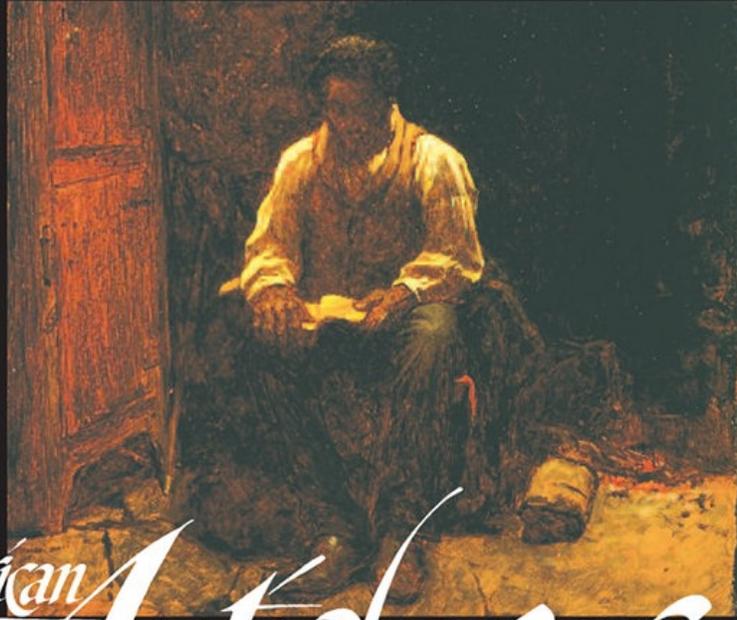


*American*  
**Antislavery  
Writings**

Colonial Beginnings  
to Emancipation



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**AMERICAN  
ANTISLAVERY WRITINGS**

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**COLONIAL BEGINNINGS  
TO EMANCIPATION**

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James G. Basker, *editor*



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## *Introduction*

Whether or not Abraham Lincoln welcomed Harriet Beecher Stowe to the White House in the midst of the Civil War by calling her “the little woman who made this great war,” as Stowe family tradition has it, the anecdote remains today the most famous tribute to the power of antislavery literature in American history. Others, too, ascribed to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* a singular role in bringing on what Karl Marx called the “American Antislavery War.”\* Charles Francis Adams Jr., son of the American minister to Great Britain during the Civil War and himself a Union cavalry officer, contended in 1913 that it had had “a more immediate, considerable and dramatic world-influence than any other book ever printed.”† Certainly officials in slave states understood the work’s power. Many employed statutes against “incendiary” (i.e., antislavery) material to criminalize the book and in one notorious episode in Maryland, a Methodist minister and free black named Samuel Green was sentenced to ten years in prison merely for possessing a copy.‡ One of the best-selling books in history, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was indeed tremendously significant, but its importance has sometimes obscured an essential point: Stowe’s 1852 novel was only the most celebrated manifestation of a complex and diverse tradition of American antislavery writing that stretched back more than one hundred and fifty years.

As the volume before you attests, by the end of the seventeenth century writers such as Gerret Hendricks and George Keith in Pennsylvania and Samuel Sewall in Massachusetts had already publicly voiced their opposition to slavery, laying the groundwork for hundreds of other writers who would follow in a broadening current that by the 1850s would encompass whole shelves of literature in every genre. One marker of the significance of this tradition is the reactions it provoked from slavery’s defenders, which often went far beyond words. In 1829, after David Walker published his rousing *Appeal*, calling on

fellow African Americans to resist slavery and discrimination, distributors of his book in Charleston and New Orleans were arrested, and the Georgia legislature offered a reward of \$10,000 for Walker delivered alive, or \$1,000 dead. In 1837, a proslavery mob in Alton, Illinois, killed the antislavery publisher Elijah Lovejoy and destroyed his printing press. A year later, after a speech by the abolitionist Angelina Grimké in Philadelphia, a mob sacked the hall in which she had spoken and started a fire that consumed the building, which also housed the newspaper offices of fellow abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier, himself the victim of mob threats on other occasions. And in 1856 the violence reached the seat of power itself, when South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks responded to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner's speech "The Crime Against Kansas" by beating him unconscious with a cane on the floor of the Senate.

These episodes of censorship and violence suggest the problem for slavery's advocates: despite various political victories, over the long run they were losing the battle of ideas, a trend dramatically accelerated by the coming of the Civil War. A letter from a Union soldier in the midst of the conflict gives us another perspective on the spread of antislavery values and sensibilities. Writing to his wife from Tennessee on October 3, 1862, Lieutenant John P. Jones of the 45th Illinois Volunteer Infantry responded to the news of Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, issued just eleven days earlier. "The 'year of jubilee' has indeed come to the poor Slave," he wrote. "The proclamation is a deathblow to Slavery. . . . It is what I have expected and what I have hoped for. We now know what we are fighting for, we have an object, and that object is avowed. . . . Oh! what a day for rejoicing will it be, when America the boasted 'land of the free and home of the brave' shall have erased from its fair escutcheon the black Stain of human Slavery." The arrival of the Emancipation Proclamation had not suddenly converted Jones to antislavery thinking. What was it that had prepared him to respond so enthusiastically to news that the war in which he was risking his life was now intended to end slavery? If, as Jones

added confidently, “the majority of the people, and of the Soldiers will sustain the President in his act,”\* what might have predisposed so many to embrace the war as a crusade against slavery?

As the first pieces in this anthology suggest, arguments against slavery had been circulating in the colonies for eight decades before the American Revolution—even in the writings of men who were slaveholders themselves, such as the Virginians Arthur Lee and Patrick Henry. Slavery troubled the consciences of many Americans from the beginning. On June 19, 1700, Massachusetts merchant and magistrate Samuel Sewall wrote in his diary: “Having been long and much dissatisfied with the Trade of fetching Negroes from Guinea . . . began to be uneasy that I had so long neglected doing anything.” Seventy-six years later, in the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, another ambivalent Virginia slave-owner, Thomas Jefferson, denounced the slave trade as an “assemblage of horrors” and “cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life & liberty,” and blamed the British for inflicting it on the American colonies in the first place. The others on the drafting committee—John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman—agreed with him and approved the text. But then, in an early version of a conflict that would play itself out repeatedly, delegates from Georgia and South Carolina objected, causing the Congress to delete the passage about the slave trade in the interests of union and harmony. The issue was deferred, but, as this volume powerfully shows, it did not go away. Instead, antislavery writing emerged as one of the most energetic, voluminous, and transformative traditions of literature in the history of American letters.

There are no easy generalizations about this body of writing. The 216 selections by 158 different authors presented here, chosen from thousands of others, include works in every genre, ranging from poems, plays, novels, and short stories to slave narratives, orations, editorials, essays, letters, and petitions, as well as sermons and children’s books. Writers published their efforts in every

form and medium, from handsome multivolume novels and thick tracts and plays for the stage to shorter pieces and single poems printed in pamphlets, anthologies, song books, children's primers, magazines, and newspapers. The authors themselves are strikingly diverse: white and black, male and female, southern and northern, wealthy and poor, educated city-dwellers and rural autodidacts, amateurs as well as professional writers. It is the democratic inclusiveness of this literature, almost as much as its revolutionary content, that marks it as so surprising, so worthy of our attention.

Of the 145 named writers (thirteen are anonymous), thirty-four are women, emblematic of how the issue of slavery drew women into the public sphere long before their own movement would lead to female enfranchisement in the twentieth century. The first known poem written against slavery in America was composed by a poor white woman in Boston named Jane Dunlap, who, inspired by Phillis Wheatley, published "The Ethiopians shall Stretch out their hands to God" in 1771. Many other women would follow, from Susanna Rowson in the 1780s and Sarah Morton in the 1790s, to Elizabeth Margaret Chandler, Lydia Sigourney, Lydia Maria Francis Child, and the Grimké sisters in the 1820s and '30s, to Maria Weston Chapman, Eliza Lee Follen, Caroline W. Healey Dall, and Lucretia Mott in the 1840s, and still more after them. Harriet Beecher Stowe was standing on the shoulders of three generations of women antislavery writers.

Similarly, during a period when African Americans were widely denied any formal education, and it was a crime in many states even to privately teach a black person to read, more than thirty-five of these writers are black, three-quarters of them having begun life as chattel slaves. One of the earliest, Jupiter Hammon of Long Island, New York, remained a slave to the end of his long life (1711–c. 1800) but managed nonetheless to subtly protest his condition in "A Dialogue, intitled, the Kind Master and the Dutiful Servant" (1782). The servant in Hammon's poem quietly resists his master's attempts to control him while also gently correcting him on Christian doctrine. Thus when the Master asserts that Christian servants "that truly love his holy word" must serve their masters

unquestioningly, the Servant responds, “Dear Master, that’s my whole delight, / Thy pleasure for to do; / As far as grace and truth’s in sight, / Thus far I’ll surely go.” How different is the tone of later black writers such as David Walker, who in his 1829 *Appeal* defiantly exclaims “*Christians!!!* I dare you to show me a parallel of cruelties in the annals of Heathens or of Devils,” or former slave Harry Thomas, who in his 1856 narrative pronounced that “Slaveholders, judged by the way they treat colored people, are the worst persons on earth.” The antislavery movement would always be driven, at its core, by the personal testimony and principled defiance of the black people whom slavery sought to subject.

Among the authors, readers will encounter here such recognizable names as Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Noah Webster, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Louisa May Alcott, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson, along with the three who could be seen as the anthology’s core: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, and William Wells Brown. There are famous statesmen: George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln. But most of the writers gathered here are less well-known or long forgotten, their works long unavailable and reprinted here for the first time in a century or more. These writers come from every corner of the country as it existed at the time, many of them from states known for their antislavery activism—Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York—but also from all the other northern states, and most of the slaveholding states as well. Though often overlooked, there were white antislavery writers from Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, even South Carolina and Alabama, as well as stories and testimonies of black fugitives and refugees from virtually every southern state. With a broad range of voices comes a wide spectrum of the kind and intensity of antislavery views. Some of the writers included here called for an immediate and unqualified end to slavery, but many favored gradual abolition, compensated emancipation, or colonization schemes, plans that today seem fatally compromised. But all, by depicting

slavery as ugly, inhumane, impolitic, or unsustainable, helped nurture the sensibilities and promote the ideas that would lead to its downfall.

For all their historical importance, many of these writings have value and interest in their own right as works of literature, from the cool, angry realism of “The Heroic Slave,” the only work of fiction Frederick Douglass ever wrote, to the exquisite allusiveness of Emily Dickinson’s poem “Color—Caste—Denomination.” Naturally, in a literature concerned with awakening empathy in white readers for the suffering of black people, there is a rich vein of sentimentalism, extending from Theodore Dwight’s “Help! oh, help! thou GOD of Christians!” and the anonymous “The Wretched Taillah” in the late 1700s to Joseph Snodgrass’s “The Childless Mother” and Mary Harlan’s “Ellen, or the Chained Mother” in the mid-1800s. There are also other, and radically different, kinds of literature here, such as satire: John Trumbull’s Swiftian sketch of 1770, “The Correspondent, No. 8,” Franklin’s wry “defense” of slavery in the voice of a fictitious Arab in 1791, William Lloyd Garrison’s ironic “Truisms” of 1831, Jairus Lincoln’s edgy anthem “My country! ’tis of thee, Stronghold of slavery” in 1843, and James Russell Lowell’s scathing mockery, “Compromise,” in 1850. Another group of these writings might qualify as a kind of “American gothic” for their unsettling horrors. To this group belong the bloody specters of Thomas Branagan’s “The Penitential Tyrant,” the incestuous secrets and “skeletons in chains” of Longfellow’s antislavery poems, and the midnight terrors and forbidden love of Louisa May Alcott’s mesmerizing short story, “An Hour.” There is even futuristic fiction here, the most compelling an anonymous and innocuous-sounding pair of short stories from 1831, “A Dream” and “Another Dream.” The latter depicts a future in which a cataclysmic race war has resulted in the triumph of blacks and the enslavement of whites, while “A Dream” foretells an alternative future, when there is integration and racial harmony, and the United States has elected its first black president—a prophecy that, however implausible and wildly fanciful in 1831, was fulfilled one hundred seventy-seven

years later with the election of President Barack Obama.

Inescapably, this is a literature that is rooted in and framed by the progress of history. In the colonial period, three general qualities define American antislavery writing. First, it is primarily religious, conveyed in sermons and tracts, its arguments grounded in scripture and Christian ethics. Because of its association with a pietistic, and later evangelical, tradition, it is also remarkably absolute and insistent, with very little gradualism, compromise, or prevarication. There was nothing tentative about the earliest antislavery writings in America, as the powerful voices of George Keith, John Hepburn, and Benjamin Lay reveal. Already in 1715, for example, Hepburn was disgusted by the dehumanizing practice of masters calling slaves “*Toby, Mando, Mingo, Jack, Hector and Hagar*, and such like Names they give to their *Dogs and Horses*.” The militant Benjamin Lay in 1737 condemned slave-owning as one of the “*Sins of Sodom*” and lashed out at his errant Christian brethren who condoned it: “How do these Things become your plain Dress, Demure Appearance, feigned Humility, all but Hypocrisy, which according to Truth’s Testimony, must have the hottest Place in Hell.” In 1733 Elihu Coleman of Nantucket denounced silence as complicity in the sinfulness of slavery, a truth it would take most Americans more than one hundred years to take fully to heart. Finally, these colonial writings form part of a European American culture that was thoroughly transatlantic. American writers like John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, and Phillis Wheatley were widely read in Great Britain, and Benjamin Franklin’s first antislavery piece was published in a London newspaper. American readers, moreover, viewed themselves as British subjects, politically and culturally, and strove to stay current with the metropolitan culture, including the antislavery works of writers like Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Laurence Sterne, Thomas Day, and Granville Sharp, as well as periodicals like the London-based *Gentleman’s Magazine*.

All this changed with the American Revolution and the founding of the republic, roughly the years from 1776 to 1818. Though religious pleas

continued, antislavery writing became more secular, more literary, and, as one would expect in a new country, more overtly nationalistic. Younger writers like Samuel Hopkins, Joel Barlow, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Banneker, Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, Noah Webster, Timothy Dwight, Philip Freneau, David Humphreys, and St. George Tucker who had supported the Revolution and were self-consciously *American* in their outlook tended also to idealize their country as one where slavery should have no place. In the patriotic epic poem *The Columbiad* (1807), for example, Revolutionary War veteran Joel Barlow spoke in the voice of Africa to chide his fellow Americans for espousing Thomas Paine's ideas of freedom while still retaining slavery: "Enslave my tribes! what, half mankind imban, / Then read, expound, enforce the rights of man!" There was more optimism in these years, with good reason, as events seemed to be moving in the right direction. In 1777 Vermont banned slavery in its Constitution; in 1780 Pennsylvania passed a gradual emancipation law; in a series of Massachusetts court cases during the 1780s, judges and juries found slavery to be incompatible with the new state constitution, and made it legally unenforceable; and in 1784 Connecticut and Rhode Island adopted gradual emancipation laws, followed by New York in 1799 and New Jersey in 1804. Antislavery advocates lost out, however, at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, where slave states gained the three-fifths clause, a clause requiring the return of fugitive slaves, and a twenty-year moratorium on federal prohibition of the foreign slave trade. But that same year the Second Continental Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, which banned slavery in the territory northwest of the Ohio River (five free states formed from the territory would join the union between 1803 and 1848). While in Britain William Wilberforce was leading a determined campaign for the abolition of the slave trade for most of the 1790s, the first national abolition convention in America occurred in Philadelphia in 1794 and met again almost annually through 1806.\* Then came what many believed would prove the turning point: the United States and Britain both outlawed the transatlantic slave trade as of January 1, 1808, and antislavery

advocates hoped the domestic slave trade and slavery itself would be next. For some time thereafter, black churches in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere held commemorations every New Year's Day, celebrating the abolition of the slave trade and praying for nationwide emancipation, in services that generated hymns, sermons, and orations by black writers such as Absalom Jones, William Hamilton, Adam Carman, and others. Typical was a hymn by Peter Williams Jr., written for a ceremony in 1809, thanking God that "Thou did'st the trade o'erthrow," but focusing his listeners on the larger and more pressing political message that "*All men are free* by right / Of Nature's laws."

By 1820 a combination of economic and political factors had increased the slave states' power. The cotton gin's efficiency and the expansion of cotton cultivation into rich new agricultural land in the lower South led to a soaring market for slaves and huge economic growth. By 1819 five more slave states had joined the union: Kentucky (1792), Tennessee (1796), Louisiana (1812), Mississippi (1817), and Alabama (1819), with Missouri soon to follow. Surviving antislavery members of the founding generation and their ideological heirs put up a furious fight, arguing that the Constitution gave Congress the power to exclude slavery from new states entering the union. The "compromise" that was eventually adopted called for slave state Missouri to be admitted along with free state Maine, and thereafter for slavery to be prohibited north of 36°30', the so-called Missouri line. Slavery had emerged as the defining and dividing national issue. From 1820 to 1850 the slaveholding states continued to gain in economic and political power, while antislavery advocates in the North would launch massive new campaigns to educate the general public about the evils of slavery, encourage slaves to flee to freedom, and persuade elected officials and judges to block the growing reach of what became known as "the slave power." Where there had been years of high hope and expectation, now there was a new sense of urgency.

Thus the great surge in antislavery writing after 1820. More than a third of the 216 texts in this volume come from the thirty-year period from 1820 to 1850.

Significantly, the first periodicals devoted exclusively to the abolitionist cause emerged in these years and gave a vast new platform to antislavery writing. *The Manumission Intelligencer* was founded in 1819, became *The Emancipator* in 1820, and was succeeded by Benjamin Lundy's *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, which was published from 1821 to 1835. Garrison's *The Liberator*, the most significant abolitionist newspaper of all, appeared weekly from 1831 to 1865, publishing more than eighteen hundred numbers containing many thousands of individual articles. From 1847 to 1863, Frederick Douglass continually published newspapers, including the *North Star* (1847–51), *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (1851–59), and *Douglass' Monthly* (1859–63). Papers like Garrison's and Douglass's, and annuals like Maria Weston Chapman's *Liberty Bell* (1839–58), published not just essays and reports, but poems, short stories, biographies, and children's literature. The theater also became an antislavery forum. One of the first American antislavery plays, Daniel Henshaw's "Dialogue on Slavery," intended for school and parlor performances, appeared in 1842, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* would reach as many people through its several stage adaptations as through the novel itself. The success of Longfellow's 1842 *Poems on Slavery* signaled the increasing appeal of antislavery sentiment among a poetry-loving public. There were abolitionist hymn books, usually with one hundred or more songs in each, such as Garrison's *Selection of Anti-Slavery Hymns* (1834), Jairus Lincoln's *Anti-Slavery Melodies* (1843), and George W. Clark's *The Liberty Minstrel* (1844). Children's literature proliferated. "The African Woman" was an eight-page antislavery story for children that appeared in 1830 in a series of chapbooks printed by the American Sunday School Union. Writers produced collections for children, such as Eliza Lee Follen's *Liberty Cap* (1846) and Jane Jones's didactic dialogues, *The Young Abolitionists* (1848). One of the most ambitious children's books was Hannah and Mary Townsend's *Anti-Slavery Alphabet* (1847), aimed at children learning their ABCs. Each letter of the alphabet introduces an original antislavery poem such as, under the letter "I", this rather terrifying nursery rhyme: "I is the Infant,

from the arms / Of its fond mother torn, / And, at a public auction, sold / With horses, cows, and corn.” As the reach of antislavery literature expanded, the diversity of its readership and the intensity of its moral pressure grew commensurately.

Slave narratives also assumed increasing importance during this period. Having begun with Olaudah Equiano and Boston King in the late eighteenth century, slave narratives were published infrequently until the 1830s and '40s. Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* brought the form to new heights and made a huge impact in 1845 (five thousand copies sold in four months), but there were many others that sold well and stirred readers' emotions. The twenty-three slave narratives excerpted in this volume are only a fraction of the hundreds that poured from the press in the nineteenth century.\* From Charles Ball's agonizing *Narrative* of 1836 to Harriet Jacobs's harrowing *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in 1861, slave narratives had power that in many ways the works of novelists and polemicists could not match. Who could invent a scene as bizarre as the incident Solomon Northup records in his *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853), in which the master of a remote Louisiana plantation forces his slaves to dance for him while Northup plays the fiddle? “With a slash, and crack, and flourish of the whip, he would shout again, ‘Dance, niggers, dance,’ and away they would go once more, pell-mell, while I, spurred by an occasional sharp touch of the lash, sat in a corner, extracting from my violin a marvelous quick-stepping tune.” Indeed, there is no more implausible plot than Northup's own story: born and raised free in upstate New York, a property owner and registered voter and married family man, at age thirty-three he was kidnapped in Washington, D.C. and taken to the deep South, where he endured life as a plantation field hand cut off from any outside contact for more than twelve years, while his family up north had no idea what had happened to him and gradually lost hope that he would ever be found alive. The defenders of slavery could always impugn novels—even Stowe's masterpiece—as mere fiction. But slave narratives claimed to tell the truth. Slavery's defenders took pains to discredit them in any

way they could, by asserting that former slaves lacked the literacy to write them, that they were fabricated by white abolitionists, or that both former slaves and abolitionists had lied or exaggerated or invented the stories altogether. Nonetheless, as the eyewitness testimonies and the graphic accounts of human suffering accumulated in print they had a deep effect on the public, both in themselves and as the raw material that lent such force and verisimilitude to the novels of Stowe, Mary Hayden Green Pike, John Trowbridge, and others.

Increasingly in these decades, events brought slavery to the center of national awareness. Slave rebellions both abortive, like Denmark Vesey's failed uprising in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822, and gruesomely executed, like Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion in Virginia that resulted in scores of killings, prompted southern authorities to enact increasingly restrictive measures against any tracts that they deemed incendiary, including many of the works gathered here. At the same time, abolitionist petitioning to Congress from 1828 into the 1840s, and the struggle over whether Congress would even receive the petitions, returned the issue to the halls of power. With British Emancipation in 1833, the *Amistad* case in 1839–41, and the admission of Texas as a slave state (1845) and the U.S.-Mexican War (1846–48) giving new scope to southern expansion, slavery was never out of the news and North-South tensions never really subsided. Antislavery writing did a great deal to make that so.

Though they have written much about the flowering of transcendent writing in the 1850s known as the "American Renaissance," some literary critics have missed the extent to which the leading writers of the day were caught up in the roiling controversies over slavery. The learned and genteel Emerson, for example, erupted in anger at America's willingness to tolerate the evils of slavery, asking sarcastically in light of such complacency, "Who can long continue to feel an interest in condemning homicide . . . or wife-beating?" Thoreau urged radical action in Massachusetts: "Let the State dissolve her union with the slaveholder." Such sentiments reveal the increasing urgency with which America's greatest writers confronted the moral crisis threatening the nation's

soul. And events conspired to raise the crisis to ever higher levels. In 1850 a fracturing polity became further polarized as a new Fugitive Slave Act aroused widespread anger and resistance. Its provisions gave federal officers the power to compel private citizens to participate in recapturing and returning escaped slaves, while denying both fugitives and free blacks any legal protection against being sent into bondage by slave catchers. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 repealed the prohibition against slavery contained in the Missouri Compromise and allowed settlers in the new territories to determine whether slavery would be extended. Armed supporters of both sides raced into Kansas and from 1855 to 1858 an intermittent guerrilla war was fought between antislavery and proslavery factions. In 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the *Dred Scott* decision—widely viewed as the worst in Supreme Court history—which held that Congress had no power to prohibit slavery from the federal territories and that even free blacks could not be citizens, having “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” John Brown’s bloody raid on a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in a failed attempt to ignite a slave insurrection in 1859, and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, caused South Carolina and six other states to secede. Four more would join them after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861.

The literature gathered here conditioned many Americans to view slavery as the essential issue at stake in the war that ensued. As the uncivil discord of the 1850s gave way to civil war, antislavery writers urged their cause with even more fervor. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott depicted John Brown as a martyr in a sacred crusade, as did Brown himself, and figures like Charles Sumner, Frederick Douglass, Horace Greeley, and Martin Delany pushed Lincoln to embrace emancipation as the Union’s main objective in the war. Perhaps none did so more explicitly or effectively than Julia Ward Howe with her inspiring “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in 1862 and its closing cry, invoking Christ’s sacrifice, “As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free, / While God is marching on.” That bloody vision—

war as antislavery crusade—was soon translated into reality. Almost from the outbreak of the war in spring 1861, enslaved people began emancipating themselves by escaping into Union-held territory. Military policy, and then acts of Congress passed in August 1861 and March 1862, protected escaped slaves and prevented their return to slave-owners. In April 1862 Lincoln signed the law ending slavery in Washington, D.C., where the federal government had indisputable constitutional authority to act. By summer 1862 Lincoln was drafting an emancipation proposal, on September 22 he issued the preliminary version, and on January 1, 1863, the final Emancipation Proclamation was signed. By 1864, Lincoln was working with Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which was approved in 1865. By March 1865, emancipation had come to seem so integral to the purpose of the war that Lincoln, in his Second Inaugural Address, could interpret its immense toll of death and immeasurable suffering as a prolonged act of atonement for the nation's original sin:

“Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still must it be said “the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.”

The history of the American antislavery movement is a story of eventual triumph, although not a perfect one. All major societies in history had been built on unfree labor and hierarchies of order, and coercive power had been regarded as natural and immutable. The very necessity for the writing that follows—that so many for so long needed to raise the call to recognize the humanity of others—speaks to a painful truth: it was not *slavery* that was extraordinary, but rather the idea of *freedom* as the natural condition and universal right of mankind that marked a revolutionary turn.\* Thus the period charted in this book represents as dramatic a pivot point in human history as one is likely to find. The ideas of

freedom and natural rights that ultimately prevailed in the United States were ratified and amplified in the World Antislavery Convention of 1840, the Brussels Conference of 1890, the League of Nations' Slavery Convention of 1925, and the United Nations' Declaration of Universal Human Rights in 1948. The antislavery movement did not completely eradicate slavery any more than antiwar movements have ended war. Of this, the persistence of sex-trafficking, debt bondage, and child labor, and the need for twenty-first-century abolition societies such as Free the Slaves and Anti-Slavery International, are shocking reminders. But the antislavery writers and reformers whose passionate words are assembled here were the vanguard of a global movement that by the twentieth century had fundamentally transformed the conditions of life and made human rights an expectation of people throughout the world. It was these writers who shaped the sensibilities and attitudes that made universal freedom imaginable, desirable, and obtainable.

*James G. Basker*

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\* In a November 1864 letter from the International Workingmen's Association congratulating President Lincoln on his reelection. The letter was presented to Charles Francis Adams, the American minister to Great Britain, who in his reply offered tempered gratitude to the IWA for its support for the United States in what he called "the present conflict with slavery" (*Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 20 [New York: International Publishers, 1985], 19).

† Charles Francis Adams, *Trans-Atlantic Historical Solidarity: Lectures Delivered Before the University of Oxford in Easter and Trinity Terms 1913* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 79.

‡ David S. Reynolds, *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 151. Green was freed during the Civil War, after serving five years in prison.

\* Manuscript letter, John P. Jones to his wife, dated Jackson, Tennessee, October 3, 1862, in the Gilder Lehrman Collection, on deposit at the New-York Historical Society.

\* Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (Washington, D.C.: 1919; repr. New York: 1968), 415–16.

\* As an indication of the numbers of narratives published in various periodicals and collections, see Benjamin Drew's *The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (1856), which contains 116 different first-person accounts by former slaves all by then living in Canada, three of which are reprinted in this volume.

\* For more on this point, see Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

GERRET HENDRICKS,  
DERICK OP DE GRAEFF,  
FRANCIS DANIELL PASTORIUS,  
AND ABRAHAM OP DEN GRAEF

*Resolution of Germantown Mennonites*

This document, the earliest known expression of public opposition to slavery in the American colonies, was drafted and signed by four former Mennonites recently converted to Quakerism. The sharply argued petition was approved at the February 18, 1688 meeting of Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania (after 1854 a neighborhood in northwest Philadelphia), to be presented next to the monthly Quaker meeting at the house of Richard Worrell in nearby Dublin Township. It was subsequently read at the Quarterly Meeting in Philadelphia and the Yearly Meeting at Burlington, New Jersey, where “It was adjudged not to be so proper for this Meeting to give a Positive Judgment in the case, It having so General a Relation to many other Parts.”

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THIS IS to ye Monthly Meeting held at Rigert Worrells. These are the reasons why we are against the traffick of mens-body as followeth: Is there any that would be done or handled at this manner? viz. to be sold or made a slave for all the time of his life? How fearfull & fainthearted are many on sea when they see a strange vassel being afraid it should be a Turck, and they should be tacken and sold for Slaves in Turckey. Now what is this better done as Turcks doe? yea rather is it worse for them, wch say they are Christians for we hear, that ye most part of such Negers are brought heither against their will & consent, and that many of them are stollen. Now tho' they are black, we cannot conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones. There is a saying, that we shall doe to all men, licke as we will be done our selves: macking

no difference of what generation, descent, or Colour they are. And those who steal or robb men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? Here is liberty of Conscience, wch is right & reasonable, here ought to be likewise liberty of ye body, except of evildoers, wch is an other case. But to bring men hither, or to robb and sell them against their will, we stand against. In Europe there are many oppressed for Conscience sake; and here there are those oppressed wch are of a black Colour. And we, who know that men must not commit adultery, some do commit adultery in others, separating wives from their husbands, and giving them to others and some sell the children of those poor Creatures to other men. Oh, doe consider well this things, you who doe it, if you would be done at this manner? and if it is done according Christianity? you surpass Holland and Germany in this thing. This mackes an ill report in all those Countries of Europe, where they hear off, that ye Quackers doe here handel men, Licke they handel there ye Cattle; and for that reason some have no mind or inclination to come hither. And who shall maintaine this your cause or plaid for it! Truely we can not do so except you shall inform us better hereoff, viz. that christians have liberty to practise this things. Pray! What thing in the world can be done worse towarts us then if men should robb or steal us away & sell us for slaves to strange Countries, separating housband from their wife & children. Being now this is not done at that manner we will be done at, therefore we contradict & are against this traffick of men body. And we who profess that it is not lawfull to steal, must likewise avoid to purchase such things as are stolen, but rather help to stop this robbing and stealing if possibel and such men ought to be delivred out of ye hands of ye Robbers and set free as well as in Europe. Then is Pensilvania to have a good report, in stead it hath now a bad one for this sake in other Countries. Especially whereas ye Europeans are desirous to know in what manner ye Quackers doe rule in their Province & most of them doe loock upon us with an envious eye. But if this is done well, what shall we say, is don evil?

If once these slaves (wch they say are so wicked and stubborn men) should

joint themselves, fight for their freedom and handel their masters & mastrisses, as they did handel them before; will these masters & mastrisses tacke the sword at hand & warr against these poor slaves, licke we are able to believe, some will not refuse to doe? Or have these negers not as much right to fight for their freedom, as you have to keep them slaves?

Now consider well this thing, if it is good or bad? and in case you find it to be good to handel these blacks at that manner, we desire & require you hereby lovingly that you may informe us herein, which at this time never was done, viz. that Christians have Liberty to do so, to the end we shall be satisfied in this point, & satisfie lickewise our good friends & acquaintances in our natif Country, to whose it is a terrour or fairfull thing that men should be handeld so in Pensilvania.

This is from our meeting at Germantown hold ye 18 of the 2 month 1688 to be delivred to the monthly meeting at Richard Warrels.

gerret hendricks

derick op de graeff

Francis daniell Pastorius

Abraham op den graef

(1688)

## GEORGE KEITH

### *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes*

A Scottish Presbyterian and graduate of Aberdeen University, George Keith (c. 1638–1716) became a Quaker about 1660 and was imprisoned intermittently for his religious activities through the early 1680s. He immigrated to New Jersey in 1684, becoming surveyor-general of East Jersey and a landowner, and from 1689 he was headmaster of the Friends' Public School in Philadelphia, today known as the William Penn Charter School. Keith's antislavery thesis—noteworthy for its absolute condemnation of racial slavery on biblical and humanitarian grounds—was presented at the August 13, 1693 meeting of the Philadelphia Quakers and then published that same year by William Bradford in New York. A strong personality constantly engaged in sectarian disputes, Keith quarreled with and was disowned by the Philadelphia Quakers, went to London, became an Anglican, returned to America as a missionary preaching Anglicanism to Quakers, and eventually died as rector of a parish in Surrey, England.

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**S**EEING OUR Lord Jesus Christ hath tasted Death for every Man, and given himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time, and that his Gospel of Peace, Liberty and Redemption from Sin, Bondage and all Oppression, is freely to be preached unto all, without Exception, and that *Negroes, Blacks* and *Taunies* are a real part of Mankind, for whom Christ hath shed his precious Blood, and are capable of Salvation, as well as *White Men*; and Christ the Light of the World hath (in measure) enlightened them, and every Man that cometh into the World; and that all such who are sincere *Christians* and true Believers in Christ Jesus, and Followers of him, bear his Image, and are made conformable unto him in Love, Mercy, Goodness and Compassion, who came not to destroy mens Lives, but to save them, nor to bring any part of Mankind into outward Bondage, Slavery or Misery, nor yet to detain them, or hold them therein, but to

ease and deliver the Oppressed and Distressed, and bring into Liberty both inward and outward.

Therefore we judge it necessary that all faithful Friends should discover themselves to be true *Christians* by having the Fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which are *Love, Mercy, Goodness, and Compassion* towards all in Misery, and that suffer Oppression and severe Usage, so far as in them is possible to ease and relieve them, and set them free of their hard Bondage, whereby it may be hoped, that many of them will be gained by their beholding these good Works of sincere *Christians*, and prepared thereby, through the Preaching the Gospel of Christ, to imbrace the true Faith of Christ. And for this cause it is, as we judge, that in some places in *Europe* Negroes cannot be bought and sold for Money, or detained to be Slaves, because it suits not with the Mercy, Love & Clemency that is essential to *Christianity*, nor to the Doctrine of Christ, nor to the Liberty the Gospel calleth all men unto, to whom it is preached. And to buy Souls and Bodies of men for Money, to enslave them and their Posterity to the end of the World, we judge is a great hinderance to the spreading of the Gospel, and is occasion of much War, Violence, Cruelty and Oppression, and Theft & Robbery of the highest Nature; for commonly the Negroes that are sold to white Men, are either stollen away or robbed from their Kindred, and to buy such is the way to continue these evil Practices of Man-stealing, and transgresseth that Golden Rule and Law, *To do to others what we would have others do to us*.

Therefore, in true *Christian Love*, we earnestly recommend it to all our Friends and Brethren, Not to buy any Negroes, unless it were on purpose to set them free, and that such who have bought any, and have them at present, after some reasonable time of moderate Service they have had of them, or may have of them, that may reasonably answer to the Charge of what they have laid out, especially in keeping Negroes Children born in their House, or taken into their House, when under Age, that after a reasonable time of service to answer that Charge, they may set them at Liberty, and during the time they have them, to teach them to read, and give them a Christian Education.

*Some Reasons and Causes of our being against keeping of Negroes for Term of Life.*

*First*, Because it is contrary to the Principles and Practice of the *Christian Quakers* to buy Prize or stollen Goods, which we bore a faithful Testimony against in our Native Country; and therefore it is our Duty to come forth in a Testimony against stollen Slaves, it being accounted a far greater Crime under *Moses's* Law than the stealing of Goods; for such were only to restore four fold, *but he that stealeth a Man and selleth him, if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to Death, Exod. 21. 16.* Therefore as we are not to buy stollen Goods (but if at unawares it should happen through Ignorance, we are to restore them to the Owners, and seek our Remedy of the Thief) no more are we to buy stollen Slaves; neither should such as have them keep them and their Posterity in perpetual Bondage and Slavery, as is usually done, to the great scandal of the *Christian Profession*.

*Secondly*, Because Christ commanded, saying, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* Therefore as we and our Children would not be kept in perpetual Bondage and Slavery against our Consent, neither should we keep them in perpetual Bondage and Slavery against their Consent, it being such intollerable Punishment to their Bodies and Minds, that none but notorious Criminal Offenders deserve the same. But these have done us no harme; therefore how inhumane is it in us so grievously to oppress them and their Children from one Generation to another.

*Thirdly*, Because the Lord hath commanded, saying, *Thou shalt not deliver unto his Master the Servant that is escaped from his Master unto thee, he shall dwell with thee, even amongst you in that place which he shall chuse in one of thy Gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him, Deut. 23. 15, 16.* By which it appeareth, that those which are at Liberty and freed from their

Bondage, should not by us be delivered into Bondage again, neither by us should they be oppressed, but being escaped from his Master, should have the liberty to dwell amongst us, where it liketh him best. Therefore, if God extend such Mercy under the legal Ministration and Dispensation to poor Servants, he doth and will extend much more of his Grace and Mercy to them under the clear Gospel Ministration; so that instead of punishing them and their Posterity with cruel Bondage and perpetual Slavery, he will cause the Everlasting Gospel to be preached effectually to all Nations, to them as well as others; *And the Lord will extend Peace to his People like a River, and the Glory of the Gentiles like a flowing Stream; And it shall come to pass, saith the Lord, that I will gather all Nations and Tongues, and they shall come and see my Glory, and I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the Nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud that draw the Bow to Tuball and Javan, to the Isles afar off that have not heard my Fame, neither have seen my Glory, and they shall declare my Glory among the Gentiles, Isa. 66. 12, 18–19.*

*Fourthly,* Because the Lord hath commanded, saying, *Thou shalt not oppress an hired Servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy Brethren, or of the Strangers that are in thy Land within thy Gates, least he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee; Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him, for ye were strangers in the Land of Ægypt, Deut 24. 14, 15. Exod. 12. 21.* But what greater Oppression can there be inflicted upon our Fellow Creatures, than is inflicted on the poor Negroes! they being brought from their own Country against their Wills, some of them being stollen, others taken for payment of Debt owing by their Parents, and others taken Captive in War, and sold to Merchants, who bring them to the *American* Plantations, and sell them for Bond-Slaves to them that will give most for them; the Husband from the Wife, and the Children from the Parents; and many that buy them do exceedingly afflict them and oppress them, not only by continual hard Labour, but by cruel Whippings, and other cruel Punishments, and by short allowance of

Food, some Planters in *Barbadoes* and *Jamaica*, 'tis said, keeping one hundred of them, and some more, and some less, and giving them hardly any thing more than they raise on a little piece of Ground appointed them, on which they work for themselves the seventh dayes of the Week in the after-noon, and on the first days, to raise their own Provisions, to wit, Corn and Potatoes, and other Roots, &c. the remainder of their time being spent in their Masters service; which doubtless is far worse usage than is practiced by the *Turks* and *Moors* upon their Slaves. Which tends to the great Reproach of the *Christian Profession*; therefore it would be better for all such as fall short of the Practice of those *Infidels*, to refuse the name of a *Christian*, that those *Heathen* and *Infidels* may not be provoked to blaspheme against the blessed Name of Christ, by reason of the unparallel'd Cruelty of these cruel and hard hearted pretended *Christians*! Surely the Lord doth behold their Oppressions & Afflictions, and will further visit for the same by his righteous and just Judgments, except they break off their sins by Repentance, and their Iniquity by shewing Mercy to these poor afflicted, tormented miserable Slaves!

*Fifthly*, Because Slaves and Souls of Men are some of the *Merchandize of Babylon* by which the Merchants of the Earth are made Rich; but those Riches which they have heaped together, through the cruel Oppression of these miserable Creatures, will be a means to draw Gods Judgments upon them; therefore, *Brethren*, let us hearken to the Voice of the Lord, who saith, *Come out of Babylon, my People, that ye be not partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not her Plagues; for her Sins have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembred her Iniquities; for he that leads into Captivity shall go into Captivity*, Rev. 18. 4, 5. & 13.10.

*Given forth by our Monethly Meeting in Philadelphia, the 13th day of the 8th Moneth, 1693. and recommended to all our Friends and Brethren, who are one with us in our Testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ, and to all others*

*professing* Christianity.

(1693)

# SAMUEL SEWALL

## *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial*

A prominent Boston Puritan, Samuel Sewall (1652–1730) was a man of conscience who took courageous stances on a variety of issues. A member of the judiciary that presided over the Salem Witch Trials in 1692, five years later he became the only magistrate to publicly repent of his involvement. Throughout his life, he supported Indian Christian churches and funded scholarships for Indian students at Harvard. The miseries of African slaves also affected him. In 1700 he wrote in his diary: “Having been long and much dissatisfied with the Trade of fetching Negroes from Guinea . . . began to be uneasy that I had so long neglected doing anything.” Five days later, he published *The Selling of Joseph*, the first antislavery tract to be printed in New England. Moved partly by his unsuccessful efforts to secure the freedom of a slave named Adam from John Saffin, a Boston merchant and judge who published a defense of slavery in response to Sewall the next year, Sewall refuted several common defenses of racial slavery, such as the argument that Abraham had owned slaves, the claim that only captives whose lives had been spared in war were sold as slaves, and the specious view that the blackness of Africans was the mark of a curse on descendants of the “house of Cham.” Like his contemporaries in Philadelphia, Sewall used Christian doctrine to show the essential equality of blacks and whites, and he was the first to foreground the evils of sexual predation and the destruction of families that were inevitable consequences of slavery.

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**F**OR AS MUCH *as Liberty is in real value next unto Life: None ought to part with it themselves, or deprive others of it, but upon most mature Consideration.*

The Numerousness of Slaves at this day in the Province, and the Uneasiness of them under their Slavery, hath put many upon thinking whether the Foundation of it be firmly and well laid; so as to sustain the Vast Weight that is built upon it. It is most certain that all Men, as they are the Sons of *Adam*, are Coheirs; and have equal Right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of

Life. GOD hath given the Earth [with all its Commodities] unto the Sons of Adam, *Psal 115–16. And hath made of One Blood, all Nations of Men, for to dwell on all the face of the Earth; and hath determined the Times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: That they should seek the Lord. Forasmuch then as we are the Offspring of GOD &c. Act 17.26, 27, 29.* Now although the Title given by the last ADAM, doth infinitely better Mens Estates, respecting GOD and themselves; and grants them a most beneficial and inviolable Lease under the Broad Seal of Heaven, who were before only Tenants at Will: Yet through the Indulgence of GOD to our First Parents after the Fall, the outward Estate of all and every of their Children, remains the same, as to one another. So that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery. *Joseph* was rightfully no more a Slave to his Brethren than they were to him: and they had no more Authority to *Sell* him, than they had to *Slay* him. And if *they* had nothing to do to Sell him; the *Ishmaelites* bargaining with them, and paying down Twenty pieces of Silver, could not make a Title. Neither could *Potiphar* have any better Interest in him than the *Ishmaelites* had. *Gen. 37.20, 27, 28.* For he that shall in this case plead *Alteration of Property*, seems to have forfeited a great part of his own claim to Humanity. There is no proportion between Twenty Pieces of Silver, and LIBERTY. The Commodity it self is the Claimer. If *Arabian Gold* be imported in any quantities, most are afraid to meddle with it, though they might have it at easy rates; lest if it should have been wrongfully taken from the Owners, it should kindle a fire to the Consumption of their whole Estate. 'Tis pity there should be more Caution used in buying a Horse, or a little lifeless dust; than there is in purchasing Men and Women: Whenas they are the Offspring of GOD, and their Liberty is,

—————*Auro pretiosior Omni.*

And seeing GOD hath said, *He that Stealeth a Man and Selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to Death. Exod. 21.16.* This Law being of Everlasting Equity, wherein Man Stealing is ranked amongst the most

atrocious of Capital Crimes: What louder Cry can there be made of that Celebrated Warning,

*Caveat Emptor!*

And all things considered, it would conduce more to the Welfare of the Province, to have White Servants for a Term of Years, than to have Slaves for Life. Few can endure to hear of a Negro's being made free; and indeed they can seldom use their freedom well; yet their continual aspiring after their forbidden Liberty, renders them Unwilling Servants. And there is such a disparity in their Conditions, Colour & Hair, that they can never embody with us and grow up into orderly Families, to the Peopling of the Land: but still remain in our Body Politick as a kind of extravasat Blood. As many Negro men as there are among us, so many empty places there are in our Train Bands, and the places taken up of Men that might make Husbands for our Daughters. And the Sons and Daughters of *New England* would become more like *Jacob*, and *Rachel*, if this Slavery were thrust quite out of doors. Moreover it is too well known what Temptations Masters are under, to connive at the Fornication of their Slaves; lest they should be obliged to find them Wives, or pay their Fines. It seems to be practically pleaded that they might be Lawless; 'tis thought much of, that the Law should have Satisfaction for their Thefts, and other Immoralities; by which means, *Holiness to the Lord*, is more rarely engraven upon this sort of Servitude. It is likewise most lamentable to think, how in taking Negroes out of *Africa*, and Selling of them here, That which GOD ha's joyned together men do boldly rend asunder; Men from their Country, Husbands from their Wives, Parents from their Children. How horrible is the Uncleaness, Mortality, if not Murder, that the Ships are guilty of that bring great Crouds of these miserable Men, and Women. Methinks, when we are bemoaning the barbarous Usage of our Friends and Kinsfolk in *Africa*: it might not be unseasonable to enquire whether we are not culpable in forcing the *Africans* to become Slaves amongst our selves. And it

may be a question whether all the Benefit received by *Negro* Slaves, will balance the Accompt of Cash laid out upon them; and for the Redemption of our own enslaved Friends out of *Africa*. Besides all the Persons and Estates that have perished there.

Obj. 1. *These Blackamores are of the Posterity of Cham, and therefore are under the Curse of Slavery.* Gen. 9.25, 26, 27.

Answ. Of all Offices, one would not begg this; viz. Uncall'd for, to be an Executioner of the Vindictive Wrath of God; the extent and duration of which is to us uncertain. If this ever was a Commission; How do we know but that it is long since out of Date? Many have found it to their Cost, that a Prophetical Denunciation of Judgment against a Person or People, would not warrant them to inflict that evil. If it would, *Hazael* might justify himself in all he did against his Master, and the *Israelites*, from 2 *Kings* 8. 10, 12.

But it is possible that by cursory reading, this Text may have been mistaken. For *Canaan* is the Person Cursed three times over, without the mentioning of *Cham*. Good Expositors suppose the Curse entaild on him, and that this Prophesie was accomplished in the Extirpation of the *Canaanites*, and in the Servitude of the *Gibeonites*, *Vide Pareum*. Whereas the Blackmores are not descended of *Canaan*, but of *Cush*. Psal. 68.31. *Princes shall come out of Egypt [Mizraim] Ethiopia [Cush] shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.* Under which Names, all *Africa* may be comprehended; and their Promised Conversion ought to be prayed for. Jer. 13.23. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin?* This shews that Black Men are the Posterity of *Cush*: Who time out of mind have been distinguished by their Colour. And for want of the true, *Ovid* assigns a fabulous cause of it:

*Sanguine tum credunt in corpora summa vocato Æthiopum populos nigrum  
traxisse colorem.*

Metamorph. lib. 2.

Obj. 2. *The Nigers are brought out of a Pagan Country, into places where the Gospel is Preached.*

*Answ.* Evil must not be done, that good may come of it. The extraordinary and comprehensive Benefit accruing to the Church of God, and to *Joseph* personally, did not rectify his brethrens Sale of him.

Obj. 3. *The Africans have Wars one with another. Our Ships bring lawful Captives taken in those Wars.*

*Answ.* For ought is known, their Wars are much such as were between *Jacob's* Sons and their Brother *Joseph*. If they be between Town and Town; Provincial, or National: Every War is upon one side Unjust. An Unlawful War can't make lawful Captives. And by Receiving, we are in danger to promote, and partake in their Barbarous Cruelties. I am sure, if some Gentlemen should go down to the *Brewsters* to take the Air, and Fish: And a stronger party from *Hull* should Surprise them, and Sell them for Slaves to a Ship outward bound: they would think themselves unjustly dealt with; both by Sellers and Buyers. And yet 'tis to be feared, we have no other kind of Title to our *Nigers*. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Matt. 7.12.

Obj. 4. *Abraham had Servants bought with his Money, and born in his House.*

*Answ.* Until the Circumstances of *Abraham's* purchase be recorded, no Argument can be drawn from it. In the mean time, Charity obliges us to conclude, that He knew it was lawful and good.

It is Observable that the *Israelites* were strictly forbidden the buying, or selling one another for Slaves. *Levit.* 25.39, 46. *Jer* 34.8–22. And GOD gaged His

Blessing in lieu of any loss they might conceipt they suffered thereby. *Deut.* 15.18. And since the partition Wall is broken down, inordinate Self love should likewise be demolished. GOD expects that Christians should be of a more Ingenuous and benign frame of spirit. Christians should carry it to all the World, as the *Israelites* were to carry it one towards another. And for men obstinately to persist in holding their Neighbours and Brethren under the Rigor of perpetual Bondage, seems to be no proper way of gaining Assurance that God ha's given them Spiritual Freedom. Our Blessed Saviour ha's altered the Measures of the ancient Love-Song, and set it to a most Excellent New Tune, which all ought to be ambitious of Learning. *Matt.* 5. 43, 44. *John* 13. 34. These *Ethiopians*, as black as they are; seeing they are the Sons and Daughters of the First *Adam*, the Brethren and Sisters of the Last *ADAM*, and the Offspring of GOD; They ought to be treated with a Respect agreeable.

*Servitus perfecta voluntaria, inter Christianum & Christianum, ex parte servi patientis saepe est licita, quia est necessaria: sed ex parte domini agentis, & procurando & exercendo, vix potest esse licita: quia non convenit regulæ illi generali: Quæcunque volueritis ut faciant vobis homines, ita & vos facite eis.* *Matt.* 7.12.

*Perfecta servitus pænæ, non potest jure locum habere, nisi ex delicto gravi quod ultimum supplicium aliquo modo meretur: quia Libertas ex naturali æstimatione proxime accedit ad vitam ipsam, & eidem a multis præferri solet.*

Ames. Cas. Consc. Lib. 5. Cap. 23. Thes. 2, 3.

(1700)

## JOHN HEPBURN

### from *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule, or an Essay to Prove the Unlawfulness of Making Slaves of Men*

Little is known of John Hepburn (fl. 1684–1715) except that he began life as an indentured servant in New Jersey and emerged in the early eighteenth century as a leading Quaker and later influenced John Woolman. His *American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule* was by far the longest and most systematically argued attack on slavery that had yet appeared in the American colonies. While elsewhere in the treatise Hepburn pursues various biblical and ethical arguments at length, in the section included here he focuses on the sufferings of black people, both physical and psychological, and writes with the fervor of an outraged witness.

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#### *Argument the First.*

**T**HE MORE a Man becomes conformable to the Attributes of God, the more just and holy he is, and the more beloved of God, and consequently a more perfect Christian.

*First*, then, God hath given to man a Free-Will, so that he is Master of his own Choice (whether it be good or evil) and will in no way force and compel the Will of man; yea, not unto that part which is good, far less unto evil, notwithstanding his Attribute of Omnipotence. And seeing then, it is thus with God and his Creatures, we ought also to do so by our fellow mortals, and therefore we ought not to force and compel our fellow creatures, the Negroes, Nay, not although we judge it for them a better way of living; For when we force their will, this is a manifest Robbery of that noble Gift their bountiful Creator hath given them, and is a right down Contradiction to the aforesaid Attributes of God, and consequently an Anti-Christian Practice. And so, those that oppose

God and his Attributes, they may expect to Incur his Displeasure; So they may find a pregnant instance in *Pharaoh* and his Egyptian Slave-Masters.

*2dly.* This Practice contradicts Christs command, who commanded us, *To do to all men as we would they should do to us*, or as we would be done by. Now the buying and selling of the *Bodies* and *Souls* of Men, was and is the Merchandize of the Babylonish Merchants spoken of in the *Revelations*. Now the Tyranizing over and making Slaves of our Fellow Creatures, the Negroes, every one knows, or may know, this is not the way they would be done unto.

Now, I have shown you, *first*, That this Practice opposes God and his Attributes, and *2dly*, That it opposes Christ and his Command; And what is this in Effect but to bid Defyance, and to live in Opposition to Christ and his Gospel? and if so, it is a high Degree of an Antichristian Life and Practice.

And now, *my beloved Friends*, who are concerned in this Practice, as you love the Welfare of your immortal Souls, I intreat you (for it is for your sakes I labour) not lightly to look over these considerations, if ye think to receive a *Reward for the Deeds done in the Body*; For how will ye answer when ye are brought before *Gods Tribunal*, and there appear naked and bear before the Son of Man, if ye have lived and dyed in Opposition to his everlasting Gospel, for the confirmation of which, for our Sakes, cost him his precious Life, and now for a little worldly Interest, got in Opposition to Christ and his Gospel, by the Bondage and Inslaving of Negroes; the very Reading of which is enough to make all Hearts concerned to tremble. The very thought of this makes me declare, for all the Riches and Honours of this world, I would not be found in this Antichristian Life and Practice.

*3ly*, I have shewed before, That GOD, who is no respecter of persons, hath given to all men a Freedom of their Wills, to pitch upon their own choice, for both Soul and Body, which are the only parts, next unto the Life, the free donation of our heavenly Father, in this terrestrial world; But it would seem by the Negro-Masters Practice and Arguments, that God did miss the matter, by his Wisdom, when he gave the Negros (his Creatures) the Freedom of their Wills;

but our Negro-Masters have found out, by their ingenuity, how to mend this (seeming) Defect, in two respects, to wit, that is to rob them of their Freedom, and make them bond-Slaves and their Posterity forever. And in the next place, they can highly enrich themselves by the Bargain; by the unparalleled and never enough lamented Bondage and Slavery of those poor Creatures and handy work of God, And can afford to keep themselves with white hands, except at some Times they chance to be besparkled with the Blood of those poor Slaves, when they fall to beating them with their *twisted Hides* and *Horse-whips*, and other *Instruments of Cruelty*, too barbarous here to relate, all done in the name of their deservings and correction. And furthermore, they can afford (by their beloved *Diana*, their Slaves) to go with *fine powdered Perriwigs*, and great *bunched Coats*; and likewise keep their Wives idle (*Jezebel-like*) to *paint their Faces*, and *Puff*, and *powder their Hair*, and to bring up their Sons and Daughters in *Idleness* and *Wantonness*, and in all manner of *Pride* and *Prodigality*, in *decking* and *adorning* their Carcasses with pufft and powdered Hair, with *Ruffles* and *Top-knots*, *Ribbands* and *Lace*, and *gay Cloathing*, and what not; All, and much more, the miserable Effects produced by the Slavery of Negroes; and their Slaves in the *vilest Raggs*, much ado to cover their nakedness, and many of them not a *Shirt* upon their Backs, and some of them not a *Shoe* upon their Foot in *cold Frosts* and *Snow* in the Winter Time, that many of them have their Feet and other members *frozen off*, by reason of their Cruell Usage; and some of them must lie by the *Fire* among the *Ashes*, or be driven out to lie in *Huts* out of Doors among the worst of their *Dogs*, for some of the finest of their *Dogs* they permit to lie in the bed with themselves.

And they accommodate their Slaves with such Names as these, *Toby*, *Mando*, *Mingo*, *Jack*, *Hector* and *Hagar*, and such like Names they give to their *Dogs* and *Horses*

And when their Masters see fit they will *hang them up by their Thumbs*, and then command another Negro to beat him so long, as his Master sees fit; this he must not refuse to do, if it were his *own Father*, nay, further, they will force

them to be very *Hang-men*; And notwithstanding of all this, some of them must go with a *hungry Belly*, and that which they do get to eat (ye need not doubt but it) is the *worst the House affords*.

Now all that fear God cannot but know that those men who use such Cruelty are not only void of the *Fear of God*, but are even destitute of *humane Civility*, and *Pity* and *Mercy*; Therefore their Example can be no more a Rule for keeping Slaves than it is for using such inhumane Cruelty, which all sober Men abhor; For it cannot be expected that men of such Cruelty have much regard to the lawfulness of what they do, and it is great Pity that men who are naturally more moderate and merciful should be led to the Practice of an unlawful thing by the Example of the *vilest of men*.

But to return to the Servants of such cruel Masters; By this Description all may see, that they are put under an unavoidable Necessity of sinning to maintain *self-Preservation*, an Instinct of Nature belonging to all the Creatures of God; So self-preservation puts them to *steal*, *rob*, and *lye*, and many other sinfull Actions; nay, some of them when they see themselves surrounded and trapped with all the Miseries aforesaid, and many more, then they go into Dispair, and miserably *murder themselves*, and some their *Masters*, to get rid of their Tortures and miserable Slavish Life. There was one of them (*I think*) within less then two years ago, shot himself with a Gun, near his Masters House, within a few miles off the place where I write this lamentable story.

Now for those heinous Sins, as Lying, stealing, Robbing, and Self-Murder; they cannot escape Punishment, by the Justice of God. Now as *I* have said before, they being put under such necessity of sinning, and they themselves being but *Infidels*, I desire the Negro-Masters to inform me, who must answer for all these abominable Sins?

And now, *Reader*, I have given thee a small View of the Usage and Treatment of these poor miserable Slaves; for if I would enlarge upon their Usage, I need write nothing else to swell up a Book to I know not what bigness; The *parting of Man and Wife* being such a heinous sin committed by the Negro-

Masters, I cannot pass by; The parting the Husband from the Wife, and the Wife from the Husband, and their Children from them both, to make up their Masters Gains, they force them thus to break the seventh Command, and commit Adultery with other strangers, or other mens Wives or Husbands. These and the like Usages, is enough to make them believe, there is no God at all, and harden them in Idolatrous Worship, and make them blaspheme against the holy God, that he takes not immediate Vengeance on such notorious Offenders. And here are the *first three* Commands broken, occasioned by their Masters. And the breaking the *fourth* is evident to all; for some, for want of Food and other necessaries, for all their hard weeks Labour to enrich their Master, for to maintain Self-preservation, puts them to work on the First Day of the Week, to supply their pure Necessities, and so break that which their Masters call the Christian Sabbath. And so, here is all the Commands of the first Table broken by them, occasioned by the *Cruelty* of their Masters. And their Children being sold from their Parents, they unavoidably cannot honour them; and here is the breach of the *fifth*. And to get rid of their miserable Tortures, many kill themselves and others; and here is the breach of the *Sixth*. The parting of Man and Wife makes them commit *Adultery* with others; and here is the breach of the *Seventh*. To maintain Self-preservation, they unavoidably must *steal*; and here is the breach of the *Eighth*. Then they run away to avoid their Tortures, and when they are caught their Master will ask them, *Do you not deserve to be hung up and Beat?* and here they must bear False witness against themselves (which is worse than against their Neighbours) and say, *yes, I do, de serve to be hung up and Beat;* and here is the breach of the *ninth*. And when they are in great necessity of Food and Rayment, and have it not of their own, they unavoidably must covet it of their Neighbours, and here is the breach of the *Tenth*.

Now *Reader*, here are all the Ten Commands of God (occasioned by their Masters) broken by them. This is such a Charge, that I doubt it will be too hot or too heavy for the Negro-Masters to answer.



## ELIHU COLEMAN

### from *A Testimony against the Anti-Christian Practice of Making Slaves of Men*

A native of Nantucket, Massachusetts, and son of a prominent New England family, Elihu Coleman (1699–1789) was an adult convert to Quakerism. Influenced by earlier Quakers like John Hepburn, Coleman confessed in his preface “To the Reader” that he found it hard to write against slavery partly because it had been “carried on so long pretty much in silence.” He was thus one of the first to stigmatize silence as complicity when one is confronted with an evil like slavery. In the passage selected here from his eighteen-page treatise, Coleman uses biblical citations to debunk the “mark of Cain” myth more thoroughly than anyone previously—though that belief would persist among slaveholders for generations to come. Ultimately all of Coleman’s arguments are rooted in his belief that to deprive a person of freedom on the basis of race is “to deface the image of God,” thus implying that racism itself is an offense against God.

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But some may object, as I my self have heard them, that there was a Mark set upon *Cain*, and they do believe that these Negroes are the Posterity of *Cain*, because of their Hair, and their being so black, differing from all others, and that *Canaan* was to be a Servant of Servants to his Brethren, whom they take to be of the same Linage: But if we do but observe, and read in the Genealogy of *Cain*, we may find that they were all drowned in the old World, and that *Canaan* was of the Line of *Seth*. And altho’ it was of the Will of God that the World was drowned, because of their great Wickedness; yet we may observe also, that there was unclean Beasts went into the Ark, as well as clean, and that it was the Will or Permission of God, that there should be a *Ham*, as well as a *Shem* and *Japhet*: By which we may see that God suffers wicked Men to live as well as Righteous, and we find that the Sun shineth on the Evil as well as on the Good, and that the Rain falleth on the Unjust as well as the Just, and that Christ forbids his

Followers to meddle with the Tares lest they hurt the Wheat; therefore none can have any Plea for making of them Slaves, for their being either ignorant or wicked; for if that Plea would do, I do believe they need not go so far for Slaves as now they do.

And altho' *Canaan* was to be a Servant of Servants to his Brethren, yet the Lord afterwards spake by the Prophets, that the Son should not bear the Iniquity of the Father, nor the Father should not bear the Iniquity of the Son, but the Soul that sinneth should die. Then the Posterity of *Canaan*, or of *Ham*, do not bear their Sins: And the Apostle *Peter* saith, *Now I perceive of a Truth that God is no respecter of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth God and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him.* Now altho' the Negroes might not have the Understanding that some other Nations have, then I do believe there is the less required, and if they do but as well as they know, I do believe it is well with them. For *John* the Divine saith in the *Revelations*, that he saw them that were sealed in their Foreheads, of the Tribes of Israel, of each Tribe Twelve Thousand, which made an Hundred and Forty and Four Thousand: And after this I beheld (said he) and lo a great Multitude which no Man could Number, of all Nations, and Kindreds, and People, and Tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white Robes, and Palms in their Hands, and they cried with a loud Voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, Rev. 7. 9, 10. Now if there was of all Nations, Kindreds, Tongues and People, then there was some of the Negroes.

Now altho' the *Turks* make Slaves of those they can catch, that are not of their Religion, yet (as History relates) as soon as any embraces the Mahomitan Religion, they are no longer kept Slaves, but are quickly set free, and for the most part put to some place of Preferment; so zealous are they for Proselytes and their own Religion. Now if many among those called *Christians*, would but consider how far they fall short of the *Turks* in this Particular, it would be well; for they tell the Negroes that they must believe in Christ, and receive the Christian Faith, and that they must receive the Sacrament, and be baptized, and

so they do; but still they keep them Slaves for all this. Now how partial are those that can judge a Negro that should run away from his Master to deserve beating, and if one called a Christian (altho' it may be no better Christian than the other) should run away from the *Turks*, they can judge him to be a good Fellow, and to have done well. Now I look upon this Practice of making Slaves to be so great a Sin, that even Men whose Principles will allow of killing Men in their own Defence, will not allow of making Slaves; for they counting it better to deprive them of Life that rise up against them, than to deprive those of Liberty that have done them no Harm.

