy; and it was only thought justice to the North for the South to intimate their intention to leave the Union. But that was not done. Then came the question – how shall we reconcile the two sections of the country and save the Union? In the South slavery was regarded as a Divine institution – ministers preached it, the church believed it, the States endorsed it – hence it existed. 700,000 slaves were held in the South by professing Christians; almost every religious society there, except the Society of Friends, held slaves. Slaves who were communicants in the same churches with their owners were sold by the latter to pay the minister's salary and build places of worship. A lady sold a slave girl – she mentioned it on the Sunday at chapel – in order to give something to send the Gospel to China! To meet the important question as to saving the Union, the Crittenden¹⁴ compromise had been proposed. After stating its conditions, he said it seemed liked purchasing peace at too great a sacrifice of principle. It was proposed to submit it to the popular vote of the country, and if two-thirds of the States voted for it, it would go before Congress, and become part of the constitution, and then slavery would have a constitutional right to extend itself indefinitely southward of the line – to divide the free North from the slave-holding South, and have power to recapture flying slaves all through the North section. Some even of the Democratic party were ready to agree to this, but he protested against slavery, whether negro, Irish, Scotch, or Russian; it was wrong, and Government should get rid of it. (Cheers.) South Carolina had held her convention, and sent commissioners to Washington to demand their part of the public properly. Six other States had united with Carolina, and a temporary presidency¹⁵ had been set up in a year. If the North survived the present struggle, and remained firm to her principles, she would have bearded slavery in its den and caused it to give up the ghost. (Cheers.) If she yielded she would give strength and encouragement to the system, and involve herself in a serious conflict which was but now commenced. The Lecturer then touched upon the public line of policy which the President was most likely to pursue in reference to slavery. He judged from the character of the man. Like many other good men, the President had risen to power and position without making much noise in the world; but he had risen on principles, and he (the lecturer) believed him to be a man who would retain his principles and those of his party. Other politicians in America were not, he was sorry to say, of that character. Daniel Webster¹⁶ agreed with the Southerners to uphold the Fugitive Slave Law in consideration of their electing him President, and they nominated another, and told Webster that as they had bought him others might re-purchase him when President. (Applause.) Because Brooks¹⁷ could not answer the arguments in Congress of Charles Sumner¹⁸ he drew his cane in the House and wounded him; and Brooks was re-elected in order to re-enter the House. South Carolina presented him with a cane, and engraved thereon, 'Hit him again!' (Laughter.) He trusted that President Lincoln would heed

the remonstrances of the British Government respecting the slave trade. His Government would, for the first time, exert a healthful anti-slavery influence; and it was hoped that the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law would take place. The Lecturer then discussed the present condition of the slaveholding states, quoting many statistics showing the relative size, population, &c., of the Free and the Slave States. In the Free States land averaged £4 an acre; in the Slave States it was worth but £1 10s 6d; and the contrast in the appearance of the two sections of the country was equally striking – the one being alive with a busy, intelligent population, the other having its inhabitants – those who owned no slaves, as well as the slaves especially – steeped in ignorance and inactivity. He considered some of the probabilities as to the slaves obtaining their freedom, and foretold it, even though obtained by other than moral means. He then spoke of the want of courage in the slaveholders as illustrated in the case of John Brown,¹⁹ and the courage of the slaves, some of whom were not only untried Andersons,²⁰ but it might be Garibaldis²¹ too. (Cheers.) He held that no man could loathe freedom, even if he was to try, because it was a law written upon his soul by the finger of the Almighty God; and he loved freedom, and that love of freedom was beyond his control. (Applause.) Slavery degraded the intellect and suppressed the aspirations of the human mind, and so long as that soul existed the love of freedom in that soul would exist, and the slave panted for the living waters of freedom. (Applause.) In passing to the fourth part – that of fugitive slaves – he would state that they had an underground railroad²² in the United States of America. That underground railroad existed in different directions, from the shores of Canada, through the free States, to the borders of the slave States. He was a conductor of that railroad for twelve years. It was laid out in shares, of which he held one, but he had transferred his stock to his friends, and received the dividends in Canada. They called it underground because of its obscurity – its locality could not be found out by the slaveholders. (Hear, hear.) They knew what the underground railroad was, but they could not identify the parties who were engaged upon it. (Hear, hear.) Thus it was as much concealed to them as though it was literally underground. It was called a ‘railroad’ because of the facilities with which it passed its passengers from a land of slavery to a land of freedom. (Cheers.) The Abolitionists in that region passed the slaves from one person’s hand to another’s, so that a slaveowner could not catch his victim. It was, therefore, a mutual agreement into which the Abolitionists of the North had entered to assist the slaves on their way to Canada. (Applause.) 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. But there was another method by which the slaves escaped as well as by that underground railroad. There were many abolitionists in the slave states, but they could not advocate or avow their principles. A man who spoke in favour of freedom for slaves was liable to be tarred and feathered, or hanged by the neck. (Hear, hear.) Hence it was that a man in Texas last year was hanged by the neck on the ground of his being an abolitionist. (Hear, hear.) Nine miles from the town in which he (the lecturer) lived, on the Kentucky side, a negro rose up and slew his master. Now, he did not justify the crime, but he did argue that there should have been a legal process according to law – that was, if the law was just. (Hear, Hear.) But they literally took that man and

burned him to the stake in noonday. ('Shame.') That was the feeling in the South. (Hear, hear.) Again – 49 miles from his city a slave struck a white man and disabled him. The slave was put in prison. One of the citizens got up at the corner of the street, and, addressing a crowd, said, 'As many of you as are of my opinion will go to the prison and take the man out.' Upwards of 1,500 persons followed that man to the prison and took him out, and bound him to a stake – (shame) – and no proceedings whatever were taken against the offending parties. The lecturer here narrated some interesting instances of his having aided the escape of runaway slaves. One came to his house, pursued by his owner and friends, who demanded him to be given up. The lecturer refused to admit them until they obtained a search warrant. They instantly despatched one of their party to a neighbouring magistrate for a warrant. In the meantime he felt uneasy, fearing that he should be despatched in aiding and abetting a runaway slave, and subjected to a fine of 200 dollars, and that the slave would be secured, carried back into slavery, and punished according to the will of his owner. Fortunately, however, he had an ingenious wife, and whilst he stood at the door discussing with the pursuers, his wife was inside dressing the slave in woman's attire. In a few moments his wife and the slave came out, and appeared to talk seriously together. The pursuers were too eager in peering into the passage in quest of the slave to notice two 'ladies' pass out, and so the slave was passed on to the next abolitionists, and eventually landed in Canada. The recital of this story, with its gratifying result, called forth loud applause. The slaveholder, said the lecturer, argued that the parental and filial affections of the negro were not elements of their nature, as in the white race, and that it made no difference if they were torn away from their friends. To confute this assertion the lecturer pictured the sorrows of a mother whose child was about to be sold at the auction block, and her anxieties to be sold with her offspring. He then gave a most interesting and graphic description of the escape of Eliza,²³ of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin';²⁴ her leaving the banks of the Ohio, with her little Harry²⁵ in her arms, her stealthy yet rapid progress through the plantations and forest, over precipitous rocks, and across the blocks of ice which floated on the river, bounding the land of freedom. He spoke of the assistance he had rendered her in her flight – how he carried little Harry in his arms, and accompanied her to the house of an abolitionist. She was still in Canada; her boy had grown up to be a young man, and she was a Christian woman, praying her way to Heaven. He next traced the progress of the 'Anderson case,'²⁶ from the infliction of the blow upon Digges up to the discharge of Anderson, who had been apprehended on a charge of murder. He rejoiced that the people of the colony and the people of England had spoken out upon the matter, and that the press had exercised its power in defence of the slave. He stated his object in addressing the meeting that night to be chiefly to obtain funds for erecting chapels and schools. Would the people of England help him in that work, so that those who had been reared in slavery and in ignorance might be educated in all that was useful? They looked forward to the day when the song of freedom should be sung and the note should be struck in the Southern States: the Northern breeze should catch the sound, and these 45,000 escaped slaves on British soil would extend their hands over the line to give their brother a happy welcome and hail him as 'a man and a brother.' The lecturer resumed his seat amidst loud applause.

On the motion of the Rev. H. I. Roper, thanks were voted to the lecturer, and the meeting separated after singing the doxology.

Notes

1. 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).
2. 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
3. Psalm 76:10.
4. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
5. For further information on the 'Anderson case', a reference to the US and UK national controversies that resulted from John Anderson's murder of his white enslaver in his successful self-liberation journey from bondage to Canada, see Harper Twelvetrees, ed., *The Story of the Life of John Anderson, The Fugitive Slave* (London: William Tweedie, 1863); Patrick Brode, *The Odyssey of John Anderson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Robert C. Reinders, 'The John Anderson Case, 1860–1: A Study in Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 56.4 (1975): pp.393–415.
6. Eliza is the name of a self-liberated mother in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe was said to have based the character of Eliza and her son Harry on real-life freedom fighters aided by Mitchell on the Underground Railroad.
7. He 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>
8. 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
9. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
10. For further information of the legal case involving the fight for the freedom of James Somerset, an enslaved man, in the British courts in 1772 see Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery: James Somerset and the End of Human Slavery* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 2006).
11. William Murray (1705–1793) was a white British barrister and judge.
12. The legal transcript of the Somerset Case is available online at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/rights/transcripts/somerset_case.htm
13. John Russell (1792–1878) was a white British politician. He was elected for two terms as Prime Minister of the UK.
14. The Crittenden Compromise of 18 December 1860 was the pro-enslaving vision of white US senator John J. Crittenden (1787–1863) who sought to embed and protect enslavement in the nation's law.
15. Jefferson Davis (1808–1889).
16. Daniel Webster (1782–1852).
17. Preston Brooks (1819–1857).
18. Charles Sumner (1811–1874).
19. John Brown (1800–1859).
20. John Anderson (1831/1832–?). For further information on the US and UK national controversies that resulted from John Anderson's murder of his white enslaver in his successful

- self-liberation journey from bondage to Canada, see Harper Twelvetrees, ed., *The Story of the Life of John Anderson, The Fugitive Slave* (London: William Tweedie, 1863); Patrick Brode, *The Odyssey of John Anderson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Robert C. Reinders, 'The John Anderson Case, 1860–1: A Study in Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 56.4 (1975): pp.393–415.
21. Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882) was a white Italian republican, political leader, and military general.
 22. 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).
 23. Eliza is the name of a self-liberated mother in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe was said to have based the character of Eliza and her son Harry on real-life freedom fighters aided by Mitchell on the Underground Railroad.
 24. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
 25. Harry is the name of the son of Eliza, a self-liberated mother in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe was said to have based the character of Harry and Eliza on real-life freedom fighters aided by Mitchell on the Underground Railroad.
 26. For further information on the 'Anderson case,' a reference to the US and UK national controversies that resulted from John Anderson's murder of his white enslaver in his successful flight from bondage to Canada, see Harper Twelvetrees, ed., *The Story of the Life of John Anderson, The Fugitive Slave* (London: William Tweedie, 1863); Patrick Brode, *The Odyssey of John Anderson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Robert C. Reinders, 'The John Anderson Case, 1860–1: A Study in Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 56.4 (1975): pp.393–415.



Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Leicester Chronicle*,
Leicester, Leicestershire, England, 21 June 1862, p.4.

ON TUESDAY EVENING last, the Rev. William M. Mitchell, a coloured minister from Toronto, Canada, author of the 'Underground Railroad,'¹ delivered a lecture on American Slavery, in the Town Hall, when, although the weather was exceedingly unfavourable, there was a large attendance. The Mayor (S. Viccars, Esq.) presided. The Mayor briefly introduced the lecturer, whom he said was a very highly respectable man, although some reports had been circulated to the contrary. Mr. Mitchell then stepped forward and delivered a long address with remarkable fluency and expression. He stated that there were three points of view on which he should speak of slavery, – first upon the system derived from personal observation; secondly the exposition of the underground railroad, and the effects of the present war upon the system; and thirdly, the exposition of the underground railroad in connection with fugitive slaves in Canada. He was born, he said, in North Carolina, in a wigwam, his mother being an Indian of the red tribe, and his father half negro and half white. The Americans told him that he had one-eighth of negro blood in him; but as he had never weighed it he could not tell. At any rate he was a man, and would be if he had all negro blood in him. (Applause.) The speaker next spoke of the breeders of slaves, speculators, and the mode of taking the slaves to market, giving an effecting account of the parting of mothers and fathers and children. The scar of the whip on the slave depreciated his value; and particular care was taken that no marks should appear on him at the sale; and just before the sale they were supplied with whisky, in order to make them appear active and lively. Forty thousand slaves had been bought annually lately. The domestic slaves were well dressed, and did not appear slaves; and it was a matter of purpose to have them so because domestic slaves with a good appearance added to the dignity of the owner. Anti-slavery principles were somewhat nipped in the bud from a partial knowledge of the condition of the slaves – from seeing only those that were more comfortable than the rest, and from being unable to get a true knowledge of the condition of the slaves. If a slave were to tell the truth to a visitor of how he was used, he would be whipped for doing so directly after the departure of that visitor. The underground railroad was called by that name because of its secrecy. It extended from 300 to 2,500 miles, but the larger number escaped between 300 and 1,200 miles, though some hardy slaves escaped beyond those distances. He had been engaged in this system twelve years, and he had been enabled to effect the escape of 1,700 slaves, amongst whom was the Eliza²

of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'³ He only wished that the number had been so many thousands. For aiding in the escape of Eliza, he was fined 200 dollars, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. His wife dressed Eliza as a gentleman, and put 'him' in the hands of the underground organization, and Eliza was taken away before a search warrant could be obtained by her pursuers, he refusing to let them come in until they had obtained one. The Quakers assisted much in this organization, for they were true to humanity, and the speaker gave illustrations, mentioning the name of Mr. Joseph Sturge.⁴ Three times he had walked between loaded revolvers to cut the ropes of the slaves and set them free. At that time he did not realise his danger: he relied upon the justness of his cause, and upon God. He proceeded to show that it was not true that the slaves had not natural affections like other people, by an interesting narrative, in which an aged slave after having placed herself in a place of safety in a Quaker's house, returned to the scene of her slavery and conducted her daughter, son-in-law, and grand-child, over the ground she had trodden before, until they at last reached Canada. Slavery could not be overdrawn. The salaries of many of the so-called Christian ministers were paid by selling slaves out of the Church. Seventy slaves had been willed to a college in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and from the product of their labour, the professors were paid. If they stole a horse they would be excommunicated, but if they stole human beings they would be good deacons and members. The child of Eliza was sold but not delivered. She suspected that the child was to be sold, and she listened at the key-hole. For a week sleep fled from her; and at midnight she cautiously crept out into the dense forest, making her way thirty-five miles to the Ohio river. She lost one boot, and the rocks would no doubt cut her feet to pieces, till nature was exhausted. At the dawn of day she found herself at the edge of that river, which was frozen over. White cracks were all over the ice, and looking back to the enemy, and pressing the child to her bosom, she leaped from point to point till she reached the opposite shore. At these crossing points, one of the organization of underground slavery was there to rescue, whilst her pursuers were on the opposite bank. This was in the year 1847, in January, and that night she was brought to his (the lecturer's) house, and he carried her child ten miles alternately with the mother. The lecturer next spoke of the influence of war⁵ upon slavery, and the Northern prejudice. The North would not liberate the slaves till they were forced to do so by necessity. The war had liberated 26,785 slaves, and slavery was doomed. He had never doubted that the North would overcome the South, but he did doubt the possibility of keeping the South. The Old Union was gone. The South was better prepared for defence than for an aggressive war; but the South could not subsist when the seaports and principal cities were stopped up, which the North was enabled to do, for the interior was nothing but dense woody forests. He now, to wind up, had come to this country to get contributions to build a chapel in Toronto, and a school for the education of 1,600 persons. He wanted £1,200 to complete the object. Mr. Mitchell sat down amid loud applause. – The Rev. Johnson Barker rose to propose that the most earnest thanks of the meeting be given to the Mayor for presiding that evening; and, in doing so, said that the lecturer had been the victim of some aspersion, but the rumour which had been floating about had been investigated, and had been found to be just as hollow and as empty as the air. – The Rev. T. Lomas seconded the resolution, and it was carried by acclamation. – The Mayor having responded, the meeting separated at ten o'clock, a collection being made at the doors, and books, entitled 'The Underground Railroad'⁶ offered for sale.

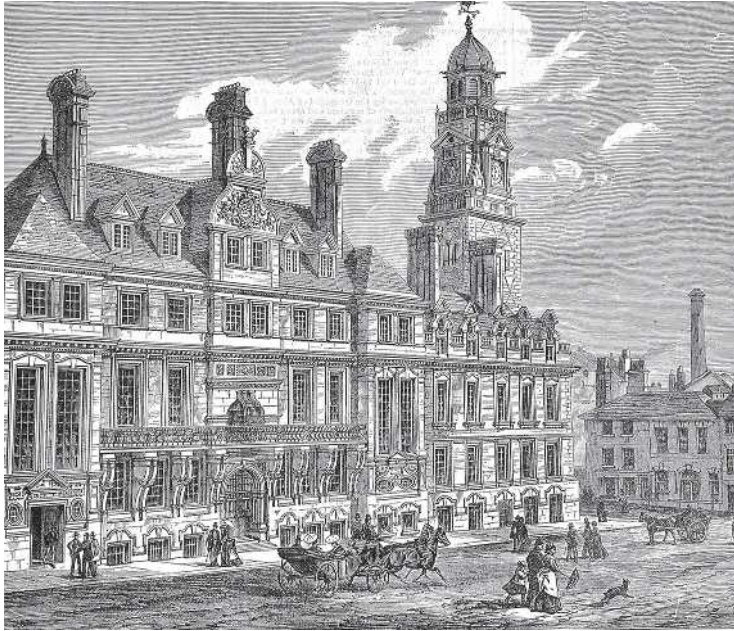


Figure 66 Print of the Town Hall, Leicester, England, 1876. Originally from *The Illustrated London News*. (Author copy.)



Figure 67 Photograph of the Town Hall and Square, Leicester, England, 1916. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. 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).
2. Eliza is the name of a white female adult character who was a self-liberated mother in white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Stowe was said to have based the character of Eliza and her son Harry on real-life freedom fighters aided by Mitchell on the Underground Railroad.
3. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
4. Joseph Sturge (1793–1859).
5. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
6. William M. Mitchell, *The Underground Railroad* (London: W. Tweedie, 1860).

NATHANIEL PAUL

(1793–1839)

Biographical History

BORN TO A family of freedom fighters, Nathaniel Paul was one of the pioneers of the Black transatlantic social justice movement and lectured on the British stage as early as 1832. His lectures against US enslavement and transatlantic racism in Britain, Canada, and the US were powerful condemnations of white enslavers and white persecutory violence, and at every opportunity he collected donations to support freedom fighters who had recently settled in the Wilberforce Settlement in Canada to secure their self-liberation from US enslavement.

He served as pastor to the Union Street Baptist Church located in Albany, New York, and he was a prominent leader in the local Black community. He was a writer, abolitionist, orator, educator, and political organiser: he created the Union Society of Albany for the Improvement of the Colored People in Morals, Education, and Mechanic Arts. He was chiefly involved in the organisation of the Wilberforce Settlement in Canada, a community named after the white British abolitionist William Wilberforce and founded with the vision to offer a new way of life for freedom seekers and Black people living and making new lives fighting for all freedoms in Canada, particularly those who had recently fled white racist attacks in neighbouring Ohio. He also gave antislavery lectures across New York, served as an agent for the first African American newspaper *Freedom's Journal*, and was appointed the first pastor of the Hamilton Street Baptist Church in Albany.

Paul travelled to Britain in 1832 on behalf of the Wilberforce Settlement and for three years he raised donations for this initiative while lecturing against enslavement, racial injustice, and colonisation; a movement developed by white racist and proslavery supporters to encourage African Americans to emigrate to the African continent.

Here we reproduce two speeches Nathaniel Paul delivered in 1833, in Devizes and Norwich, England.

Further Reading

Primary

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— 'An Address, Delivered on the Celebration of the Abolition of Slavery, in the State of New York, July 6, 1829'. Albany: Printed by J. B. Van Steenberg, 1829.

- Speech Delivered Against the Colonization Society, 10 July 1833, *Patriot*. Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit Mercy. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=274
- Speech Delivered at the Anti-Colonization Meeting in Exeter Hall, London, 13 July 1833. Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit Mercy. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=1913
- Letter to William Lloyd Garrison, 31 August 1833, London, England. Digital Commonwealth. Available online: <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:2z10zk51x>
- Speech in England, *The Liberator*, 14 March 1835. Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit Mercy. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=2345
- Speech before the Glasgow Emancipation Society, Scotland, *The Liberator*, 27 June 1835. Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit Mercy. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/archives/special-collections/index.php?collectionCode=baa&record_id=2383
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Secondary

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Anon., 'Slavery in the United States', *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*,
Devizes, Wiltshire, England, 31 January 1833, p.3.

THE REV. N. PAUL, a gentleman of colour, from Wilberforce Settlement, Upper Canada, delivered on Tuesday evening, at the Long Room of the Bear Inn, in this town, a Lecture on the state of Slavery, and of the free coloured population in the United States of America, together with an account of Wilberforce Settlement. The Chair was taken by G. E. Sloper, esq. – Letters were read from the Rev. T. A. Methueu, and the Rev. W. Money, expressive of regret at not being able to be present. Some preliminary observations were then made by the Chairman, in the course of which, the following extracts from a highly interesting letter from Mr. Wilberforce¹ to Mr. Paul, was introduced to the notice of the meeting: –

East Farley, near Maidstone, Jan. 14th, 1833.

DEAR SIR, – I am sorry for having been unable to return an earlier reply to your letter from Bath, of the 3d inst., and I am unaffectedly concerned at your having been misled by an inaccurate account of my movements, into a journey to Bath, in expectation of seeing me there. I am quite glad to hear that you have become acquainted with my excellent and highly valued friend, Mr. Jay. I speak my sincere opinion, when I say, that his acquaintance would be far more than a compensation for a much longer journey than from London to Bath. * * *

I do not know the precise district or spot in which Wilberforce is situated. If, as I believe, within the diocese of my worthy old friend, the Bishop of Canada,² when you return, I will give you an introduction to him, which I hope may be of use to you: – And now, my dear Sir, permit me to beg you to allow me to send you the inclosed trifle (£5.) as my contribution towards the fund which may be raised to promote the purposes of your settlement. It is a small contribution; apply it, however, as a slight pledge of my good will, with an assurance that I should be glad to augment it a hundred fold. Parliament is to assemble, I find on the 29th inst.; meanwhile, I will write to my friend, Mr. Buxton,³ and request him to turn his own attention, and that also of some *common* and *like-minded* friends to the subject of your undertaking, for the purpose of considering what course we may best adopt for the interests of your community. When you next write to me, pray mention how soon you would like to return to Canada, and also tell me the colony's situation. – With every good wish, I remain, dear Sir, your faithful servant, W. WILBERFORCE.

The rev. gent. then proceeded to address the numerous and respectable company assembled. His commencing remarks, which were of the most liberal and Christian character, were principally directed to the general system of Slavery, and the awfully dark and neglected condition of the inhabitants of Africa. After which, he proceeded to the particular objects of his Lecture, embracing remarks and facts, illustrative of the extent and degrading nature of Slavery in the United States – the present humiliating situation of the free people of colour in that country – and the origin, past progress, and future prospects, of the colony of Wilberforce, in the dominions of his Britannic Majesty in Upper Canada. From these it appeared, that there are (according to the census of 1830), 2,010,572 SLAVES in that boasted land of liberty! and of *free persons of colour* 319,467! Slavery is chiefly confined to what are denominated *the South & South-western States*, viz. District of Columbia, (the seat of the National Government,) Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri. It may probably surprise the people of this free country to be informed, that those who are denominated *free* in America, are not in *any* of the States entitle to *all* the privileges and immunities of *citizens*. Their condition, especially in each of the above named States, is truly deplorable. Though subject to taxation in common with all others, they are notwithstanding universally disfranchised; and having no incentives to rouse their energies and cultivate their intellect, they are obliged to submit to the mortification of being considered inferior to their oppressors. While they feel deeply sensible to their inferiority when contrasted with the more enlightened and accomplished white citizens, they are deprived by law of the advantages of education, – interdicted from attending as spectators the halls of legislation and courts of justice, – from fillings posts of honour; – are prohibited the use of the press and freedom of speech, – & forbidden by law to convoke assemblies of persons of their own colour, unless the worship be conducted by a *white* minister, – and of late, unconstitutional and cruel laws have been enacted to compel them to leave those States in which they were born; while in *no other of the United States* can these unfortunate and oppressed persons find an asylum without being subject to unpleasant and often to cruel restrictions.

Compelled by such degrading treatment, several families emigrated from Ohio and other States in the year 1829, and settled themselves in the beautiful and fertile tract of country which lies between Lakes Erie and Huron, under the sanction and protection of the British Authorities of Upper Canada.

This emigration was caused by the passing of an inhuman and obnoxious law, obliging every *free person of colour* to leave the state of Ohio in 30 days, or pay a sum of 500 dollars as security for not becoming a burden to the State; and in default of one or the other of these requirements, he was subjected to a punishment of the most degrading character. On the promulgation of this law by the authorities of Ohio, the free coloured people called a meeting to consider their future steps, when they resolved to request an additional 30 days, in order to decide on this important matter; this time was granted them. They immediately sent a deputation to the British Governor of Upper Canada, Sir J. Colborne,⁴ K.C.B. requesting to know how they would be received if they emigrated to that province. ‘The answer,’ said the rev. speaker, ‘was that of a true-born Englishman’, namely, ‘Tell *the free coloured people of constitutional America on the other side of the Lake, that we loyalists on this side the Lake pay no regard to colour, but to conduct; and that if they come to this*

province, they will be entitled to all the privileges of the subjects of the King of England.' On this they immediately left the land of their birth, and as many as were able at once located on lands purchased of the British Canada Company; others procuring labour at different spots as they were able. At the settlement, the emigrants immediately proceeded to clear the land, giving to their settlement the name of WILBERFORCE, in token of the unfeigned gratitude and high respect in which they hold that ardent friend of African Emancipation.

Since the formation of this infant colony, it has flourished beyond the most sanguine expectations of its warmest friends, and the settlers have been industriously employed in rearing comfortable log houses for their dwellings, and in bringing their lands into a state of cultivation. The God of mercy has graciously smiled upon the labours of their hands, so that they have raised during the last year enough to supply their necessities.

The Gospel has been introduced, and two Christian churches have been constituted, each of which has a pastor. A *Sunday School* has been formed and is in successful operation. – A *Day School*, also, promises to produce a very beneficial influence on the interests of the colony. In addition to these important institutions, a *Temperance Society* has been organised, which receives the countenance and support of the whole Colony, who have resolved to prohibit the introduction of *ardent spirits*, even as an article of merchandise. It is proposed also, to found in this colony a Seminary of education for Ministers and others, upon the principle of *manual labour*; that the students, by employing part of the day in *agricultural* or *mechanical* pursuits, may provide, either in whole or in part their own support.

But at the same time however, while all friends of the coloured people in America hail with delight the formation of this highly important Settlement, they cannot but deeply regret, that there are *thousands of free people of colour*, who are anxious to join their brethren at Wilberforce, but who do not possess the means of meeting the necessary expences for doing so. It is in behalf of those oppressed and unhappy individuals, and to promote the cause of education and religion, that Mr. Paul has been appointed as an agent to visit England, to appeal to the benevolence of the British people for such donations, either in *goods or money* as, for the accomplishment of such an object, they may be disposed to give. The sum necessary for the removal of a family consisting of six persons, would probably amount to £4. Whatever may be given will be sacredly appropriated either in assisting the coloured people in removing to Canada, or towards the Establishment of the contemplated seminary, as the donor may direct.

In the course of Mr. Paul's address, many instances of gross oppression towards the *free coloured people* in different States, were enumerated – many heart rending accounts of cruelties practiced on the *unoffending slave*, were detailed, which made the most manifest impression on the numerous and respectable audience, and called forth the honest and indignant expression of '*shame!–shame!*' on the perpetrators of such unjustifiable atrocities, and excited a feeling of deep interest and lively sympathy in every bosom. Throughout the whole of Mr. P's address, he was listened to with the most marked attention and breathless interest, and we doubt not that this case will receive the kind attention of every friend of freedom and humanity, in this town and neighbourhood. It would be impossible to do justice to the candid admissions – the manly bearing – the Christian feeling – the simple eloquence – the touching appeals,

of the speaker; and we feel persuaded that an impression was made on the minds of all present, in favour of this advocate of Christian freedom, and the cause of the oppressed, which will only cease with their own capacity for enjoying the rights and privileges of Englishmen.

At the close of the Rev. Mr. Paul's address, the Rev. R. Elliott proposed, and the Rev. Jos. Mayo seconded, a resolution, expressive of sympathy and lively interest towards the free coloured people of the United States, and the colonists of Wilberforce. The meeting broke up decidedly interested in the proceedings of the evening.



Figure 68 Bear Hotel, Devizes, England. From Charles G. Harper, *The Old Inns of Old England: A Picturesque Account of the Ancient and Storied Hostelries of our own Country*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1906. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
2. Alexander Macdonell (1762–1840) was a white Scottish religious leader and the first Catholic Bishop of Canada.
3. Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845).
4. John Colborne (1778–1863) was a white British army officer and Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada.



Anon., 'Wilberforce Settlement', *Bury and Norwich Post*,
Norwich, Norfolk, England, 11 December 1833, p.3.

ON THURSDAY EVENING a meeting was held in St. Andrews Hall, for the purpose of making known circumstances and aiding the objects of this settlement of free blacks and coloured people in Upper Canada.

Dr. Ash was called to the chair, on the motion of the Rev. J. Alexander, and expressed his regret that the ladies could not be accommodated in the orchestra, as announced. The Mayor had imagined that he was at liberty to grant the use of it; but the Hospital Committee, whose property it was, objected to its being so appropriated. In introducing Mr. Paul, whose ancestors had been stolen from their native land and sold to a West India planter, he hoped they would listen to him with attention, and sympathise with the sufferings of the Africans. He rejoiced that slavery had received its death-blow in the British dominions, but there was a deep debt which this country owed to Africa, and which they were now called upon to cancel.

The Rev. N. PAUL, a gentleman of colour, then addressed the meeting at great length in a very able manner. He appeared before them as the feeble but devoted advocate of his suffering brethren of Africa, bound down under the worst system of slavery that ever disgraced a fallen world. With slavery he could make no compromise, nothing but its entire extirpation could satisfy him. The Christian Church was awaking from her slumber to exert her strength in diffusing the Gospel; but amidst all the places of the earth that were receiving advantages from Missionary labours, Africa was almost entirely overlooked. In that quarter of the globe the laws of God were once known, and the arts and sciences flourished; but now her moral darkness was infinitely blacker than the sable hue of her sons. At the Cape and at Liberia light might be said to be sprung up, but all around was darkness. But he must leave her where he found her, in darkness. His present object was to make a few remarks on the system of slavery in the United States of America, and to relate the circumstances which gave rise to the settlement in Upper Canada, called Wilberforce Settlement,¹ with a view to promote the civilization and religious instruction of the blacks. The United States of America contained above two millions of slaves, being more than a sixth of the whole population, though slavery was abolished in 13 out of the 25 States. It was true that some of the slaves were used as kindly as the system admitted of: they were as well fed and cared for as a merciful man would treat his beast, and there were instances of extreme cruelty: but he would dwell upon neither, though

he had known slaves whipped till their backs were raw for praying to their God, or burnt to death for offences which in a white man were not capital. He knew many slaveholders abominated such cruelty, and would be as ready to hold up their hands against it as any of his audience. But he would state how the slaves as a body were treated. – Mr. Paul proceeded to state that the slaves were worked from dawn till dark, covered only with a piece of cloth round their waists, allowed only a peck of corn per week for food, and liable to be punished by master or driver at their pleasure, or even to be put to death, as, though it was a capital offence by law, the evidence of a slave is inadmissible. They are liable to be torn from their families, and it was no uncommon thing to see whole families sold, the father to be sent to the West, the mother to the East, and the children in another direction, without regard to their feelings and their prayers not to be separated. He had seen their tears and heard their bitter lamentations on being torn from each other to meet again no more in this world. – His brethren had feelings as acute as those of the white men, and what would be the feelings of that audience if a single scene of this sort were to take place in England. The whole island would be shaken to its centre, the stability of the throne would be shaken, the monarch who should authorise such an act would be compelled to abdicate. The cause of the formation of the Wilberforce settlement was, that no people of colour were allowed to be educated in the United States, nor to worship in the same places as the Whites. Even where there were no slaves these prejudices existed, and if a person of colour travelled out of his own neighbourhood, he was liable to be seized, and unless he could prove he was free was liable to be sold into

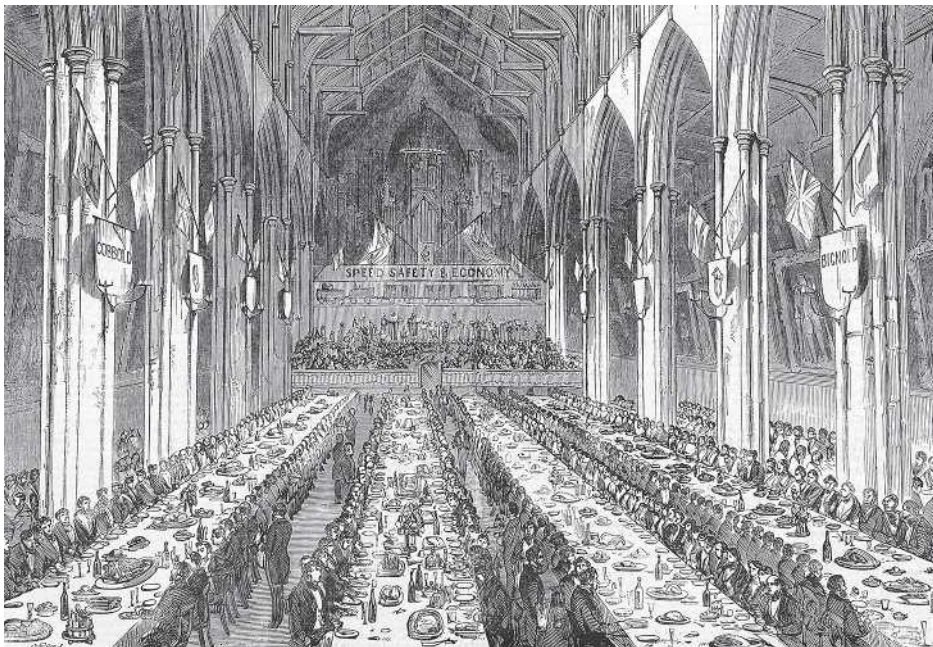


Figure 69 Print of a dinner in St Andrews Hall, Norwich, England, 1849. Originally from *The Illustrated London News*. (Author copy.)

bondage. In 1829 a law was passed in Ohio, compelling all coloured people, within 30 days, to enter into a bond of 500 dollars never to become a public expence, or in default to be immediately sold into slavery. The people of colour immediately called a meeting, the first act of which was to petition for 30 days longer, and they then sent a deputation to Sir John Cockburn,² the Governor of Upper Canada, (under whose patronage he, Mr. Paul, was now come over) to ask whether they could be allowed to place themselves under the protection of the British Government. This noble minded man bid them tell the Republicans of America, that British Royalists knew no distinctions of colour, but Blacks and Whites were equally entitled to liberty as his Majesty's subjects. At this announcement they wept for joy, and this had laid the foundation of the Wilberforce settlement. Here they had established an institution for young men, in which they had adopted a *manual system* of education: the scholar worked a part of his time and studied a part, and thus they became accustomed to habits of industry, and were found to make equal progress in their studies with those who did no work. It was for this institution that he asked their assistance. So far as he had gone in England the object had met with decided success, the English had nobly and cheerfully done their duty.