Now if any one should ask one of the Negroes Masters that had a Negro Child and a Child of his own, what Harm the one had done, that it should be made a Slave more than the other? that they would not I believe be able to answer it; and if they have done us no Harm, (as it is evident they have not) then it is very contrary to Scripture, and even to Nature, to make them suffer. Now if we will but look back into the Original of this Practice, which ought to be most looked into, and spoken against; for until the Cause is removed, I know not how the Effect should cease; we shall find that they were stollen in the first place either by them that fetched them, or they carrying such Goods as induced some of their own Nation to steal them; and they standing ready to receive them, which is as bad as if they had stollen them themselves.

Now we may find that Man-stealing and Man-slaying were joined together, and there was the same Punishment for the one as for the other. See *Exod.* 21. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. *And he that smiteth a Man, so that he die, shall surely be put to Death. And he that stealeth a Man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his Hands, he shall surely be put to Death.* We may find it also in the New Testament joined with the worst of Murderers, as such as were Murderers of Fathers and Murderers of Mothers, and Man-stealers, 1 *Tim.* 1. 9, 10. The Prohibition is general, he that stealeth away Man, a Brother or a Stranger, or Heathen, or any Man, the Punishment is Capital; for he that killed was to be put to Death, because it was the Image of God, *Gen.* 9. 6. So he that robbeth a Man

of his Freedom, which only maketh Knowledge useful, seems to deface the Image of God, and therefore is punished with Death.

*(1733)*

## BENJAMIN LAY

### from *All Slave-Keepers that Keep the Innocent in Bondage*

An English-born Quaker enraged by what he witnessed over several years in Barbados, Benjamin Lay (c. 1681–1759) came in 1731 to Philadelphia, where he became a fiery, provocative, and relentless antislavery campaigner. Diminutive and hunchbacked, Lay employed shock tactics in his speeches and protest activities, on one occasion piercing a bladder of red dye to dramatize the deaths that he claimed awaited slaveholders as punishment for their actions, splattering fellow Quakers at a meeting, and on another abducting a young boy to teach his slave-owning father the pain that Africans felt when their children were captured and sold. This passage exhibits the defiant, almost menacing tone that fills most of his 278-page diatribe against slavery.

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NOW FRIENDS, you that are Slave-Keepers, I pray and beseech ye, examine your own Hearts, and see and feel too, if you have not the same answer from Truth now within; while you Preach and exhort others to Equity, and to do Justice and love Mercy, and to walk humbly before the Lord and his People, and you yourselves live and act quite contrary, behave proudly, do unjustly and unmercifully, and live in and encourage the grossest Iniquity in the whole World. For I say, you are got beyond Gospel, Law, *Abraham*, Prophets, Patriarchs, to *Cain* the Murtherer, and beyond him too, to the Devil himself, beyond *Cain*, for he Murthered but one, that we know of, but you have many Thousands, or caused 'em to be so, and for ought I know many Hundreds of Thousands, within 50 Years. What do you think of these Things, you brave Gospel Ministers? that keep poor Slaves to Work for you to maintain you and yours in Pride, Pride and much Idleness or Laziness, and Fulness of Bread, the Sins of *Sodom*: How do these Things become your plain Dress, Demure Appearance, feigned Humility, all but Hypocrisy, which according to Truth's

Testimony, must have the hottest Place in Hell; to keep those miserable Creatures at hard Labour continually, unto their old Age, in Bondage and sore Captivity, working out their Blood and Sweat, and Bowels, youthful strength and vigour, then you drop into your Graves, go to your Places ordained or appointed for you; so leave these poor unhappy Creatures in their worn-out old Age, to your proud, Dainty, Lazy, Scornful, Tyrannical, and often beggerly Children, for them to Domineer and Tyrannize over, cursing them and you in your Graves, for working out their youthful Blood and strength for you, and then leave 'em to be a Plague to us; and then of the abuses, miseries and Cruelties these miserable old worn out Slaves go through, no Tongue can express, starved with Hunger, perish with Cold, rot as they go, for want of every thing that is necessary for an Humane Creature; so that Dogs and Cats are much better taken care for, and yet some have had the Confidence, or rather Impudence, to say their Slaves or Negroes live as well as themselves. I could almost wish such hardened, unthinking Sinful devilish Lyars were put into their Places, at least for a time, in a very hard Service, that they might feel a little in themselves, of what they make so light of in other People; and it would be but just upon 'em, and indeed why should they be against it, if the Negroes live as well and better than they; but such notorious Lies will never go down well, with any Sober right tender-hearted People truly fearing God, and that love the Truth above all; for such I believe firmly, when they come to see, and rightly consider the vileness of this practice in all its parts, and the cursed Fruit it brings forth, they will never enter into it; and if they are in, will endeavour to get out as soon as they can; for I do believe if all the Wickedness, Tyranny, oppressions and abominable Barbarities were written concerning this Hellish Trade, it would fill a large Volume in Folio.

Many has said, they do not see it so great an Evil or Sin, that is, Negroe-Keeping; who so Blind as them that will not see; but them that are willing to see, I think it my duty to inform them what I can by Word and Writing, and then leave it to the Lord.



# JOHN WOOLMAN

from *The Journal, 1755; 1758*

The most famous Quaker antislavery activist until Anthony Benezet, John Woolman (1720–1772) published a major treatise, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, in two parts (1754 and 1762) while recording in his private journal his lifelong objections and acts of resistance to slavery. The journal was published posthumously in 1774 and greatly influenced later generations: William Ellery Channing called it “beyond comparison, the sweetest and purest autobiography.” In the two passages below, from 1755 and 1758, Woolman describes two of the earliest instances in which he acted on his private convictions and refused to work for slave-owners who had engaged him to write their wills.

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About this time an ancient man of good esteem in the neighbourhood came to my house to get his will wrote. He had young Negroes, and I asking him privately how he purposed to dispose of them, he told me. I then said, “I cannot write thy will without breaking my own peace,” and respectfully gave him my reasons for it. He signified that he had a choice that I should have wrote it, but as I could not consistent with my conscience, he did not desire it, and so he got it wrote by some other person. And a few years after, there being great alterations in his family, he came again to get me to write his will. His Negroes were yet young, and his son, to whom he intended to give them, was since he first spoke to me, from a libertine become a sober young man; and he supposed that I would have been free on that account to write it. We had much friendly talk on the subject and then deferred it, and a few days after, he came again and directed their freedom, and so I wrote his will.

Near the time the last-mentioned friend first spoke to me, a neighbour received a bad bruise in his body and sent for me to bleed him, which being done he desired me to write his will. I took notes, and amongst other things he told me

to which of his children he gave his young Negro. I considered the pain and distress he was in and knew not how it would end, so I wrote his will, save only that part concerning his slave, and carrying it to his bedside read it to him and then told him in a friendly way that I could not write any instruments by which my fellow creatures were made slaves, without bringing trouble on my own mind. I let him know that I charged nothing for what I had done and desired to be excused from doing the other part in the way he proposed. Then we had a serious conference on the subject, and at length, he agreeing to set her free, I finished his will.

(1755)

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In this Yearly Meeting several weighty matters were considered, and toward the last, that in relation to dealing with persons who purchase slaves. During the several sittings of the said meeting, my mind was frequently covered with inward prayer, and I could say with David that tears were my meat day and night. The case of slavekeeping lay heavy upon me, nor did I find any engagement to speak directly to any other matter before the meeting. Now when this case was opened, several faithful Friends spake weightily thereto, with which I was comforted, and feeling a concern to cast in my mite, I said in substance as follows:

In the difficulties attending us in this life, nothing is more precious than the mind of Truth inwardly manifested, and it is my earnest desire that in this weighty matter we may be so truly humbled as to be favoured with a clear understanding of the mind of Truth and follow it; this would be of more advantage to the Society than any mediums which are not in the clearness of divine wisdom. The case is difficult to some who have them, but if such set aside all self-interest and come to be weaned from the desire of getting estates, or even from holding them together when Truth requires the contrary, I believe way will open that they will know how to steer through those difficulties.

Many Friends appeared to be deeply bowed under the weight of the work and manifested much firmness in their love to the cause of truth and universal righteousness in the earth. And though none did openly justify the practice of slavekeeping in general, yet some appeared concerned lest the meeting should go into such measures as might give uneasiness to many brethren, alleging that if Friends patiently continued under the exercise, the Lord in time to come might open a way for the deliverance of these people. And I, finding an engagement to speak, said:

My mind is often led to consider the purity of the Divine Being and the justice of his judgments, and herein my soul is covered with awfulness. I cannot omit to hint of some cases where people have not been treated with the purity of justice, and the event hath been melancholy.

Many slaves on this continent are oppressed, and their cries have reached the ears of the Most High! Such is the purity and certainty of his judgments that he cannot be partial in our favour. In infinite love and goodness he hath opened our understandings from one time to another concerning our duty toward this people, and it is not a time for delay.

Should we now be sensible of what he requires of us, and through a respect to the private interest of some persons or through a regard to some friendships which do not stand on an immutable foundation, neglect to do our duty in firmness and constancy, still waiting for some extraordinary means to bring about their deliverance, it may be that by terrible things in righteousness God may answer us in this matter.

Many faithful brethren laboured with great firmness, and the love of Truth in a good degree prevailed. Several Friends who had Negroes expressed their desire that a rule might be made to deal with such Friends as offenders who bought slaves in the future. To this it was answered that the root of this evil would never be effectually struck at until a thorough search was made into the circumstances of such Friends who kept Negroes, in regard to the righteousness of their motives in keeping them, that impartial justice might be administered

throughout.

Several Friends expressed their desire that a visit might be made to such Friends who kept slaves, and many Friends declared that they believed liberty was the Negro's right, to which at length no opposition was made publicly, so that a minute was made more full on that subject than any heretofore and the names of several Friends entered who were free to join in a visit to such who kept slaves.

(1758)

## ANTHONY BENEZET

### from *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes*

Born in France to a Huguenot family and raised in England, Anthony Benezet (1713–1784) came to Philadelphia as an eighteen-year-old, joined the Quakers, and became one of the most influential antislavery writers and activists in American history. His works were distributed both in America and in England, where he was admired and quoted by leading abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson. For twenty years he also educated black children in his home, persuading the Quakers to open a school for them in 1770. Among the graduates of the Negro School in Philadelphia were Absalom Jones and James Forten, both of whose writings are represented elsewhere in this volume. In this excerpt from his *Observations*, Benezet aims to awaken sympathy for Africans captured and sold into the slave trade by invoking the sufferings of white colonists captured by Indians in the ongoing French and Indian War. He builds his case not only through his own commentary but with quotations from the published works of various eyewitnesses, among them the Dutchman William Bosman and the Frenchman John Barbot, both of whom had worked as European agents for the slave trade in Africa.

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In the present war, how many of our poor Country Men are dragged to Bondage and sold for Slaves; how many mourn, a Husband, a Wife, a Child, a Parent, or some near Relation taken from them; and were we to follow them a little farther, and see them exposed to sale and bought up to be made a Gain of, what Heart so hard that would not melt with Sympathy and Sorrow: And could we hear the Purchasers, for the sake of Gain, pushing on the Savages to captivate our People, what inhuman wretches should we call them, what Punishment should we think their Guilt deserved! But while our Hearts are affected for our Brethren and Relations, while we feel for our own Flesh and Blood, let us extend our Thoughts to others, and allow me, gentle Reader! to recommend to thy

serious Consideration, a Practice that prevails among several Nations who call themselves Christians, and I am sorry to say it, in which we as a Nation are deeply engaged, & which is of such a Nature, as that nothing can be more inconsistent with the Doctrines and Practice of our meek Lord and Master, nor stained with a deeper Dye or Injustice, Cruelty and Oppression, I mean the SLAVE TRADE, the purchasing and bringing the poor Negroes from their Native Land, and subjecting them to a State of perpetual Bondage, and that often the most cruel and oppressive. And this carried on chiefly at the instigation of those to whom the Promulgation of the merciful, pure, and holy Gospel of Christ Jesus was committed. Will not the just Judge of all the Earth visit for all this? Or dare we say, that this very Practice is not one Cause of the Calamities we at present suffer. And that the Captivity of our People is not to teach us to feel for others, and to induce us to discourage a Trade, by which many Thousands are Yearly captivated? Evils do not arise out of the Dust, nor does the Almighty willingly afflict the Children of Men; But when a People offend as a Nation, or in a publick Capacity, the Justice of his moral Government requires that as a Nation they be punished, which is generally done by War, Famine or Pestilence. I know there are many Arguments offered in favour of the Purchasers, but they are all drawn from Avarice or ill founded, none will stand the Test of that divine Rule, *To do unto all Men, as we would they should do unto us.* Without Purchasers, there would be no Trade; and consequently every Purchaser as he encourages the Trade, becomes partaker in the Guilt of it, and that they may see what a deep dye the Guilt is of, I beg leave to quote some Extracts from the Writings of Persons of Note, who have been long employed in the African Trade, and whose Situation and Office in the Factories will not admit any to question the Truth of what they relate. By these we shall see, that in order to get Slaves, the Europeans settled at the Factories in Africa, encourage Wars, and promote the Practice of stealing Men, Women and Children, which they readily purchase without any Regard to Justice, Equity or any of the tender Ties of Nature.

*William Bosman*, Factor for the Dutch AFRICAN Company, at the Factory at DELMINA, who wrote an Account of that Country, now more than fifty Years past, tells his Readers ‘That the Booty which the Negro Soldiers aim at in their Wars, are Ornaments of Gold and Prisoners of War, in Order to sell them for Slaves at Pleasure, that many of the Inhabitants depend on Plunder and the Slave-Trade; and that when Vessels arrive, if they have no Stock of Slaves, the Factors trust the Inhabitants with Goods for the Value of one or two Hundred Slaves, which they send into the inland Country in Order to buy Slaves, at all Markets even sometimes two Hundred Miles deep in the Country, where Markets of Men were kept in the same Manner as those of Beasts with us. He farther adds, That, in his Time, the Europeans furnished the Negroes with an incredible Quantity of Fire-Arms and Gunpowder, which was then the Chief vendible Merchandize there.’ This was the State of the Negro Trade when *Bosman* wrote his Account of GUINEA, which, as I have already said, was more than fifty Years ago; Since that Time the Trade is prodigiously augmented, there being now more than ten Ships to one that was then employed in it; And as the Demand for Slaves has augmented, so have the Negroes been the more induced not only to wage War one with another, but also to put in practice the most base and inhuman Methods, in Order to get their unhappy Countrymen into their Power, that they may sell them to the European Traders.

*John Barbot*, Agent General of the French Royal African Company, in his Acc. printed 1732 writes as follows. ‘Those Slaves sold by the Negroes, are for the most Part Prisoners of War, taken either in fight or pursuit, or in the incursions they make into their Enemies Territories; others are stolen away by their own Country-Men, and some there are who will sell their own Children, Kindred or Neighbours. This has often been seen, and to compass it, they desire the Person they intend to sell, to help them in carrying something to the Factory by Way of Trade, and when there, the Person so deluded, not understanding the Language, is sold and delivered up as a Slave, notwithstanding all his Resistance

and exclaiming against the Treachery. Abundance of little Blacks of both sexes are also stolen away by their Neighbours, when found abroad on the Roads, or in the Woods; or else in the Corn Fields, at the Time of the Year when their Parents keep them there all Day, to scare away the devouring small Birds.’

A Person of Candour and undoubted Credit now living in *Philadelphia*, who was on a trading Voyage, on the Coast of *Guinea*, about seven Years ago, was an Eye Witness of the Misery and Desolation which the Purchase of Slaves occasions in that Country, a particular Instance of which he relates in the following Manner viz. ‘Being on that Coast, at a Place called *Basalia*, the Commander of the Vessel according to Custom sent a Person on Shore, with a Present to the King of the Country, acquainting him with their arrival, and letting him know that they wanted a Cargo of Slaves: The King promised to furnish them with Slaves, and in Order to do it, set out to go to War against his Enemies, designing also to surprize some Town and take all the People Prisoners. Sometime after the King sent them Word he had not yet met with the desired success, having been twice repulsed, in attempting to break up two Towns; but that he still hoped to procure a Number of Slaves for them; and in this Design he persisted, till he met his Enemies in the Field, where a Battle was fought, which lasted three Days, during which Time the Engagement was so bloody, that 4500 were slain on the Spot. Think, says the Author, what a pitiable sight it was, to see the Widows weeping over their lost Husbands, and Orphans deploring the loss of their Fathers &c.’ What must we think of that cruel Wretch who occasioned such a Scene of Misery, or what of those who for the sake of Gain instigated him to it.

N. N. *Brue*, a noted Traveller, a Narrative of whose Travels is to be met with in a new Collection of Voyages, printed by the King’s Authority in the Year 1745, Tells his Readers; ‘That the Europeans are far from desiring to act as Peace-Makers, amongst the Negroes, which would be acting contrary to their Interest, since the greater the Wars, the more Slaves are procured.’ He also gives an Account of the Manner in which the Slaves are got, in the Place where he

then was, in the following Terms viz. ‘When a Vessel arrives, the King of the Country sends a Troop of Guards to some Village, which they surround; then seizing as many as they have Orders for, they bind them and send them away to the Ship, where the Ship’s Mark being put upon them, they are hear’d of no more. They usually carry the Infants in Sacks, and gag the Men and Women for fear they, should alarm the Villages, thro’ which they are carried: For, says he, ‘these Actions are never committed in the Villages near the Factories, which it is the King’s Interest not to ruin, but in those up the Country.’

Also, *Joseph Randal*, in his Book of Geography, printed in the Year 1744, in the Account he gives of the *Guinea* Trade, after generally confirming the above Account, adds: ‘That in time of full Peace nothing is more common, than for the Negroes of one Nation to steal those of another, and sell them to the Europeans. There has, says he, been Instances amongst the Negroes of Children selling their Fathers and Mothers, when they have been weary of them, and wanted to enjoy what they had; which I suppose, says that Author, gave birth to the Laws, by which the Children are not to inherit the Goods or Estates of their Fathers and Mothers. Thus, these poor Creatures are brought down to the Coast to be sold to the Merchants of Europe. When the Price is agreed upon, which for an able bodied Man, under thirty five Years of age, may be about 5 Pounds, the Women a fifth Part less, and the Children in proportion to their Age, the European Merchants brand them with hot Irons to distinguish them, and lock the poor wretches up in some Prison, till they can be sent on board; When they come to America, they are disposed of, some to the Spaniards to work in the Mines, (for the English are obliged by the Assiento Contract, to deliver thirty Thousand Slaves every Year to the Spaniards, and the rest are sold to the Planters in *America*.) It is thought that the English transport annually near fifty Thousand of those unhappy Creatures, and the other European Nations together about Two Hundred Thousand more.’ Let but any one reflect that each Individual of this Number had some tender attachment which was broken by this cruel Separation; some Parent or Wife, who had not even the Opportunity of mingling Tears in a

parting Embrace; or perhaps some Infant whom his Labour was to feed and Vigilance protect; or let any consider what it is to lose a Child, a Husband or any dear Relation, and then let them say what they must think of those who are engaged in, or encourage such a Trade. By the fore mentioned Accounts it appears, how by various perfidious, and cruel Methods, the unhappy Negroes are enslaved, and that mostly, by the Procurement of those called Christians, and violently rent from the tenderest Ties of Nature, to toil in hard Labour, often without sufficient Supplies of Food, and under hard Taskmasters, and this mostly to uphold the Luxury or Covetousness of proud selfish Men, without any Hope of ever seeing again their native Land; or an end to their Miseries. Oh ye cruel Taskmasters! ye hard-hearted Oppressors! will not God hear their Cry; and what shall ye do; when God riseth up; and when he visiteth; what will ye answer him? *Did not he that made you make them? and did not one fashion you in the Womb?*

(1759)

# ARTHUR LEE

## *Letter to the Virginia Gazette, March 19, 1767*

The third son of one of the wealthiest plantation families in Virginia, the Stratford Lees, Arthur Lee (1740–1792) was educated at Eton College, the University of Edinburgh, and the Inns of Court in London, an unusual education for an American colonist. He was an ardent patriot during the American Revolution, serving as a diplomat to various European courts and later as a member of the Continental Congress. Having attacked slavery in his anti-British *Essay in Vindication of the Continental Colonies of America* (1764), Lee focused exclusively on the topic in this 1767 letter to the printer of the *Virginia Gazette*. A slaveholder himself, Lee nonetheless argues against slavery on moral, Christian, and historical grounds.

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*Pulchrum est bene facere reipublicae, etiam benedicere haud absurdum.*

TACITUS

To serve ones Country, is a Noble aim—  
Whether attempted by the Sword or pen.

To Mr. Rind  
Sir—

Permit me, in your paper, to address the members of our Assembly, on two points, in which the publick interest is very dearly concern'd.

The Abolition of Slavery & the Retrieval of Specie, in this Colony, are the Subjects, on which I would bespeak their Attention. They are both to be accomplish'd by the same means.

Chosen as you are, Gentlemen, to watch over & provide for the publick weal and Welfare, whatever is offer'd, as tending to those desirable purposes, will I hope, meet from you a favourable ear. And, be the fate of my Sentiments

as it will, I flatter myself that your pardon at least will be Indulged to the Writer.

Long and serious Reflection upon the nature & Consequences of Slavery, has Convinced me, that it is a Violation both of Justice and Religion; that it is dangerous to the safety of the Community in which it prevails; that it is destructive to the growth of arts & Sciences; and lastly, that it produces a numerous & very fatal train of Vices, both in the Slave, and in his Master.—To prove these assertions, shall be the purpose of the following essay.

That Slavery, then, is a violation of Justice, will plainly appear when we consider what Justice is. It is simply & truly defin'd, as by Justinian, *constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi*, a constant Endeavour to give every man his right.

Now, as freedom is unquestionably the birth-right of all mankind, of Africans as well as Europeans, to keep the former in a State of Slavery is a constant violation of that right, and therefore of Justice.

The ground on which the civillians, who favour Slavery, admit it to be just, Namely, Consent, force, and birth, is totally disputable. For surely a Man's own will or Consent, cannot be allow'd to introduce so important an innovation into society as that of Slavery, or to make himself an out-law, which is really the State of a Slave, since neither Consenting to nor aiding the Laws of ye Society, in which he lives, he is neither bound to obey them, nor entitled to their protection. To found any right in force, is to frustrate all right, and involve every thing in confusion, violence and rapine. With these two the last must fall, since if the Parent cannot be justly made a Slave, neither can the Child be born in Slavery. *Le droit des gens, a voulu que les prisoniers,\* &c.*

“The Law of nations, says Baron Montesquieu, has doom'd prisoners to Slavery, to prevent their being Slain. The Roman civil law, permitted debtors whom their Creditors might treat ill, to Sell themselves. And the Law of nature requires that children, whom their parents, being Slaves, cannot maintain, should be slaves like them. These reasons of the Civillians are not just; it is not true that a Captive may be slain, unless in case of absolute necessity; but if he hath been

reduced to slavery it is plain that no such necessity existed, since he was not slain.

It is not true that a freeman can sell himself. For sale supposes a price, but in this act the Slave & his property becomes immediately that of his Master, the slave therefore can receive no price, nor the Master pay &c. And if a man cannot sell himself, nor a prisoner of war be reduced to Slavery, much less can his Child." Such are the Sentiments of this illustrious civillian; his reasonings, which I have been obliged to contract, the reader, interested in this subject, will do well to consult at large.

Yet even these rights of imposition very questionable, nay, refutable as they are, we have not to authorize the Bondage of the Africans. For neither do they consent to be our Slaves, nor do we purchase them of their Conquerors. The British Merchants obtain them from Africa by violence, artifice & treachery, with a few trinkets to prompt those unfortunate & detestable people to enslave one another by force or Strategem. Purchase them indeed they may, under the authority of an act of British Parliment. An act entailing upon the Africans, with whom we were not at war, and over whom a British Parliment could not of right assume even a shadow of authority, the dreadful curse of perpetual slavery upon them and their children forever. There cannot be in nature, there is not in all history, an instance in which every right of men is more flagrantly violated. The laws of the Antients never authorized the making slaves but of those nations whom they had conquer'd; yet they were Heathens and we are Christians. They were misled by a false and monstrous religion, divested of humanity, by a horrible & Barbarous worship; we are directed by the unerring precepts of the revealed religion we possess, enlightened by its wisdom, and humanized by its benevolence. Before them were gods deformed with passions, and horrible for every cruelty & Vice; before us is that incomparable pattern of Meekness, Charity, love, and justice to mankind, which so transcendently distinguished the founder of Christianity and his ever amiable doctrines. Reader—remember that the corner stone of your religion is to do unto others as you wou'd they shou'd

do unto you; ask then your own Heart, whether it would not abhor anyone, as the most outrageous violator of this & every other principle of right, Justice & humanity, who should make a slave of you and your Posterity forever. Remember that God knoweth the heart. Lay not this flattering unction to your Soul, that it is the custom of the Country, that you found it so, that not your will, but your Necessity consents; Ah think, how little such an excuse will avail you in that awfull day, when your Saviour shall pronounce judgment upon you for breaking a law too plain to be misunderstood, too sacred to be violated. If we say that we are Christians, yet act more inhumanly and unjustly than Heathens, with what dreadfull justice must this Sentance of our blessed Saviour fall upon us: Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;\* but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Think a moment how much your temporal, your eternal welfare, depends upon the abolition of a practice, which deforms the Image of your God; tramples on his reveal'd will, infringes the most Sacred rights, and violates humanity.

Enough I hope has been said to prove that slavery is in violation of justice and religion. That it is dangerous to the safety of the State in which it prevails, may be as safely asserted.

What one's own experience hath not taught, that of others must decide. From whence does history derive its utility. For being, when truly written, a faithfull record of the transactions of mankind, and the consequences that flow'd from them; we are thence furnished with the means of judging what will be the probable effect of transactions similar among ourselves. We learn then from history, that Slavery, wherever encouraged, has sooner or later been productive of very dangerous commotions. I will not trouble my reader here with quotations in support of this assertion, but content myself with referring those, who may be dubious of its truth, to the histories of Athens, Lacedaemon, Rome, and Spain. And that this observation may bear its full weight, let me beg that it be remember'd these states were remarkable for being the most warlike in the world; the bravest and best trained to discipline and arms.

That we are not such is but too obvious. Yet it does not appear that the slaves in those Communitys, were so numerous as they are in ours. Demothenes during his orphanage, had been defrauded of a large fortune; and in his oration of retrieving it enumerates 52 Slaves. Tacitus, in mentioning a roman Nobleman, who was assassinated by one of his Slaves; records the whole number amounting to 400, to have suffered Death for that crime. From these facts we may conclude, that the proportion of slaves among the antients was not so great as with us; and as, notwithstanding this, the freemen, tho' infinitely better armed and disciplined than we are, were yet brought to the very brink of ruin by the insurrections of their Slaves; what powerful reasons have not we, to fear even more fatal consequences from the greater prevalence of Slavery among us. How long how bloody and destructive, was the contest between the Moorish slaves and the native Spaniards, and after almost deluges of blood had been shed, the Spaniards obtain'd nothing more, than driving them into the mountains; from whence they remain themselves subjected to their perpetual inroads. Less bloody indeed, though not less alarming, have been the insurrections in Jamaica; and to imagine that we shall be forever exempted from this Calamity, which experience teaches us to be inseperable from slavery, so encouraged, is an infatuation as astonishing, as it will be surely fatal. On us, or on our posterity, the inevitable blow, must, one day, fall; and probably with the most irresistable vengeance the longer it is protracted. Since time, as it adds strength and experience to the slaves, will sink us into perfect security and indolence, which debillitating our minds, and enervating our bodies, will render us an easy conquest to the feeblest foe. Unarm'd already and undisciplined, with our Militia laws contemned, neglected or perverted, we are like the wretch at the feast; with a drawn sword depending over his head by a Single hair; yet we flatter ourselves, in opposition to the force of reason and conviction of experience, that the danger is not imminent.

To prosecute this Subject farther, at present, would I perceive Mr. Rind, engross too much of your paper, and most likely disgust the reader, I must

therefore take leave to defer what remains to the next week. Happy shall I be if my poor attempts should prompt more able Heads to think and write upon a Subject, of such lasting import to the welfare of the Community. Strongly, I confess, am I attached to the positions here laid down, because they are formed upon long and serious deliberation; Yet I am open to that conviction, which truth ever operates on minds unseduced by Interest, and uninflamed by passion.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant

PHILANTHROPOS

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[\\* Oeuvres de Montesquieu livre XXV Chap II](#)

[\\* Mathew Chap 7 v. 21](#)

# BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

## *A Conversation on Slavery*

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) joined Dr. Bray’s Associates, a London charity devoted to founding missionary schools for black children in the colonies, in 1760. Although he was conciliatory and accommodating about slavery for most of his life, Franklin evinced his final convictions when he agreed to serve as president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in 1787. In this fictionalized conversation submitted anonymously to a London newspaper in 1770, the American character accepts that racial slavery is wrong and praises Granville Sharp’s abolitionism, but then defensively argues that American slavery is no worse than the oppression of white laboring people in Britain. Here we see how Franklin’s American patriotism had already begun to delimit his views on potentially divisive topics.

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*To the Printer of the Public Advertiser.*

*Broad-Street Buildings, Jan. 26, 1770.*

SIR,

Many Reflections being of late thrown out against the Americans, and particularly against our worthy Lord-Mayor, on Account of their keeping Slaves in their Country, I send you the following Conversation on that Subject, which, for Substance, and much of the Expression, is, I assure you, a *real one*; having myself been present when it passed. If you think it suitable for your Paper, you will, by publishing it, oblige

Your Friend,  
N. N.

*A Conversation between an ENGLISHMAN, a SCOTCHMAN, and an AMERICAN, on  
the Subject of SLAVERY.*

*Englishman.* You Americans make a great Clamour upon every little imaginary Infringement of what you take to be your Liberties; and yet there are no People upon Earth such Enemies to Liberty, such absolute Tyrants, where you have the Opportunity, as you yourselves are.

*American.* How does that appear?

*Eng.* Read *Granville Sharpe's* Book upon Slavery: There it appears with a Witness.

*Amer.* I have read it.

*Eng.* And pray what do you think of it?

*Amer.* To speak my Opinion candidly, I think it in the Main a good Book. I applaud the Author's Zeal for Liberty in general. I am pleased with his Humanity. But his *general Reflections on all Americans*, as having no real Regard for Liberty; as having so little Dislike of Despotism and Tyranny, that they do not scruple to exercise them with unbounded Rigour over their miserable Slaves, and the like, I cannot approve of; nor of the Conclusion he draws, that therefore our Claim to the Enjoyment of Liberty for ourselves, is unjust. I think, that in all this, he is too severe upon the Americans, and passes over with too partial an Eye the Faults of his own Country. This seems to me not quite fair: and it is particularly *injurious* to us at this Time, to endeavour to render us odious, and to encourage those who would oppress us, by representing us as unworthy of the Liberty we are now contending for.

*Eng.* What Share has that Author's Country (England I mean) in the Enormities he complains of? And why should not his Reflections on the Americans be general?

*Amer.* They ought not to be general, because the Foundation for them is not general. New England, the most populous of all the English Possessions in America, has very few Slaves; and those are chiefly in the capital Towns, not employed in the hardest Labour, but as Footmen or House-maids. The same may be said of the next populous Provinces, New-York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Even in Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas, where they are

employed in Field-work, what Slaves there are belong chiefly to the old rich Inhabitants, near the navigable Waters, who are few compared with the numerous Families of Back-Settlers, that have scarce any Slaves among them. In Truth, there is not, take North-America through, perhaps, one Family in a Hundred that has a Slave in it. Many Thousands there abhor the Slave Trade as much as Mr. Sharpe can do, conscientiously avoid being concerned with it, and do every Thing in their Power to abolish it. Supposing it then with that Gentleman, a Crime to keep a Slave, can it be right to stigmatize us all with that Crime? If one Man of a Hundred in England were dishonest, would it be right from thence to characterize the Nation, and say the English are Rogues and Thieves? But farther, of those who do keep Slaves, all are not Tyrants and Oppressors. Many treat their Slaves with great Humanity, and provide full as well for them in Sickness and in Health, as your poor labouring People in England are provided for. Your working Poor are not indeed absolutely Slaves; but there seems something a little like Slavery, where the Laws oblige them to work for their Masters so many Hours at such a Rate, and leave them no Liberty to demand or bargain for more, but imprison them in a Workhouse if they refuse to work on such Terms; and even imprison a humane Master if he thinks fit to pay them better; at the same Time confining the poor ingenious Artificer to this Island, and forbidding him to go abroad, though offered better Wages in foreign Countries. As to the Share England has in these Enormities of America, remember, Sir, that she began the Slave Trade; that her Merchants of London, Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow, send their Ships to Africa for the Purpose of purchasing Slaves. If any unjust Methods are used to procure them; if Wars are fomented to obtain Prisoners; if free People are enticed on board, and then confined and brought away; if petty Princes are bribed to sell their Subjects, who indeed are already a Kind of Slaves, is America to have all the Blame of this Wickedness? You bring the Slaves to us, and tempt us to purchase them. I do not justify our falling into the Temptation. To be sure, if you have stolen Men to sell to us, and we buy them, you may urge against us the old and true saying, that *the*

*Receiver is as bad as the Thief.* This Maxim was probably made for those who needed the Information, as being perhaps ignorant that *receiving* was in it's Nature as bad as *stealing*: But the Reverse of the Position was never thought necessary to be formed into a Maxim, nobody ever doubted that *the Thief is as bad as the Receiver*. This you have not only done and continue to do, but several Laws heretofore made in our Colonies, to discourage the Importation of Slaves, by laying a heavy Duty, payable by the Importer, have been disapproved and repealed by your Government here, as being prejudicial, forsooth, to the Interest of the African Company.

*Eng.* I never heard before of any such Laws made in America. But the severe Laws you have made, on Pretence of their being necessary for the Government of your Slaves (and even of your white Servants) as they stand quoted by Mr. Sharpe, give us no good Opinion of your general Humanity, or of your Respect for Liberty. These are not the Acts of a few private Persons; they are made by your Representatives in your Assemblies, and are therefore the Act of the whole.

*Amer.* They are so; and possibly some of them made in Colonies where the Slaves greatly out-number the Whites, as in Barbadoes now, and in Virginia formerly, may be more severe than is necessary; being dictated perhaps by Fear and too strong an Opinion, that nothing but extream Severity could keep the Slaves in Obedience, and secure the Lives of their Masters. In other Colonies, where their Numbers are so small as to give no Apprehensions of that Kind, the Laws are milder, and the Slaves in every Respect, except in the Article of Liberty, are under the Protection of those Laws: A white Man is as liable to suffer Death for killing a Slave, though his own, as for any other Homicide. But it should be considered, with regard to these severe Laws, that in Proportion to the greater Ignorance or Wickedness of the People to be governed, Laws must be more severe: Experience every where teaches this. Perhaps you may imagine the Negroes to be a mild tempered, tractable Kind of People. Some of them indeed are so. But the Majority are of a plotting Disposition, dark, sullen, malicious,

revengeful and cruel in the highest Degree. Your Merchants and Mariners, who bring them from Guinea, often find this to their Cost in the Insurrections of the Slaves on board the Ships upon the Coast, who kill all when they get the upper Hand. Those Insurrections are not suppressed or prevented but by what your People think a very necessary Severity, the shooting or hanging Numbers sometimes on the Voyage. Indeed many of them, being mischievous Villains in their own Country, are sold off by their Princes in the Way of Punishment by Exile and Slavery, as you here ship off your Convicts: And since your Government will not suffer a Colony by any Law of it's own to keep Slaves out of the Country, can you blame the making such Laws as are thought necessary to govern them while they are in it.

*Eng.* But your Laws for the Government of your white Servants are almost as severe as those for the Negroes.

*Amer.* In some Colonies they are so, those particularly to which you send your Convicts. Honest hired Servants are treated as mildly in America every where as in England: But the Villains you transport and sell to us must be ruled with a Rod of Iron. We have made Laws in several Colonies to prevent their Importation: These have been immediately repealed here, as being contrary to an Act of Parliament. We do not thank you for forcing them upon us. We look upon it as an unexampled Barbarity in your Government to empty your Gaols into our Settlements; and we resent it as the highest of Insults. If mild Laws could govern such People, why don't you keep and govern them by your own mild Laws at home? If you think we treat them with unreasonable Severity, why are you so cruel as to send them to us? And pray let it be remembered, that these very Laws, the cruel Spirit of which you Englishmen are now pleased so to censure, were, when made, sent over hither, and submitted, as all Colony Laws must be, to the King in Council for Approbation, which Approbation they received, I suppose upon thorough Consideration and sage Advice. If they are nevertheless to be blamed, be so just as to take a Share of the Blame to yourselves.

*Scotchman.* You should not say we force the Convicts upon you. You know

you may, if you please, refuse to buy them. If you were not of a tyrannical Disposition; if you did not like to have some under you, on whom you might exercise and gratify that Disposition; if you had really a true Sense of Liberty, about which you make such a Pother, you would purchase neither Slaves nor Convict Servants, you would not endure such a Thing as Slavery among you.

*Amer.* It is true we may refuse to buy them, and prudent People do so. But there are still a Number of imprudent People, who are tempted by the Lowness of the Price, and the Length of the Time for which your Convicts are sold, to purchase them. We would prevent this Temptation. We would keep your British Man-Merchants, with their detestable Ware, from coming among us: But this you will not allow us to do. And therefore I say you force upon us the Convicts as well as the Slaves. But, Sir, as to your Observation, that if we had a real Love of Liberty, we should not suffer such a Thing as Slavery among us, I am a little surprised to hear this from you, a North Briton, in whose own Country, Scotland, Slavery still subsists, established by Law.

*Scotchman.* I suppose you mean the heretable Jurisdictions. There was not properly any Slavery in them: And, besides, they are now all taken away by Act of Parliament.

*Amer.* No, Sir, I mean the Slavery in your Mines. All the Wretches that dig Coal for you, in those dark Caverns under Ground, unblessed by Sunshine, are absolute Slaves by your Law, and their Children after them, from the Time they first carry a Basket to the End of their Days. They are bought and sold with the Colliery, and have no more Liberty to leave it than our Negroes have to leave their Master's Plantation. If having black Faces, indeed, subjected Men to the Condition of Slavery, you might have some small Pretence for keeping the poor Colliers in that Condition: But remember, that under the Smut their Skin is *white*, that they are *honest good People*, and at the same Time are *your own Countrymen!*

*Eng.* I am glad you cannot reproach England with this; our Colliers are as free as any other Labourers.

*Amer.* And do you therefore pretend that you have no such Thing as Slavery in England?

*Eng.* No such Thing most certainly.

*Amer.* I fancy I could make it appear to you that you have, if we could first agree upon the Definition of a Slave. And if your Author's Position is true, that those who keep Slaves have therefore no Right to Liberty themselves, you Englishmen will be found as destitute of such Rights as we Americans I imagine.

*Eng.* What is then your Definition of a Slave? Pray let us hear it, that we may see whether or no we can agree in it.

*Amer.* A Slave, according to my Notion, is a human Creature, stolen, taken by Force, or bought of another or of himself, with Money; and who being so taken or bought, is compelled to serve the Taker, or Purchaser, during Pleasure or during Life. He may be sold again, or let for Hire, by his Master to another, and is then obliged to serve that other; he is one who is bound to obey, not only the Commands of his Master, but also the Commands of the lowest Servant of that Master, when set over him; who must come when he is called, go when he is bid, and stay where he is ordered, though to the farthest Part of the World, and in the most unwholesome Climate; who must wear such Cloaths as his Master thinks fit to give him, and no other, though different from the common Fashion, and contrived to be a distinguishing Badge of Servitude; and must be content with such Food or Subsistence as his Master thinks fit to order for him, or with such small Allowance in Money as shall be given him in Lieu of Victuals or Cloathing; who must never absent himself from his Master's Service without Leave; who is subject to severe Punishments for small Offences, to enormous Whippings, and even Death, for absconding from his Service, or for Disobedience to Orders. I imagine such a Man is a Slave to all Intents and Purposes.

*Eng.* I agree to your Definition. But surely, surely, you will not say there are any such Slaves in England?

*Amer.* Yes, many Thousands, if an English Sailor or Soldier is well

described in that Definition. The Sailor is often *forced* into Service, torn from all his natural Connections. The Soldier is generally bought in the first Place for a Guinea and a Crown at the Drum-Head: His Master may sell his Service, if he pleases, to any Foreign Prince, or barter it for any Consideration by Treaty, and send him to shoot or be shot at in Germany or Portugal, in Guinea or the Indies. He is engaged for Life; and every other Circumstance of my Definition agrees with his Situation. In one Particular, indeed, English Slavery goes beyond that exercised in America.

*Eng.* What is that?

*Amer.* We cannot command a Slave of ours to do an immoral or a wicked Action. We cannot oblige him, for Instance, to commit MURDER If we should order it, he may refuse, and our Laws would justify him. But Soldiers must, on Pain of Death, obey the Orders they receive; though, like Herod's Troops, they should be commanded to slay all your Children under two Years old, cut the Throats of your Children in the Colonies, or shoot your Women and Children in St. G——e's F——ds.

# JOHN TRUMBULL

## *The Correspondent, No. 8*

An American prodigy who passed Yale's entrance examination at age seven and matriculated at thirteen, John Trumbull (1750–1831) was a prominent educator, jurist, and writer. He supported the American Revolution and emerged afterward as a leading member of the "Hartford Wits," a group of Connecticut writers that included Joel Barlow and Timothy Dwight. In this piece, the earliest known American satire against slavery, the youthful Trumbull deploys Swiftian irony to mock the conventional defenses and rationalizations of slavery.

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IT IS STRANGE that any persons should be so infatuated, as to deny the right of enslaving the black inhabitants of Africa. I cannot look on silently and see this inestimable privilege, which hath been handed down inviolable from our ancestors, wrenched out of our hands, by a few men of squeamish consciences, that will not allow them, or others peaceably to enjoy it. I therefore engage in the dispute and make no doubt of proving to every unprejudiced mind, that we have a natural, moral, and divine right of enslaving the Africans.

I shall pass over the arguments drawn from the gradation of things throughout the universe, and the privilege every creature naturally enjoys, of trampling upon those, who stand below him in the scale of being. For I must confess, however oddly it may sound, that after a long course of observations upon the conduct of mankind, & many nice calculations upon the magnitude and density of human nature in different latitudes, I am much in doubt, whether there be any thing in our boasted original superiority.

It is positively foretold in the scriptures, that the children of Ham, should be servants of servants to their brethren. Now if our adversaries will but allow these two points, that a prophecy concerning any thing that shall be done, may be

construed into a permission for the doing of it, and that the Africans are the children of Ham, which is plain from their being servants of servants to their brethren; the controversy is brought to a point, and there needs nothing further to be said upon the subject.

Besides, was not the slave trade carried on exactly in the same manner, by Abraham and several other good patriarchs, whom we read of in ancient history? Those Gentlemen will doubtless be allowed to have been perfect patterns and examples. (N. B. I am not now speaking concerning the cases of divorce and polygamy.)

The whole world is the property of the righteous; consequently the Africans, being infidels and heretics, may rightly be considered as lawful plunder.

I come now to the most weighty part of the argument; and that it may be conducted with due decorum, I desire my readers to lay their hands on their hearts, and answer me to this serious question, Is not the enslaving of these people the most charitable act in the world? With no other end in view than to bring those poor creatures to christian ground, and within hearing of the gospel, we spare no expense of time or money, we send many thousand miles across the dangerous seas, and think all our toil and pains well rewarded. We endure the greatest fatigues of body, and much unavoidable trouble of conscience, in carrying on this pious design; we deprive them of their liberty, we force them from their friends, their country and every thing dear to them in the world; despising the laws of nature, and infringing upon the rules of morality. So much are we filled with disinterested benevolence! so far are we carried away with the noble ardor, the generous enthusiasm of christianizing the heathen! And are they not bound by all the ties of gratitude, to devote their whole lives to our service, as the only reward that can be adequate to our superabundant charity?

I am sensible that some persons may doubt whether so much pains be taken in teaching them the principles of Christianity; but we are able to prove it not only by our constant assertions, that this is our sole motive, but by many

instances of learned pious negroes. I myself have heard of no less than three, who know half the letters of the alphabet, and have made considerable advances in the Lord's prayer and catechism. In general, I confess they are scarcely so learned; which deficiency we do not charge to the fault of any one, but have the good nature to attribute it merely to their natural stupidity; and dulness of intellect.

But with regard to morality, I believe we may defy any people in the world to come into competition with them: There is among them no such thing as luxury, idleness, gaming, prodigality, and a thousand such like vices, which are wholly monopolized by their masters. No people are more flagrant examples of patience, forbearance, justice and a forgiving temper of mind, &c. And none are so liberally endowed with that extensive charity, which the scriptures tell us, endureth all things.

I would just observe that there are many other nations in the world, whom we have equal right to enslave, and who stand in as much need of Christianity, as these poor Africans. Not to mention the Chinese, the Tartars, or the Laplanders, with many others, who would scarcely pay the trouble of christianizing. I would observe that the Turks and the Papists, are very numerous in the world, and that it would go a great way towards the millennium, if we should transform them to Christians.

I propose at first, and by way of trial, in this laudable scheme, that two vessels be sent one to Rome, and the other to Constantinople, to fetch off the Pope and the Grand Signior; I make no doubt but the public convinced of the legality of the thing, and filled to the brim, with the charitable design of enslaving infidels, will readily engage in such an enterprise. For my part, would my circumstances permit, I would be ready to lead in the adventure and should promise myself certain success, with the assistance of a select company, of seamen concerned in the African trade. But at present, I can only shew my zeal, by promising when the affair is concluded, and the captives brought ashore, to set apart several hours in every day, when their masters can spare them, for

instructing the Pope in his creed, and teaching the Grand Signior, to say his Catechism.

*(July 6, 1770)*

## JANE DUNLAP

### *The Ethiopians shall Stretch out their hands to God, or a call to the Ethiopians*

Calling herself “a daughter of liberty and lover of truth,” the humble and pious Jane Dunlap (fl. 1765–1771) left few traces except her book *Poems, Upon several Sermons, Preached by the Rev’d, and Renowned, George Whitefield*, published in Boston (1771), which includes both this poem and one in which she claims as her inspiration Phillis Wheatley, the “young Afric damsel.” The following is the earliest known American poem against racial slavery.

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Poor Negroes flee, you’l welcome be,  
Your colour’s no exception;  
But fly to Christ, he’s paid the price,  
Meet for your Souls redemption.

And though your souls made black with sin,  
The Lord can make them white;  
And cloath’d in his pure righteousness,  
They’l shine transparent bright.

(1771)

## DAVID COOPER

### from *A Mite Cast into the Treasury; or, Observations on Slave-Keeping*

An influential New Jersey Quaker, David Cooper (1725–1795) campaigned against slavery throughout the 1770s and 1780s. He never relented in his fight against slavery: in 1783, he published *A Serious Address to the Rulers of America, On the Inconsistency of Their Conduct Respecting Slavery*, and from 1783 to 1788 he traveled to the Continental Congress almost every year to lobby for the abolition of slavery. In the passage below, excerpted from his first published work, Cooper cast his argument in the form of a dramatic dialogue designed to prick the conscience of any sincere Christian.

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*Query.* How came thee possessed of this woman?

*Ans.* I bought her of an African merchant, who brought her from Guinea when a child.

*Query.* How came he by her?

*Ans.* I know not: I suppose he bought her of them who had a right to sell her.

A right to sell her! No one, not even her father could have such a right longer than till she came to the age of a woman, at which time she was pronounced free by the law of nature, the rules of equity and justice, and precepts of Christ, whether in her father's house, or a master's, in her native country, or among strangers; this inherent right she carries with her, and cannot be disseized of but by her own consent.—But it is very likely she was stolen from her parents, and then justice will say the perpetrator had not the least right to her, consequently could convey none, but that he deserved death for the act.—If this is the chain of conveyance on which thy title to these negroes stands, thou sees it is none at all, but that the life of the person thou holds under, was justly

forfeited for being the means of putting them into thy power; therefore if thou had been a christian in deed and in truth, that is, been dictated in all thy conduct by the precepts of Christ, which are the perfections of justice, would sooner have cast thy money into the fire, than have made such an unchristian purchase, by doing of which, thou approved of, and made thyself a partner in all the string of crimes committed in procuring, bringing, and selling this child for a slave; but having done it, should then have acted the part of a father by her, been more earnest in giving her a christian education, than to make her earn her purchase-money, and have claimed no right to her after she came to woman's age.— This is as thou would desire a child of thine should be treated in the like circumstances; but as thou did not then discharge a christian duty by her, hath now an additional cumber, and ought to do this by her children; for being under thy care, their own father cannot do it, and by a free act of thy own, thou stands his substitute as to their education, and ought to discharge a father's duty to them in that respect.

*Object.* I act the part of a father by negroes! be at the cost of raising them, schooling and what not, and when they are able to earn something set them free! —I'll assure thee I'll do no such thing, it would be injustice to myself and family.—Why at that age they'll bring me near 100£ per head.

Do not be warm my friend, I am not about to force thee to obey the laws of God,\* “To deal justly, and love mercy.” I know thou has the laws of men on thy side. I am only endeavouring to shew thee it would be abundantly thy greatest interest so to do; and as thou calls thyself a christian, should expect much rhetorick need not be used to convince thee that to be such it is absolutely necessary to obey Christ's precepts and doctrine; to which there is nothing more diametrically opposite than the slave trade from first to last.

(1772)

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\* Mic. vi. 8.

# PATRICK HENRY

## *Letter to John Alsop, January 13, 1773*

Most famous for his exclamation “Give me Liberty, or Give me Death!”, the Virginian Patrick Henry (1736–1799) was one of many founding fathers who professed a hatred of slavery but continued to hold slaves. In this letter to a Quaker friend living in Hudson, New York, Henry presents an extraordinary self-examination of his own hypocrisy: he views the keeping of slaves as an “abominable practice” and a “lamentable evil,” but feels himself unable to overcome “the general inconvenience of living without them.” The dark mood of his last paragraph foreshadows similar ruminations by Jefferson and others.

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HANOVER, Va., Jan. 13, 1773.

DEAR SIR:—I take this opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of ANTHONY BENEZET’S book against the slave trade. I thank you for it. It is not a little surprising that Christianity, whose chief excellence consists in softening the human heart, in cherishing and improving its finer feelings, should encourage a practice so totally repugnant to the first impressions of right and wrong. What adds to the wonder is, that this abominable practice has been introduced in the most enlightened ages. Times that seem to have pretensions to boast of high improvements in arts, sciences and refined morality, have brought into general use, and guarded by many laws, a species of violence and tyranny which our more rude and barbarous, but more honest, ancestors detested.

Is it not amazing that at the time when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision, in a country, above all others, fond of liberty—that in such an age and in such a country we find men professing a religion the most humane, mild, meek, gentle and generous, adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty? Every thinking, honest man rejects it in speculation. How few, in

practice, from conscientious motives!

The world, in general, has denied your people a share of its honors; but the wise will ascribe to you a just tribute of virtuous praise for the practice of a train of virtues, among which your disagreement to Slavery will be principally ranked. I cannot but wish well to a people whose system imitates the example of Him whose life was perfect; and believe me, I shall honor the Quakers for their noble efforts to abolish Slavery. It was equally calculated to promote moral and political good.

Would any one believe that I am master of slaves by my own purchase? I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them. I will not—I cannot justify it, however culpable my conduct. I will so far pay my devoir to Virtue, as to own the excellence and rectitude of her precepts, and to lament my want of conformity to them. I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be afforded to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we can do, is to improve it, if it happens in our day; if not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot, and an abhorrence of Slavery. If we cannot reduce this wished-for reformation to practice, let us treat the unhappy victims with lenity. It is the furthest advancement we can make toward justice. It is a debt we owe to the purity of our religion, to show that it is at variance with that law which warrants Slavery.

Here is an instance that silent meetings (the scoff of Rev. doctors) have done that which learned and elaborate preaching cannot effect; so much preferable are the dictates of conscience, and a steady attention to its feelings, above the teaching of those men who pretend to have found a better guide. I exhort you to persevere in so worthy a resolution. Some of your people disagree, or at least are lukewarm in the Abolition of Slavery. Many treat the resolution of your meeting with ridicule; and among those who throw ridicule and contempt on it are clergymen whose surest guard against both ridicule and contempt, is a certain act of Assembly.

I know not where to stop. I could say many things on this subject, a serious

review of which gives a gloomy perspective in future times. Excuse this scrawl,  
and believe me, with esteem, your humble servant.

PATRICK HENRY, Jr.

## PHILLIS WHEATLEY

### *To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North-America, &c.; Letter to the Rev Samson Occom, February 11, 1774*

The first African American woman writer, Phillis Wheatley (c. 1753–1784) was born in Gambia and arrived in Boston on a slave ship at about the age of eight. Although the merchant John Wheatley and his family purchased Phillis as a servant, they soon recognized her talent, paid to educate her, and encouraged her efforts to publish poetry in New England periodicals beginning in her early teens. By the early 1770s she was widely known as a prodigy and in 1773, with the support of several prominent Bostonians, she published her first book, *Poems on Various Subjects*, in London. Among its contents were her lines to the Earl of Dartmouth, linking British treatment of the American colonies to her own experience of slavery. Several English reviewers praised her book and she made a visit to London as something of a celebrity over the summer of 1773. Historians believe that a pre-condition of her return to America was a promise of manumission, which her owners granted in 1774. Her letter to the Mohegan minister Samson Occom, written that year, is the most direct condemnation of slavery she ever wrote. It was published in the *Connecticut Gazette* and several other New England newspapers.

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*To the Right Honourable William,  
Earl of Dartmouth*

*His Majesty's Principal Secretary of  
State for North-America, &c.*

Hail, happy day, when smiling like the morn,  
Fair *Freedom* rose *New-England* to adorn:  
The northern clime beneath her genial ray,  
*Dartmouth*, congratulates thy blissful sway:

Elate with hope her race no longer mourns,  
Each soul expands, each grateful bosom burns,  
While in thine hand with pleasure we behold  
The silken reins, and *Freedom's* charms unfold.  
Long lost to realms beneath the northern skies  
She shines supreme, while hated *faction* dies:  
Soon as appear'd the *Goddess* long desir'd,  
Sick at the view, she languish'd and expir'd;  
Thus from the splendors of the morning light  
The owl in sadness seeks the caves of night.

No more, *America*, in mournful strain  
Of wrongs, and grievance unredress'd complain,  
No longer shall thou dread the iron chain,  
Which wanton *Tyranny* with lawless hand  
Had made, and with it meant t' enslave the land.

Should you, my lord, while you peruse my song,  
Wonder from whence my love of *Freedom* sprung,  
Whence flow these wishes for the common good,  
By feeling hearts alone best understood,  
I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate  
Was snatch'd from *Afric's* fancy'd happy seat:  
What pangs excruciating must molest,  
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?  
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd  
That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd:  
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray  
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

For favours past, great Sir, our thanks are due,

And thee we ask thy favours to renew,  
Since in thy pow'r, as in thy will before,  
To sooth the griefs, which thou did'st once deplore.  
May heav'nly grace the sacred sanction give  
To all thy works, and thou for ever live  
Not only on the wings of fleeting *Fame*,  
Though praise immortal crowns the patriot's name,  
But to conduct to heav'ns refulgent fane,  
May fiery coursers sweep th' ethereal plain,  
And bear thee upwards to that blest abode,  
Where, like the prophet, thou shalt find thy God.

(1773)

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*Letter to the Rev. Samson Occom, February 11, 1774*

*Reverend and honored Sir,*

I have this Day received your obliging kind Epistle, and am greatly satisfied with your Reasons respecting the Negroes, and think highly reasonable what you offer in Vindication of their natural Rights: Those that invade them cannot be insensible that the divine Light is chasing away the thick Darkness which broods over the Land of Africa; and the Chaos which has reigned so long, is converting into beautiful Order, and reveals more and more clearly, the glorious Dispensation of civil and religious Liberty, which are so inseparably united, that there is little or no Enjoyment of one without the other: Otherwise, perhaps, the Israelites had been less solicitous for their Freedom from Egyptian Slavery; I do not say they would have been contented without it, by no Means, for in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance; and by the Leave of our Modern Egyptians I will assert, that the same Principle lives in us. God grant

Deliverance in his own way and Time, and get him honor upon all those whose Avarice impels them to countenance and help forward the Calamities of their Fellow Creatures. This I desire not for their Hurt, but to convince them of the strange Absurdity of their Conduct whose Words and Actions are so diametrically opposite. How well the Cry for Liberty, and the reverse Disposition for the Exercise of oppressive Power over others agree,—I humbly think it does not require the Penetration of a Philosopher to determine.

## ELHANAN WINCHESTER

### *from The Reigning Abominations, Especially the Slave Trade, Considered as Causes of Lamentation*

The son of a Massachusetts shoemaker, Elhanan Winchester (1751–1797) was a prominent pastor and theologian who, beginning with the inspiration of Whitefield’s “Great Awakening,” underwent a lifelong series of religious conversions, from Calvinist to Arminian to Baptist to, ultimately, Universalist beliefs. His personal life was full of sadness: he was widowed four times and none of his eight children survived infancy. Evangelical and itinerant in his ministry, he spent the years 1774–80 in South Carolina preaching to both whites and blacks. He delivered this antislavery sermon on December 30, 1774, in Fairfax County, Virginia, calling on slave-owners to renounce slavery because “it is an accursed thing, for which the wrath of God will be poured out upon this nation,” and ominously predicting “that some revolution is at the door.”

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How the poor creatures groan and cry under their bitter bondage, to that God who is able to avenge them!— and let their oppressors tremble at the thought that *God will bring every work into judgment*; and that eternal sorrow will be the just reward of their crimes except they repent.

HITHERTO I have chiefly considered the consequences of abusing slaves, but if we have no right at all to hold them in slavery, the case is much altered, not in our favour, but against us; if the thing itself is a crime, as may be proved from our Saviour’s words, “Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets,” Matt. vii. 12. Luke vi. 31. what have not those to expect who break the law of nature, the law of God, who transgress against the instruction of the prophets, and violate the commands of Christ and his apostles?

I KNOW some will say, that we are only to do to others as we should reasonably expect others to do to us, were we in the same circumstances, and

therefore the slaves should be kept in perpetual servitude, but should be well used. But remember Christ says, “And as ye WOULD that men should DO TO YOU: DO YE TO THEM LIKEWISE.” Now the plain question is this, If you yourselves had been unlawfully captured and enslaved, without ever forfeiting your liberty by any crime, had you been sold into a foreign country, and forcibly detained in bondage; had you been certain that your master who purchased you, knew of all these circumstances when he bought you, and that he was a professor of a religion which obliged him to *do to all men as he would they should do to him*, upon pain of damnation; would you not wish that he would set you free? would you not have a right to claim your freedom as an act of justice? Acts of kindness, mercy, and generosity, are, in some sort, different from acts of justice; nothing can excuse us for a moment from being *just; generous* we may be according to our power, but justice is a debt that we must pay, or meet the disapprobation of that just Judge, who has declared, that “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,” Matt. vii. 2. Mark iv. 24. And not only so, but he uses four different expressions, to shew in what manner we are to expect it, 1. “*good measure*, 2. *pressed down*, 3. and *shaken together*, 4. and *running over*, shall men give into *your own bosom*. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.” Luke vi. 38. If the words of Christ prove true, you that hold slaves have every thing to fear, unless you repent and reform. This abomination is sufficient to make the land desolate and waste, it is a national sin, and will bring down national punishment, unless it be repented of. If the words of Christ are true, the slaves will at length be free; and if you refuse and rebel, you will be enslaved, or devoured by the sword; and this may be depended upon. God knows how to deliver these poor oppressed creatures, and to render seven-fold to those who have so long and unjustly detained them in slavery.

THINK how you would feel, at the thoughts of your posterity being slaves, to the posterity of those whom you keep now in bondage. Oh! how much blood must be shed, before such an event can take place! but remember, the blood that

has been shed in Africa, this may come home, and those whom you at present oppress, may be your oppressors; and be sure, if that should be the case, they will render you ten-fold. This event may easily take place, if God pleases; the slaves are strong and numerous, notwithstanding all the miseries they suffer; they increase rapidly, and should a war break out, the consequences might be serious.

THE Israelites were long enslaved in Egypt, but the time of their deliverance came at last; and now the Egyptians are in bondage themselves, and have been for ages. Take heed that this be not your case. God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. It is now the third and fourth generation since the Africans have been enslaved by the English; and perhaps the time of their deliverance is at the door. God prepare us for the things that are coming upon us!

BUT some say, What shall we do? the law of the province forbids us to set them free? I know it; and it is for a lamentation that it is so; but all you can do at present, is to “sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land,” and for this in particular; so will God set a mark upon you, and spare you in the day of indignation.

IF any of you are clear from having a hand in this iniquitous trade, by all means keep so; have nothing to do with it; it is an accursed thing, for which the wrath of God will be poured out upon this nation, if the word of God be true, unless repentance and reformation prevent; for he will assuredly vindicate the cause of the oppressed, and open a door for their deliverance, even though it should be by the destruction of their oppressors.

As for you that have them in possession, and cannot set them free by the law, treat them well, and wait for the time when you may be able to give them liberty, which is the greatest blessing next to life; for I cannot help thinking that some revolution is at the door, and perhaps, is nearer and greater than we expect. In the mean time it becomes us to repent, and humble ourselves before God, and

lament our own sins, and sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed in our land; and deprecate the judgments that await our nation in general, and these colonies in particular; and let us say, “Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

(1788)

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\* A poor ignorant negro was once overheard in South Carolina, as I was informed, to pray after this manner, “Lord, how hard it is for us to have such hard masters, who whip and starve us in this world; and then, when we die, to go to hell, where we shall have nothing but *fire to eat*, and *fire to lodge in!* Lord have mercy upon us, &c.”

# THOMAS PAINE

## *Letter to the Pennsylvania Journal, March 8, 1775*

The unsigned essay printed below has often been attributed to Thomas Paine (1737–1809) on the basis of a letter Benjamin Rush wrote shortly after Paine’s death, in which he recalled that Paine claimed credit for the piece soon after it was published. Because Rush’s letter contained errors regarding Paine’s early career in North America, the authorship of this powerful protest against slavery remains uncertain. Another antislavery essay sometimes attributed to him, also anonymous and entitled “A Serious Thought,” was published in the same magazine in October of the same year.

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MESSRS. BRADFORDS,

*Please to insert the following, and oblige yours A. B.*

To AMERICANS.

**T**HAT SOME desperate wretches should be willing to steal and enslave men by violence and murder for gain, is rather lamentable than strange: But that many civilized, nay, christianized people should approve, and be concerned in the savage practice, is surprising; and still persist, though it has been so often proved contrary to the light of nature, to every principle of Justice and Humanity, and even good policy, by a succession of eminent men,<sup>\*</sup> and several late publications.

Our Traders in *Men* (*an unnatural commodity!*) must know the wickedness of that SLAVE-TRADE, if they attend to reasoning, or the dictates of their own hearts; and such as shun and stifle all these, willfully sacrifice Conscience, and the character of integrity to that golden Idol.

The Managers of that Trade themselves, and others, testify, that many of these African nations inhabit fertile countries, are industrious farmers, enjoy

plenty, & lived quietly, averse to war, before the Europeans debauched them with liquors, and bribing them against one another; & that these inoffensive people are brought into slavery, by stealing them, tempting Kings to sell subjects, which they can have no right to do, and hiring one tribe to war against another, in order to catch prisoners. By such wicked and inhuman ways the English are said to enslave towards one hundred thousand yearly; of which thirty thousands are supposed to die by barbarous treatment in the first year; besides all that are slain in the unnatural wars excited to take them. So much innocent blood have the Managers and Supporters of this inhuman Trade to answer for to the common Lord of all!

Many of these were not prisoners of war, and redeemed from savage conquerors, as some plead; and they who were such prisoners, the English, who promote the war for that very end, are the guilty authors of their being so; and if they were redeemed, as is alledged, they would owe nothing to the redeemer but what he paid for them.

They show as little Reason as Conscience who put the matter by with saying—"Men, in some cases, are lawfully made Slaves, and why may not these?" So men, in some cases, are lawfully put to death, deprived of their goods, without their consent; may any man, therefore, be treated so, without any conviction of desert? Nor is this plea mended by adding—"They are set forth to us as slaves, and we buy them without farther inquiry, let the sellers see to it."—Such men may as well join with a known band of robbers, buy their ill-got goods, and help on the trade; ignorance is no more pleadable in one case than the other; the sellers plainly own how they obtain them. But none can lawfully buy without evidence, that they are not concurring with Men-Stealers; and as the true owner has a right to reclaim his goods that were stolen, and sold; so the slave, who is proper owner of his freedom, has a right to reclaim it, however often sold.

Most shocking of all is alledging the Sacred Scriptures to favour this wicked practice. One would have thought none but infidel cavillers would endeavour to make them appear contrary to the plain dictates of natural light,

and Conscience, in a matter of common Justice and Humanity; which they cannot be. Such worthy men, as referred to before, judged otherways; Mr. BAXTER declared, *the Slave-Traders should be called Devils, rather than Christians; and that it is an heinous crime to buy them.* But some say, “the practice was permitted to the Jews.” To which may be replied,

1. The example of the Jews, in many things, may not be imitated by us; they had not only orders to cut off several nations altogether, but if they were obliged to war with others, and conquered them, to cut off every male; they were suffered to use polygamy and divorces, and other things utterly unlawful to us under clearer light.

2. The plea is, in a great measure, false; they had no permission to catch, and enslave people, who never injured them.

3. Such arguments ill become us, *since the time of reformation came*, under Gospel light. All distinctions of nations, and privileges of one above others, are ceased; Christians are taught to *account all men their neighbours; and love their neighbour as themselves; and do to all men as they would be done by; to do good to all men; and Man-stealing is ranked with enormous crimes.*—Is the barbarous enslaving our inoffensive neighbours, and treating them like wild beasts subdued by force, reconcilable with all these *Divine precepts*? Is this doing to them as we would desire they should do to us? If they could carry off, and enslave some thousands of us, would we think it just?—One would almost wish they could for once; it might convince more than Reason, or the Bible.

As much in vain, perhaps, will they search ancient history for examples of the modern Slave-Trade. Too many nations enslaved the prisoners they took in war: But to go to nations with whom there is no war, who have no way provoked, without farther design of conquest, purely to catch inoffensive people, like wild beasts, for slaves, is an height of outrage against Humanity and Justice, that seems left by Heathen nations to be practised by pretended Christians. How shameful are all attempts to colour and excuse it!

As these people are not convicted of forfeiting freedom, they have still a natural, perfect right to it; and the Governments wherever they come should, in justice, set them free, and punish those who hold them in slavery.

So monstrous is the making and keeping them slaves at all, abstracted from the barbarous usage they suffer, and the many evils attending the practice; as selling husbands away from wives, children from parents, and from each other, in violation of sacred and natural ties; and opening the way for adulteries, incests, and many shocking consequences, for all which the guilty Masters must answer to the final Judge.

If the slavery of the parents be unjust, much more is their children's; if the parents were justly slaves, yet the children are born free; this is the natural, perfect right of all mankind; they owe nothing but a just recompence to those who bring them up: And as much less is commonly spent on them than others, they have a right, in justice, to be proportionably sooner free.

Certainly, one may, with as much reason and decency, plead for murder, robbery, lewdness, and barbarity, as for this practice: They are not more contrary to the natural dictates of Conscience, and feelings of Humanity; nay, they are all comprehended in it.

But the chief design of this paper is not to disprove it, which many have sufficiently done; but to intreat Americans to consider,

1. With what consistency, or decency they complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousands in slavery; and annually enslave many thousands more, without any pretence of authority, or claim upon them?

2. How just, how suitable to our crime is the punishment with which Providence threatens us? We have enslaved multitudes, and shed much innocent blood in doing it; and now are threatened with the same. And while other evils are confessed, and bewailed, why not this especially, and publicly; than which no other vice, if all others, has brought so much guilt on the land?

3. Whether, then, all ought not immediately to discontinue and renounce it,

with grief and abhorrence? Should not every society bear testimony against it, and account obstinate persisters in it bad men, enemies to their country, and exclude them from fellowship; as they often do for much lesser faults?

4. The great Question may be——What should be done with those who are enslaved already? To turn the old and infirm free, would be injustice and cruelty; they who enjoyed the labours of their better days should keep, and treat them humanely. As to the rest, let prudent men, with the assistance of legislatures, determine what is practicable for masters, and best for them. Perhaps some could give them lands upon reasonable rent; some employing them in their labour still, might give them some reasonable allowances for it; so as all may have some property, and fruits of their labours at their own disposal, and be encouraged to industry; the family may live together, and enjoy the natural satisfaction of exercising relative affections and duties, with civil protection, and other advantages, like fellow men. Perhaps they might sometime form useful barrier settlements on the frontiers. Thus they may become interested in the public welfare, and assist in promoting it; instead of being dangerous, as now they are, should any enemy promise them a better condition.

5. The past treatment of Africans must naturally fill them with abhorrence of Christians; lead them to think our religion would make them more inhuman savages, if they embraced it; thus the gain of that trade has been pursued in opposition to the Redeemer's cause, and the happiness of men: Are we not, therefore, bound in duty to him and to them to repair these injuries, as far as possible, by taking some proper measures to instruct, not only the slaves here, but the Africans in their own countries? Primitive Christians laboured always to spread their *Divine Religion*; and this is equally our duty while there is an Heathen nation: But what singular obligations are we under to these injured people!

These are the sentiments of——JUSTICE, and HUMANITY.

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\* *Dr. Ames, Baxter, Durham, Lock, Carmichael, Hutcheson, Montesque, and Blackston, Wallis, &c. &c.*  
*Bishop of Gloucester.*

## LEMUEL HAYNES

### from *Liberty Further Extended: Or Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-Keeping*

Abandoned as an infant by his black father and white mother in West Hartford, Connecticut, Lemuel Haynes (1753–1833) was raised in the Massachusetts household of Deacon David Rose. Haynes grew to be a bookish and religious man who, after fighting in the American Revolution, went on to become the first ordained black minister in America. He would spend thirty years, from 1788 to 1818, as minister of a congregation in West Rutland, Vermont, until factional squabbles led to his dismissal, and he finished out his days as a minister in nearby Granville, New York. As a young man engaged in the Revolutionary War, and perhaps inspired by the larger prospects of freedom that the fight for independence was opening up, Haynes composed this essay arguing for the intrinsic illegality of slavery. Whether inhibited by second thoughts about its possible reception or distracted by events of the war, Haynes never published it. The manuscript was not printed until 1983.

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We hold these truths to be self-Evident, that all men are created Equal, that they are Endowed By their Creator with Ceertain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happyness.

*Congress*

I know that those that are concerned in the Slave-trade, Do pretend to Bring arguments in vindication of their practise; yet if we give them a candid Examination, we shall find them (Even those of the most cogent kind) to be Essencially Deficient. We live in a day wherein *Liberty & freedom* is the subject of many millions Concern; and the important Struggle hath alread caused great Effusion of Blood; men seem to manifest the most sanguine resolution not to Let their natural rights go without their Lives go with them; a resolution, one would

think Every one that has the Least Love to his country, or futer posterity, would fully confide in, yet while we are so zelous to maintain, and foster our own invaded rights, it cannot be tho't impertinent for us Candidly to reflect on our own conduct, and I doubt not But that we shall find that subsisting in the midst of us, that may with propriety be stiled *Opression*, nay, much greater oppression, than that which Englishmen seem so much to spurn at. I mean an oppression which they, themselves, impose upon others.

It is not my Business to Enquire into Every particular practise, that is practised in this Land, that may come under this Odeus Character; But what I have in view, is humbly to offer som free thoughts, on the practise of *Slave-keeping*. Opression, is not spoken of, nor ranked in the sacred oracles, among the Least of those sins, that are the procureing Caus of those signal Judgments, which god is pleas'd to bring upon the Children of men. Therefore let us attend. I mean to write with freedom, yet with the greatest Submission.

And the main proposition, which I intend for some Breif illustration is this, Namely, That an *African*, or, in other terms, *that a Negro may Justly Challenge, and has an undeniable right to his Liberty: Consequently, the practise of Slave-keeping, which so much abounds in this Land is illicit.*

Every privilege that mankind Enjoy have their Origen from god; and whatever acts are passed in any Earthly Court, which are Derogatory to those Edicts that are passed in the Court of Heaven, the act is *void*. If I have a perticular previledg granted to me by god, and the act is not revoked nor the power that granted the benefit vacated, (as it is imposable but that god should Ever remain immutable) then he that would infringe upon my Benifit, assumes an unreasonable, and tyrannic power.

It hath pleased god to *make of one Blood all nations of men, for to dwell upon the face of the Earth*. Acts 17, 26. And as all are of one Species, so there are the same Laws, and aspiring principles placed in all nations; and the Effect that these Laws will produce, are Similar to Each other. Consequently we may suppose, that what is precious to one man, is precious to another, and what is

irksom, or intolarable to one man, is so to another, consider'd in a Law of Nature. Therefore we may reasonably Conclude, that Liberty is Equally as precious to a *Black man*, as it is to a *white one*, and Bondage Equally as intollarable to the one as it is to the other: Seeing it Effects the Laws of nature Equally as much in the one as it Does in the other. But, as I observed Before, those privileges that are granted to us By the Divine Being, no one has the Least right to take them from us without our consent; and there is Not the Least precept, or practise, in the Sacred Scriptures, that constitutes a Black man a Slave, any more than a white one.

(1776)

# SAMUEL HOPKINS

## *from A Dialogue, Concerning the Slavery of the Africans*

A Yale-educated theologian and reformer influenced by Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening, Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803) was a Congregationalist pastor in Newport, Rhode Island, from 1770 until his death. Perhaps prompted by awareness that Newport-based ships were heavily involved in the slave trade, Hopkins spoke out against slavery from the 1770s through the 1790s. Hopkins addressed this sixty-three-page tract to “the Honorable Members of the Continental Congress,” obviously hoping to move them to legislate against slavery. At the root of American hypocrisy in claiming liberty for its citizens and denying freedom to blacks, Hopkins believed, was “our education,” which “has filled us with strong prejudices against them.”

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The present situation of our public affairs, and our struggle for liberty, and the abundant conversation this occasions in all companies; while the poor negroes look-on and hear, what an aversion we have to slavery, and how much liberty is prized; they often hearing it declared publicly and in private, as the voice of all, that slavery is more to be dreaded than death, and we are resolved to live free or die, &c. &c. This, I say, necessarily leads them to attend to their own wretched situation, more than otherwise they could. They see themselves deprived of all liberty and property, and their children after them, to the latest posterity, subjected to the will of those who appear to have no feeling for their misery, and are guilty of many instances of hard heartedness and cruelty towards them, while they think themselves very kind; and therefore to make the least complaint, would be deemed the height of arrogance and abuse: And often, if they have a comparatively good master now, with constant dread they see a young one growing up, who bids fair to rule over them, or their children, with rigour.

They see the slavery the *Americans* dread as worse than death, is lighter than a feather, compared to their heavy doom; and may be called liberty and happiness, when contrasted with the most abject slavery and unutterable wretchedness to which they are subjected. And in this dark and dreadful situation, they look round, and find none to help—no pity—no hope! And when they observe all this cry and struggle for liberty for ourselves and children; and see themselves and their children wholly overlooked by us, and behold the *sons of liberty*, oppressing and tyrannizing over many thousands of poor blacks, who have as good a claim to liberty as themselves, they are shocked with the glaring inconsistency, and wonder they themselves do not see it. You must not therefore lay it to the few who are pleading the cause of these friendless distressed poor, that they are more uneasy than they used to be, in a sense of their wretched state, and from a desire of liberty; there is a more mighty and irresistible cause than this, viz. all that passes before them in our public struggle for liberty.

And why should the ministers of the gospel hold their peace, and not testify against this great and public iniquity, which we have reason to think, is one great cause of the public calamities we are now under? How can they refuse to plead the cause of these oppressed poor, against the cruel oppressor? They are commanded to lift up their voice, and cry aloud, and shew the people their sins, &c. Have we not reason to fear many of them have offended heaven by their silence thro' fear of the masters, who stand ready to make war against any one who attempts to deprive them of their slaves; or because they themselves have slaves, which they are not willing to give up?

Might they not fully expose this iniquity, and bear a constant testimony against it, in such a manner as would have no tendency to influence one servant to behave ill in any respect; by giving them at the same time proper cautions and directions?

A. It is impossible to free all our negroes; especially at once, and in present circumstances, without injuring them, at least, many of them, and the public, to a great degree. Why then is this urged so vehemently now? I think this proceeds

from a zeal, not according to knowledge.

B. If it be not a sin, an open flagrant violation of all the rules of justice and humanity, to hold these slaves in bondage, it is indeed folly to put ourselves to any trouble and expence, in order to free them. But if the contrary be true; if it be a sin of a crimson die, which is most particularly pointed out by the public calamities which have come upon us, from which we have no reason to expect deliverance till we put away the evil of our doings, this reformation cannot be urged with too much zeal, nor attempted too soon, whatever difficulties are in the way. The more and greater these are, the more zealous and active should we be in removing them. You had need to take care, lest from selfish motives, and a backwardness to give up what you unrighteously retain; you are joining with the slothful man to cry, *there is a lion in the way! A lion is in the streets!*<sup>\*</sup> While there are no insurmountable difficulties, but that which lies in your own heart.

No wonder there are many and great difficulties in reforming an evil practice of this kind, which has got such deep root by length of time, and is become so common. But it does not yet appear that they cannot be removed, by the united wisdom and strength of the *American* colonies, without any injury to the slaves, or disadvantage to the public. Yea, the contrary is most certain, as the slaves cannot be put into a more wretched situation, our selves being judges, and the community cannot take a more likely step to escape ruin, and obtain the smiles and protection of heaven. This matter ought doubtless to be attended to by the general assemblies, and continental and provincial congresses; and if they were as much united and engaged in devising ways and means to set at liberty these injured slaves as they are to defend themselves from tyranny, it would soon be effected. There were without doubt many difficulties and impediments in the way of the *Jews* liberating those of their brethren they had brought into bondage, in the days of *Jeremiah*. But when they were besieged by the *Chaldeans*, and this their sin was laid before them, and they were threatened with desolation if they did not reform: They broke thro' every difficulty, and set their servants at liberty.

And how great must have been the impediments, how many the seeming unanswerable objections, against reforming that gross violation of the divine command in *Ezra's* time, by their marrying strange wives of which so many of the *Jews* were guilty, and the hand of the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass! Yet the pious zeal of *Ezra* and those who joined with him, and their wisdom and indefatigable efforts conquered every obstacle, and brought them to a thorough reformation. Would not the like zeal, wisdom and resolution, think you, soon produce a reformation of this much greater abomination, by finding out an effectual method to put away all our slaves? Surely we have no reason to conclude it cannot be done, till we see a suitable zeal and resolution, among all orders of men, and answerable attempts are thoroughly made.

Let this iniquity be viewed in its true magnitude, and in the shocking light in which it has been set in this conversation, let the wretched case of the poor blacks be considered with proper pity and benevolence; together with the probable dreadful consequence to this land, of retaining them in bondage, and all objections against liberating them would vanish. The mountains that are now raised up in the imagination of many, would become a plain, and every difficulty surmounted.

*Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*, could not bear to think of letting the *Hebrews* go out free from the bondage to which they had reduced them; and it may be presumed, they had as many and as weighty objections against it, as can be thought of against freeing the slaves among us. Yet they were at length brought to drop them all, and willingly to send them out free, and to be ready to part with any thing they had, in order to promote it.\*

If many thousands of our children were slaves in *Algiers*, or any parts of the *Turkish* dominions, and there were but few families in the *American* colonies that had not some child, or near relation in that sad state, without any hope of freedom to them, or their children, unless there were some extraordinary exertion of the colonies to effect it; how would the attention of all the country be turned to it! How greatly should we be affected with it! Would it not become the

chief topic of conversation? Would any cost or labour be spared, or any difficulty or hazard be too great to go through, in order to obtain their freedom? If there were no greater difficulties than there are in the case before us; yea, if they were ten times greater, would they not be soon surmounted, as very inconsiderable! I know you, Sir, and every one else, *must* answer in the affirmative, without hesitation. And why are we not as much affected with the slavery of the many thousands of blacks among ourselves, whose miserable state is before our eyes? And why should we not be as much engaged to relieve them? The reason is obvious. 'Tis because they are *Negroes*, and fit for nothing but slaves; and we have been used to look on them in a mean, contemptible light; and our education has filled us with strong prejudices against them, and led us to consider them, not as our brethren, or in any degree on a level with us; but as quite another species of animals, made only to serve us and our children; and as happy in bondage, as in any other state. This has banished all attention to the injustice that is done them, and any proper sense of their misery, or the exercise of benevolence towards them. If we could only divest ourselves of these strong prejudices, which have insensibly fixed on our minds, and consider them as, by nature, and by right, on a level with our brethren and children, and those of our neighbours, and had that benevolence, which loves our neighbour as ourselves, and is agreeable to truth and righteousness, we should begin to feel towards them, in some measure at least, as we should towards our children and neighbours in the case above supposed, and be as much engaged for their relief.

If parents have a son pressed on board a king's ship, how greatly are they affected with it! They are filled with grief and distress, and will cheerfully be at almost any cost and pains to procure his liberty: and we wonder not at it, but think their exercises and engagedness for his deliverance very just, and stand ready to condemn him who has no feelings for them and their son, and is not ready to afford all the assistance in his power, in order to recover him. At the same time we behold vast numbers of blacks among us, torn from their native country, and all their relations, not to serve on board a man of war for a few

years, but to be abject, despised slaves for life, and their children after them; and yet have not the least feelings for them, or desire of their freedom! These very parents perhaps, have a number of Negro slaves, on whom they have not the least pity; and stand ready highly to resent it, if any one espouses their cause so much as to propose they should be set at liberty. What reason for this partiality? Ought this so to be? An impartial person, who is not under the prejudices of interest, education and custom, is shocked with it beyond all expression. The poor Negroes have sense enough to see and feel it, but have no friend to speak a word for them; none to whom they may complain.

(1776)

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\* *Prov.* 26. 13.

\* It may be well worthy our serious consideration, whether we have not reason to fear the hand of God, which is now stretched out against us, will lie upon us, and the strokes grow heavier, unless we reform this iniquity, so clearly pointed out by the particular manner in which God is correcting us; and whether we have any reason to hope or pray for deliverance, till this reformation takes place.

# JOEL BARLOW

from *The Prospect of Peace*;  
from *The Columbiad*

A Yale graduate and chaplain during the Revolutionary War, Joel Barlow (1754–1812) was an American patriot who went on to a career in law and business while serving the country as a diplomat and statesman. He also became one of America’s leading poets, self-consciously striving from his youth to create a national literature. Public service took its toll: he died in Europe on a diplomatic mission during the Napoleonic wars. In July 1778, invited to address the Yale commencement, Barlow delivered “The Prospect of Peace,” with its audacious vision of a yet unborn nation where slavery would not exist. In the excerpt from *The Columbiad*, an epic modeled on classical precursors, Barlow uses the voice of Atlas (the mythical guardian of Africa) to denounce racial slavery. His closing prophecy darkly foreshadows the themes of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address almost sixty years later.

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from *The Prospect of Peace*

No grasping lord shall grind the neighbouring poor,  
Starve numerous vassals to increase his store;  
No cringing slave shall at his presence bend,  
Shrink at his frown, and at his nod attend;  
Afric’s unhappy children, now no more  
Shall feel the cruel chains they felt before,  
But every State in this just mean agree,  
To bless mankind, and set th’ oppressed free.  
Then, rapt in transport, each exulting slave  
Shall taste that Boon which God and nature gave,  
And, fir’d with virtue, join the common cause,  
Protect our freedom and enjoy our laws

PROTECT OUR FREEDOM AND ENJOY OUR LAWS.

(July 23, 1778)

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from *The Columbiad*

Enslave my tribes! what, half mankind imban,  
Then read, expound, enforce the rights of man!  
Prove plain and clear how nature's hand of old  
Cast all men equal in her human mould!  
Their fibres, feelings, reasoning powers the same,  
Like wants await them, like desires inflame.  
Thro former times with learned book they tread,  
Revise past ages and rejudge the dead,  
Write, speak, avenge, for ancient sufferings feel,  
Impale each tyrant on their pens of steel,  
Declare how freemen can a world create,  
And slaves and masters ruin every state.—  
Enslave my tribes! and think, with dumb disdain,  
To scape this arm and prove my vengeance vain!  
But look! methinks beneath my foot I ken  
A few chain'd things that seem no longer men;  
Thy sons perchance! whom Barbary's coast can tell  
The sweets of that loved scourge they wield so well.  
Link'd in a line, beneath the driver's goad,  
See how they stagger with their lifted load;  
The shoulder'd rock, just wrencht from off my hill  
And wet with drops their straining orbs distil,  
Galls, grinds them sore, along the rampart led,  
And the chain clanking counts the steps they tread.  
By night close belted in the haggard's gloom

By night close bolted in the bagmo's gloom,  
Think how they ponder on their dreadful doom,  
Recal the tender sire, the weeping bride,  
The home, far sunder'd by a waste of tide,  
Brood all the ties that once endear'd them there,  
But now, strung stronger, edge their keen despair.  
Till here a fouler fiend arrests their pace:  
Plague, with his burning breath and bloated face,  
With saffron eyes that thro the dungeon shine,  
And the black tumors bursting from the groin,  
Stalks o'er the slave; who, cowering on the sod,  
Shrinks from the Demon and invokes his God,  
Sucks hot contagion with his quivering breath,  
And, rack'd with rending torture, sinks in death.  
Nor shall these pangs atone the nation's crime;  
Far heavier vengeance, in the march of time,  
Attends them still; if still they dare debase  
And hold intrall'd the millions of my race;  
A vengeance that shall shake the world's deep frame,  
That heaven abhors and hell might shrink to name.

(1807)

# ANTHONY BENEZET

## *Observations on Slavery;* from *Short Observations on Slavery*

The leading abolitionist in America in the eighteenth century, Benezet campaigned tirelessly, from his first publication in 1759 (see pp. 28–33) through the many other works he produced up to his death in 1784. The “Observations on Slavery” included in his *Serious Considerations* constitutes a lengthy, evidence-based indictment of slavery. In his *Short Observations*, Benezet argues for the first time from a self-consciously American, rather than universal, point of view, harkening back to revolutionary statements issued by the Continental Congress in 1775. Benezet concludes that it must be “a matter of astonishment, to the whole world,” that the self-proclaimed freedom-loving United States have not yet enacted “a general abolition of slavery.”

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### *Observations on Slavery*

**T**HE SLAVERY which now so largely subsists in the American Colonies, is another mighty evil, which proceeds from the same corrupt root as War; for, however, it may be granted that some, otherwise, well disposed people in different places, particularly in these provinces, at first fell into the practice of buying and keeping Slaves, thro’ inadvertency, or by the example of others; yet in the generality it sprang from an unwarrantable desire of gain, a lust for amassing wealth, and in the pride of their heart, holding an uncontrollable power over their fellow-men. The observation which the Apostle makes on War, may well be applied to those who compelled their fellow-men to become their slaves, *they lusted, for wealth and power and desired to have, that they might consume it upon their lusts.*

It is a very afflictive consideration, that notwithstanding the rights and

liberties of mankind have been so much the object of publick notice, yet the same corrupt principles still maintain their power in the minds of most Slave Holders. Indeed nothing can more clearly and positively militate against the slavery of the Negroes, than the several declarations lately published, with so great an appearance of solemnity, thro' all the colonies, viz. "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And "That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which when they enter into a state of society they cannot by any compact, deprive or divert their property, namely the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." That after these, and other declarations of the same kind, have been so publickly made to the world, Slavery should continue in its full force in the Colonies; and even in some cases, its bands should, by Law, be farther established,<sup>\*</sup> is a great aggravation of that guilt which has so long lain upon America; and which together with the blood of the Native Indians, so daringly spilt,<sup>†</sup> is likely to be one of the principal causes of those heavy judgments, which are now so sensibly displayed over the Colonies. Perhaps nothing will so sensibly teach us to feel for the affliction of the oppressed Africans, as that ourselves partake of the same cup of distress, we have so long been instrumental in causing them to drink. If we look back to early times, and bring to our remembrance what we have heard from our fathers, relating to the first introduction of Negroes amongst us, we shall have reason to conclude, that there were but few of those concerned in those purchases, who were not in some measure acquainted with the dreadful calamities introduced in Guinea, in order to procure Slaves for the American Market. They had doubtless heard something of these accounts; they saw their afflicted fellow-men, after being by the ravages of war deprived of all property, and cruelly rent from every tender connection in their native land, brought to America, and there sold like beasts for burden or slaughter; yet we have too

much reason to conclude that but little sympathy was extended to them, few, very few, even amongst professors, endeavoured, on their behalf, “*To seek judgment, to relieve the oppressed; to plead for the fatherless, and to judge for the widow; few mourned with those that mourned;*” people saw their affliction and heard the doleful story of their particular cases with little or no fellow feeling, indifferency prevailed; there was too much of a joining in spirit with those who “*had slain with the sword, and had carried into captivity,*” arising from a secret satisfaction, at the prospect of having an opportunity, thro’ the Slaves labour, of encreasing their substance, and amassing much wealth, In the acquirement and possession of which, a proper regard not being had, “*to the will of the Lord that reigneth,*” there has been sent a *curse* upon what they esteemed a *blessing*; their riches have proved as wings to raise their children above truth and real happiness: The offspring of many of these are still living in idleness and pride; whilst others are rioting in dissipation and luxury. If the good and just father of mankind is now arisen to plead the cause of the oppressed Africans, and to bring the matter home to ourselves; who can say, what doest thou. Will not the Americans, amongst whom the establishment of religious as well as civil liberty is the present and great object of consideration and debate, be a witness against themselves, so long as they continue to keep their Fellow-Inhabitants in such grievous circumstances, whereby they are not only deprived of their liberty, but of all property and indeed of every right whatsoever?

From the experience of others, we may deduce a proper application to ourselves: We read *Jerm. xxxiv, 8.* that the Jewish people, a little before the Babylonian Captivity, acknowledged the duty which lay upon them, of proclaiming liberty to those of their brethren who had been forceably kept in servitude, beyond the term limited by the Mosaic Law; for the performance of which they had made a covenant before the Lord; but upon the danger appearing to be over, by the retreat of the king of Babylon, they caused the servants and hand-maids whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them again into subjection. Whereupon the prophet pronounces the judgment, threatned by the

Lord, against those who had thus falsified their covenant, *Chap.* xxxiv, 11. “Ye have made a covenant before me, but ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his hand-maid—to return and brought them into subjection.” Therefore, thus saith the Lord, “Ye have not hearkned unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour; behold I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword the pestilence and the famine.”

Here it may not be necessary to repeat what has been so fully declared in several modern publications, of the inconsistency of slavery with every right of mankind, with every feeling of humanity, and every precept of Christianity; nor to point out its inconsistency with the welfare, peace and prosperity of every country, in proportion as it prevails; what grievous sufferings it brings on the poor Negroes; but more especially what a train of fatal vices it produces in their lordly oppressors and their unhappy offspring. Nevertheless for the sake of some who have not met with, or fully considered those former publications, and in hopes that some who are still active in support of slavery, may be induced to consider their ways, and become more wise, the following substance of an address or expostulation made by a sensible Author, to the several ranks of persons most immediately concerned in the trade, is now republished.

“And, first, to the Captains employed in this trade. Most of you know the country of Guinea, perhaps now by your means, part of it is become a dreary uncultivated wilderness; the inhabitants being murdered or carried away, so that there are few left to till the ground; but you know, or have heard, how populous, how fruitful, how pleasant it was a few years ago. You know the people were not stupid, not wanting in sense, considering the few means of improvement they enjoyed. Neither did you find them savage, treacherous, or unkind to strangers. On the contrary they were in most parts a sensible and ingenious people; kind and friendly, and generally just in their dealings. Such are the men whom you hire their own countrymen, to tear away from this lovely country; part by stealth, part by force, part made captives in those wars which

you raise or foment on purpose. You have seen them torn away, children from their parents, parents from their children: Husbands from their wives, wives from their beloved husbands; brethren and sisters from each other. You have dragged them who had never done you any wrong, perhaps in chains, from their native shore. You have forced them into your ships, like an herd of swine,\* them who had souls immortal as your own. You have stowed them together as close as ever they could lie, without any regard either to decency or conveniency—— And when many of them had been poisoned by foul air, or had sunk under various hardships, *you have seen their remains delivered to the deep, till the sea should give up his dead.* You have carried the survivors into the vilest slavery, never to end but with life: Such slavery as is not found among the Turks at Algiers, no, nor among the heathens in America.

May I speak plainly to you? I must. Love constrains me: Love to you, as well, as those you are concerned with. Is there a God? You know there is. Is he a just God? Then there must be a state of retribution: A state wherein the just God will reward every man according to his work. Then what reward will he render to you. O think betimes! before you drop in eternity: Think how, “He shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.” Are you a man? Then you should have a human heart. But have you indeed? What is your heart made of? Is there no such principle as compassion there? Do you never feel another’s pain? Have you no sympathy? No sense of human woe? No pity for the miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breast, or the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures. Was you a stone or a brute? Did you look upon them with the eyes of a tiger? When you squeezed the agonizing creatures down in the ship, or when you threw their poor mangled remains into the sea, had you no relenting? Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast? Do you feel no relenting now? If you do not, you must go on, till the measure of your iniquities is full. Then will the great God deal with you, as you have dealt with them, and require all their blood at your hands. And at that day it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you:

But if your heart does relent; though in a small degree, know it is a call from the God of love. And to-day, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart—To-day resolve, God being your helper to escape for your life—Regard not money: All that a man hath will he give for his life. Whatever you lose, lose not your Soul; nothing can countervail that loss. Immediately quit the horrid trade: At all events be an honest man.

This equally concerns every merchant who is engaged in the Slave-trade. It is you that induce the African villain to sell his countrymen; and in order thereto, to steal, rob, murder men, women and children without number: By enabling the English villain to pay him for so doing; whom you over pay for his execrable labour. It is your money, that is the spring of all, that impowers him to go on, so that whatever he or the African does in this matter, is all your act and deed. And is your conscience quite reconciled to this? Does it never reproach you at all? Has gold entirely blinded your eyes and stupified your heart? Can you see, can you feel no harm therein? Is it doing as you would be done to? Make the case your own. “Master! (said a Slave at Liverpool to the merchant that owned him) what if some of my countrymen were to come here, and take away my mistress, and master Tommy and master Billy, and carry them into our country and make them slaves, how would you like it?” His answer was worthy of a man: “I will never buy a slave more while I live.” O let his resolution be yours! Have no more any part in this detestable business. Instantly leave it to those unfeeling wretches, “Who laugh at humanity and compassion.”

And this equally concerns every Person who has an estate in our American plantations: Yea all Slave-holders of whatever rank and degree; seeing menbuyers are exactly on a level with menstealers. Indeed you say, “I pay honestly for my goods; and I am not concerned to know how they are come by.” Nay, but you are: You are deeply concerned, to know that they are not stolen: Otherwise you are partaker with a thief, and are not a jot honestier than him. But you know they are not honestly come by: You know they are procured by means nothing near so innocent as picking of pockets, house breaking, or robbery upon

the highway. You know they are procured by a deliberate series of more complicated villainy, (of fraud, robbery and murder,) than was ever practised either by Mahometans or Pagans; in particular by murders of all kinds; by the blood of the innocent poured upon the ground like water. Now it is your money that pays the merchant, and thro' him the captain and African butchers. You therefore are guilty: Yea, principally guilty, of all these frauds, robberies, and murders. You are the spring that puts all the rest in motion; they would not stir a step without you.—Therefore the blood of all these wretches, who die before their time, whether in their country or else where, lies upon your head. The blood of thy brother, (for whether thou wilt believe it or no, such he is in the sight of him that made him) crieth against thee from the earth, from the ship and from the waters. O! what ever it cost, put a stop to its cry, before it be too late. Instantly, at any price, were it the half of thy goods, deliver thyself from blood guiltiness! Thy hands, thy bed, thy furniture, thy house, thy land, are at present stained with blood. Surely it is enough; accumulate no more guilt: Spill no more the blood of the innocent! Do not hire another to shed blood! Do not pay him for doing it! Whether thou art a christian or no, shew thy self a man; be not more savage than a lion or a bear.

Perhaps thou wilt say, “I do not buy any negroes: I only use those left me by my father.” But is it enough to satisfy your own conscience! Had your father, have you, has any man living, a right to use another as a slave? It cannot be, even setting revelation aside. It cannot be, that either war, or contract, can give any man, such a property in another as he has in his sheep and oxen: Much less is it possible, that any child of man, should ever be born a slave. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right, which he derives from the law of nature. If therefore you have any regard to justice, (to say nothing of mercy, nor of the revealed law of God,) render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with

ships, chains and all compulsion. Be gentle towards all men. And see that you invariably do unto every one, as you would he should do unto you.

(1778)

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from *Short Observations on Slavery*,

Introductory to some EXTRACTS from the writing of the ABBE RAYNAL, on that important Subject.

**W**HEN THE General Congress first assembled, they prefaced the reason of their separation from Great Britain, with the following sentence, ‘We hold these truths to be self evident, That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights; that amongst these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ And in the declaration of the 6th of July 1775, Congress have in very forcible language declared their opinion ‘that it was contrary to the intent of the Divine Author of our existence, that a part of the human kind should hold an absolute property and unbounded power over others, marked out by infinite goodness and wisdom, as the objects of a Legal Domination.—That reverence for our great Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense, must convince all those who reflect upon the subject, that Government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind, and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end.’ As these reflections apply to human nature in general, however diversified by colour and other distinctions, how far the situation of the Negroes still kept in Slavery, on this continent is consonant thereto, is a matter which calls for the most serious attention of all those who, indeed believe, in a general Providence, and that the good Author of our being multiplies his blessings in proportion as we render ourselves worthy by the practice of Justice and Love. Hence it becomes a matter of the utmost weight to the Americans, in a peculiar manner, duly to consider

how far they can justify a conduct so abhorrent from these sacred truths as that of dragging these oppressed Strangers from their native land, and all those tender connections, which we hold so dear; the violence exercised over them, to oblige them to do the servile offices of life, for those whose superiority has been obtained by an illegal force; under the sanction of unjust laws, laws framed to hold in bondage, a bondage often rigorous and cruel, a people over whom they have not the least shadow of right; a bondage without condition, without end, and without appeal. Under this prospect of the situation of these Black People, must not every sensible, feeling heart be filled with sympathy and fearful apprehensions. Well may the words of Scripture be applied to them, "Behold the tears of the oppressed and they had no comforter;" and indeed, what refuge, what appeal can a slave have, when cruelly used by an inconsiderate master, or by a hard-hearted overseer. How inconsistent is this abhorrent practice, with every idea of Liberty, every principle of humanity. Nay is it not of publick notoriety that those masters or overseers, who by ill usage, or by an unrelenting scourge, have brought their Slaves to an untimely end, have scarce been called to any account, by those who ought not to bear the sword in vain: Scarce an instance can be mentioned even of any man's being capitally arraigned for the wilful murder of a slave. Nay, dreadful to mention, do not the laws in some of the islands, and frequent advertisements in the Southern States, in effect encourage the murder of a Negroe, who has absented himself for a certain time from his master's service, by giving a reward greater for the poor fugitive's head than for bringing him home alive.

When this unjust and cruel treatment of the Negroes is considered, and brought to the test of the above declarations, will it not appear wonderfully inconsistent and a matter of astonishment, to the whole world, that an alteration of conduct towards them, has not yet taken place, preparatory to a general abolition of Slavery on the continent; a step which every principle of honour, reason, and humanity call for, and which may well be effected in such a manner as will conduce to the happiness of the master as well as the slave. But such is

the force of the habitual depravity, when supported by the practice of great numbers, especially in that which flatters our interest and soothes our passions, that the most striking instances of oppression and cruelty, such as would make a stranger, at the first glance, shudder, lose all their force upon minds accustomed, from their infancy, to see oppression reign uncontrouled; these can see the galling chains, the cruel stripes; the dying groan without pain; and without reflection or pity, can disregard the heart-rending suffering, which many of these their afflicted fellow-men undergo,\* before the remembrance of past enjoyments and their native vigour and love of liberty, can be broke down into tame submission to the absolute will of their lordly oppressors. No plea of difficulty ought to prevent our speedily doing that justice to these oppressed people, which the nature of their several cases will allow, such as declaring their offspring free at a suitable age; and instead of extorting their service by severity of discipline, make way for their freedom, by giving them such an interest in their own labour as may stir them up to the utmost exertion of their vigour and industry, and encourage them to employ those talents and ingenuity, which are now depressed by slavery, for the general good; thus from grudging dangerous Slaves they may become willing minded labourers, equally concerned with their masters in promoting the safety and happiness of their country. It will be when measures of this kind take place in America, and when a final end is put to a horrible Slave Trade in England, that both countries may expect to flourish, under the blessing of Him who delights in Justice and Mercy; and has promised to reward every country, as well as individual, according to their deeds.

(1781)

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\* By a Law of the Province of North Carolina, May 1777. All Slaves who have been set free, except by license first obtained from the County court, for what said court shall judge to be a meritorious service, shall be seized and sold by the sheriff to the highest bidder.

‡ Many of the Indians in this and the neighbouring provinces have at different time been treacherously and cruelly murdered, particularly in the town of Lancaster and the neighbouring manor of which little judicial inquiry has been made, in order to bring the murderers to justice.

\* *The following Relation is inserted at the request of the Author.*

“That I may contribute all in my power towards the good of mankind, by inspiring any of its individuals with a suitable abhorrence for that detestable practice of trading in our Fellow Creatures, and in some measure atone for my neglect of duty as a christian, in engaging in that wicked traffic. I offer to their serious consideration, some few occurrences of which I was an eye witness. That being struck with the wretched and affecting scene, they may foster that humane principle, which is the noble and distinguished characteristic of man.

“About the Year 1749: I sailed from Liverpool to the coast of Guinea, sometime after our arrival, I was ordered to go up the country a considerable distance, upon having notice from one of the Negro Kings, that he had a parcel of Slaves to dispose of, I received my instructions and went, carrying with me an account of such goods we had on board, to exchange for the Slaves we intended to purchase; upon being introduced, I presented him with a small case of Spirits, a Gun, and some trifles, which having accepted, and understood by an interpreter what goods we had, the next day was appointed for viewing the Slaves; we found about two hundred confined in one place. But hear how shall I relate the affecting sight I there beheld, the silent sorrow which appeared in the countenance of the afflicted father, and the painful anguish of the tender mother, expecting to be forever separated from their tender offspring; the distressed maid wringing her hands in presage of her future wretchedness, and the general cry of the innocent, from a fearful apprehension of the perpetual slavery to which they were doomed. I purchased eleven, who I conducted ty'd, two and two to our ship. Being but a small vessel (ninety ton) we soon purchased our cargo, consisting of one hundred and seventy Slaves, whom thou may'st reader range in thy view, as they were shackled two and two together, pent up within the narrow confines of the main deck, with the complicated distress of sickness, chains and contempt; deprived of every fond and social tie and in a great measure reduced to a state of desparation. We had not been a fortnight at Sea, before the fatal consequence of this despair appeared. They formed a design of recovering their natural right, liberty, by raising and murdering every man on board; but the goodness of the Almighty rendered their scheme abortive and his mercy spared us to have time to repent: The plot was discovered; the ringleader tied by the two thumbs over the barricado

door, at Sun-rise received a number of lashes, in this situation he remained till Sun-set, exposed to the insults and barbarity of the brutal crew of Sailors, with full leave to exercise their cruelty at pleasure: The consequence was, that next morning the miserable sufferer was found dead, flead from the shoulders to the waist. The next victim was a youth who, from too strong a sense of his misery refused nourishment and died disregarded and unnoticed, till the hogs had fed on part of his flesh.”

\* A striking instance of this kind appeared in the case of a NEGROE, residing near PHILADELPHIA. From his first arrival he appeared thoughtful and dejected, frequently dropping tears, when fondling his master’s children; the cause of which was not known till he was able to be understood, when he gave the following account. That he had a wife and children in his own country, that some of these being sick, he went in the night time to fetch water at a spring, where he was, violently, seized and carried away, by persons who lay in wait to catch men; from whence he was transported to AMERICA; that the remembrance of his family and friends, whom he never expected to see any more, were the principal cause of his dejection and grief. Now can any whose mind is not rendered quite obdurate by the practice of oppression, or the love of gain, hear this relation without being affected with sympathy and sorrow; and doubtless the case of many of these afflicted people will be found to be attended with circumstances equally tragical and aggravating. And if we enquire of those Negroes who were brought from their native country, when children, we shall find many of them have been stolen away, when abroad from their parents on the roads, or watching their corn fields. Now TENDER PARENTS; and all who are real friends of LIBERTY; and you who are willing to read the book of Conscience, and those that are learned in the law, what can you say to these deplorable cases? When and how have these oppressed strangers forfeited their liberty; must not your heart assent to the declaration publicly made by a respectable member of the Assembly of Virginia? ‘That there cannot be in nature, there is not in history, an instance in which every right of men is more flagrantly violated.’ Does not justice loudly call for LIBERTY being restored to them? Is it not the duty of every dispenser of justice, who is not forgetful of his own humanity, to remember that they are men, and to declare them free. Where evils of such magnitude are neither inquired into nor redressed by those whose duty it is, ‘to seek judgment, to relieve the oppressed, to judge for the fatherless, and plead for the widow,’ Isa. 1. 17. what can be expected but that the groans and cries of these sufferers will reach HEAVEN, and what shall ye do ‘when GOD riseth up, and when he visiteth.’ What will ye answer him? Did not he that made them make us; and did not one fashion us in the womb. Job. xxxi. 14.

# JUPITER HAMMON

## *from A Dialogue, intitled, The Kind Master and the Dutiful Servant*

A household slave in Queens Village, Long Island (now part of New York City), Jupiter Hammon (1711–c. 1800) was the first published black poet (1761) in American history. With his poetic tribute to Phillis Wheatley in 1778, “An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatly, Ethiopian Poetess,” in which one black writer publicly paid homage to another, Hammon initiated a consciously African American literary tradition. In this master/servant dialogue, Hammon carefully but forcefully expresses resistance to the master on theological grounds, not daring, as a slave, to utter a claim based on civil or natural rights.

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MASTER.

1. Come my servant, follow me,  
According to thy place;  
And surely God will be with thee,  
And send thee heav'nly grace.

SERVANT.

2. Dear Master, I will follow thee,  
According to thy word,  
And pray that God may be with me,  
And save thee in the Lord.

MASTER.

3. My Servant, lovely is the Lord,  
And blest those servants be,  
That truly love his holy word,  
And thus will follow me.

SERVANT.

4. Dear Master, that's my whole delight,  
Thy pleasure for to do;  
As far as grace and truth's in sight,  
Thus far I'll surely go.

MASTER.

5. My Servant, grace proceeds from God,  
And truth should be with thee;  
Whence e'er you find it in his word,  
Thus far come follow me.

SERVANT.

6. Dear Master, now without controul,  
I quickly follow thee;  
And pray that God would bless thy soul,  
His heav'nly place to see.

MASTER.

7. My Servant, Heaven is high above,  
Yea, higher than the sky:  
I pray that God would grant his love,  
Come follow me thereby.

SERVANT.

8. Dear Master, now I'll follow thee,  
And trust upon the Lord;  
The only safety that I see,  
Is Jesus's holy word.

MASTER

9. My Servant, follow Jesus now,  
Our great victorious King;  
Who governs all both high and low,  
And searches things within.

SERVANT.

10. Dear Master I will follow thee,  
When praying to our King;  
It is the Lamb I plainly see,  
Invites the sinner in.

MASTER.

11. My Servant, we are sinners all,  
But follow after grace;  
I pray that God would bless thy soul,  
And fill thy heart with grace.

SERVANT.

12. Dear Master I shall follow then,  
The voice of my great King;  
As standing on some distant land,  
Inviting sinners in.

MASTER.

13. My Servant we must all appear,  
And follow then our King;  
For sure he'll stand where sinners are,  
To take true converts in.

SERVANT.

14. Dear Master, now if Jesus calle

14. Dear Master, now it Jesus calls,  
And sends his summons in;  
We'll follow saints and angels all,  
And come unto our King.

MASTER.

15. My Servant now come pray to God,  
Consider well his call;  
Strive to obey his holy word,  
That Christ may love us all.

*A LINE on the present WAR.*

SERVANT.

16. Dear Master, now it is a time,  
A time of great distress;  
We'll follow after things divine,  
And pray for happiness.

MASTER.

17. Then will the happy day appear,  
That virtue shall increase;  
Lay up the sword and drop the spear,  
And nations seek for peace.

SERVANT.

18. Then shall we see the happy end,  
Tho' still in some distress;  
That distant foes shall act like friends,  
And leave their wickedness.

MASTER.

19. We pray that God would give us grace,  
And make us humble too;  
Let ev'ry nation seek for peace,  
And virtue make a show.

SERVANT.

20. Then we shall see the happy day,  
That virtue is in power;  
Each holy act shall have its sway,  
Extend from shore to shore.

MASTER.

21. This is the work of God's own hand,  
We see by precepts given;  
To relieve distress and save the land,  
Must be the pow'r of heav'n.

SERVANT.

22. Now glory be unto our God,  
Let ev'ry nation sing;  
Strive to obey his holy word,  
That Christ may take them in.

MASTER.

23. Where endless joys shall never cease,  
Blest Angels constant sing;  
The glory of their God increase,  
Hallelujahs to their King.

SERVANT.

24. Thus the Dialogue shall end,  
Strive to obey the word;

When ev'ry nation act like friends,  
Shall be the sons of God.

25. Believe me now my Christian friends,  
Believe your friend call'd H A M M O N:  
You cannot to your God attend,  
And serve the God of Mammon.

(1782)

# ANONYMOUS

## *Shandyism*

Written in the streaming, free-associative style of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), this anonymous piece of fiction was published in the March 23, 1786 issue of *The New-Haven Gazette, and the Connecticut Magazine*. The author may have been as attracted to Sterne for his well-known hatred of slavery as for his innovative fictional technique.

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SO WE went to the coffee-house—just as we had finished our bottle, a sea-faring man made his appearance. He was surrounded with a multitude of persons who persecuted him with interrogatories——

This person was a Captain of a ship in the

### NEGRO TRADE.

From the conversation which passed between the Captain and those that surrounded him, I discovered that the cruelties incidental to the slave-trade were not confined to the unhappy negroes, but affected the instruments who carried it on——

The Captain before me had gone out mate, the crew had been thirty; three only of which returned.——

He had a long scroll in his hand. It was a list of the original crew——

Where is my daddy? asked an infant—dead.

My husband? inquired a matron—dead.

My brother? interrogated a girl—dead.

In this manner he ran through the list—One had died of a fever, another had been murdered on shore, several had been killed by slaves who had mutinied

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When the friends of the deceased had retired the Captain gave his

employers an account of his voyage——

Three ships had gone out together—they had taken in their quantity of slaves when a hard gale drove two of them on shore——

One was boarded by the negroes, and the whole crew massacred.

On board the other a similar attempt was made, but the whites having got command of the small arms, fired into the hold, and made dreadful slaughter. Thus circumstanced, one of the negroes in despair, who had discovered where the powder lay, rushed into the room, set fire to a powder barrel, and blew the vessel to pieces.

The Captain ran over these occurrences of horror with a deal of philosophic calmness; but it was not so with his employers, they frequently interrupted his detail with imprecations against the damned blacks.

And why is all this cruelty practiced.

That we may have sugar to sweeten tea that debilitates us.

Rum to make punch to intoxicate us.

And indigo to die our cloths—in short thousands are made wretched—nations are dragged into slavery, to supply the luxuries of their fellow creatures.

But I will leave my friend the surgeon——We have shook hands and parted——and I am in a stage, and it is evening——and an old woman sits before me, who often applies a wicker bottle to her mouth, and sleeps and wakes, and sips and sleeps again. She has done so for the last five miles, but seems at present thoroughly composed. So I will have a little chat with her niece——

# GEORGE WASHINGTON

## *Letter to Robert Morris, April 12, 1786; from Last Will and Testament*

George Washington (1732–1799) exemplifies the dilemma of slave-holding founders who came to hate slavery and to agonize over how it should end. Until the Revolutionary War a plantation owner with conventional proslavery attitudes, Washington may have begun to change his views after his encounter with Phillis Wheatley (who wrote a tribute to him in 1775) and his experience with black troops in the war (thousands fought on the American side). In 1786 he wrote various letters—such as this one to Robert Morris, the financier and patriot—in which Washington expressed a wish to see slavery abolished. He continued to own slaves himself and uphold the laws of property in slaves to the end of his life, when he devoted the second and by far the longest provision of his will to freeing those slaves he owned himself (others were still the property of his wife, and legally untouchable) and to funding their care and education so that they might become self-sufficient.

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### *Letter to Robert Morris*

Mt Vernon 12th April 1786

Dr Sir,

I give you the trouble of this letter at the instance of Mr Dalby of Alexandria; who is called to Philadelphia to attend what he conceives to be a vexatious law-suit respecting a slave of his, which a Society of Quakers in the City (formed for such purposes) have attempted to liberate. The merits of this case will no doubt appear upon trial; but from Mr Dalby's state of the matter, it should seem that this Society is not only acting repugnant to justice so far as its conduct concerns strangers, but, in my opinion extremely impolitickly with respect to the State—the City in particular; & without being able (but by Acts of

tyranny & oppression) to accomplish their own ends. He says the conduct of this society is not sanctioned by Law: had the case been otherwise, whatever my opinion of the Law might have been, my respect for the policy of the State would on this occasion have appeared in my silence; because against the penalties of promulgated Laws one may guard; but there is no avoiding the snares of individuals, or of private societies—and if the practice of this Society of which Mr Dalby speaks, is not discountenanced, none of those whose *misfortune* it is to have slaves as attendants will visit the City if they can possibly avoid it; because by so doing they hazard their property—or they must be at the expence (& this will not always succeed) of providing servants of another description for the trip.

I hope it will not be conceived from these observations, that it is my wish to hold the unhappy people who are the subject of this letter, in slavery. I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it—but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, & that is by Legislative authority: and this, as far as my suffrage will go, shall never be wanting.

But when slaves who are happy & content to remain with their present masters, are tampered with & seduced to leave them; when masters are taken at unawares by these practices; when a conduct of this sort begets discontent on one side and resentment on the other, & when it happens to fall on a man whose purse will not measure with that of the Society, & he loses his property for want of means to defend it—it is oppression in the latter case, & not humanity in any; because it introduces more evils than it can cure.

I will make no apology for writing to you on this subject; for if Mr Dalby has not misconceived the matter, an evil exists which requires a remedy; if he has, my intentions have been good though I may have been too precipitate in this address. Mrs Washington joins me in every good & kind wish for Mrs Morris and your family, and I am &c.

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from *Last Will and Testament*

In the name of God amen I George Washington of Mount Vernon—a citizen of the United States, and lately President of the same, do make, ordain and declare this Instrument; which is written with my own hand and every page thereof subscribed with my name, to be my last Will & Testament, revoking all others.

Imprimus. All my debts, of which there are but few, and none of magnitude, are to be punctually and speedily paid—and the Legacies hereinafter bequeathed, are to be discharged as soon as circumstances will permit, and in the manner directed.

Item. To my dearly beloved wife Martha Washington I give and bequeath the use, profit and benefit of my whole Estate, real and personal, for the term of her natural life—except such parts thereof as are specifically disposed of hereafter: My improved lot in the Town of Alexandria, situated on Pitt & Cameron streets, I give to her and her heirs forever; as I also do my household & Kitchen furniture of every sort & kind, with the liquors and groceries which may be on hand at the time of my decease; to be used & disposed of as she may think proper.

Item. Upon the decease of my wife, it is my Will & desire that all the Slaves which I hold in my *own right*, shall receive their freedom. To emancipate them during her life, would, tho' earnestly wished by me, be attended with such insuperable difficulties on account of their intermixture by Marriages with the dower Negroes, as to excite the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences from the latter, while both descriptions are in the occupancy of the same Proprietor; it not being in my power, under the tenure by which the Dower Negroes are held, to manumit them. And whereas among those who will receive freedom according to this devise, there may be some, who from old age or bodily infirmities, and others who on account of their infancy, that will be

unable to support themselves; it is my Will and desire that all who come under the first & second description shall be comfortably clothed & fed by my heirs while they live; and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them, shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the age of twenty five years; and in cases where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the Court, upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final. The Negroes thus bound, are (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of Orphan and other poor Children. And I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever. And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *this* clause respecting Slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the uncertain provision to be made by individuals. And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which have befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so: In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first; & this I give him as a testimony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

*(July 9, 1799)*

# BENJAMIN RUSH

## *The Paradise of Negro-Slaves—a dream*

A physician and writer who attended the Continental Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush (1746–1813) was also an early and ardent abolitionist. In 1773 he published a pamphlet attacking slavery in the American colonies; yet in 1776, for reasons unknown, he purchased a slave named William Grubber, whom he apparently still owned when he joined the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in 1784. Rush’s fictional vision borrows from the long tradition of “dialogues with the dead” that give the living access to the wisdom and favor of the departed—in this case not only the souls of deceased black slaves, but the recently arrived spirit of a beloved antislavery hero.

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To the EDITOR of the COLUMBIAN MAGAZINE.

SIR,

**I** SELDOM dream, and when I do, seldom dream of any thing worthy of the attention of the public. Soon after reading Mr. Clarkson’s ingenious and pathetic essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species; the subject made so deep an impression upon my mind, that it followed me in my sleep, and produced a dream of so extraordinary a nature, that I have yielded to the importunities of some of my friends, to whom I communicated it, by requesting a place for it in your magazine.

I thought I was conducted to a country, which in point of cultivation and scenery, far surpassed any thing I had ever heard, or read of in my life. This country, I found, was inhabited only with negroes. They appeared cheerful and happy. Upon my approaching a beautiful grove, where a number of them were assembled for religious purposes, I perceived at once a pause in their exercises, and an appearance of general perturbation. They fixed their eyes upon me—while one of them, a venerable looking man, came forward, and in the name of

the whole assembly, addressed me in the following language.—

“Excuse the panic which you have spread through this peaceful and happy company: we perceive that you are a WHITEMAN.—That colour which is the emblem of innocence in every other creature of God, is to us a sign of guilt in man. The persons whom you see here, were once dragged by the men of your colour from their native country, and consigned by them to labour—punishment—and death.—We are here collected together, and enjoy an ample compensation in our present employments for all the miseries we endured on earth. We know that we are secured by the Being whom we worship, from injury and oppression. Our appearance of terror, therefore, was entirely the sudden effect of habits which have not yet been eradicated from our minds.”

“Your apprehension of danger from the sight of a white-man,” said I, “are natural. But in me—you behold a friend. I have been your advocate—and——” Here, he interrupted me, and said, “Is not your name——.” I answered in the affirmative. Upon this he ran up and embraced me in his arms, and afterwards conducted me into the midst of the assembly, where, after being introduced to the principal characters, I was seated upon a sofa; and the following account was delivered to me by the venerable person who first accosted me.

“The place we now occupy, is called the PARADISE OF NEGRO SLAVES. It is destined to be our place of residence ’till the general judgment; after which time, we expect to be admitted into higher and more perfect degrees of happiness. Here we derive great pleasure from contemplating the infinite goodness of God, in allotting to us our full proportion of misery on earth; by which means we have escaped the punishments, to which the free and happy part of mankind too often expose themselves after death. Here we have learned to thank God, for all the afflictions our task-masters heaped upon us; inasmuch, as they were the means of our present happiness. Pain and distress are the unavoidable portions of all mankind. They are the only possible avenues that can conduct them to peace and felicity. Happy are they, who partake of their proportion of both upon the earth.”

Here he ended.—

After a silence of a few minutes, a young man, who bore on his head the mark of a wound, came up to me, and asked “If I knew any thing of Mr.—, of the island of Jamaica.” I told him “I did not.”—“Mr.—,” said he, “was my master. One day, I mistook his orders, and saddled his mare instead of his horse, which provoked him so much, that he took up an axe which lay in his yard, and with a stroke on my head, dismissed me from life. I long to hear, whether he has repented of this unkind action. Do, sir, write to him, and tell him, his sin is not too great to be forgiven. Tell him, his once miserable slave, Scipio, is not angry at him—he longs to bear his prayers to the offended majesty of heaven—and—when he dies—Scipio will apply to be one of the convoy, that shall conduct his spirit to the regions of bliss appointed for those who repent of their iniquities.

Before I could reply to this speech, an old man came and sat down by my side. His wool was white as snow. With a low, but gentle voice, he thus addressed me.

“Sir, I was the slave of a Mr.—, in the island of Barbadoes. I served him faithfully upwards of sixty years. No rising sun ever caught me in my cabin—no setting sun ever saw me out of the sugar field, except on Sundays and holydays. My whole subsistence never cost my master more than forty shillings a year. Herrings and roots, were my only food. One day, in the eightieth year of my age, the overseer saw me stop to rest myself against the side of a tree, where I was at work. He came up to me and beat me, ’till he could endure the fatigue and heat occasioned by the blows he gave me, no longer. Nor was this all—he complained of me to my master, who instantly set me up at public vendue, and sold me for two guineas to a tavern-keeper, in Bridgetown. The distress I felt, in leaving my children and grandchildren, (28 of whom I left on my old master’s plantation), soon put an end to my existence, and landed me upon these happy shores. I have now no wish to gratify but one—and that is, to be permitted to visit my old master’s family. I long to tell my master, that his wealth cannot make him happy.—That the sufferings of a single hour in the world of misery,

for which he is preparing himself, will overbalance all the pleasures he ever enjoyed in his life—and that for every act of unnecessary severity he inflicts upon his slaves, he shall suffer tenfold in the world to come.”

He had hardly finished his tale, when a decent looking woman came forward, and addressed me in the following language.—Sir,

“I was once the slave of Mr.—, in the state of—. From the healthiness of my constitution, I was called upon to suckle my master’s eldest son. To enable me to perform this office more effectually, my own child was taken from my breast, and soon afterwards died. My affections in the first emotions of my grief, fastened themselves upon my infant master. He thrived under my care, and grew up a handsome young man. Upon the death of his father, I became his property.—Soon after this event, he lost 100l. at cards; To raise this money, I was sold to a planter in a distant part of the state. I can never forget the anguish, with which my aged father and mother followed me to the end of the lane, when I left my master’s house, and hung upon me, when they bid me farewell.

“My new master obliged me to work in the field; the consequence of which was, I caught a fever, which in a few weeks ended my life. Say, my friend, is my first young master still alive?—If he is—O! go to him, and tell him, his unkind behaviour to me is upon record against him. The gentle spirits in heaven, whose happiness consists in expressions of gratitude and love, will have no fellowship with him.—His soul must be melted with pity, or he can never escape the punishment which awaits the hard-hearted, equally with the impenitent, in the regions of misery.”

As soon as she had finished her story, a middle aged woman approached me, and after a low and respectful curtsy, thus addressed me.

“Sir, I was born and educated in a christian family in one of the southern states of America. In the thirty-third year of my age, I applied to my master to purchase my freedom. Instead of granting my request, he conveyed me by force on board of a vessel, and sold me to a planter in the island of Hispaniola. Here it pleased God”——Upon pronouncing these words, she paused, and a general

silence ensued.—All at once, the eyes of the whole assembly were turned from me, and directed towards a little white man who advanced towards them, on the opposite side of the grove, in which we were seated. His face was grave, placid, and full of benignity. In one hand he carried a subscription paper and a petition, —in the other, he carried a small pamphlet, on the unlawfulness of the African slave-trade, with the following motto—

“Ah! why will men forget, that they are brethren?”

While I was employed in contemplating this venerable figure—suddenly I beheld the whole assembly running to meet him—the air resounded with the clapping of hands—and I awoke from my dream, by the noise of a general acclamation of—

ANTHONY BENEZET!

(1787)

## ANONYMOUS

### *Essay on Negro Slavery, No. I*

Submitted by the pseudonymous “Othello” of Baltimore, this essay was serialized in consecutive issues of the *American Museum*, a monthly magazine published in Philadelphia by Mathew Carey. The choice of pseudonym suggests a black author and the piece has often been attributed to Benjamin Banneker because the arguments here parallel many of those made in Banneker’s *Letter to the Secretary of State* (1791); see pp. 129–132 in this volume.