Notes

1. The Wilberforce Settlement was formed in 1829 in Ontario, Canada. See Nikki Taylor, 'Reconsidering the Forced Exodus of 1829: Free Black Emigration from Cincinnati, Ohio to Wilberforce, Canada'. *The Journal of African American History*, 87 (2002): pp.283–302.
2. John Colborne (1778–1863).

JAMES WILLIAM CHARLES PENNINGTON

(c.1807–1870)

Biographical History

JAMES WILLIAM CHARLES Pennington experienced enslavement in Maryland. He became a world-leading abolitionist, author, orator, preacher, and community activist. After securing his self-liberation to New York City, he served as a representative to the Negro Convention in Philadelphia from 1829 to discuss the emigration of African Americans to Canada and was still active in the organisation in the early 1850s. He studied at the Yale Divinity School but was prohibited from using the library or joining classes, a white racist persecutory act that prevented him from being formally recognised as a student. Against all the odds, he successfully managed to attend some lectures and in 1838 received authorisation to preach.

A key religious leader, Pennington presided over the marriage of Anna Murray Douglass to Frederick Douglass in September 1838. Later he became pastor for the Talcott Street Colored Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut, a historically Black church founded in 1826 which became the Faith Congregational Church and still stands today.¹ He served as president of both the Connecticut State Temperance Society, an organisation formed to promote the abolition of alcohol, and the American Missionary Association (an antislavery and religious organisation founded in 1846), while at the same time continuing to teach at local schools in Hartford, Connecticut. He travelled to the British Isles as a delegate to the second World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1843 and dedicated his life to the campaign against enslavement and racial injustice.

Pennington was an accomplished author, writing *A Text Book of the Origin and History of the Colored People* in 1841 and publishing his autobiography *The Fugitive Blacksmith* in 1849. He returned to England for his own safety in 1849 after he failed to legally purchase his own freedom in New York. In the same year, the University of Heidelberg in Germany awarded him an honorary degree as a Doctor of Divinity, and with his liberty purchased through international donations largely led by white abolitionists he travelled home to the United States in 1850. Pennington worked with freedom fighter and social justice reformer Henry Highland Garnet (see ‘Henry Highland Garnet’ in this volume) and Dr James McCune Smith, a leading abolitionist, physician, and activist, to found the Legal Rights Association, an organisation which aided African American freedom fighters in their challenges against segregation on public transport.² He

also became a conductor on the Underground Railroad and worked closely with the New York Vigilance Committee. Pennington travelled to England once again on the eve of the US Civil War (1861–1865), and served as editor for J. H. Banks, a formerly enslaved freedom fighter from Alabama who published his autobiographical narrative in Liverpool in 1861. He returned to the United States and preached in the southern states, particularly in Jacksonville, Florida and Natchez, Mississippi.

Here we reproduce Pennington's speech that he delivered in Newcastle, England, in 1843.

Notes

1. Further information on the Faith Congregational Church is available online at: <https://connecticuthistory.org/reverend-james-pennington-a-voice-for-freedom/>
2. James McCune Smith (1813–1865) was a leading African American physician, antislavery campaigner, social justice reformer, author, educator, and political organiser.

Further Reading

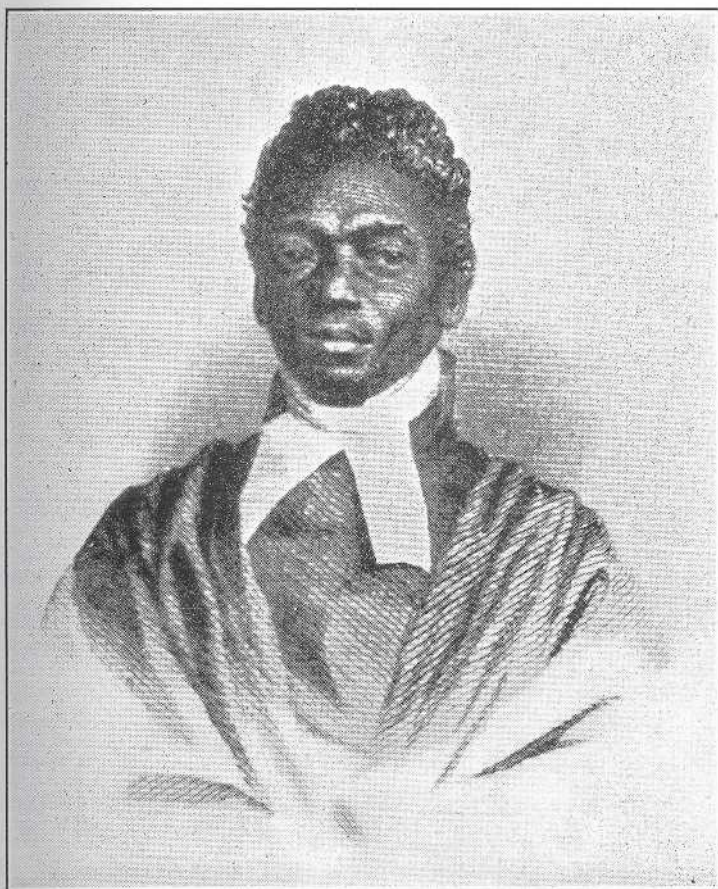
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J. W. C. PENNINGTON

Figure 70 James W. C. Pennington, from Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*. Washington DC: The Associated Publishers, 1921. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'American Slavery. Soiree to Dr. Pennington', *The Newcastle Guardian*, Newcastle, England, 27 April 1850, p.3.

ON TUESDAY EVENING, a public tea-party was held at the Temperance Hall, Nelson-street, to meet Dr. Pennington, and to present a mark of respect and attachment to him and the cause with which he is associated. Nearly four hundred persons sat down to tea, which was kindly provided by about twenty-five of the ladies of Newcastle. The Rev. D. Browning was absent through indisposition, and the Rev. J. Pringle and J. C. Houston had other engagements which prevented them from being present. The meeting in the evening was crowded . . .¹

After a short address from the Rev. G. Bell, the Rev. Dr. PENNINGTON was introduced to the meeting. He said he felt emotions of peculiar delight, gratitude, and pleasure in appearing before the meeting. He had long heard and read of Newcastle, and some of the prominent names amongst her citizens had long been known to him, especially in connection with what he considered to be one of the greatest and most powerful movements against slavery – the free produce movement. These names had long been prominent in his mind and uppermost in his heart, and he was glad to have such a favourable introduction to so large a number of the Christian inhabitants of Newcastle. He was glad because he had an opportunity of pleading the cause of his suffering and outraged countrymen, and he wished to make an appeal on behalf of the women and children of his country. He remembered how many dreary and melancholy hours he passed when a child, for want of proper parental care; and he often looked on his own child, and whilst loving that child, and endeavouring to prepare the way for its usefulness and happiness, he had to send up a petition to Almighty God that it might never be called to drink of the cup of which he once drank – the bitter cup placed by the rude hand of the tyrant to every slave child's lip. 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. The first impression he had was in connection with his wants as a child, having no mother to fly to for protection when her services were most needed. This experience followed him up to the age of ten or eleven years, when he was placed at the blacksmith's trade. He was then so small that he had to make a mound of earth on which to stand to blow the bellows, and from eleven to seventeen year of age he frequently worked from twelve to twenty hours out of the

twenty-four, and from having to swing a heavy sledge hammer from day to day at so early an age, his arms were now crooked, and he could not straighten the joints of them. If he had enjoyed the proceeds of his labour he should not now complain, but what he complained of was, that after being overwrought, under-fed, and otherwise abused, none of the proceeds of his labour should be treasured up for himself for the purposes of education or the comforts of after life. Another painful item of experience to the youthful mind of the slave was, that nothing like filial obedience could be exercised towards the parent. There might be a wish in the heart of the child to obey its parents, but the will of the master comes in and prevents it. A young man, however enterprising, may have a desire to treasure up the means to make his father and mother comfortable, but in the eye of slavery he has no father or mother, and when he sees them reduced to age, infirmity, and want, he may burn with desires to provide for them, but that is all he can do. He then described a scene he witnessed, which he should never forget, that of his master lashing his father with a cow-hide; the tyrant, he said, saw his emotions, and perceived the spirit of a son working in his bosom, and therefore scrutinised him and his movements narrowly. Instead of commending the Christian feeling in his bosom, and endeavouring to educate him as a youth should be educated, he began to tread on his heart strings more rudely, and to speak more indignantly to him than ever; and he should never forget the systematic, careful, and undeviating course he took to insult and outrage his feelings, his object being to crush all those tender ties that belong to mankind. If they find a slave contented with his position, they trumpet it to the world; having first extracted from his bosom the last spark of humanity and aspirations for liberty, they seek to make him feel that he is an exception to all other classes of the human family, and that he must submit to be treated as no other class, and then they boast of it as an argument for continuing slavery. Another deplorable thing in connection with slavery was the lamentable condition of slave children, of whom there were upwards of 800,000 in America. Up to the age of twenty-one years, he had no recollection of ever having heard any of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity plainly stated, or ever having heard the name of our common Redeemer. It seemed almost incredible that such a mass of human beings should be reared in a land which boasted so loudly of her Christian institutions, but there were thousands of youth amongst them in just that position at the present time. The cup of slavery daily became to him more bitter, and at length it was filled to the brim. One of his sisters was taken as a maid-servant into the house of her master – a situation always regarded as a perilous one, and his mother, who had the courage to watch over her, being convinced on one occasion that she was in danger, hesitated not to speak to her tyrannical master, and to remonstrate with him. She was told that if she opened her mouth again about the child, she should receive thirty-nine lashes upon her bare back. He (Dr. P.) remembered the outrage upon his father, and he now said to himself that if he remained longer, nature would be driven to extremes, and he at length resolved to make his escape. It was a painful crisis – to turn his back upon his father, mother, and sisters, without intimating to them where he was going; but, after weighing the matter well on both sides, he concluded that it would be the safest and best to say nothing. After travelling several nights and concealing himself by day, he had an impression that he had got upon free soil, and therefore ventured to travel by day; but he found himself far out of the way, and as he came near a tavern, he was arrested by two men in a barbarous and cruel manner, and taken into the

tavern. These men endeavoured to ascertain from him who his master was, in order that they might take him back and get a reward of two hundred dollars; but, as he refused to give them the information they required, they sought to bring him before a magistrate, that they might detain him till they heard who was the owner. None of the magistrates were at home, and they therefore returned to the tavern where a number of people had assembled to see the runaway slave. At last he told them he belonged to a large gang driving to the far South, and that when they got to a certain town, his master was taken ill with the small pox, and died. This acted on them like magic, and when they heard of the small-pox they began to move off. Seeing a wood about four hundred yards off he watched his opportunity to escape, and after being in the custody of these men from nine in the morning until sunset, he was left in the charge of a little boy, from whom he got away into the wood, just as night was setting in. After travelling three miles through the briars and thorns of the wood, he ventured to strike into the road, and at length got beyond the bounds of slavery. He was then without a home; but God in his providence had a place ready for him, and he should never forget the opening of that door on a frosty morning in November, and the pleasant face of that Friend by name and Friend by nature, who said to him ‘Come in, take thy breakfast, and get warm.’ He was indebted to the society of Friends not only for opening the first door to him, but the first copy of the New Testament was placed in his hands by a Quaker lady. He resided for some time in Pennsylvania, where his character for usefulness began to be formed, and when he removed to New York, he attended a Sabbath school, taught by members of the Baptist and Presbyterian bodies and the Society of Friends, a kind of union school, designed to elevate the character of the negro population who were excluded from the other schools. He then began to feel a desire to be educated, and when he became a subject of Divine grace, he saw that slavery was robbing the slave of salvation, and he resolved from that time to devote his whole life faithfully and perseveringly to overthrow this system, and for the last ten years as a teacher and public lecturer, he had thus laboured. After acceding to Mr. Bruce’s request, and giving a specimen of the slave’s music, he invited their serious attention to the free labour movement. He had visited, he said, several stores in this town, and he found that free labour cotton could be obtained of as good quality and as cheap as the slave labour cotton, and he trusted they would give the preference to the former, and thus show the slave holders that as honest men they could not deal with them until they gave up their slaves, and paid them for their labour.

Mr. HAGGIE then in the name of the ladies present, presented Dr Pennington with a handsome purse containing twenty sovereigns, as a mark of respect to him, and to help him forward in his noble exertions to free the slave. Another sovereign was subsequently added to it by a working man, whose name was not mentioned.

Dr PENNINGTON returned thanks for the liberal donation presented to him, and promised that it should be faithfully applied.

The doxology having been sung, the meeting broke up.

Note

1. Before Pennington was introduced, some remarks on US enslavement were made by white British ministers who were occupying the platform.

JOSEPH CHARLES PRICE

(1854–1893)

Biographical History

BORN INTO A legally free family in North Carolina, Joseph Charles Price became a radical social justice activist, educator, and preacher. He was educated in a religious institution organised for children who had been born to formerly enslaved parents and furthered his studies at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, graduating in 1879. In 1881, he was invited to speak at the World Ecumenical Conference – a large gathering of Methodist ministers, in London – by James Walker Hood, an African American bishop with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Price remained in England to raise donations for the Zion Wesley Institute, an educational institution created in the 1870s as the precursor to Livingstone College in North Carolina, and for which Price served as its co-founder and first president. His British mission was very successful. He managed to raise US\$11,000, and his subsequent tours of the US, including California, were equally profitable. In 1886, he became President of the North Carolina State Teachers' Association. Four years later he was elected President of the Afro-American League in Chicago, an organisation dedicated to Black civil and political rights.

Here we reproduce Joseph Charles Price's speeches that he delivered in England: in Hastings in 1881 and Birmingham a year later in 1882.

Further Reading

Primary

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- ‘Joseph Charles Price and His “Peculiar Work”’: Part II, *North Carolina Historical Review*, 70.2 (1993): pp.130–152.



Anon., 'A Black Minister on Negro Life: A Series of Lectures in Hastings',
The Hastings and St Leonards Observer, Hastings, East Sussex,
 England, 1 October 1881, p.3.

ON SUNDAY LAST, sermons were preached at the Bourne-street Wesleyan Chapel, in aid of the trust fund, by the Rev. J. C. Price, M.A., of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in America. This was followed by a public tea in the schools adjoining the chapel, on Monday evening, after which a meeting was held in the chapel.

Mr. Partridge occupied the chair, and there was a good attendance of the members of the congregation.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the meeting said he was much pleased to have the gratification of meeting them that night. A chairman's duty was always a light one, especially when he carried out the old adage of doing as little as he could. They had met there for the purpose of defraying a debt on that building. Although a stranger among them, he had now become a resident. By the doctor's advice he had come there, but he had a better physician than his medical attendant, and that was Christ. He would not take up their time as there were a lot of speakers on the platform, amongst them Mr. Price, whom they were all eager to hear. When he (the speaker) heard his sermon on the previous evening he obtained spiritual good therefrom. He thought it a great marvel that the Gospel, after being wafted across the broad waters to a foreign land, should be brought back to their own country again.¹

The Rev. J. Price said that as he had several lectures to give during the week, he trusted they would not expect much from him. From what the gentlemen who had preceded had said, he was made out to be the speaker of the hour. He, however, hoped to meet them during the week, so did not intend to say much. He was not either altogether used to their climate. In America, where he came from, they had a lot of sunshine and very little rain. When he arrived at Liverpool he was surprised at the congregation of the elements at the time, for it was a misty rainy day, and combined with the smoke, the sky did not present a very pleasant appearance. A gentleman on board asked him how many rainy days they had in a year in his native country, and he said about 150. He (the speaker) then asked a like question, to which he received an answer of somewhere about 365. This weather he thought was pure English. He had come to England to learn, and would have to learn to eat. At their tea he was surprised that they ate so much. English people should eat. In his country

they had breakfast at eight, dinner at twelve, and tea at seven. This was all they had. The speaker then went on to give an account of the habits of the youngsters of his race, which very much amused the young folks present, and also of the descriptions of the women, whom he said very closely followed the fashion. In his country, before the abolition of slavery, they all used to pray in a whisper, for if the slave drivers heard them they would be whipped. There was one woman now living who was so scared that she still prayed in a whisper. Now with regard to the collections that were going to be made. While his people were making collections, they used to sing. They had no special hymns, but as long as they made two sentences rhyme it was all right. He would give them an instance –

There is a rumbling in the sky,
It must be Jesus passing by.

And

There is a rumbling in the ground,
It must be Satan turning round.²

They used to have stirring tunes, and this used to make the people give. Some of them were inclined to become very enthusiastic when a good sermon was being preached, and would call out ‘Amen!’ ‘Hallelujah!’ ‘Glory to God!’ and many would jump several feet in the air, the women especially doing so. Now he would sing one of their hymns while their collection was being made, and perhaps it would be the means of their giving liberally.

A collection which amounted to £5 19s. 6d., was then made. A vote of thanks to Mr. Price and the Chairman terminated the meeting.

NEGRO LIFE IN AMERICA

The first of a course of four lectures, in aid of Zion Wesley Institute at Concord, North Carolina, for the higher education of the negroes in America, was given by the Rev. J. C. Price, M.A., of New Berne, North Carolina, America, in the Central Wesleyan Chapel, Hastings, on Tuesday evening, the subject being ‘Negro progress in America.’ Mr. W. W. Pocock, occupied the chair, and there was a very good attendance.

The CHAIRMAN, in the course of his opening remarks, explained that he was one of the committee to the fund, on behalf of which Mr. Price was lecturing, and that the money which he obtained was forwarded to the committee, which was composed of English gentlemen, and by whom it was forwarded to Carolina. The speaker having further explained the object of the meeting called upon, The Rev. J. C. PRICE, who said that the negroes were making great progress ‘down south.’ They were making material progress in educational and religious life. They were making the desert fertile, and thereby accumulating wealth, which at one time they had had schemed out of them by the white people, but now had shown themselves quite equal to their white brethren.

While the collection was being made, the Rev. J. C. Price sang some of the hymns used by the negroes. The collection amounted to about £11. A vote of thanks to the

Chairman, proposed by Mr. Price, and seconded by the Rev. G. Penman, concluded the meeting.

THE NEGRO AND THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

The second lecture on the life of the negroes in North Carolina, was delivered on Wednesday evening, in the Market Hall George-street, by the Rev. J. C. Price, M.A., to a crowded and enthusiastic audience, the subject being, 'The Negro and the Temperance Movement.' Mr. Heavens occupied the chair, and briefly introduced the lecturer, who, on rising, was received with loud applause.

Mr. PRICE, in the course of his remarks, said it gave him great pleasure to be present that night, especially as he was there to advocate the cause of temperance. He had come there to speak of the negroes and the temperance movement. But he found the cause was not confined to the negroes, but that they themselves were largely connected with it. Some time ago, the negroes who inhabited North Carolina had a desire to become connected with the Independent Order of Good Templars,³ but it seemed that it was too good – at least the white folk thought so – and they would not admit them. After a time, they started a new Order for the negroes, who called it the 'Kitchen Order,' but, after a time, they refused to have anything to do with it, and they determined to have nothing less than the independent order. The English then took their part, and argued that as the Order was intended for men, and the negroes were also men they should be admitted. They stood their ground, and in the end gained their cause, which was wanted more among them than any other state in the world, as they had been in bondage 250 years, and the slave owners gave them stray whiskey and brandy to drown their spirits. Then followed a prohibition campaign, which lasted for three months, and by which it was intended to prohibit the sale of alcoholic drink in some of the states, and at the Congress was a congregation of all men, for the negroes then went forward among the whites as proud-hearted humanitarians. Then the vendors of the liquor came to the niggers, who believed strongly in the Bible, although they could not read it, and induced them to believe that it said nothing against drink in the Holy Book, and so gaining their weak point succeeded in getting their votes against the prohibition, and winning their own cause. It was like a story he heard, where a number of men, one of whom was red-headed, were out in a boat which capsized. As another boat was putting off to the rescue, a man on the quay cried loudly to them to save the man with the red hair. They did so and on returning to land, asked the man why he so particularly wished the red-headed man to be saved; was he a relation? No, the answer being given that he was indebted to him in the sum of 5s. Africa was now declared free from the curse of strong drink. They had come to that conclusion that foul drink, taken as a beverage, was an evil. There were men of his acquaintance who had been rich, but who had now come down to poverty through drink. He advised moderate drinkers to abstain altogether, for they would take a glass, and its reactionary force would compel them to take another, then these two would fight, and they would have to send down another to part them, which, instead of doing, he became partial to one, and took his part. Two to one not being fair, they had to take another glass to make both sides equal, and in the end would send down another to be judge of fair play on both sides. In New York they had a dead house, called the *Morgue*, and to which 5,000 bodies, found in the city, rivers, &c., were taken every year, and it was reported that eight out of every ten

went there through drunkenness. There were in the United States 150,000 men going down to the grave every year through drink. If the doctors would only admit it, nine-tenths of the cases they had, would be found to accrue from drink. In Northampton city there was altogether a different state of things, for there it was prohibited to sell intoxicating drinks. At one time the Sessions Court sat for three weeks, but now it did not sit two days. The doors of their gaols were open, and they had not a pauper in the workhouse. Both crime and pauperism were the results of drink. In North Carolina two-and-a-half millions of money were spent in drink every year, and several millions was the cost of prosecuting criminals. But what they wanted was to see throughout the States a similar state of things as existed in Northampton city, and depend upon it, the day was not far distant when the sale of the accursed poisonous drink would be prohibited.

In the course of his address, the lecturer's remarks met with continued marks of approval from the audience, who completely filled the room to the doors.

At the conclusion, a collection was made on behalf of the object already mentioned above.

THE FUTURE OF THE NEGRO

This was the subject of the lecture delivered by the Rev. J. C. Price, M.A., at the Wesleyan Chapel, Norman-road, St. Leonards, on Thursday evening. The chair was occupied by Mr. Fox-Wilson, who was supported by the Rev. R. P. Downes, the Rev. G. Penman, Mr. C. J. Womersley, &c.

The meeting having been opened by the singing of a hymn, and the offering of prayer by the Rev. G. PENMAN, The CHAIRMAN made a few introductory remarks, after which The Rev. J. PRICE proceeded with his lecture. Having explained the reason of his mission to this country, the rev. gentleman said he appeared before them to solicit funds for the erection of an institution for the training of young men and women for work among their own race in the Southern States, and as this was his object, it was but natural that he should dwell particularly on the negro race, not so much in respect to its past history as to its future, and hence they had taken as a subject that night. 'The future of the negro race.' There were many ways in which they could consider and discuss this question, for it was a subject which was a very broad one, and there were many aspects to which he could direct their attention. First of all, they might speak of the future of the negro as to his capabilities, whether or not he is capable of development in his intellectual and moral nature. But it would be a vain consumption of their time if they were to begin to discuss this, as they were all aware that the negro was capable of great development. There were many men who had gone down in the history of America who had proved this. They might be sure of this, especially when they thought of such men as Frederick Douglass,⁴ for a greater man than he for eloquence upon the rostrum, upon the hustings, or upon the stump, America had not. The rev. gentleman then went on to refer to several other negro gentlemen who had made their mark in the history of the world. Thus there was no need to speak of the future of the negro as to his material capabilities. Whether the negro could sell, whether he could carry on a business, whether he could do everything in the mercantile world, they all knew that the negro was capable of doing things that other men did, and there were merchants in the great capital of the United States who carried on their duties with dignity and with honour. That

was already a matter of history. But he wished to speak to them that night about the higher education of the negroes, so that in the future they might be able to instruct their fellows in the Southern States, and possibly those in Africa too. There were some men who would always have it that the negro race was dying out. But it was a well known fact that any race that was persecuted and oppressed always seemed to multiply. That was an historical fact. They should take the oppression which had been put on nations. They should go to Egypt, go to Russia, or go to any country where the people had been oppressed and persecuted, and what was the result? Had they died out? No, when they persecuted the Israelites,⁵ what were the results? They multiplied. And when the negro race was persecuted that race multiplied, and, he thought, would continue to multiply. Why should God take the negro off the earth more than anyone else? (Applause.) Those men who talked about the negro race were, he thought, wrong in their head, because they were not going to die out. God had got a work for them to perform, and they were there that night to perform it. The peculiar work of the negro race was to educate themselves, so that they might rescue their less favoured brothers from the paths of sin and vice which many of them were now following. Therefore, it was their duty to do all they could to raise the negro from the ignorance under which they now lived, and they would do that by giving liberally to the collection which would now be made.

A collection was then made, and the meeting terminated with the Doxology.

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

This was the title of the lecture delivered by the Rev. J. Price, at the St. Leonards Wesleyan Chapel, last (Friday) evening, to a large and attentive audience. At the conclusion, a collection was made in aid of the funds for the building of a college for the higher education of the negroes.

Notes

1. Several white British reformers including the chairperson (Mr Partridge) took to the platform to welcome the audience and officially introduce Price.
2. For further information on these lines from an African American spiritual, see John W. Work, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals: A Comprehensive Collection of 230 Folk Songs, Religious and Secular, With a Foreword by John W. Work* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1940).
3. A white-led temperance organisation founded in the US in 1851. For further information on the organisation's racism, see David M. Fahey, *Temperance and Racism: John Bull, Johnny Reb, and the Good Templars* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).
4. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895). See 'Frederick Douglass' entry in *Speeches*, included in this volume.
5. Exodus 1:1–10:15. See 'Enslavement of the Israelites', British Library, available online: <https://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/inside/goldhaggadahstories/enslave/enslavement.html>



Anon., 'Negro Progress in America', *County Express, Brierley Hill, Stourbridge, Kidderminster, and Dudley News*, England, 24 June 1882, p.2.

AN INTERESTING LECTURE on 'Negro Progress in America' was delivered on Tuesday night in Birmingham by the Rev. Joseph C. Price, a coloured pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Mr. Price is on a lecturing tour through England to raise funds to build a college at Concord, North Carolina, where negro missionaries may be trained to be sent among their fellows in Africa. By his efforts £2,000 has already been raised in this country towards the £20,000 that is required for the purpose. – Mr. Price, who is a graduate of Lincoln University,¹ Pa., in demonstrating the great strides towards civilization that had been made by the negroes in the fifteen years that have elapsed since their liberation, gave instances of the flourishing state in which many of the negro normal schools and colleges were at the present time. Before freedom was granted them, they were not permitted to organise themselves into churches, but now 2,000,000 of their number were members of some religious body, and of these three-fourths were church-goers. He thought that proportion would compare very favourably with the number in this country. Those churches, too, were organised and controlled by negroes, and that fact spoke well for their capabilities of government. At the time of their being freed they had nothing but their muscles and their hopes, but they went out and laboured; and now less than 586,000 acres of tilled land in the State of Georgia alone belonged to negroes. This property, which was one-fortieth of the whole State, had been acquired by the colored men in the teeth of the prejudices of their former masters. The acquisition of property had a refining influence upon them. It was a mistake to suppose the negro was lazy. In the years 1859–61 the quantity of cotton exported to England was about 3,000,000 bales a year. In 1881 the quantity exported had increased to double that number of bales, and nearly the whole of that was grown by free negro labour in the Southern States – (applause). Take away the coloured man from these States and their bone and sinew was gone, and that fact was recognised by the Southern planters. It had been said that the negro would die out, or become merged in the white races. What were the facts? In 1874 there were 700,00 negroes in America. In 1863 the number was 4,000,000, and in 1880 they had still further increased to 7,000,000, showing a rate of interest of 33 per cent. That did not look much like dying out, and as for merging into the white races, only one in every 75,000 negroes intermarried with the white. The Red Indian was disappearing rapidly, but there was a radical

distinction between the Indians and the negroes. While the latter adopted as far as they could the habits and civilisation of the whites, the former refused to change their primitive modes of life. – The lecture was interspersed with the singing of some plantation melodies. – The room was filled, and the audience frequently testified interest in the lecture by their applause.



Figure 72 J. C. Price, 'An Orator and Educator in the Church', 1921. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)

Note

1. Lincoln College, present day Lincoln University, is a historically Black university established in 1854. See Andrew Lindstrom and Oliver Carruthers, *Lincoln: The Namesake College: A Centennial History of Lincoln College, 1865–1965* (Lincoln IL: 1965); ‘History’, available online: <https://www.lincoln.edu/about/history>

CHARLES LENOX REMOND

(1810–1873)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO ‘SARAH Parker Remond’ entry in both *Speeches* and *Narratives*.

Charles Lenox Remond was born legally free to social justice activists, liberators, and Underground Railroad conductors, Nancy and John Lenox Remond, world-renowned radical freedom fighters, in Salem, Massachusetts. He worked with white US antislavery campaigner William Lloyd Garrison and his abolitionist society based in Boston, the American Antislavery Society. He was one of the first Black lecturers to cross the Atlantic Ocean to speak on behalf of Garrison, the Society, and its supporters (also known as Garrisonians); he travelled to London for the first global conference on abolition, the World’s Antislavery Convention held in 1840.¹ He then launched an antislavery lecturing tour across the British Isles, directly benefitting from Garrison’s pre-established networks in Ireland and Scotland in particular. He was renowned for his oratory and inspired the creation of several antislavery societies. His sister Sarah Parker Remond (see ‘Sarah Parker Remond’ in *Speeches*, included in this volume, and in *Narratives*), a social justice advocate in her own right, was to follow in his footsteps a decade later. In the US, he campaigned tirelessly against enslavement, white racism and violence, and discriminatory segregationist practices on public transport. Like his fellow activists Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Wells Brown (see entries on all three figures in *Speeches*, included in this volume), Remond campaigned for African American men to serve as combat soldiers in the Union Army. In the post-war years, Remond became a member of the American Equal Rights Association. He died in Boston in 1873.

Here we reproduce Charles Lenox Remond’s speech that he delivered in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and in Manchester, England, both in 1841.

Note

1. The World Anti-Slavery Convention organised by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society was held in Exeter Hall, London, in June 1840. For further information see Miriam, Usrey, ‘Charles Lenox Remond, Garrison’s Ebony Echo: World Anti-Slavery Convention, 1840’. *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 106.2 (1970): pp.112–125.

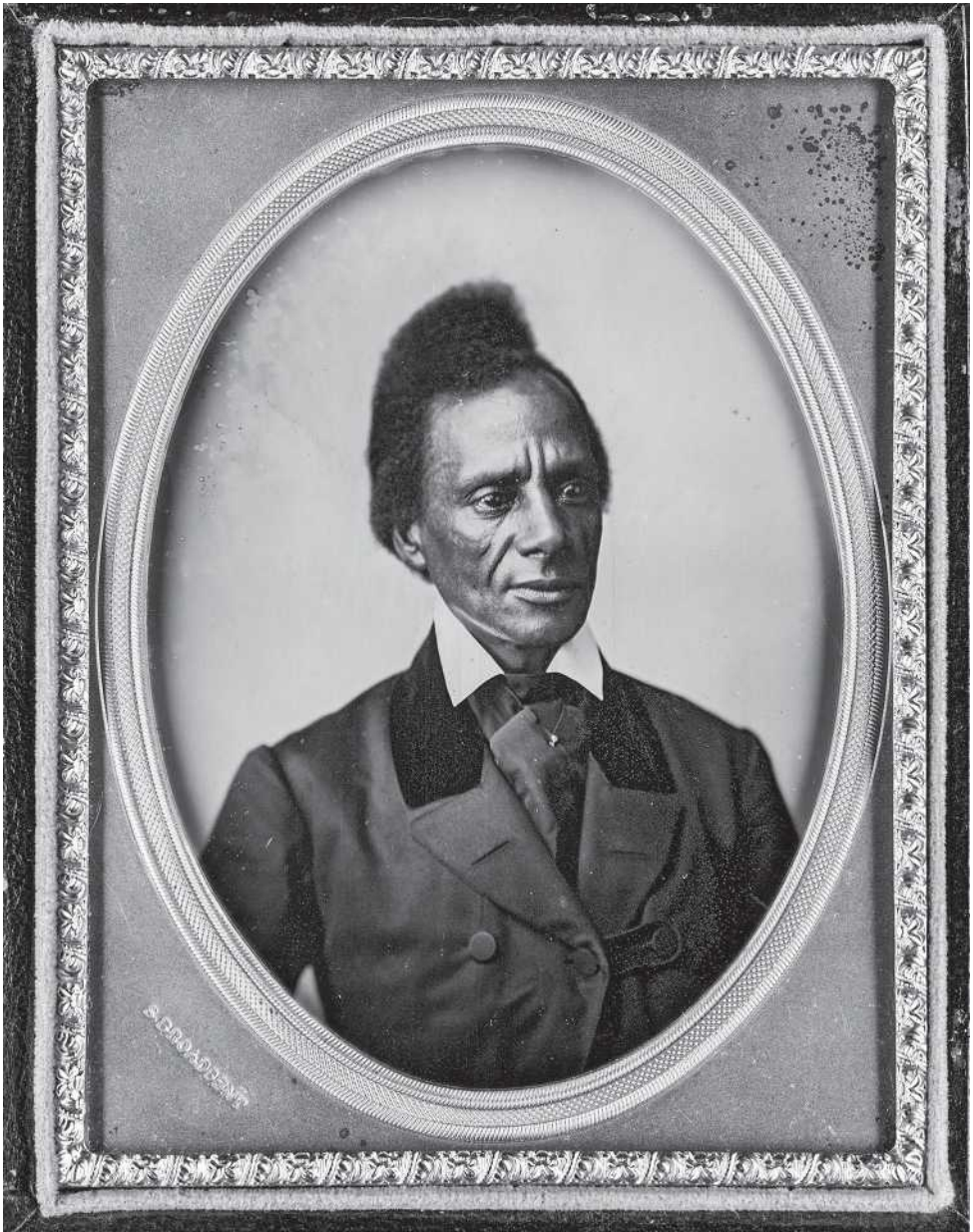


Figure 73 Charles Lenox Remond, c.1851–1856, by Samuel Broadbent. (Digital Commonwealth, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts.)

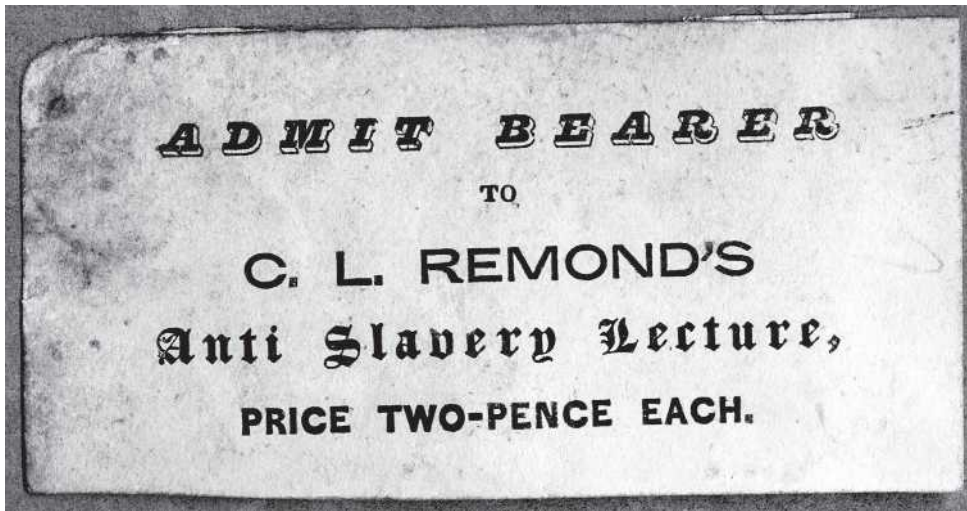


Figure 74 'Ticket for an anti-slavery lecture by Charles Lenox Remond', 1841, Cork, Ireland. (Cork City and County Archives Service.)