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**A** MIDST THE infinite variety of moral and political subjects, proper for public commentation, it is truly surprising, that one of the most important and affecting should be so very generally neglected. An encroachment on the smallest civil or religious privilege, shall fan the enthusiastic flame of liberty, till it shall extend over vast and distant regions, and violently agitate a whole continent. But the cause of humanity shall be basely violated, justice shall be wounded to the heart, and national honour, deeply and lastingly polluted, and not a breath or murmur shall arise, to disturb the prevailing quiescence, or to rouse the feelings of indignation against such general, extensive, and complicated iniquity.—To what cause are we to impute this frigid silence—this torpid indifference—this cold inanimated conduct of the otherwise warm and generous Americans?—Why do they remain inactive, amidst the groans of injured humanity, the shrill and distressing complaints of expiring justice, and the keen remorse of polluted integrity?—Why do they not rise up to assert the cause of God and the world, to drive the fiend injustice into remote and distant regions, and to exterminate oppression from the face of the fair fields of America?

When the united colonies revolted from Great-Britain, they did it upon this principle, “that all men are by nature, and of right ought to be free.”—After a

long, successful, and glorious struggle for liberty, during which they manifested the firmest attachment to the rights of mankind, can they so soon forget the principles that then governed their determinations? Can Americans, after the noble contempt they expressed for tyrants, meanly descend to take up the scourge? Blush, ye revolted colonies, for having apostatized from your own principles.

Slavery, in whatever point of light it is considered, is repugnant to the feelings of nature, and inconsistent with the original rights of man. It ought therefore to be stigmatized for being unnatural; and detested for being unjust. 'Tis an outrage to providence, and an affront offered to divine Majesty, who has given to man his own peculiar image.—That the Americans, after considering the subject in this light—after making the most manly of all possible exertions in defence of liberty—after publishing to the world the principle upon which they contended, viz. “that all men are by nature and of right ought to be free,” should still retain in subjection a numerous tribe of the human race, merely for their own private use and emolument, is, of all things, the strongest inconsistency, the deepest reflexion on our conduct, and the most abandoned apostacy that ever took place, since the Almighty fiat spoke into existence this habitable world. So flagitious a violation can never escape the notice of a just Creator, whose vengeance may be now on the wing, to disseminate and hurl the arrows of destruction.

In what light can the people of Europe consider America, after the strange inconsistency of her conduct? Will they not consider her as an abandoned and deceitful country? In the hour of calamity, she petitioned heaven to be propitious to her cause. Her prayers were heard. Heaven pitied her distress, smiled on her virtuous exertions, and vanquished all her afflictions. The ungrateful creature forgets this timely assistance—no longer remembers her own sorrows—but basely commences oppressor in her turn.—Beware, America!—pause—and consider the difference between the mild effulgence of approving providence, and the angry countenance of incensed divinity!

The importation of slaves into America, ought to be a subject of the deepest regret, to every benevolent and thinking mind—And one of the greatest defects in the federal system, is the liberty it allows on this head. Venerable in every thing else, it is injudicious here; and it is to be much deplored, that a system of so much political perfection, should be stained with any thing that does an outrage to human nature. As a door, however, is open to amendment, for the sake of distressed humanity, of injured national reputation, and the glory of doing so benevolent a thing, I hope some wise and virtuous patriot will advocate the measure, and introduce an alteration in that pernicious part of the government.—So far from encouraging the importation of slaves, and countenancing that vile traffic in human flesh: the members of the late continental convention should have seized the happy opportunity of prohibiting for ever, this cruel species of reprobated villainy.—That they did not do so, will for ever diminish the lustre of their other proceedings, so highly extolled, and so justly distinguished, for their intrinsic value.—Let us, for a moment, contrast the sentiments and actions of the Europeans on this subject, with those of our own countrymen. In France, the warmest, and most animated exertions are making, in order to introduce the entire abolition of the slave-trade; and in England, many of the first characters of that country, advocate the same measure, with an enthusiastic philanthropy. The prime minister himself is at the head of that society; and nothing can equal the ardour of their endeavors, but the glorious goodness of the cause.—Will the Americans allow the people of England, to get the start of them in acts of humanity? Forbid it shame!

The practice of stealing, or bartering for human flesh, is pregnant with the most glaring turpitude, and the blackest barbarity of disposition.—For, can any one say, that this is doing as he would be done by? Will such a practice stand the scrutiny of this great rule of moral government? Who can, without the complicated emotions of anger and impatience, suppose himself in the predicament of a slave! Who can bear the thoughts of his relations being torn from him by a savage enemy; carried to distant regions of the habitable globe,

never more to return; and treated there, as the unhappy Africans are, in this country? Who can support the reflexion of his father—his mother—his sister—or his wife—perhaps his children—being barbarously snatched away by a foreign invader, without the prospect of ever beholding them again? Who can reflect upon their being afterwards publicly exposed to sale—obliged to labour with unwearied assiduity—and, because all things are not possible to be performed, by persons so unaccustomed to robust exercise, scourged with all the rage and anger of malignity, until their unhappy carcasses are covered with ghastly wounds, and frightful contusions? Who can reflect on these things, when applying the case to himself, without being chilled with horror, at circumstances so extremely shocking?—Yet hideous as this concise and imperfect description is, of the sufferings sustained by many of our slaves, it is nevertheless true; and so far from being exaggerated, falls infinitely short of a thousand circumstances of distress, which have been recounted by different writers on the subject, and which contribute to make their situation in this life, the most absolutely wretched, and completely miserable, that can possibly be conceived.—In many places in America, the slaves are treated with every circumstance of rigorous inhumanity, accumulated hardship, and enormous cruelty.—Yet, when we take them from Africa, we deprive them of a country which God hath given them for their own: as free as we are, and as capable of enjoying that blessing. Like pirates, we go to commit devastation on the coast of an innocent country, and among a people who never did us wrong.

An insatiable, avaricious desire to accumulate riches, co-operating with a spirit of luxury and injustice, seems to be the leading cause of this peculiarly degrading and ignominious practice. Being once accustomed to subsist without labour, we become soft and voluptuous; and rather than afterwards forego the gratification of our habitual indolence and ease, we countenance the infamous violation, and sacrifice at the shrine of cruelty, all the finer feelings of elevated humanity.

Considering things in this view, there surely can be nothing more justly

reprehensible or disgusting, than the extravagant finery of many country people's daughters. It hath not been at all uncommon to observe as much gauze, lace and other trappings, on one of those country maidens, as hath employed two or three of her father's slaves, for twelve months afterwards, to raise tobacco to pay for. 'Tis an ungrateful reflexion, that all this frippery and affected finery, can only be supported by the sweat of another person's brow, and consequently, only by lawful rapine and injustice. If these young females could devote as much time from their amusement, as would be necessary for reflexion; or, was there any person of humanity at hand who would inculcate the indecency of this kind of extravagance, I am persuaded they have hearts good enough to reject, with disdain, the momentary pleasure of making a figure, in behalf of the rational and lasting delight of contributing by their forbearance, to the happiness of so many thousand individuals.

In Maryland, where slaves are treated with as much lenity, as, perhaps, they are any where, their situation is to the last degree ineligible. They live in wretched cots, that scarcely secure them from the inclemency of the weather; sleep in the ashes or on straw; wear the coarsest clothing, and subsist on the most ordinary food that the country produces. In all things, they are subject to their master's absolute command; and, of course, have no will of their own. Thus circumstanced, they are subject to great brutality, and are often treated with it. In particular instances, they may be better provided for in this state, but this suffices for a general description. But in the Carolinas, and in the island of Jamaica, the cruelties that have been wantonly exercised on those miserable creatures, are without a precedent in any other part of the world. If those who have written on the subject, may be believed, it is not uncommon there, to tie a slave up, and whip him to death.

On all occasions impartiality in the distribution of justice, should be observed. The little state of Rhode-Island, hath been reprobated by the other states, for refusing to enter into measures respecting a new general Government; and so far it is admitted that she is culpable. But if she is worthy of blame in this

respect, she is entitled to the highest admiration for the philanthropy, justice and humanity, she hath displayed, respecting the subject I am treating on. She hath passed an act prohibiting the importation of slaves into that state, and forbidding her citizens to engage in the iniquitous traffic. So striking a proof of her strong attachment to the rights of humanity, will rescue her name from oblivion, and bid her live in the good opinion of distant and unborn generations.

Slavery, unquestionably, should be abolished, particularly in this country; because it is inconsistent with the declared principles of the American Revolution. The sooner, therefore, we set about it, the better. Either we should set all our slaves at liberty, immediately, and colonize them in the western territory; or, we should immediately take measures for the gradual abolition of it, so that it may become a known, and fixed point, that, ultimately, universal liberty, in these united states, shall triumph.—This is the least we can do, in order to evince our sense of the irreparable outrages we have committed, to wipe off the odium we have incurred, and to give mankind a confidence again, in the justice, liberality, and honour of our national proceedings.

It would not be difficult to shew, were it necessary, that America would soon become a richer and more happy country, provided this step was adopted. That corrosive anguish of persevering in any thing improper, which now embitters the enjoyment of life, would vanish as the mist of a foggy morn doth before the rising sun; and we should find as great a disparity between our present situation, and that which would succeed to it, as subsists between a cloudy winter, and a radiant spring.—Besides, our lands would not be then cut down for the support of a numerous train of useless inhabitants—useless, I mean, to themselves, and effectually so to us, by encouraging sloth and voluptuousness among our young farmers and planters, who might otherwise know how to take care of their money, as well as how to dissipate it.—In all other respects, I conceive them to be as valuable as we are—as capable of worthy purposes, and to possess the same dignity that we do, in the estimation of providence; although, the value of their work apart, for which we are dependent on them, we

generally consider them as good for nothing, and, accordingly, treat them with the greatest neglect.

But, be it remembered, that their cause is the cause of heaven; and that the Father of them as well as of us, will not fail, at a future settlement, to adjust the account between us, with a dreadful attention to justice.

O T H E L L O.

*Baltimore, May 10, 1788.*

## THEODORE DWIGHT

*“Help! oh, help! thou God of Christians!”*

A lawyer and writer based in New Haven, Theodore Dwight (1764–1846) came from an accomplished family (grandson of Jonathan Edwards; brother of Timothy Dwight, president of Yale; and cousin of Aaron Burr), wrote many poems as a member of the “Hartford Wits,” and steadfastly opposed slavery, delivering an address to the Connecticut Abolition Society in May 1794. Dwight published this poetic plea anonymously on February 21, 1788 in *The New-Haven Gazette*, and *the Connecticut Magazine* to illuminate the human suffering caused by (in his words) “the barbarous traffic of human flesh.”

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TO THE PRINTER.

THE distress which the inhabitants of Guinea experience at the loss of their children, which are stolen from them by the persons employed in the barbarous traffic of human flesh, is, perhaps, more thoroughly felt than described. But, as it is a subject to which every person has not attended, the Author of the following lines hopes that, possibly, he may excite some attention, (while he obtains indulgence) to an attempt to represent the anguish of a mother, whose son and daughter were taken from her by a Ship’s Crew, belonging to a Country where the GOD of Justice and Mercy is owned and worshipped.

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“Help! oh, help! thou GOD of Christians!

Save a mother from despair!

Cruel white-men steal my children!

GOD of Christians, hear my prayer!

From my arms by force they’re rended,

Sailors drag them to the sea;  
Yonder ship, at anchor riding,  
Swift will carry them away.

There my son lies, stripp'd, and bleeding;  
Fast, with thongs, his hands are bound.  
See, the tyrants, how they scourge him!  
See his sides a reeking wound!

See his little sister by him;  
Quaking, trembling, how she lies!  
Drops of blood her face besprinkle;  
Tears of anguish fill her eyes.

Now they tear her brother from her;  
Down, below the deck, he's thrown;  
Stiff with beating, thro' fear silent,  
Save a single, death-like, groan.

Hear the little creature begging!"—  
"Take me, white-men, for your own!  
Spare! oh, spare my darling brother!  
He's my mother's only son.

See, upon the shore she's raving:  
Down she falls upon the sands:  
Now, she tears her flesh with madness;  
Now, she prays with lifted hands.

I am young, and strong, and hardy;  
He's a sick, and feeble boy;  
Take me, whip me, chain me, starve me,

All my life I'll toil with joy.

Christians! who's the GOD you worship?

Is he cruel, fierce, or good?

Does he take delight in mercy?

Or in spilling human blood?

Ah! my poor distracted mother!

Hear her scream upon the shore."—

Down the savage Captain struck her,

Lifeless on the vessel's floor.

Up his sails he quickly hoisted,

To the ocean bent his way;

Headlong plunged the raving mother,

From a high rock, in the sea.

(1788)

# PRINCE HALL

## *The Petition of a Great Number of Blacks, Freemen of this Commonwealth*

Son of a white father and free black woman, Prince Hall (1735–1807) came to Boston from Barbados at age seventeen and worked as a leather craftsman. A leader in the black community, Hall petitioned the Massachusetts government repeatedly from 1777 through the 1790s on issues arising from racial discrimination. Here, Hall protests crimes that would later recur under the federal fugitive slave acts.

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To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in General Court assembled, on the 27th  
February, 1788;

The Petition of a great number of Blacks, freemen of this Commonwealth,  
humbly sheweth;

That your petitioners are justly alarmed at the inhuman and cruel treatment that three of our brethren, free citizens of the town of Boston, lately received. The Captain, under pretence that his vessel was in distress on an Island below in this harbor, having got them on board, put them in irons, and carried them off from their wives and children, to be sold for slaves. This being the unhappy state of these poor men, what can your petitioners expect but to be treated to the same manner by the same sort of men? What then are our lives and liberties worth, if they may be taken away in such a cruel and unjust manner as this? May it please your Honors, we are not insensible that the good laws of this State forbid all such bad actions; notwithstanding we can assure your Honors, that many of our free Blacks that have entered on board of vessels as seamen, have been sold as

slaves, and some of them we have heard from, but know not who carried them away. Hence it is, that many of us, who are good seamen, are obliged to stay at home through fear, and the one-half of our time, loiter about the streets, for want of employ; whereas, if they were protected in that lawful calling, they might get a handsome livelihood for themselves and theirs, which in the situation they are now in, they cannot. One thing more we would beg leave to hint, that is, that your petitioners have for some time past, beheld with grief, ships cleared out from this harbor for Africa, and they either steal our brothers and sisters, fill their ship-holds full of unhappy men and women, crowded together, then set out for the best market to sell them there, like sheep for slaughter, and then return here like honest men, after having sported with the lives and liberty of their fellow-men, and at the same time call themselves Christians. Blush, O Heavens, at this! These, our weighty grievances, we cheerfully submit to your Honors, without dictating in the least, knowing by experience that your Honors have, and we trust ever will, in your wisdom, do us that justice that our present condition requires, as God and the good laws of this Commonwealth shall dictate to you.

As in duty bound, your petitioners shall ever pray.

PRINCE HALL.

PRIMUS HALL.	JOHN COOPER.
BRITTON BALCH.	JOSEPH HICKS.
CYRUS FORBES.	JAMES HICKS.
THOMAS SANDERSON.	GEORGE MILLER.
LANCASTER HILL.	JAMES HOOKER.
CATO UNDERWOOD.	MATHEW COX.
SHARPEA GARDNER.	CATO GRAY.
JUBA HILL.	ROBERT JACKSON.
RICHARD POLLARD.	JOHN KING.
WILLIAM SMITH.	BOSTON BULLARD.
JAMES BALL.	JOHN MATLOCK.

## SUSANNA ROWSON

from *The Inquisitor; or, Invisible Rambler*

Born in England but raised in America, Susanna Haswell Rowson (1762–1824) returned to England in 1778 and lived there for fifteen years before settling permanently in the United States in 1793. First an actress in Philadelphia and then a schoolmistress in Boston, she produced a steady stream of novels, short fiction, and other literary works, most famously the sentimental bestseller *Charlotte Temple* (1791). *The Inquisitor* is a collection of tales written in the style of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. In this excerpt, the speaker ruminates sympathetically on the miseries of slavery, including those of the bereft families left behind in Africa.

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**T**HE MAN who with unmerciful hand scourges his slave, does he then remember that the person he is chastising is endowed with the same sense of feeling as himself, and is as sensible of pain, hunger, thirst, cold, aye, and all the social blessings of life? has filial, conjugal, and paternal affection?—then why, because he is a slave, should you bestow on him painful stripes, when yourself would shrink to receive but the smallest of them—Does the name of Slave,—

Slave! said I, rising as I spoke, while the sanguine tide that plays about my heart rushed unbidden to my cheeks—

Why did I blush, why did I tremble, as I pronounced the word slave?—It was because I was ashamed of the appellation—It is a word that should never be used between man and man—The negro on the burning sands of Africa was born as free as him who draws his first breath in Britain—and shall a Christian, a man whose mind is enlightened by education and religion, for a little sordid pelf, sell the freedom of this poor negro, only because he differs from him in complection

—what right has a European to sell an African? do they leave their native land and seek our coast, by arts entice our countrymen away, and make them slaves?  
—

## THE SLAVE

**I** WALKED out and endeavoured to dissipate the disagreeable reflection; but the idea of slavery pursued me still.

Unhappy man, said I, as busy fancy drew out the sad scene.

She held up to my mind's eye a man born to a good inheritance, and surrounded with all the comforts, all the blessings, he desired—but he was a negro.

He was sitting in his little hut, his jetty companion by his side; one infant at her breast, two others prattling at her knee: she looked, she felt happy. Her husband, her children, were with her; serenity played on every countenance; content had fixed her habitation in their dwelling—Some Europeans enter—they deck his beloved children with baubles—they tie beads round the arms of his wife—and ornament her jetty locks with glittering toys—He is charmed with their courtesy—He walks with them to the sea side, and takes his boy, his eldest darling, with him—they invite them on board the vessel—Poor soul! unsuspecting their treachery, he goes, and bids adieu to liberty for ever—His wife, taking advantage of his absence, trims up their hut—lays her dear babes to sleep—and then prepares a supper for her love, composed of wholesome roots and fruit—She wonders why he stays—She leaves her home and walks toward the sea, she sees him embark—her child goes too—the sailors spread the sails—the vessel moves—she shrieks—but there my heart was wrung so keenly, I could go no farther.

I left the wife, and followed the poor negro—he had no comfort but the idea that he should be with his child; that he should have it in his power to ease him if heavy tasks were imposed, to guard him from dangers, and teach him to be

resigned and contented.—They arrive at Barbadoes—they are exposed to sale and allotted to different masters.

Alas! poor man, tears and entreaties are vain; you are in the hands of the sons of Mammon.

Fancy still led me forward—I saw him when age and in-firmities came on without one comfort, without one friend, on a miserable bed, sickness and sad remembrance his only companions—he is weary of life—he offers up a prayer for his still dear companion, for his children, his hapless enslaved child—He dies—and is thrown into the grave without a prayer to consecrate the ground, without one tear of affection or regret being shed upon his bier.

Had not that poor negro a soul?

Yes—and in futurity it shall appear white and spotless at the throne of Grace, to confound the man who called himself a Christian, and yet betrayed a fellow-creature into bondage.

(1788)

# OLAUDAH EQUIANO

from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself.*

Recently discovered evidence suggests that Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–1797) was probably born in South Carolina, not in what is now Nigeria, as his *Narrative* indicates. The earliest verifiable detail in his story is that he was taken to sea as a slave by a British sea captain in 1757. Equiano became an accomplished sailor and used shipboard entrepreneurial schemes to save enough to buy his own freedom in 1766. He worked twenty years as a commercial seaman based in London before becoming a writer in the late 1780s as the British abolition movement emerged. Published in 1789, his *Narrative* had enormous impact: it went through multiple editions, was translated into several languages, and, as the prototypical slave narrative, influenced generations of black writers, notably Frederick Douglass. To lend credibility to his exposé of the transatlantic slave trade, Equiano seems to have invented a fictional but realistic African childhood for himself in a narrative that has otherwise been corroborated in most of its factual details.

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Thus I continued to travel, sometimes by land, sometimes by water, through different countries and various nations, till, at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped, I arrived at the sea coast. It would be tedious and uninteresting to relate all the incidents which befell me during this journey, and which I have not yet forgotten; of the various hands I passed through, and the manners and customs of all the different people among whom I lived: I shall therefore only observe, that in all the places where I was the soil was exceedingly rich; the pomkins, eadas, plantains, yams, &c. &c. were in great abundance, and of incredible size. There were also vast quantities of different gums, though not used for any purpose; and every where a great deal of tobacco. The cotton even grew quite wild; and there was plenty of redwood. I saw no

mechanics whatever in all the way, except such as I have mentioned. The chief employment in all these countries was agriculture, and both the males and females, as with us, were brought up to it, and trained in the arts of war.

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not; and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of

returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across I think the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced any thing of this kind before; and although, not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us; they gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate: but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a

brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner.

(1789)

# BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

## *Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim on the Slave Trade*

By 1790 Franklin's opposition to slavery had hardened. Addressed to Andrew Brown, the editor of the *Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Evening Post* where it appeared on March 25, 1790, this deft satire takes as its starting point a proslavery speech made by the Georgia congressman James Jackson on March 16 during a debate over Quaker petitions asking Congress to restrict the slave trade. Franklin's ironic allegory likens contemporary apologists for slavery to unenlightened Islamic slaveholders of Christians. Franklin died on April 17, 1790, making this one of his last published utterances.

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE FEDERAL GAZETTE

March 23d, 1790.

SIR,

Reading last night in your excellent Paper the speech of Mr. Jackson in Congress against their meddling with the Affair of Slavery, or attempting to mend the Condition of the Slaves, it put me in mind of a similar One made about 100 Years since by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, a member of the Divan of Algiers, which may be seen in Martin's Account of his Consulship, anno 1687. It was against granting the Petition of the Sect called *Erika*, or Purists, who pray'd for the Abolition of Piracy and Slavery as being unjust. Mr. Jackson does not quote it; perhaps he has not seen it. If, therefore, some of its Reasonings are to be found in his eloquent Speech, it may only show that men's Interests and Intellects operate and are operated on with surprising similarity in all Countries and Climates, when under similar Circumstances. The African's Speech, as translated, is as follows.

“Allah Bismillah, &c.

*God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet.*

“Have these *Erika* considered the Consequences of granting their Petition? If we cease our Cruises against the Christians, how shall we be furnished with the Commodities their Countries produce, and which are so necessary for us? If we forbear to make Slaves of their People, who in this hot Climate are to cultivate our Lands? Who are to perform the common Labours of our City, and in our Families? Must we not then be our own Slaves? And is there not more Compassion and more Favour due to us as Mussulmen, than to these Christian Dogs? We have now above 50,000 Slaves in and near Algiers. This Number, if not kept up by fresh Supplies, will soon diminish, and be gradually annihilated. If we then cease taking and plundering the Infidel Ships, and making Slaves of the Seamen and Passengers, our Lands will become of no Value for want of Cultivation; the Rents of Houses in the City will sink one half; and the Revenues of Government arising from its Share of Prizes be totally destroy'd! And for what? To gratify the whims of a whimsical Sect, who would have us, not only forbear making more Slaves, but even to manumit those we have.

“But who is to indemnify their Masters for the Loss? Will the State do it? Is our Treasury sufficient? Will the *Erika* do it? Can they do it? Or would they, to do what they think Justice to the Slaves, do a greater Injustice to the Owners? And if we set our Slaves free, what is to be done with them? Few of them will return to their Countries; they know too well the greater Hardships they must there be subject to; they will not embrace our holy Religion; they will not adopt our Manners; our People will not pollute themselves by intermarrying with them. Must we maintain them as Beggars in our Streets, or suffer our Properties to be the Prey of their Pillage? For Men long accustom'd to Slavery will not work for a Livelihood when not compell'd. And what is there so pitiable in their present Condition? Were they not Slaves in their own Countries?

“Are not Spain, Portugal, France, and the Italian states govern'd by

Despots, who hold all their Subjects in Slavery, without Exception? Even England treats its Sailors as Slaves; for they are, whenever the Government pleases, seiz'd, and confin'd in Ships of War, condemn'd not only to work, but to fight, for small Wages, or a mere Subsistence, not better than our Slaves are allow'd by us. Is their Condition then made worse by their falling into our Hands? No; they have only exchanged one Slavery for another, and I may say a better; for here they are brought into a Land where the Sun of Islamism gives forth its Light, and shines in full Splendor, and they have an Opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the true Doctrine, and thereby saving their immortal Souls. Those who remain at home have not that Happiness. Sending the Slaves home then would be sending them out of Light into Darkness.

“I repeat the Question, What is to be done with them? I have heard it suggested, that they may be planted in the Wilderness, where there is plenty of Land for them to subsist on, and where they may flourish as a free State; but they are, I doubt, too little dispos'd to labour without Compulsion, as well as too ignorant to establish a good government, and the wild Arabs would soon molest and destroy or again enslave them. While serving us, we take care to provide them with every thing, and they are treated with Humanity. The labourers in their own Country are, as I am well informed, worse fed, lodged, and cloathed. The Condition of most of them is therefore already mended, and requires no further Improvement. Here their Lives are in Safety. They are not liable to be impress'd for Soldiers, and forc'd to cut one another's Christian Throats, as in the Wars of their own Countries. If some of the religious mad Bigots, who now tease us with their silly Petitions, have in a Fit of blind Zeal freed their Slaves, it was not Generosity, it was not Humanity, that mov'd them to the Action; it was from the conscious Burthen of a Load of Sins, and Hope, from the supposed Merits of so good a Work, to be excus'd Damnation.

“How grossly are they mistaken in imagining Slavery to be disallow'd by the Alcoran! Are not the two Precepts, to quote no more, *'Masters, treat your Slaves with kindness; Slaves, serve your Masters with Cheerfulness and*

*Fidelity,*’ clear Proofs to the contrary? Nor can the Plundering of Infidels be in that sacred Book forbidden, since it is well known from it, that God has given the World, and all that it contains, to his faithful Mussulmen, who are to enjoy it of Right as fast as they conquer it. Let us then hear no more of this detestable Proposition, the Manumission of Christian Slaves, the Adoption of which would, by depreciating our Lands and Houses, and thereby depriving so many good Citizens of their Properties, create universal Discontent, and provoke Insurrections, to the endangering of Government and producing general Confusion. I have therefore no doubt, but this wise Council will prefer the Comfort and Happiness of a whole Nation of true Believers to the Whim of a few *Erika*, and dismiss their Petition.”

The Result was, as Martin tells us, that the Divan came to this Resolution; “The Doctrine, that Plundering and Enslaving the Christians is unjust, is at best *problematical*; but that it is the Interest of this State to continue the Practice, is clear; therefore let the Petition be rejected.”

And it was rejected accordingly.

And since like Motives are apt to produce in the Minds of Men like Opinions and Resolutions, may we not, Mr. Brown, venture to predict, from this Account, that the Petitions to the Parliament of England for abolishing the Slave-Trade, to say nothing of other Legislatures, and the Debates upon them, will have a similar Conclusion? I am, Sir, your constant Reader and humble Servant,

HISTORICUS

## JOSEPH SANSOM

### from *A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans, in the Character of an Ancient Negro, Born a Slave in Pennsylvania*

A Quaker merchant based in Philadelphia, Joseph Sansom (1767–1826) is remembered as an artist and writer. Sansom's *Poetical Epistle* dramatizes the debate over Christianity and slavery by giving voice to a slave who is a Christian believer rebutting the arguments of an escaped slave who rejects it as the creed of tyrants. The speaker drives home his point by citing the names of Christians who publicly denounced slavery, including Samuel Sewall, John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, Benjamin Franklin, and their counterparts in England and France.

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But my glad Soul anticipates the day,  
When Men no more on Fellow-Men shall prey,  
Or dare—pretending *policy* and *fate*,  
Divine and human laws to violate.  
Three centuries our groans have pierc'd the Skies—  
But bright'ning visions light my clouded eyes:  
Religion and Philosophy unite  
Our Minds t' enlighten, and our wrongs to right.  
And much, my Countrymen, depends on you;  
Be patient, humble, diligent, and true,  
In hope of coming freedom, as you can—  
Commend your righteous cause to GOD and Man.  
You see the efforts of the Good and Wise,  
Think not to right yourselves—let GOD arise,  
Fit you for freedom, and then make you free,

As he design'd his creature MAN to be.

Shun Cities then, unweildy haunts of Trade,  
*Industry* beckons to the rural shade:  
There honest Labour earns two-fold reward,  
First health, then plenty from the well-turn'd sward.  
Where oft at eve, far round to th' list'ning Swain,  
Thund'ring Niagara bodes the coming rain,  
Or *westward* where Ohio's winding tide  
Darts o'er the rocks, or rounds the mountains' side,  
Adventrous Settlers friendly welcome give,  
And teach the Needy how to work—and live.

Meanwhile—in silence let us wait the hour  
That shall to civil-life our Race restore—  
And Oh! when Liberty's enchanting smile  
Height'neth enjoyment and endeareth toil,  
If we remember whence the blessing flows,  
To GOD 'twill lead us, as from GOD it rose—  
Who solemn inquisition makes for Blood,  
*And turns the rod o'th' Wicked from the Good.*  
To him let AFRIC's dusky Sons sing praise,  
*His works are marvellous and just his ways.*  
May Time's swift course the pleasing theme prolong,  
And Children's Children still repeat the Song.  
Nor be their names forgot (in free estate)  
Whom Love first urg'd our cause to advocate;  
Or theirs who now the generous plea inforce,  
SHARP, RAYNAL, DE WARVILLE, and WILBERFORCE,  
CLARKSON, who lives and labours but for us,

Sage NECKAR, PINKNEY, MIFFLIN, PORTEUS,  
MADISON, PARRY, aged FRANKLIN, SCOT,  
LA FAYETTE, MARSILLAC, and BOUDINOT—  
Illustrious groupe—\*yet these are but a part  
Of those engraven on my grateful heart,  
In distant Climes, whom wond'ring Nations see  
Bound in thy seraph-band, Philanthropy.  
May philosophic Minds no more embrace  
Those endless feuds which martyr half the Race,  
But rather Concord and her train restore—  
Echo the Rights of Men from shore to shore,  
Strengthen the Weak—illuminate the Blind,  
Reform—convert—and humanize Mankind;  
Till CHRIST proclaim the CHRISTIAN JUBILEE,  
Break every yoke, and set the Oppressed free—  
Sheathe up, or to a ploughshare turn the sword,  
Take to himself the pow'r, and reign king, priest, and LORD.

(1790)

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\* On this occasion it were injustice not to mention the late James Ramsay, vicar of Teston in Great Britain, who wrote largely in vindication of the Negroes. He died in 1789.

# BENJAMIN BANNEKER

*from* Copy of a Letter from Benjamin Banneker to the Secretary of State

A free black man born in Maryland, Benjamin Banneker (1731–1806) was a polymath who worked as a surveyor, studied math and astronomy, published almanacs, wrote poems, and quietly protested racial injustice. When he sent Thomas Jefferson a copy of his latest almanac in 1791, Banneker included this rather daring letter in which he quotes back to Jefferson lines from the Declaration of Independence in order to confront him with the hypocrisy of slaveholding in a nominally free society. Jefferson responded politely but noncommittally, saying of African Americans, “no body wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced, for raising the condition, both of their body and mind, to what it ought to be.”

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*Maryland, Baltimore County, August 19, 1791.*

SIR,

**I** AM fully sensible of the greatness of that freedom, which I take with you on the present occasion; a liberty which seemed to me scarcely allowable, when I reflected on that distinguished and dignified station in which you stand, and the almost general prejudice and prepossession, which is so prevalent in the world against those of my complexion.

I suppose it is a truth too well attested to you, to need a proof here, that we are a race of beings, who have long labored under the abuse and censure of the world; that we have long been looked upon with an eye of contempt; and that we have long been considered rather as brutish than human, and scarcely capable of mental endowments.

Sir, I hope I may safely admit, in consequence of that report which hath reached me, that you are a man far less inflexible in sentiments of this nature,

than many others; that you are measurably friendly, and well disposed towards us; and that you are willing and ready to lend your aid and assistance to our relief, from those many distresses, and numerous calamities, to which we are reduced.

Now Sir, if this is founded in truth, I apprehend you will embrace every opportunity, to eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions, which so generally prevails with respect to us; and that your sentiments are concurrent with mine, which are, that one universal Father hath given being to us all; and that he hath not only made us all of one flesh, but that he hath also, without partiality, afforded us all the same sensations and endowed us all with the same faculties; and that however variable we may be in society or religion, however diversified in situation or color, we are all of the same family, and stand in the same relation to him.

Sir, if these are sentiments of which you are fully persuaded, I hope you cannot but acknowledge, that it is the indispensable duty of those, who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who possess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and influence to the relief of every part of the human race, from whatever burden or oppression they may unjustly labor under; and this, I apprehend, a full conviction of the truth and obligation of these principles should lead all to.

Sir, I have long been convinced, that if your love for yourselves, and for those inestimable laws, which preserved to you the rights of human nature, was founded on sincerity, you could not but be solicitous, that every individual, of whatever rank or distinction, might with you equally enjoy the blessings thereof; neither could you rest satisfied short of the most active effusion of your exertions, in order to their promotion from any state of degradation, to which the unjustifiable cruelty and barbarism of men may have reduced them.

Sir, I freely and cheerfully acknowledge, that I am of the African race, and in that color which is natural to them of the deepest dye; and it is under a sense of the most profound gratitude to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, that I now

confess to you, that I am not under that state of tyrannical thralldom, and inhuman captivity, to which too many of my brethren are doomed, but that I have abundantly tasted of the fruition of those blessings, which proceed from that free and unequalled liberty with which you are favored; and which, I hope, you will willingly allow you have mercifully received, from the immediate hand of that Being, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect Gift.

Sir, suffer me to recal to your mind that time, in which the arms and tyranny of the British crown were exerted, with every powerful effort, in order to reduce you to a state of servitude: look back, I entreat you, on the variety of dangers to which you were exposed; reflect on that time, in which every human aid appeared unavailable, and in which even hope and fortitude wore the aspect of inability to the conflict, and you cannot but be led to a serious and grateful sense of your miraculous and providential preservation; you cannot but acknowledge, that the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy you have mercifully received, and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven.

This, Sir, was a time when you clearly saw into the injustice of a state of slavery, and in which you had just apprehensions of the horrors of its condition. It was now that your abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you publicly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remembered in all succeeding ages: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Here was a time, in which your tender feelings for yourselves had engaged you thus to declare, you were then impressed with proper ideas of the great violation of liberty, and the free possession of those blessings, to which you were entitled by nature; but, Sir, how pitiable is it to reflect, that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of Mankind, and of his equal and impartial distribution of these rights and privileges, which he hath conferred upon them, that you should at the same time counteract his mercies, in

detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren, under groaning captivity and cruel oppression, that you should at the same time be found guilty of that most criminal act, which you professedly detested in others, with respect to yourselves.

I suppose that your knowledge of the situation of my brethren, is too extensive to need a recital here; neither shall I presume to prescribe methods by which they may be relieved, otherwise than by recommending to you and all others, to wean yourselves from those narrow prejudices which you have imbibed with respect to them, and as Job proposed to his friends, “put your soul in their souls’ stead;” thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and benevolence towards them; and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others, in what manner to proceed herein.

And now, Sir, although my sympathy and affection for my brethren hath caused my enlargement thus far, I ardently hope, that your candor and generosity will plead with you in my behalf, when I make known to you, that it was not originally my design; but having taken up my pen in order to direct to you, as a present, a copy of an Almanac, which I have calculated for the succeeding year, I was unexpectedly and unavoidably led thereto.

This calculation is the production of my arduous study, in this my advanced stage of life; for having long had unbounded desires to become acquainted with the secrets of nature, I have had to gratify my curiosity herein, through my own assiduous application to Astronomical Study, in which I need not recount to you the many difficulties and disadvantages, which I have had to encounter.

And although I had almost declined to make my calculation for the ensuing year, in consequence of that time which I had allotted therefor, being taken up at the Federal Territory, by the request of Mr. Andrew Ellicott, yet finding myself under several engagements to Printers of this state, to whom I had communicated my design, on my return to my place of residence, I industriously applied myself thereto, which I hope I have accomplished with correctness and accuracy; a copy of which I have taken the liberty to direct to you, and which I

humbly request you will favorably receive; and although you may have the opportunity of perusing it after its publication, yet I choose to send it to you in manuscript previous thereto, that thereby you might not only have an earlier inspection, but that you might also view it in my own hand writing.

And now, Sir, I shall conclude, and subscribe myself, with the most profound respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,  
BENJAMIN BANNEKER.

# JONATHAN EDWARDS

from *The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade, and of the Slavery of the Africans*

Son of the Congregationalist minister Jonathan Edwards of Massachusetts, Jonathan Edwards (1745–1801) was educated at the College of New Jersey (as Princeton was first known), taught at Yale for many years, and was one of the leading theologians and preachers of his era. In September 1791 Edwards delivered this forceful sermon at the annual meeting of the Connecticut Society for the Promotion of Freedom, then published it as a thirty-seven-page pamphlet. In this excerpt, the ardent Calvinist makes clear that he finds not only slavery but racism “abominable.” He writes, “The nations from Germany to Guinea have complexions of every shade from the fairest white, to a jetty black: and if a black complexion subject a nation or an individual to slavery, where shall slavery begin? or where shall it end?”

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II. The slave-trade is wicked and abominable on account of the cruel manner in which it is carried on.

Beside the stealing or kidnapping of men, women and children, in the first instance, and the instigation of others to this abominable practice; the inhuman manner in which they are transported to America, and in which they are treated on their passage and in their subsequent slavery, is such as ought forever to deter every man from acting any part in this business, who has any regard to justice or humanity. They are crowded so closely into the holds and between the decks of vessels, that they have scarcely room to lie down, and sometimes not room to sit up in an erect posture; the men at the same time fastened together with irons by two and two; and all this in the most sultry climate. The consequence of the whole is, that the most dangerous and fatal diseases are soon bred among them, whereby vast numbers of those exported from Africa perish in the voyage: others

in dread of that slavery which is before them, and in distress and despair from the loss of their parents, their children, their husbands, their wives, all their dear connections, and their dear native country itself, starve themselves to death or plunge themselves into the ocean. Those who attempt in the former of those ways to escape from their persecutors, are tortured by live coals applied to their mouths. Those who attempt an escape in the latter and fail, are equally tortured by the most cruel beating, or otherwise as their persecutors please. If any of them make an attempt, as they sometimes do, to recover their liberty, some, and as the circumstances may be, many, are put to immediate death. Others beaten, bruised, cut and mangled in a most inhuman and shocking manner, are in this situation exhibited to the rest, to terrify them from the like attempt in future: and some are delivered up to every species of torment, whether by the application of the whip, or of any other instrument, even of fire itself, as the ingenuity of the ship-master and his crew is able to suggest or their situation will admit; and these torments are purposely continued for several days, before death is permitted to afford relief to these objects of vengeance.

By these means, according to the common computation, twenty-five thousand, which is a fourth part of those who are exported from Africa, and by the concession of all, twenty thousand, annually perish, before they arrive at the places of their destination in America.

But this is by no means the end of the sufferings of this unhappy people. Bred up in a country spontaneously yielding the necessaries and conveniences of savage life, they have never been accustomed to labour: of course they are but ill prepared to go through the fatigue and drudgery to which they are doomed in their state of slavery. Therefore partly by this cause, partly by the scantiness and badness of their food, and partly from dejection of spirits, mortification and despair, another twenty-five thousand die in the seasoning, as it is called, i. e. within two years of their arrival in America. This I say is the common computation. Or if we will in this particular be as favourable to the trade as in the estimate of the number which perishes on the passage, we may reckon the

number which dies in the seasoning to be twenty thousand. So that of the hundred thousand annually exported from Africa to America, fifty thousand, as it is commonly computed, or on the most favourable estimate, forty thousand, die before they are seasoned to the country.

Nor is this all. The cruel sufferings of these pitiable beings are not yet at an end. Thenceforward they have to drag out a miserable life in absolute slavery, entirely at the disposal of their masters, by whom not only every venial fault, every mere inadvertence or mistake, but even real virtues, are liable to be construed into the most atrocious crimes, and punished as such, according to their caprice or rage, while they are intoxicated sometimes with liquor, sometimes with passion.

By these masters they are supplied with barely enough to keep them from starving, as the whole expence laid out on a slave for food, clothing and medicine is commonly computed on an average at thirty shillings sterling annually. At the same time they are kept at hard labour from five o'clock in the morning, till nine at night, excepting time to eat twice during the day. And they are constantly under the watchful eye of overseers and Negro-drivers more tyrannical and cruel than even their masters themselves. From these drivers for every imagined, as well as real neglect or want of exertion, they receive the lash, the smack of which is all day long in the ears of those who are on the plantation or in the vicinity; and it is used with such dexterity and severity, as not only to lacerate the skin, but to tear out small portions of the flesh at almost every stroke.

This is the general treatment of the slaves. But many individuals suffer still more severely. Many, many are knocked down; some have their eyes beaten out; some have an arm or a leg broken, or chopt off; and many for a very small or for no crime at all, have been beaten to death merely to gratify the fury of an enraged master or overseer.

Nor ought we on this occasion to overlook the wars among the nations of Africa excited by the trade, or the destruction attendant on those wars. Not to

mention the destruction of property, the burning of towns and villages, &c. It hath been determined by reasonable computation, that there are annually exported from Africa to the various parts of America, one hundred thousand slaves, as was before observed; that of these six thousand are captives of war; that in the wars in which these are taken, ten persons of the victors and vanquished are killed, to one taken; that therefore the taking of the six thousand captives is attended with the slaughter of sixty thousand of their countrymen. Now does not justice? does not humanity shrink from the idea, that in order to procure one slave to gratify our avarice, we should put to death ten human beings? Or that in order to increase our property, and that only in some small degree, we should carry on a trade, or even connive at it, to support which sixty thousand of our own species are slain in war?

These sixty thousand, added to the forty thousand who perish on the passage and in the seasoning, give us an hundred thousand who are annually destroyed by the trade; and the whole advantage gained by this amazing destruction of human lives is sixty thousand slaves. For you will recollect, that the whole number exported from Africa is an hundred thousand; that of these forty thousand die on the passage and in the seasoning, and sixty thousand are destroyed in wars. Therefore while one hundred and sixty thousand are killed in the wars and are exported from Africa, but sixty thousand are added to the stock of slaves.

Now when we consider all this; when we consider the miseries which this unhappy people suffer in their wars, in their captivity, in their voyage to America, and during a wretched life of cruel slavery: and especially when we consider the annual destruction of an hundred thousand lives in the manner before mentioned; who can hesitate to declare this trade and the consequent slavery to be contrary to every principle of justice and humanity, of the law of nature and the law of God?

III. This trade and this slavery are utterly wrong on the ground of impolicy. In a variety of respects they are exceedingly hurtful to the state which tolerates

them.

1. They are hurtful, as they deprave the morals of the people.—The incessant and inhuman cruelties practiced in the trade and in the subsequent slavery necessarily tend to harden the human heart against the tender feelings of humanity in the masters of vessels, in the sailors, in the factors, in the proprietors of the slaves, in their children, in the overseers, in the slaves themselves, and in all who habitually see those cruelties. Now the eradication or even the diminution of compassion, tenderness and humanity, is certainly a great depravation of heart, and must be followed with the correspondent depravity of manners. And measures which lead to such depravity of heart and manners, cannot but be extremely hurtful to the state, and consequently are extremely impolitic.

2. The trade is impolitic as it is so destructive of the lives of seamen. The ingenious Mr. Clarkson hath in a very satisfactory manner made it appear, that in the slave-trade alone Great-Britain loses annually about nineteen hundred seamen; and that this loss is more than double to the loss annually sustained by Great-Britain in all her other trade taken together. And doubtless we lose as many as Great-Britain in proportion to the number of seamen whom we employ in this trade.—Now can it be politic to carry on a trade which is so destructive of that useful part of our citizens, our seamen?

3. African slavery is exceedingly impolitic, as it discourages industry. Nothing is more essential to the political prosperity of any state, than industry in the citizens. But in proportion as slaves are multiplied, every kind of labour becomes ignominious: and in fact in those of the United States, in which slaves are the most numerous, gentlemen and ladies of any fashion disdain to employ themselves in business, which in other states is consistent with the dignity of the first families and first offices. In a country filled with Negro slaves, labour belongs to them only, and a white man is despised in proportion as he applies to it.—Now how destructive to industry in all of the lowest and middle class of citizens, such a situation and the prevalence of such ideas will be, you can easily

conceive. The consequence is, that some will nearly starve, others will betake themselves to the most dishonest practices, to obtain the means of living.

As slavery produces indolence in the white people, so it produces all those vices which are naturally connected with it; such as intemperance, lewdness and prodigality. These vices enfeeble both the body and the mind, and unfit men for any vigorous exertions and employments either external or mental. And those who are unfit for such exertions, are already a very degenerate race; degenerate, not only in a moral, but a natural sense. They are contemptible too, and will soon be despised even by their Negroes themselves.

Slavery tends to lewdness not only as it produces indolence, but as it affords abundant opportunity for that wickedness without either the danger and difficulty of an attack on the virtue of a woman of chastity, or the danger of a connection with one of ill fame. A planter with his hundred wenches about him is in some respects at least like the Sultan in his seraglio, and we learn the too frequent influence and effect of such a situation, not only from common fame, but from the multitude of mulattos in countries where slaves are very numerous.

Slavery has a most direct tendency to haughtiness also, and a domineering spirit and conduct in the proprietors of the slaves, in their children, and in all who have the control of them. A man who has been bred up in domineering over Negroes, can scarcely avoid contracting such a habit of haughtiness and domination, as will express itself in his general treatment of mankind, whether in his private capacity, or in any office civil or military with which he may be vested. Despotism in economics naturally leads to despotism in politics, and domestic slavery in a free government is a perfect solecism in human affairs.

How baneful all these tendencies and effects of slavery must be to the public good, and especially to the public good of such a free country as our's, I need not inform you.

4. In the same proportion as industry and labour are discouraged, is population discouraged and prevented. This is another respect in which slavery is exceedingly impolitic. That population is prevented in proportion as industry

is discouraged, is, I conceive, so plain that nothing needs to be said to illustrate it. Mankind in general will enter into matrimony as soon as they possess the means of supporting a family. But the great body of any people have no other way of supporting themselves or a family, than by their own labour. Of course as labour is discouraged, matrimony is discouraged and population is prevented.— But the impolicy of whatever produces these effects will be acknowledged by all. The wealth, strength and glory of a state depend on the number of its virtuous citizens: and a state without citizens is at least as great an absurdity, as a king without subjects.

5. The impolicy of slavery still further appears from this, that it weakens the state, and in proportion to the degree in which it exists, exposes it to become an easy conquest.—The increase of free citizens is an increase of the strength of the state. But not so with regard to the increase of slaves. They not only add nothing to the strength of the state, but actually diminish it in proportion to their number. Every slave is naturally an enemy to the state in which he is holden in slavery, and wants nothing but an opportunity to assist in its overthrow. And an enemy within a state, is much more dangerous than one without it.

These observations concerning the prevention of population and weakening the state, are supported by facts which have fallen within our own observation. That the southern states, in which slaves are so numerous, are in no measure so populous, according to the extent of territory, as the northern, is a fact of universal notoriety: and that during the late war, the southern states found themselves greatly weakened by their slaves, and therefore were so easily overrun by the British army, is equally notorious.

From the view we have now taken of this subject we scruple not to infer, that to carry on the slave-trade and to introduce slaves into our country, is not only to be guilty of injustice, robbery and cruelty toward our fellow-men; but it is to injure ourselves and our country; and therefore it is altogether unjustifiable, wicked and abominable.



## EZRA STILES ET AL.

### *The Petition and Address of the Connecticut Society, for the promotion of Freedom*

Congregationalist minister and, for seventeen years, president of Yale, Ezra Stiles (1727–1795) was one of the leading intellectuals and theologians in eighteenth-century America. This “Petition” that he and his colleagues presented to Congress in January 1791 is remarkable both for its secular and legal—rather than theological—rationale and for its authors’ claim that their petition represents the prevailing opinion in Connecticut.

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To the Honorable the SENATE and HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA, in Congress assembled—

*The PETITION and ADDRESS of the CONNECTICUT SOCIETY, for the  
promotion of Freedom, and for the relief of Persons unlawfully holden in  
Bondage:*

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT, from a sober conviction of the unrighteousness of slavery, your petitioners have long beheld, with grief, a considerable number of our fellow-men doomed to perpetual bondage, in a country which boasts of her freedom.

That, though all men are of the same species, and by nature have an equal claim to all the enjoyments of life, it has been the unhappy policy of this country, to impose slavery and want on those who are brought from Africa; while we hold forth the prospects of liberty and plenty to emigrants from all other countries.

That the principle, “that the labour of slaves is necessary to the due cultivation of our land,” has introduced a commerce in the human race far beyond the pretended necessities of our country, and has led the citizens of these States into a very extensive trade for the supply of other nations with slaves—a trade, in the end, generally unproductive to the adventurers, always destructive to the lives and morals of seamen, and, as relative to the victims devoted to slavery, most inhuman, not only with respect to their subsequent situation, but especially during their passage.

Your petitioners are fully of opinion, that calm reflection will at last convince the world, that the whole system of African slavery is unjust in its nature—impolitic in its principles—and, in its consequences, ruinous to the industry and enterprise of the citizens of these States.

From a conviction of these truths, your petitioners were led, by motives, we conceive, of general philanthropy, to associate ourselves for the protection and assistance of this unfortunate part of our fellow-men; and, though this society has been lately established, it has now become generally extensive through this state, and, we fully believe, embraces, on this subject, the sentiments of a large majority of its citizens.

With such sentiments, we, your petitioners, esteem it our indispensable duty to join with other societies, instituted for the same purpose, in requesting the interposition of the Supreme Council of the nation in behalf of that unhappy people, to check the progress of this evil system, and, while it exists, to meliorate the condition of the unfortunate sufferers.

Your petitioners rejoice that the subject excited the attention of the House of Representatives the last session; and, though it is by no means requested that Congress will enact laws which would impugn the Constitution of these United States, or be inconsistent with the general welfare of their country, yet your petitioners earnestly pray, that Congress will exert the powers constitutionally vested in them, to pass such laws as will prevent, as much as possible, the horrors of the slave trade—will prohibit the citizens of the United States from

carrying on the trade, for the purpose of supplying foreigners with slaves—will prohibit foreigners from fitting out vessels in any port of the United States, for transporting persons from Africa to any foreign port—and, as far as possible, will alleviate the sufferings of those who are now in slavery, and check the further progress of this inhuman commerce.

Your petitioners, assuring your Honors that their united exertions will ever aim at the happiness and prosperity of the American Republic, cheerfully submit this their request to the wisdom of Congress, with full confidence, that that honorable body will ever pursue the great objects of all good governments, to increase the felicity, and meliorate the condition, of the human race.

IN the name, and by order, of the Connecticut Society, for the promotion of freedom, &c.

EZRA STILES, *President of  
the said Society.*

SIMEON BALDWIN, *Secretary.*

*New-Haven, Jan. 7, 1791.*

## ROBERT PLEASANTS ET AL.

### *The Memorial of the Virginia Society, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery*

A Quaker and former plantation owner who freed his slaves in 1782 and arranged for their education, Robert Pleasants (1723–1801) helped found the Virginia Abolition Society and served as its first president. He also founded the Gravelly Hill School, the first school for free blacks in Virginia. In this petition to the U.S. Congress, Pleasants and his colleagues use stark language, calling slavery “not only an odious degradation, but an outrageous violation of one of the most essential rights of human nature.” In 1791 Virginia’s Abolition Society was one of six to appeal to Congress to abolish, or at least restrict, the slave trade; the others were Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

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To the Honorable the CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA—

*The MEMORIAL of the VIRGINIA SOCIETY, for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of free Negroes, and others, unlawfully held in bondage, and for other humane purposes:*

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

**T**HAT your memorialists, fully believing that “righteousness exalteth a nation,” and that slavery is not only an odious degradation, but an outrageous violation of one of the most essential rights of human nature, and utterly repugnant to the precepts of the gospel, which breathes “peace on earth, goodwill to men;” they lament that a practice, so inconsistent with true policy and the unalienable rights of men, should subsist in so enlightened an age, and among a people professing, that all mankind are, by nature, equally entitled to freedom. But, more especially, that a trade to Africa, for the express purpose of

enslaving and transporting that much-injured and oppressed people from their native country and connections, should be continued, or suffered, by any of the United States of America.

Your memorialists do, therefore, request, and earnestly in-treat Congress to take the premises into consideration, and exert the powers they are possessed of, in passing such laws as may put a stop to, or discourage, so unrighteous a traffic; and alleviate, as much as possible, the horrors and cruelties generally practiced in the prosecution of the trade, so contrary to every sentiment of humanity and justice, and destructive of the lives and temporal happiness of that unfortunate race of mankind. They conceive that an act so laudable, would well become the Representatives of a free people, and be pleasing in the sight of the merciful Father of all the families of the earth.

Signed, by appointment, and on behalf of the said Society, at their half-yearly meeting, held in the town of Manchester the 5th day of the 4th month, called April, 1791.

ROBERT PLEASANTS,  
*President*

Attest.

JAMES SMITH, *Secretary*.

## ANONYMOUS

### *The Wretched Taillah: An African Story*

This romantic story of love, sacrifice, and betrayal on the African coast appeared in the *Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum* for April 1792. The idealization of Africans as superior moral beings and the demonization of whites as despicable and untrustworthy reverses common prejudices of the time.

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**O**N THE banks of the Gambia was born the beautiful Taillah. Her shape was tall, regular, and elegant. Her soul seemed formed for the highest state of refinement, and had she been born of a different complexion, in this, or any civilized country, she would have been esteemed, admired and caressed. But, alas! how different her destiny! Strange that those, who call themselves civilized, without one tear of pity, can wantonly involve in misery, souls of a more dignified nature than theirs!

Taillah was the only daughter of Tantee, prince of the fertile plains stretched along the south side of the river Gambia. Of a fierce and cruel disposition, war was his only delight and employment. The northern side of the river was possessed by Fidlao, a prince less powerful, but in whose soul, although uncultivated by science, humanity and every social virtue flourished. With anguish of soul he beheld the fertile plains watered by the Gambia, still more fertilized by the heaps of his slaughtered countrymen. But overtures of peace to Tantee were in vain, while those Americans, whose traffick is the human species, gladly purchased the captives. Tantee conducted his wars with vigour, and frequently with success. To defend his subjects was Fidlao's only desire. He never could think of vending any of Tantee's subjects to the Americans, whom he ever considered as the prime cause of all their desolating wars, and as the scourges of the God of his ancestors on his species. In a battle,

fought by the two princes, Fidlao was defeated and his son, Tildah, the inheritor of all his father's virtues, was taken, and immediately bound hands and feet, and cast into a dungeon, hung around by the curtain of darkness and despair. Not a ray of light to cheer his body, nor a faint glimmering of hope to support his drooping soul—Fidlao seeing that all was lost, in a fit of despair thrust a dagger into his breast, heaping curses on Tantee, and the inhuman purchasers of his friends and countrymen.

The next day was kept a festival by the subjects of Tantee: but to Taillah it was a day of sorrow. The generous supporters of humanity, and the defenders of liberty, were sunk into wretchedness, and oblivion; while cruel barbarity oppression and tyranny stepped forth and reaped the rewards of virtue. The ghosts of her wantonly butchered countrymen haunted her imagination: the thoughts of her father's vending the unfortunate captives to the Americans, tortured her soul with anguish: The misfortunes of a young, brave, humane and virtuous prince wrought so strongly on her feelings, that she determined to effect his escape or become a sacrifice for virtue in distress. She went immediately to the keeper of the dungeon, and by bribery, at last gained admission to the gloomy confinement of Tildah. The prince, perceiving a ray of light from her torch, and supposing the message was for his murder, cried out with joy—O God of the ancestors of Fidlao, I thank thee for this prospect of a speedy end to all my miseries. Death is all I desire: Tantee has seized my kingdom, and what have I left? Separate me not from my murdered friends, separate me not from the good Fidlao. Hear my prayers, O God of the ancestors of Fidlao, for I have served thee with a pure heart. I am wretched, but, not vicious. As he thus spoke, he heard these gentle accents—"Tildah, worthy Tildah, where art thou?" What was his astonishment, when he saw before him the beautiful Taillah melting into tears of pity! She gave him some refreshment, unbound him, and retired, promising to return in the evening, and effect his escape. She took the keeper of the dungeon to her apartment, and showing him her treasures, offered them all, if he would permit the prince to depart, and report that he was dead, which was daily expected to

happen. It was too tempting. He complied. She brought him from the dungeon, and they, with a trusty female servant, took a boat and fell down the river. In searching along the coast for a place of reception, they were driven to an uninhabited island. Here they resolved to fix their residence, free from the horrid scenes of war, cruelty and devastation. Their hearts beat in perfect concord, and all was harmony and love. Each revolving year was witness of their happiness. Four years had now elapsed, since Tildah had bid adieu to misery, when, walking on the shore after a violent storm, he perceived a white person on a piece of timber. He immediately took his boat and brought him on shore. He found that he was the captain of a ship from an American port, for the express purpose of enslaving his fellow countrymen. He had ever been accustomed to consider persons of this complexion, as monsters of inhumanity, whose happiness consisted in making others miserable. But, he was in distress, and the heart of Tildah melted into pity. He led him to his cottage and treated him as a brother. The American tarried with Tildah a year, and had a son by the female servant. At length, being anxious to revisit his native country, he prevailed on Tildah to convey him, in his boat, to the *embouchure* of the Gambia, hoping there to find some American vessel. He promised Tildah, in the most sacred manner, that he would never make known the place of his retirement. Tildah returned safe to his anxious Taillah. The captain found a vessel, almost ready to sail for the West Indies, waiting to purchase only a few more slaves. This perjured villain, breaking through every bond of humanity and gratitude, informed the captain of Tildah's retirement. They sailed directly for the island, and seized the noble Tildah, and the beautiful Taillah with four children, together with the female servant and her infant, and cast them into the hold of the ship. O God! why slept thy thunder and crushed not the execrated heads of such monsters of ingratitude and inhumanity!

# SARAH WENTWORTH APTHORP MORTON

## *The African Chief*<sup>\*</sup><sub>—</sub>

Remembered as the “American Sappho,” Sarah Morton (1759–1846) emerged as a public poet after a major scandal. Descended from the Wentworths and Apthorps, two prominent Boston families, she married Perez Morton, a successful lawyer, whose affair with Sarah’s younger sister, Frances, led to the birth of an illegitimate daughter and Frances’s subsequent suicide. The scandal roiled Boston society in 1788–89, but despite Sarah’s pain, she began publishing poetry in mid-1789 and in June 1792 contributed “The African Chief” to the *Columbian Centinel*, a Boston newspaper. She later included antislavery passages in *Beacon Hill* (1797), the first volume of her unfinished epic about the American Revolution.

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See how the black ship cleaves the main,  
High bounding o’er the violet wave;  
“Remurm’ring with the groans of pain,  
Deep freighted with the princely Slave.

Did all the Gods of AFRIC sleep,  
Forgetful of their guardian love,  
When the white traitors of the deep  
Betray’d him in the palmy grove!

A Chief of GAMBIA’S golden shore,  
Whose arm the band of Warriours led;  
Perhaps the Lord of boundless power,  
By whom the foodless POOR were fed.

Does not the voice of REASON cry,

“Claim the first Right that NATURE gave,  
From the red scourge of bondage fly,  
Nor deign to live a burden’d Slave!”

Has not his suff’ring offspring clung  
Desponding round his fetter’d knee;  
On his worn shoulder weeping hung,  
And urg’d one effort to be free!

His WIFE by nameless wrongs subdu’d,  
His bosom’s-friend to death resign’d,  
The flinty path-way bath’d in blood,  
Pour’d tortures on his frantick mind.

Stung by despair he sought the plain,  
To Heaven uprais’d his starting eye,  
Claim’d FREEDOM from the crushing chain,  
Or mid the battle’s rage to die.

First of his race, he led the band,  
Guardless of dangers floating round,  
’Till by his fierce avenging hand,  
Full many a despot stain’d the ground.

As erst MESSE<sup>u</sup>ENIA’S sons\* oppress’d  
Flew desp’rate to the sanguine field,  
With iron cloath’d each injur’d breast,  
And bid the haughty Spartan yield.

Does not the soul, to Heaven allied,  
Feel the full heart as greatly swell,

As when the *Roman Cato* died,  
Or when the *Grecian Victim*<sup>†</sup> fell!

If later deeds quick raptures raise,  
The boons by BELGIA'S patriots won,  
PAOLI'S time-enduring praise,  
Or the still greater WASHINGTON.

If these command thy generous zeal,  
Who scorn'd a tyrant's mad controul,  
For bleeding GAMBIA learn to feel,  
Whose Chieftain claim'd a kindred soul.

Ah! mourn the lost disastrous hour,  
Lift the red eye of bootless grief,  
While numbers throng the sultry shore,  
And tear from Hope the captive Chief.

While the hard race of *pallid hue*,  
Unpractic'd in the power to feel;  
Resign him to the murd'ring crew—  
The horrors of the quiv'ring wheel.

Let SORROW bathe each blushing cheek,  
Bend piteous o'er the tortur'd Slave,  
Whose wrongs COMPASSION cannot speak,  
Whose only refuge, is the grave.

PHILENIA

(1792)

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*\* Captured in arms at St. Domingo, fighting for his FREEDOM.*

*\* The Messenian nation being finally conquered by the Spartans, and the miserable remnant (according to the custom of the age) led into slavery, were so inhumanely oppressed and afflicted by their masters, that in an effort of despair they united in arms, and seizing upon a fortress, after innumerable cruelties inflicted, obtained their freedom.*

† LEONIDAS.

# NOAH WEBSTER

from *Effects of Slavery on Morals and Industry*

A Connecticut native, Yale graduate, failed lawyer, and, from 1782, schoolmaster and writer of grammar and spelling books, Noah Webster (1758–1843) had not yet published his landmark *Dictionary* when he wrote the long treatise against slavery from which this excerpt is taken. Drawing on historical and international examples, Webster warns the young American republic about the deleterious effects of slavery on masters and slaves alike, and the threat to the survival of any government that sustains the institution.

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THE history of the European settlements in the West Indies abounds with facts which evince the perpetual danger to which men are exposed, when surrounded with slaves. The numerous insurrections of the negroes which have, at different times, harassed those settlements, have taught the planters to depend on the bayonet only for the safety of their persons and estates. Nor will this resource always supply the want of confidence in the fidelity of their domestics. Treachery often eludes the watchman's eye, and the lordly *master* himself, tho' surrounded with guards, becomes the *slave* of suspicion and distrust.

WITHOUT entering into a detail of the calamities and horrors that have been occasioned in the West Indies by the attempts of slaves to recover their liberty and avenge their wrongs, it will be sufficient barely to mention the present deplorable state of the French colony in St. Domingo. The miseries of that Island are the theme of almost every gazette. To recapitulate them would be useless; for who among my readers does not recollect the accounts he has read the last two years? and whose blood is not chilled at recollecting the recitals of cruelty, outrage and murder which have marked the bloody scenes? Where is the civilized man, who has tasted the pleasures and known the value of peace and

security, who can willingly renounce the enjoyment of both, for the sake of living in splendor, and yield himself a prey to the vexations of unceasing watchfulness and suspicion? Who can sacrifice the cheerfulness, contentment and confidence that reign among equals and fellow citizens, the felicities that bless a nation of freemen and freeholders, for the society of ignorant stupid slaves and treacherous dependants? Can the human mind be so debased as to rejoice in the wretchedness of man? Surely the master as well as the slave, must lose the sensibilities of his nature, and degenerate to a brute, before he can endure the sight of men doomed to linger out their existence in chains, bending beneath the pressure of heavy burthens, crippled with hard labor and bruises, emaciated with hunger, scourged by their merciless drivers, hopeless and forlorn, courting the relentless monster, *death*, to wrest them from the hands of that more unfeeling monster, *man*.\*

THIS leads me to notice some effects of slavery on the character of the master. It is a general truth that the men who, from their infancy *hold*, and those who *feel*, the rod of tyranny, become equally hardened by the exercise of cruelty, and equally insensible to the sufferings of their fellow men. Such is the nature and tendency of despotism, that in its operation, it not only checks the progress of civilization, but actually converts the civilized man into a savage; at least so far as respects the humane affections of the heart.

In ancient Rome, parents had the most despotic power over their children. By the laws of Romulus, confirmed by the laws of the twelve tables, fathers might sell or even slay their children.† The same absolute authority had masters over their slaves;‡ tho before the close of the Republic this power was abridged by the Cornelian Law, and was finally abolished by the Emperor Adrian.

THESE unlimited powers exercised by the old Romans, together with their martial life, and the constant view of the combats of the gladiators, which habituated them to scenes of blood and cruelty, inspired them with a barbarous fierceness, which prepared them for the practice of public plunder and private

assassination.\* But were the Romans more cruel by nature than modern nations? Were they more savage in their tempers than the lordly despots of the present age, who are accustomed to tyrannize over slaves? “Do we not perceive,” says that judicious traveller Dr. Moore,† “that the practice of domestic slavery has, at this day, a strong tendency to render men haughty, capricious and cruel? Such is the nature of man, that if he has power without controul, he will use it without justice; absolute power has a strong tendency to make good men bad, and never fails to make bad men worse.”

It may be remarked that with respect to a great number of vices, the extremes of society approach very near each other. The tyrant is above law, and his slave is below it. “Men, in excess of happiness or misery,” says Montesquieu,‡ “are equally inclinable to severity; witness conquerors and monks.” He might have extended the remark to *masters* and *slaves*, who in general are equally lazy, cruel and ferocious. So with respect to excessive gaming, says Millar, in his historical view of the English Government,§ which is a vice peculiarly predominant in the most rude and barbarous, as well as the most luxurious and opulent nations.\*\* The same observation may be made with respect to excessive drinking. The progress of power and wealth in civilized states may, as it respects the prevalence of these and some other vices, be resembled to a circle; making the equal poverty and independence of the savage state the point at which the progress begins and pursuing it to the opposite point, we have that state of society in which mediocrity of fortune and power give lenity to government and mildness to manners; but in pursuing the progress further, we find great wealth and power with excessive poverty, and society, with a retrogradual motion, approaching the original point of barbarism. An extreme disparity of circumstances renders one class of men the masters of the other, and the *tyrant*, and his *slave* in their cruelty, their stubbornness, their laziness, their inhumanity, and their excessive passion for revenge become allied to *savages*.\* Whatever exceptions there may be to this rule, it is generally true

that the possession of power renders men proud, insolent, cruel, vindictive; and the reason why this character is not applicable, in its full extent, to American planters who are owners of slaves, is not that Americans are born with better hearts than other men, or that the nature of domestic tyranny is changed, but it is because the immediate exercise of despotism is delegated to substitutes. The negro driver is generally the active tyrant, and acquires all the ferocious qualities connected with his profession.

It is remarkable likewise that a spirit of private revenge is more prevalent among the little tyrants who are educated with slaves, than among the citizens of a free state where there is little distinction of rank and power. I refer in particular to the custom of duelling, which is merely a savage spirit of revenge, set in motion by a squeamish delicacy about trifles and regulated by certain rules of refinement falsely called *laws of honor*. This custom, which had its origin in the dark ages of European savageness, when the right of private revenge and hostility was in full exercise,<sup>†</sup> is retained in all parts of Europe and America, where slavery exists, and is nearly or totally banished from states where there is full liberty and equality of rights among all the citizens. Every year brings us news of the fatal effects of this savage practice in the southern States of America; but in the eastern states the practice can be hardly said to exist. To the honor of the laws, the institutions, and the manners of this state, be it remembered, that no instance of this barbarous custom has yet stained the annals of our Republic.

The exercise of uncontrolled power, always gives a peculiar complexion to the manners, passions and conversation both of the oppressor and the oppressed.

The tyrant is rough, boisterous, irritable—he takes fire at a word or a wink, and blood must satiate his vengeance. In moderate governments, men are taught to moderate their passions and pretensions; by the diffusion of power, its force is divided and weakened; every man's right is controuled by the equal right of his neighbor, as well as by the laws; equality of rights begets mutual respect, and respect begets affability, condescension and mildness of manners.\*

The character of the inhabitants in almost all free republican states, where domestic slavery does not exist, verifies these remarks.

(1793)

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\* The negroes in the West Indies consider death as a deliverance from servitude and a restoration to their native country. Hence their funerals are seasons of joy and festivity, and are attended with dancing.

† In liberos suprema partum auctoritas esto; venundare, occidere liceto. Leg. Rom. This power of the father over his children was restrained by imperial constitutions before the times of Justinian. See Justin Inst. lib. 1. tit. 9.

‡ Justin. Inst. lib. 1. tit. 8.

\*Montesq. Reflections on the causes of the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. p. 118.

† vol. 1. p. 212. where the reader will find some excellent remarks on this subject. See also Hume's Essays vol. 1. p. 402.

‡ Spirit of Laws, book 6. chap. 9.

§ page 30. 31.

\*\* Tacitus de Mor. Germ. ca. 24. 22.

\* The editor of Watson's Phillip. 3d remarks that "ideas of superior dignity have a tendency to blunt the sense of injustice committed against inferiors." page 408. note.

† Millar's hist. view of the Engl. gov. p. 62. The practice of private stabbing, formerly so common in England, and still frequent in Spain, and some other countries, may be traced to this source; but universal liberty and science will banish it from the earth.

\* Men are better and more amiable, in proportion as they are happier. Moderate independence banishes care and disposes the mind to joy and beneficence. Bourq. travels vol. 1. 383. The character of the Swiss in the free Cantons, and of the New-England people, is a full proof of this doctrine; but the most illustrious example of the effects of equal rights among men, is the peaceable disposition of the Quakers. It is curious to mark the different effects which steady laws and the arbitrary exercise of will have upon the manners of men. The government of the Quakers is very absolute and rigid; but it is the authority of *laws* and *rules*, and not of *arbitrary will*; therefore *steady* in its operation. Hence the firm, uniform, systematic deportment of the members of that society. A Quaker is seldom capricious, or irritable; but moderate in his passions, slow in deciding, and very persevering. How different is a man born in the same nation, who has been accustomed to brandish his whip over slaves.

# TIMOTHY DWIGHT

from *Greenfield Hill*;  
from *Triumph of Democracy*;  
from *The Charitable Blessed*

A theologian, teacher, pastor, writer, Revolutionary War veteran, and academic leader, Timothy Dwight (1752–1817) held the presidency of Yale for twenty-one years (1795–1816) while publishing sermons, tracts, and some of the most important early American poetry. Several passages of his epic poem *Greenfield Hill*, about a quintessentially American village of the same name, concern the evils of slavery. In this excerpt, Dwight scrutinizes the dehumanizing effects of slavery on the personal development of individuals at every stage of life, ultimately damning slavery as “Satan’s triumph over lost mankind.” In his poem of 1801, in the wake of a Virginia slave insurrection known as Gabriel’s Rebellion and of Thomas Jefferson’s election to the presidency, the Federalist Dwight portrays slavery as the gravest danger for America’s future. In his sermon on charity, delivered August 8, 1810, in the First Church in New Haven, Dwight stressed the responsibility of Christians to fight against slavery and relieve the sufferings of free blacks.

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from *Greenfield Hill*

See fresh to life the Afric infant spring,  
And plume its powers, and spread its little wing!  
Firm is its frame, and vigorous is its mind,  
Too young to think, and yet to misery blind.  
But soon he sees himself to slavery born;  
Soon meets the voice of power, the eye of scorn;  
Sighs for the blessings of his peers, in vain;  
Condition’d as a brute, tho’ form’d a man.  
Around he casts his fond. instinctive eyes.

And sees no good, to fill his wishes, rise:  
(No motive warms, with animating beam,  
Nor praise, nor property, nor kind esteem,  
Bless'd independence, on his native ground,  
Nor sweet equality with those around;)  
Himself, and his, another's shrinks to find,  
Levell'd below the lot of human kind.  
Thus, shut from honour's paths, he turns to shame,  
And filches the small good, he cannot claim.  
To sour, and stupid, sinks his active mind;  
Finds joys in drink, he cannot elsewhere find;  
Rule disobeys; of half his labour cheats;  
In some safe cot, the pilfer'd turkey eats;  
Rides hard, by night, the steed, his art purloins;  
Serene from conscience' bar himself essoins;  
Sees from himself his sole redress must flow,  
And makes revenge the balsam of his woe.

Thus slavery's blast bids sense and virtue die;  
Thus lower'd to dust the sons of Afric lie.  
Hence sages grave, to lunar systems given,  
Shall ask, why two-legg'd brutes were made by HEAVEN;  
HOME seek, what pair first peopled Afric's vales,  
And nice MONBODDO calculate their tails.

O thou chief curse, since curses here began;  
First guilt, first woe, first infamy of man;  
Thou spot of hell, deep smirch'd on human kind,  
The uncur'd gangrene of the reasoning mind;  
Alike in church, in state, and household all,

Supreme memorial of the world's dread fall;  
O slavery! laurel of the Infernal mind,  
Proud Satan's triumph over lost mankind!

(1794)

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from *Triumph of Democracy*

Proceed great state—thy arts renew,  
With double zeal thy course pursue,  
Call on thy sister states to obey,  
And boldly grasp at sovereign sway—  
Then pause—remember ere too late,  
The tale of St. Domingo's fate.  
Tho' *Gabriel* dies a host remain  
Oppress'd with slavery's galling chain,  
And soon or late the hour will come,  
Mark'd with Virginia's dreadful doom.

(1801)

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from *The Charitable Blessed*

This unfortunate race of people are in a situation, which peculiarly demands the efforts of charity, and demands them from *us*. *Our* parents and ancestors have brought *their* parents, or ancestors, in the course of a most iniquitous traffic, from their native country; and made them slaves. I have no doubt, that those, who were concerned in this infamous commerce, imagined themselves justified;

and am not disposed to load their memory either with imprecations or censures. Happily for *us*, the question has been made a subject of thought and investigation. This decided it at once: and we are now astonished, that it could ever have given rise to a single doubt. Under the influence of overwhelming conviction, we have made the descendants of these abused people free. Here we have stopped; and complimented, and congratulated, ourselves for having done our duty. But notwithstanding this self-complacency, it is questionable, my Brethren, whether we have rendered to the present race of this people any real service. You will ask, "Have we not made them free? and is not liberty, in the acknowledgement of all men, a pre-eminent blessing?" Liberty, my Brethren, is a blessing in the hands of those, who know how to use it, and are disposed to use it to good purposes. It may easily be abused by ignorance; it will certainly be abused by vice; and, whenever it is abused, it becomes a curse, instead of a blessing.

But these people, I need not inform you, are, generally, neither able, nor inclined, to make their freedom a blessing to themselves. When they first become free, they are turned out into the world, in circumstances, fitted to make them only nuisances to society. They have no property; nor any skill to acquire it. Nor have they, in the proper sense, generally any industry. They have been indeed used to labour; but it was under the controul, and for the benefit, of others. The *hatred of labour*, in this situation, becomes the habit; not the labour itself. They have no economy; and waste, of course, much of what they earn. They have little knowledge either of morals or religion. They are left, therefore, as miserable victims to sloth, prodigality, poverty, ignorance and vice. We complain of their vice. Who in such circumstances would not be vicious? They have the usual appetites and passions of man; and love to eat and drink, to wear finery, and to riot in amusements, just as we do; but are unfurnished with those restraints on these propensities, with which a merciful God has furnished us.

As these people are thus in a great measure unable to provide for themselves, and to regulate their own conduct; they must be equally unfit to

educate their children, and to form them to habits of industry, economy, morals, or religion. Knowledge and habits, which they themselves have not, they cannot communicate. Their children must grow up in more dismal ignorance, and with even worse habits, than those of their parents. The parents have often grown up in respectable families; have, in many instances at least, received some instruction; have seen some good examples; and have been trained up in some good habits of industry and behaviour. All these benefits, however, very many of them have lost, under the influence of that delirious folly, which so frequently accompanies the unexpected acquisition of freedom; and all of them must be much worse instructors, than those by whom they themselves were taught. The children, therefore, must, in all cases, be very imperfectly educated; and, in most, will not be educated at all. In this manner the progeny of these people will naturally decline, until they have reached the lowest point of degradation both in ignorance and vice; and will become blots and burdens upon society: not because they are weaker, or worse, by nature, than we are; but because they are destitute of the advantages, which, under God, raise us above their miserable level.

When we introduced these unhappy people into this country, we charged ourselves with the whole care of their temporal and eternal interests; and became responsible to God for the manner, in which we should perform this duty. It is in vain to alledge, that *our ancestors* brought them hither, and not we. As well might a son, who inherited an ample patrimony, refuse to pay a debt, because it was contracted by his father. We inherit our ample patrimony with all its incumbrances; and are bound to pay the debts of our ancestors. *This* debt, particularly, we are bound to discharge: and, when the righteous Judge of the Universe comes to reckon with his servants, he will rigidly exact the payments at our hands. To give them liberty, and stop here, is to entail upon them a curse. We are bound to give them, also, knowledge, industry, economy, good habits, moral and religious instruction, and all the means of eternal life. Did no commands of God, did no appeal to conscience and charity, require this at our

hands; our own interest, and that of our descendants, demands it all. The performance of this duty will make them blessings, the neglect of it will make them curses, to society.

*(1810)*

## PHILIP FRENEAU

### *On the Migration to America, and Peopling the Western Country; Virginia: A Fragment*

Born to a prosperous New York family, Philip Freneau (1752–1832) entered the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) the year after the death of his father, in 1767, and graduated in 1771. A poem he co-wrote with classmate Hugh Henry Brackenridge, “The Rising Glory of America,” was read to the graduating class that included future president James Madison. Supporting himself as a teacher, clerk, farmer, ship’s officer, and, under the sponsorship of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, as the editor of one of the young nation’s very partisan newspapers, Freneau would never fully escape the shadow of poverty, but would all the while pursue his avocation as a poet. He formed an antipathy to slavery while working in the Caribbean in the 1770s and 1780s, and wrote about it in early poems such as “The Island Field Hand” (1784). In “On the Migration to America,” Freneau connected the movement of people westward—from Europe to America and from the east coast to western territories—with the spread of freedom and the prospect of a future without slavery. By 1795, no longer in Jefferson’s employ, he wrote “Virginia,” his indictment of the Old Dominion for its continuing dependence on slave labor. Presaging the looming sectional rift, Freneau distinguishes the work ethic of Northern whites from the “languor” of Virginians, disdaining them as “boors inactive” who “still rely / On the sad negro for the year’s supply.”

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### *On The Migration to America, and Peopling the Western Country*

To western woods and lonely plains,  
Palemon from the crowd departs,  
Where Nature’s wildest genius reigns,  
To tame the soil, and plant the arts—  
What wonders there shall Freedom show!

What mighty states successive grow!

From Europe's proud, despotic shores,  
Hither the stranger takes his way,  
And, in our new-found world, explores  
A happier soil—a milder sway—  
Where no proud despot holds him down,  
No slaves insult him with a crown.

What charming scenes attract the eye  
On wild Ohio's savage stream!  
Here Nature reigns, whose works outvie  
The boldest pattern Art can frame—  
Here ages past have roll'd away,  
And forests bloom'd but to decay.

From these fair plains, these rural seats,  
(So long conceal'd, so lately known)  
Th' unsocial Indian far retreats,  
To make some other clime his own—  
Where other streams, less pleasing, flow,  
And darker forests round him grow.

Great fire of floods\*! whose rapid wave  
Thro' various countries takes its way,  
To which creating Nature gave  
Unnumber'd streams to swell thy sway:  
No longer shall they useless prove,  
Nor idly thro' the forest rove.

No longer shall thy princely flood  
From distant lakes be swell'd in vain.

FROM DISTANT TAKES BE SWELL'D IN VAIN,  
Nor longer, through a darksome wood,  
Advance, unnotic'd, to the main;  
Far other ends the fates decree,  
And Commerce plans new freights for thee.

While Virtue warms the gen'rous breast,  
Here heaven-born Freedom shall reside;  
Nor shall the voice of War molest,  
Nor Europe's all-aspiring pride:  
Here Reason shall new laws devise,  
And order from confusion rise.

Forsaking kings and regal state,  
With all their pomp and fancied bliss,  
The trav'ler owns—convinc'd—tho' late,  
No realm so free, so blest as this:  
The east is half to slaves consign'd,  
And half to slavery more refin'd.

O come the time, and haste the day,  
When man shall man no longer crush!  
When Reason shall enforce her sway,  
Nor those fair regions raise our blush,  
Where still the African complains,  
And mourns his, yet unbroken, chains.

Far brighter scenes, a future age,  
The muse predicts, these states shall hail,  
Whose genius shall the world engage,  
Whose deeds shall over Death prevail!  
And happier systems bring to view,

Than ever eastern sages knew.

(1794)

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*Virginia:*  
A FRAGMENT

Vast in extent, VIRGINIA meets my view,  
With streams immense, dark groves, and mountains blue;  
First in provincial rank she long was seen,  
Built the first town, and first subdued the plain:  
This was her praise—but what can years avail  
When times succeeding see her efforts fail!  
On northern fields more vigorous arts display,  
Where pleasure holds no universal sway;  
No herds of slaves parade their sooty band  
From the rough plough to save the fopling's hand,  
Where urgent wants the daily pittance ask,  
Compell to labour, and complete the task.

A race of slaves, throughout their country spread,  
From different soils extort the owner's bread;  
Averse to toil, the natives still rely  
On the sad negro for the year's supply;  
He, patient, early quits his poor abode,  
Toils at the hoe, or TOTES some ponderous load,  
Sweats at the axe, or, pensive and forlorn,  
Sighs for the eve, to parch his stinted corn!  
With watchful eye maintains his much-lov'd fire,  
Nor even in summer lets its spark expire—

At night returns, his evening toils to share,  
Lament his rags, or sleep away his care,  
Bind up the recent wound, with many a groan;  
Or thank his gods that SUNDAY is his own.

To these far climes the scheming Scotchman flies,  
Quits his bleak hills to court *Virginian* skies;  
Remov'd from oat-meal, sour-croust, debts, and duns,  
Prudent, he hastes to bask in kinder suns;  
Marks well the native—views his weaker side,  
And heaps up wealth from luxury and pride,  
Exports the produce of a thousand plains,  
Nor fears a rival, to divide his gains.

Deep in their beds, as distant to their source  
Here many a river winds its wandering course:  
Proud of her bulky freight, through plains and woods  
Moves the tall ship, majestic, o'er the floods,  
Where *James's* strength the ocean brine repels,  
Or, like a sea, the deep *Potowmack* swells:  
Yet here the sailor views with wondering eye  
Impoverish'd fields that near their margins lie,  
Mercantile towns, where languor holds her reign,  
And boors inactive, on the exhausted plain.

(1795)

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\* Mississippi

## DAVID HUMPHREYS

from *A Poem on Industry Addressed to the Citizens of the United States of America*;  
from *A Valedictory Discourse*

Connecticut born and Yale educated, David Humphreys (1752–1818) fought in the American Revolution, eventually serving on Washington’s staff, before going on to the life of a farmer and businessman who also served his country as a diplomat and wrote serious literary works. A prolific member of the first generation of self-consciously American writers, Humphreys—like his contemporaries Dwight, Barlow, Trumbull, Freneau, Morton, Rush, and Webster—believed that the ideals on which America was founded demanded the abolition of slavery. While one might expect a prominent ex–army officer of the time to adopt a stoic attitude, the tone of his “Poem on the Industry of the United States” is remarkably emotional. He describes the miseries of slavery in language evocative of Christ’s physical ordeal: “Their bleeding bosoms bathe with oil and wine / Bind up their wounds.” A decade later, Humphreys inserted verses against slavery into a speech to fellow veterans in Hartford, Connecticut, asking rhetorically, twenty-one years after American independence had been won, “How long in vain shall Afric’s race be mourn’d / In hopeless bondage, unredeem’d, how long?”

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from *A Poem on Industry Addressed to the Citizens of the United States of America*;

Now first I sing of sweets, untried too long,  
Now first, sweet Maple! consecrate the song!  
Dancing around, in many a mazy ring,  
Thee shall our youths, and thee our virgins sing;  
In sacch’rine streams, thou pour’st the tide of life,  
Yet grow’st still stronger from th’ innocuous knife:

Thy blood, more sweet than Hyblean honey, flows  
Balm for the heart-sick, cure of Slav'ry's woes;  
Bleed on, blest tree! and as thy sweet blood runs,  
Bestow fond hope on Afric's sable Sons.

Oh could my song impressive horror bring,  
And conscience arm with more than mortal sting,  
From stony eyes the tender tear should start,  
And mercy melt the long obdur'd of heart.  
See naked Slaves, who tend the dulcet reeds,  
Whose murder'd flesh beneath their butcher bleeds,  
And hear their dolorous groans!—then say, how good,  
How sweet the dainties steep'd in human blood!

What tho' eternal darkness shades the race,  
Tho' grosser features vilify the face;  
Tho' no warm blushes changeless cheeks adorn  
With crimson stains, like transient clouds of morn;  
Tho' nature ne'er extends their woolly hair,  
In golden ringlets, exquisitely fair!  
Yet has not God infus'd immortal pow'rs,  
The same their organs and their souls as ours?  
Are they not made to ruminare the sky?  
Or must they perish like the beasts that die?  
Perish the thought, which men's high worth impairs,  
Sons of Omnipotence and Glory's Heirs!

Ah! ye who love the human race divine,  
And fondly wish to cherish all who pine;  
In milk of human kindness bless the tree,  
Which soon shall help to set the bondman free:

For soon shall int'rest man's fierce wrath assuage,  
And heav'n restrain the remnant of his rage.

Not long shall human flesh be bought and sold,  
The Charities of life exchange'd for gold!  
For soon shall Commerce, better understood,  
Teach happier barter for the mutual good.

(1794)

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from *A Valedictory Discourse*

Was it for this, incomparably bold,  
Led by your godlike chief, through climates far,  
We brav'd the summer's heat, the winter's cold,  
Breasting the dreadful enginery of war  
Through eight long years, in many a gory field,  
High in the van, the starry flag unfurl'd,  
Till peace (with heroes' blood the treaty seal'd)  
Confirm'd man's equal rights in this new world?  
What! while we hear the clank of slavery's chains,  
Mix'd with discordant sounds of patriot zeal;  
While love of freedom throbs through veteran veins,  
For Afric's sons shall we no pity feel?  
How long in vain shall Afric's race be mourn'd?  
In hopeless bondage, unredeem'd, how long?  
No hand to help—with cries for justice spurn'd—

Cringe at the cutting of the penal thong?

Ye planters! bashaws! cast one kind regard  
On blacks from Guinea brought for barter'd gold;  
Or, blind to interest as of feeling hard,  
Can ye with cruel scorn their woes behold?

Will no good angel on the Lybean shore,  
Dash the curst vessel destin'd to our climes;  
Ere yet augmented slaves with flames and gore  
Retort their wrongs, and measure crimes for crimes?

Behold!—oh, horror!—HAYTI'S bloody strand!  
Mark! how the lesson erst by white-men giv'n,  
Not vainly taught the barb'rous sable band,  
To claim the *birth-right* held alone from Heav'n.<sup>1</sup>

Dark rose the negroes—'twas the dread resolve,  
That *right* to rescue, or with *it* expire,  
Bade the strong bolts that bound their flesh dissolve,  
Like flaxen cords before devouring fire.

Once whitemen triumph'd—blackmen now are free;  
While fearful noises fluctuate on the wind,  
Late victors fly for safety to the sea,  
And not a haughty master lags behind.

Thou blot on nature, Slavery! disappear!  
Yet, monster! yet, a moment, from thy mouth,  
Shall gall and venom tinge the verdant year,  
And blast the glories of the boasted South.

Then bright through hursting clouds the aurora trace!

then, bright through bursting clouds, the aurora trace.

Though long the night, and murky low'r'd the sky,  
Lift up your heads! ye much enduring race!

Lift up your heads! for your redemption's nigh.

*(July 4, 1804)*

# CHARLES PINCKNEY SUMNER

from *The Compass*

In this undergraduate literary production, written while a student at Harvard, Charles Pinckney Sumner (1776–1839) devotes his closing lines to a call for America to lead the nations of the world in eradicating slavery and inequality. Decades later, his son Charles Sumner, as abolitionist crusader and senator from Massachusetts, would carry that spirit forward in his lifelong fight against slavery.

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More true inspir'd, we antedate the time,  
When futile war shall cease thro' every clime;  
No sanction'd slavery AFRIC'S sons degrade,  
But equal rights shall equal earth pervade;  
When fearless Commerce by the *compass* led  
On every wave her *sacred flag* shall spread,  
With liberal course to either pole shall run,  
Or round the zodiac travel with the sun;  
No narrow treaty sell the boundless sea,  
Which nature's charter to the world made free;  
When all the compact, which this globe shall bind,  
Shall be the *mutual good* of all mankind;  
When welcome COOKS earth's union'd round shall sail,  
And view unbounded bliss thro' every land prevail.

(1795)

## ANONYMOUS

### from *Reflections on the Slavery of the Negroes, Addressed to the Conscience of Every American Citizen*

Signing himself cryptically as “L.B.C.” of Arlington in Bennington County, Vermont, and publishing his verses in *The Rural Magazine: or, Vermont Repository* for July 1796, this poet seems to be a voice out of nowhere. Vermont abolished slavery in its founding constitution in 1777. Yet this passionate Vermonter was stirred to address his fellow Americans on what he saw as the country’s most urgent issue.

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Reason, Columbians, we assert, prevails,  
Presides and smiles o’er all our fed’rate realms;  
And, uncontroul’d religion, from on high,  
In pristine purity, reigns all around;  
Our governments and laws, we likewise say  
Have nature, truth, and virtue for their base,  
Our tongues and pens to earth around declare  
That men of ev’ry climate, name, and hue,  
Are equal all, and all ought to be free:  
But let’s preach on however long and true,  
And rant about celestial reason’s sway,  
And boast our justice, truth, and righteous laws,  
And our great love for universal man—  
Still we are hypocrites, and traitors base,  
To reason, justice, charity, and truth.  
Behold these shameful scenes round southern states;  
See kindred beings of each sex and age,  
Like bestial herds, submit to their cruel tail

Like vesual nerus, wimpt to men cruel ton,  
Tir'd, naked, hungry, thirsty, and abus'd;—  
See, as they move with weary limbs along  
With woe worn hearts, and pensive cheerless meins,  
Their tears fast pour and wet the clods they tread—  
Their sighs ascend, and join the passing gale—  
Their flowing blood pursues th' inhuman stroke,  
Inflicted without cause by Christians vile,  
And blent with sweat pursue, the earth disdain.  
Should wise Columbians be what wisdom scorns?  
Should their wise senates tolerate such wrongs?  
Should myriads of them, deem'd unright and just,  
Supremely civiliz'd, humane, and free,  
Derive their pleasures, substance, and support,  
From brethren's anguish, sorrow, sighs, and tears?  
Should such impiety pollute our soil,  
Which fling disgrace on all Columbia's sons?  
Should human flesh be 'slav'd, and bought, and sold,  
Here where pure liberty exalts her throne,  
Th' asylum calm of persecuted man?  
Is it because they're ignorant, and poor,  
Unfriended, helpless, innocent, and weak,  
That Afric's children should be Christians' slaves?  
Is it because they're of the Pagan race,  
Untutor'd in the Bible's sacred love?  
Our ancestors throughout Europa's climes,  
Were Painims too, ere they the gospel heard.—  
For reason potent, needless to explain,  
Columbians should before all nations else,  
Disclaim all property in fellow men,  
And set the long insulted Negro free

And set the long insulted Negro free.  
A soul he has immortal as our own;  
And flesh and blood as rich as monarchs boast;  
And precious in the sight of God as ours:  
His birth, feelings, passions, powers, and wants,  
Decline, and death, to ours are similar.

(1796)

# ST. GEORGE TUCKER

from *A Dissertation on Slavery:  
With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of  
Virginia*

Born in Bermuda and educated at the College of William and Mary, St. George Tucker (1752–1827) trained as a lawyer, fought in the American Revolution, married into the Virginia plantocracy, and succeeded George Wythe as professor of law at his alma mater. Tucker’s affiliation with the Virginia establishment and his careful legal reasoning tempered his loathing of slavery. His *Dissertation* outlined a plan involving gradualism, compensation for slave-owners, and relocation of freed blacks to western territories. Nonetheless, Tucker warned his fellow Virginians not to postpone abolition because “every day renders the task more arduous to be performed.”

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Those slave holders (whose numbers I trust are few) who have been in the habit of considering their fellow creatures as no more than cattle, and the rest of the brute creation, will exclaim that they are to be deprived of their *property*, without compensation. Men who will shut their ears against this moral truth, that all men are by nature *free*, and *equal*, will not even be convinced that they do not possess a *property* in an *unborn* child: they will not distinguish between allowing to *unborn* generations the absolute and unalienable rights of human nature, and taking away that which they *now possess*; they will shut their ears against truth, should you tell them, the loss of the mother’s labour for nine months, and the maintenance of a child for a dozen or fourteen years, is amply compensated by the services of that child for as many years more, as he has been an expence to them. But if the voice of reason, justice and humanity be not stifled by sordid avarice, or unfeeling tyranny, it would be easy to convince even

those who have entertained such erroneous notions, that the right of one man over another is neither founded in nature, nor in sound policy. That it cannot extend to those *not in being*; that no man can in reality be *deprived* of what he doth not possess: that fourteen years labour by a young person in the prime of life, is an ample compensation for a few months of labour lost by the mother, and for the maintenance of a child, in that coarse homely manner that Negroes are brought up: And lastly, that a state of slavery is not only perfectly incompatible with the principles of government, but with the safety and security of their masters. History evinces this. At this moment we have the most awful demonstrations of it. Shall we then neglect a duty, which every consideration, moral, religious, political, or *selfish*, recommends. Those who wish to postpone the measure, do not reflect that every day renders the task more arduous to be performed. We have now 300,000 slaves among us. Thirty years hence we shall have double the number. In forty years we shall have 1,200,000. And in less than another century from this day, even that enormous number will be doubled. Milo acquired strength enough to carry an ox, by beginning with the ox while he was yet a calf. If we complain that the calf is too heavy for our shoulders, what will not the ox be?

(1796)

## ANONYMOUS

### from *The American in Algiers, or the Patriot of Seventy-Six in Captivity*

The unknown writer of this long poem presents himself in Canto II as a “sable bard,” a black man who tells the story of his capture as a child in Africa, his endurance of the Middle Passage, and his sale as a slave in Baltimore when the American colonies were still under British rule. Writing years after American independence, the speaker, now an old man, excoriates America for its hypocrisy in proclaiming freedom but denying it to black slaves.

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I now address a much respected band,  
And bid my lays to ev'ry heart expand;  
You who have triumph'd in the field of mars,  
And led whole squadrons to the din of wars:  
And you brave patriots who in private ranks,  
Laid claims well founded to your country's thanks;  
Who now the last, o'er trembling slaves extend,  
And insult daily with oppression blend;  
Kings of your kitchens, say tyrannic lords,  
What impulse prompted to unsheath your swords,  
'Midst toils and dangers eight long years to wield,  
Each murd'rous weapon in th' embattled field;  
If love of liberty impell'd the fight,  
Why now deprive another of his right?  
That very right for which you shed your blood,  
And solemnly appeal'd to nature's God;  
Where are the rights you once so fondly taught?

where are the rights you once so loudly taught:  
Or where the liberty for which you fought?  
You say all men were first created free,  
Whence then the right t' usurp their liberty?  
Hath not the African as good a right,  
Deriv'd from nature to enslave the white?  
As whites to say the hue our climate gave,  
Our rights shall forfeit and ourselves enslave?  
Do we not see where'er we turn our view,  
Throughout all nature's children different hues?  
And do white hogs the unjust priv'lege claim,  
To make the black ones root the ground for them?  
Did e'er the whites among the feather'd brood,  
Compel the blacks for them to gather food?  
Think what an inconsistency 'twould be,  
Such usurpation in the brutes to see:  
As inconsistent are the steps you trace,  
You conquer'd tyrants to supply their place.

Thus freedom's sons, who once a despot spurn'd,  
Now plac'd in pow'r have equal despots turn'd,  
Rul'd by the Deamon of inconstancy,  
They fought for freedom, yet enslave the free;  
If in past ages steps you're now to tread,  
In vain your vaunted heroes fought and bled:  
In vain Montgomery, Warren, Mercer fell;  
In vain the World their wond'rous actions tell;  
Because your fathers stole their neighbor's good,  
Must you pursue the crooked paths they trod?  
If rogues obtain our property by stealth,  
Should that debar the owner from his wealth?  
Your laws are strict — and true to be observ'd

Your laws are strict—and woe to he or she  
Who dares infringe the right of property!  
'Tis a vast crime to steal man's worthless pelf,  
But virtue rare to steal the man himself.  
Such is your system which all good men curse,  
The Theory is bad, the practice worse.

And now all you whose stomachs gorge in food  
Obtain'd by tyranny, and steep'd in blood,  
Who boast of liberty and equal laws,  
And crowd your fields with slaves to damn your cause,  
In undivided mass, Slave-holders, all,  
Jointly, and severally, to you I call,  
And crave attention, while the bard recites,  
The usurpation of his country's rights;  
Daring each artful sophist to confute  
The stubborn truths his pen shall thunder out.

(1797)

## BOSTON KING

from *Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher*

Born into slavery in South Carolina, at age twenty Boston King (c. 1760–1802) escaped and claimed his freedom by joining the British when they took Charleston in 1780. His freedom remained precarious for the rest of the Revolutionary War until he finally was evacuated from New York in 1783 along with three thousand other former slaves. In 1792, after nine years living among black refugees in Nova Scotia, he joined the exodus to Sierra Leone, where he ended his life as a missionary and schoolteacher. His plainspoken narrative was published in London, serialized over four issues of the *Methodist Magazine* in 1798.

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My master being apprehensive that Charles-Town was in danger on account of the war, removed into the country, about 38 miles off. Here we built a large house for Mr. Waters, during which time the English took Charles-Town. Having obtained leave one day to see my parents, who lived about 12 miles off, and it being late before I could go, I was obliged to borrow one of Mr. Waters's horses; but a servant of my master's, took the horse from me to go a little journey, and stayed two or three days longer than he ought. This involved me in the greatest perplexity, and I expected the severest punishment, because the gentleman to whom the horse belonged was a very bad man, and knew not how to shew mercy. To escape his cruelty, I determined to go to Charles-Town, and throw myself into the hands of the English. They received me readily, and I began to feel the happiness of liberty, of which I knew nothing before, altho' I was much grieved at first, to be obliged to leave my friends, and reside among strangers. In this situation I was seized with the small-pox, and suffered great hardships; for all the Blacks affected with that disease, were ordered to be

carried a mile from the camp, lest the soldiers should be infected, and disabled from marching. This was a grievous circumstance to me and many others. We lay sometimes a whole day without anything to eat or drink; but Providence sent a man, who belonged to the York volunteers whom I was acquainted with, to my relief. He brought me such things as I stood in need of; and by the blessing of the Lord I began to recover.

By this time, the English left the place; but as I was unable to march with the army, I expected to be taken by the enemy. However when they came, and understood that we were ill of the small-pox, they precipitately left us for fear of the infection. Two days after, the waggons were sent to convey us to the English Army and we were put into a little cottage, (being 25 in number) about a quarter of a mile from the Hospital.

Being recovered, I marched with the army to Chamblem. When we came to the head-quarters, our regiment was 35 miles off. I stayed at the head-quarters three weeks, during which time our regiment had an engagement with the Americans, and the man who relieved me when I was ill of the small-pox, was wounded in the battle, and brought to the hospital. As soon as I heard of his misfortune, I went to see him, and tarried with him in the hospital six weeks, till he recovered; rejoicing that it was in my power to return him the kindness he had shewed me. From thence I went to a place about 35 miles off, where we stayed two months: at the expiration of which, an express came to the Colonel to decamp in fifteen minutes. When these orders arrived I was at a distance from the camp, catching some fish for the captain that I waited upon; upon returning to the camp, to my great astonishment, I found all the English were gone, and had left only a few militia. I felt my mind greatly alarmed, but Captain Lewes, who commanded the militia, said, "You need not be uneasy, for you will see your regiment before 7 o'clock to-night." This satisfied me for the present, and in two hours we set off. As we were on the march, the Captain asked, "How will you like me to be your master?" I answered, that I was Captain Grey's servant. "Yes," said he; "but I expect they are all taken prisoners before now; and I have

been long enough in the English service, and am determined to leave them.” These words roused my indignation, and I spoke some sharp things to him. But he calmly replied, “If you do not behave well, I will put you in irons, and give you a dozen stripes every morning.” I now perceived that my case was desperate, and that I had nothing to trust to, but to wait the first opportunity for making my escape. The next morning, I was sent with a little boy over the river to an island to fetch the Captain some horses. When we came to the Island we found about fifty of the English horses, that Captain Lewes had stolen from them at different times while they were at Rockmount. Upon our return to the Captain with the horses we were sent for, he immediately set off by himself. I stayed till about 10 o’clock, and then resolved to go to the English army. After travelling 24 miles, I came to a farmer’s house, where I tarried all night, and was well used. Early in the morning I continued my journey till I came to the ferry, and found all the boats were on the other side of the river: After anxiously waiting some hours, Major Dial crossed the river, and asked me many questions concerning the regiment to which I belonged. I gave him satisfactory answers, and he ordered the boat to put me over. Being arrived at the head-quarters, I informed my Captain that Mr. Lewes had deserted. I also told him of the horses which Lewes had conveyed to the Island. Three weeks after, our Light-horse went to the Island and burnt his house; they likewise brought back forty of the horses, but he escaped. I tarried with Captain Grey about a year, and then left him, and came to Nelson’s-ferry. Here I entered into the service of the commanding officer of that place. But our situation was very precarious, and we expected to be made prisoners every day; for the Americans had 1600 men, not far off; whereas our whole number amounted only to 250: But there were 1200 English about 30 miles off; only we knew not how to inform them of our danger, as the Americans were in possession of the country. Our commander at length determined to send me with a letter, promising me great rewards, if I was successful in the business. I refused going on horse-back, and set off on foot about 3 o’clock in the afternoon; I expected every moment to fall in with the

enemy, whom I well knew would shew me no mercy. I went on without interruption, till I got within six miles of my journey's end, and then was alarmed with a great noise a little before me. But I stepped out of the road, and fell flat upon my face till they were gone by. I then arose, and praised the Name of the Lord for his great mercy, and again pursued my journey, till I came to Mums-corner tavern. I knocked at the door, but they blew out the candle. I knocked again, and intreated the master to open the door. At last he came with a frightful countenance, and said, "I thought it was the Americans; for they were here about an hour ago, and I thought they were returned again." I asked, How many were there? he answered, "about one hundred." I desired him to saddle his horse for me, which he did, and went with me himself. When we had gone about two miles, we were stopped by the picket-guard, till the Captain came out with 30 men: As soon as he knew that I had brought an express from Nelson's-ferry, he received me with great kindness, and expressed his approbation of my courage and conduct in this dangerous business. Next morning, Colonel Small gave me three shillings, and many fine promises, which were all that I ever received for this service from him. However he sent 600 men to relieve the troops at Nelson's-ferry.

Soon after I went to Charles-Town, and entered on board a man of war. As we were going to Chesepeak-bay, we were at the taking of a rich prize. We stayed in the bay two days, and then sailed for New-York, where I went on shore. Here I endeavoured to follow my trade, but for want of tools was obliged to relinquish it, and enter into service. But the wages were so low that I was not able to keep myself in clothes, so that I was under the necessity of leaving my master and going to another. I stayed with him four months, but he never paid me, and I was obliged to leave him also, and work about the town until I was married. A year after I was taken very ill, but the Lord raised me up again in about five weeks. I then went out in a pilot-boat. We were at sea eight days, and had only provisions for five, so that we were in danger of starving. On the 9th day we were taken by an American whale-boat. I went on board them with a

cheerful countenance, and asked for bread and water, and made very free with them. They carried me to Brunswick, and used me well. Notwithstanding which, my mind was sorely distressed at the thought of being again reduced to slavery, and separated from my wife and family; and at the same time it was exceeding difficult to escape from my bondage, because the river at Amboy was above a mile over, and likewise another to cross at Staten-Island. I called to remembrance the many great deliverances the Lord had wrought for me, and besought him to save me this once, and I would serve him all the days of my life. While my mind was thus exercised, I went into the jail to see a lad whom I was acquainted with at New-York. He had been taken prisoner, and attempted to make his escape, but was caught 12 miles off: They tied him to the tail of a horse, and in this manner brought him back to Brunswick. When I saw him, his feet were fastened in the stocks, and at night both his hands. This was a terrifying sight to me, as I expected to meet with the same kind of treatment, if taken in the act of attempting to regain my liberty. I was thankful that I was not confined in a jail, and my master used me as well as I could expect; and indeed the slaves about Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New-York, have as good victuals as many of the English; for they have meat once a day, and milk for breakfast and supper; and what is better than all, many of the masters send their slaves to school at night, that they may learn to read the Scriptures. This is a privilege indeed. But alas, all these enjoyments could not satisfy me without liberty! Sometimes I thought, if it was the will of GOD that I should be a slave, I was ready to resign myself to his will; but at other times I could not find the least desire to content myself in slavery.

Being permitted to walk about when my work was done, I used to go to the ferry, and observed, that when it was low water the people waded across the river; tho' at the same time I saw there were guards posted at the place to prevent the escape of prisoners and slaves. As I was at prayer one Sunday evening, I thought the Lord heard me, and would mercifully deliver me. Therefore putting

my confidence in him, about one o'clock in the morning I went down to the river side, and found the guards were either asleep or in the tavern. I instantly entered into the river, but when I was a little distance from the opposite shore, I heard the sentinels disputing among themselves: One said, "I am sure I saw a man cross the river." Another replied, "There is no such thing." It seems they were afraid to fire at me, or make an alarm, lest they should be punished for their negligence. When I had got a little distance from the shore, I fell down upon my knees, and thanked GOD for this deliverance. I travelled till about five in the morning, and then concealed myself till seven o'clock at night, when I proceeded forward, thro' bushes and marshes, near the road, for fear of being discovered. When I came to the river, opposite Staten-Island, I found a boat; and altho' it was very near a whale-boat, yet I ventured into it, and cutting the rope, got safe over. The commanding officer, when informed of my case, gave me a passport, and I proceeded to New-York.

(1798)

# ANONYMOUS

## *The African Slave*

This ballad appeared in *The Prisoner* (1802), “a collection of poetical pieces, written by a person confined in the state-prison” at Trenton, New Jersey, for an unspecified offense. Writing in the voice of “Itaniko,” the anonymous author tells the story of an American slave, from his capture in Africa and his attempted suicide aboard the slave ship, to his role in quelling an insurrection and his eventual sale in America to a plantation owner.

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TUNE—“*Ellen O’Moore*”

Ye Sons of Columbia, who taste every blessing  
That Liberty, Plenty, and Peace can bestow,  
Give ear to my story, and think how distressing!  
Ah! hear the sad tale of an African’s woe:  
Tho’ guiltless my life was, without provocation  
I was torn from my country, companions, and nation,  
And doom’d to the toils of a life’s Mancipation;  
Ah! such the hard fate is of *Itaniko*.

One morn, I my juvenile gambols was playing,  
No ill did I bode, for no fear did I know,  
As thro’ the palm-forest, thus carelessly straying,  
A prey I was seiz’d by the steel-hearted foe:  
Who dragg’d me on board, where in fetters they bound me,  
While pale-visag’d hell-hounds in horror surround me  
I plung’d in the deep hoping death would have found me,

They snatch'd from the billows poor *Itaniko*.

My father! I utter'd in wild exclamation,

When life's crimson current a while ceas'd to flow:

Awake, O my Country! in just indignation,

The swift-feather'd vengeance elance from the bow!

In vain were all efforts their power to vanquish,

What language can picture my heart-rending anguish!

In cold galling chains for my freedom to languish!

Oh! such the hard fate is of *Itaniko*.

On board of our ship there arose a dire faction,

I let my curs'd fiends the conspiracy know;

But mark the reward of this life-saving action,

Altho' I befriend them no pity they show;

For when on the shores of Columbia we landed,

The caitiffs I sav'd with what infamy branded!

The christian's base gold was the boon they demanded,

And sold as a slave was poor *Itaniko*.

You boast of your Freedom . . . your mild Constitution

See tears undissembled for Liberty flow!

Unmov'd can you witness such cruel delusion,

Who feel in your bosoms Philanthropy glow?

Were we not by the same common Parent created?

Why then for the hue of my race am I hated?

Why, faultless, to mis'ry and chains am I fated?

Ah! why is thus wretched poor *Itaniko*?

Each morn to fresh toils I awake broken-hearted

The blood-streaming lash & the sweat-reeking hoe;

By Country, by Hope, by all Pleasure deserted,  
A victim, alas! to unspeakable woe:  
O, GOD of Columbia! behold with compassion,  
The Cruelties, Insults, and Wrongs of my nation,  
And blast, by thy justice, that Tyrant-Oppression,  
That holds from his country poor *Itaniko!*

(1802)

# THOMAS BRANAGAN

## *from* The Penitential Tyrant; or, Slave Trader Reformed

A Catholic Irishman raised in Dublin who later described himself as a “dunce,” Thomas Branagan (1774–1843) went to sea at age fourteen and soon was shipping out from Liverpool aboard slave ships. After several years in the slave trade, and then as an overseer on plantations in Antigua, Branagan had a conversion experience, embraced Methodism, and in 1798 came to Philadelphia where he began his career as a writer and abolitionist. By one estimate, he produced more than twenty books of prose and poetry, several going through five or more editions during his lifetime. He tried to enlist Thomas Jefferson in the antislavery cause by sending him copies of *The Penitential Tyrant* and other works. Jefferson refrained from action or endorsement, but he did keep Branagan’s books in his library. Writing in a style that might be considered a kind of American gothic, Branagan’s repentant slave-driver is haunted by the ghostly visitations of “thousands, thousands, thousands slain” in slavery.

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### *Canto Second*

One night, methought about the midnight hour.  
A double darkness o’er me seem’d to lower;  
Pensive I lay, to know what God design’d,  
Sensations awful fill’d my boding mind!  
The poor unhappy slaves rose to my view,  
My former guilt, their wounds now bled anew;  
I heard their sighs, and saw their big round tears,  
Wept as they wept, and fear’d with all their fears:  
Methought I saw once more their natal shore,  
All stain’d with carnage, red with human gore;  
Shrouded in blood they now appear’d to stand,

And pointed to their agonizing land;  
I saw the thousands, thousands, thousands slain,  
On their primeval, their parental plain:  
Their lacerated limbs, with chains opprest,  
Their minds, alas! with mighty woes distrest!  
Each body mangled, scourged in every part,  
While sighs and groans burst from each swelling heart!  
I saw in tides of tears their sorrows flow,  
And still new anguish added to their woe;  
Shade after shade before my eyes arose,  
All wailing with unutterable woes!  
Mov'd at the sight, from tears I scarce refrain,  
And mild compassion thrills through ev'ry vein,  
I saw the phantoms, which too well I know,  
And while I look'd, the tears began to flow;  
The visionary spectres still abound,  
Pour out shrill shrieks, with shrieks the hills resound;  
Wars, chains, and whips, with cruel tyrants stood,  
Around them red, alas! with human blood;  
Or seem'd to stand in hellish arts refin'd,  
The traitors, foes, and tyrants of mankind!  
And lo! the spectres now their torments tell,  
All red with blood, and with a hideous yell;  
Scarcely could I their horrid screams sustain,  
My blood stood shiv'ring in each purple vein.  
Near and more near approach'd the injur'd slaves,  
I saw, O horrid sight! their op'ning graves!  
Their faces all were turn'd towards the sky,  
While tears of blood stood quiv'ring in each eye:  
My blood stagnated, now forgot to flow—

Aghast I lay, frail monument of woe!  
But still I saw, or seem'd to see, their shore  
All white with bones, and horrible with gore!  
In each low wind, methought I heard their cries,  
Their groans reverberated to the skies—  
I listened with a solemn awe profound,  
And heard, and think I hear, the midnight sound;  
To every word my sighs responsive flow,  
Tears follow tears, and woe succeeded woe;  
“Alas! alas!” they said, or seem'd to say,  
“Your promises have soon dissolv'd away;  
You heard our groans, you saw our misery,  
You knew our wrongs and fatal destiny;  
You promis'd in that penitential hour,  
Our wrongs t' exhibit, and our tyrants' power;  
Your promis'd pity soon has fled away,  
Like sable clouds before the golden day;  
You've seen, you've heard us all our ills disclose,  
The narrative big with ten thousand woes;  
Forgetful of your promise and your vow,  
The tribute of a tear you'll scarce bestow;  
If still unpitied, nor our wrongs redress'd,  
Revere your God, God will avenge the oppress'd;  
Oh! had we died upon our native plain,  
Stretch'd like brave heroes, by our tyrants slain!  
Oh! had our blood smok'd on each ruffian's spear,  
And thus sav'd us from sin, insult, and fear;  
But now we meet a shameful shocking fate,  
Unworthy of the brave, the bold, the great;  
How hard our fate, our complicated wo,

In every land we find a christian foe—”  
With grief profound, they strive again to say  
What anguish dictates, but no words find way;  
I saw and heard them, and methinks I hear,  
Still angry voices murmuring in my ear.  
The golden planets shed their fiery light,  
The silver moon illum’d the shades of night;  
While sudden horror, far beyond belief,  
Wrapt all my senses in a cloud of grief—  
I fly in haste—I fly impending fate—  
And seek for mercy, ere I seek too late;  
And prove obedient to the voice divine,  
Paint crimes (*of which so large a share was mine*),  
My accomplices in guilt I now display;  
'Tis Heav’n commands, and Heav’n I must obey.  
That all mankind may see their tyranny,  
And approve his vengeance when their doom they see.

(1805)

# ISABELLA OLIVER SHARP

## *On Slavery*

Described in the Gettysburg Centinel as “the celebrated American poetess” in the announcement of her marriage to the Revolutionary War veteran Alexander Sharp in 1812, Isabella Oliver (1771–1843) was raised in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Despite a lack of formal education and a habit of composing poems orally and dictating them to others, she published *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1805, which attracted more than one thousand subscribers. In this collection primarily of short lyric poems (including elegies on George Washington and Alexander Hamilton), “On Slavery” stands out for its length, reflecting Oliver’s sense that slavery was a central issue of her time.

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Among the moral evils which disgrace  
The page historic of the human race,  
Slavery seems most to blacken the records;  
It militates against our blessed Lord’s  
Divine instructions. Is it not a shame  
For any that assume the christian name,  
Who say the influence of his blood extends  
From sea to sea, to earth’s remotest ends,  
To trade in human flesh, to forge a chain  
For those who may with them in glory reign?  
But, independent of the christian light,  
Humanity is outrag’d, every right  
Of human nature trampled to the ground;  
By men who deify an empty sound,  
And call it liberty, or what they please;  
But God will visit for such crimes as these

BUT GOD WILL VISIT FOR SUCH CRIMES AS THESE.

Behold the fruitful islands of the main;  
Where sweetness is extracted from the cane  
Where luscious fruits in rich profusion grow,  
And streams of milk and honey us'd to flow:  
The cords of slav'ry were so tighten'd there,  
Its hapless victims could no longer bear;  
But desperation work'd in every brain,  
And gave them strength to break the iron chain.

A scene of terror and of blood ensues!

The bare idea petrifies the muse!

Here is a glass: let each oppressing state  
Forsake their practice, or expect their fate.

Slavery's a very monster on the earth,

Which strangles every virtue in its birth:

From the first drawing of the human mind,

Children should be instructed to be kind;

To treat no human being with disdain,

Nor give the meanest insect useless pain:

Yet mark how babes and sucklings learn to rack,

And trample down, the poor defenceless black;

Their little humours ample scope may have,

When only vented—on a wretched slave.

God's image in his creature they deride,

And daily grow in indolence and pride,

With ignorance and cruelty combin'd;

A Slavery of the most ignoble kind!

O ye, who make and execute the laws,  
Exert your influence in so good a cause;  
Pursue with zeal some well-arranged plan,

To stop this most unnat'ral trade in man:  
This interesting object keep in view:  
Much has been done, but much is still to do.  
Forever honour'd be their names, who strive  
To keep divine philanthropy alive:  
But horror seizes every feeling mind,  
To hear of depredation on mankind!  
Till this inhuman commerce disappears,  
Our country must claim kindred with Algiers.  
AMERICA! wipe out this dire disgrace,  
Which stains the brightest glories of thy face.  
'Twas thine against oppressive power to raise  
A noble standard, and attract the gaze  
Of the surrounding nations, who approve  
Thy arduous struggle, rising from a love  
Of liberty. Your rights you understood,  
And rose, resolv'd like men to make them good;  
Through every rank the gen'rous ardour ran;  
The poorest lab'rer feels himself a man.  
COLUMBIA'S sons put forth their talents now;  
Intrepid soldiers, starting from the plough,  
A virtuous independence to secure,  
Hunger and thirst and nakedness endure.  
Such great occasions noble minds invite,  
And bring conceal'd abilities to light;  
Consummate statesmen in our councils rise,  
Fit for their station, honest, brave, and wise;  
Our gallant leaders in the martial field  
To neither Greece nor Rome the laurels yield;  
Nor were it just to pass Columbia's fair;

Who share the burden should the garland share.  
Thy charms, O Liberty! their souls impress,  
Behold them patriots even in their dress;  
The graceful vestments of the most refin'd,  
By their own hands have been with pleasure twin'd;  
They throw the shuttle, and they mix the dye,  
And ev'n the famed Spartan dames outvie;  
Their tenderness and modesty retain;  
Gentle, not weak, they vigorously sustain,  
Without a murmur, the severest toil;  
With their fair hands they cultivate the soil;  
Expos'd to summer's heat and winter's cold;  
Prepare the fuel, and attend the fold;  
To give the husband, brother, or the sire  
To the hard duties which the times require.  
The world can testify this picture true;  
From recent facts the muse her colours drew.  
But ah! how soon those glowing colours fade!  
The sons of Afric form a dismal shade:  
Each southern state unnumber'd slaves commands,  
Who steel their hearts, and enervate their hands.  
There knotted whips in dreadful peals resound,  
While blood and sweat flow mingled to the ground,  
So fame reports, and rising in her ire  
She adds, that some beneath the lash expire.  
Ah stop! inhuman! why provoke the rod,  
The dreadful vengeance of an angry God!  
Behold with trembling the outstretched hand  
Of incens'd justice lifted o'er the land!  
For crimes like yours, and their pernicious brood,

(For these are parent-sins, and taint the blood)  
Malignant fevers through the land are sent,  
To punish sin, and lead us to repent;  
But if these warnings we refuse to mind,  
A train of evils follow close behind;  
If we may credit God's eternal word,  
And those examples left upon record.  
Are these the blest abodes of liberty!  
Is this the generous race that would be free!  
The power to whom you fancied honours pay,  
From scenes like these with horror turns away!  
Wherever genuine liberty is found,  
She copies heaven in shedding blessings round.  
Should not this fruitful, this salubrious clime  
Inspire us with the gen'rous and sublime?  
Our hills appear for contemplation made,  
Our lofty forests form a noble shade;  
These seem the native haunts of liberty:  
Was not the wild unletter'd Indian free?  
Alas! the mournful truth must be confess'd,  
Ferocious passions triumph'd in his breast;  
There gloomy superstition's terrors reign'd;  
Insidious wiles his manly courage stain'd;  
While sloth and ignorance in fetters bind  
The nobler workings of the savage mind.  
See these by Europe's fairer sons displac'd,  
With useful arts and polish'd manners grac'd!  
Now sturdy labour, with incessant toil  
Clears the rude wild, and cultivates the soil.  
As art's first sample clapboard roofs appear;

But soon a neat convenient house they rear;  
At length a stately dome attracts the eyes;  
And seat with seat in taste and beauty vies.  
Now liberal sciences the land pervade,  
And philosophic musings court the shade.  
The fairest traits of liberty we find,  
Where equal laws to peace and order bind,  
And true religion elevates the mind.  
Oh, slavery! thou hell-engender'd crime!  
Why spoil this beauteous country in her prime,  
Corrupt her manners, enervate her youth!  
Blast the fair buds of justice, mercy, truth!  
But, Europe! know, to thy eternal shame,  
From thee at first this foul contagion came;  
Before we to a nation's stature grew,  
We learn'd this trade, this barb'rous trade, from you:  
Should not we now exert a noble pride,  
And lay your follies, and your crimes, aside?  
Yet not so vain, or self-sufficient be,  
As not to copy excellence of thee.  
How many futile reasons have been given  
For mixing God and mammon, sin and heaven!  
Some say, they are of Canaan's cursed race,  
By God ordain'd to fill this servile place:  
Was then their lineage fully ascertain'd,  
Before they in the cruel hold were chain'd?  
Before the tenderest ties of human life  
Were torn asunder; the beloved wife  
Dragg'd without mercy from her husband's breast,  
And the sweet babes they mutually caress'd,

Carried like cattle;—(Let it not be told!)  
By christians too, to be to christians sold?  
Their lineage prov'd—it were of no avail;  
Here all attempts at palliation fail.  
In Joseph's case we may a parallel see;  
Sent into Egypt by divine decree,  
His brethren's evil, God intends for good,  
Yet they, as guilty, in his presence stood.  
Some plead the precedent of former times,  
And bring example in, to sanction crimes:  
Greece had her Helots, Gibeonites the Jew;  
Must then Columbia have her Negroes too!  
By men who by his spirit were inspir'd,  
To teach us what our blessed Lord requir'd,  
Rules have been given to regulate our lives,  
As subjects, husbands, parents, children, wives;  
Masters and servants due directions have;  
But show a single lesson to a slave.  
Those heavenly doctrines have a liberal aim,  
And practis'd, soon would abrogate the name.  
Our blessed Lord descended to unbind  
Those chains of darkness which enslave the mind;  
He draws the veil of prejudice aside,  
To cure us of our selfishness and pride:  
These once remov'd, then Afric's sable race  
No more among the brutal herd we place:  
Are they not blest with intellectual powers,  
Which prove their souls are excellent as ours?  
The same immortal hopes to all are given,  
One common Saviour and one common heaven.

When these exalted views th' ascendant gain,  
Fraternal love will form a silken chain,  
Whose band, encircling all the human race,  
Will join the species in one large embrace.

*(1805)*

# ABSALOM JONES

## from *A Thanksgiving Sermon*

Born a slave in Sussex, Delaware, and separated from his mother and siblings when his master brought him as a servant to Philadelphia in 1762, Absalom Jones (1746–1818) managed to educate himself, save money, and eventually purchase his wife’s freedom and then, in 1784, his own. He went on to become a religious and community leader in Philadelphia, where in 1794 he founded St. Thomas’s African Episcopal Church, the first black Episcopal church in the United States. It was there that he delivered this sermon, on the occasion of the abolition of the foreign slave trade by the United States and Great Britain.

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Exodus, iii. 7,–8.

*And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.*

THESE WORDS, my brethren, contain a short account of some of the circumstances which preceded the deliverance of the children of Israel from their captivity and bondage in Egypt.

They mention, in the first place, their *affliction*. This consisted in the privation of liberty: they were slaves to the kings of Egypt, in common with their other subjects; and they were slaves to their fellow slaves. They were compelled to work in the open air, in one of the hottest climates in the world; and, probably, without a covering from the burning rays of the sun. Their work was of a laborious kind: it consisted of making bricks, and travelling, perhaps to a great distance, for the straw, or stubble, that was a component part of them. Their

work was dealt out to them in tasks, and performed under the eye of vigilant and rigorous masters, who constantly upbraided them with idleness. The least deficiency, in the product of their labour, was punished by beating. Nor was this all. Their food was of the cheapest kind, and contained but little nourishment: it consisted only of leeks and onions, which grew almost spontaneously in the land of Egypt. Painful and distressing as these sufferings were, they constituted the smallest part of their misery. While the fields resounded with their cries in the day, their huts and hamlets were vocal at night with their lamentations over their sons; who were dragged from the arms of their mothers, and put to death by drowning, in order to prevent such an increase in their population, as to endanger the safety of the state by an insurrection. In this condition, thus degraded and oppressed, they passed nearly four hundred years. Ah! who can conceive of the measure of their sufferings, during that time? What tongue, or pen, can compute the number of their sorrows? To them no morning or evening sun ever disclosed a single charm: to them, the beauties of spring, and the plenty of autumn had no attractions: even domestick endearments were scarcely known to them: all was misery; all was grief; all was despair.