Further Reading

Archives

Black Abolitionist Archive, University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, Michigan. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/find/special_collections/digital/baa/

Remond Family Papers 1823–1869, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. The Finding Aid is available online: <https://pem.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/resources/342>

Primary

Remond, Charles Lenox, 'For the Dissolution of the Union', in Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham, eds, *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, pp.205–208.

— 'The Right of Colored Citizens in Traveling', in Philip S. Foner, ed., *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, pp.189–190.

— 'The Rights of Colored Citizens in Traveling', in Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham, eds, *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998, pp.189–194.

— 'Speech by Charles Lenox Remond', 29 May 1844, in C. Peter Ripley, ed. (with Roy E. Finkenbine, Michael F. Hembree, Donald Yacovone), *The Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol III: The United States, 1830–1846*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991, pp.442–446.

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Anon., 'Mr. Remond's Lecture on Slavery', *The Belfast News-Letter*,
Belfast, Antrim, Northern Ireland, 15 October 1841, p.2.

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING last, Mr. Charles Lennox Remond, a man of colour, and a native of Rhode Island, United States, delivered his introductory lecture on Slavery in America, to a very crowded and fashionable audience in the Assembly Room, Commercial Buildings. The room, in fact, was literally crammed, and indeed, the Committee in selecting such a room, seemed to have but little idea of the interest which the Belfast public in general take in the rights and liberties of the poor slave. James Standfield, Esq, the long-trying, faithful, and persevering advocate of the poor 'nigger,' having introduced Mr. Remond to the meeting, that gentleman proceeded to say that the subject of slavery was such as involved the liberty of the United States of America; and, that with all their boasted freedom – falsely so called – he could compare their present position, as regarded the countenance and support which they give to slavery, to an asp in a basket of flowers. (Hear, and cheers.) He then proceeded to read an extract from the American Declaration of Independence,¹ to show that the system of slavery was entirely at variance with the spirit of that declaration; and condemned, in very emphatic terms, the gross insistency of the American people in that and in many other respects. He spoke also in a very favourable manner of the rapid strides which the Anti-Slavery Society² were making, and their exertions to extinguish the abominable and inhuman traffic in human blood which was at present carried on to such an extent; and he hoped that the day was not far distant when their efforts would be crowned with success, and that the stain of slavery, which had so long rested on the page of their country's history, would be blotted out for ever. After dwelling at considerable length, and with much warmth on the sufferings and cruelties to which that unhappy race were exposed, he read, in support of his arguments, a list of the punishments which were inflicted upon them for trifling as follows: – 'If more than seven slaves are found together in any road, without a white person, twenty lashes a piece; for visiting a plantation without a written pass, ten lashes; for letting loose a boat from where it is made fast, thirty-nine lashes for the first offence; and for the second, "shall have cut off from his head one ear;" for keeping or carrying a club, thirty-nine lashes; for having any article for sale, without a ticket from his master, ten lashes; for travelling in any other than "the most usual and accustomed road," when going alone to any place, forty lashes; for travelling in the night without a pass, forty lashes; for being found in another person's negro-quarters, forty lashes;

for hunting with dogs in the woods, thirty lashes; for being on horseback without the permission of his master, twenty-five lashes; for riding or going abroad in the night, or riding horses in the day time, without leave, a slave may be whipped, cropped, or branded in the cheek with the letter R, or otherwise punished, not extending to life, or so as to render him unfit for labour.’



Figure 75 High Street, Belfast, by Robert French, c.1906. (Lawrence Photograph Collection, National Library of Ireland, Flickr Commons.)

Notes

1. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
2. The American Anti-Slavery Society was an antislavery organisation founded by William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) and other white abolitionists in 1833 and it was disbanded in 1870.



Anon., 'American Slavery, and Prejudice Against Colour', *Manchester Times*, Manchester, Lancashire, England, 27 November 1841, p.3.

DURING THE LAST fortnight Mr. REMOND, an interesting and eloquent gentleman of colour, who more than twelve months ago appeared at a public meeting of the British India Society in this town, has been delivering a course of seven lectures, illustrative of the subject of slavery in the United States, of which he is a citizen, and of the prejudice against the coloured population of his country. Mr. Remond is the most able advocate of the noble cause for which he pleads we have ever heard among those who are of his own complexion. He is thoroughly master of his subject. 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. His audiences were deeply attentive to his addresses. He traced the history of slavery in the United States from its commencement; he dwelt upon its varied and ramified relations to the state; its deep-seated connexion with the churches of almost all denominations; the compromising and time-serving spirit of the statesmen of America; the frequent violation of the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and the spirit of the constitution; the actual workings of slavery as exhibited in the evidence of a host of creditable witnesses; the origin and operations of the deceptive scheme of colonization, which has for twenty years been used as a means of sustaining prejudice and retarding the cause of abolition; the rise and progress of the Anti-Slavery Societies of America, with the persecutions, dangers and martyrdoms of those who were the pioneers in the cause; the sackings, spoliations, and burnings of pro-slavery mobs, and the horrors of Lynch-law legislation; the successive triumphs obtained by the inimitable friends of human rights; the present cheering position of the cause; the relation of slavery to this country commercially, politically, and religiously; the results of emancipation in the West Indies; the effect of that measure upon the United States; the means to be employed for the universal extinction of slavery, and the duty of all classes in this country to effect that grand and benevolent object.



Figure 76 Photograph of Market Street, Manchester, England. (Author copy.)

SARAH PARKER REMOND

(1826–1894)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO ‘SARAH Parker Remond’ in *Narratives* and ‘Charles Lenox Remond’ in *Speeches*, included in this volume.

A renowned human rights and social justice campaigner fighting for the freedoms, equalities, and civil rights of all Black people worldwide, Sarah Parker Remond was born legally free to social justice activists, liberators, and Underground Railroad conductors, Nancy and John Lenox Remond, world-renowned freedom fighters in Salem, Massachusetts. Like the radical speaking careers of Maria W. Stewart, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth, Remond faced restrictions on the public political platform because of her race *and* gender. All too aware that few platforms, particularly in Britain, welcomed Black women as speakers, she, along with her feminist forebears, defied these barriers and had an extraordinary impact on the transatlantic antislavery movement. Individually and together they changed history.

Remond campaigned relentlessly for social justice and worked alongside the white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and his abolitionist organisation based in Boston, the American Antislavery Society. In 1853, Remond was physically assaulted by white racist persecutors and violently removed from a theatre in Salem, Massachusetts, after her refusal to move to a segregated section. Not to be defeated by white racist persecutory hate, she successfully sued the company for damages. Her revolutionary and heroic actions led to the desegregation of theatres in Salem. In 1858, she travelled to Liverpool, England, and organised a lecturing tour across England and Scotland in particular, utilising William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist friends and contacts who welcomed her into their homes and helped arrange publicity for her lectures.

In 1859, Sarah Parker Remond spoke alongside Frederick Douglass (see ‘Frederick Douglass’ in *Speeches*, included in this volume) during his second trip to the British Isles, and was very successful at reawakening antislavery feeling in towns across England. Remond, as a Black female liberator on the British stage, was unusual in her abolitionist activism for speaking so graphically about the sexual violence and abuse Black women faced in enslavement, particularly when she recounted the heroic story of enslaved women such as freedom fighter Margaret Garner.¹ On stage, Remond positioned

herself as a representative of the millions of enslaved people, reminding her predominantly white audiences of their white privilege, and urging them to support the antislavery cause, appealing to white women in particular in a shared ideology of sisterhood. During the US Civil War (1861–1865), she denounced the Confederacy, the alliance of eleven southern states that seceded from the federal government to protect and uphold enslavement, and she spoke out against the racism of proslavery US apologists and defenders on British and US soil. While in London, she undertook medical training and moved to Florence and Rome to practise as a physician. She died in 1894.

Here we reproduce Sarah Parker Remond's speeches that she delivered in Ennis, Ireland, in 1859, Leigh, England, in 1860, and Birmingham, England, in 1861.

AMERICAN SLAVERY.

MR. **FREDERICK DOUGLASS**, the distinguished Abolitionist of Rochester, U. S. ; **MISS SARAH PARKER REMOND**, a Coloured Lady, of Boston, U. S. ; and **WILSON ARMISTEAD**, Esq., Author of "A Tribute for the Negro," &c., will deliver **ADDRESSES ON AMERICAN SLAVERY**, in the **CORN EXCHANGE**, Wakefield, on **THURSDAY EVENING**, January 12th, 1860.

The **Rev. C. J. CAMIDGE**, M.A., Vicar of Wakefield, will preside.

Chair to be taken at **Seven o'clock**. Doors open at **Six o'clock**.

Free Admission.

Figure 77 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by Frederick Douglass and Sarah Parker Remond. (The British Library Board, *Barnsley Chronicle*, England, 7 January 1860, p.4.)

Note

1. Margaret Garner (1834–1858) was a revolutionary freedom fighter who fought to secure her own and her family's self-liberation from enslavement with her husband and children in 1856. For further information, see Mark Reinhardt, *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Further Reading

Archives

Black Abolitionist Archive, University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, Michigan. Available online: https://libraries.udmercy.edu/find/special_collections/digital/baa/

Remond Family Papers 1823–1869, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. The Finding Aid is available online: <https://pem.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/resources/342>

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Anon., 'Miss Remond's Anti-Slavery Lecture', *The Clare Journal and Ennis Advertiser*, Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, 17 March 1859, p.4.

MISS REMOND, WHOSE appearance is remarkably feminine, and graceful, coupled with a quiet, dignified manner, a well toned voice and pleasing style, of annunciation, proceeded to address the meeting. – She said she stood before the enlightened assemblage, the representative of four millions of men and women, robbed of every right, deprived of every privilege – a race of outraged and injured fellow-beings, whose wrongs should command the deepest sympathy, and the redress of whose grievances should of right obtain the heartiest co-operation and the most energetic aid from all lovers of freedom in every civilised country (hear, hear, and cheers). She pointed out that this question, as it stood, involved not alone the destiny of the down-trodden and proscribed black slave, but also the destiny even of their oppressors. She drew in characters of the most dreary kind, the prominent features of the slavery system, as practiced and recognised in the slaveholding states. She showed that over thirty millions of people who ought to desire, not only to be free themselves, but that mankind should be free, were held in subjection by the influence of about one hundred and thirty-four thousand tyrants who uphold this vile system (hear, hear). America, with all her boasted freedom and intelligence, was at the foot of this vile despotism, which had taken shelter beneath the shadow of the Republic, crushing out the life and spirit of an entire people (cheers). She pointed out the obstacles which the true friends of slavery abolition had to contend with, the dire and inveterate prejudices, fostered and kept up against all, white or black, who are branded with the stigma of inheriting trace of the proscribed blood. She dwelt with scorn on the wretched distinction of caste, and the brutal insults daily offered to unoffending persons. She said she would not that evening enter on any descriptions of the revolting horrors, outrages and cruelties perpetrated every day under the abominable slave system; but she solemnly asserted that there were to be found throughout all the slave holding states numbers of characters, incidents and examples exactly similar to those portrayed in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's¹ admirable book² (hear, hear and cheers). In a strain of impressive eloquence Miss Remond pointedly dwelt on the possible mission of Britain in aiding to overthrow the iniquitous slavery system, and showed how compatible such aid was and would be with the spirit of true liberty. She [____?] all the adverse influences, grounded on so called commercial interest and otherwise, which stood arrayed against the true abolitionists of slavery in America, and met

them one after the other, in a series of able arguments. She quoted a thrilling passage from a recently-published work, describing the sale by public auction, of a beautiful white woman, yet a slave – her accomplishments, nay, her very religious and Christian virtue, subserving the purpose of the auctioneer to enhance the price in dollars of this human chattel. Miss Remond, after drawing a fearful picture of the sufferings of helpless women in slavery, concluded her long and able address by a powerful appeal on behalf of a cause the noblest in human energies could be engaged – the abolition of the hateful system by which man can buy, sell, enslave and degrade, his fellow-creatures. Miss Remond sat down amidst loud and enthusiastic applause.

Notes

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
2. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.



Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery by Miss Remond', *Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser*, Leigh, Lancashire, England, 1 September 1860, p.3.

A LARGE GATHERING OF all classes of the inhabitants of this town took place in Bethesda Independent Chapel, on Tuesday evening, for the purpose of hearing a lecture on American Slavery, from Miss Sarah P. Remond, a coloured lady of considerable celebrity. The chapel was crowded to overflowing before the time appointed for the meeting to be opened, and scores – nay, hundreds – went away greatly disappointed . . .¹

Miss REMOND then rose, and opened her address by stating that she esteemed it a privilege to represent there the American slave. Perhaps no class of human beings in the wide, wide world had suffered more from misrepresentation than her clients – her suffering countrymen and women, who by the laws, and the religion, and a corrupt public sentiment, were suffering every hour the degradation which it would be her task that night to lay before her hearers. It was not with the horrors of American slavery she should deal this night; one could not if they would, and she certainly on this occasion would not if she could, go down into the depths of the infamy of American slavery, nor portray the physical suffering of the slave. As to his mental, moral, and intellectual degradation no pen had ever written, no lips had ever uttered, what it really was; it was too contaminating. All knew what slavery had been in every age; they knew what it had been in our own colonies; and it was the same everywhere. She should endeavour to submit a brief outline of facts as to the effect of American slavery and its different influences in America, and then state what she wished to be done in order that the people of England might help to get rid of slavery. America had ever been a slave-holding nation; it enslaved the Indian before it enslaved the negro. King Philip² said, when his son was stolen and sold into slavery, his heart was ready to break and he was willing to die. Tyrants cared not of what complexion or nation their victims might be, and the American slave was of every complexion, viewing with the raven in blackness, or like many a slave woman she had herself looked upon, as fair as any of those then sate before her. The lecturer went on to trace the progress of slavery from its rise in 1620 in the then British colony of Virginia to that sadder hour when the American constitution in 1787 was allowed to incorporate this evil principle, and in which at this day it finds one of its firmest and strongest strongholds. Were it not a fact that it became part and parcel of

that constitution she believed slavery would long since have been swept away from the land; but the idolatry with which so great a portion of the American people regarded the document setting forth the independence of America – regarding it as above even the good God himself – that idolatry was such that the abolitionists could not reach it as they would. Still, at the present moment, although the power of slavery had been shaken as it never was shaken before, yet the tyrants were coming forward with all their strength in order that they might repel the spirit of freedom which, in spite of every effort, they would find they could neither crush nor obliterate. Again and again she (Miss Remond) was told it was quite time the slave should be emancipated, but the English mind little understood the obstacles which the friends of freedom had to contend with in the United states. They read the document of American Independence and saw the fact stated that all men were born free and equal, and endowed by the Creator with life, liberty, and happiness, and they asked what it meant? Every sixth man, woman, or child was a slave, a chattel, a thing, with no more right in the estimation of the laws than a horse or a sheep in the pastures of Old England that night. They little dreamt that the whole executive, legislative, political, religious, and social influences of the country were welded and bonded together against the slaves and their friends; they little dreamt what a corrupt public sentiment did for her suffering countrymen and women. Ah! the sad fact was here: American slavery had not only treated black men and women like chattels and things, but every other man and woman, be they white or black, who identified themselves with the cause of the slave, must be sufferers also. Ah! more than this; it had found out the finer feelings of the soul, but their hearts were insensible to the curse of American slavery; and this was the saddest of all the sad features of American slavery, that the hearts of the great mass of the American people could not be reached because slavery had done its sad work upon them; and therefore it was a question which should command the attention of the civilised world, whether the interest and sympathy of the public should be given for vice or virtue – whether every Englishman and woman would say ‘I prefer the former;’ for what was American slavery? Wesley³ termed it ‘the sum of all violence.’ Every imaginable and conceivable crime was comprised in American chattel slavery as it exists in the 19th century. No matter what a man’s position in American society may be – whatever the circle in which he moves – if he identify himself with the American slave, it is sufficient to brand him at once, and public opinion is in arms against him. She (Miss Remond) was sorry to say that there were ministers who came over to this country, who being more or less implicated in the curse of slavery, were received into English society as fellow-worshippers. The actual slaveholder perhaps was not so favoured, but those who partook with them in communion were received here, and in a greater or less degree were doing the work of the slave-holder in Old England. It was only slightly felt at present. She (Miss Remond) hoped the British public would take the matter in hand, and so keep their hands clean from that accursed thing – American slavery. (Applause.) Women now had no power to protect themselves from the brutal Legrees⁴ of the southern plantations. There was no marriage; virtue was set at defiance. Twenty thousand slaves were raised annually in the more northern of the slave states in the same manner that the farmer raised sheep for the market in Old England. This one fact should settle at once and for ever, in the minds of every man and woman who loved the virtue, what American slavery is, and should induce them at once to raise their protest against it.

Give to the abolitionists the strength of British opinion; that was what they desired above everything else. Every word spoken in England in denunciation of slavery went across the broad Atlantic and had ten times the power of public opinion there, because the opinion of England once pronounced was recognised and received and acted upon throughout the civilised world, but nowhere more than in America. She would not say they liked it, but it was felt. The words of Lord Brougham⁵ and other men who were able to exert an influence, exercised in America she could not tell how great an influence. Let not British opinion recede one iota from what it had ever been! The lecturer proceeded vividly to depict the prosperity and intelligence of the free or northern states, and stated that while there were 16 slave states there were 15 free. At the last census there were, as far as could be ascertained, in the northern states, 17 millions who were entirely free and where slavery was prohibited by law. The number of slaveholders was only 27,000, and this was an important fact, because this was the power which wielded the greatest influence in the land, notwithstanding that the number was very small. There were about four millions of slaves and not quite one million of free coloured persons. This was independent of 25,000 Germans who were cultivating free labour cotton. It was very rarely that a German bought a slave. Englishmen, when they went to the southern states, became planters frequently, but Irishmen almost invariably did so as soon as they could. We heard a great deal about slavery in Ireland, and even in Old England men and women had said to her (Miss Remond) ‘We are slaves.’ But compare the condition of the poorest peasant in Ireland with the state of the slave, and no man or woman would venture to say the state and circumstances of the latter were not immeasurably worse. She was sorry to say that when the Irish went south, though they did not go in great numbers, they almost invariably became slave-owners. This only proved that tyrants were of no particular race, and that Peiro⁶ suffering in the dungeons of Naples was only an illustration of a malevolent spirit which existed all the world over. If the northern free states, where wealth and industry were to be seen on every hand, had but said ‘American slavery shall be abolished,’ come what might, it would have been abolished long since and swept away out of the land; but political and religious influences – and religious influence the most because it was the strongest – had kept the slave in his chains. It was religious influences which obtained the passing of the infamous fugitive slave law. The sentiment of the New England States repelled it and the people said ‘We cannot obey it’; but Daniel Webster,⁷ with an eye to the presidential chair, came forward and said ‘The people of the north must obey it,’ though he could not have enforced that precept if he had not brought religious influence to bear upon it. Sermon after sermon was preached from the most influential pulpits in favour of 1000 dollars fine and six months’ imprisonment on any man or woman who gave a cup of cold water or a crust to a suffering, exhausted, and hunted fugitive from slavery *en route* for Canada. The clergy and the missionaries in America were all on the side of slavery. They had no other object in holding intercourse with British opinion than to uphold slavery. She (Miss Remond) wanted the people of England to see to it. Let them watch the signs of the times, and let them not suffer this corrupt and corroding influence to grow one iota in Old England. (Applause.) Let neither the cotton nor any other commercial interest influence them in favour of slavery. Give American Slavery no quarter. Say to those ministers who come over here ‘Go loose your fettered fellow-creatures at home before you come here to preach Christ to a people who have long since swept

chattel slavery from their possessions.' Now, as to the free coloured people; how were they treated! Nominally free they were, and yet they were hated as though they had committed some great crime. With few exceptions the churches were closed against them, unless they would sit out of sight in some corner pew. If they went to the communion table they must go last. It seemed almost sacrilegious to mention Christianity in connection with such proceedings. The earnings of the slaves amounted annually to 125 million dollars, and yet not one cent did the slaves themselves over have. It might be wages were lower in Old England than they should be. She (Miss Remond) had no word of encouragement to offer to any who oppressed the working classes of England and Ireland, but it would be insulting to compare American slavery with the condition of the working classes in this country. What slave-holder dare enter the walls of the humblest peasant's cottage and take one of his little ones away into bondage? Where in England if a man entered a cottage and seized the peasant's wife, and the husband resisted, the intruder would have power to shoot him dead? If any man in America resisted the slave master, he (the master) had power to take the other's life. But this was not all. Slavery had laid hold even upon the free white men and women. Cases had been decided, the courts consigning such persons to slavery, and especially women. Here the lecturer went on to discourse most eloquently on heroism never to be surpassed, which had been exhibited by women under such circumstances, and especially the thrilling incidents in connection with the escape and recapture of Margaret Garner,⁸ who had resolved to obtain for herself and children or to die in the attempt. Such cases were happening every day. A hundred and fifty millions of victims were made every year to this system, and what was worse, at the present time, the slave trade was increased in order that England might have more cotton. Think of the one fact – of the taking of all the earnings of these men and women, of robbing them, which was the least of all their sufferings, and yet there were millions in England that night who lived on the unremunerated toil of these slaves. She (Miss Remond) did not think those who were thus dependent were as guilty as might be imagined. Not that it was not a sin to live on the unpaid earnings of other men and women, but so long as American slavery existed it could not be avoided as one way in which the cotton market would be supplied. She (Miss Remond) did not attach much importance to slave-grown cotton. She felt that the system must be uprooted before the use of slave-grown cotton could be totally dispensed with. But still it had been proved over and over again that if there was an increasing demand for free-labour cotton there would be a more general disposition to produce it; and she had facts to produce showing that cotton known to be slave-labour cotton was sold for free labour cotton, and deception therefore was only added to the other fact. If we are to use slave-labour cotton let us use it as such, and not encourage deception. Let England help the abolitionists to abolish the system of slavery altogether. Let them purchase free labour cotton if they could get it, but let not to the crime of slavery be added deception. If only would add to the difficulty. But England should speak out emphatically on this question of American slavery. Let the people of England put those of America in a position to say 'We have no part nor lot in this matter – morally and religiously we have nothing to do with it.' The English people would not allow a monopoly in anything else, but they would allow one in cotton; they allowed 27,000 slave-holders to have a monopoly, and yet they were told that if cotton were not forthcoming there would be a revolution in Old England. But the cotton question

was not one of interest for her. It was enough for her to know that men and women were deprived of every privilege. She cared not whether the abolition of slavery in the West Indian colonies was a failure as attempted to be proved by the *Times* and other pro-slavery parties; but let the people of England beware of the spirit of slavery creeping into their own country. Miss Remond cautioned the English people against the prevalent disposition to entertain social prejudices against people of colour, and she replied to the question sometimes put in England, ‘Do you want us to fight for the American slave?’ by saying, ‘No; the abolitionists, the uncompromising friends, of the slave, never advocate anything but moral suasion; they say if any one has a right to fight for liberty it is the American slave, but we do not feel that it is expedient to fight, only as a last resort.’ When people could advocate the liberation of prisoners in Italy, whose suffering was not one-tenth that of the poor slave – when they could boast of such heroes as Garibaldi⁹ and Peiro, she (Miss Remond) was glad of it, and yet some of those who extolled the deeds of such men could denounce a slave insurrection as a thing not to be tolerated. However, in spite of all obstacles 40,000 fugitive slaves were that night under the banner of Queen Victoria, and beneath the banner of St. George they found a shelter which the stars and stripes denied them. (Applause.) In conclusion, the lecturer called upon the women of England to lend a helping hand in this cause. The citizens of America were waiting for the sympathy and co-operation of the people of England. They wished them to say ‘We do hate this accursed thing; we will not give our influence either in the social circle or in the religious world to a system like that.’ ‘I speak,’ said Curran,¹⁰ ‘in the spirit of our laws which makes liberty commensurate with, and inseparable from, British soil; – which proclaims even to the stranger and sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon British earth, that the ground on which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of Universal Emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced; no matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon him; – no matter in what disastrous battle his liberty may have been cloven down; – no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery; – the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in her own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of the chains that burst from around him; and he stands – redeemed, regenerated, disenthralled, by the irresistible genius of “Universal Emancipation.”’ ‘Let not,’ added Miss Remond, ‘the descendants of such a man as that be wanting in this our trial hour for freedom.’ She then sat down amidst enthusiastic plaudits.

Notes

1. Here the chairperson of the meeting discusses US enslavement and introduces Sarah Parker Remond to the audience.
2. Metacom, also known as Metacomet, King Philip, or Philip of Pokanoket (c.1638–1676), was the ‘sachem (intertribal leader) of a confederation of indigenous peoples that included the Wampanoag and Narraganset’. He ‘led one of the most costly wars of resistance in New England history, known as King Philip’s War (1675–76)’. Further information is available at ‘Metacom: Wampanoag leader’, *Britannica*, available online at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Metacom>
3. John Wesley (1703–1791).

4. Samuel Legree is the name of a white male enslaver, persecutor, and torturer in white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).
5. Lord Henry Brougham (1778–1868).
6. Piero Maroncelli (1795–1846), a white Italian liberal poet and musician.
7. Daniel Webster (1782–1852).
8. Margaret Garner (1834–1858) was a Black revolutionary freedom fighter who fought to secure her own and her family's self-liberation from enslavement with her husband and children in 1856. For further information, see Mark Reinhardt, *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
9. Giuseppe Maria Garibaldi (1807–1882).
10. John Philpot Curran (1750–1817) was a white Irish politician and orator.



Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery by Miss Remond', *Birmingham Daily Post*, Birmingham, England, 25 January 1861, p.3.

LAST EVENING MISS Remond, a coloured lady from America, delivered a lecture on the above subject before a numerous audience assembled in the Temperance Hall, Upper Temple Street. His Worship the Mayor presided, and Mr. Recorder Hill occupied a seat on the platform. Claiming for the Negro, at the outset, the full rights given by God to those beings, whom he had made 'a little lower than the angels',¹ the lecturer demanded the authority by which America held four millions of her brethren in bondage; and turning to advantage the cogent arguments with which, in its boast of pre-eminent freedom, the Union had so abundantly furnished the opponents of the negro traffic, she left the slavemongers without a shred of right or reason on which to support their practices. She then gave a description of the state of society throughout America; showed how slavery was interwoven with the interests of every class; and pointed out the almost utter hopelessness of effecting the abolition of slavery by any home influence, other than by the fearful crisis that must come one day, if, indeed, it had not come already. Adverting to the cases of Anderson² and John Brown,³ she expressed her firm adherence to the moral suasion principle, but at the same time claimed for them an equal right with a Washington⁴ or a Garibaldi⁵ to fight for the freedom of their race. She afterwards spoke of the present crisis in America, and said the events of the last six months had only revealed the hideous state of things that had existed there for the last thirty years – that had grown with the country's growth and strengthened with its strength. That the agitation would not decrease, that the matter would not be compromised, that the dislocation of the States would be completed she earnestly desired, for in that consummation and that only saw she hope for the slave; and having said this Miss Remond concluded with an eloquent appeal to the people of Great Britain for their sympathy and moral aid, observing that by a marvelous coincidence the opportunity of giving that sympathy had been thrust upon them at the right moment in the case of Anderson. The lecture, eloquent and powerful as it was, drew forth loud applause.

Notes

1. Hebrews 2.7, Psalm 8.5.
2. John Anderson was a survivor and freedom fighter who travelled to Britain in 1861 after an extradition case. For further information on the 'Anderson case', a reference to the US

and UK national controversies that resulted from John Anderson's murder of his white enslaver in his successful liberation from bondage to Canada, see Harper Twelvetrees, ed., *The Story of the Life of John Anderson, The Fugitive Slave* (London: William Tweedie, 1863); Patrick Brode, *The Odyssey of John Anderson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); Robert C. Reinders, 'The John Anderson Case, 1860–1: A Study in Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations'. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 56.4 (1975): pp.393–415.

3. John Brown (1800–1859).
4. George Washington (1732–1799).
5. Giuseppe Maria Garibaldi (1807–1882).

MOSES ROPER

(1815–1891)

Biographical History

A RADICAL FREEDOM FIGHTER whose activism extended to the US, Canada, Britain, and Ireland, Moses Roper experienced enslavement in Caswell County, North Carolina, as a result of his enslaved mother Nancy's rape by her white enslaver. Of African and indigenous heritage, Roper was nearly murdered by his white female enslaver while just an infant but he was saved by the heroic actions of his grandmother. Despite the bodily and mental brutalities he daily received, he heroically tried to secure his self-liberation from enslavement between sixteen and twenty times, with each failed attempt resulting in his arrest, torture, and incarceration. Roper finally managed to secure his self-liberation from Florida in 1834 and briefly settled in New York and Boston, but he soon fled to Britain the following year after rumours his white enslaver had sent white men to the North to drag him back into enslavement.

While living and labouring in the UK, Roper was initially supported by white British abolitionists including Thomas Price, George Thompson, and Joseph Sturge, and he briefly attended the University of London in 1836. In 1837, he published one of the first autobiographical narratives written by an African American author on British soil, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Moses Roper*, a work which was printed in the US in the following year and went through multiple editions throughout the late 1830s and early 1840s. Five thousand copies were sold in Welsh, and an 1849 Canadian edition was published after Roper's move there. To raise money for his education, financial survival, and for the legal purchase of his family members, Roper embarked on an extensive lecturing tour of Britain and Ireland, speaking over 2,000 times. Alongside his powerful oratory, he circulated his narrative to abolitionists, the audiences of his antislavery meetings, and every white racist and enslaver he could remember in the US. He frequently exhibited weapons of torture and bravely denounced British racists who accused him of twisting the truth regarding the brutalities of US enslavement. Despite the intense sabotage and racist slander he received from white newspaper correspondents and white British abolitionists alike, Roper constantly challenged the white fragility and white privilege of his audiences. He refused to compromise on his descriptions of the brutalities of enslavement and graphically exposed the sadism of white enslavers as he was determined to share the truth of what he had experienced and witnessed.

In 1839, Roper married a white Englishwoman named Ann Price and together they had five children, three surviving to adulthood: Maria, who tragically later died, Annie,

Ada, Alice, and Maria, who also tragically died. Roper and his family moved to Canada in 1844, where he became a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Roper returned to the UK in 1846 and again in the late 1850s, lecturing until the beginning of the Civil War. During this time, Roper's marriage appears to have broken down, for his wife and children can be found living in England in the early 1860s while Roper returned to the US alone. A few years later, he briefly settled in New York in 1866, marrying again, before travelling to Canada in the 1870s, where he may have used the name 'Henry Roper'.

He commenced a short lecturing tour in Vermont during the 1880s, but financial hardship possibly drove him towards working as a farmhand in Strong, Maine, in 1890. After experiencing severe physical illness, Roper attempted to reach his home state of North Carolina; tragically, he died on the way at a hospital in Boston in 1891, alone, save his loyal dog St Peter who refused to leave his side. Against his final wishes, he was buried in a pauper's grave, where he remains to this day.¹

Here we reproduce speeches that Moses Roper delivered in Leicester in 1838, in Bradford in 1840, and in Hereford in 1855, all in England.

Note

1. Moses Roper is buried at Grave 23 Row 34, Section C in Mount Hope Cemetery, Boston, in a pauper's grave. We are grateful to Augusta West for bringing this information to our attention and for sharing his death certificate with us. See also Anon., *Boston Globe*, 12 April 1891, p.2.

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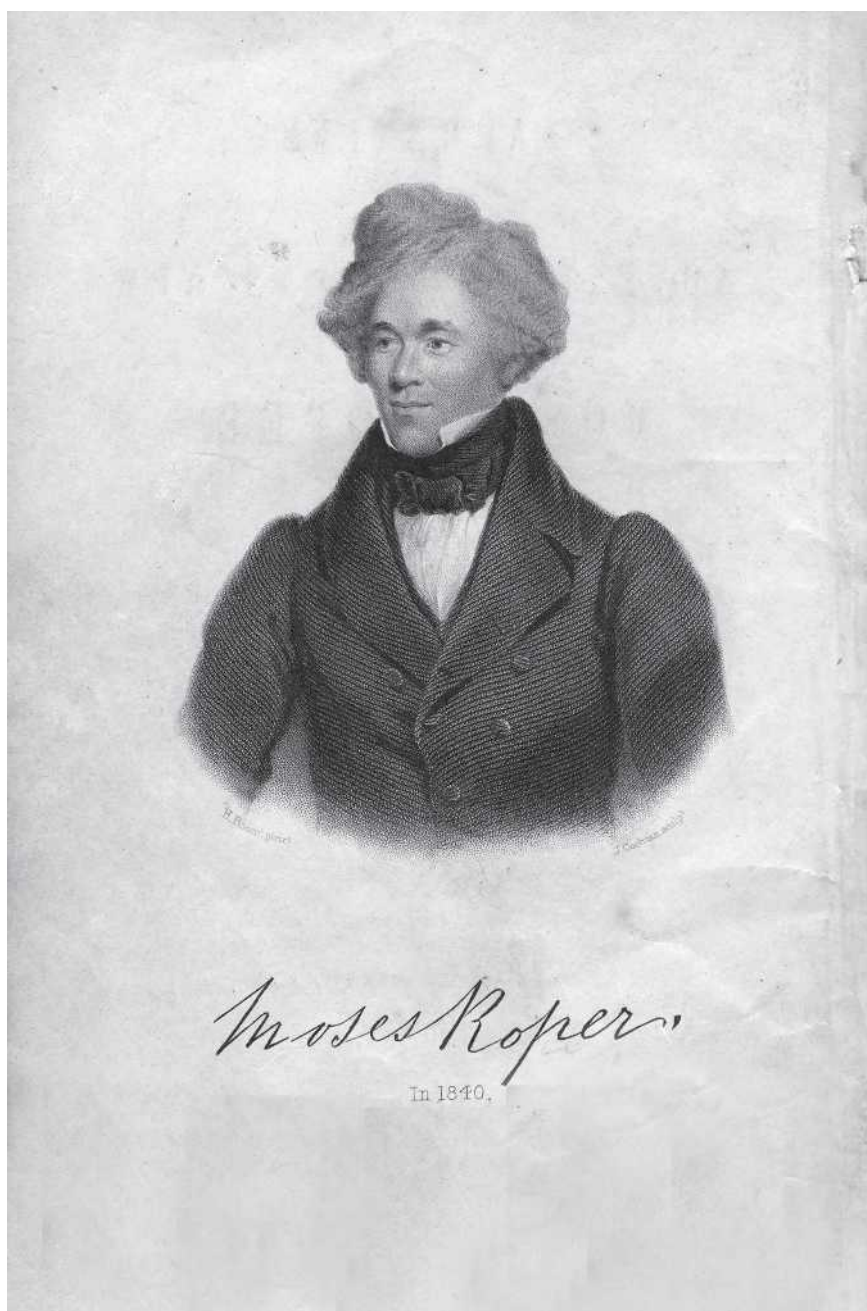


Figure 78 Moses Roper, author portrait from Roper, *Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery*. Berwick-Upon-Tweed: Published for the author and printed at the Warder Office, 1848. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Leicestershire Mercury and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties*, Leicester, Leicestershire, England, 19 May 1838, p.2.