Our text mentions, in the second place, that, in this situation, they were not forgotten by the God of their fathers, and the Father of the human race. Though, for wise reasons, he delayed to appear in their behalf for several hundred years; yet he was not indifferent to their sufferings. Our text tells us, that he saw their affliction, and heard their cry: his eye and his ear were constantly open to their complaint: every tear they shed, was preserved, and every groan they uttered, was recorded; in order to testify, at a future day, against the authors of their oppressions. But our text goes further: it describes the Judge of the world to be so much moved, with what he saw and what he heard, that he rises from his throne—not to issue a command to the armies of angels that surrounded him to fly to the relief of his suffering children—but to come down from heaven, in his own person, in order to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians. Glory to God for this precious record of his power and goodness: let all nations of the

earth praise him. *Clouds and darkness are round about him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. He hath remembered his mercy and truth toward the house of Israel, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.*

The history of the world shows us, that the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage, is not the only instance, in which it has pleased God to appear in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations, as the deliverer of the innocent, and of those who call upon his name. He is as unchangeable in his nature and character, as he is in his wisdom and power. The great and blessed event, which we have this day met to celebrate, is a striking proof, that the God of heaven and earth is *the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever*. Yes, my brethren, the nations from which most of us have descended, and the country in which some of us were born, have been visited by the tender mercy of the Common Father of the human race. He has seen the affliction of our countrymen, with an eye of pity. He has seen the wicked arts, by which wars have been fomented among the different tribes of the Africans, in order to procure captives, for the purpose of selling them for slaves. He has seen ships fitted out from different ports in Europe and America, and freighted with trinkets to be exchanged for the bodies and souls of men. He has seen the anguish which has taken place, when parents have been torn from their children, and children from their parents, and conveyed, with their hands and feet bound in fetters, on board of ships prepared to receive them. He has seen them thrust in crowds into the holds of those ships, where many of them have perished from the want of air. He has seen such of them as have escaped from that noxious place of confinement, leap into the ocean; with a faint hope of swimming back to their native shore, or a determination to seek an early retreat from their impending misery, in a watery grave. He has seen them exposed for sale, like horses and cattle, upon the wharves; or, like bales of goods, in warehouses of West India and American sea ports. He has seen the pangs of separation between members

of the same family. He has seen them driven into the sugar, the rice, and the tobacco fields, and compelled to work—in spite of the habits of ease which they derived from the natural fertility of their own country in the open air, beneath a burning sun, with scarcely as much clothing upon them as modesty required. He has seen them faint beneath the pressure of their labours. He has seen them return to their smoky huts in the evening, with nothing to satisfy their hunger but a scanty allowance of roots; and these, cultivated for themselves, on that day only, which God ordained as a day of rest for man and beast. He has seen the neglect with which their masters have treated their immortal souls; not only in withholding religious instruction from them, but, in some instances, depriving them of access to the means of obtaining it. He has seen all the different modes of torture, by means of the whip, the screw, the pincers, and the red hot iron, which have been exercised upon their bodies, by inhuman overseers: overseers, did I say? Yes: but not by these only. Our God has seen masters and mistresses, educated in fashionable life, sometimes take the instruments of torture into their own hands, and, deaf to the cries and shrieks of their agonizing slaves, exceed even their overseers in cruelty. Inhuman wretches! though You have been deaf to their cries and shrieks, they have been heard in Heaven. The ears of Jehovah have been constantly open to them: He has heard the prayers that have ascended from the hearts of his people; and he has, as in the case of his ancient and chosen people the Jews, *come down to deliver* our suffering countrymen from the hands of their oppressors. He *came down* into the United States, when they declared, in the constitution which they framed in 1788, that the trade in our African fellow-men, should cease in the year 1808: He *came down* into the British Parliament, when they passed a law to put an end to the same iniquitous trade in May, 1807: He *came down* into the Congress of the United States, the last winter, when they passed a similar law, the operation of which commences on this happy day. Dear land of our ancestors! thou shalt no more be stained with the blood of thy children, shed by British and American hands: the ocean shall no more afford a refuge to their bodies, from impending slavery: nor shall the shores of the British

West India islands, and of the United States, any more witness the anguish of families, parted for ever by a publick sale. For this signal interposition of the God of mercies, in behalf of our brethren, it becomes us this day to offer up our united thanks. Let the song of angels, which was first heard in the air at the birth of our Saviour, be heard this day in our assembly: *Glory to God in the highest, for these first fruits of peace upon earth, and good-will to man: O! let us give thanks unto the Lord: let us call upon his name, and make known his deeds among the people. Let us sing psalms unto him and talk of all his wondrous works.*

*(January 1, 1808)*

# ANONYMOUS

## *The African Slave*

By the early 1800s a sentimental poem on behalf of enslaved Africans was becoming, for many writers, something of a literary set piece. This unattributed poem was selected by the Washington, D.C.–based editor Mary De Krafft for inclusion in *Poems, Chiefly Amatory; by a Lady* in 1809. The obvious assumption was that American readers were also attentive to slavery in the Caribbean.

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*Occasioned by the recent insurrections of the oppressed Blacks in the West Indies.*

Shall the muse that's wont to wander  
Where the wretched sigh and cry,  
Forbear upon the slave to ponder,  
Dying beneath the burning sky.

Shall not pity, gentle maiden,  
Wet the eye of freedom's son  
When he beholds the slave o'erladen,  
See him lash'd, and hear him groan.

O'er Atlantic's sky hu'd billows  
Fancy guides my weeping way,  
To mourn the toiling wretches' sorrows,  
Doom'd to servitude a prey!

O hark! I hear their plaintive anguish  
Murmur on the foaming shore;  
Yes, I see the females languish,

Spent with loss of purple gore!

Say, thy rich and lordly tyrant,

Speak what reason bids thee say,

Were these made for thee to torment,

Scourge and make to death a prey?

O no, blest freedom's sacred fire

Shall in the sable bosom glow;

With fortitude the slave inspire

To break the chain of galling woe!

*(1809)*

# PETER WILLIAMS JR.

## *Hymn I*

Son of an African American Revolutionary War veteran and community leader, Peter Williams Jr. (c. 1780–1840) was educated at the African Free School in New York City, entered the Episcopal ministry, and eventually became a leading abolitionist and the founding pastor of the Free African Church of St. Philip, now known as St. Philip's Episcopal Church, in 1818. Though he helped successfully promote many reforms and led several African American organizations, Williams's church was burned by a racist mob in 1834, causing church authorities to suppress his abolitionist activities. This hymn is typical of those composed every year for the anniversary celebration of the abolition of the slave trade.

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### I.

To the Eternal LORD,  
By saints on earth ador'd  
And saints above.  
Let us glad honors rear,  
In strains of praise and pray'r  
His glorious name declare,  
The God of Love.

### II.

When the oppressor's hands  
Bound us in iron bands  
Thou didst appear.  
Thou saw our weeping eyes,  
And list'ning to our cries,  
In mercy didst arise,

Our hearts to cheer.

III.

Thou did'st the trade o'erthrow,  
The source of boundless woe,  
    The world's disgrace,  
Which ravag'd Afric's coast,  
Enslaved its greatest boast,  
A happy num'rous host,  
    A harmless race.

IV.

In diff'rent parts of earth  
Thou called the HUMANE forth,  
    Our rights to plead,  
Our griefs to mitigate,  
And to improve our state,  
An object truly great,  
    Noble indeed.

V.

Thou didst their labours bless,  
And gave them great success,  
    in FREEDOM'S cause.  
They prov'd to every sight  
By truth's unerring light,  
*All men are free* by right  
    Of Nature's laws.

VI.

They to insure our bliss,

Taught us that happiness  
Is from above.  
That it is only found  
On this terrestrial ground,  
Where virtuous acts abound,  
And MUTU'L LOVE.

## BOYREREAU BRINCH

from *The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nick-  
Named Jeffrey Brace*

Jeffrey Brace (c. 1742–1827), previously known as Boyrereau Brinch, was an African-born slave who, after enduring the Middle Passage and decades of extreme hardship, dictated his life story to Benjamin Franklin Prentiss (c. 1774–1817), an antislavery lawyer in Vermont. In the passage below, Brace recalls some of his earliest moments in America, straight off the slave ship and unable to speak English or understand anything happening around him.

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The captain who had bought me, and Welch, went into a room together, where they sat drinking and talking—perhaps this was his boarding house. While they sat regaling themselves with the inebriating drop, I remained in the stoop where I was first seated, imagining that they were planning my death.

While in this melancholy situation, as I sat musing upon my approaching fate, I discovered some Negroes and Mulattoes, boiling something in a large kettle. They seemed to be jabbering to each other. I fancied they were talking about me, and concluded that I was to be boiled in the same kettle. The thoughts of this horrid death, destroyed my hunger; every feeling except the thoughts of death, my native country and friends, sunk before the horror that pressed upon me. While I was thus situated, the white woman asked me into the house, or rather by signs, she induced me to go in. She let me set down and put into my hands one spoonful of pork and onions, which appeared had been stewed together. Also, a small piece of biscuit, which I ate without much indignation. It being about dusk, Welch came in and conducted me to a small back room, where the floor was sanded, and locked me in; there was neither bed nor chair in the

room, therefore, I laid me down upon the floor and went to sleep, but I soon awoke and found I was extremely sick. I tried to get out, but found my efforts were vain. Accordingly I was obliged to puke upon the floor, after which I felt extremely weak and thirsty, but laid me down again upon the floor, and slept until sunrise. When I awoke, I heard some person at the door unlocking it. It was Welch himself, he opened the door, looked in and saw what I had done, returned, got a large whip, and the first salutation, after jabbering a few words, and frothing at the mouth, which was unintelligible to me, only I saw he was angry, he turned the butt of his whip, and knocked me down flat upon the floor. I, half stunned, attempted to get up, but he caught hold of my shirt, drew it over my head, and while he continued whipping, almost suffocated me. At length he tore off my shirt, which left me entirely naked as I was born; he again knocked me down, and continued whipping me. At this time the white woman came to the door, they had some words; I believe she undertook to expostulate with him, for he shook his whip at her, and she retired, then he resumed his whipping, until I fainted. After I was brought to, by the white woman, I found I was much bruised, and had bled much; and I could never, to this day discover but the blood had every appearance and quality of white man's blood. It was after 12 o'clock at noon, that I had any knowledge of any thing which transpired after I fainted. Thus I was sold, and thus was I whipped, without being able to expostulate or enquire of my tyrant the reason for treating me in the foregoing manner . . .

(1810)

# WILLIAM HAMILTON

## *Hymn II*

Once rumored to be the illegitimate son of Alexander Hamilton, the African American William Hamilton (1773–1836) was a carpenter by trade who was also a writer, composer, and activist based in New York City. He produced orations and hymns and, with Peter Williams Sr., founded the New York African Society for Mutual Relief in 1808. This hymn was one of two he composed for the New Year’s Day ceremony in the African Church in New York City commemorating the second anniversary of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Years later, still an active New York abolitionist, Hamilton published “An Oration Delivered in the African Zion Church, on the Fourth of July, 1827, in Commemoration of the Abolition of Domestic Slavery in this State, 1827.”

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1 Now let a burst of sacred joy,  
    And unmingled delight,  
Ascend the hill of God our king,  
    Who doeth all things right.

2 Now let the sons of Africa,  
    In loudest strains rejoice;  
God is our king, his loudest praise  
    Sing forth with cheerful voice.

3 No more can avarice, that foul fiend,  
    To human peace a foe;  
Thy sons, O Africa, beguile,  
    And liberty o’erthrow.

4 No more shall foul oppression’s arm

NO MORE SHALL YOUR OPPRESSIONS END,  
From your once peaceful shore,  
Drag your defenceless, harmless sons  
To slavery no more.

5 God is our king, let all rejoice,  
The SLAVE TRADE is no more;  
God is our king, let Afric's sons  
His matchless name adore.

*(1810)*

## ADAM CARMAN

### from *An Oration Delivered at the Fourth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*

Little biographical information survives about Adam Carman (fl. 1810–1811), except that he was an African American orator and activist in the New York African Methodist Episcopal Church. Along with his colleagues Peter Williams Jr. and Henry Johnson, he participated in the annual commemorations of the abolition of the slave trade in 1810 and 1811, and probably other years as well. This excerpt from his 1811 oration is remarkable for its swelling cadences and his pointed address to “my youthful brethren,” called upon to preserve the memory of the slave trade.

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Thus, my brethren, we became viewed and considered as commercial commodities; thus we became interwoven into the system of commerce, and the revenue of nations: hence the merchant, the planter, the mortgagee, the manufacturer, the politician, the legislators, and the cabinet minister, all strenuously advocated the continuance of the Slave Trade. Therefore the poor unfortunate African was placed in a situation truly deplorable; no one to look to for redress or remedy, no one to soothe his sorrows; all the artillery in the world apparently against him: the laws of Christendom consigned his fate, and their votaries tore him from his home, his family relatives and friends, dragged him on board the slave ship destined to a distant land, from her whom he had lived with for series of years in the utmost reciprocal affection, she that could cheer the gloomy hours of his life, soften his cares and relieve his burdens; the delight of his soul, the first and greatest of all earthly comforts, the greatest and best of all mortal blessings: his life becomes odious, he is inconsolate, his tranquility is murdered, his liberty has come to a period, all his future days are marked out for

the most tormenting and degrading despotism that ever existed—and while the stately ship spreads her canvass to the breeze, and was receding from his native land, he takes the last mournful look on the land of his nativity; there he beholds his beloved consort, surrounded with their juvenile posterity, dressed in the gloomy veil of tears, deploring the loss of his protecting arm, exposed to the indignation of the next merciless crew of assassins of tranquility; and while she casts her eyes around her, looking on her juvenile infants with maternal sensibility and sympathetic commiseration, she becomes almost frantic. Avarice has made her a widow, and doomed her progeny to eternal orphanage, while he survives who should be her shield and defence in the hour of dangers. Good God, this tragic scene pierced him to his very heart with a dagger that can never be eradicated, it haunts and preys upon his very vitals through his future existence; although much are his miseries augmented in his transportation from Africa to America, yet far is his sufferings from its maturity. When arrived to their destined land, he is there exposed to the public market, and considered and viewed as a vendible article, and is driven away from thence by the command of the highest bidder, to be assassinated on his plantation; not instantaneously, it would be far less cruel was it the case, but he is not afforded that blessing; he is to be murdered corporally by sure and slow degrees, by three powerful weapons peculiar to the lands of slavery, viz. the lash, extreme hunger, and incessant hard labour, which lengthens out his mangled life, and makes his journey to the emancipating grave a dismal one.

My beloved brethren, this has not been the cruel situation of one individual family! would to God it was; cruel as it would be, I would not have called it into notice on this occasion; but suffer me to say, millions and millions of our forefathers and brethren have been dragged from home in the same or similar way, and sacrificed to the same or similar fate as above delineated, without the least regard to their nuptial rights, or the ties of consanguinity; whilst thousands of others, when arrived into America and the British West-India islands, have been shot, hung, drowned in cold blood; although many attempted to escape

such horrid tragedies by eloping into the gloomy forests, but were pursued, hunted down, and devoured by blood hounds. Thousands of others doomed to the mines, to end their days in those cimmerician caves, those dreadful recesses from all the world. Such unexampled debasement would have disgraced the most savage nation of antiquity. Good God! when I reflect upon the disorders, confusions, desolations, and havocs, which that nefarious trade has been the sire of, I must exclaim in language unreserved, that it hath not its rival in all the history that ever came in the range of my observation. Ancient Jerusalem, that city blackened with crimes, and steeped in the blood of martyrs, at which cruel scene the Son of God wept on mount Olives, is not its rival. All the deleterious effects of superstitious paganism, popery, and mahometanism; or all the enthusiasms of the ecclesiastical impostors, who have spread desolation wherever they have prevailed in any considerable degree, terminating the existence of millions; oft compelling the saints to famish in dungeons and wander in exile, is not its parallel: in a word, it has not its competition in all history, from the inspired Moses to the present day. The greatest symbolation it hath, was in that dread hour when the terrific drapery was thrown around the great theatre of nature for the space of three hours, which signalized great wickedness in the earth.

Think not, my youthful brethren, that I am exaggerating the tragic tale of our wrongs; no, no—I presume I need not enter into any range of argument to identify the validity or cogency of these assertions or sentiments: I therefore, fathers, salute you upon this all important occasion; you can authenticate these assertions, you can substantiate the veracity of what has been said; you can say, All the amplitude of language or phraseology it is possible for a man to be master of, is too weak, too trivial to develop the horrors attendant on the Slave Trade, and may be considered as mere imaginations to its realities; you can exclaim with our noble brother Hamilton, it baffles description.

Then if so full of evils, so replete with miseries as to be void of description, what an inestimable blessing is its annihilation; to Africans and descendants, it

ought to be the most copious source of our joy. I know not, my brethren, how we can sufficiently express what we ought to feel on this occasion; it addresses itself to our finest feelings, and commands of us individually a tribute of congratulation. He that has the least drop of African blood flowing through his veins, and does not witness the warm emotions of gratitude on this auspicious and exalted occasion, he is degenerated from his country, and the sable race disowns him.

*(1811)*

## PETER CLEMMONS SR.

*from Poor Peter's Call to His Children, and to All Others Who Can  
Hear and Believe*

A Virginia-born Quaker who moved first to Delaware and then in 1777 settled in North Carolina, Peter Clemmons Sr. (1749–1815) became a prosperous landowner, businessman, and father of fourteen children. The town of Clemmons, North Carolina, is named for him. Late in life, moved by his religious convictions, Clemmons freed all his slaves. In this spiritual memoir, published in Salisbury, North Carolina, he records his spasms of conscience and offers an urgent message to both his children and the public to resist “the Devil’s power” because owning slaves leads to eternal damnation.

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But now came the trying time to me to make manifest my obedience and love to God, for the paths of justice and injustice were both laid open before me, together with the laws of our land and of grace, to enable me to make the choice either of the just or unjust path, in setting the negroes free immediately, or keeping them in bondage any longer. To keep me in the path of injustice, the deceiver raised all his power against just freedom, and immediately persuaded me to keep the negroes in my service until the following Christmas, which was between four or five months, that my business would then better admit of their being set free. Just freedom demanded that his just right should be given up to him on the spot, and without delay; telling me at the same time that the just should enter the kingdom of heaven, but the unjust should not—that life was uncertain, &c. When the deceiver found that I wanted to walk in the path of justice, he gave up so long a time as Christmas, and plead with me only to keep them one week. Just freedom sounded the alarming trumpet of God and said, that the unjust should not enter the kingdom of heaven; after all the truths of

justice the deceiver made one more trial to keep me under his power—to keep me from obeying the commandments of God, in doing to all others as I would have others do to me—the deceiver told me that if I gave them up at that instant I should break my promise—that I should be a liar, and that no liars could enter the kingdom of God—that if I only would keep them one week longer, I could make my promise good; for I had promised one of my neighbours that the negro man should go the following week, to help him to boil salt—that I needed the salt which I was to be paid for his week’s work. But the trumpet sounded so loud from God, that it broke the Devil’s power, and he left me and just freedom to settle the dispute between ourselves. After that selfish Devil was gone, who had deceived me so long, and kept me walking in the path of injustice, whilst I had been telling others that they must do justly; thus he had made me like the hypocrite who had a beam in his eye, and was saying to his brother, let me pull the mote out of your eye. So after he was gone, I gave my word in truth to just freedom, that I would give up all my right to him as soon as I got home—by setting the negro man and the negro woman free, which I had called my right and property all the time they had lived with me until then. However, I dreaded very much a further trial, when it would come to the knowledge of my beloved wife, for I knew it would take her unawares, and what the consequences would be, I did not know; But God helped me to stand to my word and promise. The next morning I went for Negrom, (as I called him) and desired my neighbour to send him home that evening, but he did not come until next morning; I then immediately gave the negro man and negro woman a full discharge in writing, for them to be free from me, my heirs, and all person or persons whatsoever—I delivered them up to just freedom, the right owner—after this I hired them both for one month, and paid them the same price that I could have hired other hands. Thus I made my promise good to my neighbour, as to the negro man working for him the following week. When the God of heaven saw my obedience to justice, it pleased him to restore me to his love, peace and favour, which was of more value to me than ten thousand times ten thousands of the best negro slaves on

earth; for I would not have given in exchange the love, peace and favour of the God of heaven—no, not for all the negroes on earth, and all the money and other riches in this world besides for which I am truly thankful to the Lord my God, for his mercies to me in breaking the yoke of injustice off my neck, which I, (being deceived) had worn from the time I had bought those captive negroes, to the time that the Lord freed them from under my oppressive hand.

I ask you all who are in the same state I was in, either ignorantly or knowingly, and who still keep negroes in bondage, whether you know or believe, that freedom is the negro's just right? for all who keep them are in one state or the other; but I believe that the greatest part of you know that it is their just right, unless there be some who have forfeited this right by some misdemeanor or crime.

*(1812)*

# JAMES FORTEN

## from *Letters from a Man of Colour on a Late Bill Before the Senate of Pennsylvania*

Born to free black parents in Philadelphia, James Forten (1766–1842) was educated in Anthony Benezet’s African Free School until age nine, when the death of his father compelled him to go to work to help support his family. During the Revolutionary War he served aboard an American privateer but was captured by the British and spent seven months on a prison ship. He later became a successful businessman and a leader in the black community, petitioning Congress in 1799 to end the slave trade and protect free blacks from kidnapping. In 1813, Forten wrote *Letters from a Man of Colour* to attack a bill in the Pennsylvania state senate that would have abridged the rights of free blacks in ways “not only cruel in the extreme, but decidedly unconstitutional.” The bill died without ever being voted on. In 1816, after initial interest, he became an unrelenting opponent of the African colonization movement; the previous year, a group of Quakers in Philadelphia, led by Charles Fenton Mercer, had transported thirty-eight free blacks to Freetown, Sierra Leone. In the early 1830s Forten embraced the new radical abolition movement, as a close personal friend of William Lloyd Garrison and financial supporter of the abolitionists’ flagship journal *The Liberator*. For all his activism, sadly, Forten lived to see a revision of the Pennsylvania constitution in 1838 that stripped African Americans of the right to vote.

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### LETTER I

O Liberty! thou power supremely bright,  
Profuse of bliss and pregnant with delight,  
Perpetual pleasures in thy presence reign,  
And smiling Plenty leads thy wanton train.

ADDISON.

WE HOLD this truth to be self-evident, that GOD created all men equal, and is one of the most prominent features in the Declaration of Independence, and in that glorious fabric of collected wisdom, our noble Constitution. This idea embraces the Indian and the European, the Savage and the Saint, the Peruvian and the Laplander, the white Man and the African, and whatever measures are adopted subversive of this inestimable privilege, are in direct violation of the letter and spirit of our Constitution, and become subject to the animadversion of all, particularly those who are deeply interested in the measure.

These thoughts were suggested by the promulgation of a late bill, before the Senate of Pennsylvania, to prevent the emigration of people of colour into this state. It was not passed into a law at this session and must in consequence lay over until the next, before when we sincerely hope, the white men, whom we should look upon as our protectors, will have become convinced of the inhumanity and impolicy of such a measure, and forbear to deprive us of those inestimable treasures, Liberty and Independence. This is almost the only state in the Union wherein the African race have justly boasted of rational liberty and the protection of the laws, and shall it now be said they have been deprived of that liberty, and publickly exposed for sale to the highest bidder? Shall colonial inhumanity that has marked many of us with shameful stripes, become the practice of the people of Pennsylvania, while Mercy stands weeping at the miserable spectacle? People of Pennsylvania, descendants of the immortal Penn, doom us not to the unhappy fate of thousands of our countrymen in the Southern States and the West Indies; despise the traffick in blood, and the blessing of the African will for ever be around you. Many of us are men of property, for the security of which, we have hitherto looked to the laws of our blessed state, but should this become a law, our property is jeopardized, since the same power which can expose to sale an unfortunate fellow creature, can wrest from him those estates, which years of honest industry have accumulated. Where shall the poor African look for protection, should the people of Pennsylvania consent to

oppress him? We grant there are a number of worthless men belonging to our colour, but there are laws of sufficient rigour for their punishment, if properly and duly enforced. We wish not to screen the guilty from punishment, but with the guilty do not permit the innocent to suffer. If there are worthless men, there are also men of merit among the African race, who are useful members of Society. The truth of this let their benevolent institutions and the numbers clothed and fed by them witness. Punish the guilty man of colour to the utmost limit of the laws, but sell him not to slavery! If he is in danger of becoming a publick charge prevent him! If he is too indolent to labour for his own subsistence, compel him to do so; but sell him not to slavery. By selling him you do not make him better, but commit a wrong, without benefitting the object of it or society at large. Many of our ancestors were brought here more than one hundred years ago; many of our fathers, many of ourselves, have fought and bled for the Independence of our country. Do not then expose us to sale. Let not the spirit of the father behold the son robbed of that Liberty which he died to establish, but let the motto of our Legislators be: "The Law knows no distinction."

These are only a few desultory remarks on the subject, and intend to succeed this effervescence of feeling, by a series of essays, tending to prove the impolicy and unconstitutionality of the law in question.

For the present, I leave the publick to the consideration of the above observations, in which I hope they will see so much truth, that they will never consent to sell to slavery

A MAN OF COLOUR.

*(April 1813)*

THOSE PATRIOTICK citizens, who, after resting from the toils of an arduous war, which achieved our Independence and laid the foundation of the only reasonable Republick upon earth, associated together, and for the protection of those inestimable rights for the establishment of which they had exhausted their blood and treasure, framed the Constitution of Pennsylvania, have by the ninth article, declared; that “All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying life and liberty.” Under the restraint of wise and well administered laws, we cordially unite in the above glorious sentiment, but by the bill upon which we have been remarking, it appears as if the committee who drew it up mistook the sentiment expressed in this article, and do not consider us as men, or that those enlightened statesmen who formed the constitution upon the basis of experience, intended to exclude us from its blessings and protection. If the former, why are we not to be considered as men. Has the GOD who made the white man and the black, left any record declaring us a different species. Are we not sustained by the same power, supported by the same food, hurt by the same wounds, wounded by the same wrongs, pleased with the same delights, and propagated by the same means. And should we not then enjoy the same liberty, and be protected by the same laws.— We wish not to legislate, for our means of information and the acquisition of knowledge are, in the nature of things, so circumscribed, that we must consider ourselves incompetent to the task; but let us, in legislation, be considered as men. It cannot be that the authors of our Constitution intended to exclude us from its benefits, for just emerging from unjust and cruel mancipation, their souls were too much affected with their own deprivations to commence the reign of terrour over others. They knew we were deeper skinned than they were, but they acknowledged us as men, and found that many an honest heart beat beneath a dusky bosom. They felt that they had no more authority to enslave us, than England had to tyrannize over them. They were convinced that if amenable to the same laws in our actions, we should be protected by the same laws in our

rights and privileges. Actuated by these sentiments they adopted the glorious fabric of our liberties, and declaring “all men” free, they did not particularize white and black, because they never supposed it would be made a question whether *we were men or not*. Sacred be the ashes, and deathless be the memory of those heroes who are dead; and revered be the persons and the characters of those who still exist and lift the thunders of admonition against the traffick in blood. And here my brethren in colour, let the tear of gratitude and the sigh of regret break forth for that great and good man, who lately fell a victim to the promiscuous fury of death, in whom you have lost a zealous friend, a powerful, an herculean advocate, a sincere adviser, and one who spent many an hour of his life to break your fetters, and ameliorate your condition—I mean the ever to be lamented Dr. BENJAMIN RUSH.

It seems almost incredible that the advocates of liberty, should conceive the idea of selling a fellow creature to slavery. It is like the heroes of the French Revolution, who cried “*Vive la Republick,*” while the decapitated Nun was precipitated into the general reservoir of death, and the palpitating embryo decorated the point of the bayonet. Ye, who should be our protectors, do not destroy.—We will cheerfully submit to the laws, and aid in bringing offenders against them of every colour to justice; but do not let the laws operate so severely, so degradingly, so unjustly against us alone.

Let us put a case, in which the law in question operates peculiarly hard and unjust.—I have a brother, perhaps, who resides in a distant part of the Union, and after a separation of years, actuated by the same fraternal affection which beats in the bosom of a white man, he comes to visit me. Unless that brother be registered in twenty four hours after, and be able to produce a certificate to that effect, he is liable, according to the second and third sections of the bill, to a fine of twenty dollars, to arrest, imprisonment and sale. Let the unprejudiced mind ponder upon this, and then pronounce it the justifiable act of a free people, if he can. To this we trust our case, without fear of the issue. The unprejudiced must pronounce any act tending to deprive a free man of his right, freedom and

immunities, as not only cruel in the extreme, but decidedly unconstitutional both as regards the letter and spirit of that glorious instrument. The same power which protects the white man, should protect

A MAN OF COLOUR.

*(1813)*

# GEORGE BOURNE

from *The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable*

The abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison is reported to have said that, apart from the Bible, no book was more influential to him than *Book and Slavery Irreconcilable*, the incendiary treatise by the English-born Presbyterian and later Dutch Reformed minister George Bourne (1780–1845). In 1804 Bourne emigrated to Baltimore, where he founded *The Baltimore Evening Post* and worked as a writer until 1810, when he moved to Virginia and returned to the ministry. His reengagement with Christian doctrine inspired in him an eruption of abolitionist fervor, which was both to define him and to complicate the rest of his life. He faced conflicts with Presbyterian authorities over his expulsion of slave-owners from his congregation and his violent public denunciations of slavery, and, beginning in 1816, he was forced to move first to Germantown, Pennsylvania, then Ossining, New York, and Quebec, Canada. He spent his final sixteen years in New York City.

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The Church of God groans. It is the utmost Satanic delusion to talk of religion and slavery. Be not deceived: to affirm that a Slave-holder is a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ, is most intelligible contradiction. A brother of him who went about doing good, and steal, enslave, torment, starve, and scourge a man because his skin is of a different tinge! Such Christianity is the Devil's manufacture to delude souls to the regions of woe.

You are Christians! you profess that you feel *bowels of mercy*; and hold in *free-born* slavery the descendants of stolen Africans! Your Christianity is a *non-entity*. You are a Class-Leader! you ask your Class-mate, how he has lived during the past week?—he informs you, of his peace of conscience, and love of God; and you saw him half-murdering his servants; you know that his dependent is naked, without food, houseless and miserable; *do you believe him?* You are a

Deacon! You converse with a Professor: he assures you, that he endeavors to obtain heavenly bliss, conformably to the example of the Friend of Sinners; but you are certified that as a Magistrate, he swears, “all men are born free,” and nevertheless, detains his Christian brother in slavery: no man can credit such absurd contradictions. You are an Exhorter: you are at a Prayer Meeting: you ask your friends to engage in the exercises; they plead for the mercy, pardon, love, benevolence, and approbation of God, because they manifest those affections in their intercourse with men, and notwithstanding hold slaves! can you subjoin an AMEN to such hypocrisy?

You are an Elder: you avow before the Church and the World that you believe the BOOK which condemns *Slave-holding* or *Man-stealing* as the utmost iniquity; and yourself unmercifully lacerate colored women in the last state of pregnancy; or *tan* the servants whom you have flayed with salt, pepper and vinegar? Who can place the smallest confidence in you?

You are a Preacher: you have the Book as your light; and the Book as your sole remuneration. That Book informs you, that slavery is the acme of all unrighteousness; you are a Slaveholder! that Book teaches you, that the worst of all sinners is the Church-Officer who engages in the iniquity which he ought to reprove, or connives at the transgressor, whom he should admonish: Yet, you are either a Kidnapper or his Defender!

Longer to abet such inconsistency, to support such absurdity, or to continue in such guilt, must affix a death-warrant to the existence of the Church. It is absolutely impossible that religion can flourish among *Man-stealers*: and every mode except an immediate expulsion of obdurate Flesh-Dealers from the professed family of Christians, is a sanction of the crime, and a stigma on the BOOK.

Remember, Church-Officers, your awful responsibility: with the illumination of the sacred volume around you, can you rest in peace, with the conviction, that men are deluded, and you enlighten them not: can you risk the

scrutiny of the bar of God, with the condemnation of impenitent Slave-holders transferred to your negligence and intimidation; who can calmly assert, or who himself believes, that Slavery is either equitable, merciful, or devotional; who *dare* to profess himself a Presbyterian or a Methodist and be connected in any form with man-stealing? Slave-Drivers sow to the Flesh; of the Flesh they reap corruption. Will you venture your everlasting felicity, upon a *perhaps*; upon an unfounded hope that so many have not been deceived; when that *perhaps*, that *hope* are both declared by the Book, to originate in idolatry, to exist through deceitfulness, and to end in Tophet?

You procrastinate—the enemy of souls urges you to cry *to-morrow*;—he advises the adoption of *prudent and moderate reform*; knowing that such amendment insures him more certain conquest: he excites dread, by the menace of worldly displeasure, and the varied reproaches and privations which accompany it: you listen, you assent to the seduction, and the evil augments. The duration of all terrestrial vanities hastens to its close: in the result, you are individually interested; who can calmly anticipate righteous retribution upon the basis of man-stealing? who can peacefully contemplate the exchange of worlds, with the never-ceasing horrors of domestic oppressions unexpiated? who can fearlessly await the judgment of the Son of Man with the diversified iniquity and hard-heartedness of slavery recorded against him?

Christians! How long will you tacitly or openly sanction, or actually engage in a system which includes every practicable iniquity? Can you conscientiously believe, that a slave-holder exhibits that assimilation to the meek and lowly Jesus, which is indispensable to an enjoyment of the inheritance of the Saints in light? Are you prepared to answer all the demands, which equity may propound at the final examination of the last great day, when the enormities of slavery are weighed in the balance of the Judge?

## PRINCE SAUNDERS

from *Memoir Presented to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race*

The career of Prince Saunders (c. 1784–1839) reveals the variety and complexity of antislavery thinking in the nineteenth century. Saunders was a free black abolitionist, activist, and educator. Early on, he served as a teacher in black schools in Colchester, Connecticut, and Boston, Massachusetts, where he was also active in the African Masonic Lodge and the African Baptist Church. An 1815 visit to London brought him into contact with British abolitionists, including William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, and a visit to Haiti the following year prompted him to become a proponent of colonization there, a plan to which he remained devoted for the last twenty years of his life, despite the opposition of James Forten and other black abolitionists. This address to the Abolitionist Convention in 1818 aimed to present colonization to Haiti, the world's first black republic, as a logical next step once African Americans were freed from “the thraldoms of the most abject slavery.”

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*Respected Gentlemen and Friends,*

AT a period so momentous as the present, when the friends of abolition and emancipation, as well as those whom observation and experience might teach us to beware to whom we should apply the endearing appellations, are professedly concerned for the establishment of an Asylum for those Free Persons of Colour, who may be disposed to remove to it, and for such persons as shall hereafter be emancipated from slavery, a careful examination of this subject is imposed upon us.

So large a number of abolitionists, convened from different sections of the country, is at all times and under any circumstances, an interesting spectacle to the eye of the philanthropist; how doubly delightful then is it, to me, whose

interests and feelings so largely partake in the object you have in view, to behold this convention engaged in solemn deliberation upon those subjects employed to promote the improvement of the condition of the African race.

It was in this city and its vicinity, that the eccentric, the humane, the pious, and the practically philanthropic Lay, was the first who laboured to draw aside that thick, and then impenetrable veil, with which prejudice and avarice had obscured the enormities of the slave-trade; being seemingly conscious that it was only necessary that its iniquitous and barbarous character should be discovered and known in order to effect its condemnation and abolition, by every community of practical christians.

This commonwealth was, also, the scene of a great portion of the benevolent exertions of that early and zealous advocate for the injured descendants of Africa, the candid and upright Sandiford.

Philadelphia had the honour and the happiness of being for years adorned and illumined by the beneficent light of the precepts and example of that distinguished philanthropist, the late venerable and excellent Benezet. Those rays of the light of truth and justice, which had beamed upon his own mind and heart, and which he communicated to the public through the medium of the press, in this country, were sent across the Atlantic; and Anthony Benezet's historical account of Guinea seems to have done much towards interesting the mind of the celebrated Thomas Clarkson, upon the great subject of the abolition. This city and its neighbourhood were the region, which was enlightened by the residence and labours of that illustrious pattern of practical beneficence, the pious and humane Woolman.

Among other distinguished abolitionists, who were cotemporaries with Woolman and Benezet, the late Warner Mifflin, of Kent county in Delaware, stands preeminently conspicuous. So deeply did he become impressed with a sense of the injustice, and the inhumanity of holding slaves, that he fixed upon a day for the emancipation of thirty-seven persons of colour, who were received from his father. On that interesting occasion it appears that he called them into

his chamber, one after the other, and that the following is the substance of the conversation which took place between him and one of them: “Well, my friend James, how old art thou?” “My master,” said he, “I am twenty-nine years and a half old.” The master replied, “Thou shouldst have been free at twenty-one years of age, as our white brethren are. Religion and humanity enjoin it upon me this day to give thee thy liberty, and justice commands me to pay thee for eight and a half years’ services: which, at 21*l.* 5*s.* per year, including thy food and raiment, makes the sum of 95*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* which I owe thee.” Would that every slave holder would “go and do likewise.”

The names of Pemberton, Wistar, and Rush, who have been successively called to preside over the interests of the Abolition Society, in this city, will be cherished in affectionate remembrance, in conjunction with those of many other eminently distinguished abolitionists, in different parts of the United States, who have also passed the bourn of that more elevated scene of human destiny, where the wicked cease from troubling and oppressing their fellow beings, and where the weary have entered upon an interminable state of rest, felicity and immortal peace, in those bright mansions, which the King of Glory has gone to prepare for the reception of all those who have, with religious fidelity and care, assiduously cherished and cultivated that celestial principle, which the inspiration of the Almighty hath lighted up in the soul of every individual; and which, when duly nurtured and improved, must inevitably bring forth the fruits of those beneficent, philanthropic, humane, benevolent and pious affections, which constitute that pure and elevated charity and love, which fulfill all the laws of christian purity and human excellence.

To those who have thus laboured to discipline their minds and hearts, and to bring them into an entire subjection and imitation of the great example of excellence, by religiously considering the wrongs endured by those persecuted and afflicted children of sorrow, whose liberty has been cloven down by the artifice, intrigue, violence or oppressive cruelty, of the stronger portion of mankind; to such as have so believed, and practised, are the thoughts of an

immortality beaming with the lustre of a faith so strong, and a hope so clear and transporting, peculiarly interesting.

To those excellent men who have exemplified the dignity of human nature by their labour of practical piety and goodness, while sojourning in this state of discipline and probation, by becoming the protectors of the friendless, among all the various descriptions of their brethren of mankind; to them belongs the happiness of looking forward with delightful anticipation to that animating period, when the great and excellent benefactors of the human race shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever, for the illumination of that eternal city, which hath foundation, whose maker and builder is God Almighty, in the heavens.

Many of the most distinguished and enlightened individuals in different regions, and among various nations, are habitual in their labours to unbind the chains of unjust captivity and servitude; and to set the innocent victims of avarice and cupidity upon the broad basis of the enjoyment of those unalienable rights, which the universal Parent has entrusted to the care of every individual among his intelligent, and accountable children.

And if those who consider the poor, in the ordinary concerns of charity and pious alms giving, are authorised to look for the favour of providence; with how much more full an assurance may those who have delivered their fellow beings from the inhuman grasp of the unprincipled kidnapper, or saved them from dragging out a miserable existence, amidst the thraldoms of the most abject slavery; with what confident expectation of becoming the recipients of that inconceivably glorious recompence of reward, which God has prepared for those who love and obey him, (and keep his commandments,) may such persons anticipate the period when Christ shall reappear, to make up his jewels.

(1818)

# JOHN JAY

## *Letter to Elias Boudinot, Esq., November 17, 1819*

First president of the New York Manumission Society, and first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, John Jay (1745–1829) was uniquely positioned in 1819 to comment from a historical perspective on the crisis over the admission of Missouri as a slave state. In this letter, Jay offers his radical interpretation of the Constitution, arguing that from 1808 onward, Congress had the legal authority to prohibit the importation of slaves into any and every state, “whether *new* or *old*.” His text was published with antislavery speeches by Rufus King and others as part of the campaign to deny Missouri admission to the Union except as a free state.

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*Bedford, West Chester County, N.Y.*

*17th November, 1819.*

DEAR SIR,

I have received the copy of a Circular Letter, which as Chairman of the committee appointed by the late public meeting at Trenton, respecting slavery, you was pleased to direct to me on the 5th instant.

Little can be added to what has been said and written on the subject of Slavery. I concur in the opinion that it ought not to be introduced nor permitted in any of the *new states*, and that it ought to be gradually diminished and finally abolished in all of them.

To me the constitutional authority of the Congress, to prohibit the migration and importation of slaves into any of the states, does not appear questionable.

The *first* article of the Constitution specifies the legislative powers committed to the Congress. The 9th section of that article has these words —“The *migration* or *importation* of such persons as any of the *now existing*

states shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808—but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation not exceeding ten dollars for each person.”

I understand the sense and meaning of this clause to be—That the power of the Congress, although competent to prohibit such migration and importation, was not to be exercised with respect to the *then* existing states (and them only) until the year 1808—but that the Congress were at liberty to make such prohibition as to any *new* state which might in the *mean* time be established.—And further that from and after *that* period, they were authorized to make such prohibition as to *all* the states, whether *new* or *old*.

It will I presume be admitted that Slaves were the Persons intended.—The word Slaves was avoided, probably on account of the existing toleration of Slavery, and its discordancy with the principles of the Revolution; and from a consciousness of its being repugnant to the following positions in the Declaration of Independence—“We hold these truths to be self-evident—that *all* men are created Equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights—that among them are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

As to my taking an *active* part in “organizing a plan of co-operation,” the state of my health has long been such as not to admit of it.

Be pleased to assure the Committee of my best wishes for their success, and permit me to assure you of the esteem and regard with which

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

JOHN JAY

The Honourable  
ELIAS BOUDINOT, Esq.

# RUFUS KING

## from *Observations of Rufus King, on the Missouri Bill*

Born in Scarborough, Maine (then part of Massachusetts) and educated at Harvard, Rufus King (1755–1827) fought in the American Revolution, helped draft the Constitution, and had a long career as a politician and diplomat. His slavery politics were complex. In the 1780s he supported the exclusion of slavery from the Northwest Territory and emphatically opposed the admission of slave states to the Union, but he seemed willing to tolerate slavery in existing states and endorsed colonization schemes for freed blacks. In the pamphlet excerpted here, based on two speeches delivered while a U.S. senator from New York, he leaves aside moral issues to argue against slavery on political and economic grounds. His remarks resonated long after the Missouri crisis. In 1822 Denmark Vesey was partly inspired by his pamphlet to lead a slave insurrection, and in 1848 it was reprinted by Free Soil advocates.

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The existence of slavery impairs the industry and the power of a nation; and it does so in proportion to the multiplication of its slaves: where the manual labour of a country is performed by slaves, labour dishonours the hands of freemen.

If her labourers are slaves, Missouri may be able to pay money taxes, but will be unable to raise soldiers, or to recruit seamen, and experience seems to have proved that manufactures do not prosper where the artificers are slaves. In case of foreign war, or domestic insurrection, misfortunes from which no states are exempt, and against which all should be seasonably prepared, slaves not only do not add to, but diminish the faculty of self defence: instead of increasing the public strength, they lessen it, by the whole number of free persons, whose place they occupy, increased by the number of free men that may be employed as guards over them.

The motives for the admission of new states into the union, are the extension of the principles of our free government, the equalizing of the public burdens, and the consolidation of the power of the confederated nation. Unless these objects be promoted by the admission of new states, no such admission can be expedient or justified.

The states in which slavery already exists are contiguous to each other: they are also the portion of the United States nearest to the European colonies in the West Indies;—colonies whose future condition can hardly be regarded as problematical. If Missouri and the other states that may be formed to the west of the river Mississippi are permitted to introduce and establish slavery, the repose, if not the security of the union may be endangered; all the states south of the river Ohio and west of Pennsylvania and Delaware will be peopled with slaves and the establishment of new states west of the river Mississippi will serve to extend slavery instead of freedom over that boundless region.

Such increase of the states, whatever other interest it may promote, will be sure to add nothing to the security of the public liberties; and can hardly fail hereafter to require and produce a change in our government.

On the other hand, if slavery be excluded from Missouri, and the other new states which may be formed in this quarter, not only will the slave markets be broken up, and the principles of freedom be extended and strengthened; but an exposed and important frontier will present a barrier, which will check and keep back foreign assailants, who may be as brave, and, as we hope, will be as free as ourselves. Surrounded in this manner by connected bodies of freemen, the states where slavery is allowed will be made more secure against domestic insurrection, and less liable to be affected by what may take place in the neighbouring colonies.

It ought not be forgotten, that the first and main object of the negotiation which led to the acquisition of Louisiana, was the free navigation of the Mississippi; a river that forms the sole passage from the western states to the ocean. This navigation, although of general benefit, has been always valued and

desired, as of peculiar advantage to the western states; whose demands to obtain it, were neither equivocal nor unreasonable. But with the river Mississippi,—by a sort of coercion, we acquired by good or ill fortune, as our future measures shall determine, the whole province of Louisiana. As this acquisition was made at the common expense, it is very fairly urged, that the advantages to be derived from it should also be common. This it is said will not happen, if slavery be excluded from Missouri, as the citizens of states where slavery is permitted will be shut out, and none but citizens of states where slavery is prohibited can become inhabitants of Missouri.

But this consequence will not arise from the proposed exclusion of slavery: the citizens of states, in which slavery is allowed, like all other citizens, will be free to become inhabitants of the Missouri, in like manner as they have become inhabitants of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, in which slavery is forbidden. The exclusion of slaves from Missouri, will not therefore operate unequally among the citizens of the United States. The constitution provides, “that the citizens of each state shall be entitled to enjoy all the rights and immunities of citizens of the several states”—every citizen may therefore remove from one to another state, and there enjoy the rights and immunities of its citizens. The proposed provision excludes slaves, not citizens, whose rights it will not, and cannot impair.

Besides there is nothing new or peculiar in a provision for the exclusion of slavery: it has been established in the states north west of the river Ohio, and has existed from the beginning in the old states where slavery is forbidden. The citizens of states where slavery is allowed, may become inhabitants of Missouri, but cannot hold slaves there, nor in any other state where slavery is prohibited. As well might the laws prohibiting slavery in the old states become the subject of complaint, as the proposed exclusion of slavery in Missouri; but there is no foundation for such complaint in either case.

# ANONYMOUS

## *The Christian Slave*

Under the pseudonym “Solivagus” (or “solitary wanderer”), this short story appeared in *The Christian Herald and Seaman’s Magazine* for July 21, 1821, published in New York by John Caldwell. Set in rural South Carolina, this tale-within-a-tale is indebted to the “graveyard school” of sentimental literature dating back to Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751).

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IT WAS a little past sunset, when I began to be anxious to find a place where, for the night, I might rest my weary body, after a day’s ride under a sultry sun.— I was travelling in S. Carolina, and was not now far from a branch of the Cooper river. My reflections were pleasing, though tinged with melancholy, for I was far away from kindred and friends,—a stranger in a strange land. Whilst memory was recalling the scenes of reality, which like the visions of a dream, were now no more, a fancy throwing around me the veil of anticipated scenes,—I came to an old church. The country here is a dead level, and its surface is covered with thinly scattered pines. The church stood solitary; not a house in sight: it was built of wood, but was much decayed. The breezes of evening were gently sighing through the tops of the long-leafed pines which stood near, whilst still nearer stood several large live oaks, which spread out their aged arms, as if to shelter what was sacred. On their limbs hung in graceful folds the long gray moss, as if a mantle of mourning, waving over a few decayed tombs at the east side of the church. These oaks gave the place a very sombre and awful appearance; they seemed to stand as silent mourners over the dust of several generations, that had already sunk into the grave, and waiting in solemn expectation, that others would also soon come and lie beneath their shades in the long sleep of death. The time

of day, and the sacredness of the spot, were so congenial to my own feelings, that I involuntarily stopped my horse.

My curiosity was now excited by seeing a very aged negro standing and gazing steadily on a small decaying tomb; he seemed to be intent, and did not observe me; his woolly locks were whitened by age; his countenance was manly, though it bore the marks of sorrow; he was leaning on his smooth-worn staff, the companion of many years. I was somewhat surprised on seeing this aged African silently meditating among these vestiges of the dead, and accordingly aroused him from his reverie; he started at first, but his confidence was soon gained. There is a spring in the bosom of every christian, which throws a joy into his heart, whenever he meets a fellow christian, during his pilgrimage here below. I soon found the old negro to be an eminent christian, and we soon were acquainted. I inquired what motive induced him, at that hour of the day, to visit these tombs. Instead of answering my question directly, he gave me the following account of himself, in broken language:—

About 60 years ago, and this negro was living under his paternal roof in Africa; he was the son of a chief of a small tribe, the pride of his parents, and the delight of his countrymen; none could more dextrously throw the dart, none more skilfully guide the fragile canoe over the bosom of the deep. He was not far from 20 years of age, when on a fair summer's morn, he went in his little canoe to spend the day in fishing. About noon he paddled his bark to the shore, and under the shade of a beautiful palmetto tree, he reclined till the heat of the noon-day should be past. He was young, healthy, and active; he knew no foe whom he dreaded, he was a stranger to fear, and he dreamed only of security, as he slept under the shade of his own native tree. Thus while our sky is encircled by the bow of happiness, we forget that it may soon be overspread with darkness. When this African awoke, he found his hands bound behind him, his feet fettered, and himself surrounded by several white men, who were conveying him on board of their ship;—it was a slave ship. The vessel had her cargo completed, and was ready to sail. As they were unfurling the sails, the son of Africa, with many

others of his countrymen, for the last time, cast his eyes upon his native shores. Futurity was dark, was uncertain, was despair! His bosom thrilled with anguish, as he threw his last farewell look over the plains of his native country. There was his native spot where he had lived, there the home of his infancy and childhood, there the place where he had inhaled his earliest breath—and to tear him from these, seemed like breaking the very strings of his heart.

After a melancholy passage, during which this African was forced to wear double the irons, to receive double the number of lashes, that any of his companions received, on account of his refractory spirit, he was at length landed and sold to a planter in the place where he now resides. There is nothing new, nothing novel or interesting that ever takes place in the life of a slave—you describe one day, and you write the memoirs of a slave. The sun, indeed, continues to roll over him, but it sheds upon him no new joys, no new prospects, no new hopes: So it was with the subject of this narrative. His master was naturally a man of a very humane disposition, but his overseers were often little else than compounds of vice and cruelty. In this situation the negro lost all his natural independence and bravery. He often attempted to run away, but was as often taken and punished. Having no cultivated mind to which he could look for consolation—knowing of no change that was ever to take place in his situation, he settled down in gloominess. Often would he send a silent sigh for the home of his youth; but his path showed but few marks of happiness, and few rays of hope for futurity were drawn by fancy's hand. Sunk in despondency and vice, he was below the brutes around him.

In this situation he was accidentally met by the good minister of the parish, who addressed him as a rational and immortal being, and pressed upon him the first principles of religion. This was a new subject, for he had never before looked beyond the narrow bounds before him; nor had he ever dreamed of a world beyond this. After a long conversation on this subject, the minister got him to promise that he would now "*attend to his soul.*"

After this interview the clergyman could not, for many months, obtain an

interview with his new pupil, who most carefully shunned him. But, though afraid to meet his minister, he still felt an arrow of conviction in his heart. Wherever he went, whether asleep or awake, to use his own words, his promise, “me take care of soul, stick close to him.” He now began in earnest to seek “the one thing needful.” By the kindness of his master he learned to read his Testament, and to inquire more and more about Jesus. He was now very desirous to see his minister; and before a convenient opportunity occurred, he was in such distress of mind as actually to attempt two several times to kill himself. His minister visited him, conversed and prayed with him. “Oh,” he would say, “God never think such poor negro, he no love so much sinner, he no before ever see such bad heart!” The mercy of Christ, and his compassion towards sinners were explained to him, and his soul was filled with “joy and peace in believing.” He now rejoiced and thanked God that he was brought from his native shores, as he had a fairer country and purer enjoyments presented to his view, after the visions of this transitory world shall be over. He now became more industrious, and more faithful. By uncommon industry he raised money sufficient to purchase his own freedom. He next bought the liberty of his wife, and had nearly completed paying for that of his only daughter when she was liberated by the hand of death. His wife soon followed her, and left this world a perfect void to the husband and father. His every tie that bound him to earth was now broken. Having no earthly enjoyment left, he now placed his affections on heaven alone. It is easy for the Christian to make rapid progress in holiness when not fettered by worldly cares.

It was now dark, and I must leave my new acquaintance. I left him with his face wet with tears, still standing beside the tomb—the tomb of his old minister! This good man had been his faithful and constant guide, and though his ashes had been slumbering for years, the negro had not yet forgotten how to weep at their urn. I could not but admire the goodness, and the wonderful dealings of God, in order to bring men to himself. Happy minister! who hast been the instrument of covering multitudes of sins! Happy negro! his is not this world. Though no sculptured marble may tell the traveller where he may shortly lie—

though he never trod the thorny road of ambition or power—though the trumpet of fame never blew the echo of his name through a gaping world—still those eyes, which will soon be closed in death, may hereafter awake, to behold, undaunted, a world in flames, and these heavens fleeing away.

SOLIVAGUS.

*(1821)*

# JEREMIAH GLOUCESTER

from *An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*

Son of John Gloucester, a minister and former slave who traveled the country to raise the funds to free his wife and four children, Jeremiah Gloucester (1799–1827) was pastor of the Second African Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia from 1824 until his premature death three years later. In this oration, delivered at the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, Gloucester uses the occasion of the annual commemoration of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, which dates back to 1808, to lament the continuance of slavery and remind the nation that “God will not pass by with impunity such a horrid crime.”

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Homer says “when a man is made a slave, he loses from that day the half of his virtue.” Longinus quoting the same passage affirms that “slavery however mild, may still be called the prison of the soul.” Tacitus remarks “that even wild animals lose their spirit when deprived of their freedom;” and says judge Tucker of Virginia, on this very same subject, “Whilst America hath been the land of promise to Europeans, and her descendants, it hath been the vale of death to millions of the wretched sons of Africa.” And says Mr. Jefferson, “I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever;” the Almighty has no attribute that takes sides in such a barbarous traffic. This philosopher, this statesman called the attention of his state to an evil, corroding as he thought every day the morals, inflaming the passions, weakening the energies, and endangering the liberties of a free, and manly people. In fact it has attracted the attention, and engaged the notice of almost every part of Christendom. America has taken laudable means to suppress it, and in consequence of the exertion which England has made, she contends for the right of example; and when Napoleon was swaying a victorious sceptre in France,

amidst his mad career of war, and carnage; when every call of mercy seemed drowned in the din of battle; and every fiber of humanity eradicated by ambition; he forbade the slave trade. Men high in office, eminent in science, fair in character, and exalted in the confidence of their fellow citizens, have arrayed themselves as the champions of emancipation. Suffer me here to mention the labor of Benjamin Lay; this memorable gentleman, who was a quaker by profession, was one of the first whose name is recorded in history, that engaged in the behalf of the oppressed Africans. He commenced his career in the year 1718, on the Island of Barbadoes.

Behold this philanthropic advocate engaged in public, and private admonition with every person who was in the least implicated in this traffic; and after he had spent 13 years pleading the cause of the oppressed without any apparent success, the opposition grew so strong against him for his truly pious labours that he resolved to seek an asylum in another part of the world lest he should be contaminated with the accused evil. In the year 1731, he arrived in this city; he soon beheld that which induced him to show his abhorrence to the abominable evil which every where prevailed. It may be easily supposed that his independent opinion, rendered him a less welcome emigrant, than those that could quietly approve the habits of the times. This champion of justice and of human rights, stood as a solitary combatant in the field, with pride and avarice marshaled against him. He used every method that human ingenuity could invent, to convince the society of friends, as well as others, how wicked it was to hold slaves at this time, he became intimately attached to the truly honorable Anthony Benezet, and Ralph Stanford; who likewise done all in their power to convince the world that such a practice was inconsistent to the law of God, and repugnant to the rights of man. Thanks be to kind heaven, this pious man, together with many more of the society of friends did not labour in vain in our behalf; for we learn from history as early as 1767, the legislature of Massachusetts, brought in a bill for prohibiting the importation of Africans into their province; however it did not pass; it was brought forward again 1774

unhappily it shared the same fate; but it finally passed for Virginia, abolished the slave trade in the year 1778, Pennsylvania 1780, Massachusetts 1787, Connecticut and Rhode Island in 1788. It was finally interdicted by the general Congress in 1794, and made punishable as a crime 7 years before that measure was adopted in England, which took place January the 1st, 1801; which we are assembled this day to offer our mutual gratulations and pious gratitude for such a glorious act. Yes, after America lifted up the pole of liberty and unfurled the banner and swayed the sceptre of Independence, and uttered this noble sentiment, "all men are created equal, endowed by the creator of the universe with certain unalienable rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Then it was that the African lifted up his bleeding fettered hands, and cried with a voice that reiterated am I not a man, and a brother! at which humanity sprang forth and espoused his cause, drawing from his vitals the deadly arrow of injustice, and held up a shield to defend him from a fresh attack. Ever since the Africans have been striving to unloose every fetter that binds her; yes, a part of her sons, and daughters have effectually broke their chain on the Island of St. Domingo, and have proclaimed the imprescribable rights of man, sealing the covenant made with liberty, by their blood; their own happiness we trust was not alone the effect of their glorious efforts, their views no doubt extended to all that were bleeding under the yoke of bondage; they said their interest blended with their own. Ages to come will read with astonishment the history of their brilliant exploits! yes, liberty which they have been the invincible defenders of, has found an asylum in the bosom of a regularly organized independent government. Fellow citizens, notwithstanding all that has been done, and tho' we are surrounded by a host of friends; yet there are thousands of our brethren of colour suffering under the tyranical yoke of bondage in the south, and on the West India islands. In the state of Maryland, in the year 1810, there were 111,502 slaves; in Virginia 392,518; in Kentucky 80,501; in North Carolina, 202,243; in South Carolina, 196,365; and in Georgia, 105,218; amounting altogether to 1,088,247: what the increase has been since, or how

many in the rest of the states I have not been enabled to ascertain. But from this calculation (which comes far short of the number;) you see that slavery still exists. Now I would ask every slave holder, if they were within the walls of this house, if they meant to teach us that republicanism is a mere name! and the liberty that their fore fathers spilt their blood for, is but a mere fantom? I appeal to the hearts of all true republicans, if it is not a sin in the sight of heaven, to hold in cruel slavery a part of the human family, for no other crime than they are not of the same colour? we love this country, but we do detest the principle of holding slaves, because it tolls the death bell of this republic. God will not pass by with impunity such a horrid crime. When we behold the mountain of misery in the south, that has been raised by those who professes to vindicate injured innocence, and advocate the rights of man; we tremble for such a government that acts so inconsistent.

But my brethren they would tell us that they had a right to hold their slaves in bondage; that they were willed to them by their ancestors. But where did their ancestors obtain their right? I answer from the devil, whose work they do. It is a reproach to this country to hold the declaration of independence in one hand, and the lash of despotism in the other. But it is said we are not of the same flesh and blood; but I would ask if it is not said in scripture that God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth? Now where is the individual that can object to this, on rational grounds, till he has first proved from authentic records, or from the nature of things, that this passage is not true? and what records can be found that is more authentic than the Bible? where is the table of genealogy whereby it can be made appear that the Africans have not descended from Adam, and Eve? Is there any thing in the nature of the African, in his soul, or body, that may not easily be accounted for, on the supposition that he and the whites are of the same family? I challenge every metaphysical reasoner to summon up all their strength, and solve these problems, if they can; I care not how you may attempt to do it, however there is but two ways that the difference can be proved; if there is any difference between the two. Now if you

cannot prove that the Africans, and the whites are different beings, then the inference that Dr. Beatty draws is a just one, viz. "That slavery is inconsistent with the dearest rights of man's nature, it is utterly repugnant to every principle of reason, religion, humanity and conscience," and says an eminent author, "He that can seriously argue in vindication of slavery, deserves no other answer than a stab of a Poniard." Suppose this country was invaded, and the rights of the whites violated by Africans, just as cruelly as our rights are now violated; would not the whites say of us with truth, that we are such barbarians as to deserve at their hands no other return than final extermination? yes, they would arm themselves with the rights of nature, and sweep us from the face of the earth, if it were possible. We do not stand in need of proof, to substantiate this fact; let one of those kidnappers steal a white child, and paint him black, and what do we hear, every one is crying out O! inhumanity! every one could shed a tear for the bereaved parent; but how few tears are shed when an African is kidnapped. Ah! my brethren, if it was not for the society of Friends, together with a few others, you would not be able to let your children leave your sides. Nay, you would not be safe in your own house.

My brethren, I am highly gratified to see so many of you united together in those different societies, celebrating the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade; I need not tell you, that the free people of colour are increasing with such rapidity that great exertions are made by the colonization society, to get the free people of colour out of these United States. We are opposed to this plan in its present form. If the slave holders could get all the free people of colour out of this country, they know it would be easy for them to hold their slaves in peace; are we not justifiable in making this objection? if they wished slavery entirely abolished, why would they have opened a new avenue in Missouri, for the admission of slaves? why did they not admit her into the union on the grounds that they should not admit slaves into their territory? we can never coincide with such a plan, until I can see what is become of our brethren, who are in bondage.



# ANN EVANS

## from *Africa*

Little is known of Ann Evans (fl. 1826) except that she published this twenty-page poem in Andover, Massachusetts, in May 1826, and that, according to the biography of William Lloyd Garrison written by his sons, it was the first publication to move their father to consider the issue of slavery. Garrison reviewed and praised the poem in the *Free Press*, the newspaper he founded at age twenty-one with his partner Isaac Knapp. He seemed to have known Evans personally and praised her as “a young lady of fine talents, whose circumstances are far from being affluent, but whose pen should never be idle.”

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Is it a dream!

A wild and terrible vision of the night,  
When deep sleep falls on man! or do I see,  
In waking horror, a monstrous form, so frightful,  
That human language finds no softer name  
By which to call its hideous ugliness,  
Than SLAVERY—direst sound!—Is it a dream?  
Or do I hear a voice of dreadful import,  
The wild and mingling groans of writhing millions,  
Calling for vengeance on my guilty land!

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes  
A fount of tears!—Columbia! in *thy* bosom  
Can slavery dwell?—Then is thy fame a lie!  
Can Oppression lift his hideous, gorgon head,  
Beneath the eye of *Freedom*?—Oh my country!  
This deep anathema—this direst evil,

“Like a foul blot on thy dishonour’d brow,”  
Mars all thy beauty; and thy far-fam’d glory  
Is but a gilded toy, for fools to play with!  
For in the mock’ry of thy boasted freedom,  
Thou smil’st, with deadly joy, on human woe!  
Thy soil is nourish’d with tears and blood!—Columbia!  
O let the deepest blush of honest shame  
Crimson thy cheek! for vile Oppression walks  
Within thy borders!—rears his brazen front  
'Neath thy unchiding eye!—Oh tell it not  
In Gath, lest those who worship idol gods  
Laugh thee to scorn, and cry, in mad derision,  
Behold what *Christians* do!\*

Will the spirit

Of free-born man yield to the galling chain,  
Which binds his flesh? Can toil, and stripes, and death,  
Subdue the soul?—Oppression’s ruthless hand  
May fetter the *limbs*:—The immortal *mind is free*.  
Let tyrants tremble on their tott’ring thrones!  
Let the proud man who dares to call his brother,  
Form’d by the same Hand that gave him life,  
By the vile name of SLAVE, start with dismay,  
Like him of old, Belshazzar, when, (all else  
Invisible, wrapt in the dreadful veil  
Of mystery,) a *hand*, the monarch saw,  
(Belonging not to earth,) writing his doom,  
In words *felt*, though they could not be decipher’d.  
There is a spirit in man, that will not bend  
To the tyrant’s frown!—Mark yon portentous cloud,  
Rising from ocean’s bosom.—See! it spreads,

More dense and dreadful.—Is it the distant noise  
Of mutt'ring thunder—('tis a strange, wild sound!)  
That breaks so fearfully upon the sense?  
As the mad mingling of many voices  
It steals on the affrighted ear of night;  
And all again is calm and still as death!

(1826)

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\* It ought to be remembered, with deep self-abasement, that the slave trade has found the mass of its abettors among nations nominally Christian. According to the most judicious calculations, Africa has been drained annually of 150,000 of its inhabitants; and—shameful acknowledgment! the great receptacles of this unhappy race have been the West Indies, and the United States. A million and a half are supposed to exist in our own free country. *Mem. of Rev. S. J. Mills*, pp. 121, 122.

# WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

## *The African Chief*

Born and educated in Massachusetts, William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878) earned fame early in life as a poet in the Romantic tradition and, after moving to New York in the mid-1820s, went on to great success as a journalist and man of letters. His politics and sensibilities were steadily antislavery, as is apparent in this poetic dramatization of a heroic African who refuses to be enslaved. In later years, he would oppose the annexation of Texas, honor John Brown as a martyr, and support Abraham Lincoln. Indeed, it was Bryant who introduced Lincoln at his famous Cooper Union Address in New York in 1860.

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Chained in the market-place he stood,  
    A man of giant frame,  
Amid the gathering multitude  
    That shrunk to hear his name—  
All stern of look and strong of limb,  
    His dark eye on the ground:—  
And silently they gazed on him,  
    As on a lion bound.

Vainly, but well, that chief had fought,—  
    He was a captive now,—  
Yet pride, that fortune humbles not,  
    Was written on his brow.  
The scars his dark broad bosom wore,  
    Shewed warrior true and brave;  
A prince among his tribe before,  
    He could not be a slave.

Then to his conqueror he spake—  
    “My brother is a king;  
Undo this necklace from my neck,  
    And take this bracelet ring;  
And send me where my brother reigns,  
    And I will fill thy hands  
With store of ivory from the plains,  
    And gold-dust from the sands.”

“Not for thy ivory nor thy gold  
    Will I unbind thy chain;  
That bloody hand shall never hold  
    The battle spear again.  
A price thy nation never gave,  
    Shall yet be paid for thee;  
For thou shalt be the Christian’s slave,  
    In lands beyond the sea.”

Then wept the warrior chief, and bade  
    To shred his locks away;  
And, one by one, each heavy braid  
    Before the victor lay.  
Thick were the platted locks, and long,  
    And deftly hidden there  
Shone many a wedge of gold among  
    The dark and crisped hair.

“Look, feast thy greedy eye with gold  
    Long kept for sorest need;  
Take it—thou askest sums untold,

And say that I am freed.  
Take it—my wife the long, long day  
Weeps by the cocoa-tree,  
And my young children leave their play,  
And ask in vain for me.”

“I take thy gold—but I have made  
Thy fetters fast and strong,  
And ween that by the cocoa shade  
Thy wife will wait thee long.”  
Strong was the agony that shook  
The captive’s frame to hear,  
And the proud meaning of his look  
Was changed to mortal fear.

His heart was broken—crazed his brain—  
At once his eye grew wild—  
He struggled fiercely with his chain,  
Whispered, and wept, and smiled;  
Yet wore not long those fatal bands,  
And once, at shut of day,  
They drew him forth upon the sands,  
The foul hyena’s prey.

# ELIZABETH MARGARET CHANDLER

## *The Slave-Ship; The Enfranchisement; Tea-Table Talk; Think of Our Country's Glory*

Born in Delaware, orphaned at nine, and educated in a Philadelphia Quaker school, Elizabeth Margaret Chandler (1807–1834) became a prolific abolitionist writer during her sadly foreshortened life. At age eighteen, she won a prize for her first work, “The Slave-Ship,” a poem published in a Philadelphia periodical, *The Casket*, and which in later years she considered equal to any of her writings. It was reprinted a year later in Benjamin Lundy’s abolitionist newspaper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, where in 1830 she published the sentimental story “The Enfranchisement.” In 1832, in the same journal, using the pseudonym “Agnes,” she published the didactic story “Tea-Table Talk,” in which a conversation between two middle-class ladies about sugar boycotts opens a vista on the complicity of consumers in an economic system that benefits from slavery. One of her last compositions, the vigorous hymn “Think of Our Country’s Glory,” combines patriotism and abolitionist fervor. It was included in *A Selection of Anti-Slavery Hymns*, edited by William Lloyd Garrison in 1834, and was frequently reprinted in collections and hymnals over the next forty years.

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### *The Slave-Ship*

The Slave-ship was winding her course o’er the ocean,  
The winds and the waters had sunk into rest;  
All hush’d was the whirl of the tempest’s commotion,  
That late had awaken’d the sailor’s devotion,  
When terror had kindled remorse in his breast.

And onward she rode, though by curses attended,  
Though heavy with guilt was the freight that she bore,

Though with shrieks of despair was the midnight air rended,  
And ceaseless the groans of the wretches ascended,  
That from friends and from country forever she tore.

On the deck, with his head on his fetter'd hand rested,  
He who once was a chief and a warrior stood;  
One moment he gain'd, by his foes unmolested,  
To think o'er his woes, and the fate he detested,  
Till madness was firing his brain and his blood.

“Oh, never!” he murmur'd in anguish, “no, never!  
These limbs shall be bent to the menial's toil!  
They have reft us, my bride—but they shall not forever  
Your chief from his home and his country dissever—  
No! never will I be the conqueror's spoil!

“Say! long didst thou wait for my coming, my mother?  
Did ye bend o'er the desert, my sister, your eye?  
And weep at the lengthen'd delay of your brother,  
As each slow passing moment was chased by another,  
And still he appear'd not a tear-drop to dry.

“But ye shall—yes, again ye shall fondly embrace me!  
We will meet my young bride in the land of the blest:  
Death, death once again in my country shall place me,  
One bound shall forever from fetters release me!”  
He burst them, and sunk in the ocean's dark breast.

## *The Emancipation*

It was a pretty looking cottage—with its roof half covered with the boughs of a great tree, and vines creeping up about the doors and windows. The garden, with its gay flowers, tempting berries, and fine vegetables, was almost without a weed; while the pailing that surrounded both that and the grass-plot, in front of the house, fairly glistened with its fresh covering of white-wash.

The old woman was seated in a large arm-chair, just outside of the door. Her countenance was one of the finest I have ever seen. She had probably passed seventy summers, but her brow yet remained as dark as the still brilliant eye over which it was arched. The lines of age were distinctly, but not deeply traced upon her cheek and forehead; and her mouth and chin, though wearing them much more visibly than her other features, retained their characteristic marks of firmness and dignity. Her whole face was beaming with mingled benevolence, gratitude and devotion. By her side was sitting a little dark-faced urchin of some half dozen years—and grouped round them, either seated on the grass, or on a long bench beneath the tree, several other descendants of Africa, whose happy faces, glowing with intelligence and feeling, spoke nothing of that consciousness of abasement and degradation, which is so often written upon the countenances of their race.

Shall I tell you the history of that group? It is a tale of female generosity, and negro gratitude.

That woman—she in the elbow-chair, with the open bible upon her knee—was a native, and till within these few years a resident, of Kentucky. Her husband was an owner of slaves—her father had been—and in her youth she thought but little of the sinfulness of laying unrighteous hands upon the property of God. But when the gentle creatures that called her “mother,” gathered about her with their loving eyes, and she listened to their soft voices in the evening twilight, she felt how wretched would be *her* lot, if it were in the power of man’s hand to tear them from her arms forever; and she thought of them, and

commiserated the condition of the miserable slave. At first, it was compassion only that led her to sympathise with their unhappy fate; but the conviction soon came to her heart, that slavery was unjustifiable wickedness in the sight of the Almighty. She entreated her husband, almost with the earnestness of one beseeching for her own life, to liberate their slaves. He refused—and she wept secretly and in silence—but by every means in her power she strove with tireless perseverance to alleviate the bitterness of their lot. She was their instructor, their friend, their benefactress moving about among them more like a parent than a mistress, preserving their respect by the quiet dignity of her manner, and winning their enthusiastic gratitude and love, by her kindness and affection.

When her husband died, they were distributed among their children, who had all married and left the paternal roof. Again she renewed her solicitations for the freedom of those objects of her care—and again she was repulsed—ay, even by her own children was her prayer refused to be granted. She did not stoop to remonstrance, but her resolution was taken—and great as was the sacrifice, she accomplished the holy purpose of her heart. She purchased those slaves, from the oldest to the youngest—she accompanied them here, to Ohio, where she might bestow on them the blessing of liberty—she expended almost her last cent in the performance of her high deed of justice; and they flung themselves at her feet in an overwhelming burst of gratitude—disenthralled—enfranchised!

And they have never forgotten her kindness. She owes all the comforts, by which she is surrounded, to their unwearying industry: to labor for her, to serve her, and to obey her lightest word, is alike their pride and their happiness—and on this evening, they are all met together at her cottage, to celebrate the anniversary of their emancipation.

Is it a true story?

Why—recollect 'tis summer twilight, and there is the moon, just rising over the tree-tops; so a little embellishment may be pardonable. But the circumstance of that widow having thus purchased and manumitted those slaves, and the story of their gratefully laboring for her support—is really the truth.

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*Tea-Table Talk**Helen and Maria.*

“Dear me, Helen, I cannot conceive why you think that taking a lump of sugar in your tea, or eating a piece of cake, or a preserve, can do any harm to the slaves. And when you are in company it must be so disagreeable, and look so singular, to decline eating almost every thing that is offered you! I think you must almost starve sometimes!”

“I have never yet been driven to such an extremity,” answered her friend, smiling; “but I will acknowledge that it is certainly very disagreeable to be obliged so frequently to disappoint the kindness of my friends; neither is it at all pleasant to appear singular in one’s notions, which however is not now greatly to be feared, since abstinence from slave articles has become lately quite common. But even if that was not the case, my reasons are, I believe, sufficiently strong to render singularity in this respect entirely proper, and to enable me to bear the imputation of it patiently.”

“But you have eaten of such things all your life, till lately, and never thought it wrong; and all the rest of your family make use of them, so that, begging your pardon, cousin Helen, I cannot think it otherwise than very silly for you to make such a fuss about it now.”

“In telling me that I have made use of slave produce through the whole of my life until lately, you have mentioned an excellent reason, my dear Maria, why I should patiently and cheerfully endure any privations that an abstinence from it may impose upon me now. But because I have done wrong ignorantly, or because those whom I most love have not the same views with myself in that

respect, shall I continue to sin against my conscience?”

“I suppose you should not, if the use of slave produce really were wrong, or could be done without altogether;—but other people do not think it wrong, and why should you be more particular?”

“Shall I tell you why I think it wrong, Maria?”

“Oh! now, you want to tell me some horrid story about the treatment of the slaves. I do not know how you can bear to think and talk about such things.”

“How, then, dear Maria, can you wonder that I should refuse to assist in *creating them*. It is indeed very painful to think upon the vast amount of suffering produced by slavery, but not half so painful, cousin, as to assist in producing it. Do not imagine that I think I deserve credit for my abstinence from slave luxuries, or what I suppose you would call necessary articles. I claim none—to partake of them would be to me far the greater punishment. There are times when I almost shudder at the thought, and when I feel as if I could almost as easily endure the taste of human blood, as of the sweetness of the slave-grown cane! It is wonderful to me how any female, who has even a partial knowledge of the horrors of slavery, can be willing to support such a system, or can receive the least enjoyment from the indulgence in comforts and luxuries which are purchased by the sacrifice of so many lives. We shudder to think of the immolation of human beings by savage nations, at the altars of their gods; but when our own gratification is in question, we become careless of the poured out blood of thousands!”

“Now you are severe, Helen! Do you think I would continue to use slave produce, especially when I could avoid doing so by any means, if I thought all I made use of would occasion the loss of life to any human being?”

“Yet you must acknowledge, Maria, for I believe you are aware of the fact, that, even excluding those who have sunk under the pressure of long continued toil and hardships, the number of the miserable beings who have been deprived of their lives by actual violence is immense. And the cause of slavery, and all its attendant ills, can only be found in the profits of its extorted labor.”

“But, cousin, all the slave produce I should use in the whole course of my life would make no difference in the number of slaves. Abstinence would only punish myself, without any benefit to those you compassionate.”

“The articles you make use of cannot be produced without *some* time and labor, be the quantity what it may. Allowing the labor of a slave for six or twelve years to produce all the various slave grown products which you may use during the course of your life, would not he who was so occupied be in effect *your slave*, during the time he was thus employed? Do you not receive as much benefit from his oppression as the individual who is his nominal owner, but in fact, for that length of time, only your agent? Nor will the circumstances of this portion of labor, being divided among many persons, create any difference. You must excuse me for considering that for the time that is necessary to produce the articles you consume, you are a slave-holder; or that you are doing worse, by paying another for the commission of a crime which you would not dare to commit yourself!”

“You speak very plainly, Helen; but I will not be offended, for I know you feel strongly—nay, I will even acknowledge that I have taken my last cup of tea without sugar, and that it was not so very disagreeable. But I will talk no more upon the subject now, only to say that if I was fairly convinced you were right, I believe I would give up the use at least of slave sugar.”

AGNES.

(1832)

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*Think of Our Country's Glory*

Think of our country's glory,  
All dimm'd with Afric's tears—  
Her broad flag stain'd and gory

With the hoarded guilt of years!

Think of the frantic mother,  
Lamenting for her child,  
Till falling lashes smother  
Her cries of anguish wild!

Think of the prayers ascending,  
Yet shriek'd, alas! in vain,  
When heart from heart is rending  
Ne'er to be join'd again.

Shall we behold, unheeding,  
Life's holiest feelings crush'd?—  
When woman's heart is bleeding,  
Shall woman's voice be hush'd?

Oh, no! by every blessing  
That Heaven to thee may lend—  
Remember their oppression,  
Forget not, sister, friend.

## LYDIA SIGOURNEY

### *To the First Slave Ship; Slavery: Written for the Celebration of the Fourth of July*

By the time of her death, Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791–1865) was the best-known woman poet in the United States, having published some fifty books of prose and poetry, and contributed hundreds of other pieces to various periodicals. Based in Hartford, Connecticut, and married to a man who first resented, and then depended on, her income from writing, she wrote for a popular audience and supported many reform causes, including rights for women and the abolition of slavery. “To the First Slave Ship” appeared in her first collected volume of *Poems*, published in Boston by S. G. Goodrich. Her ironic Fourth of July poem “Slavery” was published in her collected *Poems* in Philadelphia (1834) and reprinted the same year in a London collection entitled *Lays from the West*. The poem remained popular and was set to music by George W. Clark, who included it in his abolitionist anthology *The Liberty Minstrel* in 1844.

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#### *To the First Slave Ship*

First of that train which cursed the wave,  
And from the rifled cabin bore,  
Inheritor of wo,—*the slave*  
To bless his palm-tree’s shade no more,

Dire engine!—o’er the troubled main  
Borne on in unresisted state,—  
Know’st thou within thy dark domain  
The secrets of thy prison’d freight?—

Hear’st thou *their* moans whom hope hath fled?—  
*Wild cries in agonizing starts?—*

WIND CREES, IN AGONIZING STARS:

Know'st thou thy humid sails are spread  
With ceaseless sighs from broken hearts?—

The fetter'd chieftain's burning tear,—  
The parted lover's mute despair,—  
The childless mother's pang severe,—  
The orphan's misery, are there.

Ah!—could'st thou from the scroll of fate  
The annal read of future years,  
Stripes,—tortures,—unrelenting hate,  
And death-gasps drown'd in slavery's tears,

Down,—down,—beneath the cleaving main  
Thou fain would'st plunge where monsters lie,  
Rather than ope the gates of pain  
For time and for Eternity.—

Oh Afric!—what has been thy crime?—  
That thus like Eden's fratricide,  
A mark is set upon thy clime,  
And every brother shuns thy side.—

Yet are thy wrongs, thou long-distrest!—  
Thy burdens, by the world unweigh'd,  
Safe in that *Unforgetful Breast*  
Where all the sins of earth are laid.—

Poor outcast slave!—Our guilty land  
Should tremble while she drinks thy tears,  
Or sees in vengeful silence stand,  
The beacon of thy shorten'd years.—

THE DEACON OF thy SHORTHEN d years,  
Should shrink to hear her sons proclaim  
The sacred truth that heaven is just,—  
Shrink even at her Judge's name,—  
“Jehovah,—Saviour of the opprest.”

The Sun upon thy forehead frown'd,  
But Man more cruel far than he,  
Dark fetters on thy spirit bound:—  
Look to the mansions of the free!

Look to that realm where chains unbind,—  
Where the pale tyrant drops his rod,  
And where the patient sufferers find  
A friend,—a father in their God.

(1827)

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### *Slavery*

“Slavery is a dark shade on the Map of the United States.”

*La Fayette.*

WRITTEN FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FOURTH OF JULY

We have a goodly clime,  
Broad vales and streams we boast,  
Our mountain frontiers frown sublime,  
Old Ocean guards our coast;  
Suns bless our harvest fair,  
With farvid smile serene

with fervid spirit,  
But a dark shade is gathering there—  
What can its blackness mean?

We have a birth-right proud,  
For our young sons to claim,  
An eagle soaring o'er the cloud,  
In freedom and in fame;  
We have a scutcheon bright,  
By our dead fathers bought,  
A fearful blot distains its white—  
Who hath such evil wrought?

Our banner o'er the sea  
Looks forth with starry eye,  
Emblazoned glorious, bold and free,  
A letter on the sky,  
What hand with shameful stain  
Hath marred its heavenly blue?  
The yoke, the fasces, and the chain,  
Say, are these emblems true?

*This day doth music rare*  
Swell through our nation's bound,  
But Afric's wailing mingles there,  
*And Heaven doth hear the sound:*  
O God of power!—we turn  
In penitence to thee,  
Bid our loved land the lesson learn—  
*To bid the slave be free.*



# GEORGE MOSES HORTON

## *On Liberty and Slavery; The Slave's Complaint*

Born a slave in North Carolina, George Moses Horton (c. 1797–c. 1883) was an autodidact who struggled for years to purchase his own freedom, first by selling commissioned love poems to University of North Carolina students and later by publishing volumes of his own writings. Despite the efforts of northern abolitionists, to whom he was a cause célèbre, and his fame as the most accomplished slave poet of his era, he did not gain his freedom until the Civil War. The poems here are two of his earliest and most vehemently antislavery works, displaying an attitude that became increasingly dangerous for a slave to express amid the mounting tensions of the 1840s and '50s.

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### *On Liberty and Slavery*

Alas! and am I born for this,  
    To wear this slavish chain?  
Deprived of all created bliss,  
    Through hardship, toil and pain!

How long have I in bondage lain,  
    And languished to be free!  
Alas! and must I still complain—  
    Deprived of liberty.

Oh, Heaven! and is there no relief  
    This side the silent grave—  
To soothe the pain—to quell the grief  
    And anguish of a slave?

Come Liberty, thou cheerful sound,  
Roll through my ravished ears!  
Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,  
And drive away my fears.

Say unto foul oppression, Cease:  
Ye tyrants rage no more,  
And let the joyful trump of peace,  
Now bid the vassal soar.

Soar on the pinions of that dove  
Which long has cooed for thee,  
And breathed her notes from Afric's grove,  
The sound of Liberty.

Oh, Liberty! thou golden prize,  
So often sought by blood—  
We crave thy sacred sun to rise,  
The gift of nature's God!

Bid Slavery hide her haggard face,  
And barbarism fly:  
I scorn to see the sad disgrace  
In which enslaved I lie.

Dear Liberty! upon thy breast,  
I languish to respire;  
And like the Swan unto her nest,  
I'd to thy smiles retire.

Oh, blest asylum—heavenly balm!  
Unto thy boughs I flee—

And in thy shades the storm shall calm,  
With songs of Liberty!

(1829)

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*The Slave's Complaint*

Am I sadly cast aside,  
On misfortune's rugged tide?  
Will the world my pains deride  
Forever?

Must I dwell in Slavery's night,  
And all pleasure take its flight,  
Far beyond my feeble sight,  
Forever?

Worst of all, must Hope grow dim,  
And withhold her cheering beam?  
Rather let me sleep and dream  
Forever!

Something still my heart surveys,  
Groping through this dreary maze;  
Is it Hope?—then burn and blaze  
Forever!

Leave me not a wretch confined,  
Altogether lame and blind—  
Unto gross despair consigned,  
Forever!

Heaven! in whom can I confide?

Canst thou not for all provide?

Condescend to be my guide

Forever:

And when this transient life shall end,

Oh, may some kind eternal friend

Bid me from servitude ascend,

Forever!

(1829)

# ROBERT VOORHIS

## from *Life and Adventures of Robert Voorhis, the Hermit of Massachusetts*

In his autobiography dictated to a sympathetic white man, Henry Trumbull (1781–1843), Robert Voorhis (c. 1769–post-1829), the “Hermit of Massachusetts,” tells of how he was born a slave in Princeton, New Jersey, then separated at age four from his mother and sent to Washington, D.C. He was later promised the chance to buy his freedom but was treacherously abducted and sold south to Charleston, South Carolina, leaving behind a wife and two children he would never see again. After a series of escapes and misfortunes, he spent twenty years sailing the world aboard merchant ships before withdrawing into life as a recluse in a Massachusetts cave near the Rhode Island border. Trumbull’s humane curiosity and the care with which he transcribed Voorhis’s life preserved the story of a desperate black man who would otherwise have disappeared from history.

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I was born in Princeton (New Jersey) in the year 1769 or ’70, and was born, as was my mother (who was of African descent,) in bondage; although my father, as has been represented to me, was not only a pure white blooded Englishman, but a gentleman of considerable eminence—I had no brothers and but one sister, who was three years older than myself; but of her, as of my mother, I have but a faint recollection, as I in my infancy was included in the patrimonial portion of my master’s oldest daughter, on her marriage to a Mr. JOHN VOORHIS, by birth a German. When but four years of age I was conveyed by my master to Georgetown (District of Columbia,) to which place he removed with his family, and never have I since been enabled to learn the fate of my poor mother or sister, whom, it is not very improbable, death has long since removed from their unjust servitude.

At the age of 14 or 15, my master apprenticed me to a Shoemaker, to obtain if possible a knowledge of the art; but making but little proficiency, he again took me upon his plantation, where my time was mostly employed in gardening until about the age of nineteen. It was at that age, that I became first acquainted with an agreeable young female (an orphan) by the name of ALLEY PENNINGTON, a native of Cecil county, (Maryland)—she first expressed her attachment for me, and a willingness to become my partner for life, provided I could obtain my freedom, nor can I say that I felt less attachment for one with whom I was confident I could spend my life agreeably—she was indeed the object of my first love, a love which can only be extinguished with my existence; and never at any period previous was the yoke of bondage more goading, or did I feel so sensibly the want of that freedom, the deprivation of which, was now the only barrier to my much wished for union with one I so sincerely and tenderly loved.

As my master had uniformly expressed an unwillingness to grant me my freedom, on any other terms than receiving a suitable compensation therefor, my only alternative now to obtain it, was to apply to one with whom I was most intimately acquainted, and to whom I thought I could safely communicate my desires, as he had in more than one instance, expressed much regard for me, and a willingness to serve me—to him I proposed that he should pay to my master the stipulated sum (Fifty Pounds.) demanded for my freedom, and that the bill of sale should remain in his hands, until such time as I should be enabled by the fruits of my industry to repay him, principal and interest, and allow him a suitable compensation therefor for his trouble—to this proposal he very readily assented, and not only expressed his willingness but his approbation of my much desired union with my beloved ALLEY. My request was immediately complied with, the Fifty Pounds were paid by my good friend (as I then supposed him,) to whom I was by bond transferred as his lawful property, and by whom I was given to understand that I might then seek business for myself, and turn my attention to any that I should conceive the most profitable, and consider myself under no

other bondage than as a debtor, to the amount paid for my freedom. The name of one who had manifested so much what I supposed real and disinterested friendship for me, but who finally proved the author of almost all the wretchedness, which I have since endured, ought not to be concealed—it was JAMES BEVENS.

Feeling myself now almost a free man, I did not, as may be supposed, suffer many hours to elapse before I hastened to bear the joyful tidings of my good fortune, to one, who, as I had anticipated, received it with unfeigned demonstrations of joy and who, so far from exhibiting an unwillingness to fulfill her promise, yielded her hand without reluctance or distrust—we were married, lawfully married, and more than three years of domestic felicity passed away, without a misfortune to ruffle our repose—in the course of which the Almighty had not only been pleased to bless us with two children, but myself with so great a share of good health, as to have enabled me by my industry, to earn and refund a very considerable portion of the fifty pounds paid by Bevins for my freedom—of these sums I had neither made any charge, or took any receipts—in this I was brought to see my error, but, alas! too late.

Bevins, as I have stated, was a man in whom I had placed implicit confidence, and indeed until the period mentioned, supposed him, as regarded myself, incapable of any thing dishonorable, much less of being the author of as great an act of cruelty and injustice, as ever was recorded in the catalogue of human depravity!

It was late one evening, an evening never to be forgotten by me, while sitting in the midst of my innocent and beloved family, amused with the prattle of my eldest child, and enjoying all the felicity which conjugal love and parental affection are productive of, that this monster in human shape (Bevins) accompanied by another, entered, seized and pinioned me! and gave me to understand that I was intended for a Southern market!! It is impossible for me to describe my feelings or those of my poor distracted wife, at that moment! it was

in vain that I intreated, in vain that I represented to Bevins that he had already received a very great proportion of the sum paid for my freedom—to which the ruffian made no other reply, than pronouncing me a liar, dragged me like a felon from my peaceable domicile—from my beloved family—whose shrieks would have pierced the heart of any one but a wretch like himself!

In the most secret manner, at eleven at night, I was hurried on board of a Schooner, where additional miseries awaited me!—for fear of an escape, I found that irons were to be substituted for the ropes with which they had bound me! and while a person was employed in riveting them, I improved the opportunity, which I thought probably would be the last, to address the author of my miseries, in words nearly as follows:—“are these the proofs, master Bevins, of the friendship which you have professed for me! tell me I pray you, what have I done to merit such barbarous treatment from your hands? nothing, no nothing! I have nothing wherewith to reproach myself but my own credulity!”—to this he made no reply; shackled and handcuffed, I was precipitated into the hold of the schooner, by the motion of which I perceived was soon under way, and bearing me I knew not whither! So far from feeling an inclination to sleep, it was to me a night of inconceivable wretchedness! I could hear nothing but the shrieks of my poor disconsolate wife, and the moans of her helpless children! indeed such was my imagination—alas! he alone can have a just conception of my feelings who may have been placed in a similar situation, if such a person can be found on earth.

In three days (during which no other food was allowed me but a few pounds of mouldy bread) the Schooner reached the port of her destination—Charleston, S. C.—and from which, without being relieved of my irons, I was conveyed to and lodged in prison; where I was suffered to remain in solitude five days—from thence I was conducted to a place expressly appropriated to the sale of human beings! where, like the meanest animal of the brute creation, I was disposed of at public auction to the highest bidder!

Resolved on my liberty, and that I would not let pass unimproved the first

opportunity that should present, to regain it, I did not remain with my purchaser long enough to learn his name or the price paid for me; who, to win my affections, and the better to reconcile me to my situation, professed much regard for me and made many fair promises, (not one of which it is probable he ever intended to perform,) and the better to deceive me, voluntarily granted me the indulgence to walk a few hours unguarded and unattended about the city; supposing, no doubt, that it would be impossible for me to regain my liberty, as no coloured person was allowed to proceed beyond the limits of the city, without a well authenticated pass—of this I was not ignorant, and therefore sought other and less dangerous means to escape, for I felt that death in its worst forms would be far preferable to slavery.

I carelessly strolled about the wharves among the shipping, where I at length was so fortunate as to find a Sloop bound direct to Philadelphia—she had completed her lading, her sails were loosed and every preparation made to haul immediately into the stream—watching a favourable opportunity, while the hands were employed forward, I unperceived ascended and secreted myself between two casks in the hold—all beneath was soon well secured by the hatches, and I had the satisfaction to find myself in less than three hours, from the time that I was purchased like a bale of goods at auction, stowed snugly away, and with fair prospects of regaining my liberty! it was at that moment that a secret joy diffused itself through my soul—I found unexpected consolation and fortitude, produced by a firm persuasion that by the assistance of a divine providence I should accomplish my deliverance.

Early in the morning of the fourth day from that of our departure, we were safely moored along side of one of the Philadelphia wharves. During the passage of three days and one night, my only nourishment had been about one gill of spirits, contained in a small viol, with which I occasionally moistened my lips, for on the third day my thirst had become intolerable.

I was as fortunate in leaving the sloop unsuspected or undiscovered, as I had been in secreting myself on board of her, and as soon as safely on shore, my

first object was to procure lodging and something to satisfy the cravings of nature, at a boarding house for seamen. Representing myself as belonging to a coaster, I was not suspected as any other than a free man. As I had heard much of the hospitality of the Quakers (or Friends,) and as a class who were the zealous advocates for the emancipation of their fellow beings in bondage, to one of them, on the very day of my arrival, I made my situation known, concealing nothing; and begged that he would interest himself so far in my behalf as to advise me what I had best do, to secure my person from further arrest by unjust claimants, and to restore to me my bereaved and afflicted family.

The good man listened with much apparent attention to my story, and seemed somewhat affected thereby, and so far from exhibiting any disposition to discredit any part of it, presented me with half a crown, and requested me to call on him in the forenoon of the next day, by which time (as he said) he would have an opportunity to consult some of his brethren, by whom he thought steps would be taken to redress my wrongs—nor have I any reason to believe that he promised more than he intended to perform, and I believe that by these good people I should have been effectually freed from the shackles of slavery, had not another melancholly instance of adverse fortune, placed me in a situation not to comply with his request. Returning to my lodgings in the evening, I was accused (jocosley, as I at first supposed) by the inmates of the house, of being a runaway slave! still however persisting in my former story, that I was free and belonged to a coaster, but being unable to reply satisfactorily to their enquiries, as to the name and place of destination of the vessel, I was committed to prison and advertized as a suspected runaway.

By what means my pretended master obtained information of my situation, I could never learn, for after nine days close confinement in prison (during which I was not permitted to communicate with any one but the gaoler) I was once more strongly ironed and delivered over to the charge of the captain of a Charleston packet—to which port as it proved she was bound direct. It will not be necessary to inform you that my treatment was no better than what I had

received on my late passage from Maryland—nor do I know that I could have reasonably expected any better, from those who probably considered coloured people as free from feelings as understandings. As soon as we reached Charleston, I was conducted to and delivered over to my reputed master, who had however in my absence, as it appeared, become somewhat sick of his purchase, for the next day I was with two or three others similarly situated, exposed to sale at public auction.

*(1829)*

## DAVID WALKER

### *from Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World*

Often seen as the forefather of black nationalism, David Walker (1796–1830) shocked the country with his courageous and defiant *Appeal in Four Articles*, boldly addressed “to the Coloured Citizens of the World.” His ingenious tactics for distributing the book throughout the South, using black church networks and benevolent societies, prompted southern officials to take drastic steps. The state of Georgia, for example, offered \$10,000 to anyone who captured Walker alive, or \$1,000 to anyone who would assassinate him. Nonetheless, the book went through several editions and was hugely influential. Born free in Wilmington, North Carolina, and shaped by his experiences as a young adult in Charleston, Walker wound up in Boston, where he flourished. Joining the African American Masonic Lodge, he became the Boston agent for the country’s first black newspaper, *Freedom’s Journal* (published in New York), and helped create the Massachusetts General Colored Association, which opposed African colonization schemes and fought for black political causes. Though suspicions that his early death was caused by poisoning were untrue (he died of consumption), his deliberately provocative tone made such rumors easy to believe.

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ADDITION.—Our dear Redeemer said, “Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house tops.”

How obviously this declaration of our Lord has been shown among the Americans of the United States. They have hitherto passed among some nations, who do not know any thing about their internal concerns, for the most enlightened, humane, charitable, and merciful people upon earth, when at the same time they treat us, the (coloured people) secretly more cruel and unmerciful than any other nation upon earth.—It is a fact, that in our Southern and Western States, there are millions who hold us in chains or in slavery, whose

greatest object and glory, is centered in keeping us sunk in the most profound ignorance and stupidity, to make us work without remunerations for our services. Many of whom if they catch a coloured person, whom they hold in unjust ignorance, slavery and degradation, to them and their children, with a book in his hand, will beat him nearly to death. I heard a wretch in the state of North Carolina said, that if any man would teach a black person whom he held in slavery, to spell, read or write, he would prosecute him to the very extent of the law.—Said the ignorant wretch,\* “a Nigar, ought not to have any more sense than enough to work for his master.” May I not ask to fatten the wretch and his family?—These and similar cruelties these *Christians* have been for hundreds of years inflicting on our fathers and us in the dark. God has however, very recently published some of their secret crimes on the house top, that the world may gaze on their Christianity and see of what kind it is composed.—Georgia for instance, God has completely shown to the world, the *Christianity* among its white *inhabitants*. A law has recently passed the Legislature of this *republican* State (Georgia) prohibiting all free or slave persons of colour, from learning to read or write; another law has passed the *republican* House of Delegates, (but not the Senate) in Virginia, to prohibit all persons of colour, (free and slave) from learning to read or write, and even to hinder them from meeting together in order to worship our Maker!!!!!!—Now I solemnly appeal, to the most skilful historians in the world, and all those who are mostly acquainted with the histories of the Antedeluvians and of Sodom and Gomorrah, to show me a parallel of barbarity. *Christians!! Christians!!!* I dare you to show me a parallel of cruelties in the annals of Heathens or of Devils, with those of Ohio, Virginia and of Georgia—know the world that these things were before done in the dark, or in a corner under a garb of humanity and religion. God has however, taken off the fig-leaf covering, and made them expose themselves on the house top. I tell you that God works in many ways his wonders to perform, he will unless they repent, make them expose themselves enough more yet to the world.—See the acts of the *Christians* in FLORIDA, SOUTH CAROLINA, and KENTUCKY—was it not

for the reputation of the house of my Lord and Master, I would mention here, an act of cruelty inflicted a few days since on a black man, by the white *Christians* in the PARK STREET CHURCH, in this (CITY) which is almost enough to make Demons themselves quake and tremble in their FIREY HABITATIONS. —Oh! my Lord how refined in iniquity the whites have got to be in consequence of our blood\*—what kind!! Oh! what kind!!! of Christianity can be found this day in all the earth!!!!!!

I write without the fear of man, I am writing for my God, and fear none but himself; they may put me to death if they choose—(I fear and esteem a good man however, let him be black or white.) I forbear to comment on the cruelties inflicted on this Black Man by the Whites, in the Park Street Meeting House, I will leave it in the dark!!!!!! But I declare that the atrocity is really to Heaven daring and infernal, that I must say that God has commenced a course of exposition among the Americans, and the glorious and heavenly work will continue to progress until they learn to do justice.

(1829)

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\* The Blood of our fathers who have been murdered by the whites, and the groans of our Brethren, who are now held in cruel ignorance, wretchedness and slavery by them, cry aloud to the Maker of Heaven and of earth, against the whole continent of America, for redresses.

\* It is a fact, that in all our Slave-holding States (in the countries) there are thousands of the whites, who are almost as ignorant in comparison as horses, the most they know, is to beat the coloured people, which some of them shall have their hearts full of yet.

# ANONYMOUS

## *The African Woman*

This children's story was published as an illustrated eight-page chapbook by the American Sunday-School Union in Philadelphia. The simple vocabulary would enable young readers to form their own understanding of the evils of racism.

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**L**ITTLE MARY was sitting at the window with her mother. She saw a poor old African woman go by. O mother, said she, I do not love that woman at all! Why not, Mary? Because she is black; I do not like anybody that is black. Her mother said, Mary, Mary, I am sorry to hear you talk so. It is foolish, it is wicked.

Mary looked very sober. Then she said, Why is it wicked, mother? My dear, it is wrong, because God has told us to love everybody in the world. God made that poor woman as well as you. I will call her in to see you.

Mary was frightened. She said, O no, mother, if you please, do not call her in. Yes, my dear, I wish to teach you a lesson. Then she raised the window, and asked the old woman to come in. Mary's mother said, Good woman, what do you think of this little girl? She is a dear little miss, madam: may I give her a peach? Then she took a peach out of her basket, and gave it to Mary. The little girl felt very much ashamed, and hung down her head.

The old woman then said, Once I had three little girls, but they are all dead. The Lord knows what is best. And the tears came into her eyes. Mary was ready to weep too. Then Mrs. Ewing gave the woman some work to do; for she knew her very well.

After the woman had gone, Mary said, Mother, I am sorry for being so foolish and naughty; I will not hate black people any more. Her mother said, My

dear, you should not hate any of God's creatures. All men and women are made of one blood. All are brethren. This poor African woman was brought to America when she was young. Now she is old, and very poor. Besides, she is a pious woman, and I am sure Christ loves her. You ought to love her too, and to do her all the good you can. Mary said nothing, but after all she felt some dislike to poor Patty.

Not long after Mary was very sick. She was in bed several weeks.

One morning the old African woman knocked at the door, and said, Mrs. Ewing, where is little Miss Mary? I never see her going by to school.

Then Mrs. Ewing took her into the chamber where Mary lay sick. Old Patty was very sorry.

She came and nursed Mary for seven days and nights. And when the little girl got well, she said,

Mother, I will never hate anybody again for having a dark skin. Poor Patty is a great deal better than I am.

(1830)

# WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

## *To the Public; Universal Emancipation; Truisms; Song of the Abolitionist*

No sampling of the voluminous writings of William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) could do justice to his importance in American history as a radical abolitionist. Born in Massachusetts, Garrison’s formative experiences were a childhood of profound poverty and religiosity and an apprenticeship at age thirteen to a local newspaper. He disseminated his increasingly radical ideas over several decades in newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. In 1830, his imprisonment for libeling a slave trader as a “murderer” in the Baltimore paper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* brought him to public attention. New England abolitionists brought him to Boston, where in 1831 he launched *The Liberator*, the weekly paper that published thousands of pieces of abolitionist writing in every genre and was Garrison’s primary vehicle for thirty-five years. In its inaugural essay, “To the Public,” Garrison repents his prior gradualism, and vows to campaign relentlessly for immediate abolition, “SO HELP ME GOD!” Over the years he would produce scores of poems and hymns, including “Universal Emancipation” and “Song of the Abolitionist,” as well as more biting pieces such as his idiosyncratic and ironic aphorisms, bitterly entitled “Truisms.” He helped found the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832 and became a leading force in the American Anti-Slavery Society, founded the next year. Garrison’s evolving radicalism on slavery and other issues such as women’s rights and anticlericalism would draw him into growing controversies over the years, both within the antislavery movement and in the larger sphere of national politics.

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### *To the Public*

In the month of August, I issued proposals for publishing ‘THE LIBRATOR’ in Washington city; but the enterprise, though hailed in different sections of the country, was palsied by public indifference. Since that time, the removal of the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* to the Seat of Government has rendered less

imperious the establishment of a similar periodical in that quarter.

During my recent tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in public sentiment was to be effected in the free states—and *particularly in New-England*—than at the south. I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave owners themselves. Of course, there were individual exceptions to the contrary. This state of things afflicted, but did not dishearten me. I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, *within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty*. That standard is now unfurled; and long may it float, unhurt by the spoliations of time or the missiles of a desperate foe—yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let southern oppressors tremble—let their secret abettors tremble—let their northern apologists tremble—let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.

I deem the publication of my original Prospectus\* unnecessary, as it has obtained a wide circulation. The principles therein inculcated will be steadily pursued in this paper, excepting that I shall not array myself as the political partisan of any man. In defending the great cause of human rights, I wish to derive the assistance of all religions and of all parties.

Assenting to the ‘self-evident truth’ maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, ‘that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park-street Church, on the Fourth of July, 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of *gradual* abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice and absurdity. A similar recantation, from my pen, was

published in the *Genius of Universal Emancipation* at Baltimore, in September, 1829. My conscience is now satisfied.

I am aware, that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I *will be* as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

It is pretended, that I am retarding the cause of emancipation by the coarseness of my invective, and the precipitancy of my measures. *The charge is not true.* On this question my influence,—humble as it is,—is felt at this moment to a considerable extent, and shall be felt in coming years—not perniciously, but beneficially—not as a curse, but as a blessing; and posterity will bear testimony that I was right. I desire to thank God, that he enables me to disregard ‘the fear of man which bringeth a snare,’ and to speak his truth in its simplicity and power. And here I close with this fresh dedication:

‘Oppression! I have seen thee, face to face,  
And met thy cruel eye and cloudy brow;  
But thy soul withering glance I fear not now—  
For dread to prouder feelings doth give place  
Of deep abhorrence! Scorning the disgrace  
Of slavish knees that at thy footstool bow,  
I also kneel—but with far other vow  
Do hail thee and thy hord of hirelings base:—  
I swear, while life-blood warms my throbbing veins,

Still to oppose and thwart, with heart and hand,  
Thy brutalising sway—till Afric's chains  
Are burst, and Freedom rules the rescued land,—  
Trampling Oppression and his iron rod:  
*Such is the vow I take—SO HELP ME GOD!*'

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

BOSTON, January 1, 1831.

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*Universal Emancipation*

Though distant be the hour, yet come it must—  
Oh! hasten it, *in mercy*, righteous Heaven!  
When Afric's sons, uprising from the dust,  
Shall stand erect—their galling fetters riven;  
When from his throne Oppression shall be driven,  
An exiled monster, powerless through all time;  
When freedom—glorious freedom, shall be given  
To every race, complexion, caste, and clime,  
And nature's sable hue shall cease to be a crime!

Wo if it come with storm, and blood, and fire,  
When midnight darkness veils the earth and sky!  
Wo to the innocent babe—the guilty sire—  
Mother and daughter—friends of kindred tie!  
*Stranger and citizen alike shall die!*  
Red-handed Slaughter his revenge shall feed,  
And Havoc yell his ominous death-cry,  
And wild Despair in vain for mercy plead—  
While hell itself shall shrink and sicken at the deed!

WHILE HEH HSEH SHUH SHUH, AND SIKERH AT THE SEED.

Thou who avengest blood! long-suffering Lord!

My guilty country from destruction save!

Let Justice sheathe his sharp and terrible sword,

And Mercy rescue, e'en as from the grave!

O for the sake of those who firmly brave

The lust of power—the tyranny of law—

To bring redemption to the perishing slave—

Fearless though few—Thy presence ne'er withdraw,

But quench the kindling flames of hot, rebellious war!

And ye—sad victims of base avarice!

Hunted like beasts—and trodden like the earth;

Bought and sold daily, at a paltry price—

The scorn of tyrants, and of fools the mirth—

Your souls debased from their immortal birth!

Bear meekly—as ye 've borne—your cruel woes;

Ease follows pain—light, darkness—plenty, dearth:

So time shall give you freedom and repose,

And high exalt your heads above your bitter foes!

Not by the sword shall your deliverance be;

Not by the shedding of your masters' blood;

Not by rebellion—or foul treachery,

Upspringing suddenly, like swelling flood:

Revenge and rapine ne'er did bring forth good.

*GOD'S time is best!*—nor will it long delay:

Even now your barren cause begins to bud,

And glorious shall the fruit be!—Watch and pray,

For, lo! the kindling dawn, that ushers in the day!

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*Truisms*

1. All men are born equal, and entitled to protection, excepting those whose skins are black and hair woolly; or, to prevent mistake, excepting Africans, and their descendants.

2. If white men are ignorant and depraved, they ought freely to receive the benefits of education; but if black men are in this condition, common sense dictates that they should be held in bondage, and never instructed.

3. He who steals a sheep, or buys one of a thief, deserves severe punishment. He who steals a negro, or buys him of a kidnapper, is blameless. Why? Because a sheep can be eaten, and a negro cannot; because *he* has a *black* fleece, and *it* a *white* one;\* because the law asserts that this distinction is just—and law, we all know, is founded in equity; and because pure benevolence actuates in the one case, and downright villainy in the other.

4. The color of the skin determines whether a man has a soul or not. If white, he has an immortal essence; if black, he is altogether beastly. Mulattoes, however, derive no benefit from this rule.

5. The blacks ought to be held in fetters, because they are too stupid to take care of themselves; at least, we are not so stupid as to suffer them to make the experiment.

6. To kidnap children on the coast of Africa is a horrid crime, deservedly punishable with death; but he who steals them, in this country, as soon as they are born, performs not merely an innocent but a praiseworthy act.

7. In Africa, a man who buys or sells another, is a monster of hell. In America, he is an heir of heaven.

8. A man has a right to heap unbounded execration upon the foreign slave

trade, and the abettors thereof; but if he utter a sentiment derogatory to the domestic traffic, or to those who assist in the transportation of victims, he is to be imprisoned for publishing a libel, and sentenced to pay a fine of not less than one thousand dollars.

9. He who calls American slaveholders *tyrants*, is a fool, a fanatic, or a madman; but if he apologise for monarchical governments, or an hereditary aristocracy, set him down as a tory, and a traitor to his country.

10. There is not the least danger of a rebellion among the slaves; and even if they should revolt *en masse*, what could they do? Their united physical force would be utterly contemptible.

11. None but fanatics or idiots desire immediate abolition. If the slaves were liberated at once, our throats would be cut, and our houses pillaged and burnt!

12. Our slaves must be educated for freedom. Our slaves must never learn the alphabet, because knowledge would teach them to throw off their yoke.

13. People at the north have no right to alleviate physical suffering, or illumine spiritual darkness, at the south; but they have a right to assist the Greeks, or the Hindoos, or any foreign nation.

14. Were the slaves, goaded to desperation, to rise against their masters, the free states are constitutionally bound to cut their throats! 'The receiver is as bad as the thief.' The free states receive and consume the productions of slave labor! The District of Columbia is national property: slavery exists in that District! Yet the free states are not involved in the guilt of slavery!

15. A white man, who kills a tyrant, is a hero, and deserves a monument. If a slave kills his master, he is a murderer, and deserves to be burnt.

16. The slaves are kept in bondage *for their own good*. Liberty is a curse to the free people of color—their condition is worse than that of the slaves! Yet it would be very wicked to bind them with fetters for *their good*!

17. The slaves are contented and happy. If sometimes they are so ungrateful or deluded as to abscond, it is pure philanthropy that induces their masters to

offer a handsome reward for their detection.

18. Blacks have no intellect. The laws, at the south, which forbid their instruction, were not enacted because it was supposed these brutes had brains, or for the sake of compliment, but are owing simply to an itch for superfluous legislation.

19. Slaves are held as property. It is the acme of humanity and justice, therefore, in the laws, to recognise them also as moral agents, and punish them in the most aggravated manner, if they perpetrate a crime; though they cannot read, and have neither seen nor known the laws!

20. It is foolish and cruel for an individual to denounce slavery; because the more he disturbs the security of the masters, the more vindictive will be their conduct toward the slaves. For the same reason, we ought to prefer the products of slave labor to those of free; as the more wealthy masters become, the better they will be enabled to feed and clothe their menials.

21. To deny that a man is a christian or republican, who holds slaves and dooms their children to bondage, is most uncharitable and inconsistent.

22. To say that a clerical slavite is bound to follow his own precepts, or to obey the seventh and tenth commandments, is preposterous.

23. To doubt the religious vitality of a church, which is composed of slaveholders, is the worst species of infidelity.

24. The Africans are our slaves—not because we like to oppress, or to make money unjustly—but because Noah's curse must be fulfilled, and the scriptures obeyed.

(1831)

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*Song of the Abolitionist*

*AIR—Auld Lang Syne*

I.

I am an Abolitionist!  
I glory in the name;  
Though now by SLAVERY'S minions hissed,  
And covered o'er with shame:  
It is a spell of light and power—  
The watchword of the free:—  
Who spurns it in the trial-hour,  
A craven soul is he!

II.

I am an Abolitionist!  
Then urge me not to pause;  
For joyfully do I enlist  
In FREEDOM'S sacred cause:  
A nobler strife the world ne'er saw,  
Th' enslaved to disenthral;  
I am a soldier for the war,  
Whatever may befall!

III.

I am an Abolitionist—  
Oppression's deadly foe;  
In God's great strength will I resist,  
And lay the monster low;  
In God's great name do I demand,  
To all be freedom given,  
That peace and joy may fill the land,  
And songs go up to heaven!

IV.

I am an Abolitionist!

No threats shall awe my soul,  
No perils cause me to desist,  
No bribes my acts control;  
A freeman will I live and die,  
In sunshine and in shade,  
And raise my voice for liberty,  
Of nought on earth afraid.

V.

I am an Abolitionist—

The tyrant's hate and dread—  
The friend of all who are oppressed—  
A price is on my head!  
My country is the wide, wide world,  
My countrymen mankind:  
Down to the dust be Slavery hurled!  
All servile chains unbind!

(1841)

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\* I would here offer my grateful acknowledgments to those editors who so promptly and generously inserted my Proposals. They must give me an available opportunity to repay their liberality.

\* There are exceptions to all general rules.

## JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

### *To William Lloyd Garrison; The Hunters of Men; The Yankee Girl; Clerical Oppressors; The Slave Ships; The Branded Hand*

One of the most popular and prolific American poets of the nineteenth century, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892) was a Massachusetts native who from age nineteen received encouragement and help from William Lloyd Garrison in getting his poems published and finding jobs editing newspapers. With Garrison, he was a founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833; he later described his signing of the Anti-Slavery Declaration that year as one of the most important acts of his life. After several years of publishing antislavery poems in the 1830s, the offices of his paper, *The Pennsylvania Freeman* in Philadelphia, were burned by an anti-abolitionist mob in 1838. The first five poems printed here were all originally published in various periodicals, then collected in his volume *Poems Written During the Progress of the Abolition Question in the United States* (Boston, 1837). “The Branded Hand” was Whittier’s poetic response to an infamous episode in 1844 when Jonathan Walker, a sympathetic tradesman, tried to help seven slaves escape by boat from Florida. Walker was caught at sea, tried and convicted by a federal territorial court, and, as part of his punishment, had the initials “S.S.” (“slave stealer”) branded on his hand. Abolitionists embraced Walker as a hero, circulating images of his branded hand and literary tributes like Whittier’s throughout the North.

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### *To William Lloyd Garrison*

Champion of those who groan beneath  
Oppression’s iron hand:  
In view of penury, hate and death,  
I see thee fearless stand.  
Still bearing up thy lofty brow,  
In the steadfast strength of truth,  
In manhood sealing well the vow

in manhood scaling well the vow

And promise of thy youth.

Go on!—for thou hast chosen well;

On in the strength of God!

Long as one human heart shall swell

Beneath the tyrant's rod.

Speak in a slumbering nation's ear,

As thou hast ever spoken,

Until the dead in sin shall hear—

The fetter's link be broken!

I love thee with a brother's love,

I feel my pulses thrill,

To mark thy spirit soar above

The cloud of human ill.

My heart hath leaped to answer thine,

And echo back thy words,

As leaps the warrior's at the shine

And flash of kindred swords!

They tell me thou art rash and vain—

A searcher after fame—

That thou are striving but to gain

A long enduring name—

That thou hast nerved the Afric's hand,

And steeled the Afric's heart,

To shake aloft his vengeful brand,

And rend his chain apart.

Have I not known thee well, and read

Thy mighty purpose long!

And watched the trials which have made

And watched the trials which have made

Thy human spirit strong?  
And shall the *slanderer's demon breath*  
Avail with one like me,  
To dim the *sunshine of my faith*,  
And earnest trust in thee?

Go on—the dagger's point may glare  
Amid thy pathway's gloom—  
The fate which sternly threatens there,  
*Is glorious martyrdom!*  
Then onward with a *martyr's zeal*—  
Press on to thy reward—  
The hour when man shall only kneel,  
Before his Father—God.

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### *The Hunters of Men*

Have ye heard of our hunting, o'er mountain and glen  
Through cane-brake and forest—the hunting of men?  
The lords of our land to this hunting have gone,  
As the fox-hunter follows the sound of the horn:  
Hark—the cheer and the hallo! the crack of the whip,  
And the yell of the hound as he fastens his grip!  
All blithe are our hunters, and noble their match—  
Though *hundreds* are caught, there are *millions* to catch:  
So speed to their hunting, o'er mountain and glen,  
Through cane-brake and forest—the hunting of men!  
  
Gay luck to our hunters!—how nobly they ride  
In the glow of their zeal, and the strength of their pride!—

The Priest with his cassock flung back on the wind,  
Just screening the politic Statesman behind—  
The saint and the sinner, with cursing and prayer—  
The drunk and the sober, ride merrily there.  
And woman,—kind woman—wife, widow and maid—  
For *the good of the hunted*—is lending her aid:  
Her foot's in the stirrup—her hand on the rein—  
How blithely she rides to the hunting of men!

Oh! goodly and grand is our hunting to see,  
In this 'land of the brave and this home of the free.'  
Priest, warrior, and statesman, from Georgia to Maine,  
All mounting the saddle—all grasping the rein—  
Right merrily hunting the black man, whose sin  
Is the curl of his hair and the hue of his skin!  
Wo, now to the hunted who turns him at bay!  
Will our hunters be turned from their purpose and prey?  
Will their hearts fail within them?—their nerves tremble, when  
All roughly they ride to the hunting of men?

Ho—ALMS for our hunters! all weary and faint  
Wax the curse of the sinner and prayer of the saint.  
The horn is wound faintly—the echoes are still  
Over cane-brake and river, and forest and hill.  
Haste—alms for our hunters! the hunted once more  
Have turned from their flight with their backs to the shore:  
What right have *they* here in the home of the white,  
Shadowed o'er by *our* banner of Freedom and Right?  
Ho—alms for the hunters! or never again  
Will they ride in the pomp to the hunting of men!

ALMS—ALMS for our hunters! why *will* ye delay,  
When their pride and their glory are melting away?  
The parson has turned; for, on charge of his own,  
Who goeth a warfare, or hunting, alone?  
The politic statesman looks back with a sigh—  
There is doubt in his heart there is fear in his eye.  
Oh! haste, lest that doubting and fear shall prevail,  
And the head of his steed take the place of his tail.  
Oh! haste, ere he leave us! for who will ride then,  
For pleasure or gain, to the hunting of men!

(1834)

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*The Yankee Girl*

She sings by her wheel, at that low cottage-door—  
Which the long evening shadow is stretching before,  
With a music as sweet as the music which seems  
Breathed softly and faint in the ear of our dreams!

How brilliant and mirthful the light of her eye,  
Like a star glancing out from the blue of the sky!  
And lightly and freely her dark tresses play  
O'er a brow and a bosom as lovely as they!

Who comes in his pride to that low cottage-door?  
The haughty and rich to the humble and poor?  
'Tis the great southern planter—the master who waves  
His whip of dominion o'er hundreds of slaves.

'Nay Ellen—for shame!—Let those yankee fools, spin,

Who would pass for our slaves with a change of their skin—  
Let them toil as they will at the loom or the wheel,  
Too stupid for shame, and too vulgar to feel!

But thou art too lovely and precious a gem,  
To be bound to their burdens and sullied by them—  
For shame, Ellen, shame!—cast thy bondage aside,  
And away to the south, as my blessing and pride.

Oh, come where no winter thy footsteps can wrong,  
But where flowers are blossoming all the year long,  
Where the palmettoe's shadow is over my home,  
And the lemon and orange wave white in their bloom!

Oh come to my home, where my servants shall all  
Depart at thy bidding and come at thy call—  
They shall heed thee as mistress with trembling and awe,  
And each wish of thy heart shall be felt as a law.'

Oh, could ye have seen her—that pride of our girls  
Arise and cast back the dark wealth of her curls,  
With a scorn in her eye which the gazer could feel,  
And a glance like the sunshine that flashes on steel!

'Go back, haughty Southron!—thy treasures of gold  
Are dim with the blood of the hearts thou hast sold—  
Thy home may be lovely, but round it I hear  
The crack of the whip and the footsteps of fear!

And the sky of thy south may be brighter than ours,  
And greener thy landscapes, and fairer thy flowers;  
But, dearer the blast round our mountains which raves,

Than the sweet summer zephyr which breathes over slaves!

Full low at thy bidding thy negroes may kneel,  
With the iron of bondage on spirit and heel;  
Yet know that the yankee girl sooner would be  
In *fetters* with *them*, than in freedom with *thee*!

(1835)

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### *Clerical Oppressors*

In the Report of the celebrated Pro-Slavery Meeting in Charleston, S. C., on the 4th of the 9th mo., 1835, published in the Courier of that city, it is stated, ‘*The CLERGY of all denominations attended in a body*, LENDING THEIR SANCTION TO THE PROCEEDINGS; and adding by their presence to the impressive character of the scene!’

Just God!—and these are they  
Who minister at Thine altar, God of Right!  
Men who their hands with prayer and blessing lay  
On Israel’s Ark of light!

What! preach and kidnap men?  
Give thanks—and rob Thy own afflicted poor?  
Talk of Thy glorious liberty, and then  
Bolt hard the captive’s door?

What! servants of thy own  
Merciful Son, who came to seek and save  
The homeless and the outcast—, fettering down  
The tasked and plundered slave!

Pilate and Herod, friends!  
Chief priests and rulers, as of old, combine!  
Just God and holy! is that church which lends  
Strength to the spoiler, Thine?

Paid hypocrites, who turn  
Judgment aside, and rob the Holy Book  
Of those high words of truth which search and burn  
In warning and rebuke.

Feed fat, ye locusts, feed!  
And, in your tasselled pulpits, thank the Lord  
That, from the toiling bondman's utter need,  
Ye pile your own full board.

How long, oh Lord! how long  
Shall such a Priesthood barter Truth away,  
And, in Thy name, for robbery and wrong  
At thy own altars pray?

Is not Thy hand stretched forth  
Visibly in the heavens to awe and smite?  
Shall not the living God of all the earth,  
And heaven above, do right?

Woe, then, to all who grind  
Their brethren of a Common Father down!  
To all who plunder from th' immortal mind  
Its bright and glorious crown!

Woe to the Priesthood! woe  
To those whose hire is with the price of blood—

Perverting, darkening, changing as they go,  
The searching truths of God!

Their glory and their might  
Shall perish; and their very names shall be  
Vile before all the people, in the light  
Of A WORLD'S LIBERTY.

Oh! speed the moment on  
When Wrong shall cease—and Liberty, and Love,  
And Truth, and Right, throughout the earth are known,  
As in their home above.

(1837)

---

*The Slave Ships*

“All ready?” cried the Captain;  
“Ay, Ay!” the seamen said—  
“Heave up the worthless lubbers,  
The dying and the dead.”  
Up from the slave-ship's prison  
Fierce, bearded heads were thrust—  
“Now let the sharks look to it—  
Toss up the dead ones first!”

Corpse after corpse came up,—  
Death had been busy there.  
Where every blow is mercy,  
Why should the spoiler spare?  
Corpse after corpse they cast

Sullenly from the ship,  
Yet bloody with the traces  
Of fetter-link and whip.

Gloomily stood the captain,  
With his arms upon his breast,  
With his cold brow sternly knotted,  
And his iron lip compress'd.

“Are all the dead dogs over?”  
Growl'd through that matted lip—  
“The blind ones are no better,  
Let 's lighten the good ship!”

Hark! from the ship's dark bosom,  
The very sounds of hell!—  
The ringing clank of iron—  
The maniac's short, sharp yell!  
The hoarse, low curse, throat-stifled—  
The starving infant's moan—  
The horror of a breaking heart  
Pour'd through a mother's groan!

Up from that loathsome prison  
The stricken blind ones came—  
Below, had all been darkness—  
Above, was still the same.  
Yet the holy breath of Heaven  
Was sweetly breathing there,  
And the heated brow of fever  
Cool'd in the soft sea-air.

“Overboard with them, shipmates!”

Cutlass and dirk were plied;  
Fetter'd and blind, one after one,  
Plunged down the vessel's side.  
The sabre smote above—  
Beneath, the lean shark lay,  
Waiting with wide and bloody jaw  
His quick and human prey.

God of the earth! what cries  
Rang upward unto Thee?  
Voices of agony and blood,  
From ship-deck and from sea.  
The last dull plunge was heard—  
The last wave caught its stain—  
And the unsated sharks look'd up  
For human hearts in vain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Red glow'd the western waters—  
The setting sun was there,  
Scattering alike on wave and cloud  
His fiery mesh of hair.  
Amidst a group in blindness,  
A solitary eye  
Gazed, from the burden'd slaver's deck,  
Into that burning sky.

“A storm,” spoke out the gazer,  
“Is gathering and at hand—  
Curse on 't—I'd give my other eye

Save on t... and give my... eye  
For one firm rood of land.”  
And then he laugh’d—but only  
His echoed laugh replied—  
For the blinded and the suffering  
Alone were at his side.

Night settled on the waters,  
And on a stormy heaven,  
While fiercely on that lone ship’s track  
The thunder-gust was driven.  
“A sail!—thank God! a sail!”  
And, as the helmsman spoke,  
Up through the stormy murmur  
A shout of gladness broke.

Down came the stranger vessel  
Unheeding, on her way,  
So near, that on the slaver’s deck  
Fell off her driven spray.  
“Ho! for the love of mercy—  
We’re perishing and blind!”  
A wail of utter agony  
Came back upon the wind.

“Help *us!* for we are stricken  
With blindness every one—  
Ten days we ’ve floated fearfully,  
Unnoting star or sun.  
Our ship ’s the slaver Leon—  
We ’ve but a score on board—  
Our slaves are all gone over—

Our slaves are all gone over

Help—for the love of God!”

On livid brows of agony

The broad red lightning shone—

But the roar of wind and thunder

Stifled the answering groan.

Wail'd from the broken waters

A last despairing cry,

As kindling in the stormy light,

The stranger ship went by.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the sunny Guadaloupe

A dark hull'd vessel lay—

With a crew who noted never

The night-fall or the day.