A VERY NUMEROUS AND respectable assemblage was convened at the Harvey Lane Chapel on Wednesday evening, to listen to the statements of Moses Roper, an American slave, who succeeded, after making repeated attempts, and undergoing the most cruel punishment, in effecting his escape from that country about two years ago. Though, from unavoidable circumstances, but brief and limited notice of this meeting had been given, the place was crowded by an intelligent and deeply-interested auditory, who could not fail of having their aversion to slavery strengthened, their sympathies awakened afresh, and their energies aroused to increased exertions in behalf of the oppressed, by the details which were then given.

The Rev. J. P. MURSELL having briefly explained the object of the meeting. MOSES ROPER, who is a tall, athletic individual, of an intelligent, and somewhat commanding appearance, proceeded to address the meeting as follows: – I only come before you this evening, to give you a statement of facts. Very likely you have heard a great deal of slavery in the West Indies and other parts of the world. All I profess to do is to give you some account of what I have seen myself of slavery. I shall not attempt to make a speech, but merely to give you fact upon fact. All who have read anything of slavery must know that slaves have not the advantage of practicing to speak in public, nor even of learning to read. There is a law in the United States, that if more than three slaves are caught together, they shall receive 50 lashes with a whip called a '*negro flopper*.' For teaching a negro to read, for the first offence, there is a fine of 500 dollars (about 100 guineas English money;) for the second offence, *death*! A gentleman whom I was living with, was a deacon – I am ashamed to say it, being also a member – of the Baptist Church. I shall have to mention Baptists and Methodists often, but with no reflection upon such in this country. The great majority of the slaves are Methodists, and the slaveholders Baptists. The Methodists will allow their slaves to go inside their chapels, but the Baptists seldom do. I was a member of a Baptist Church for years, yet never entered a chapel. There are some of the slaves who can exhort, and they hold prayer-meetings in the woods. Mr. Gooch, my master, came to one of these meetings, when a slave was in prayer, and ordered him off the estate, telling him that if he caught him again, he would give him 100 lashes with the 'negro-flopper' which he held in his hand. [This instrument of torture, which is a large heavy-handled whip, with a thong of

immense thickness, was here exhibited to the meeting.] I have used this often when a driver, and have been flogged with it myself. They employ stout slaves for this purpose, and there is great art in using it. Some could cut a person's clothes off with it. The end of the handle is filled with lead two or three inches up, for the overseers, when the slaves resist, to knock them down. I myself was knocked down with it once; and I have seen hundreds so knocked down. The first or second time that I attempted to speak in public, about three months ago, when I was exhibiting this whip, a gentleman (who I afterwards found a pro-slavery man) got up, and said that he did not believe the statement. He said that a person, after he had given one lash, would have to rest five minutes. I said that I was not able to argue with him, but, having been a driver, if he would walk out into the street, I would give him 100 lashes without stopping. This whip is used by the *patrol*¹ who ride out on the Sabbath and at nights. From six to twelve planters go together, with this 'flopper' and loaded pistols. A slave cannot go out at night – not even across a street – without a pass from his master. If the patrol find him without one they give him sixty lashes. I have known slaves flogged when coming home from church. The churches in the Southern States are 5, 10, or 15 miles distant. The slaves cannot go to church or chapel without a pass, and most of the masters refuse it. This (exhibiting to the meeting a heavy club-like thing) is what is called the '*negro-paddle*.' [This instrument is in size and shape like a large cricket-bat, and perforated with three rows of holes on each side, the middle rows being the largest.] I have been flogged hundreds of times with the whip, but only twice with this. I would as soon have 100 lashes with the whip as one stroke with this. One stroke makes a large wale, & the second breaks it. A neighbouring planter had an unruly slave, as he was called, – I was an unruly slave myself, having tried to escape twenty or thirty times – This slave was brought from Virginia, from his wife, and he attempted to escape. Mr. Perry gave him 50 blows with this 'paddle,' and then cut the wales open with a saw. I saw him several times after, and saw the marks. People will say here, that this treatment is against the master's interest, and so is not likely. Now I could not read till I escaped, and I have had but 18 months education. But since I learned to read, I have been in the Anti-Slavery Office,² and have seen the worst statements in print, and yet I have read nothing like what I have seen, or even felt, excepting death – though I have been flogged in such a way that I would rather have been put to death. It is said here that it is for our interest to treat our horses well; and that it is the same with the planters and slaves. Suppose a planter had 400 or 500 slaves, as many have, and he were to go to whip one, and that one resisted. It would be for his interest to flog that one to death, for an example to the others. Though they do not allow the slaves to read or write, they have regular ministers in the Southern states, who preach to the Slaves. But these ministers are Slave-holders themselves. (Hear.) I have lived with and belonged to a Slave-holding minister, and have been flogged by him! (Hear.) They do not preach repentance, but obedience. Though I could not read I could repeat one text. I had heard it often when they were preaching to the Slaves. Sometimes they preach expressly to the slaves, and then they stand at the chapel-door and the slaves stand in the yard. This text was, 'Servants be obedient to your masters.' The last I heard preach from this text was the Rev. David Golightly, of Spartenburg county, who said, 'If your master gives you a cup of cold water you must say "Thank you massa!" If he gives you only a dry crust of bread, you must say, "Thank you, massa." If *he gives you a few cuts with the whip, you must say "Thank you massa."* It is all for your own good!' That was the most striking part of the sermon to me, and all I can remember. I

have found people here much interested with the Revival Meetings of the South and I have read many accounts of them in this country. I do not stand here to speak against revivals, but against hypocrites. For a man who can make merchandize of his fellow-man, cannot be a Christian, – cannot be a religious man. This is saying a great deal, but if you had felt what I have you would say so too. I have attended Revival Meetings – not exactly attended – but have been *taken to them for sale!!* for these meetings are the greatest slave markets. The Methodists hold these meetings – their camp meetings – for several days, when thousands are said to be converted. The Baptists hold their associations. There are persons who are regular slave-merchants, – who get rich by buying and selling them, as people do horses in this country. They buy up lots – from 50 to 100 – to attend these meetings. Some may think that these are persons who trespass upon and take advantage of these meetings; but I have seen members and ministers buying slaves of them and taking them home! (Hear.) The last Revival Meeting I was at, was near Greenville, where 15,000 or 20,000 people were present. The slaves were put out in rows as they generally are, for people to look at. A gentleman came from Greenville, and offered 550 dollars for myself. Six hundred dollars were asked for me, but were refused. On Sunday morning he came again and bought two female slaves. This man was said to be converted – at least he had been hallooing and shouting at the Revival Meeting. I notice this meeting because I was offered for sale, but I have attended others. I have been but seldom offered for sale, for I have generally been a domestic slave. I have been in all the stations which a slave could hold, from the highest to the lowest, and the highest is a low one. I had – before the slaves were taken to be sold – to see that they were dressed well; and to oil their faces – the very black ones – to make them shine. The majority of the slaves who are admitted into – I was going to say Christian churches – but into slaveholding churches, are not pious men; for they are admitted with a note from their masters, whether the masters are religious men or not. The masters say it is for their interest to have them members of churches, for they are more honest and better slaves. But many of the slaves who preach are pious men. One whom I knew, after the law was passed that not more than three slaves should meet together – (that is, not three on one estate – for there are 400 or 500 together on an estate – but three from different estates) which was done lest the slaves should communicate knowledge to each other, for if they could do that, they would be slaves no longer – this slave, after this law was passed, had a place erected several miles from any white man's house, in the woods, and collected several thousands of people together. On Saturday, his master, who had found him out, told him if ever he preached again on Sunday he would give him 100 lashes with the 'flopper' on Monday morning. This slave, like many others, said he had two massas, the one greater than the other, and he must obey the greatest. On the Sunday morning, the master went out, after breakfast, to visit some of his friends, and the slave hoped that he should be able to preach to the people – who would assemble, not knowing the order which had been given to him – and return before the master. But the master got home first, and this slave learned, from the domestic slaves, that he knew, and would flog him in the morning. So he ran away from Georgia to South Carolina, and came about nine miles from the place where I then lived. He secreted himself in a building belonging to a planter named Garrison. Garrison's wife saw him, and told her husband, who loaded his rifle; for the law is to call three times after a runaway slave, and if he will not stop, to shoot him. Once, when I had been taken, being fastened to a horse, with a collar riveted round my neck, I tried to ride away with the horse, for I

could not get off. The persons who were bringing me were behind in a chaise, and one fired, but the pistol missed fire. I wanted to die. Garrison fired at this slave, but missed him, and then struck him with the rifle. The slave took the rifle from him, struck him, and got away. The next day they took the blood-hounds, as usual, to find him. I myself was once bit nearly through the hand with one of these dogs – the mark is to be seen now. They advertise runaway slaves, when they catch them, and if the master does not come for them in six months – in some of the states it is twelve months – they are sold for the gaol expenses. But George's master soon came, and Garrison's friends bought George of him. They then got leave of the planters for 50 miles round, for their slaves to come. A great tree was cut down, and George was made to hug the stump, being fastened to it. They built round him a pen about ten feet square, with light-wood – what is called here the pitch-pine – and filled it with shavings. They then poured several barrels of pitch upon his head, and several gallons of turpentine upon the pen, and four men lighted the corners, and so he was burnt to death. It is death for a slave to strike a white man. I saw the stump of the tree several years after. I have heard it said here that these statements are picked out – that many slave-holders are benevolent men. It is said that there are West India slave-owners in this country who are benevolent, kind men. It may be so; but if it is, they cannot send their benevolence to the overseers and drivers. In America the planters all live on their estates. I have known some of these kind slave-holders who never flog their slaves. I know one who was a Presbyterian, he used to go on the estates, and say 'Why do you flog your slaves, I can make mine work without flogging.' The way Colonel Macquillar used to make his slaves work without flogging was by putting them in a rice-barrel, with small tacks run into it, and rolling them down a hill. His own slaves told me that he had killed several in this way. But the evidence of slaves is of no use, if he had killed several thousand. This Colonel had two female slaves. He sent them into a field, where they were clearing away the wood, to grub up the stumps of a tree, there were several wasps nests. They were stung so in the eyes that they could not finish it, and in a few days one of them died. This man lived six miles from the estate I then lived on. The next I shall mention lived about a mile off. He was not exactly a slave-owner, but hired them. He had but one slave, and several white men. I have heard it said that it is impossible to do without slave-labour in the Southern States for white men could not work there. But I have known some to work, and thousands to wish the slaves were free, that they might get employment. The masters will not employ them; for they tell the slaves, and want to make them believe that white men were not made to work on the fields. This Mr. Bell was a Methodist. I tell the truth; for I have been held in bondage by a Methodist who flogged my mother till the blood ran down to her heels; and I had rather be turned out of this chapel than not tell the whole truth. (Hear, hear.) This man was a member of a slave-holding Church, – Satan's Church, I call it. – Two sailors were once going along a street, the one a little before the other, and hearing the screams of a family who were being separated, the first turned back, and said to the other, 'Jack, if the devil don't catch these fellows we might as well not have any devil at all!' This slave, when Mr. Bell had him, had never worked on cotton. The task in hoeing cotton is generally three quarters of an acre in a day, and if not done, 50 stripes. In picking cotton it is 100 lbs. in a day, and if it is not done one stripe for every 1/4lb. that is short. Mr. Bell gave him three-quarters of an acre to hoe, in July, when the cotton is very grassy. If it is not grassy the task may be done; but if it is very grassy, it is impossible, even for one who is used to it, to do it. Just before night, there

came on a storm of rain. He lacked 5 or 6 rows, but went under a tree to shelter himself. When the rain was over, it was dark. Henry knew he should have the lashes on Monday morning, for he knew his master would not flog him on Sunday. Mr. Bell was called a pious man, because he would not have any work done on Sunday. So, for fear of the flogging he went on Sunday morning, and finished it. On Monday morning Mr. Bell went to him, and asked him why he hoed on Sunday, for he could tell that it had been done since the rain. He then tied him up about 9 o'clock, and flogged him at intervals, till six in the evening. We heard his screams. About six he untied him, and told him to go home, which was about a mile. He could not walk, however, from the flogging. The two white men had compassion on him, helped him on a horse, and laid him on the kitchen-floor. The kitchens are generally about 200 yards from the house. When they were at supper, Mr. Bell heard his groans, and said 'We'll go out and see what is the matter with the nigger.' They found him breathing his last groan. I have known hundreds of slaves to be flogged to death, but never knew a master to be hung for it. This was the only case I ever knew tried, and that was because the slave was another man's property. Mr. Gooch, my master, was on the Jury. The verdict was Wilful Murder. All Mr. Bell had to do was to pay the price of the slave to his owner. He could not do this; and Mr. Cunningham, a wealthy planter in the neighbourhood paid the money, and took Bell as an overseer, this circumstance being his recommendation. This Bell was a Methodist, and a class-leader. The Methodist Conference here has no influence over the Episcopal Methodist Conference in America. Many will say 'This is the slaves' side of the question. The slave-holders would tell a different story.' You have heard the slave-holders' story 250 years ago. Now, I think it is time for the slaves to speak. I have published an account of my sufferings and escape, and I have sent a copy of that book to every slave-holder whose name is there mentioned. There are hundreds of thousands who attempt to escape as I did, but not one in 100,000 can effect his escape, because the slaves are kept so ignorant that they cannot read, and they do not know the geography of the country, so they are as likely to go South as North. If they go North, there is some change; though there the law compels the inhabitants to give them up. They load them, too, with irons from 50lbs. to 100lbs, in weight. I shall show you irons made of the same shape and weight as those I wore myself. I had them made because many thought it impossible to wear them in the way I mentioned. I thought if I could not convince them in any other way, I would show them; so I put them on, and walked through Cheapside in London. The slaves suffer a great deal, but it is hard to convince the people here. [Two immense irons were here produced, which are used for the legs.] Mr. Gooch, (the same deacon I mentioned before) the last time I wore such as these, made me strike them myself in the blacksmith's shop. Though I show you the irons, it is impossible to describe what it is to wear them. You may go and see them worn, and yet not know. You must be slaves themselves, before you can feel what it is. The Englishmen who go into the slave states, and partake of all the good things which the planters give them, care nothing about the slaves. [A chain was here exhibited, of several enormous links used to fasten the leg-irons together.] When I have had these irons and this chain on, I have sometimes had a rope given me to put round my neck, and hold the chain up, that I might walk better. These handcuffs and collars are made in Birmingham. I saw them in a window, and wondered what they were for, as I knew there were no slaves here; so I went in, and asked the price. The clerk thought I was a West Indian planter or merchant, and shewed me several kinds which he said he had sent out to

America. [A large iron collar, and a pair of handcuffs were then produced.] One he showed me had spike in it. I gave him a copy of my book, and told him if he read it I hoped he would never make such irons again. This man professes to be a religious man too. I was tied with this [exhibiting a ponderous iron chain] to a female slave, to prevent my running away; so I ran away with the female slave too, (Great laughter) or walked away rather. The next day, a slave whom I knew assisted me in getting the irons off. This chain weighs about 40lbs. This female slave had run away several times: once, she had been gone six months, and, when found, she was not more than five or six miles from the place where she set out. She had been hid in a rock, and fed by some of the neighbouring slaves, who are usually very kind to runaways. The last time I ran away, Mr. Gooch knew some one must have assisted me, so he flogged me to make me tell. He gave me 200 lashes, but I would not tell. He then put my fingers into a vice – the marks are to be seen now – and screwed my finger nails off! (Expressions of horror.) I have often heard people here say, ‘Go to a manufactory, and you will see slaves worse off than those in America.’ I have been to the factories in Manchester, but I never saw the chain, or the ‘flopper.’ But, if they think they are worse off than the slaves, let them exchange with them. I will find a slave for everyone who will go. None who have factories in this country ornament their *slaves* with this *watch-chain* of 40lbs. weight round their necks. But I have seen female slaves with it on, and have had them chained to me with it. I cannot bear to hear the rattling of these chains. The other night, at the house where I stopped at Mansfield, there was a large dog chained in the yard, and in the night I dreamed I was at Mr. Gooch’s. Since I have come to this country, and felt the power of that religion which can change even the slave-holder’s heart, I would not wish to injure any one; but as Mr. Gooch is a professor of that religion which teaches men to ‘do as they would be done by,’ I could willingly give him 100 lashes, that he might know what it is to suffer such things. These things are done in the land of republican freedom. On the 4th of July, they hoist the flag of *liberty* over 3,000,000 slaves, – the greatest burlesque on freedom that can possibly be. I say these things here, which I dare not say in that pretended land of liberty. I was sold in that free land by my own father, when two months old. Many white men go to housekeeping before they are married and select good-looking female slaves for housekeepers. After eight of nine years, they marry slave-holders’ daughters. The female slaves and their children are then sold. I was the only child my mother had. My father was General Roper, of South Carolina. I lived in the neighbourhood a long time, and persons who saw me frequently asked me if I was not the son of General Roper. I said I had heard my mother say my name was Roper. He heard of it, and got the person to whom I then belonged to sell me into the South, several hundreds of miles off. Even in the 13 states which have abolished slavery, if the slaves escape there, the masters can take them back. I escaped from Apalachicola, in South Florida. I lay still by day, and travelled by night, guided by the North Star. I had to go 2000 miles to Boston, in Massachusetts, the cradle of liberty, where the monument stands to commemorate Bunker’s Hill.³ After I had been employed several months by a man of colour, he saw an advertisement, and others saw it and advised me to get away. One day I had gone out of the shop but about five minutes when a person who was employed to follow me, came to the shop, and gave a description which agreed very well with me, excepting my head. The abolitionists had advised me to have my head shaved, and wear a wig with straight hair, which I did, and had false whiskers. The coloured men are all abolitionists, and this man would not tell of me, though he was

offered 50 dollars. The man had not been gone three minutes before I returned to the shop. My master told me I had better give myself up, for I should be taken, I considered a few minutes, and said, if I had to be taken I would go back dead. I walked into the streets, and felt strong enough to have separated the whole of this meeting if they had tried to stop me. I went to one of the greatest lawyers in the United States. I said ‘I am a slave who has escaped. I want to know if, in this free state, my master can take me.’ He opened the Declaration of American Independence,⁴ and read to me that slave-holders can take their property wherever they find it. I said, ‘I am my own property, and I will take myself wherever I find myself.’ (Laughter and cheers.) I walked along and felt determined, although almost a *peace-man*, to meet with death or have my freedom. I went by the railroad, and got into the state of New York. I met with some abolitionists there, who sent me to England. I have often heard, from the slave-holders, of the cruelty of the English in putting Americans to death. They told me that the English all wore red coats; and when I saw a man in a red coat I would run. I knew one slave who got into Vermont, which joins Canada. In Ludlow, in Vermont, he hired himself to a lawyer. After he had been with two years, some one, seeing an advertisement for a slave, wrote to the slave-holder, stating that a slave was in the town. The slave-holder came at the hour, and went to the lawyer, who is a thorough abolitionist. He said to him ‘This man is my property.’ The lawyer said ‘You must prove that this man is your property.’ The lawyer had the man put in prison. The slave-holder went back, and brought a bill of sale. The lawyer told him that would not do. He went back again and brought two slave-holders who had seen the slave on the estate. The lawyer said that would not do. The slave-holder said ‘What would you have me do?’ The lawyer said, ‘I want you to go to heaven, and bring a bill of sale from God, to show that this man is your property, before you can have him!’ (Hear.) He did not go there – for slave-holders think very little about heaven – but he went to a United States attorney. I did not see these things done, but I went to the town afterwards, and the inhabitants told me. The case lasted in court for a week, between the United States lawyer and the State lawyer; and the slave was ordered to go back. On the last night of the trial the lawyer got up, and while he was speaking he wept. You have heard of ‘*lynch-law*.’ I have heard of many cases, but this was the only one in favour of a slave; it is generally used to put slaves to death. The people rose, and threw the slave-holder out of the window, and the United States’ Attorney with him; and got hold of the slave, and sent him into Canada where he is now free. In Charleston a book has been published by a learned Dr. – for Dr. in Physic or Dr. in Divinity is a very cheap degree in America – to show that slaves have no souls. I have heard many slave-holding Drs. preach, but I cannot think that they have any religion. I think all slave-holders Satan’s disciples; but I cannot think them religious men. I have seen many arguments by some of these learned Doctors, to show that slaves had no souls. I have been told I had not a soul. I have seen, in the American coffee-house, an advertisement for ‘Moses, a negro man.’ When a slave, I was told I was not a man. They say that slaves have never done anything to show that they have intellect. In the little that I have read of the history of Africa, I have seen that Africans built the pyramids: that they have given generals to the line, and bishops to the church, and martyrs to the fire. (Hear.) I will show you whether a slave has not a soul. A slave had made his escape from Ohio; but when he got to the river, he saw men guarding the ferries, so that he could not get over. A rich slave-holder offered his master 500 dollars for him, and directed him to be sent, when taken, with a driver. These drivers, if they use the whip

well, are sometimes made free when their masters die, and some of the family procure them situations. They then have a free pass given them; but, if they do not produce it, they are liable to be taken for runaway slaves. When the slave was taken, and brought to his original master, he sent one of these free drivers with him. The slave perceived something hanging out of the driver's pocket, as they were going along, which he knew was a free pass, and slipped it out unperceived. When they got within a mile or two of the slave-holder's house, he begged – as they often do – that the driver would take off his chains, they he might not go before his new master, and be seen by the other slaves, in them, promising that he would not run away. The driver did so, and he did not run away. When they got near the door, the slave went up first, and knocked, and said to the master, 'Massa, here's your slave.' The driver was so astonished at such conduct, which is a great offence in a slave, that he could not speak for some minutes. He then said, 'Oh! massa, I'm a free man.' The master said, 'If you open your mouth again, I will give you 100 lashes; I have heard all about you.' In a short time, he again ventured to speak, when the master said, 'If you speak again, I will get the rifle out.' The slave had heard of the 500 dollars; so the master gave him the money, and he went with it, and the free pass, got over the Ohio, which he could not cross before, and went into Canada. So you see this slave had intellect equal to a white man with the same advantages. If the slaves could read the Bible, they would soon be free. Let them read the Bible, and the beautiful poem of Montgomery,⁵ which I read as soon as I learned to read, and which I could wish to stand in the centre of America, and sound throughout the country. –

'In these romantic regions Man grows wild;
 Here dwells the negro, nature's outcast child,
 Scorn'd by his brethren; but his mother's eye,
 That gazes on him from her warmest sky,
 Sees in his flexible limbs untutor'd grave,
 Power on his forehead, beauty in his face;
 Sees in his breast, where lawless passions rove,
 The heart of friendship and the home of love;
 Sees in his mind, where desolation reigns,
 Fierce as his clime, uncultur'd as his plains,
 A soil where virtue's fairest flowers might shoot,
 And trees of science bend with glorious fruit;
 Sees in his soul, Invol'd in thickest night,
 An emanation of eternal light,
 Ordain'd, 'midst sinking worlds, his dust to fire
 And shine for ever when the stars expire.
 Is he not *Man*, though knowledge never shed
 Her quickening beams on his neglected head?
 He is not *Man*, though sweet religion's voice
 Ne'er bade the mourner in his God rejoice?
 Is *he* not man, by sin and suffering tried?
 Is *he* not man, for whom the Saviour died?
 Belie the Negro's powers: – in headlong will,
 Christian! *thy* brother, thou shalt prove him still;

Belie his virtues; since his wrongs began,
His follies and his crimes have stamp't him Man,⁶

I have been present, when in parting husbands from their wives and children, they would have to beat the drums to drown the noise. When they take them away they are generally chained 50 or 100 together. On one occasion after trying to escape, I was in a temporary prison, and I saw 28 slaves chained to one chain. These were men who had been bought from their wives. There is a large river about 15 miles from Charleston, and the next day the news came from a coloured man belonging to the gaoler, that these men had jumped into this river, and were all drowned. I had seen many slaves hang themselves; drown themselves, and cut their throats, but I never knew of anything (except parting with my own mother) that affected me so much as this. After I had been with several masters, I fell into the hands of Marvell Lewis of South Carolina. He travelled a good deal, in nearly all the slave states; or I should never have known how to get away. He took me with him to the island of Cuba. When returning he died, and I was put up for sale at Columbus, with his horses and carriages. Soon after I became acquainted with a female slave, who had a husband and six or seven children. When I had been in the place about three weeks, a dealer came and took a fancy to her. She was good-looking, and her youngest child was about 10 months old. He bought her of the Rev. Dr. Price of Apalachicola from her children, and took her to New Orleans, 300 miles off. Being interested about her, I went to the steward of the brig, and he told me she had died of grief in two or three days. If you knew as much of these Doctors of Divinity as I do, you would agree with me that they are not religious men. I see it is getting late; but I could go on till Saturday night, relating facts. Facts are not wanting, but I have related enough to show you what American slavery is, and slavery is the same all the world over. The slave-holders, however, must give them up; the time of freedom will come. I wish they would give me six months to go into the slave states, I would have freedom. I would not tell them – as some may think, to rise, and kill their masters. But I would tell them to say to the masters, ‘If you will pay us for our work, we will work; and if not, we will not work, Murder us, if you like but we will not be slaves’ – and I would willingly take my share in the dangers of the attempt. 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! But I hope the day *will* come, when the words of that beautiful poet I mentioned before will be fulfilled. –

‘Thy chains are broken, Africa, be free!’
Thus saith the island-empress of the sea;
Thus saith Britannia. – O ye winds and waves!
Waft the glad tidings to the land of slaves;
Proclaim on Guinea’s coast, by Gambia’s side,
And far as Niger rolls his eastern tide
Through radiant realms beneath the burning zone,
Where Europe’s curse is felt, her name unknown,
‘Thus saith Britannia, empress of the sea,
Thy chains are broken, Africa, be free!’⁷

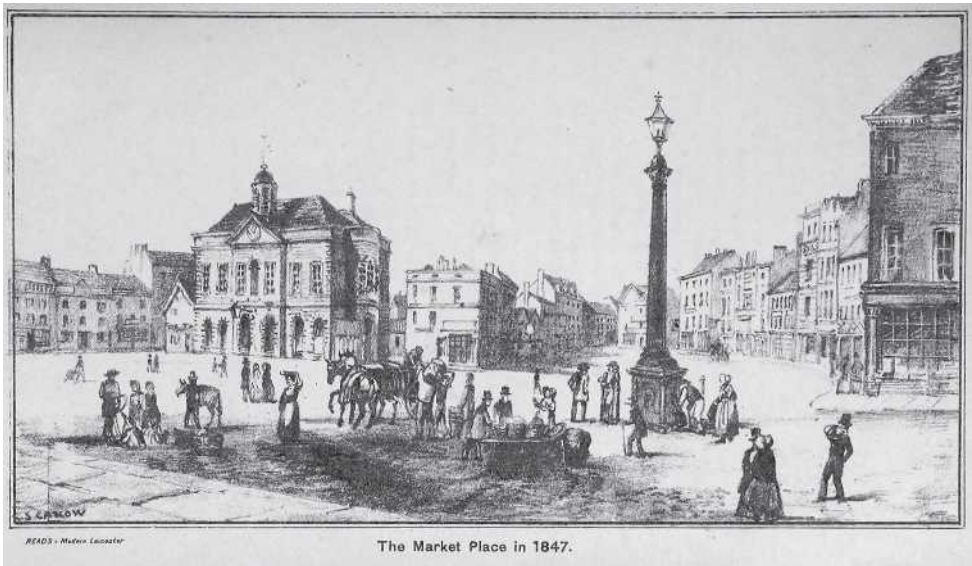


Figure 79 Market Place, Leicester, England, c.1847. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)



Figure 80 Photograph of Harvey Lane Chapel, Leicester, England. (Image Leicestershire and The Record Office, Leicestershire County Council.)

Notes

1. The ‘patrol’, 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).
2. This is possibly a reference to the office of the white-led British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society located in London.
3. The Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown, Massachusetts, commemorates the Battle of Bunker Hill, a major military conflict which took place between British and United States troops on 17 June 1775 during the American Revolutionary War.
4. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
5. James Montgomery (1771–1854) was a white Scottish poet and editor. See next note.
6. He is quoting from James Montgomery, ‘The West-Indies, Part II’, in *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery* (Boston MA: Leonard C. Bowles, 1821), pp.98–99.
7. See James Montgomery, ‘The West-Indies, Part II’, in *The Poetical Works of James Montgomery* (Boston MA: Leonard C. Bowles, 1821), p.85.



Anon., 'Moses Roper the Escaped Slave', *The Bradford Observer*,
Bradford, Yorkshire, England, 5 March 1840, p.3.

MOSES ROPER FORMERLY a slave in the United States, but who happily escaped from bondage, and found that freedom in a foreign country which was denied him in his own, gave a lecture on Tuesday night at the Temperance Hall, on the horrors of slavery. He exhibited and described some implements of corporal punishment, used by the planters of the United States and their merciless overseers, and gave a melancholy detail of the sufferings to which the slaves are exposed, and the degraded condition to which the system of slavery has reduced the white population of the Southern States of America. Moses Roper is of gigantic proportions and stands six feet five inches. He is but little darker in complexion than Europeans, but his hair and features indicate his consanguinity to the African race. His father, Mr. Roper, was, we believe, a judge in America, of course a white. His mother was the offspring of Indian and negro parents, and therefore Moses Roper is a scion of Europe, Africa and America, and a mixture of the white, black and red men. Allowing for his adult education, which was commenced since his escape, his address and language are highly interesting and impressive. Among other instruments of 'physical force,' most of which are reserved for to-night's lecture, he displayed the 'flapper' and the 'paddle.' The 'flapper' is a ponderous whip, more adapted for the back of an elephant than that of any other animal. It is loaded with lead, and the handle like a sledge hammer is used to knock down the refractory. The 'paddle' reassembles a cricket bat in shape, and the flat surface is drilled so that it excoriates and opens the skin. This latter instrument is more formidable than the former, and the slaves are much more in fear of it than of the 'flapper.' Mr. Roper, in the course of his description of the eventful fortunes of his attempts to escape, roused the liveliest sympathy in the breasts of his hearers, and recited several soul-stirring strains of Montgomery's¹ (of Sheffield) poetry. He lamented in a feeling manner the fate of his mother, whom he had wished to redeem from slavery, but who is now dead. He enlarged on the desolate condition of his brothers and sisters who have been sold to remote states, and from whom he has had no intelligence of late. He stated that he still loved America, that he suffered much from the English climate, yet to be reckoned a British citizen had been his ardent desire, but that legal naturalization was above his pecuniary means. Among other anecdotes, Moses Roper mentioned one of a female negro preacher. Her text was 'The sheep shall sit on the right hand and the goats on the left.'² 'And

now brethren, what you tink dis mean? You no know – I tell you den what dis mean. Sheep hah curly hair, nigger hah curly hair; sheep you see mean nigger. Goats hab straight hair; buckra (whites) hah straight hair – goat den white men. Now you see what dis mean. (a laugh).’ ‘I have (said Mr. Roper) attended revivals in the woods where sometimes 40,000 people assembled; these revivals are great slave markets in the southern states, and I have myself been hawked about for sale in the same markets. I have even been employed to look after the other cattle (black slaves), and it has been my duty every morning to oil their faces to make them shine, to give them an appearance of health. My master has been offered 600 dollars for me and refused.’ Mr. Roper related other interesting anecdotes and concluded by announcing that he would lecture again on Thursday (to-night). The hall was crowded.

Notes

1. James Montgomery (1771–1854).
2. Matthew 25:33.



Anon., 'Lecture on American Slavery', *Hereford Times*,
Hereford, Herefordshire, England, 4 August 1855, p.9.

MR. MOSES ROPER, who, after explaining the circumstances which have induced him to lecture again upon the same topic which he had descanted upon on his previous visit, viz., that he had now acquired a better knowledge of the language than he then possessed, alluded to the common supposition that slavery was now done away with, whereas there are now in America between three and four millions of coloured slaves, the truthful detail of whose sufferings, and the wrongs and cruelties inflicted upon them, would mock the wild flights of fiction, and out-do the most romantic details of book-makers. It was true, that of late, this stain had been blotted out in many places. France and Denmark had abolished the hideous commerce in their possessions; and the Bey of Tunis, one of the most despotic men in the world, had also abolished slavery in his dominions. In the West Indies, no less a number than 800,000 slaves had been set free, at a cost of twenty millions sterling;¹ and this noble act shone out as one of the brightest jewels in the British crown. The emancipation of these poor slaves must be looked upon as almost as wonderful as the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt.² Recurring to his own eventful history, he informed the meeting that he had been a slave to no less than fifteen different masters, and had made twenty efforts to escape, some successful and some unsuccessful, and terrific were the hardships he had endured before he at last succeeded in setting foot upon the English shore, where he had been welcomed as a suffering and injured brother, and where no slave pollutes the happy soil, but all are free by the proclamation of the law. He had been asked why he did not go into the country where the evils he complained of existed, as declamation at such a distance could have no real effect. His answer was, that, no matter how long he had been absent, nor under what circumstances he had left the land of slavery, as soon as he passed the boundaries of American possessions he became again a slave – a piece of goods, a machine, a property, and liable to be taken up by any one, and sent to undergo all those horrors from which he had fortunately and providentially made his escape. Others had said, 'The Americans themselves feel the injustice of slavery, and require emancipation – let them work it out themselves, for we have nothing to do with it.' Let such persons remember that tobacco, rice, cotton, and many other articles of their daily consumption are beaten out of the blood of these slaves, and then say – if they dared – that they had nothing to do which could be stopped at the frontier of a

state or kingdom, and regard no wrong – pity no suffering – but what took place in its own dominions? No! Christianity teaches no such lessons as these! Under its benign influence the missionary goes forth to war against deep-rooted superstition, and uncultivated ignorance, to further the cause of God, and bring the wandering flock to the fold of Christ. A degree of moral responsibility exists now in the world, by which one nation affects another by its moral bearing, even though they be separated by the pathless ocean. This moral influence will be extended more and more as Christianity continues its progress in the universe; for the force of opinion is fast taking the place of the force of arms, and under its moral tendency oppression and slavery must ultimately fall. He had found great prejudice existing against men of colour, and he was himself brought up amongst Africans, and whilst in Canada he had mingled with the Indian in their wigwams; and the maxim he would inculcate was to hail a man as a brother wherever he was found, without regard to the colour of the skin – or if that colour was taken into consideration, they should look upon a white man as God's work in ivory, and the black man as God's work in ebony. As a great German writer had said, humanity was to be regarded as a great study, and the whole human race should be treated as a universal brotherhood, mankind having but one object in view – viz., the development of our spiritual nature. There could be no doubt that we were all sent on earth for some great end, and to combat evils of some kind; and there are many evils which every man in opposing does something towards annihilating, and slavery was one of these. When he lectured on his previous visit to England, there were many people who did not believe the statements he then made, with regard to the cruelties inflicted upon slaves, and the oppressions they were compelled to submit to; but since that time 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'³ and a thousand other witnesses had added their testimony to the truth of his assertions. Indeed he could assure them that, had he not been blessed with an iron constitution, cruelty would have done its work, and he should not have been there to address them. But horrible as were the sufferings of the slaves, what he regarded as still more vile and wicked, was the injustice which robbed them of the primitive right of every man to be his own master, and which deprived them of the common opportunities of bettering their condition, both temporarily and spiritually: and the detestable system which made war against these privileges was the greatest outrage which could be committed upon human nature. The common relations of life consisted of parents, children, &c.; but the slave was taught to look upon his owner as his sole relation – his children were sold away for the gain of that owner, and thus God's most beautiful provisions of nature were thwarted under the slave system. It was a maxim that the more ignorant a slave was the better he could work; and there was a law in Louisiana against teaching slaves to read, inflicting a fine of 500 dollars for the first offence, while the second was punishable by death. Still great numbers did acquire a little education, some by nursing their master's children and eliciting from them all they knew, and he was himself at the present time in communication with many slaves who had obtained their education by similar means. One great objection of the slave owners to their learning to read and write was, that by that means they may in time be able to organise some system amongst themselves for their liberation. As an instance of the degradation in which they were kept, he said that, although a man grown when he first made his escape, he did not know his alphabet, and had been taught to believe that the earth extended no farther than he could see. Every opposition was offered to any

congregation of slaves taking place, even for worship; he had seen a planter come up to their meetings and lash a man while on his knees, and threaten 100 lashes to every one who listened to him again. The lecturer went on to denounce the mode in which the ministers of the Gospel preached and practised; assuring the meeting that he had known a clergyman preach on a Sunday, and flog his slaves on the following day. They generally selected such texts as, 'Servants, obey your masters,'⁴ substituting the word 'slaves,' and arguing that slavery was perfectly justified by Scripture – preaching the doctrine, not of deliverance, but obedience. He gave a vivid description of the horrors of a slave auction, one of which he had witnessed, at which some quadroon daughters of the late Judge Jefferson were sold, their value being accelerated in the following manner: beautiful, 150 dols.; virtuous 150 dols. more; members of the Methodists, 200 more; daughters of Judge Jefferson, 200 more; on, until the price swelled to 1,500 dols.; all those traits with which a person can be adorned being thus estimated at a market price, and offering additional inducements to the traders in human flesh and blood. He had assisted in stealing many slaves from their masters when he was in Canada, and he hoped to assist in stealing many more; he would rather pay any amount of money to get them free by this means, than contribute a single cent towards buying them off from their owners, because this was partially recognising the principle of buying and selling slaves. He gave an elaborate detail of the various laws and regulations passed in the States for the promulgation of the slave trade, diversifying his descriptions with entertaining anecdotes called from his own experience, which is detailed in his interesting work. With regard to the prejudice existing against African blood, he related an amusing anecdote of an overseer under whom he worked, and who, while in an agreeable humour, one day held some conversation with him. This man told him that the Africans had no souls, any more than the cows, horses, and other animals which they tended; and when asked whether the same God had not made them all, he answered, 'No. God made the whites, but the devil made the blacks.' This he endeavoured to explain by stating that God was sitting upon a hill, amusing himself by fashioning a man out of a handful of white clay, and that the devil saw the operation and imitated it with some black clay; but not being satisfied with his work, his Satanic Majesty struck the black upon the face, which is seen through the race by the peculiar formation of the nose. He gave this as an instance of the gross darkness under which the slaves were trained, all the doctrines inculcated having the tendency to degrade them in their own estimation. The lecturer then cited several instances in vindication of Africa, referring to the history of Carthage and Nubia, which were once the cradles of learning, the fountains to which all the world went to drink the waters of knowledge. He referred to the fact of Moses⁵ having married an Ethiopian woman, and said he had found in Nubia hundreds of black Jews, worshipping in their own synagogues, claiming and boasting of their descent from the Queen of Sheba.⁶ The renowned Hannibal⁷ was an African. In Hayti, the people rebelled against the French, under an African general,⁸ and Napoleon⁹ lost 40,000 men in the struggle, and had then the mortification of retiring, leaving them unconquered. In Trinidad, too, at the present day, the Governor-General is a black, as are also many lawyers, doctors, clergymen, &c. The lecturer then remarked upon the native music of the slaves, and gave specimens of their extemporaneous singing. He took a review of the different States of the Union, stating that in the Northern States, which are called free, slavery still prevails to some extent, although

the inhabitants pretend to discourage it. In the elections for Congress, the possession of every five slaves entitles the owner to three votes, and this is one inducement to the continuation of the system. They were, however, getting ashamed of it, and he hoped the time would soon come when a universal emancipation would take place.

The meeting was briefly and appropriately addressed by the Rev. T. Nicholas and Joseph Morgan, Esq.; after which a collection was made towards defraying the expenses of the lecturer, and the proceedings terminated shortly before ten o'clock.

**AMERICAN
SLAVERY.**

Comprising 3 Millions of Human Beings.

On *Friday* Evening, *Feb. 23^d*, 1844,

MOSES ROPER,

(WHO MADE HIS ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY, AND HAS SINCE BEEN PURSUING HIS
STUDIES IN LONDON), WILL DELIVER

AN ADDRESS

At the Baptist Meeting-house Haddenham

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

INSTRUMENTS OF TORTURE.

Fac-similes of those mentioned in his "Narrative."

After the Address a "Narrative of Adventures and Escape of MOSES ROPER, from American Slavery," with a
Portrait of the Author, on Steel, (5th Edition,) price 2s., may be had at the Meeting.

J. Johnston, Printer, Harmer Street, Gravesend.

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98

NB 9/29

Figure 81 Handbill for a lecture by Moses Roper given in Haddenham, England, in 1844. (Buckinghamshire Archives.)

Notes

1. For further information on this 'compensation money', see 'Context' included as part of the 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership: University College London', available online: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/context/>
2. Psalm 68:31.
3. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
4. Ephesians 6:5.
5. Exodus 2.
6. For further information see Wendy Laura Belcher, 'From Sheba They Come: Medieval Ethiopian Myth, U.S. Newspapers, and a Modern American Narrative'. *Callaloo*, 33.1 (2010): pp.239–257.
7. Hannibal (247–c.183–181 BC) was a military general born in Carthage who fought against Rome during the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE). For further information, see William Culican, 'Hannibal', 31 December, 2020, *Britannica*, available online: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hannibal-Carthaginian-general-247-183-BC/The-Alpine-crossing>
8. Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803) was a self-liberated freedom fighter, military general, and founder of the first Black republic in the western hemisphere. For further information, see Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).
9. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) was a white French military general and politician.

AMANDA BERRY SMITH

(1837–1915)

Biographical History

AMANDA BERRY SMITH was born into enslavement in Maryland in 1837 to Samuel Berry and Miriam Matthews Berry. Through Samuel Berry's exceptional industry and courage, he raised enough money through the sale of his hand-made brooms and other materials to purchase himself and his entire family, including his daughter, Amanda Berry Smith. Smith was taught to read and write by her parents because the nearest school which adhered to prejudicial, discriminatory, and exclusionary practices was only open to white students during the day. Throughout her life, she benefitted from close relationships with other African Americans in the Methodist Episcopal Church, who would later support her after the tragic death of her two husbands – C. Devine and James Smith – and several children. She joined religious meetings and revivals and soon began to preach to local communities.

In 1878, Smith travelled to the British Isles with her daughter Mazie and remained there for two years while she completed her studies. She travelled extensively around the British Isles, and in 1880 she travelled to India for a year and a half, moving to the African continent, including Liberia, where she preached for eight years and educated young children. She adopted two children and returned to the United States in 1890, where she continued teaching and supporting social justice movements including local temperance societies.

In 1893, Smith published her personal narrative, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist* in Chicago, which detailed her experiences of preaching in three continents. She also edited a monthly newspaper, *The Helper* in Harvey, Illinois, which she established to raise funds for her community work. In 1899, she founded The Amanda Smith Orphanage and Industrial Home for Abandoned and Destitute Colored Children in Harvey, and she continued her labours as a preacher to raise money for its development.¹ She died in Florida in 1915.²

Here we reproduce a short summary of Amanda Berry Smith's speech she gave in Keswick, England, in 1878. The newspaper reporter fails to do justice to her two addresses that she delivers: for one we are given no sense of the content while for the other we are given only the title 'Second Coming of Christ'. This terrible injustice reveals the very real difficulties presented by white supremacist archives in even

beginning to memorialise African American women's histories, testimonies, lives, and works.

Notes

1. For more information on the orphanage, see the web page on Amanda Berry Smith available on the Illinois Periodicals Online Project: <https://www.lib.niu.edu/1998/ihwt9820.html>
2. In an obituary published on the 6 March 1915, *The Chicago Defender* eulogised Smith as the 'Race's Foremost Evangelist . . . the greatest woman that this race has ever given to the world' (p.1).

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Figure 82 Amanda Smith, author portrait from Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist*. Chicago: Meyer & Brother Publishers, 1893. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'Christian Convention at Keswick', *Carlisle Express and Examiner*, Carlisle, Cumbria, England, 3 August 1878, p.6.

THE SERVICES CONNECTED with this religious movement terminated on Saturday morning with an early prayer meeting. Supplementary services, however, have since been held. On Saturday night the Rev. W. Haslam, incumbent of Curzon Street Chapel, preached; and the congregation was also addressed by Mrs. Amanda Smith, formerly a slave in the Southern States. Though an Ethiopian by birth, she speaks English powerfully and well, but slightly tinged with the American nasal accent. On Saturday afternoon and night services were also conducted in the marquee, in both of which Mrs. Smith took part. Her addresses are earnest and enthusiastic and like many American preachers she occasionally intersperses her remarks with an apposite hymn. Yesterday morning another meeting was held, when the subject of Mrs. Smith's address was the 'Second Coming of Christ.'



Figure 83 Keswick Vale, England, by William Green, c.1800. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)



Figure 84 Amanda Berry Smith, by T. B. Latchmore, 1885. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.)

LEWIS SMITH

(c.1824–1825–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO 'LEWIS Smith' in *Narratives*.

Lewis Smith experienced enslavement in Kentucky. His legal freedom was orchestrated by the heroism of his enslaved wife, whose name we do not know, who persuaded her white enslaver to purchase him. Promising to work overtime and not to secure his liberation, Smith toiled to pay his own ransom and secured US\$300 as a bond before being given leave to travel to the northern states to successfully raise the remaining US\$700. Once in Ohio, alongside fellow freedom seeker Theodore Gross, Smith attempted to raise US\$6,000 for the purchase of his second wife, Kezia, and their children.¹ Both freedom fighters undertook an urgent mission to the British Isles in 1860 to fund the remaining sum of US\$4,800 by the end of 1861, the year stipulated by Smith's white enslaver. The two antislavery orators orchestrated a lecturing tour aided by the famed white British abolitionist George Thompson, and successfully raised the remaining amount by speaking to audiences in town halls, churches, chapels, and Sunday Schools. The tour was so successful that more donations were collected to liberate Gross' half-sister from enslavement. The intergenerational freedom fighters of Smith's family included: Kezia 'aged about 36', Winfield Scott Smith (17), America Smith (15), Dinah Smith (11), Alfred Smith (9), James Smith (7), Elijah Smith (3).

Once his family were liberated, Smith settled in Ripley, Ohio, where he became a member of the Wesleyan church. During the US Civil War, the church was burned down by white enslavers and a makeshift church in the local school was also blown up with gunpowder by white southern sympathisers. Smith returned to the British Isles with his son Alfred in 1870 to raise money for a new school and church. Through a white supporter, Jacob Odgers, an amanuensis, Smith published a narrative *The Self-Ransomed Slave* in 1871 to encourage donations (see 'Lewis Smith' in *Narratives*). The date and circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce Lewis Smith's speeches that he gave in London in 1861 and in Leeds, England, a few years later in 1870.

Note

1. 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

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Anon., 'Popular Lectures at Surrey Chapel', *The South London Chronicle*, London, England, 9 March 1861, p.4.

THE REV. NEWMAN Hall, on Monday evening, gave some anti-slavery poetical readings, after which two coloured men (emancipated slaves) addressed the meeting (a well-attended one) on Slavery, and its Effects.

The Rev. Newman Hall said the evening was to be devoted to 'Slavery,' and previous to the addresses of his two friends, he would read to them some poetry on the subject. Mr. Hall then read Longfellow's¹ beautiful poems, 'The Slave's Dream,'² and 'The Good Part, which shall not be Taken Away,'³ which represents a slaveholder (a lady) who had parted with her slaves, and had to work for her bread in consequence. If all slaveholders did the same, it would be a good cure for slavery. Some time ago, an American gentleman came into his (Mr. Hall's) vestry, and wanted to see Mrs. Hall; but, when he held out his hand to her, she drew back, as she said she never shook hands with an American until she knew he was not a holder of slaves. The gentlemen did not say he held slaves, but began defending slavery, using Scriptural among other arguments, which Mrs. Hall could not readily answer; but at last she said to him, 'Suppose slavery were to become a non-paying speculation, would your Scriptural arguments induce you to keep up the institution?' That question the American could not satisfactorily answer, and he (Mr. Hall) needed to tell them the discussion ended there. (Laughter.) Mr. Hall then read, 'The Slave Singing at Midnight,'⁴ 'The Quadroon Girl,'⁵ and 'The Warning,'⁶ remarking that the last was apropos to the present time, and shortly recounted the facts of the present crisis in America, saying, although it was unfortunate, politically and commercially, yet if the slave became emancipated through that political and commercial ruin – if such good came out of such evil – then he (Mr. Hall) should rejoice at it. (Cheers.) He then called upon Lewis Smith (an emancipated slave) who said he was quite bashful that evening (laughter), and he didn't think he should get on no-how with so many good-looking ladies before him, but he must say something for the little ones he had left behind him, and he would say it as well as he could, and if they didn't like it, why they must come up and do it themselves. (Laughter.) They were all happy in that chapel, but he wasn't happy, for he had been robbed of his wife and children. He didn't think much about slavery until he had married and had two children, and then he thought that the wife and the children were not his, but belonged to his master. He was two years

and a-half trying to get his freedom, working sometimes all night in mines blasting rocks, until he had saved 300 dollars. He might, perhaps, have run away, and got safe off, without so much labour, but then they would have handcuffed his wife and children, and have sent them off to the auction-mart. It would make their blood run cold to see the way in which a mother was sold to one master, and her children to another. He knew of mothers who couldn't bear it, and they had hung themselves. The first man who owned him was named Pepper, and he was fond of a drop of gin, and he died through it, and the woman he lived with she was fond of a drop, and she had died too, for she fell into the fire in a state of intoxication. Sometimes the master would start off to market, and she would then cane the whole lot of slaves. Well, when she fell into the fire, the master came home, and thought some of the slaves had pushed her into the fire, and he asked him (the speaker) whether it was so, and had he said only a 'yes,' the whole of them would have been hung. The master then broke up his establishment, and he was sold, and then he tried to save up to buy himself off, and so did his brother; but when his brother had saved up nearly enough money, he was put into gaol, and his money taken away from him, and he was sold again, and where he was now he didn't know. He also had been put into gaol two or three times, but he had got his papers, and was glad to say that he had bought off himself, and his wife, and three of his children' but there were still four in slavery, and he hoped soon to go back and see them. In America they were told that they were sold according to Scripture, but when his eyes were opened he could not believe that anybody had a right to sell that which God had given him – his liberty. He found the people of England good to him, and large-hearted; they were very good to him, so good that sometimes he didn't know he was a black man; but still he wanted to go home to see his wife and his children. They all had good-looking wives, and the wives had good-looking husbands, but he wouldn't 'swop' his black wife for any of them (laughter), and he wanted to go home to see her, and to teach his little ones about Christ; and if they would help him to do so, he would be much obliged to them. (Cheers.)

The Rev. Newman Hall said his black friends were Christians, and there were thousands of good black Christians, who could join in a prayer-meeting, and the very fact of their being Christians was made use of to increase their price at the auction mart. (Shame.) Mr. Hall then read a piece of poetry bearing on the subject.

Tabb Gross⁷ (another emancipated slave) said it was customary, among the Christians he belonged to, to keep the best wine for the end of the feast, but they wouldn't find it so with him. The subject that he was going to speak about bore very deeply upon his heart, but he was there for the purpose of convincing them that it was wrong to make people slaves. He had had the honour of being a preacher in America for seven years, but they had better preachers than he was, and he was, therefore, only going to tell them of the horrors of slavery. His brother was somewhat backward at seeing so many white faces; but no wonder, for when he saw white faces in America he didn't know whether they were friends or enemies. But he knew they were all friends before him. He had, when a slave never himself suffered the lash, nor suffered much, for he had only been sold four times (and some were sold a dozen times a-year), and the last time he was sold to an old preacher, and, though that class were generally the worst masters of slaves, yet his master was a very good one, and promised that when he died he would free his slaves, and so they were all looking for his death, but it didn't come; and he was like a man who had promised another his trousers after his death, but

who wore them out before he died. (Laughter.) The most cruel feature of slavery was the auction mart, taking the wife from the husband and selling her, and the children from their parents and selling them. When his first master died, his slaves (of whom the speaker was one), 47 in number, were sold to pay his debts and then he first felt the horrors of slavery, for he had a poor old mother and seven brothers and sisters (one black and six quadroons), the six quadroons being the children of his master. If anyone with a heart (and not a gizzard) had looked into the cabin upon the 47, the night before the sale, and have heard the crying, and singing, and prayer, that heart would have bled. His poor old mother hoped they would all have been sold together, but it wasn't so. Next morning the auctioneer came and took their names, and told them to look pleased and smile when he called them to the table; but many of the poor things had too heavy hearts to smile, and they couldn't do it. One dealer came and told them he lived in Kentucky, where the pigs ran about with a knife and fork in their backs so that anybody could have a slice. Well, the poor, simple slaves believed the tale, and they all wanted to go to that master, and his black brother was sold to him, and so was the speaker, and he asked the man to buy his mother and brothers and sisters. He had a beautiful quadroon sister about 17, whom he asked the master to buy, but he wouldn't, and said 'she was too white.' He felt the full horror of slavery when he saw that girl stand upon the block, trembling and crying, and obliged to answer the most unreasonable and indecent questions put to her by those people who dealt in flesh and blood. The slaves at the auction mart were treated like horses, and examined as closely, and at that moment he would rather have chosen death to life than have seen his own sister in that position. His sister fetched the most unreasonably high price of 1,702 dollars, and why did she fetch that high price? Why, because she was bought body and soul, and there was no law to protect her. Then his mother came upon the block, and he asked his master to buy her; he said he would 'if the price didn't run up too high,' which it did, and she went to the man who had his quadroon brothers and sisters. And when the sale was over his master told him and his black brother to wait and bid his mother and brothers good-bye, for it would be a long while before they would see one another again. His poor old mother wept and blessed them and said she didn't expect to see them again; and sure enough, he was 14 then, and now he was 44, and she had never seen him since. This was how he got his freedom. A man, though not a Christian, but he must have had a good heart, went security for him, for 1,000 dollars, and then he (the speaker) went to California, and came back and bought himself and his wife off for 1,600 dollars, and that was how he got out of it.

The Rev. Newman Hall said he was happy to say that the object with which their two black friends came from America was accomplished, and enough money had been subscribed for the purchase of Lewis Smith's children. However, if they gave more than usual that evening, the surplus should go towards presenting Tabb Gross, who had come over simply to help his friend without any hope of reward, with a small sum. Let them thank God there was no slavery in England, and they might depend upon it there was not such a free and happy country anywhere as England. (Cheers.)

Another released slave, Mr. Kinnaird,⁸ who is here for the purpose of raising a sum of money to erect a chapel in Canada for the fugitive slaves, then announced that a meeting would be held at Exeter Hall on Wednesday week, and spoke warmly against the evil of slavery.

The doxology closed the proceedings.

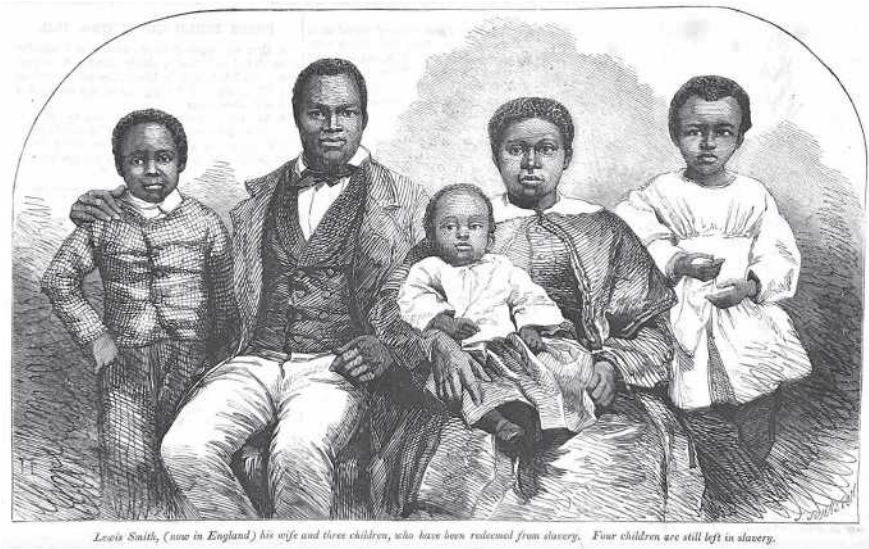


Figure 85 Lewis Smith and Kezia Smith, with three of their children. (*The Band of Hope Review*, 1 January 1861, p.4, with thanks to Michelle Shorney.)

Notes

1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) was a white US poet, scholar, and teacher.
2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his poem ‘The Slave’s Dream’ in his collection *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842 and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=77
3. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his poem ‘The Good Part, That Shall not be Taken Away’ in his collection *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842 and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=98
4. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his poem ‘The Slave Singing at Midnight’ in his collection *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842 and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=78
5. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his poem, ‘The Quadroon Girl’ in his collection *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842 and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=100
6. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow published his poem ‘The Warning’ in his collection *Poems on Slavery*, printed in 1842 and available online at: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=80
7. 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
8. ‘Mr. Kinnaird’ is Thomas M. Kinnaird, a formerly enslaved individual who became a leading religious leader and reformer and on whose life and works research is ongoing. For further information see Thomas M. Kinnaird, *Fugitive Slaves in Canada. An Appeal on behalf of Mr Kinnaird’s Mission*, an original document consisting of UK testimonials in support of his fund-raising efforts, dated 1861, and held in the British Library, London, UK.



Anon., 'The Freedmen of America', *The Leeds Mercury*,
Leeds, Yorkshire, England, 14 April 1870, p.4.

A MEETING FOR THE purpose of giving assistance to Mr. Lewis Smith, a ransomed slave, who has come to this country with the view of raising funds on behalf of a new church and school for freedmen in America, was held last night in Belgrave Chapel, Leeds. Mr. W. H. CONYERS presided over the meeting, which was somewhat thinly attended. Mr. GEO. THOMPSON was cordially received in rising to speak. He stated that his presence was owing to his friendship for Mr. Lewis Smith – a man for whom he entertained the sincerest respect and esteem. Mr. Smith was born a slave on one of the plantations of Kentucky. His mother was a slave, and by the law then prevailing in the United States the children of a slave mother became the property of those who were the legal owners of her body. He remained a slave until he had reached to years of manhood, when he married a slave woman, who bore to him seven children. He then obtained leave of his master to hire his time and labour for his own redemption. The price set upon his person was a thousand dollars. He went to work, and while regularly paying his owner the stipulated price for his time, he, by extra exertion, accumulated the sum required, paid it with all due legal form – received his deed of manumission, and at thirty-six years of age became a free man – a self-ransomed slave. Being now free himself, he at once undertook the work of rescuing from bondage his wife and his seven children. In this task he was joined by a friend who, like himself, had been a slave; who, like himself, had paid the price of his own redemption, and had, besides, effected by purchase the liberty of his wife and three children. Smith and his friend Gross¹ were pious men. Smith, at that time, was a member of a Presbyterian Church, while Gross was a Methodist and the pastor of a free negro congregation in the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. Lewis Smith was illiterate, modest, and slow of speech; but his friend could read and write, could talk fluently, had no lack of confidence in himself, possessed considerable humour, as well as genuine pathos, and could alternately move an audience to merriment and sadness. Hand in hand these men went forth to see how much of \$7,000 they could raise to bring a mother and her seven children out of the house of bondage. They travelled from Ohio, eastward, collecting subscriptions as they went, until they came to Boston, and from thence proceeded to New York; but although they found friends everywhere, they returned home with less than one-third of the amount required for the purchase of the entire family. They applied what they had received to the

emancipation of the mother and her three youngest children; and in order to raise the 5,000 additional dollars necessary to redeem the four eldest children, they came to England, where they inspired confidence by their exemplary Christian conduct. The sum required was raised, it was remitted to trusty hands in America to be applied to the object for which it had been given, and when Mr. Smith returned home it was to find those whom he had left in slavery as free as himself. Mr. Smith settled with his family in Ripley, Ohio, where he became connected with a small Methodist church, the members of which were principally fugitives from slavery. The Church and the school-house attached to it were maliciously destroyed during the war.² In 1868 a congregation of white Methodists removed into a new and larger building, and offered for sale to their coloured brethren the house they had vacated, naming at the time a reasonable price. It was the very thing they had need of, but the question was how to raise the money, for those who had been left without a place wherein to worship were very poor. They asked time to find the money. Their request was cheerfully granted, and Mr. Smith's brethren, remembering the success which had attended his mission to England in 1861, urged him to visit this country a second time, and make an appeal to British Christian sympathy on their behalf, Mr. Smith reluctantly consented and came; but not before he had pledged his homestead and a small estate of ten acres, by the cultivation of which he had supported his family, for the payment in whole or in part of the sum required to buy the chapel in the event of his mission to England proving a failure. He seeks to raise a thousand pounds; he has not yet succeeded in raising more than three hundred. By aiding Mr. Smith in this good work, they would excite to joy and inspire with gratitude the Christian negroes

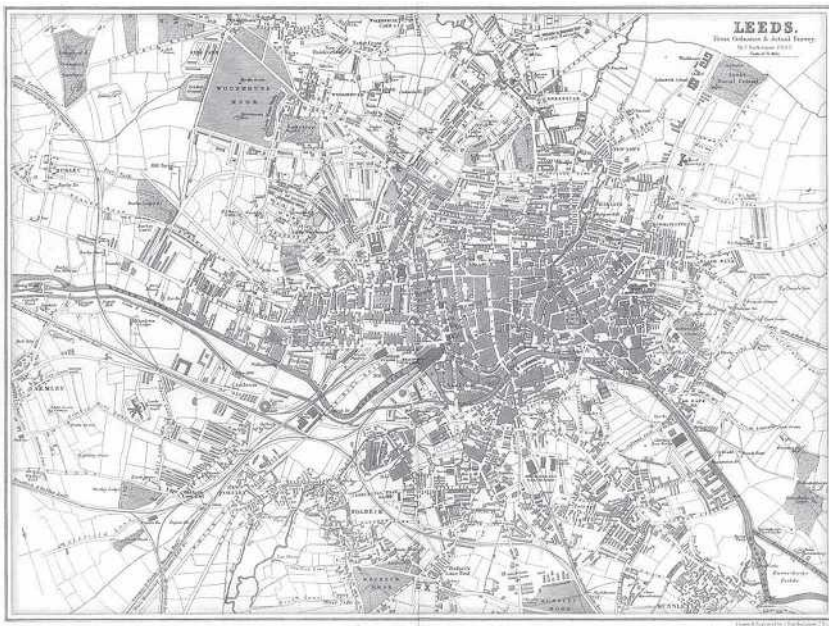


Figure 86 Map of Leeds, England, by J. Bartholemew, 1866. (Wikimedia Commons.)

whom he represented, and secure for their use, and for the benefit of an emancipated race, a building in which the Gospel might be preached, and in which the young might be trained in the way they should go. (Applause). Mr. Thompson then gave an interesting and lucid sketch of the rise and growth of slavery in America, and of the efforts, ultimately successful, made for its abolition. He described what had been done for the emancipated negroes, and referred to the universal testimony given that the coloured men had proved themselves worthy of their freedom; and that in every direction they were making most satisfactory progress, – A collection having been made on behalf of the object which has brought Mr. Smith to this country, that gentleman briefly addressed the meeting, and the proceedings were brought to a close with the usual vote of thanks to the chairman.

Notes

1. Theodore, also known as Tabb, Gross. 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
2. The US Civil War (1861–1865).

JAMES CHEENEY THOMPSON

(DATES UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO 'JAMES Cheeney Thompson' in *Narratives*.

James Cheeney Thompson experienced enslavement in Richmond, Virginia, Cuba, and New Orleans. After enduring several self-liberation attempts which were thwarted by white men designed to hunt freedom fighters, he finally managed to begin a new life fighting for freedom in Canada. He then travelled to Liverpool, UK, in around 1860 or 1861. A powerful protester and radical campaigner, throughout the US Civil War he lectured in the British Isles against US enslavement and against the racial injustice and murderous torture he had witnessed. Throughout his lectures, he exhibited paintings (some of which he designed or painted himself) that depicted his journey from enslavement to liberation and the torture he had personally experienced or witnessed. When discussing the themes of violence, torture, incarceration, rape, and murder, Thompson exhibited weapons such as whips, chains, manacles, and even a whipping post to shocked audiences. During the US Civil War, Thompson spoke out against the Confederacy and exposed the cruel practices of the Confederate leaders, many of whom were enslavers, and pro-Confederate supporters on both sides of the Atlantic. After some lectures, he also recited and sold his own works of poetry, including 'Life's Scenes', 'Afric's Hope', and 'The Holy City'. Thompson remained in England until at least 1867 and collected donations towards the object of becoming a missionary, but the date and circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce speeches that James Cheeney Thompson delivered in England: in Lancaster and Ulverston in 1861, and in Buckingham in 1864.

Further Reading

Primary

Anon., 'Slavery', *Wrexham Weekly Advertiser*, 3 June 1865, p.6.

Anon., 'Slavery', *Reading Mercury*, *Oxford Gazette*, *Newbury Herald*, and *Berks County Paper*, 27 October 1866, p.4.

Drew, Benjamin, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: Or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada, Related by Themselves*. Boston MA: John P. Jewett and Company 1856.
 Still, William, *Still's Underground Rail Road Records: With a Life of the Author*. Philadelphia PA: William Still, 1886.
The Bicester Herald, and Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire Courier, 15 April 1864, p.1.

Secondary

Foster, Helen Bradley, 'African American Enslavement and Escaping in Disguise', in Donald Clay Johnson, ed., *Dress Sense: Emotional and Sensory Experiences of the Body and Clothes*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007.
 Parry, Tyler D and Charlton W. Yingling, 'Slave Hounds and Abolition in the Americas', *Past & Present*, 246.1 (2020): pp.69–108.
 Takagi, Midori, *Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction: Slavery in Richmond Virginia, 1782–1865*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002.
 Vidal, Cécile, *Caribbean New Orleans; Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.



Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Lancaster Guardian*, Lancaster, Lancashire, England, 12 October 1861, p.4.

ON TUESDAY EVENING, a crowded meeting assembled in the Palatine Hall, to listen to a recital by Mr. J. C. Thompson, an escaped slave, of his personal adventures whilst 'a chattel' in the United States. Mr. Thompson, who is a young and very intelligent man, has the most satisfactory testimonials, which, previous to the lecture, were submitted to several gentlemen in the town. The object of the lecture was to assist Mr. Thompson in raising means to go out to Africa to teach the natives the use of cotton cleaning machines, with the object of furnishing them with profitable employment, and striking a blow at the profitableness of slavery. The chair was occupied by the Rev. Colin Campbell, who, after a few preparatory remarks, introduced the lecturer, Mr. THOMPSON,¹ who said: He was born a slave, and many times had he known his mother to weep over the fate of her children, and wish them in the grave rather than live the life of slaves. He was born at a place which had become notorious, from some important incidents of the present American war now happening there – he meant Bull's Run.² Himself and family were sold at a very early age, and it so happened that they were all sold to different purchasers, and with the exception of his mother, he had not seen any of them since that separating day of sale. His first employment was that of hawking and selling bread in the public streets, his owner having hired him to a baker for that purpose. He and his fellow slaves were expected to sell a given quantity each day, and if it was not sold there was always a severe flogging with a large leather strap, perforated, with a view of increasing the pain of the blows given by it. Sometimes the punishment was followed up by being flogged with a bunch of thistles, and the heads of them coming off with the force of the blows, they would sink into the flesh, and could not be removed until they had produced festering sores of the most painful character. Many devices were adopted by the bread boys to equalise their sales of bread, and to make it approach the quantity required of them, but it was always at the expense of some poor victim, who would flee to the woods with the certainty of being captured and doubly punished in a very short time. His position as a baker became so unbearable that he sought the presence of his master and mistress with the view of obtaining some amelioration of his condition, but it was all in vain. He then made an attempt to escape from slavery altogether, and had nearly succeeded, when the treachery of a coloured man in whom he had placed confidence made all his efforts abortive, – he was captured and dreadfully punished. This

did not, however, discourage him in his attempt to obtain his freedom; he was again and again re-captured by those who made it their business to capture slaves. After he had made several attempts and failed, he heard from a white man that there was a country in which the black man was free. He anxiously inquired where that country was, how it could be reached, and which was the road to it, and he resolved to be free though death might be the result of his efforts. He then gave a description of the way in which bloodhounds were trained to hunt slaves, and so accustomed were these hounds to be fed by the whites they would not eat from the hands of the blacks though famishing with hunger. This result was brought about by the training they received; they looked upon the black man as an enemy, and the white man as a friend. On one occasion he was hunted by more than sixty of these hounds. He related at great length his successive but not successful attempts to escape; his frequent recaptures, and the penalties he paid through his ignorance of the States through which he had to pass to obtain his freedom. He ultimately made his escape in company with six others; they were all armed with revolvers, and were determined to fight for life and liberty. Happily their numbers were sufficient to overpower any opposition they met with, and by the aid of the 'underground railway' friends, he finally was enabled to say – 'I am free.' It was now his intention to make up for lost time in matters of education and useful work, with the view of becoming a benefactor of the African race. To that end, he would be glad of any assistance sympathising friends would be able to give. The lecturer was repeatedly applauded, and the audience manifested the utmost sympathy with him. Mr. Thompson exhibits considerable ability in the handling of his subject. While harrowing our feelings by a recapitulation of the cruel and brutal treatment he experienced from his various masters, and in his repeated attempts to escape, by an easy transition he is able to move his audience to mirth with his laughable delineation of negro life and character. His style is animated and agreeable, and his mode of delivery distinct and emphatic, and we were altogether impressed with a very favourable opinion of his merit. We sincerely wish him full success in the accomplishment of his object.

Notes

1. George Thompson (1804–1878).
2. The First Battle of Bull Run was a military conflict of the US Civil War that took place in Prince William County, Virginia, on 21 July 1861. A Confederate victory, this battle resulted not only in the defeat but in the retreat of the Union Army.



Anon., 'The Evils of Slavery', *The Ulverston Mirror*, Ulverston, Lancashire, England, 9 November 1861, p.7.

ON MONDAY, MR. J. C. Thompson, an escaped slave, brought to this town under the auspices of the Ulverston Anti-Slavery Society, addressed a very numerous audience in the Temperance Hall; R. Hannay, Esq., in the chair. The address, rather than a lecture, took the form of a personal narrative, Mr. Thompson giving in detail some of the most striking incidents in his own life, the barbarous treatment to which he had been subjected, with a history of his various attempts to escape from slavery, which at last resulted in success. Mr. Thompson is a young man, apparently three or four and twenty years of age, of not very dark complexion, but evidently the offspring of a white father, his mother being a negro slave. It is but twelve months since he left New York, shortly after his escape from slavery, and taking this fact into consideration, the progress he has manifestly made towards educating himself is perhaps greater than might have been expected. At all events it shows that he possesses some good parts, and may become highly intelligent. The object of the lecturer is stated to be, to provide himself with funds to enable him to proceed to Africa, under the auspices of the African aid society, to teach the natives in the cotton districts the use and management of the cotton gins. The barbarous treatment which Mr. Thompson experienced, though probably no worse than that to which thousands of other slaves are subjected, seemed almost incredible, and he himself seemed to think that some of his statements would hardly receive credit, hence his emphatic assurance, 'If my body has not experienced and undergone this treatment, may God in heaven judge me at the bar of judgment, and my soul never enter into rest.' The following is a brief relation of the events narrated by Mr. Thompson: – He was born and bred in Virginia, near to Bull's Run,¹ now somewhat notorious, his master's plantation being on part of a gap near the Manassas railroad. His first recollections were of his mother and the death of his master. His mother had five children, the eldest at that time being not quite ten years of age. After his master's death one of his first recollections was seeing the place thronged with people, purchasers of the plantation and stock, including the negroes, male and female. The members of his family were bought by different men, and from the time of seeing them on the auction block, he never heard of his brothers and sisters, and was in utter ignorance as to whether they were alive or not. He was sold to a student and being very young fetched only 150 dollars, and was hired out merely to do odd light work about a house. Young as he was, however, he could

remember that everything in the world seemed dark and drear to him, his thoughts being fixed on his mother, sisters, and brothers. As he grew older he was taken by his master to college to wait upon him, and then commenced his actual experience of the horrors of slavery. His duties were to black his master's boots, brush his clothes, &c., and for some slight neglect he was tied to a bedpost, and beaten till the blood ran down his back. While fulfilling these duties his master went off to get married, and Thompson was hired out to a bread baker, who, while seeming never to be angry, and while smiles were playing on his countenance, practised the most barbarous ill-usage on his negroes, who had not only to bake the bread but to sell it. A certain quantity of bread was given to each to dispose of, and if there happened to be any lack of purchasers, and any portion of bread remained unsold, the crime of bringing any of it back was visited most severely on the poor fellows. They were placed in a dark dungeon, and from four o'clock on the Sunday morning were compelled to beat 'hominy' all day. But this was their ordinary Sunday's employment; and the punishment for failing to sell their stock of bread preceded the Sabbath day's labour. This humane master's system of punishment was to place two barrels about six feet apart, and to stretch the offending negro with his feet on one barrel and his head laying on the other, while in this position as many blows were administered as suited the whim of the master. A blanket was thrown over the negroes' head, and with a refinement of cruelty, the wretch would approach them stealthily on tiptoe, and with a heavy strap give a number of sudden blows which would almost tear the flesh from the miserable wretches' backs. He lived with this man three years, and never saw him angry, that is in a passion. While the negroes were still suffering from the strap, this wretch of a baker would obtain some grey thistles, with long and sharp prickles, and with them again lay open their wounds. The prickles breaking off in their backs would fester for about six weeks causing the most excruciating agony. Under this severe treatment, it is hardly to be wondered at that Thompson should meditate an escape, though he had no notion then of what 'freedom' was – his only thought being to get away from his then tyrant. Often had he escaped to the swamps in the vicinity of his master's premises, but had always been caught and taken back. At last he determined upon making an attempt to get away from him altogether, and started off down the country. After walking for about four weeks – in the night time and hiding in the day – he came to a river, and not being able to swim, sought the assistance of an old coloured man, to whom he told his condition, and was by him assisted across on a raft. He walked again for about two weeks, and came to his native place, and a person knowing him took him in charge, and wrote back to the administrator of his old master's estate, and he came and took possession of poor Thompson, who was again consigned to the tender mercies of Mr. Pritchard, the baker, to whom he was hired, and from whom he had escaped. The latter person took him back and subjected him to worse treatment than before. He was chained to a huge iron pot, and was kept to beating hominy. Frequently he tried to slip the chain, but unfortunately for him the peculiar conformation of the negro's heel prevented it passing over that part of his foot. He managed to free himself by breaking a piece out of the iron pot, and made his escape with the chain fast to his ankle at one end, and having a piece of iron at the other! Pulling the whole up the inside of his trouser's leg he started off towards freedom, and walked nine weeks with the chain fastened round this ankle, eating into the bone, and inflaming his whole side. His account is that he met with a negro

blacksmith whom he persuaded to cut the iron off, and then he started on his long journey again, living on apples and what he could pick up. He got caught again, and was sold to a man (after being branded with a hot iron) for 1,300 dols. His new owner did not keep him long, for he made his escape the same night, and got to the railway station (he had travelled on it before), and if he is to be believed – his account will certainly not convince all the hearers of his veracity – he got to the top of a railway carriage, laid down, grasped the stove pipe, and travelled in this manner for 1,700 miles! He succeeded at last, with the assistance of a coloured man who acted as a pilot to seven of them, in getting into a free state. In going over a bridge four miles from the spot where their right to travel without a pass was unquestioned, he relates that they had each a revolver, and they met four white men who commanded them to give themselves up, but seeing that they were armed, the white men, who were armed also – one with a double-barrelled gun – slunk away, making a sort of excuse for their intrusion, and dubbing the negroes ‘gentlemen!’ Having once got into a free state, Thompson says he got a situation as waiter at Albany, and in a five months’ stay saved 129 dollars, and made his way to New York. Here he commenced business as a barber in partnership with another man, but was informed by a policeman that his late owner was getting out a writ of *habeas corpus* to take him back, and he at once took up his hat, completely disguised himself, and managing to get on board the steamer *Baltimore*, sailed for England the next day, where he in due time arrived. – That Mr. Thompson has seen a good deal of negro life no one can doubt, but that he has gone through anything like what he describes in his narration we have heard a great many doubt. As to his truthfulness or otherwise we do not venture an



Figure 87 Ulverston Market Place, England, 1860. (Wikimedia Commons.)

opinion. Certainly that 1,700 miles of railway travelling does look most extraordinary. The Rev. F. Evans, at the conclusion of the address, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Thompson, and in doing so suggested a reason for the American war which would probably be new to President Lincoln.² He said: I was thinking that under the law of Moses³ every man stealer was to be put to death. Now, all the slaves in the northern states of America are either slaves sold personally or are the descendants of those who were sold, – and every man stealer was to be put to death. May we not think that the present war that is going on in America has been excited by divine providence to carry into execution the law of Moses? They have been guilty of man stealing, and now they are to be killed by one another in order to carry the law of Moses into effect. The Rev. Mr. Horsburgh seconded the motion, which was carried with applause. A vote of thanks to the chairman terminated the proceedings.

Notes

1. The First Battle of Bull Run was a military conflict of the US Civil War that took place in Prince William County, Virginia, on 21 July 1861. A Confederate victory, this battle resulted not only in the defeat but in the retreat of the Union Army.
2. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
3. Exodus 21–24, 31–35.



Anon., 'American Slavery', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*,
Buckingham, Buckinghamshire, England, 12 March 1864, p.4.

A LARGE AND HIGHLY respectable audience assembled in the Town-hall, on Tuesday evening last, to hear a lecture on the above subject, by Mr. J. C. Thompson, formerly a slave. The Rev. W. F. Norris, vicar, took the chair, and in the course of his introductory remarks, paid a grateful tribute to the memory of the illustrious William Wilberforce,¹ who worked so well, and with so much success, in the cause of negro emancipation. The chairman then introduced Mr. J. C. Thompson, who was received with many tokens of welcome. He said he had often wished in his heart that there were many like Wilberforce, but he was afraid there were not many like him. There are doubtless many good men in the world, but the evil they have to meet is so great, and so overwhelming in its operations, that the good these men can effect seems scarcely perceptible, and must at times dishearten them. Wilberforce is well known to the better class of slaves; those upon whom the light of freedom has shone, and who know its meaning, and sigh for it. He need not say that the institution of slavery was not a new institution. We read of it in the bible, in the history of the Jews.² We read of slavery among the Greeks and Romans,³ but their slaves were allowed privileges American slaves are denied. We know slavery is an old institution, but as the world becomes more enlightened, slavery becomes more degrading, and the slaveholders more cruel. In this nineteenth century slaves have been worse treated than ever. In the slave states, slaves are not allowed by law to assemble in greater numbers than seven; if they did, their property became confiscated, and a strict watch set upon them. If, in passing down a street, a slave should meet a white man and not give him the wall side of the path, the white man could, if he chose, chastise the slave severely, and the slave get no redress. He (the lecturer) could take up two hours in speaking of these petty laws and annoyances, to which slaves are subject, but must not dwell upon them. There is, said he, a great war⁴ going on in America; the South is fighting for slavery, and the North for its abolition. The Southerners knew that if Slavery was kept within its present boundary it must perish. They think it right for the strong to get their support out of the weak, and maintain that slavery is the right and natural condition of the negro race. Some of these slaveholders own from 600 to 700 slaves, differing in value according to their usefulness. President Lincoln's⁵ aim is to preserve the Union, and he has done more in the last two years towards the abolition of slavery than was ever done before. Since he has been president more than half a million of slaves have

been set at liberty; they have now the rights of citizens, and are treated as men. Schools are erected for their education, and they are entrusted with votes. But this war is eating up the very vitals of the country; its pecuniary resources are becoming exhausted, and the cry of woe and sorrow is heard on every hand. If you sympathise with the slave, then you must wish the North success in their endeavours to abolish slavery, and give the negro his birthright. If his hearers had any idea of the cruelty and wrong under which the poor slaves groan, and toil, and tremble, they would have no sympathy with the South, none whatever. He could not well describe these things, but he would hasten to give his own experience as a slave, and how he escaped from the house of bondage. His father and mother are still slaves. He was sold from them when five years of age, and except from his mother he has never heard from any of them since. The first time he was sold he fetched £40; the next time £50; and the third and last time £70. He was often hired out to different persons, and for entirely different purposes. Sometimes a gentleman's servant, sometimes a baker, at another time a gardener, then a groom, and sometimes all combined. At one time he became the body-servant of a young gentleman, who treated him very cruelly, often tying him to the bedpost and flogging him for amusement, or for very trifling offences. At another time he was hired out as general servant to a family of several ladies – a mother and daughters, and to these he was gardener, groom, coachman, and superintendent of the laundry. He had to wash the ladies' linen, and his mistress used to inspect it with double magnifying glasses, and if any stains of dirt were left in any article he was chastised like a child, and made to do his work over again. At length his patience became exhausted, and he resolved to effect his escape from slavery, and to taste the sweets of freedom. He left his owner, and after hiding by day and travelling by night, he reached a railway station, and contrived to get on the top of the roof of the railway carriage, and to travel by express, but to pay no fare. He thus managed to travel many hundreds of miles, and his freedom seemed near, when he was captured and retained till his master fetched him back. He was then branded in the side, the scars of which he said could be felt through his clothes. He made another start for liberty, and this time was successful. He reached New York, and there worked as a hairdresser, till one day a friend told him he had better be off, as a man was trying for a summons to apprehend him (Mr. Thompson) under the Fugitive Slave Law.⁶ He left the hairdresser's shop instantly, and prepared for another start. Some friends who were anxious to see him escape from his pursuers, packed up a box for him, and a ship being just about to start for England, he procured some false whiskers, and a Portuguese suit of clothes; he then engaged with the captain to bring him across the Atlantic – apparently a Portuguese gentleman, but in reality a fugitive slave panting for liberty. After the ship had left New York, the captain sought after the Portuguese passenger, but never found him. They arrived safe at Liverpool, and when the lecturer stepped on British soil he said it seemed as if a load had been taken from his shoulders; he felt so happy, or as he expressed it – as though an earthquake of joy was in his heart. Such is a brief outline of Mr. Thompson's lecture, during the delivery of which he was frequently applauded. In handling his subject he exhibits great ability, and knows how to provoke mirth, as well as how to excite pity for the slave. He is an excellent mimic, and imitates the voices of the characters he is describing with great precision. He has a happy countenance, which is lightened up with good temper when speaking of liberty and its sweets; but when he speaks of slavery and its horrors, it is almost indicative of wrath and

impatience. At the close of the lecture, the Rev. W. F. Norris expressed the pleasure he had experienced in being present, a pleasure which he felt sure had been shared by the audience. It was, he considered, a great advantage to have a man among them who could speak from experience upon American slavery. All must have been amused, and he hoped profited. He hoped the object of the lecture would be to excite sympathy for the oppressed wherever they might be. We are too apt to shut ourselves up in our little corner, so to speak, and forget others who should have our sympathy. While shuddering at the cruelties practised by the slaveholders, we should not forget that the human heart is the same in England as in the slave states of America, the law perhaps making the difference between us and them. Men here have the same passions, and the same propensities in common with the slave dealers, which if indulged in, would produce the same effects. He hoped that the lecture would learn every one present to place great restraint upon their passions, and to check any desire which might arise to tyrannise over any with whom they might come in contact. He felt it his duty to ask the lecturer to accept a vote of thanks for his lecture, which he was sure the audience would unanimously give. The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation. Mr. J. G. Holyoake, who happened to be present, addressed a few words to the audience. He said he had heard many slaves lecture, but Mr. Thompson's lecture was the best he had ever heard on the subject. We in England have been told, that the slaves were incapable of being taught anything beyond work. He thought the capabilities of the lecturer refuted that argument entirely. He also thought that if slavery held in bondage but ONE man with capabilities similar to the lecturer, it was a sufficient reason why it should be abolished. He wished to congratulate the lecturer upon his escape from



Figure 88 Photograph of the Town Hall, Buckingham, England. (Author copy.)

servitude, and to express the pleasure he had experienced in listening to him. Mr. Thompson replied briefly, and the attentive audience then dispersed. We should have said that the lecture was illustrated with some well executed drawings, which made the subject the more interesting, and presented many matters in a much plainer aspect than words could do, unaccompanied by any picture.

Notes

1. William Wilberforce (1759–1833).
2. For further information, see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
3. For further information, see Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1981).
4. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
5. Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).
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: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/fugitive.asp

D. E. TOBIAS

(c.1870–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO ‘D. E. Tobias’ in *Narratives*.

The son of formerly enslaved parents, D. E. Tobias was born in South Carolina in c.1870 and worked on a farm as an agricultural labourer until he was seventeen years of age. Ever the social justice campaigner dedicating his life to fighting the educational inequalities facing all Black people living in the US, he expressed a wish to become a teacher and minister amongst African Americans living in the South. Tobias graduated from Brown University and according to the *New York Herald* became a ‘printer, economist, criminologist, and psychologist’.

On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Tobias wrote blistering attacks against segregation, the convict lease system, the unjust incarceration of Black people of all genders and ages across the US southern states in particular, the torturous conditions they faced while serving times for menial offences, and Jim Crow. Originally a white racist fictional character created by white US performer, Thomas Dartmouth Rice, in the decades that followed and on through to the present day, the phrase ‘Jim Crow’ became synonymous with white persecutory systems of legal racial segregation. Tobias travelled to London to investigate prison conditions in England and Scotland, and published a revolutionary document that has been neglected by scholars. It contains a searing indictment of the persecutory and discriminatory legacies of enslavement that had by no means ended, and is entitled *Freed . . . But Not Free: The Grievances of the Afro-American* (see ‘D. E. Tobias’ in *Narratives*). He also published a pamphlet, *Class, Color and Race: Questions and Prejudices Discussed*, in which he wrote open letters to white British newspaper editor W. T. Stead and Senator Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina. On his return to the US, he supported fellow radical African American civil rights leaders including W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) and worked with Jamaican politician and Black nationalist Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887–1940) in his activism on US soil. The date and circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce two speeches D. E. Tobias delivered in Dundee, Scotland, in 1898.

Further Reading

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Anon., 'The Negro in America', *The Evening Telegraph*,
Dundee, Angus, Scotland, 5 December 1898, p.5.

MR. D. E. TOBIAS, a coloured gentleman from South Carolina, U.S.A., is at present in this country seeking aid for certain philanthropic schemes he has in hand for the betterment of the negro in America. He has come to Dundee, and during the next fortnight will address meetings in various parts of the city in furtherance of his mission. On Sunday afternoon he spoke to a gathering of young men in the Y.M.C.A., under the presidency of Mr. William Stewart. He explained that in the minds of most people in this country the negro was usually associated with the banjo. But the negro with the banjo was hardly typical of the race. The negroes were freed from slavery 33¹ years ago, having for 250 years been looked upon as articles of purchase and sale. After 250 years of slavery he thought the churches in America should have opened their doors to the negro, but that had not yet been done. Special seats in the gallery or in a corner were reserved for negroes, and if two of them went into a church the minister was almost sure to take for his text 'Servants, obey your masters;' the application being obvious. The religious organisations, when they advertised missions, were careful to make it distinctly understood that they were going 'to bring white young men to Christ.' Even in the Y.M.C.A. the negro had no freedom, and could not go to the library and take books. He perhaps could not complain so far as that was concerned, as he was not taxed for that library; but he objected to being taxed for the State Library while he was not allowed to use it. If taxation without representation was tyranny and sufficient to justify the Americans fighting the British, it was also a tyranny in the case of the negro. When he went to a northern college to study for the ministry, he was told he would have to sit at a table by himself as they would not allow him to sit with the whites. In this country he could go into a shop and be treated like others, but not so in America. Mr. Tobias was patiently listened to and frequently applauded.

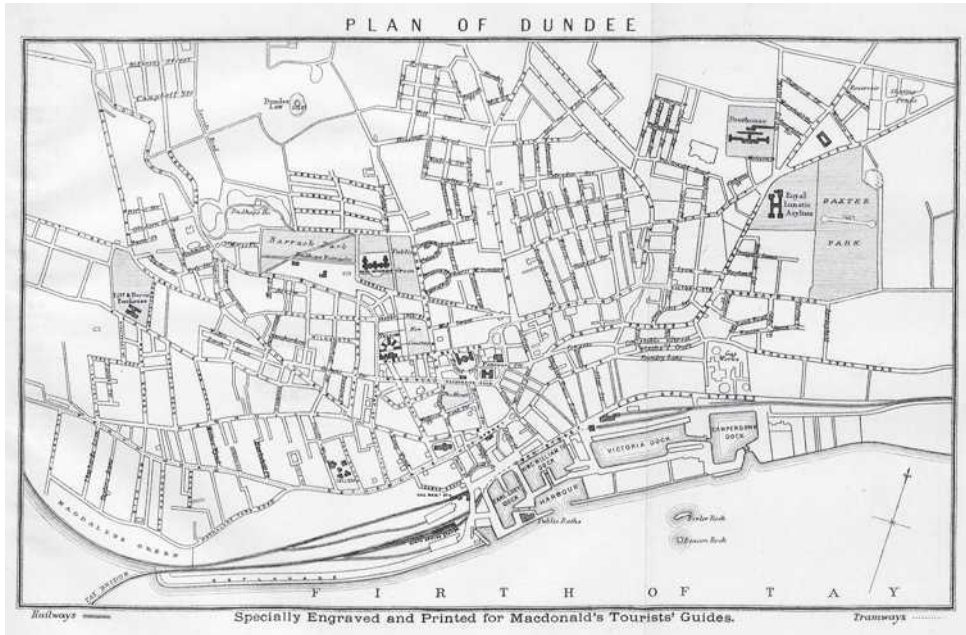


Figure 89 Map of Dundee, Scotland, c.1888. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Notes

1. He is referring to the '13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery', 31 January 1865, which is available online at: <https://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/13th-amendment>
2. Ephesians 6:5.



Anon., ['By a Lady Correspondent'] 'Black Woman and White Woman',
The Dundee Courier, Dundee, Angus, Scotland, 16 December 1898, p.6.

YESTERDAY AFTERNOON A meeting was held in Dundee Y.W.C.A. Parlour, when a most interesting lecture was given by Mr. D. E. Tobias on 'Black Woman and White Woman in America.' Mrs. D. Cox presided. Himself a negro of the negroes, Mr. Tobias has the subject of the entire emancipation of his brethren very near his heart. He has come to this country with excellent testimonials and letters of introduction from ministers in America. Being sent to Scotland from London, he proceeded to Aberdeen, where he found a warm friend in Mrs. Fyvie Mayo, and after a stay of about three or four weeks he came to Dundee, where he has made many friends. The subject of the meeting merited a much larger attendance, but small numbers did not at all damp his enthusiasm. Speaking directly of the African race, he said the development cannot be very rapid so long as women are held in subordination, and all our energies must be devoted to the freedom of women. At present very little was known of the women apart from seeing and hearing them at concerts, and, considering their chances, the coloured race were, he said trully magnificent. Many of them are teachers, missionaries, &c., and all are working for the benefit and uplifting of their race in America. Forty-five years only have elapsed since they were first admitted to any institution. They are always ready to take part in meetings, read papers, &c. As teachers, they go from one place to another in the Southern States, and travel by the 'Jim Crow'¹ car. In so doing they have to put up with many indignities. They are ordered to a room reserved for the use of coloured people, where all sorts of men of loose character congregate. If they made for the other apartments, a policeman immediately pounces upon them with the words – 'This place is not for you. There is the place for niggers.' If there are white men about of any spirit they naturally take the part of the women. In several cases black women have been arrested for this offence, and after paying away considerable sums of money to unscrupulous lawyers who promise great things, but who do not raise their little finger to help them, they are made to promise that they will never dare to enter a room on the 'Jim Crow' car set apart for white women. The same treatment is merited out to them when they go to the public parks; one particular park in Georgia bearing the sign – 'No negroes or dogs allowed here.' The question of master and subject has being going on for the last thirty-three years. In the churches set apart for a white congregation the coloured race are regarded as intruders. If the blacks did happen to show their face in any one of such they were

politely told to withdraw, and directed to the church for niggers, and the coloured man concludes on seeing the congregation of faces that discretion is the better part of valour, and quietly withdraws. The white men are not all alike unvaliant, however, and Mr. Tobias told the story of a white missionary who asked him to share his bed. Tobias resented, saying he knew his place better, and held out till two o'clock next morning, when he finally gave in. The coloured people are excluded from the libraries, although their upkeep is shared alike with the whites, and never on any occasion are they allowed to sit down in the rooms. Speaking of the prisons, Mr. Tobias said two distinct systems prevailed – the reformatory and the contract. The contract system is simply a leasing out or farming of prisoners, and many stories of inhuman treatment were related. The lessee has absolute control of the convicts, and they are sent out to work in mines, wheat farms, ditching, &c. An armed guard is stationed over them. Prisoners of all sexes are together, the women being compelled to wear men's apparel. After working for fourteen to twenty hours, they are driven home to sheds at night, receiving each a piece of coarse meat, which they are obliged to cook over small fires. There are no beds on which they may repose their tired limbs. Some possess the luxury of a small bundle of straw, but most squat on the bare floor. At a given time the order is given to 'stretch' by the guard, who is stationed above, and half an hour later they must 'turn' at his call, and so on till five o'clock next morning, when they are told to rise. No wonder that with such treatment they are all weary of this world and the death-rate should be large – one in every four. There is no day of rest for them, Sabbath being a recognised day of labour. If convicts are scarce, and the demand is not equal to the supply, a simple way out of the difficulty is to arrest some men on suspicion for a crime that may have been enacted some six months previous. In conclusion, Mr. Tobias said that the remedy lay in the coloured race getting a vote and having power to send to Washington men who would put down such iniquities. Barbers in America a little time ago refused to shave a black man, but, under penalty of being fined £3, they now have had to give way. No soap, however, is made mention of by Government, and when the barber brings his razor down once or twice the coloured man makes a dash for the door, and this barber has seen the last of him. Whilst at college this ostracism was meted out to him, but he trusted that the day was not far distant when all would respect the coloured man for what he is, not what he is supposed to be. A vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs. Watson to Mrs. Cox for presiding and to Mr. Tobias for his interesting address.

Note

1. '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 car'.

WILLIAM TROY

(1827–1905)

Biographical History

BORN LEGALLY FREE into a freedom that was in name only in Virginia in 1827 to an enslaved father and a free mother, William Troy became a leading Baptist minister, conductor on the Underground Railroad, abolitionist, and author. After discovering his local white US pastor in Virginia had legally sold African Americans from his own congregation, he moved and settled first in Cincinnati, Ohio, and then Ontario, Canada, with his wife, Sydney Blackburn, in 1851. Shortly before the US Civil War (1861–1865), Troy travelled to the British Isles to campaign for abolition and to raise donations for a Baptist church in Windsor, Ontario, after which he extended his visit to other European nations. In Britain, Troy collaborated with other Black freedom fighters including Rev. William Mitchell. After the Civil War he resided in Richmond, Virginia to preach, and opened an industrial school in 1874. During his lifetime, he published several works including *Hair-Breadth Escapes from Slavery to Freedom* (1861), a radical book that outlined the numerous ways in which African American freedom fighters secured their liberation from enslavement: in the vast majority of cases, of their own volition, on their own terms, and with only the support of Black family members and extended kinship groups and Black conductors on the Underground Railroad.

Here we reproduce William Troy's speech that he delivered in Bristol, England, in 1860.

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THE REV. WILLIAM Troy, a coloured minister, delivered an address last evening at the Old King-street Baptist school-room, on the moral and religious condition of the fugitive slaves of Canada. The chairman (the Rev. F. Bosworth) having opened the proceedings with prayer, the lecturer commenced by adverting to the laws of the Southern States of America, which allowed the slave owner to consider his slaves as part of his goods and chattels, which he might sell or mortgage as real estate. They were not allowed to receive any education, and had no opportunity for caring for their spiritual welfare. Since the year 1720,¹ when the first twenty slaves were taken to America, there had been continual sorrow, weeping, groans, and shedding of tears among the African race; and if (said the speaker) he stood before them till he grew old with age, he could not tell them all the scenes of cruelty and misery he himself had witnessed. He said that this contempt with which they were treated by the laws of the American States had followed them into Canada. He regretted that the fugitive slaves of Canada should be thought so degraded; he would admit that not having opportunities for education, they were ignorant, and his great wonder was that they were not worse than they were. There were about 45,000 fugitive slaves in Canada, who had escaped from the slave states, and were enjoying the privileges of freedom, and yet even in the town of Windsor, in Canada West, where he resided, the prejudice against people of colour 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. Upon his remonstrating with the trustees of the school, they told him that if he would find a person who would teach a class of coloured children, they would try to obtain a separate school for them. Thus, though they paid taxes for school education, they were denied its privileges, and as their only chance of improvement was education, they had built schools and chapels of their own. In speaking of the industry of the fugitive slaves the lecturer said he had known a number of instances in which they had learnt trades and supported themselves and families shortly after their arrival. They cultivated the ground equally as well as their neighbours, and some of them had managed to purchase farms of 50 to 200 acres. There were about 800 in the town of Windsor, several of whom were men of property. As regarded their morals, because they were not all moral, it was said that

they were all degraded. It was impossible, he said, that among 40,000 persons there should be none found immoral. But it was the purpose of the pro-slavery party to make them appear to be prone to immorality and laziness, and therefore give out that it was infinitely better to keep them in a state of bondage. If a black man became a member of a church, he must take his seat away up in the gallery; if the Lord's Supper was administered, the coloured members were compelled to wait till the white men had partaken, when they came down afterwards, and shared in the communion by themselves. There was a disposition in them to love the worship of God and a willingness to hear the Gospel. He had preached to 2000 of these persons at a time, and whenever they heard of Christ and Him crucified, they seemed anxious to listen to what the preacher said. This evinced their improved moral condition, and was sufficient to contradict the assertions of their enemies about their degraded condition. The speaker alluded to the destitute condition of the fugitives upon their arrival, some of them having come from a distance of 1500 miles. 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. He related a touching incident of a fugitive slave mother,² who, rather than allow her children whom she had rescued to return to slavery, cut their throats in the presence of their captors. The speaker concluded by appealing to his audience to assist the fugitive slaves of Canada in building schools and places of worship, where they might be educated and taught the blessings to be derived from a knowledge of the Gospel of Christ.



Figure 90 Bristol Harbour, England, c.1850. (Wikimedia Commons, originally from Bristol Record Office.)

Notes

1. '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 at: <https://historicjamestowne.org/history/the-first-africans/>
2. This is possibly a reference to Margaret Garner (1834–1858), a Black revolutionary freedom fighter who fought to secure her own and her family's self-liberation from enslavement with her husband and children in 1856, but it could also relate to the untold and countless women who made the same sacrifice to ensure their children had liberty in death if not in life.

SAMUEL RINGGOLD WARD

(1817–1866)

Biographical History

SAMUEL RINGGOLD WARD experienced enslavement in Maryland. He secured his self-liberation and went on to become a renowned preacher, antislavery activist, orator, journalist, editor, and political leader. Across the United States and Canada, Ward was an educator, religious minister, newspaper editor and political organiser; he lectured on abolition and protested against white racist acts of injustice, persecution, and discrimination. In 1838 Ward married Emily E. Reynolds. In 1853, he travelled to the British Isles to take advantage of the popularity of antislavery feeling, which was a direct result of the success of white US author Harriet Beecher Stowe's antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in 1852. He held temperance, antislavery, and religious meetings across the nation, and befriended influential white British reformers, authors, and other formerly enslaved Black freedom fighters who were visiting Britain at the time, including Alexander Crummell and William and Ellen Craft (see their entries in *Speeches*, included in this volume). In 1855, Ward published his narrative, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* in Toronto, Canada, in which he detailed his experiences in Canada, Britain, and the US. He emigrated to Jamaica later that same year where he became a farmer and served as a Baptist minister in Kingston. He died there in 1866.

Here we reproduce the speeches Samuel Ringgold Ward gave in Bury St Edmunds and in York, England, both in 1854.

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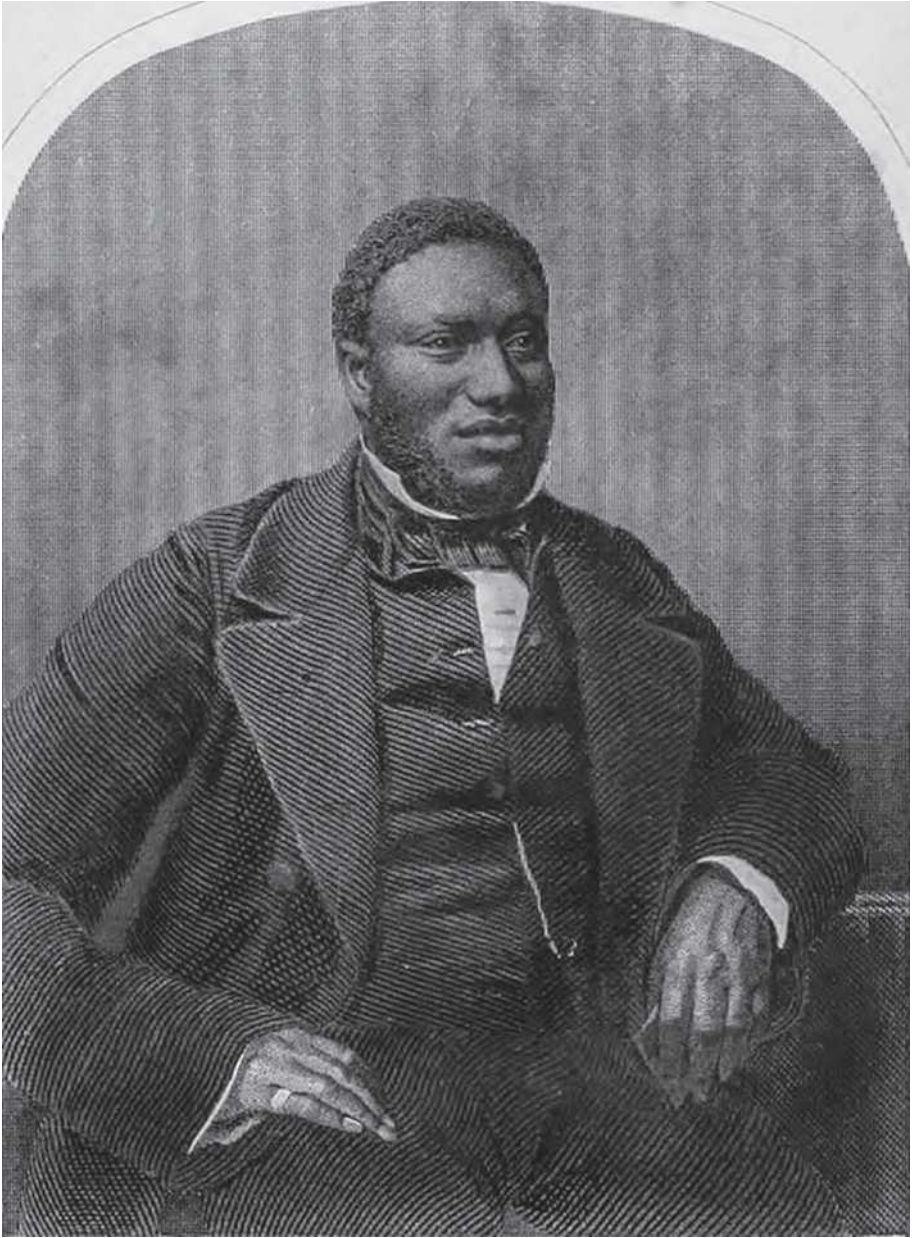


Figure 91 Samuel Ringgold Ward, author portrait from Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Antislavery Labors in the United States, Canada & England*. London: John Snow, 1855. (Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.)

Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Herald*, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, England, 19 July 1854, p.6.

THE REV. S. R. WARD commenced by expressing his regret that he could not present to the meeting anything like a favourable or hopeful phase of the present state of things touching slavery in the United States of America. He regretted this the more on account of the bonds which bound the people of that and of this country together – on account of their one-ness of origin, their one-ness of language, their likeness of pursuits, and their likeness of character in a great many things, and on account of the high degree of hopefulness which had always been maintained in this country of the ultimate triumph of principle over this iniquitous practice. He regretted there were at this time no signs of hope that there could be a peaceable abolition of the slave system of America; he the more regretted to have to state this because some present had a personal interest in the matter, having labored for upwards of 20 years to bring it about, with the greatest possible hope, and at times, with good prospect of success. He should not dwell much on the state of slavery in America, having most to say of what Englishmen could do in this country towards its abolition. In the first place it was needful that the people of this country should know what slavery was, because they were constantly making great mistakes respecting it. Some said that slavery was not so bad, because the slaves were not so badly treated, and talking about the strong attachment between the slaves and their masters; others palliated the system on this and on that account; but let it be known that slavery was slavery, however it might be modified, however kindly the slave was treated; he might, like Dives, fare sumptuously every day, he might dress in purple and fine linen, and live on the greatest luxuries of the earth; he might have some one to fan him while he slept, and to tremble when he awoke, but, after all, he was still a slave, a piece of property in the hands of the person who claimed power over him. The slave, a human being, clad in the garments of humanity, made subject to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, and all creeping things – the slave, thus endowed, thus invested, was reduced to the position of a mere piece of property, so that a man could buy, sell, mortgage, or swap him as he would swap a horse, or do what he pleased with him. Let them imagine Anglo-Saxons, who had made more progress than all the rest of the world put

together, who had made such noble sacrifices for truth and for the acquirement of freedom – let them imagine them with their Bibles in their hands, with their religious institutions, and their institutions for the benefit of human beings and the alleviation of human woes – let them imagine them, in spite of their knowledge, taking men and reducing them to this condition, in the 19th century! Imagine what was constantly occurring among the Anglo-Saxon race, even that half on the other side of the Atlantic. The slave, said the law, was a chattel to all constructions and purposes whatever; he could neither hold nor have anything, but it must belong to his master; and the law struck him out of the list of sentient beings, allowing him only the same relation to his master that the quadruped bore to his owner. This was slavery, and when a human being was reduced to this condition it made no odds how his master fed, clothed, treated him: in every respect he was as a piece of property. A right to his own earnings a slave could not have, for the reason that he belonged to some other man, not to himself, and could not acquire the possession of property. Again, with regard to the rite of marriage: marriage, the meeting was aware, was the oldest, the first institution given to man. A slave had no marriage rights. It was not true, when a priest had said to the two slaves who had pledged their faith to each other, ‘Whom God hath joined, &c,’ that a man could not put them asunder; one man might own the husband and another the wife; and he owned the husband might send him to a distance from his wife, and he who owned the wife might send her from her husband. As slaves they were both to go where their masters pleased, where their needs demanded, where their caprices dictated. There was, in the conditions, the essentials of slavery, things not adhering to it but inherent in it, much that was totally irreconcilable with right, inconsistent with the laws of human nature, inconsistent, above all, with the laws of God. The British people had had to do with slavery, and had been guilty of encouraging it – they had had to do with indirectly – and they had to do with it as connected by intimate ties with the British people. In the first place, when slavery was first established in America, while we never had a charter which allowed of trading in slaves, while we never had a single colony whose charter strictly construed, did not forbid slavery, yet the very people of the colonies commenced trading in slaves and keeping them, and the British Government winked at it. After reference to the decision in the *Somerset*¹ case, in May, 1772, in the Court of King’s Bench, that when a slave came to England, his landing here made him a free man – that coming to this country, or to any of its possessions, he could not be recovered as a fugitive, could not be taken back as a slave – Mr. Ward observed that from that period down to the time when we freed our slaves in 1838,² we constantly, when the Americans lost slaves, and they came to us, gave gold to pay for them. A case might occur of this sort – 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. This was our guilt. 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. He recollected a memorable case of a number of negroes escaping, and getting on board a British ship commanded by Admiral Cockburn;³ the masters demanded the slaves; he refused to give them up, because, they having entered a British ship he considered them as free as if they had touched the British soil. The British fleet sailed

to the West Indies, and the Admiral carried the negroes with him. A demand for payment for them was made upon the British Government, which confirmed Admiral Cockburn in his decision. This was in 1814, and from that time down to 1846 the American Government had unweariedly corresponded with the British Government for gold to pay for these negroes, and they ultimately got for them 200,000 dollars or 40,000l. sterling. After Jonathan had put this principal into his pocket, he said, 'Now we reckon we'll have interest on that,' and John Bull paid it. The practical effect of this proceeding was that we might be said to do anything that the Yankees demanded of us in furtherance of slavery at that time. There was one piece of encouragement we gave them – we held slaves [in] our own British islands till the Emancipation Act in 1838, when we set the example of freeing them; and there could be no kind of doubt of the good effect of giving freedom to those who had been so long crushed and trampled upon. The present condition of the slave question in the States was this. The Yankees had set up housekeeping for themselves; they were an independent people; they need not hold on to slavery, one of the institutions borrowed from us; but while they held on to the principles of Magna Carta,⁴ the right of trial by jury, the right of a man to be secure in his person, papers, and effects from unreasonable searches, and to others of our institutions, they chose to cling also to that vile thing called slavery, which we had abandoned. But they did more than this. At the time when the Americans became free from British government there were not more than six slave-holding States; now they had fifteen. Then slavery was a feeble thing, just asking for the right and privilege to live here and there; now it was a dominant thing, a great and surprising thing, maintaining domination over the Church, the people, and every department of the whole country. Up to 1790, not a single law had been passed by the American Congress in favour of slavery, but afterwards the slaveholders began to ask Congress to make laws in their favour. They got Congress to make a law that coloured people should not become voters. No sooner was this passed than in 1791 they asked for and obtained another law whereby no black could become a naturalised citizen; in 1793⁵ they passed a law which mulcted a person in 400 dollars if he rendered assistance to poor fugitives, and gave the utmost power to the Magistrates to retain slaves when claimed. In 1810,⁶ under Jefferson's⁷ administration, a law was passed whereby no black person was permitted to carry the American mail, and if the contractor employed a black man for that purpose it cost him 50 dollars. In 1840 a law on the National Domains authorised the selling of land to actual settlers at a dollar for the acre it was thought that a man who had cleared and cultivated a tract of land was entitled to this privilege, but it was confined entirely to the whites. If he (Mr. Ward) were to clear and cultivate and build on a piece of ground, he could not buy it, but any white man, the greatest scoundrel that ever crawled, should step up and buy it out of his hands. (Shame, shame!) This was the way in which the cords had been lengthened and the stakes strengthened of this accursed system. Mr. Ward next proceeded to detail the gradual admission of States to be slave-holding States; and then narrated some appalling anecdotes of the escape and recapture of fugitives, which he said he mentioned to show that to strengthen, enlarge, and increase slavery was the leading idea of the American Government and people. The British *animus* was for the expansion of the Constitution, more rights for the people, improvement of the poorer classes, the extension of the area of English liberty, making it a greater blessing to ourselves and our children; the American *animus*

was to strengthen slavery and to crush the negro. Take the position of the negro as dwelling under the Fugitive Slave law:⁸ a man might come into that room, if it were in Yankeedom, and say, 'That negro on the platform is my slave,' and might take him before a Commissioner, and if any one dared to interfere, it would cost him 2000 dollars and 6 months' imprisonment. This was the Fugitive Slave law, made by Christian people in the afternoon of the 19th century. Mr. Ward next remarked on the Nebraska bill.⁹ In 1821, when Missouri was admitted as a slave State, strong objections were offered to it, and the 8th section of the Act forbade that slavery should exist further North than latitude 36.30; but in admitting Nebraska and Arkansas the other day, this 8th section was struck out, and slavery was allowed its range over that vast territory. These things were done by a majority from the North, so that the guilt rested more on the Northerners than on those from the South. When he saw slavery extended over Arkansas and Nebraska, and the people of the North not only submitting to but aiding in it, he confessed he saw no hope of a spirit of repentance coming over that country. The slave-owners had got Cuba and Brazil, and would like to have Jamaica also – but didn't we wish they might get it, and wouldn't it do them much good when they got it? They said they had only to bluster about it a little and they would get it. He himself was a little interested in Jamaica, and could say that when they got it they would have their hands full: they would catch a Tartar they had no notion of. They had got Cuba, and might get Hayti, but before they got Jamaica they had to come and consult John Bull, and he was rather a hard customer, as the Emperor Nicholas¹⁰ had found out. This was the present state of things in America. He was glad to see the men and women of this country had devoted themselves to the cause of the slave, and were determined to do all they could for his liberty. He was sorry he could not tell them better things of America, but it was his business to tell them true things. It might be asked if 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'¹¹ had not been productive of good; but he was informed that the rage for it was now over, and the public attention was engaged by Thackeray's¹² Lectures. Those who could trample the Bible under foot could trample under foot the impression made by 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' He had no fear himself but that the slave would be freed, for God's word was pledged to that, but he feared that that event was far distant. He heard Christians say 'Oh, it will come.' A good time would come when right would take the place of might, but there were signs of this coming in the ordinary way, no sign whatever to his humble ken. – Mr. Ward then proceeded to the more cheering part of his discourse, and mentioned several instances of escapes to Canada, shewing the perils the fugitives underwent, their joy on entering the land of freedom, and what excellent workmen they became. In Canada, there were 40,000 fugitive slaves, and this showed something tangible that the British people could do indirectly. When these fugitives first arrived they were exhausted and destitute, but when they had been there some half-dozen days, they were as well-to-do as any men in the country. They had established schools, which were so well managed, and the children learned so rapidly, that white people had preferred sending their children to them, and there were three Government schools actually falling into decay for want of use. In religious matters he knew no people more eager to grasp knowledge, to receive the Gospel and impart it to others, and live according to it, than these fugitives. If he were asked what he would do to induce the Americans to discontinue slavery, he would advocate cultivating the negro material, giving it all the encouragement of British freedom and British institutions,

making the most of the sort of men the slaveholders did their utmost to crush, and showing in every way what their opinion was as contrasted with American ideas of them. There was another matter of great importance perhaps, not for present but for future consideration. If a ship from any part of the world arrived at a Southern port of the United States, having a black man on board, either as a passenger or seaman, he was dragged from the ship, loaded with chains, and placed in the common felon's goal, remaining there till the ship sailed again, and then if the captain did not pay the charges, some 30 cents per day, for his keep, while the real cost was 5 cents, he would be sold to defray them. This was done to black *British* subjects as well as others. He wanted to know if British people would endure that their own fellow subjects should be enslaved by any people under the sun? This was not in accordance with John Bull's ideas. Yet for 30 years this had been done. If the meeting wanted to know what British people should do, he would say, 'make a noise, kick up a row, let Downing-street understand that these things are not to be tolerated much longer; speak out; demand that your fellow-subjects shall not be sold into slavery by anybody; just as you say that Nicholas shall not trample on Turkey; say that neither Yankees nor any others shall trample on British subjects.' Aye, but some folks would say, 'We trade in cotton with our American brethren, and this will injure the cotton trade.' It was true we bought it, and they sold it; but we were not to allow our fellow-subjects to be enslaved because we bought cotton of America. The last that was heard from our Government on this matter was that inasmuch as Carolina and Georgia were about to alter the law, it was better to leave the matter in their hands! Perhaps the Government had as much as they could do to attend to Nicholas, till they should get news from Cronstadt, but we must not let these things go on 30 years longer. Another subject, and he had done. By our continuing to purchase the productions of Cuba, Brazil, and Porto Rico, we did more to sustain slavery than any other people. While doing so we were saying to the slave-holders, 'Steal slaves, and we will pay you for what they produce – keep slaves, steal their earnings, trade in their children, bring us the products, and we will give you in hard cash the market price for them?' This was bad enough even if we could not help it. But he thought it would be helped, for we had soil, we had climate, and we had means to raise the productions for ourselves. He was under an engagement to take two estates in the West Indies. His operations were begun this very year. Sugar in any quantity could be produced in Jamaica; cotton of the first quantity could be cultivated in Demerara, and some said that no better coffee could be grown than the mountain coffee of Jamaica. As to tobacco, those who liked that weed could have it good enough grown for them on British soil. Only one-fourth of Jamaica was tilled, and three-fourths lay waste and idle, and why should we not have a little cotton to wear, coffee to drink, and tobacco to smoke, untainted with the blood of the slave? We had money enough for that purpose, lands enough, labour enough, but nothing was done. We had talked to the slave-holder, preached to him, prayed to him, but this was all we had done, for we concluded by saying, 'Can you sell us any sugar, cotton, or tobacco?' We could grow these ourselves in Jamaica. According to the old process of sugar-making, out of some 18 per cent. of saccharine matter contained in the cane, no less than 15 per cent. was washed in the manufacture, besides a further loss in the transport to England. By improved machinery which had lately been brought into use, instead of 15 per cent. being wasted, 97 per cent. of the saccharine matter was retained, and in that a dry state that could be carried

across the ocean without the least loss in transport, and was worth when here 32s. per cwt. This had been done, and was being done; and if God spared his life two years longer he hoped to present the Mayor with a sample of it. Cotton could be reared there, at the rate of 400lbs. when Yankeedom produced 250lbs. only. Coffee could be grown there as well as any where, and tobacco could be produced in plenty. Some people talked of the West India Islands being ruined by freedom – because the negroes would not work. The English people had determined that the thing should be done, at the expense of 20 millions,¹³ and when Englishmen spent their money they were in earnest. The planters said the negroes would not work, and so the islands were ruined. But was that so? Amongst the enactments which preceded the abolition of slavery, was one providing that the negroes should be apprenticed for six years, but if they chose to buy their time out sooner, they might go free. When the masters went before the stipendiary Magistrate to settle the price which they slaves were to pay for their time, they said they were worth 2s a day, and this the negroes paid. When their apprenticeship expired and their turn came to be paid, they asked 2s a-day. But the masters then found out they were not worth so much, and offered not more than 1s., perhaps not more than 8d. a-day. The negroes were puzzled; they could not reconcile it that when they came to receive money their labour was worth so much less than when they had to pay it. They could not, and what was more, they would not understand it; they said ‘This is no fair;’ and they left the planters, and away they went to the mountains, tilling the land, and raising vegetables for the market, and so forth. The planters then notified that they would sell the lands, but when the day of sale came, up stepped the negroes and bought the whole of them. Oh! how lazy these negroes were! (Applause.) Then the planters must have labourers from abroad, and they imported them from Africa and from India with the consent of Earl Grey, and taxed the negroes to raise the money to being over these men to compete with themselves – a piece of the greatest oppression ever practiced. Meantime, the negroes looked on whilst the imported labourers died off like rotten sheep, and that did not answer. Then the planters levied high taxes on the provisions imported for the negroes, on which the negroes raised provisions for themselves. The result of all was that the negroes who, 16 years since, had not a house of their own over their heads, now owned 300,000 acres of land. (Applause.) If he wanted work done and said to a negro, ‘Work this land and you shall have fair wages, raise cotton, sugar, or tobacco for me, and I will pay you so much,’ he could have as much labour in Jamaica as he needed – as much, no doubt, as he could pay for. Some men would say to the negroes, ‘God and work,’ without naming a price: and the negro would answer, ‘God Almighty make me free – I not work without a bargain.’ Mr. Ward next adverted to the price of land, which was said to be so much depreciated, but when he offered a nobleman 10s an acre for some he said, ‘Oh no! he could not let him have it, as the negroes paid 25s an acre for it.’ He contended that a resident proprietor could make estates pay in the West Indies, but not if he lived in Bury or in Bristol, and had to employ a manager and an attorney. The manager, perhaps, would plant between the rows of canes Indian corn for his own benefit, reducing of course the produce of sugar for the proprietor; and they all knew very well, as he could speak from his own experience as a law student, that money did not increase by passing through the hands of an attorney. (Laughter.) His plan to make the estates pay was to be resident upon them, and to raise the produce without intermediate agency, not depending altogether on sugar,

or any other crop, but on a variety of products. By these means the islands might be cultivated, and what was better, the slaveholders ousted out of the market, or driven to an honest way of doing business. This was the plan to which he was devoted, and to which he meant to devote some years if his life were spared. Mr. Ward concluded by stating that a paper called the *Provincial Freeman*,¹⁴ devoted to these interests, had been started at Toronto, and though he had not the least interest in it, except in contributing to its pages, he should be glad to receive contributions in support of, or orders for, the journal; he should not refuse contributions towards enabling him and those who would be associated with him to cultivate the lands at Jamaica; and he asked for a collection to defray the expenses of the meeting, the surplus of which, if any, would be applied to the object before mentioned.

THE MAYOR, in the name of the Meeting, thanked Mr. Ward for the lecture he had delivered. He had brought many painful topics under their notice, but amply sufficient to induce them to do all in their power to render their brethren on the other side of the water as capable as themselves.

Mr. WARD briefly acknowledged the compliment, and expressed his obligations to his audience for the great attention they had given to his remarks.

A vote of thanks to the Mayor for taking the chair was proposed by Mr. GEDGE, seconded by Mr. BRIDGMAN.

The MAYOR having acknowledged the vote, the Meeting broke up.

Notes

1. For further information on the legal case involving the fight for the freedom of James Somerset, an enslaved man, in the British courts in 1772 presided over by white British barrister and judge, William Murray, see Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery: James Somerset and the End of Human Slavery* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 2006).
2. For further information on the abolition of the ‘apprenticeship’ system which replaced enslavement and which was finally legally abolished in 1838, see James Latimer, ‘The Apprenticeship System in the British West Indies’. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 33.1 (1964): pp.52–57. See also Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds, *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Joseph T. Murphy, ‘The British Example: West Indian Emancipation, the Freedom Principle, and the Rise of Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1833–1843’. *Journal of the Civil War*, 8.4 (2018): pp.621–646.
3. George Cockburn (1772–1853) was a white British Royal Navy officer.
4. The original Magna Carta, or Great Charter, is a centuries-old charter of rights known as the Magna Carta Libertatum, or Great Charter of Freedoms, endorsed by white King John of England in 1215. For more information on its history, context and meaning, see the British Library UK website: <https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta>
5. For access to a full transcription of the ‘Fugitive Slave Act of 1793’, ‘An Act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their masters’, see: <https://web.archive.org/web/20090923082639/http://www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/history/slaveact1793.htm>
6. For further information on this legislation, see Paul Finkelman, ‘Race, Slavery, and Federal Law, 1789–1804: The Creation of Proslavery Constitutional Law Before *Marbury*’. *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*, 14.1 (2018): pp.1–26.
7. Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826).

8. 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
9. 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. The legislation resulted in stoking the fires of the nation's conflict over enslavement and led to a number of violent 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
10. Nicholas I (1796–1855) ruled as Emperor of Russia.
11. White US author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) first published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852.
12. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863) was a white author living in England who had been born in Calcutta, India. He undertook many lecturing tours in the US and the UK. See Jane Lightcap Brown, 'From Augusta to Columbus: Thackeray's Experiences in Georgia, 1853 and 1856'. *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 67.3 (1983): pp.305–320.
13. For further information on this 'compensation money', see 'Context' included as part of the 'Legacies of British Slave-ownership: University College London', available online: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/context/>
14. The *Provincial Freeman* was an African American newspaper edited by leading Black antislavery campaigner, author, editor, and human rights activist, Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823–1893) and published in Canada between 1853 until 1857. Ward was a key editor, supporter, contributor, and fund-raiser. For further information, see Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).



Anon., 'American Slavery', *The York Herald*,
York, Yorkshire, 28 October 1854, p.6.

THE REV. MR. WARD was received with loud cheers. He said that he was an humble representative of the negro race – a race upon whom all the people had trampled – a race who had been consigned to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for other members of the family of God – a race in whose bodies and souls others had trafficked – yet a race who could stand boldly before the world as faultless as any other – a race who in ancient times had given a tinge, a shape, a form, a fashion to the thoughts of the people like any other – a race who had done no injury to their fairer brethren, but who had received deep, lasting, corroding injuries, never to be realised, only to be stoned for by the blood of Christ, and to be seen, in their length, and breadth, and depth, and height, only on the great day of account. (Applause.) Since the days of Queen Elizabeth¹ the people of this island had been red-dened in the blood of his race down to the time to which the Lord Mayor had referred, when the county of York pronounced that England should no longer bear the stain of slavery. Since that time the negro had received attention, for where England gave attention, all the world followed. Still, there were eight millions of slaves, three and a half being in the United States, a similar number in the Brazils, and the remainder were held by the Spanish, Danish, and Dutch colonists. Eight millions of human beings reduced to the level of the horse or the ox, and held and reputed to be chattels for all purposes whatever! It was against this injustice – against this chattellisation of human beings – against this making merchandise of God's children – this bartering of men purchased by Christ's blood – against this outrageous, monstrous system which violated the feelings of their common humanity – that great meeting, worthy of York, was assembled to protest. (Applause.) Mr. Ward then referred to the decision of Lord Mansfield² in 1772 in favour of the freedom of slaves in this country, but at that time the English held slaves in their own American possessions, and therefore they occupied an anomalous position, but now, when they had emancipated their slaves, they stood on good ground. The question then arose as to what British people should do, and in answering this query, Mr. Ward said that in the slave states of America the people were exceedingly careful and guarded lest other people should speak to their slaves. It was indeed a strange thing that a country which made the loudest noise about liberty, which decreed all men free, of all the countries under the moon, it should take such steps as it did, and recognise such an institution of slavery.

In the states of Louisiana, Georgia, and the Carolinas, and other southern ports, as soon as a ship entered quarantine, certain officers go on board, and if there be any negroes there, they are taken on shore, put under confinement, and if they cannot raise the gaol fees when the ship sails, that negro, free though he be, is sold as a slave. This was done believing that if they suffered negroes to come on shore they would converse with their slaves, tell them of the sweets of liberty, and so they would run the risk of losing them. Not only was this system carried out with respect to free negroes in general, but the officers dared to lay their hands on the man who could say he was born on British soil, and drag him to prison and slavery. Now this was a thing not to be endured, and what he would ask the people of York to do was to cry out against it. The facts did not rest on his own evidence, for they were to be found among the archives of our government, it being a statement which lately fell from a statesman's lips that from thirty to sixty British-born persons were seized and sold in the course of a year, and this had been going on for thirty years. Englishmen sang 'Britons never shall be slaves,'³ but some were annually made slaves. Mr. Ward referred to John Glasgow,⁴ whose case has lately been before the public, who was born free in Demerara, and English settlement, but who had been seized in Georgia, and not being able to pay the gaol fees, was now a slave in that state. Such a state of affairs he considered was un-English, and it was strange that this great country allowed it to exist without its voice being raised against it. Having emancipated their own slaves, it ill became them to allow themselves to be enslaved. It had, however, been said that the Americans would not trade with us if we interfered. But he (Mr. Ward) knew them better, for the English took seven-eighths of their cotton, and the Yankees would not quarrel with their bread and butter on that subject. (Laughter.) He begged that the English people would be true to justice, and raise up their voices against the enslavement of their fellow subjects, for they had legal rights, and constitutional rights, and human rights, and British rights on their side. Let them say but little about their neighbours acting unjustly, until they themselves had acted justly towards their own people. Mr. Ward then inquired what were the hopes that America would abrogate slavery, and in replying to it he said he had no hopes whatever of the kind. In proof of this opinion, he referred to the gradual growth of pro-slavery ideas in the constitution. At first they passed a law that no coloured person should vote in Columbia, and they had gone on increasing the slave laws till now a person, aiding a slave to escape in any way, was liable to a penalty of 500 dollars, and a slave was not allowed to be out after ten at night. The number of the slave states at first was 6, but now it was 15, and this had been accomplished by the Northern states themselves, inasmuch as they had a majority in the Senate-house. The rev. gentleman alluded to the Fugitive Slave Bill,⁵ by which trial by jury, and right of appeal from the decision of the judge, were taken away from the slave; and then he noticed some matters connected with his own individual history, stating that he was the son of a slave, but that his mother had been able to effect her escape when he was two or three years old. He had been, along with several others, pronounced a traitor for effecting the escape of a slave, and had been obliged to fly to Canada, where he intended to remain, for he would not return to that free country in any ship that touched at American ports, for fear he should be seized and dragged into slavery. The Fugitive Slave Act had been extended only in May last, by the passing of the Nebraska Bill,⁶ and on these grounds he did not see much hope for the termination of slavery just yet. He might be asked

if he could give any explanation why a nation, who sympathised with other suffering nations of the world, so far forgot themselves in respect of the negro race. The Yankees hated the blacks, and any one sympathizing with them were placed under the universal ban. Mr. Ward observed that his lordship, had he been seen walking up Broadway, in New York, with a black man, as he might have been seen the other night in Old York, would have lost his position considerably, and fallen in the estimation of persons calling themselves Christians. This was a kind of negrophobia which showed itself in many ways – in the steamer or on the rails, and it intruded itself into Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational Churches, where the black communicants or members were not allowed to partake of the elements of the body and blood of Christ until after all the whites had finished, and the question had been asked, ‘has any one been omitted?’ the negroes of course being nobody. Mr. Ward stated that there were about 30,000 negroes in Canada, 3,000 of whom only were British-born subjects, and he did not know a better method of advancing the great cause of emancipation than by giving to these people the highest possible cultivation of their moral, intellectual, and spiritual faculties, so that they may show to their American detractors, who spoke of their great inferiority in these respects, that there was something in reality beneath the black skin which was able to develop itself, if they would give it a fair chance. Reference was made to the love of liberty which was implanted in the heart of the black, as shown by his wish to be free, and his willingness to encounter the greatest difficulties in order to work out the yearnings of

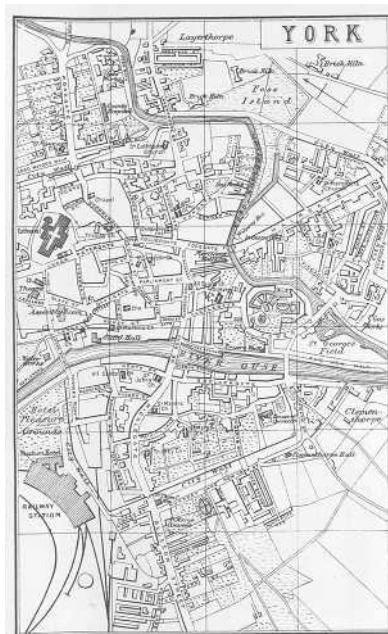


Figure 92 Map of York, from William Paterson and John Merrylees, *Paterson's Guide Book to England and Wales*. Edinburgh: 1886. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

his soul. It required a great deal of manhood and determination to resolve, and it required much vigorous exercise to execute. They loved liberty, and they would endure much for its sake. The Queen⁷ had not more loyal subjects anywhere than the negroes who were sheltered beneath the British flag, and on the 1st of August last they drew up an address to her Majesty. In conclusion, Mr. Ward made some remarks on the support given by the people of this country by the consumption of slave grown sugar, coffee, tobacco, &c., &c., and he hoped that the result of experiments which were being tried would be, that all these commodities could be produced independent of America, in our own possessions of India, British Africa, and Australia, and then slavery would probably come to an end. He had for himself resolved to do all he could for his fellow-countrymen, and he solicited the pecuniary support of the meeting, assuring it that the money should be devoted to the education of the Canadian coloured population, so that ultimately they may be a rebuke to slavery.

Notes

1. Elizabeth I (1533–1603) ruled as Queen of England and Ireland from (1558–1603). For further information on this monarch's role as a white enslaver, see Nick Hazlewood, *The Queen's Slave Trader: John Hawkyins, Elizabeth I, and the Trafficking in Human Souls* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004).
2. William Murray (1705–1793). For further information on the legal case involving the fight for the freedom of James Somerset, an enslaved man, in the British courts in 1772 presided over by white British barrister and judge, William Murray, see Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial That Led to the End of Human Slavery: James Somerset and the End of Human Slavery* (Boston MA: Da Capo Press, 2006).
3. He is quoting from 'Rule, Britannia!', a poem which has since become a nationalist song originally written by white British author, James Thomson (c.1700–1748) and transformed into a song by white English composer, Thomas Arne (1710–1778) in 1740. The full text can be found at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45404/rule-britannia>
4. For further information on John Glasgow, see Ikuko Asaka, 'Different Tales of John Glasgow: John Brown's Evolution to *Slave Life in Georgia*'. *Journal of Black Studies*, 49.3 (2018): pp.212–234; Jeffrey Green, '133: John Brown and John Glasgow, 1855', available online: <https://jeffreygreen.co.uk/133-john-brown-and-john-glasgow-1855/>
5. 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
6. 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 resulted in stoking the fires of the nation's conflict over enslavement and led to a number of violent 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
7. Queen Victoria (1819–1901).

JAMES WATKINS

(c.1823–1825–DATE UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO 'James Watkins' in *Narratives*.

James Watkins experienced enslavement in Maryland. He secured his self-liberation in 1845 and settled in Hartford, Connecticut, with his wife, Mary Eliza Watkins (née Wells). The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act forced him to journey to England for safety, where he spent over a decade lecturing against US enslavement, racism, colonisation, and segregation. He was a strong supporter of free produce, urging British audiences to import free-grown goods such as cotton from India or the African continents instead of relying on the importation of goods produced by enslaved people in the US South. During his meetings, he often produced instruments of torture that were used in labour camps in the US South and from which he still bore the bodily and mental scars. He regularly recounted stories of the unforgivable hypocrisy of white religious ministers who owned enslaved people and thus polluted the purity of Christianity. He made both Birmingham and Manchester his home while lecturing.

The first edition of his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins*, was published by a very likely white male amanuensis in Bolton, England, in 1852. It was a work he continually revised in 1853, 1856 and 1859, before creating a new title for another edition, *Struggles for Freedom*, published in 1860 (with subsequent revisions in 1862 and 1863), that ultimately reflected his experiences in his own words and the challenges he faced from white oppressors and racism in Britain.

In 1856 in Beverley, and three years later in Manchester, Watkins also published a book of antislavery poetry, titled *Poems, Original and Selected*, which included famous abolitionist verses from white US poet Walt Whitman but also poems written by audience members inspired by Watkins' own lectures on British soil. His speaking tours were almost as extensive as Moses Roper's (see 'Moses Roper' in *Speeches*, included in this volume). In later editions of his autobiographical works, he meticulously recorded the hundreds of cities, villages, and hamlets he had spoken in across Britain and Ireland.¹ And much like Roper, Watkins worked to collect donations in an attempt to

liberate enslaved family members from US enslavement. Watkins returned to the US after living in Britain for nearly two decades.

While in Connecticut, James Watkins married Mary Eliza (née Wells) in 1845 and together they had three children, Simeon W. Watkins, Ellen A. P. Watkins, and Mary Isabella Watkins, who accompanied their mother when she sailed to England. As an intergenerational family of liberators, James Watkins was occasionally accompanied by Mary Eliza and some of their children on the lecturing stage to sing antislavery songs. They returned to the US, without James Watkins, in 1858. Tragically, two of their children died, Mary in 1863, and Simeon in 1869 from a lung complaint. The fate of Ellen, and the dates of death for her parents, are currently unknown,² although James Watkins may have been living in Baltimore in the 1880s.

Here we reproduce the speeches that James Watkins gave in Wolverhampton in 1853, in Sheffield in 1854, and in Derby in 1856, all in England.

Notes

1. For a map of James Watkins' speaking locations, see Hannah-Rose Murray's website: www.frederickdouglassinbritain.com
2. Connecticut US Marriage Index, 1620–1926, Ancestry.com; 1860 United Federal Census, Ancestry.com; 1870 United Federal Census, Ancestry.com; US Federal Census Mortality Schedules 1850–1885, Ancestry.com.

Further Reading

Primary

- Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 22 July 1854, p.12.
- Watkins, James, Letter to the Editor, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, Birmingham, England, 18 May 1854. 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.395–398.
- *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins*. Bolton: Kenyon and Abbatt, 1852.
- *A Narrative of the Life of James Watkins: Containing Twenty Years' History of His Slave Life, in Maryland, U.S.* Birmingham: Printed for James Watkins, 1856.
- *Narrative of the Life of James Watkins: Formerly A Slave in Maryland, U.S.* Manchester: James Watkins, 1859.
- *Poems, Original and Selected*. Beverley: Kemp & Son, 1856.
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Anon., 'Lecture on Slavery', *The Wolverhampton Chronicle*,
Wolverhampton, West Midlands, 26 October 1853, p.4.

A LECTURE ON THE above subject was delivered on Monday evening last, in St. George's school-room, in this town, by Mr. J. Watkins, a fugitive slave from America. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. W. Barker, who introduced the lecturer in a brief speech, and read several letters from gentlemen sympathising with Mr. Watkins, after which the lecturer addressed the audience in an effective and interesting 'Lecture,' occupying upwards of an hour in its delivery; in the course of which, at intervals, he was heartily applauded. He commenced by calling particular attention to America, which, he said, 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. The slaves were not only coloured men and women, but Englishmen, Scotchmen, and others, were made slaves in that country. He wished them particularly to remember that the children of every slave woman followed the condition of the mother. Some of the ladies in Georgia and other states wished to elevate the heathen, by establishing a missionary society, and the manner in which the subscription to this society had often been raised was by selling the young children of their slaves; they often sold them by weight, and sometimes received as much as two guineas per pound! The lecturer then proceeded, in an animated strain, to describe the treatment of slaves, the means adopted for their recovery, if they attempted an escape, the punishment to which they were afterwards subjected, and narrated the particulars of an insurrection which had taken place among the slaves. The sale of his own relatives, his subsequent escape to Canada, which is called by the slaves 'Canaan,'¹ his arrival at Connecticut, and his voyage to England, were afterwards touched upon, and the lecturer concluded amidst much applause. The chairman having briefly addressed the meeting, votes of thanks, on the proposition of Mr. J. Wilkes, were carried to the Rev. Mr. Despres for the use of the room, and to the chairman, and the meeting, after an acknowledgement of the vote by the chairman, separated.



Figure 93 Photograph of Queens Square, Wolverhampton, England, 1914. (Author copy.)

Note

1. 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.



Anon., 'American Slavery', *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, 22 July 1854, p.12.

ON TUESDAY EVENING, JAMES WATKINS, a fugitive slave from Maryland, gave an account of his experience of slavery, in Mount Zion Chapel. The Rev. H. BATCHELOR presided, and in introducing Mr. Watkins, stated that letters from Birmingham, written by the Revs. Dr. Dixon and Brewin Grant testified to the excellency of his character – he was indeed a member of the Methodist society.¹

The lecturer said he always liked to assure his hearers as to the accuracy of his statements, so as to preclude all exceptions. He, therefore, solicited questions, and should be most happy to answer them. As at the marriage ceremony, enquiry was previously made as to any party knowing any lawful cause why it should not take place, and if not, no objection could be taken afterwards. He hoped those who doubted would speak at once, and not, when he was gone and not able to speak, kick up a row. He was not there to run America down. He loved it and its institutions, excepting slavery. The declaration of independence² affirmed that all men are created free and equal. But in defiance of this solemn declaration, there are two millions and a half of slaves on its soil. Having been for 20 years a slave, he knew something of their condition. He was not permitted to receive any education, not even to attend a Sunday school – none dared tell him about Christ. A slave was only considered a thing, like a horse, and was bought and sold in the market like cattle. Prior to sales, slaves are put into prison to fatten. He was driven thither with 1500 others. Their food was put in troughs, from whence they took it out with large shells, in place of spoons, feeding like swine. Jumping sticks were set up, and the drivers whipped them if they did not jump aright. They were well greased to make them look sleek, and if any gray hairs were seen in the head of the older, they were blackened, lest signs of age should worsen the sale. One million of slaves, however, are as white as their masters, being the offspring of the white man's lust. Children follow the condition of their mothers. Female slaves are often beaten – they work with their infants slung on their back. One poor mother having been made to leave her infant at a hedge foot while she was at work, was prevented going to it on hearing its cries, the overseer lashing her. When, at last, some one was sent to look to the infant, it was found stung to death by a serpent. The mother died soon after, owing to her maltreatment. The ill-usage of the females used to distress him, so as to render slavery insupportable to him, although he was well-treated, and had an

easy life. He sighed too for freedom – the clank of the chains and the echo of the drivers' whips, to which responded the groans of their victims, sickened him. On resolving to run away, he went to take leave of his mother. She would not let him go, but retained his hand with a desperate grip. At last, as his only resource, he threw her down forcibly and disengaging himself he started off. The third day he was discovered by the dogs, and at last overpowered by them and his pursuers after a fight. He was whipped till he stood in his own blood, and then washed in strong brine, to prevent the flakes of flesh, which the whip had made to hang about him, putrefying, and wrapped up in greased cloths. For 12 months he suffered greatly in consequence, and the scars would remain until his death. He wore an iron collar too, the significant sign of being a runaway. He knew a young Creole, aged 18, owned by her father, and he a member of a Christian church. She dressed in the best attire, could play on the piano, and in every respect fared at table as her father. Why was she thus treated? Alas! only for the same reason as the sheep is fattened – she was for sale. Several gentlemen came to look at her, but the price was above them – 1800 dollars. At length one purchased her and took her to his estate. She was a pious Christian, and was sold to the highest bidder by her own father, and bought for the vilest purpose. Her owner, having got possessions of his property, then made to her his infamous proposals. She refused with abhorrence, stating that she was willing to work her finger ends off for him, but she could not comply with his lust. He threatened, but she persisted, and at length he had her tied up and beaten. (Mr. Watkins here produced the model of the instrument used – something like a large battledore, perforated.) Still she refused, declaring she would die virtuous however he treated her, and die she did under this inhuman, infernal, treatment. Whenever English gentlemen visited the slave-owners, the negroes were clean and greased, and as they knew the certain penalty of truth-telling, they gave false answers when questioned as to their condition. In this way travelers were deceived and contributed by their reports to mislead the public. Ministers guilty of teaching slaves were tarred and feathered, and driven away. He did not run away on account of being ill-treated, but from love of liberty. A slave does not own even one of his own hairs. He ran away to possess that which was God's inalienable gift to every man. As to Father Gavazzi, he did not think much of a man who, while pleading for his own nation's political freedom, pleaded for the chains of two millions and a half of slaves. It had been said there were slaves in England. Were he an Englishman, he should feel it an insult to be compared to a slave. In this land, the poorest and lowest had the English law as his protector, equally with the nobleman. The old slaves were sometimes offered five dollars if they would run away. This, however, was merely to get rid of them when past working. 'You have had my blood,' said one on being thus bribed to go off, 'and you may now have my bones.' His master had offered him his freedom when he should be at a certain age, and two wives besides! He had rejected the offer because he wished to have the pleasure of choosing a wife for himself. The Rev. Elisha Lovejoy,³ the pastor of a large church, because he once preached to the slaves, had all his members turned against him. And when he saw 500 slaves shipped off to the South, he stood and wept, and exclaimed he was ashamed of his country. For this he was tarred and feathered, and expelled the country. Having again gathered a church in a free state, one night a party of his former church assailed his house, set fire to it, and when he was attempting to escape,

his wife hanging on his arm, one of his former members shot him dead. Dying he held up his hands to heaven, declaring he would still plead for the slave with his last breath. The blacks were not the only sufferers, the whites were partners therein. Infants are sold by weight – two guineas for every pound. Infants are sold from the breast. They would sell an angel if they could. His own sister had been sold, and that too for the white man's lust. The horrors of slavery could not be exaggerated – the picture was so black, that it was impossible to over colour. An American vessel would not bring him over the sea. He had paid 1260 dollars for the freedom of three of his brothers and sisters. He concluded by begging all to pray for the slave owners that they might have the iniquity of their conduct forgiven in holding their fellow beings as chattels.⁴

On Tuesday evening, Mr. Watkins addressed a much more numerous audience in the Mount Tabor chapel, Wellington street. Mr. I. SCHOFIELD presided, and the chapel was quite filled. Mr. Schofield apologised for departing from his usual practice, taking the chair without being elected by the meeting. He had been induced to do so by the request of his coloured friend, and out of respect to him and his race. He did not allow any exclusive and narrow feelings to influence him. Mr. Watkins was a member of the Conference Methodist church, but he did not think worse of him for that, but welcomed him most cordially. (Here Mr. Watkins rose and grasped the hand of the Chairman, and was loudly cheered by the meeting.) Mr. Watkins was recommended by Mr. G. W. Harrison, late Mayor of Wakefield, who had presided at a large public meeting held in his behalf.⁵

Mr. WATKINS repeated much of what he had said on the previous evening, but some new matter was occasionally introduced. The love of freedom had in him been co-existent with the awakening of the intellectual powers. He remembered in youth walking in the tobacco fields, and watching in the tobacco fields, and watching the big sun in its glorious freedom, rising and setting and spanning the heavens, and as he gazed he was moved by a passionate longing to be free, and asked, How long shall I be a slave? But echo returned⁶ no response but one of despair, – 'For life!' He thought it very hard to be thus at the mercy of a man like himself, and not to be able so much as to call even an inch of his skin on his own. The negroes called the land of their bondage Egypt, and that across the lake Erie, Canaan, because those who trod its soil were free. And they loved the North Star because it was their guide to Canada; by it they steered their course when flying by night from slavery. He thought God had hung that brilliant beacon in the heavens for the salvation of fugitives. The rice plantations were the penal settlements for discontented negroes, whom it was thought desirable to use up. They were in Savannah and Georgia. No matter how healthy and strong the constitution, if the negro there lived seven years, he was thought long-lived. They had to work up to the waist in water, and in tents which were so low and close, that life sank with frightful rapidity. The chergoes, too, an insect peculiar to the country, got into the flesh where they lay their eggs, and hatch, and in a few years the rice labourers become covered with insect life, a loathsome object to others and themselves. If you 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. In the production of the molasses, 40 or 50 negroes, naked, are put into a large vat, where they remain two, three, four, or five hours, keeping the liquor in motion, and

when they have completed the work, they are scraped down by the overseer with a board, and the result is returned to the molasses in the vat. The surest mode of putting an end to American slavery would be to grow cotton in India or in some other of our possessions. Cotton growing is most remunerative, and if the trade could be diverted from the southern states, slavery would die a natural death. By the southern law, if any slave raises his hand to his master, even though it be in self-defence, no matter how reasonable the defence, he forfeits his arm. Although this is seldom enforced, the offence is generally visited with the loss of two fingers or an ear, or by branding on the cheek. Should a negro be murdered before the eyes of five millions of slaves, no conviction could follow, for slaves are regarded not as persons but as things, and should it be witnessed by a white man, the paltry penalty is only five dollars. Whipping a horse cruelly is more heavily punished here than the murder of a black man. A slave cannot look at his master or mistress – it is regarded as intolerable insolence. He (the Lecturer) had gazed upon the stars – those glorious worlds on high, beaming with the Divine goodness upon earth, and he could behold the lovely scenes of nature, and no reproof fell on him, but he could not look on a frail mortal like himself; and he felt this to be an enormous evil, at which his soul revolted. His mother, though she had given birth to fourteen children, all of whom had been taken from her and sold, had been whipped with a cow-hide, which cut like a knife, and 49 blows were laid on her, because in her age and feebleness she had failed to complete her work. He did not wonder that Father Mathew⁷ and Father Gavazzi⁸ had brought home so favourable account of American slavery. The slave-owners had taken care to win their good judgment by driving them about, feting them, &c., and Henry Clay⁹ had headed a subscription in which one of the Fathers was interested, with 2000 dollars. To make up this sum, Mr. Clay sold five negroes; the price of blood, then, was the bribe. Kossuth,¹⁰ however, declared he would protest against slavery wherever it existed. His integrity was recompensed with the hatred of the southerners. The prizes given on the capture of a fugitive tempted even women to become negro hunters; and Mr. Watkins himself had had to do battle with one in his flight. The Lecturer concluded with a humorous account of the various perils and hardships encountered until he made good his escape to Hartford.¹¹

NOTICE.—The Friends of MR. JAMES WATKINS, a Fugitive Slave from America, will (D.V.) hold a Tea Meeting in the Dorset Institution, 54 UPPER SACKVILLE-STREET, on MONDAY NEXT, 16th March, 1857, at Seven o'Clock precisely, to bid him farewell previous to his leaving Dublin, and also to organise an Anti Slavery Association. Single Tickets of Admission, 1s each; Double Ticket, to admit two, 1s 6d; to be had from Mr. John Robertson, 3 Grafton street; Mr. W. Robertson, 35 Lower Sackville street; Messrs. Rowse and Co., Stephen's green West; and Mr. P. D. Hardy, Upper Sackville street; and the at O'd Schoolhouse, Rathmines.

Figure 94 Newspaper advertisement for a lecture by James Watkins. (The British Library Board, *Saunders's News-letter*, England, 13 March 1857, p.3.)

Notes

1. After a long preamble by white British men on the platform who spoke of US enslavement in condemnatory terms, Watkins stood up on the platform to speak.
2. For access to a full transcript of the Declaration of Independence dated 4 July 1776 see: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
3. Elijah Parish Lovejoy (1802–1837).
4. After a long conclusion from white British men on the platform who praised Watkins' speech, the newspaper correspondent then moved onto covering Watkins' second lecture.
5. Watkins stood up to speak after a long preamble from white British men on the platform who condemned US enslavement.
6. Watkins may have used this phrase solely as an oratorical device, but he possibly refers to the Greek myth of Echo, the nymph who was cursed by the Goddess Hera and spurned by Narcissus.
7. Theobald Mathew (1790–1856) was a white Irish priest and temperance advocate who undertook tours of the US. For further information see John F. Quinn, 'Father Mathew's American Tour, 1849–1851'. *Irish-American Cultural Institute*, 30.1 (1995): pp.91–104.
8. Alessandro Gavazzi (1809–1889) was a white Italian religious leader and scholar who undertook tours of the US. For further information see N. Carter, *Britain, Ireland and the Italian Risorgimento* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
9. Henry Clay (1777–1852).
10. Louis Kossuth (1802–1894).
11. After a long conclusion where white British men on the platform condemned US enslavement and thanked Watkins for his speech, the resolution from the previous meeting was carried, and donations were given to Watkins 'towards a fund for bringing over to this country the Lecturer's wife and family, and establishing him in some business'.



Anon., 'Lectures on Slavery at Stony Middleton', *The Derby Mercury*, Derby, Derbyshire, England, 9 April 1856, p.4.

ON THURSDAY AND Friday evenings, Mr. J. Watkins, a fugitive slave, gave impressive lectures in the Wesleyan chapel, Stony Middleton. The Rev. G. Marsland, B.A., presided on the first occasion, and on the second Lord Denman was called to the chair by acclamation. We were only present at the latter named meeting, when there were about 200 persons in the chapel, and if it could have contained 200 more, the interest was such, that the number might have bene doubled. Lord Denman, in introducing the subject matter of the meeting, feelingly alluded to his late lamented father's exertions in the cause of negro emancipation when he was in impaired health, and also alluded to a letter written to that nobleman by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe,¹ and which he hoped to see some day published. The reason why the lecturer had chosen a Wesleyan chapel in which to speak was simply this – he had been converted from heathenism through having attended a camp meeting of Wesleyans while a slave in Maryland, and he had in consequence a feeling of kindness, respect, and regard towards that body. Lord Brougham's² opinion against a man being a 'chattel' was alluded to; also that Lord Palmerston,³ in 1813, described the services of free men, in the army, as far more valuable than those of men torn from their homes, and that likewise, many years ago, he presented a petition from the learned University of Cambridge on the subject of negro slavery. The lecture of Mr. Watkins, who although he describes himself 'a fugitive slave,' has very much the manners of a gentleman, gave a vivid and thrilling description of the horrors and deprivations, mentally and physically, of American slavery, and exhibited the manacles and cow hide scourge with which he had been too well acquainted. The lecture was listened to with breathless attention, and after a vote of thanks to the noble chairman, and another to the trustees of the chapel, the doxology was sung, and the meeting separated. A satisfactory collection was made.

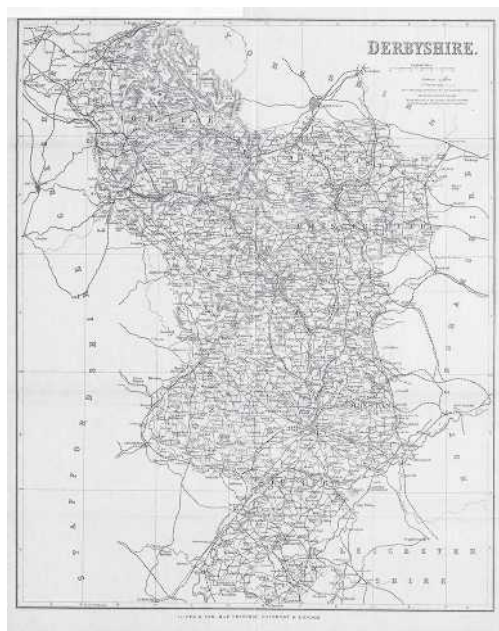


Figure 95 Map of Derbyshire, England, c.1896. (British Library Collection, Flickr Commons.)

Notes

1. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).
2. Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868).
3. Henry John Palmerston (1784–1865) was a white British politician who was elected as UK Prime Minister between 1859–1865.

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT

(1862–1931)

Biographical History

SEE ALSO 'Ida B. Wells-Barnett' in *Narratives*.

A world-renowned social justice advocate 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. 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 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 it overturned the 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 in 1892. In the immediate aftermath, she penned an editorial in her newspaper the *Memphis Free Speech* denouncing the injustice and warring against these white persecutory acts of barbaric torture and murder. 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 published her revolutionary social justice work *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases* in 1892, which she later expanded as *A Red Record* in 1895. She also worked with pioneering Black newspaper editor and journalist Samuel Jules Celestine Edwards, on a British publication, *United States Atrocities*, printed in 1892. She travelled to the British Isles in 1893 and 1894 to campaign against white supremacist legislation and the violences, 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. In 1895, she married social justice campaigner and newspaper editor Ferdinand L. Barnett and they had four children together: Charles Aked Barnett,



Figure 96 Ida B. Wells-Barnett, by Oscar B. Willis, c.1890–1910. (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.)



Figure 97 S. J. Celestine Edwards, 1894. (The National Archives UK, Flickr Commons.)

Herman Kohlsaas Barnett, Ida Bell Wells Barnett Jr, and Alfreda Marguerita Barnett. A world-renowned human rights campaigner, activist, and relentless political organiser, she was the founding member of numerous societies including the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, one of the oldest US civil rights organisations.

Here we reproduce Ida B. Wells-Barnett's speeches that she delivered in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1893, and in London and Leeds, England, in 1894.

Further Reading

Archives

Ida B. Wells Papers 1884–1976, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois. The Finding Aid is available online: <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/src/findingaids/view.php?eadid=ICU.SPCL.IBWELLS>

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- Silkey, Sarah L., *Black Woman Reformer: Ida B. Wells, Lynching, and Transatlantic Activism*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015.



Anon., 'Lynch Law in the Southern States of America', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, 25 April 1893, p.4.

A MEETING WAS HELD in the Ballroom of the Music Hall Buildings last night for the purpose of hearing an address on 'Lynch Law in the Southern States of America' by Miss Ida B. Wells, an American negro lady, who has been the victim of a Tennessee mob.¹ There was a large and representative attendance, and Mrs. Isabella Fyvie Mayo² was called to the chair on the motion of Mr. Alfred M'leod. After a few introductory remarks by Mrs. Mayo, Miss Impey,³ a member of the Society of Friends addressed the meeting. The number of murders in America, she said, was rapidly on the increase, and this last winter they had heard of so many outrages upon the coloured people that they had formed an association to agitate the question, and Miss Wells, on the invitation of the association, had come to this country. Miss Wells, in a lengthy and eloquent speech, gave a vivid account of the terrible condition of matters in many of the American Southern States and not the least interesting part of the address was the narration of her personal experiences of the prejudice which is entertained by the white population against the coloured portion of the community. Lawlessness was rampant. It was not confined to one locality. Lynching seemed to have become the favourite pastime of many of the whites. In the past ten years over 1000 coloured men and women and even children had been butchered and murdered. The details of these horrible outrages seldom reached beyond the narrow sphere in which they occurred, for those who committed the murders usually wrote the reports. The undisputed word of any white person for any cause seemed sufficient to cause lynching. The tyrant slavery had gone to work under a new name and a new guise. Having destroyed the citizenship of the coloured men it was now sought to destroy their manhood. In the close of the 19th century this was being done, and by a Christian nation. Other Christian nations which spent their thousands of pounds yearly to Christianise the heathen stood by and looked on with utter indifference, or with a silence which was practically acquiescence. Before any laws could be enacted or enforced a strong public sentiment in favour of what was right and just towards every human being was needed. This was the only remedy, and this was all her race asked or desired for themselves – that all supposed or accused criminals be tried and punished by the due process of law, and not by mobs, and that the race might have an equal chance in life with their white neighbours. (Applause). Professor Iverach⁴ said

he thought they should be willing to make it known that they, in the name of humanity, Christianity, and civilisation, protested against this kind of thing. (Applause). The Americans were very sensitive of the opinions of the British nation, and he thought they would also be sensitive of the moral indignation of the people of this country. He proposed that the meeting, having listened to the recital of deeds of injustice and inhumanity systematically practised by the white population in the Southern States of America, towards the coloured population in these States, record their abhorrence of such deeds, and resolve that a branch of the society for the furtherance of the brotherhood of man be formed in Aberdeen with a view particularly to enlighten public opinion in Great Britain, America, elsewhere on conduct opposed to the first principles alike of Christianity and civilisation. The Rev. James Henderson, Constantinople, seconded, and the resolution was supported by the Rev. S. G. Woodrow, Aberdeen, and adopted unanimously. A vote of thanks was accorded to Mrs. Mayo for presiding on the motion of Mr. Thomas Ogilvie.

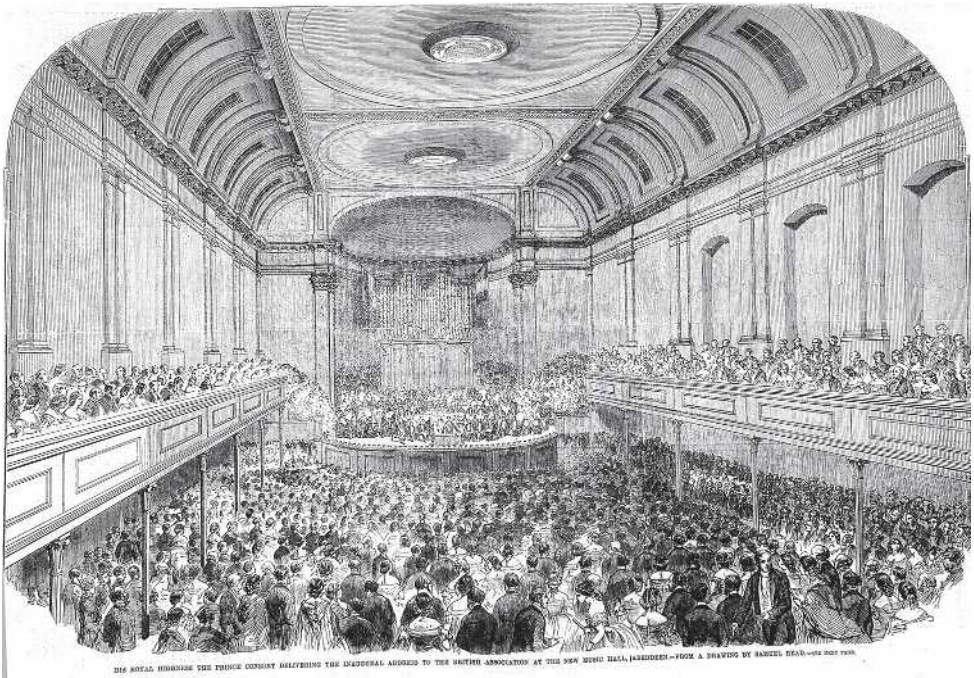


Figure 98 A print of the Music Hall, Aberdeen, Scotland, 1859. Originally from *The Illustrated London News*. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. For further information, see Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); Sarah L. Silkey, *Black Woman Reformer: Ida B. Wells, Lynching, & Transatlantic Activism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

2. Isabella Fyvie Mayo (1843–1914) was a white Scottish author and reformer.
3. Catherine Impey (1847–1923) was a white British social justice campaigner and founder of the antiracist publication, *Anti-Caste*, between 1888–1895. For further information, see Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
4. James Iverach (1839–1922) was a white Scottish author and Professor of Apologetics and Christian Ethics at the United Free Church College in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Anon., 'Lynch Law in America', *Reynold's Newspaper*,
London, England, 3 June 1894, p.2.

MISS IDA B. WELLS, who is on a mission to this country for the purpose of arousing public opinion against the terrible crimes committed in the United States in the name of 'Lynch law,' delivered an address on 'What Can England Do for Us?' at Little Portland-street Unitarian Chapel, Great Portland-street, W.

MISS WELLS, in the course of her address, said that freedom came to the negro not as a matter of right, but as a matter of war expediency. The oppression of the negro in America seemed to arise from the assumption that he was ignorant and degraded from the beginning, and that every means should be taken to keep him so. Accepting those conditions as best he could, the negro was not in any way allowed to associate with white people, or otherwise he suffered the most cruel oppression. In proportion as the negroes accumulated property, so they hoped their disabilities would be removed; but the reverse had unfortunately been the case, and ultimately the abominable practice of 'Lynch law' had been perpetrated. The Judges and juries had it in their power to fill workhouses and prisons with negro criminals sent there on the most trivial charges, and not ever tried by any legal process. The States being no longer able to support them in that way they were placed under the convict lease system, when task masters and overseers could be placed over them, and bloodhounds placed upon their track if they made any attempt to escape. Negroes treated in that way did not survive longer than ten years. Having referred to the many cruel acts of lynching lately perpetrated upon negroes for imaginary or trivial offences, Miss Wells remarked that her own life had been threatened, and that she was unable in consequence to return to her own home in Memphis. The statistics showed that 1,000 men, women, and children had been lynched during the last ten years, and six within the past two months. The statistics showed that lynching was on the increase. She felt that the public sentiment of England would have some effect. It was a fearful thing to know that those atrocities were being committed by civilised Anglo-Saxons, who professed Christianity. She did not ask for the negro more maudlin sympathy, but that he should be punished by the law. Some good had already accrued from the agitation in this country, and many leading American newspapers were beginning to take up the cause.

The following resolution was unanimously agreed to: 'That this meeting of regular and occasional worshippers in little Portland-street Chapel desires to express its abhorrence of the barbarities perpetrated in the Southern States of America under the name of "Lynch law," and to appeal to all lovers of justice in the United States to obtain the equal protection of laws and common human rights for all their fellow citizens.'



Anon., 'The Negro – a Man and a Brother', *The Leeds Mercury*, Leeds, Yorkshire, England, 6 July 1894, p.3.¹

THERE WAS A large audience in the Belgrave Lecture Hall, Leeds, last night, to hear a lecture by Miss Ida B. Wells, B.A., a coloured lady, who is engaged in a campaign against the horrible system of negro lynching, now so prevalent in the Southern States of America. 'The negro – a man and a brother' – was the title of her address, and after briefly narrating the history of the slave trade in America, she proceeded to speak of some of its consequences, and of the present grievances of the now so-called free race. During the ten years immediately following the termination of the great American civil war,² there were no less than 20,000 negroes, who were simple enough to believe that the United States government would protect them in the exercise of their newly-acquired rights, but who were murdered. At the present day the cruelties and prejudices shown by white men towards their coloured brethren was astounding. The white man, believing in the divine right of maintaining the supremacy, had charge of the ballot boxes at elections, and contrived them to their own purpose. This had been going on for nearly twenty years; it was well known, but no effort whatever had been made to rectify this wrong, owing to the fear of bringing about the old ill-feeling between the people of the northern and southern States. It was pretty well becoming understood that the rights of negroes were not worth while white men fighting over. As showing the prejudices existing between the two races, a law had been passed making it a State offence for black and white to intermarry. The white man most loudly and frequently protested against these social inequalities of the races. If white men would insist upon maintaining relations with coloured women, those relations should be legal and honourable ones. In the railway, trams, churches, and at places of amusement, the black people were strictly forbidden to mix amongst the whites, by whom they were regarded as source of contamination. Personally, she had been roughly dragged out of a first-class compartment of a railway train by the conductor and two guards, simply because she happened to be black.³ In the law-courts a coloured person could obtain no redress if the defendant happened to be a white. Almost every organisation having for its object the moral, educational, or physical advancement of the people had closed doors to the negroes. The line of demarcation was only drawn at the public-house and gambling dens. Proceeding to the subject of lynching, Miss Wells said that in proportion as the negro had accumulated wealth Lynch law had grown. Beginning in 1882, when first records were taken, there were 52 persons lynched in different parts of the

South. In 1892, there were 169 people lynched, including five women, two of whom were burnt alive; in 1893 the number increased to 158, four of these being women. Up to May 1st of this year fifty persons had been lynched. 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. One man she had heard of was skinned alive. These things happened not during the days of the Spanish Inquisition, not during the Dark Ages of the world, these crimes were not committed by the cannibals of the South Sea Islands – had they been so committed there would have been a terrible outcry – but were committed in the glare of the nineteenth century civilisation, and by men who belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race, who boasted of their Christianity. The world was singularly silent, and the tone of condemnation and the voice that ought to cry shame on such deeds had been very hesitating and undecided. The world, she believed, had done so little regarding this matter because it knew so little it was her mission to give to the world the black people's side of the story. It was a crime for a black man to fire upon a white man even in self-defence; and she knew of three negroes⁴ who were brutally lynched for so acting. She had made it her duty to specially investigate all lynching cases, a duty full of risk. In the paper⁵ of which she had been editor, she had exposed the conduct of the whites, and as a result her newspaper premises had been destroyed, and her manageress driven out of the town. Happening at the time to be away from her office, she received no personal injury, but preparation, she understood, had been made in the town to lynch her on her return. One prominent citizen had declared that if she returned to Memphis in 20 years he would shoot her down on sight. Nearly a thousand men and women had been lynched since 1882, 600 of whom were lynched on mere suspicion. In broad daylight a mob had dragged a negro prisoner through the streets, hanged him to a telegraph post, and shot bullets through his body. Then the mob had crowded round and had their photograph taken, copies being merrily bought as a souvenir. The Coroner's jury being composed chiefly of those who were in the mob, their verdict was 'Killed by some parties unknown.' Only a month ago a negro in Kansas was discovered to be suffering from smallpox. He was shut up in a tent, and no local doctor would attend him. On the arrival of a physician from some outside place nothing but a few ashes remained of the man and tent, and some neighbours readily admitted that they had barricaded the door, and had then set fire to the place – a most economical way of getting rid of a smallpox patient. 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.

On the motion of the Rev. Chas. Hargrove, the following resolution was passed: – 'That this meeting, having heard the statements made by Miss Wells, as to the intolerable outrages to which her coloured brethren and sisters in the Southern States are subjected – statements made familiar to English readers by newspaper reports of such outrages again and again committed – desires to express to her its cordial sympathy in her noble and womanly work, and to put on record its abhorrence of the continental and open violation of the elementary principles of our common civilisation which guarantees to all men equal rights before the law. It appeals to the white men, our own kin, across the water, to do justice equally as between man and man, and equally as between man and man, and equally repress and punish all lawless outrages.' The Mayoress (Mrs. Leuty) presided.

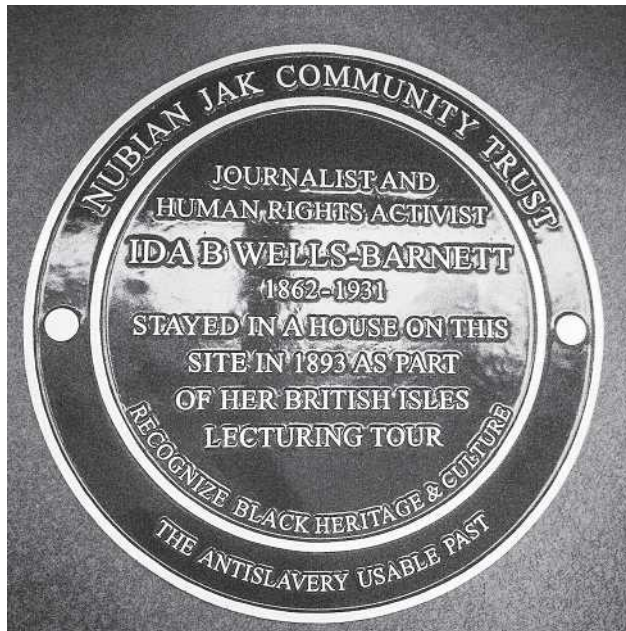


Figure 99 Heritage plaque to Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Edgbaston Community Centre. Originally the site of 66 Gough Road, where Wells stayed when she visited Birmingham. (Author copy.)

Notes

1. This newspaper article was originally titled 'The Horrors of Lynching: A Coloured Lady's Story' by an unnamed reporter. We have replaced it with Ida B. Wells-Barnett's preferred title as recorded within this newspaper's account of her address.
2. The US Civil War (1861–1865).
3. For further information concerning Ida B. Wells-Barnett's physical assault and violent removal from a railway carriage in 1883 by white racist persecutors who were committed to enforcing discriminatory segregationist practices, see *A legal brief for Ida B. Wells' lawsuit against Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern Railroad Company before the state Supreme Court, 1885*. Available online: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/ida-b-wells-and-anti-lynching-activism/sources/1113>
4. The three men she is referring to are Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Henry Stewart. For further information on their horrific murders at the hands of a white persecutory and torturous mob, see David M. Tucker, 'Miss Ida B. Wells and Memphis Lynching'. *Phylon*, 32.2 (1971): pp.112–122.
5. The paper she edited was named the *Memphis Free Speech* and was founded in 1881 in Memphis, Tennessee. For further information, see Robin Hardin and Marcie Hinton, 'Speech in Memphis: The Life of a Black Post-Reconstruction Newspaper'. *Race, Gender & Class*, 8.4 (2001): pp.78–95.

TURNER WILLIAMS

(DATES UNKNOWN)

Biographical History

TURNER WILLIAMS EXPERIENCED enslavement in North or South Carolina. As he powerfully relates in the lecture below, his grandfather ‘had been kidnapped on’ the African coast. Williams was forced to work in the hotel industry by his white enslaver and after ‘receiving little gratuities from travellers’ and burying them safely in the ground, he eventually secured his self-liberation to Ohio, travelling ‘1062 miles on foot in five weeks and two days’. He travelled to Montreal, Canada, and then possibly came to Britain in 1851. During the mid-1850s he lectured around England against US enslavement, often singing antislavery songs, exhibiting paintings, drawings, and even a panorama covering 600 feet that memorialised his life in enslavement and the hourly tortures that enslaved people of all ages and genders experienced. He was briefly helped by the Ladies’ Society to Aid Fugitives from Slavery who connected him with friends in Luton and ‘apprenticed him to the trade of a bonnet blocker’. Tragically, ‘a large number of labourers having been discharged, himself included amongst the number, he came to London, in the hope of obtaining employment’. He was given 10s., 6d. by the Society. The date and circumstances of his death are currently unknown.

Here we reproduce Turner Williams’ speech he gave in Sheffield, England, in 1853.

Further Reading

Primary

- Anon., ‘Lectures on Slavery’, *Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner*, 29 January 1853, p.5.
Anon., ‘Lectures on Slavery’, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 19 February 1853, p.7.
Anon., ‘Lecture on Slavery’, *Derbyshire Courier*, 6 August 1853, p.3.
Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner, 12 February 1853, p.5.
Ladies’ Society to Aid Fugitives from Slavery. London: R. Barrett, 1855, pp.4–6.
The Huddersfield Chronicle, 5 February 1853, p.8.

Secondary

- Foster, Charles I., ‘The Colonization of Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816–1835’, *The Journal of Negro History*, 38.1 (1953): pp.41–66.
Goddu, Teresa A., ‘Anti-Slavery’s Panoramic Perspective’, *MELUS*, 39.2 (2014): pp.12–41.

- *Selling Antislavery: Abolition and Mass Media in Antebellum America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Shick, Tom W., 'A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization from 1820 to 1843 with Special Reference to Mortality', *The Journal of African History*, 12.1 (1971): pp.45–59.
- White, Shane and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech*. Boston MA: Beacon Press, 2005.



Anon., 'A Slave's Adventures', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*,
Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, 16 July 1853, p.3.

ON MONDAY AND Wednesday evenings, Turner Williams, an escaped slave, gave a humorous account of his adventures, in the Mechanics' Institution, Surrey street; his Worship the Mayor and the Vicar having kindly lent the patronage of their names. Mr. Williams' grandfather had been kidnapped on the coast of Africa, when unsuspectingly visiting an American ship for the purpose of commerce. He had been twenty years a slave, and therefore ought to know something about slavery and slave owners. 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. Many Christian people taught this. But his experiences led him to a different conclusion. 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. As to many slaveowners being good men, perhaps there might be good masters; but he never met with any, and could not understand how they could be very good when they separated man and wife, and parents and children, for gain, just as a farmer would separate the calf from the cow, and treated their slaves as though they were beasts. (Cheers.) By the holding of slaves, they at least sanctioned a system which was full of cruelty, and which gave occasion to some of the most nefarious and inhuman deeds that could be named. It exceeded his ability to conceive what goodness could attach to such patronage. (Cheers). As for himself, he had been treated sometimes better and sometimes worse; but he had always been robbed of his freedom, and therefore he could not abuse language, or impose upon himself, so as to say he had ever been treated well. In fact, he believed much in running. (Cheers). He thought it was better to run away into liberty, than to sit still content, and die, or be flogged to death, as a slave. (Cheers.) And he had held his conviction so firmly that he had carried it out, and escaped from North Carolina into Canada. (Cheers.) An account of his adventures on the road, while travelling 1062 miles in five weeks and two days, was given, interspersed with some sensible and humorous remarks on the atrocities of the system, and the monstrous inconsistency of the 'freest people in the world' legalising slavery. The Liberia colonization scheme¹ he denounced as a sham, the real intent being to ship

off all the free negroes of the States, in order that the detection and apprehension of the fugitives might be certain and easy. It was not therefore out of love to the Negro, but to render the escape of their captives impossible. (Cheers.) A nigger was held in America to be an intermediate link between brutes and man. Niggers were held and let out, just as in this country parties keep livery stables, and let out horses. He held this to be the vilest kind of robbery: it robbed God of his creatures, and it robbed God's creatures of their inalienable rights. (Cheers.) He saw no more wrong in running away than in a man claiming and carrying away his own property when unjustly seized by another. (Cheers.) In Louistown, he had seen a woman apprehended and sent back into slavery in Kentucky, after she had been fourteen years in freedom. Slaves were bought and sold like horses, and often the slave's mouth was opened to see if his teeth were sound and white; for if they were not, it was assumed that his health was not perfect, and he was depreciated in value thereby. Those who were past much work, either from age or weakness of constitution, were sent to the rice fields to be used up. Those fields lying low, and being marshy ground, were hot-beds of disease, and soon swept away the labourers. Masters thought it economical to get rid of slaves from whom they could get little more work, rather than be burdened with their keep when disabled. Having sung the Fugitive Slave's song, Mr. Williams further explained the subject by drawings, in which were depicted various scenes taken from Negro life, in South Carolina.

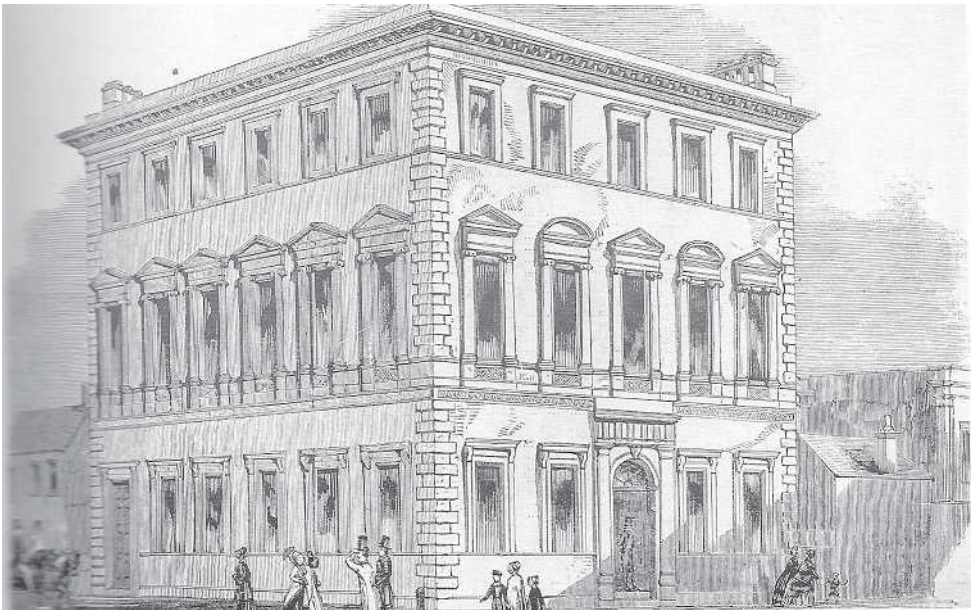


Figure 100 Print of the Mechanics Institute, Surrey Street, Sheffield, England, c.1850. (Wikimedia Commons.)



Figure 101 Photograph of Mechanics Institute, Surrey Street, Sheffield, England. (Picture Sheffield, Reference: s06452. Sheffield Archives and Sheffield Local Studies Library.)

Note

1. For further information, see Charles I. Foster, 'The Colonization of Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816–1835'. *The Journal of Negro History*, 38.1 (1953): pp.41–66; Tom W. Shick, 'A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization from 1820 to 1843 with Special Reference to Mortality'. *The Journal of African History*, 12.1 (1971): pp.45–59; Brandon Mills, *Exporting the Racial Republic: African Colonization, National Citizenship, and the Transformation of U.S. Expansion, 1776–1864* (PhD dissertation, Urbana-Champaign, University of Illinois, 2011).