The blossom of the orange

Waved white by every stream,

And tropic leaf, and flower, and bird,

Were in the warm sun-beam.

And the sky was bright as ever,

And the moonlight slept as well,

On the palm-trees by the hill-side,

And the streamlet of the dell.

And the glances of the Creole

Were still as archly deep,

And her smiles as full as ever

Of passion and of sleep.

— . . . . .

But vain were bird and blossom,  
The green earth and the sky,  
And the smile of human faces,  
To the ever-darken'd eye;—  
For, amidst a world of beauty,  
The slaver went abroad,  
With his ghastly visage written  
By the awful curse of God!

(1837)

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*The Branded Hand*

Welcome home again, brave seaman! with thy thoughtful brow and gray,  
And the old heroic spirit of our earlier, better day—  
With that front of calm endurance, on whose steady nerve, in vain  
Pressed the iron of the prison, smote the fiery shafts of pain!

Is the tyrant's brand upon thee? Did the brutal cravens aim  
To make God's truth thy falsehood, His holiest work thy shame?  
When, all blood-quenched, from the torture the iron was withdrawn,  
How laughed their evil angel the baffled fools to scorn!

*They* change to wrong, the duty which God hath written out  
On the great heart of humanity too legible for doubt!  
*They*, the loathsome moral lepers, blotched from foot-sole up to crown,  
Give to shame what God hath given unto honor and renown!

Why, that brand is highest honor!—than its traces never yet  
Upon old armorial hatchments was a prouder blazon set;  
And thy unborn generations, as they crowd our rocky strand,

Shall tell with pride the story of their father's BRANDED HAND!

As the templar, home was welcomed, bearing back from Syrian wars  
The scars of Arab lances, and of Paynim scimeters,  
The pallor of the prison, and the shackle's crimson span,  
So we meet thee, so we greet thee, truest friend of God and man!

He suffered for the ransom of the dear Redeemer's grave,  
*Thou* for His living presence in the bound and bleeding slave;  
He for a soil no longer by the feet of angels trod,  
*Thou* for the true Shechinah, the present home of God!

For, while the jurist sitting with the slave-whip o'er him swung,  
From the tortured truths of freedom the lie of slavery wrung,  
And the solemn priest to Moloch, on each God-deserted shrine,  
Broke the bondman's heart for bread, poured the bondman's blood for wine;

While the multitude in blindness to a far off Saviour knelt,  
And spurned, the while, the temple where a present Saviour dwelt;  
Thou beheld'st Him in the task-field, in the prison shadows dim,  
And thy mercy to the bondman, it was mercy unto Him!

In thy lone and long night watches, sky above and wave below,  
Thou did'st learn a higher wisdom than the babbling school-men know;  
God's stars and silence taught thee as His angels only can,  
That, the one, sole *sacred thing* beneath the cope of heaven is MAN!

That he, who treads profanely on the scrolls of law and creed,  
In the depth of God's great goodness may find mercy in his need;  
But wo to him who crushes the SOUL with chain and rod  
And herd with lower natures the awful form of God!

'Then lift that manly right hand, bold ploughman of the wave!  
Its branded palm shall prophecy, "SALVATION TO THE SLAVE!"  
Hold up its fire-wrought language, that whoso reads may feel  
His heart swell strong within him, his sinews change to steel.

Hold it up before our sunshine, up against our Northern air—  
Ho! men of Massachusetts, for the love of God look there!  
Take it henceforth for your standard—like the Bruce's heart of yore,  
In the dark strife closing round ye, let that hand be seen before!

And the tyrants of the slave land shall tremble at that sign,  
When it points its finger Southward along the Puritan line:  
Wo to the State-gorged leeches, and the church's locust band,  
When they look from slavery's ramparts on the coming of that hand!

(1845)

# ANONYMOUS

## *A Dream; Another Dream*

These two fictional sketches were published under the pseudonym "T. T." in William Lloyd Garrison's new abolitionist weekly, *The Liberator*, on April 2 and April 30, 1831. In his choice of motto for the first piece, the author shows his sophistication by quoting Samuel Johnson, who was here echoing Cicero.

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### *A Dream*

*'Time obliterates the fictions of opinion, and confirms the decisions of nature.'*—DR. JOHNSON.

I was reading, the other day, some very curious reasonings upon *time*, which, as well as space, the author annihilates without any ceremony. 'I have proved elsewhere,' says he, 'that the idea of duration offers nothing absolute. Let us suppose, placed in space, intelligences who see, in the same instant, the earth in all the points of its orbit, as we ourselves see a lighted coal, at the same instant, in all the points of the circle which it is made to describe. Is it not evident that, if these intelligences can observe what passes upon earth, they will see us, at the same instant, tilling the ground and gathering the harvest!' After reading these somewhat whimsical speculations, and building thereupon some of my own not less strange, my waking fancies passed, by an imperceptible transition, into the vagaries of a dream. On casting a look out of my window, I saw, with some astonishment, that a young tree which I had planted in the morning, was now full grown, and cast a venerable shade over the surrounding lawn. My surprise was but momentary. On recurring again to my speculations upon time, I perceived that the thing was perfectly natural. For, in fact, I reasoned, the time of planting, of the growth, and the maturity of the tree are one and the same, if the mind of the observer is capable of perceiving them at once,

at which desirable state my mind appears now to have arrived. And, thought I, since there is usually in nature a conformity of one thing to another in these matters, why may I not behold other equally remarkable appearances as this of my tree? I felt an irresistible desire to go out and make discoveries. As I was hastening out of the room for this purpose, a card of invitation, upon the table, caught my eye. The name of the inviter was new to me, but I did not on that account hesitate to proceed to the appointed place.

A momentary surprise again crossed my mind, when, on entering a splendidly lighted room, I perceived that nearly one half the company were of the negro race, and that blacks and whites were mingling with perfect ease in social intercourse. Ah! this too, said I, is one of the effects of that same non-existing but wonder-working *time*. I was introduced as a stranger, and presently found myself in the train of a lively young lady of sable hue, whom the surrounding group of gentlemen, of both colors, showed to be the reigning belle.

‘A wonderful change, indeed,’ an elderly gentleman was replying to some remark, ‘and, having been absent from my country since I was a boy, I must say, to me perfectly unaccountable. May I ask the favor of some account of the manner in which it has been brought about?’

‘Nay,’ replied the lady, ‘you should ask some one better able to give you information than I am, some of our great statesmen for instance.’

‘But it would dwell longer in my memory, and, therefore, be far more instructive, as well as agreeable, could I hear it from the lips of the fair.’

‘*Fair* is not the word of compliment now in vogue,’ said the lady, apparently much diverted by the mistake.

No way abashed, however, he recovered his ground admirably.

‘Allow me then to say, that whatever is uttered in that most musical voice, cannot fall upon inattentive ears.’

This compliment did not appear displeasing to the lady, whose voice struck me as being the softest and sweetest I had ever heard, a peculiar attraction which is in fact not unfrequently possessed by persons of African extraction.

‘May I ask the subject of discussion?’ said I.

‘Oh, how it has come to pass,’ said she with an air of mock humility, ‘that we, poor degraded slaves, have now an equal station in society with our quondam masters.’

‘I give my vote,’ said a young white beau, ‘that the attractions of female loveliness first made the tyrants ashamed of their prejudices.’

‘But to speak seriously, upon what is indeed a subject for serious joy and gratitude,’ said a black gentleman, Mr. A., ‘our emancipation, and subsequent restoration to the rights and dignity of men, were conducted throughout upon Christian principles, upon principles of justice and humanity; and this, I think, is the true account of the total overthrow of former prejudices. And a *speedy* overthrow, I think we must call it, considering how strong and deeply rooted those prejudices were.’

‘Miss B.,’ said the elderly gentleman who had first requested information, ‘I thought you had promised us your views of this wonderful revolution.’

‘I was not upon the scene,’ she replied, ‘when the emancipation of the slaves took place; but, as I have been informed, some bright geniuses made the discovery that black men have rights as well as whites, and are no more fond of having their rights trampled upon. Well, the discovery was denied to be a discovery, and was argued against with great zeal and skill.’

‘And pray by what sort of arguments?’

‘O, the most logical. “It would be very inconvenient to restore these pretended rights, *ergo* they are not rights.” “Those persons are black, and have different shaped heads from ours, *ergo* they are inferior, *ergo* nature intended them for slaves.” “We want them to till our ground and raise our sugar, *ergo* we will have them.”’

‘Admirable! this last argument, I presume, was borrowed from that kingly logician the lion, in his division of the prey.’

‘Most probably. But I have not yet exhausted their arguments. One of the most acute still remains. “It is impossible they should be freed till they are

educated, and impossible they should be educated till they are free, therefore they must remain as they are.””

‘And how could the advocates of emancipation escape this dilemma?’

‘By denying the premises, and better still by proving them false, both by educating before they freed, and by freeing and then educating, both of which plans answered perfectly well. Our discoverers proceeded to promulgate the new doctrine, that blacks have rights, in the usual way; they talked, they wrote, they preached, they published; they reasoned, they entreated, appealed to sympathy, conscience, religion. Gradually, by their efforts and the inherent force of truth, the new doctrines made their way.’

‘Aided a little, I suspect,’ said Mr. W., ‘by the fear that the blacks would begin to reason themselves and use the logical arguments of powder and ball.’

‘O, you wrong them; that motive operated only on a few and those the basest minds,’ said the lady.

‘How fortunate is it,’ said Mr. A., ‘that this revolution was brought about more by the instrumentality of the whites than our own! Even if it had been possible for our fathers to accomplish it without bloodshed, (which it was not,) I would rather it should be as it is.’

‘Why so?’ said I.

‘Because, in no other way could the seeds of jealousy and ill-will have been so completely destroyed. But now, the good they have done us, and the kind and noble feelings they have shown towards us, have neutralized the effect of former wrongs.’

‘And how beautiful a bond of union,’ said Miss B., with enthusiasm, ‘is formed between us by our common admiration of those great and generous men who exerted themselves most in this cause, the ornaments of their race, the benefactors of ours! How can we but love all their color for their sakes? And how can the whites feel otherwise than kindly towards a race, in whose behalf were called forth the noblest efforts of the noblest minds which our country has produced?’

‘Is there never,’ said the elderly gentleman, aside, to me, ‘is there never any appearance among the blacks of a recollection of their former condition,—any feeling of inferiority?’

Miss B., overhearing him, smiled, certainly with no appearance of conscious inferiority. ‘You forget,’ said she, ‘that none of the present generation have been in the condition to which you allude. Indeed, I think I have quite as often seen slight symptoms of shame on the part of the whites for their former misdoings.’

‘But in fact,’ said a black gentleman, ‘there is scarcely anything of the kind on either side. We are too well familiarized with the present state of things. We are too completely united into one people and there is as little thought of separate interests and feelings between blacks and whites, as between tall and short, or dark eyes and blue, or between men and women.’

‘Custom is a wonderful magician indeed,’ said the elderly gentleman. ‘Still when I recall the days of my boyhood, I am amazed. For though all the blacks had then been emancipated, I well remember it used to be said, that it was impossible they should ever mingle upon equal terms with the whites. It was considered fixed as the decrees of fate, that they must always continue a distinct and degraded race. So universal was this feeling, that I do not see how custom could have done anything but keep things as they were.’

‘And so in truth it might, had it been allowed to,’ said Mr. A. ‘But the work having been begun, as I said before, upon right principles, those principles did not allow those who held them to stop till it was complete. The Philo-Africans, or rather philanthropists, would not rest satisfied with a scanty measure of justice, but continued to urge our full and free admission to all political and social privileges. Great enthusiasm was excited in the cause, and enthusiasm was successfully opposed to prejudice. Many persons made it a point wherever they could find a tolerably well educated black, to introduce him into society. And now was the time for them to do something for themselves; and, in fact, the talents, learning and energy of individuals, not only made their own way to fame

or respectability, but shed some lustre on our whole dark race. Our first black President was a man of such distinguished talents, that none chose to risk their own reputation for discernment by not acknowledging it, and African inferiority was heard of no more. In short, after the amalgamation was once begun, it is vain to attempt to enumerate all the circumstances that contributed to forward it.'

'You should not omit, however,' said another of the company, 'that, in this money loving world, cash sometimes balanced color in the accounts current of society, and proved a passport to gentility. Moreover, a few individuals married into respectable white families.'

'Among minor causes of this most happy revolution,' said Mr. W., 'I think should be mentioned, as having had some influence in diminishing the absurd prejudices relating to complexion, the happy termination of the Cherokee troubles, when the faith and honor of our nation were in such terrible jeopardy.'

'And when they hardly escaped without a stain,' said Mr. Y.

'True,' replied a person who had just joined our group, 'even to be in danger is almost a stain in such a case; but let us be thankful that justice and honor prevailed at last.'

To this last speaker, an intelligent looking black gentleman of most dignified aspect, I had presently the honor of being introduced to as the President of the United States.

'The work of amalgamation and reconciliation was a slow one, however,' said Miss B. 'Even when I was a child, I remember one little Charleston miss refused for some time to stand up in the same class with me.'

'I remember,' said Mr. A., 'hearing a very respectable old gentleman, and a clergyman, tell of his having once been invited to a dinner party while on a visit to one of the northern cities in his younger days, and afterwards receiving from his inviter a note of apology and explanation, stating how very much distressed he felt to inform him that his mother, an old lady full of old fashioned prejudices, had absolutely refused to sit at table with a negro, and that therefore it would not be in his power to receive him.'

‘Is that possible?’ said Miss B.

‘Fact,’ said Mr. A.; ‘it took place, I think, before emancipation. I dare say the good lady would have been quite as willing to receive a black bear at her table.’

‘And there are still living,’ said Mr. H. ‘a few old ladies who retain very similar feelings.’

Our conversation was here interrupted by the sound of music. Two ladies, seemingly intimate friends, sang a duet together very charmingly; but she of jet complexion so entirely outshone her fair coadjutor, that if the latter had not been singularly free from vanity, she would not have subjected herself to the comparison. In all the music that followed, the blacks were unquestionably superior, and I remarked that national music at least had gained by the union of the two races. This led to a discussion whether the national character also had not been improved by the peculiar qualities of each supplying the deficiency of the other. It was generally agreed, that in manners at least the whites had gained a certain ease and dignity, which were still, however, more conspicuous in the blacks. Some of the company also were of opinion, that the pugnacious disposition of the former was softened by intercourse with a milder race, and that the benefit was repaid to the latter by the growth of a more active and enterprising spirit among them.

The company soon after dispersed, and I found myself on my way home. Bright moonlight then changing very conveniently into brighter sunshine, I was exploring the city the next morning, without having passed any intermediate night. With enough that was familiar to make me feel at home in my native city, some things looked strange, but nothing perplexed me more than the new names to old places which continually met my eye—‘LUNDY PLACE,’ ‘BENEZET STREET,’ ‘GRANVILLE STREET,’ and many others which have escaped my recollection. At almost every turn, I came in sight of a monument in honor of some worthy, who had been a distinguished promoter of the union; but the

names which I had never before heard remain shrouded in that obscurity, in which the names of a dream are so often left. We are sure we should recognize them; if we could but hear them again.—One monument was to JAMES STEPHEN, considered as indirectly a benefactor of this country, since, as the inscription stated, he was ‘one of the few who took the part of an oppressed race, when nations were the oppressors,—one who, for a length of years reaching through half a century, devoted himself to their cause.’

Presently I joined a knot of politicians, who were discussing the news of the day.

‘What is thought of the proposal for changing the seat of government?’ said one. ‘Will it be carried?’

‘Impossible to say,’ was the reply; ‘many of the black members, indeed the southerners generally, seem to think WILBER-FORCE a more eligible situation than Washington, but the northerners oppose it.’

‘What other business is going on this session?’

‘Very little. CLARKSONIA will probably be taken into the Union. With what wonderful rapidity that territory has grown up!’

A faint sound of a bell in a distant part of the city now fell upon my ear, which announced, as I was informed, the approaching celebration of the anniversary of general emancipation. Then followed the firing of cannon, the noise of which awoke me. I started, and found that my black servant had in a passion thrown to the door with great violence. I looked out of my open window, and his passion was explained and excused. *I saw a drove of negroes driven by, and the sound I had taken for a bell was the clanking of their chains.*

T. T.

(1831)

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*Another Dream*

*I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that his justice will not sleep for ever.—*

JEFFERSON

Will it be thought that I have a strong propensity to fall asleep over my books, if I confess that the immediate origin of another strange dream seemed to be the following passages, which I had been reading from Butler's Analogy. 'Suppose then two or three men of the best and most improved understandings, in a desolate open plain, attacked by ten times the number of beasts of prey—would their reason secure them the victory in this unequal combat? Power then, though joined with reason, and under its direction, cannot be expected to prevail over opposite power though merely brutal, unless the one bears some proportion to the other. Brute force might more than maintain its ground against reason, for want of union among the rational creatures. Length of time then, proper scope and opportunities for reason to exert itself, may be absolutely necessary to its prevailing over brute force.' Again—suppose that a certain number of rational creatures had by greater physical power, joined with a greater improvement of their rational powers, obtained authority over other creatures having the same nature, but in a less favorable situation, and with a less cultivation and command of the rational powers which they nevertheless possessed. Suppose further that this authority were so exercised, in so arbitrary a manner, and with so little regard to the rights, the happiness, and the wills of the rational creatures subjected to it, as necessarily to generate in them a desire to free themselves from it. It is manifestly impossible that such a state of things should continue. For having the same rational nature with those who possess power over them, it must necessarily come to pass that some among them will be placed in circumstances to give the necessary improvement to their rational powers; and it is impossible, or, however, in the highest degree improbable, but that among the innumerable unforeseen circumstances continually arising, some conjuncture will take place which will give them a superiority of power over the rational creatures who had before been above them. In this case, their desire to free

themselves from authority will become effect. A slight noise here caused me to raise my eyes from the book in which I had still supposed myself to be reading, (though the latter passages I have never since been able to find in the Analogy.) My black servant had entered the room, and stood before me, with something more than his usual self-complacency shining in his dark face.

‘Sir,’ said he, ‘that set of rational creatures, called negroes, have arrived at the conjuncture in which their desire to free themselves will probably become effect. The slaves have risen, Sir.’

He made his customary polite bow, and retired. I hastened out of the room to inquire the new, caught a glimpse of my newly planted tree, which was again flourishing in full grown vigor, and tried to overtake blackey; but just as he reached the tree, he seemed to vanish away. I met no other creature I had ever seen before. Every face was filled with consternation. The words, ‘insurrection,’ ‘civil war,’ ‘carnage,’ ‘savage barbarity,’ rang in my ears. Companies of militia were mustering and hastening Southward. The few blacks both free and slaves, in this part of the country, (that is the middle section,) were gone, I was told, to join their brethren. The rising was general throughout the country, and had been conducted with wonderful secrecy by the management of one or two intelligent leaders. News was continually pouring in of battles and murders, and horrible atrocities.—Then a shout of joy—The United States troops had gained a considerable victory, and taken many prisoners, some of them among the leaders. Fifty had been hanged, to strike terror into the rest, and it was confidently expected that the insurrection would soon be quelled. Alas! the next news was that the tide of victory had turned—and the blacks had retaliated by hanging fifty of their prisoners, all of them persons of respectability. I saw a venerable looking old man fall senseless on the pavement, when he heard his son’s name among these unhappy victims. Other disasters followed, and it was now known that these unexpected successes of the negro arms were attributable to the genius and skilful generalship of their commander in chief, a person from Liberia, who was considered among them as a second Lafayette. The assistance

he had brought with him was trifling in point of numbers, but he was himself a host. Rumors of other foreign assistance increased the general consternation throughout the United States. In addition to this, no inconsiderable number of persons refused from conscientious scruples to take up arms against a people whom they considered to have been grievously oppressed, though few approved this violent method of asserting their rights. Early one morning came the intelligence that a party of negroes were within four miles of us. We had supposed ourselves safe, from our comparatively northern position, and were wholly unprepared. A very few families and individuals escaped to the neighboring villages. The rest were subjected to all that the vengeance of infuriated slaves could inflict, but I have only a confused remembrance of murders, and tortures; screams of agony, and lamentations for husbands, wives, children and parents. Three savage negroes rushed into my house, and killed my wife and child before my face. Oh! the unutterable agony of that moment! as real as anything I ever suffered in my waking life. I fainted. From this situation, I was roused by a loud and tumultuous shout—‘The Haytien fleet!’ ‘The Haytien fleet!’—Where am I? said I. And I found myself in one of these southern cities, chained to another prisoner, and surrounded by negroes, whose countenances expressed the joy and triumph occasioned by the arrival of aid from Hayti. I soon found that my destination, as well as that of several hundred other prisoners, was to labor on the fortifications of the city, under the lash of one of the most savage looking negroes I ever beheld, and so surrounded by armed men that escape was impossible. We were fastened two and two together, and worked incessantly in the broiling sun, the least pause of weariness being followed by the lash. The driver especially exercised the most excessive severity against the person to whom I was chained. The cause of this the latter explained to me, by saying that the fellow had been a slave of his, and from his sullen and unmanageable disposition, had been frequently subjected to punishment, for which he was now taking his revenge. Once a prisoner just before us, carrying an immense weight, stumbled and fell, and my companion laid down his own

burden to assist him. This drew upon him so cruel a whipping that I feared for his life. It was in vain to remonstrate or to represent that he was only performing an act of common humanity. ‘Ay,’ said the fellow, ‘there’s plenty of humanity from white to white, but none from white to black.’

Next followed a siege. The city was desperately attacked by the United States troops, and as desperately defended. Time passed on, provisions became scarce, and something like the horrors of famine were felt, chiefly by the white prisoners. After two days fasting, I was just raising to my lips a morsel of bread I had somehow obtained, when a little wretch of a black child snatched it from me and devoured it. The United States army withdrew, and our sufferings were at an end. We were indeed employed in the most servile drudgery, but no longer feeling the want of food, *that* was a trifle. Rumors of battles, with alternate success on each side, continually reached us, and it began to be said that both sides, but especially the whites, were tired of fighting. The blacks felt desperate, and resolved they must conquer or die. The whites were for the most part gradually driven northward, and the blacks left in possession of the southern states. One day as I was toiling along, dragging a pretty heavily laden hand-cart, the shouts of the multitude burst upon my ear, and the ringing of bells announced some great event. ‘Liberty! Independence! Peace!’ were presently distinguished. ‘The tyrants acknowledge us for an independent nation! Huzza! Independence, and equal rights, and no distinction of color!!’—The genius of dreams who had already by some mysterious multiplication or division of moments, crowded months into as many hours, with as little regard to the unities of place as time, now transported me to Charleston, become the seat of the newly established government. I found myself disguised as a negro and seated amidst the imperial council, listening to an animated debate on the question of disposing of the white persons still resident among the blacks. Various were the measures recommended. Some talked of death, and some of slavery for all, or for all above a certain age. The States had proposed a treaty of peace and alliance with certain advantages, on condition of life and liberty being granted to those whites still in

the power of the blacks. They offered an asylum to those unfortunate people among them. The treaty was rejected, for it was remarked that, 'our allies, the Cherokees, would laugh to scorn the idea of trusting to a treaty.' At this moment I feared lest the burning blush of shame upon my cheeks should betray the white man, even through their dark disguise. It was decided to be unsafe to permit these unfortunate people to find a retreat so near, as they might foment disturbances. One of the council then read an elaborate report he had prepared, recommending that every white person suffer the punishment of death who shall be proved to have held in unjust bondage more than twenty of his fellow creatures. The principle of this distinction he defended by its analogy to those laws which subject the crime of theft to a more or less severe punishment, according to the amount stolen. Various petitions having been brought forward from different individuals praying for the life and liberty of their former masters, it was proposed that a clause be added exempting from death those who would otherwise be liable to it, but whose lives should be petitioned for by three fourths of their former slaves. But even with this amelioration, the law was thought by some too sanguinary. A venerable looking man whom I took to be a minister of the gospel, next rose. 'Why,' said he, 'do we speak of death and punishment? The retribution for our wrongs has already been terrible: there has been enough of death and destruction. Let us think of mercy. And let us not speak of slavery any more than of death for the whites. Why should we imitate the tyranny from which we have escaped? Oh let us set an example of magnanimity, and remember that no one ever repented having returned good for evil. Let the wretched remnant of the tyrants dwell in peace among us.' Another orator rose — 'The speaker who recommended mercy has, in that, my entire approbation; but to think of their remaining among us on any footing of equality is as preposterous as to propose to allow a race of tigers to range our cities with the freedom of domestic animals. We may talk of magnanimity and forgiveness, but it is absurd. The enmity between us is as eternal and deep rooted as that between the race of Eve and of the serpent; and as reasonable would it be to cherish one

of the latter in our bosom, as to adopt the whites into our nation. We may talk of giving them freedom among us, but it is impossible; they would ever be among us an abhorred and despised race. They have themselves long ago decided, that we and they can never occupy the same realm as equals, and they were right. We never can. But does it therefore follow that we must either exterminate, or reduce them to slavery and as far as possible to a level with the brutes? Happily there is yet an alternative, and I call upon every philanthropist and every patriot to join in a scheme which unites at once a humane regard to this ill-deserving but much to be pitied race, with a due consideration of our own safety, and the welfare of our country. Let us *colonize* them. But the question then arises in what spot we should fix them? Where but in their native land, the land of their fathers, the region to which their constitutions are by nature adapted, and whence they were driven by persecution and oppression? *There is a peculiar, a moral fitness in this restoration.* Arrangements may easily be made with the king of Portugal or the Grand Seignor for the purchase of a sufficient territory, and humanity shall restore the exiles to that beloved native soil whence oppression drove them forth some hundred years ago.' With indignation and scorn expressed in every feature, another individual thus spoke: 'Away with this false and sickening humanity. Let criminals be treated as criminals. There is a peculiar, a moral fitness in holding those in slavery who have so held others. My counsel is, that they and their descendants for ever be retained as slaves to us and our posterity. Tell me not of the innocent children who have not participated in their fathers' crimes. When felt *they* compassion for innocent children or unborn generations, whom they would have doomed to perpetual slavery, neither for their own nor their fathers' sins? As a nation have this people sinned, and as a nation must they receive their retribution.' He sat down, and some of more merciful dispositions again spoke of colonization. But others suggested that where the poor whites were born was in truth their native land, and that *there* were all their attachments; that Portugal and Turkey, though in Europe, could scarcely be considered the native country of Englishmen, still less of their

descendants; and that at the distance of several generations, but little affection remained for a parent country. These suggestions were over-ruled however, and humanity and colonization were voted to be identical. But another difficulty occurred. Many persons were in possession of white laborers whom they had either taken prisoners in battle, bought, or otherwise obtained, (and if their title were now defective, time would mend it.) Could these persons be deprived of their *property*? Again, how could the portion of *northern* territory, of which the nation was in possession, or might come into possession, be cultivated without white laborers? Must it be left a desert? All which matters occasioned much debate. Then the advocates of vengeance made once more an effort to be heard. 'Let every person without exception, who shall be proved to have been guilty of the crime of keeping a human being in slavery, be condemned to death.' Here I made an effort to speak in behalf of mercy, but could utter only inarticulate sounds, and awoke in an agony of horror. Unspeakable was the relief of finding that all these things were but a dream. May no resemblance to them ever be reality!

T. T.

(1831)

## ANONYMOUS

### *The Family Circle—No. 8*

Serialized in twelve numbered installments in the “Juvenile Department” of *The Liberator*, this children’s story is framed as a running conversation about slavery among the members of a family consisting of mother, father, and several children. Their dialogue in this, the eighth installment, gently teases out lessons about northern complicity in the slave system and the insidiousness of racial discrimination.

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*‘It can never be right to inquire into the expediency of doing a great and acknowledged wrong.’—Mr Hayne of S C.*

*‘He who upholds oppression, shares the crime.’*

‘I should think father,’ said Lucy, ‘that all the slaves who could get a chance would run away quite out of the slave states, and come here where people think it is wicked to keep slaves.’

‘It is very natural you should suppose so, my dear,’ said her father, ‘and it is very mortifying to me as a republican, and painful as a friend of justice and humanity, to say that the poor slave even if he makes out to escape from the tyranny of his master, cannot find liberty among us. No longer ago than last summer, a poor man and woman made their escape from New-Orleans and concealed themselves aboard a vessel coming to Boston, but when they got here, they were put into a cellar, as I heard the account, and confined till the vessel returned, when they were sent back again. The poor woman was so much terrified at the thoughts of being carried back, that she tried to throw herself overboard.’

‘Poor people!’ said Lucy, ‘what a disappointment, and how cruel to send them back again.’

‘How abominable,’ said George, ‘after the poor creatures had once got away from their tyrants, for anybody *here* to be willing to assist in sending them back to slavery again.’

‘Were not the people who sent them back punished for it?’ said Helen.

‘Not that I ever heard of,’ said her father. ‘You know I told you that the slaveholders were allowed to send into any of the free states, and take up runaway slaves, and our people are allowed to assist them.’

‘But why do the free states allow this?’ said Lucy. ‘As they think it is wicked to keep people in slavery, I should think there would be some law to punish any of their own people that had anything to do with it.’

‘I will try and explain this to you,’ said her father. ‘You know, children, that though each of the states has a government of its own, yet that for some purposes they are all united as one nation under what is called the Federal Government.’

‘Yes sir,’ said Lucy, ‘I believe I understand.’

‘Well, my dear, at the time the Federal Government was formed, the free states entered into an agreement to allow the slaveholders to send into any of the free states and take up any slaves who might make their escape into them.’

‘Why, then, father,’ said George, ‘I do not see but the free states help to keep the poor blacks in slavery, for if they had not made this agreement they would have been free as soon as they had got out of the slave states.’

‘Oh why,’ said his mother, ‘is not our country as free as England.’

‘I know mother,’ said George, ‘what you are thinking of—Cowper’s lines which followed what Lucy learned some time ago,

“Slaves cannot breathe in England, if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free;  
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.”

‘I think,’ said his mother, ‘when there is not a city of refuge in our whole

country to which the wretched fugitive can escape from the most cruel oppression that ever afflicted humanity, it is too monstrous an absurdity to boast of this as a land of freedom.'

'There is not then one spot in the whole United States,' said George, 'where the poor slave is not a prisoner, let him go where he will, he is still a slave, till he can escape from this land of freedom.'

'Oh! father,' said Lucy, 'why did the free states enter into such a wicked agreement? It was wicked, father, was it not?'

'My dear,' said her father, 'there were advantages, both to the free and slave states, in being united which made both sides think it best to give up some things which they did not quite like to; and people who ought to know better than little girls, and certainly *as well* as your father, think, that upon the whole, the free states made the best bargain they could.'

'But,' said George, 'they had no right to make a bargain to injure other people, if they were to gain ever so much advantage from it.'

'Ah! father,' said Lucy, 'the poor slaves cannot think it was the best bargain for them, and I do not think it was right not to take more care for their liberty, just at the very time too, when they were thinking so much of their own.'

'No, my dear,' said her mother, 'neither does your father think it was right;' and then turning to her husband, she added, 'you recollect Miss Edgeworth says "children are excellent casuists."''

'What is a casuist, mother? and what did Miss Edgeworth mean?' said Lucy.

'A casuist, my dear,' said her mother, 'is one who reasons upon the right and wrong of actions, and Miss Edgeworth thought that where children can understand all the circumstances, they can judge of right and wrong as well as grown people; and they sometimes judge more correctly, because they are not so likely to puzzle themselves by thinking of other things connected with the subject, but which have nothing to do with the plain right or wrong of the case.'

'In the present instance,' said their father, 'you decided, I think, very

correctly, that it was not right to enter into such an agreement as the free states did, and I wish every child in the country could have the case fairly presented to him that he might be able to decide impartially, before he had learned to take it for granted as too many grown people do, that whatever is sanctioned by law must be right and proper. I willingly tell you I think it was very unjustifiable for the free states to enter into an agreement which deprived them of the power of affording shelter to any of their afflicted fellow creatures, and involved them in the guilt of slaveholding.'

'I believe,' said their mother, 'that there are many people who do not know that such an agreement was ever made, and cannot understand how it is, that this part of the country has anything to do with slaveholding.'

'I have no doubt it is so,' said their father, 'because cases of slaves escaping to this part of the country so seldom occur, that the subject is not often brought before us; and yet it is a fact, that however desirous any one might be to protect one of these poor creatures, there is not a house in the country but may be entered, and the owner compelled to give up to slavery a man whom he believes to have as good a right to freedom as himself.'

'Father,' said George, 'if you could help any of the slaves to escape would not you do it? I would.'

'And so would I,' said Lucy.

'And so would I,' said little Helen; 'say father, would not you?'

'I think,' said their father, 'I should be very apt to do all I could, and should think I was very wicked to aid in any way in restoring them to their masters.'

The children clapped their hands and said 'Then we were all right.'

'Yes, my dear children, you were right, and whatever may be the law of the land, I think no just and humane man, unless he is strangely deluded, will have any concern in helping to force a fellow creature into bondage. I am glad, my dear children, you feel so much interest for the poor slaves.'

'Oh,' said George, 'I never meet a black man now, but I think of the slaves, and how badly he must feel when he thinks of so many of his own people so

wickedly held in slavery, and it makes me feel as if I wanted to do something kind to every black person I see.'

'I think,' said his mother, 'everybody ought to try and do all in their power for people who are so much to be pitied, instead of feeling the foolish dislike to them which some weak people do.'

'Do you mean, mother,' said Lucy, 'that anybody would dislike a person, without knowing whether he was a good or bad man, or anything about him except that he was black? I never heard anything so silly.'

'Why that,' said little Helen, 'is as silly as Rosamond's disliking good Mrs Egerton, because she had an ugly bonnet.'

Helen had just been reading this part of Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond.

'I think,' said George, 'it is wicked, and that is worse than silly. I am sure there is more reason to dislike white people, for they always seem to have treated the blacks worse than I ever heard that the black people treated them.'

'True, indeed,' said his father, 'and it is quite time that the whites should endeavor to make up for past injustice by treating the colored people we have among us in a more christian-like manner.'

'Oh, father,' said the children, 'I wish there was anything we could do for any of these poor people.'

'Continue to feel thus, dear children,' said their father; 'be always ready and inclined to do them good, and I doubt not the time will come, when you will have opportunity.'

U.I.E.

(1831)

# LYDIA MARIA FRANCIS CHILD

## *Jumbo and Zairee; Slavery's Pleasant Homes*

Born into an old New England family in Medford, Massachusetts, and married at age twenty-six to the impecunious lawyer David Lee Child, Lydia Maria Francis Child (1802–1880) was a professional writer, ardent abolitionist, and activist. She published the antislavery story “Jumbo and Zairee” in her own *Juvenile Miscellany*, the periodical she founded in 1826, one of the first American magazines intended exclusively for children. At the height of her success as a popular writer, she published in 1833 the powerful abolitionist tract *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, which influenced readers such as Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner toward actively opposing slavery, but harmed her reputation with the wider public and caused her *Juvenile Miscellany* to close. In 1843, while editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, she wrote the wry short story “Slavery's Pleasant Homes” for Garrison's annual, *The Liberty Bell*. An intricate work of fiction, it is at once a love story and a murder mystery. In later years she harbored fugitive slaves and offered to nurse the injured John Brown in his prison cell, acts that deepened the animosity of her pro-slavery enemies.

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### *Jumbo and Zairee*

LITTLE JUMBO and his sister Zairee were two pretty negro children. Their father was a prince; and he lived near the coast of Guinea. Ships from Europe and America, often go there for gold dust and ivory; and I am very sorry to say the Americans have sometimes stolen the negroes, and sold them for slaves.

It happened that an English vessel was once wrecked not far from where Jumbo lived. Every body on board perished, except one gentleman, who clung to a mast, and was thrown upon the sand. Jumbo's father took this unfortunate stranger to his house, and warmed and fed him, as if he had been his own son. He lived several months with the negro prince; during which time he enjoyed

himself very much in hunting, fishing, and riding: the English king could not have treated a guest with more kindness and generosity. The two children, Jumbo and Zairee, were very much attached to the white man. They would listen to his stories by the hour together; their yams and calabashes of milk were always brought for him to share; and many a crying time they had, because their mother made them go to bed, before he came home from hunting. They often teased Mr. Harris, for that was the gentleman's name, to live always in Africa, with them; but this he would not promise—for though he felt very grateful to his benefactor's family, and even loved them dearly, he could not conceal that his heart longed for white faces, and his native language.

The children would sigh deeply, when they heard him say that he must go back to England, and would ask, "May Jumbo and Zairee go, too?" Their mother would say, "What! and leave me all alone!" This always made the affectionate little creatures very sorry; and they would look up in her face very sorrowfully, as they replied, "Oh, no—Mother would be very sick, if Jumbo and Zairee went away."

At last, a British vessel brought letters and money for Mr. Harris, and he made preparations to return home. He earnestly entreated to take the children with him; promising to send them back after they had been a few years at school. The prince was willing to have them go; for he said they would then be able to teach their people a great many new things: but the mother grieved, as if she would break her heart. When Mr. Harris saw how much she was troubled, he would not consent to take the children; but he did every thing he could to show his gratitude.

He gave the prince a beautiful sword, a pair of pistols, and a hunting horn; which he had ordered to be brought from England, on purpose for him; to his wife he gave a large scarlet shawl, an amber necklace, and gold bracelets; Jumbo had a drum and fife; and Zairee a doll almost as big as herself, that could move its eyes, and open its mouth. At first, it frightened her very much to look at it; for she had never seen such a thing before, and she thought it would bite her.

However, she got accustomed to it in a few hours; and then she was so delighted with it, that she talked like a parrot the whole time.

The children were very anxious to go on board the English vessel, the day Mr. Harris was to sail; but as they had been several times, and as their father was absent hunting, they were strictly forbidden to go near the sea-shore. Mr. Harris did not tell them what hour the vessel was to sail, because he knew how they would cry, if they thought they should see him no more. He was far away, almost out of sight of the African coast, before Jumbo and Zairee knew anything of the matter. At first, they cried bitterly; and when they had dried their tears a little, it popped into their heads to run off in search of the vessel. They ran along the sea-shore hand in hand, for nearly a mile, without seeing anything of the ship. At last they grew weary, and sat down on the beach, and picked up the prettiest shells they could find. While they were thus employed, they saw a boat at a distance; as it came nearer, they perceived it to be filled with white men. The foolish little creatures were overjoyed; for they had never seen any white man, but Mr. Harris, and the crew of the vessel in which he sailed, and they were now quite sure they should hear of their friend. They forgot how often their careful mother had told them that cruel white men came to steal away little negro children.

The boat came nearer, and at length the white men leaped on the beach, spoke very kindly to the children, and offered to give them some beads for their shells. Jumbo and Zairee, in broken English, asked where Mr. Harris was, for they wanted to see him. The men told them that he was in a vessel a little ways off, and that if they would jump into the boat, they should go and see him. Jumbo was for going directly; but Zairee wanted to go back and tell her mother; because she said her mother would cry if she could not find them. The sailors promised her that they should be carried back to their mother in a very little while; and the poor little creatures were tempted to go in the boat. They were cruelly deceived. The vessel on board which they were carried was an American slave ship! and Jumbo and Zairee were tied together, and put in a dark hole with

a great many other wretched negroes. Oh, then how bitterly they wept to think they had disobeyed their good mother, by running away! She, poor woman! was almost crazy when she found they were gone. All the country round was searched in vain. At first, she thought they had wandered on the sea-shore, and had been eaten up by crocodiles. Crocodiles abound in Africa. They are very large ugly creatures, with a monstrous mouth, and a back covered with shell, so hard that it is said to be bullet-proof. They often seize upon people and devour them. And this was thought to be the fate of poor Jumbo and his sister, until a huntsman brought in word that he had seen a ship off the coast, and white men prowling about on shore.

This almost broke the mother's heart; for several days she would not taste any food. She feared that her husband would be very angry with her, for allowing the children to be out of her sight. And then she said she had rather, a thousand times over, that they had been swallowed by crocodiles, than to be carried off, and made slaves by the white men. She hated the sound of a white man's name. She would not allow even Mr. Harris to be mentioned before her; for she could not help sometimes suspecting that he had returned and stolen her treasures from her.

When Jumbo's father returned, he was very angry—not with his wife,—for she was so sick and broken-hearted, that he could not be angry with her; but he vowed revenge against all the white men. Never again, he said, would he save one from death; if they were shipwrecked on his shores, they should perish. Many a white man was afterwards murdered by the prince and his tribe. Was it not melancholy that the cruelty of white men, should thus turn the kindness of a savage heart into gall and bitterness?

As for Jumbo and Zairee, they had a wretched voyage. The bread that was given them was mouldy and hard, and even of that they seldom had as much as they wanted. The want of pure air made them ill; and for many days Jumbo thought poor little Zairee would die. Five of the negroes did die, and were thrown overboard during the voyage. The hard-hearted captain did not seem to

pity his miserable captives in the least; he was only angry to have them die, because he thought he should not get quite so much money. You will ask me if this man was an American? One of our own countrymen, who make it their boast that men are born free and equal? I am sorry to say, that he was an American. Let us hope there are but few such.

After a long and wearisome voyage, the vessel arrived in the port of Savannah, the capital of Georgia. The negroes were tied in pairs, and driven to the market-place to be sold. In this hour of distress, it was a great consolation to Jumbo and Zairee that they were not separated from each other. They were put up at auction together, and the same planter bought them both. For the first two or three years, they did not find slavery so bad a thing as they had feared. It is true, they were kept at work all the time; but they were comfortably clothed and fed, and nobody abused them.\* But, at the end of that time, a new overseer was appointed, who was a very cruel man. Their master was a kind-hearted man; but he was too indolent to take much trouble; and he let the overseer of the slaves do pretty much as he pleased. Almost every day, some one or other of the slaves had a severe whipping, by order of this wicked tyrant; and he made them work harder than Kamschatkadale dogs. Jumbo bore his fate with patience and fortitude; but many a time, when his work was done, did he and Zairee weep to think of their beloved Africa, and of the pleasant times they used to have, sitting under the cocoa trees, eating yams and milk for supper.

Jumbo had borne several cruel beatings himself without complaint; but one day, when the overseer ordered Zairee to be tied to a post, and receive twenty lashes, merely because she had broken an earthen pitcher, he could endure it no longer. He ran to the post, seized hold of his sister, and tried to prevent her being tied. This did no good. The poor creature was forced away; and Zairee was ordered to receive forty lashes, and her brother seventy-five.

After this dreadful whipping, it was many days before Jumbo could creep out of his miserable bed. His heart was full of fury towards the white men. Alas! can we blame the poor creature for it? Even a Christian would have found it very

hard to forgive such injuries; and Jumbo had never been taught to read his Bible.

Not long after his recovery, he was accused of wounding the overseer in the back, with an intent to kill him; but the thing could not be proved; and, as all the negroes hated him, it was as likely to be one as another. Jumbo escaped punishment; but as suspicion rested pretty strongly upon him, he was offered for sale. Zairee begged hard to be sold with him; but her request was denied. Jumbo was sold to a cotton planter, who lived about twenty miles distant. The parting of brother and sister was painful indeed. The only consolation they had had in their misery was the liberty of being together. Zairee could not eat any food the day that Jumbo left her; and when the overseer heard of this, he ordered her to be whipped. "The next thing I shall hear," said he, "will be that she is ill and unable to work. I shall not allow of any such nonsense."

A plate full of food was placed before Zairee, and a man stood over her with a whip, to beat her, if she did not eat every mouthful. This was in the United States of America, which boasts of being the only true republic in the world! the asylum of the distressed! the only land of perfect freedom and equality! "Shame on my country—everlasting shame." History blushes as she writes the page of American slavery, and Europe points her finger at it in derision.

It was so ordered, by divine Providence, that what threatened to be the greatest calamity to the unhappy Zairee, turned out in the end to be a blessing.

Among Jumbo's new companions in slavery, was one very dignified middle-aged negro, who attracted his particular attention. He was very melancholy and said but little; but when he did speak, he betrayed intelligence unusual among people of his color, who have so few advantages of education. He and Jumbo soon became very much attached to each other. One evening, as they sat in their hut making brooms, the elder negro said, in imperfect English, "I believe one reason I like you so well Jumbo, is on account of your name. They call me Pompey; but I am prince Yoloo." Jumbo dropped his broom and looked up eagerly—the name sounded like something he had known and forgotten. "I

had a son named Jumbo,” continued the black prince; “but the accursed white man stole him from me when he was only nine years old.”

Jumbo sprang on his feet and uttered a shriek of joy. He had found his father! A long and earnest conversation followed, in the course of which Jumbo discovered that the Ashantees, a neighboring tribe, had made war upon his father, had taken him prisoner, and sold him to an American captain.

Yoloo wept like a child when he found that both Jumbo and Zairee were alive and well. The most wonderful thing he had to tell was that Mr. Harris had bought a plantation in America, and actually lived within five miles of them. “I did not know it,” said Yoloo, “till about six weeks ago, when master sent me to his house of an errand. It made my blood very hot, when I saw the white man, whom I had treated with so much kindness in my own country; for I thought he had stolen away my children; and I have ever since been thinking how I could find an opportunity to kill him.”

Jumbo was glad his father had not killed him; for he said he felt sure he was good and kind, though he was a white man.

Yoloo now felt very anxious to see Mr. Harris; for he thought he would buy him and his children, if he once knew who they were; and every body said he was the kindest master in the world; that he visited his slaves every day, listened to their complaints, relieved their wants, and never allowed the overseer to punish them without his knowledge.

Yoloo and Jumbo talked a great deal about making themselves known to Mr. Harris. But they did not dare to talk in the presence of the overseer; for they were obliged to speak English, because Jumbo had forgotten his native tongue. When Yoloo repeated a song, with which his mother used to lull him to sleep, it sounded pleasant to his ears, and he smiled as a baby smiles, when he hears music; but he did not understand one word of all that was said.

One day as they were busily at work, picking cotton, a gentleman on horseback stopped and spoke to Yoloo. “You seem to be a very industrious fellow,” said he; “What is your name?” “My name is Yoloo,” replied the slave;

“they call me Pompey”—as he spoke, he looked very expressively at Jumbo. —“Yoloo!” exclaimed the stranger—“and were you a prince in Africa?” “I was.” “Do you remember Mr. Harris the white man?” “He lived with me many months.” “God be praised!” exclaimed the stranger—and forgetting black and white, master and slave, he fell into Yoloo’s arms, and clasped him warmly to his bosom.

Mr. Harris immediately expressed his wish to buy Yoloo and Jumbo. Their master, finding him eager for the purchase, demanded eight hundred dollars a piece for them.

The next day, Mr. Harris paid the money, and took the two negroes home with him. He then went in search of poor Zairee. The news had got abroad that Mr. Harris owed a debt of gratitude to this family, and would pay any price for them. Zairee’s master took advantage of this. He first asked eight hundred dollars for her; and when he found Mr. Harris was willing to pay it, he demanded a thousand—then twelve hundred—then fifteen hundred. “Promise me in writing that I shall have the slave if I pay down fifteen hundred dollars,” said Mr. Harris. The master, fearing he should never make one half so good a bargain, complied. Zairee was purchased; and in a few hours the affectionate girl was in the arms of her father and brother.

Yoloo and his children expected to be employed as slaves on the plantation of their kind friend. But Mr. Harris said, “Prince Yoloo, who treated me like a king in his own country, shall never labor for me. You shall all return to Africa; and with you shall go every slave in my household. I have tried to show my gratitude to the negroes by being a kind master; but I am satisfied this is not all I ought to do. They ought to be free. What is wrong in the sight of God, cannot be made right by the laws of man.” When Yoloo heard these blessed words, he knelt and kissed his benefactor’s feet. Mr. Harris did as he promised. He bought a ship, and gave his slaves free liberty to return in it to their native country. Two old negroes preferred remaining with him. The others returned with Yoloo.

Jumbo and Zairee found their mother still alive. The great doll, which Mr.

Harris had given them, remained in just the same dress it wore, when they ran away. Zairee, although she was now a woman, kissed it and wept over it; she would hardly let any one touch it, so great was her reverence and gratitude for Mr. Harris.

Often, as they sat together, under the pleasant shade of their native cocoas, did they repeat to their neighbors, the story of the good white man.

(1831)

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*Slavery's Pleasant Homes*

A FAITHFUL SKETCH

'Thy treasures of gold  
Are dim with the blood of the hearts thou hast sold;  
Thy home may be lovely, but round it I hear  
The crack of the whip, and the footsteps of fear.'

WHEN FREDERIC DALCHO brought his young bride from New-Orleans to her Georgian home, there were great demonstrations of joy among the slaves of the establishment,—dancing, shouting, clapping of hands, and eager invocations of blessing on the heads of 'massa and missis;' for well they knew that he who manifested most zeal was likely to get the largest coin, or the brightest handkerchief.

The bride had been nurtured in seclusion, almost as deep as that of the oriental harem. She was a pretty little waxen plaything, as fragile and as delicate as the white Petunia blossom. She brought with her two slaves. Mars, a stalwart mulatto, of good figure, but a cunning and disagreeable expression of countenance. Rosa, a young girl, elegantly formed, and beautiful as a dark velvet carnation. The blush, so easily excited, shone through the transparent brown of

her smooth cheek, like claret through a bottle in the sunshine. It was a beautiful contrast to see her beside her mistress, like a glittering star in attendance upon the pale and almost vanishing moonsickle. They had grown up from infancy together; for the mother of Rosa was foster-mother of Marion; and soon as the little white lady could speak, she learned to call Rosa *her* slave. As they grew older, the wealthy planter's daughter took pride in her servant's beauty, and loved to decorate her with jewels. 'You shall wear my golden ornaments whenever you ask for them,' said she; 'they contrast so well with the soft, brown satin of your neck and arms. I will wear pearls and amethysts; but gold needs the dark complexion to show its richness. Besides, you are a handsome creature, Rosa, and gold is none too good for you.'

Her coachman, Mars, was of the same opinion: but the little petted coquette tossed her graceful head at him, and paid small heed to his flattering words. Not so with George, the handsome quadroon brother of Frederic Dalcho, and his favorite slave; but the master and mistress were too much absorbed with their own honey-moon, to observe them. Low talks among the rose-bushes, and stolen meetings by moonlight, passed unnoticed, save by the evil eyes of Mars. Thus it passed on for months. The young slaves had uttered the marriage vow to each other, in the silent presence of the stars.

It chanced, one day, that Rosa was summoned to the parlor to attend her mistress, while George stood respectfully, hat in hand, waiting for a note, which his master was writing. She wore about her neck a small heart and cross of gold, which her lover had given her the night before. He smiled archly, as he glanced at it, and the answer from her large, dark eyes was full of joyful tenderness. Unfortunately, the master looked up at that moment, and at once comprehended the significance of that beaming expression. He saw that it spoke whole volumes of mutual, happy love; and it kindled in him an unholy fire. He had never before realized that the girl was so very handsome. He watched her, as she pursued her work, until she felt uneasy beneath his look. From time to time, he glanced at his young wife. She, too, was certainly very lovely; but the rich, mantling beauty of

the slave had the charm of novelty. The next day, he gave her a gay dress; and when he met her among the garden shrubbery, he turned her glossy ringlets over his finger, and called her a pretty darling. Poor Rosa hastened away, filled with terror. She wanted to tell her mistress all this, and claim her protection; but she dared not. As for George, he was of a proud and fiery nature, and she dreaded the storm it would raise in his breast. Her sleeping apartment adjoined that of her mistress, and she was now called to bring water to her master at a much later hour than had been usual with him. One night, no answer was given to the summons. Rosa was not in her room. When questioned in the morning, she stammered out an incoherent excuse, and burst into tears. She was ordered, somewhat sternly, to be very careful not to be again absent when called for.

Marion took an early opportunity to plead her favorite's cause. 'I have suspected, for some time,' said she, 'that George and Rosa are courting; and for my part, I should like very well to have them married.' Her husband made no reply, but abruptly left the room. His conduct towards George became singularly capricious and severe. Rosa wept much in secret, and became shy as a startled fawn. Her mistress supposed it was because Mr. Dalcho objected to her marriage, and suspected nothing more. She tried to remonstrate with him, and learn the nature of his objections; but he answered sharply, and left her in tears.

One night, Marion was awakened by the closing of the door, and found that Frederic was absent. She heard voices in Rosa's apartment, and the painful truth flashed upon her. Poor young wife, what a bitter hour was that!

In the morning, Rosa came to dress her, as usual, but she avoided looking in her face, and kept her eyes fixed on the ground. As she knelt to tie the satin shoe, Marion spoke angrily of her awkwardness, and gave her a blow. It was the first time she had ever struck her; for they really loved each other. The beautiful slave looked up with an expression of surprise, which was answered by a strange, wild stare. Rosa fell at her feet, and sobbed out, 'Oh, mistress, I am not to blame. Indeed, indeed, I am very wretched.' Marion's fierce glance melted into tears. 'Poor child,' said she, 'I ought not to have struck you; but, oh, Rosa, I am

wretched, too.’ The foster-sisters embraced each other, and wept long and bitterly; but neither sought any further to learn the other’s secrets.

At breakfast, George was in attendance, but he would not look at Rosa, though she watched for a glance with anxious love. When she found an opportunity to see him alone, he was sullen, and rejected her proffered kiss. ‘Rosa, where were you last night?’ said he, hastily. The poor girl blushed deeply, and strove to take his hand; but he flung her from him, with so much force that she reeled against the wall. ‘Oh, George,’ said she, with bitter anguish, ‘what *can* I do? I am his *slave*.’ The justice of her plea, and the pathos of her tones, softened his heart. He placed her head on his shoulder, and said more kindly, ‘Keep out of his way, dear Rosa; keep out of his way.’

Rosa made strong efforts to follow this injunction; and dearly did she rue it. George was sent away from the house, to work on the plantation, and they were forbidden to see each other, under penalty of severe punishment. His rival, Mars, watched them, and gave information of every attempt to transgress this cruel edict. But love was more omnipotent than fear of punishment, and the lovers did sometimes catch a stolen interview. The recurrence of this disobedience exasperated their master beyond endurance. He swore he would overcome her obstinacy, or kill her; and one severe flogging succeeded another, till the tenderly-nurtured slave fainted under the cruel infliction, which was rendered doubly dangerous by the delicate state of her health. Maternal pains came on prematurely, and she died a few hours after.

George wandered into the woods, and avoided the sight of his reckless master, who, on his part, seemed willing to avoid an interview. Four days had passed since Rosa’s death, and the bereaved one had scarcely tasted food enough to sustain his wretched life. He stood beside the new-made grave, which he himself had dug. ‘Oh, Father in Heaven!’ he exclaimed, ‘what would I give, if I had not flung her from me! Poor girl, *she* was not to blame.’ He leaned his head against a tree, and looked mournfully up to the moon struggling through clouds. Cypressess reared their black forms against the sky, and the moss hung from

bough to bough, in thick, funereal festoons. But a few months ago, how beautiful and bright was Nature—and now, how inexpressibly gloomy. The injustice of the past, and the hopelessness of the future, came before him with dreary distinctness. ‘He is my brother,’ thought he, ‘we grew up side by side, children of the same father; but I am his slave. Handsomer, stronger, and more intelligent than he; yet I am his *slave*. And now he will sell me, because the murdered one will forever come up between us.’

He thought of Rosa as he first saw her, so happy, and so beautiful; of all her gushing tenderness; of her agonized farewell, when they last met; of her graceful form bleeding under the lash, and now lying cold and dead beneath his feet.

He looked toward his master’s house. ‘Shall I escape now and forever?’ said he; ‘or shall I first’——he paused, threw his arms widely upward, gnashed his teeth, and groaned aloud, ‘God pity me! He murdered my poor Rosa.’

On that night, Marion’s sleep was disturbed and fitful. The memory of her foster-sister mingled darkly with all her dreams. Was that a shriek she heard? It was fearfully shrill in the night-silence! Half sleeping and half waking, she called wildly, ‘Rosa! Rosa!’ But a moment after, she remembered that Rosa’s light step would never again come at her call. At last a drowsy slave answered the loud summons of her bell. ‘I left your master reading in the room below,’ said she; ‘go and see if he is ill.’ The girl came back, pallid and frightened. ‘Oh, mistress, he is dead!’ she exclaimed; ‘there is a dagger through his heart.’

Neighbors were hastily summoned, and the slaves secured. Among them was George, who, with a fierce and haggard look, still lingered around Rosa’s grave.

The dagger found in Frederic Dalcho’s heart was the one he had himself been accustomed to wear. He lay upon the sofa, with an open book beside him, as if he had fallen asleep reading. A desk in the room was broken open, and a sum of money gone. Near it, was dropped a ragged handkerchief, known to belong to Mars. Suspicion hovered between him and George. Both denied the deed. Mars tried hard to fix the guilt on his hated rival, and swore to many

falsehoods. But as some of these falsehoods were detected, and the stolen money was found hidden in his bed, the balance turned against him. After the brief, stern trial awarded to slaves, with slave-holders for judges and jurors, Mars was condemned to be hung. George thought of his relentless persecutions, and for a moment triumphed over the cunning enemy, who had so often dogged poor Rosa's steps; but his soul was too generous to retain this feeling.

The fatal hour came. Planters rode miles to witness the execution, and stood glaring at their trembling victim, with the fierceness of tigers. The slaves from miles around were assembled, to take warning by his awful punishment. The rope was adjusted on the strong bough of a tree. Mars shook like a leaf in the wind. The countenance of George was very pale and haggard, and his breast was heaving with tumultuous thoughts. 'He is my enemy,' said he to himself; 'tis an awful thing to die thus. The *theft* I did not commit; but if I take all the blame, they can do no more than hang me.'

They led the shivering wretch towards the tree, and were about to fasten the fatal noose. But George rushed forward with a countenance ghastly pale, and exclaimed, 'Mars is innocent. I murdered him—for he killed my wife, and hell was in my bosom.'

No voice praised him for the generous confession. They kicked and cursed him; and hung up, like a dog or a wolf, a man of nobler soul than any of them all.

The Georgian papers thus announced the deed: '*Fiend-like Murder.* Frederic Dalcho, one of our most wealthy and respected citizens, was robbed and murdered last week, by one of his slaves. The black demon was caught and hung; and hanging was too good for him.'

The Northern papers copied this version; merely adding, 'These are the black-hearted monsters, which abolition philanthropy would let loose upon our brethren of the South.'

Not one was found to tell how the slave's young wife had been torn from him by his own brother, and murdered with slow tortures. Not one recorded the

heroism that would not purchase life by another's death, though the victim was his enemy. His very *name* was left unmentioned; he was only Mr. Dalcho's *slave*!

(1843)

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\* We believe this is generally the case with slaves at the south; but the *principle* is wrong, even if there are nine hundred and ninety nine good masters out of a thousand.

# WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

from *Slavery*

Born into a prominent New England family who had entertained George Washington and John Jay as houseguests, and descended on his mother's side from a signer of the Declaration of Independence, William Ellery Channing (1780–1842) was a leading Unitarian clergyman, writer, and intellectual. His antislavery convictions originated in his family, who had freed their slaves following the American Revolution, and were strengthened by his experiences in Richmond, Virginia, where he resided briefly after graduating from college. They were reinforced by his observations on a visit to the West Indies in the 1830s. *Slavery* was the first of four books on the topic published between 1835 and his death in 1842. In the passage excerpted here, Channing focuses on the vulnerability of slave women to their masters' sexual predations and the abomination of masters selling their own children as slaves.

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Of consequence the direct tendency of slavery is to annihilate the control of Christianity. Humility is by eminence the spirit of Christianity. No vice was so severely rebuked by our Lord, as the passion for ruling over others. A deference towards all human beings as our brethren, a benevolence which disposes us to serve rather than to reign, to concede our own rather than to encroach on others' rights, to forgive, not avenge wrongs, to govern our own spirits instead of breaking the spirit of an inferior or foe,—this is Christianity; a religion too high and pure to be understood and obeyed any where as it should be, but which meets singular hostility in the habits of mind generated by slavery.

The slaveholder, indeed, values himself on his loftiness of spirit. He has a consciousness of dignity, which imposes on himself and others. But truth cannot stoop to this lofty mien. Truth, moral, Christian truth, condemns it, and condemns those who bow to it. Self-respect, founded on a consciousness of our moral nature and immortal destiny, is, indeed, a noble principle; but this

sentiment includes, as a part of itself, respect for all who partake our nature. A consciousness of dignity, founded on the subjection of others to our absolute will, is inhuman and unjust. It is time that the teachings of Christ were understood. In proportion as a man acquires a lofty bearing from the habit of command over wronged and depressed fellow-creatures, so far he casts away true honor, so far he has fallen in the sight of God and Virtue.

I approach a more delicate subject, and one on which I shall not enlarge. To own the persons of others, to hold females in slavery, is necessarily fatal to the purity of a people. That unprotected females, stripped by their degraded condition of woman's self-respect, should be used to minister to other passions in men than the love of gain, is next to inevitable. Accordingly, in such a community the reins are given to youthful licentiousness. Youth, every where in perils, is in these circumstances urged to vice with a terrible power. And the evil cannot stop at youth. Early licentiousness is fruitful of crime in mature life. How far the obligation to conjugal fidelity, the sacredness of domestic ties, will be revered amidst such habits, such temptations, such facilities to vice, as are involved in slavery, needs no exposition. So terrible is the connexion of crimes! They, who invade the domestic rights of others, suffer in their own homes. The household of the slave may be broken up arbitrarily by the master; but he finds his revenge, if revenge he asks, in the blight which the master's unfaithfulness sheds over his own domestic joys. A slave-country reeks with licentiousness. It is tainted with a deadlier pestilence than the plague.

But the worst is not told. As a consequence of criminal connexions, many a master has children born into slavery. Of these, most, I presume, receive protection, perhaps indulgence, during the lives of the fathers; but at their death not a few are left to the chances of a cruel bondage. These cases must have increased, since the difficulties of emancipation have even multiplied. Still more, it is to be feared, that there are cases, in which the master puts his own children under the whip of the overseer, or else sells them to undergo the miseries of bondage among strangers. I should rejoice to learn that my impressions on this

point are false. If they be true, then our own country, calling itself enlightened and Christian, is defiled with one of the greatest enormities on earth. We send missionaries to heathen lands. Among the pollutions of heathenism I know nothing worse than this. The heathen, who feasts on his country's foe, may hold up his head by the side of the Christian who sells his child for gain, sells him to be a slave. God forbid that I should charge this crime on a people! But however rarely it may occur, it is a fruit of slavery, an exercise of power belonging to slavery, and no laws restrain or punish it. Such are the evils which spring naturally from the licentiousness generated by slavery.

*(1835)*

## CHARLES BALL

### from *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, A Black Man*

Even by the standards of slave narratives, the story of Charles Ball (c. 1781–post-1836) is particularly heart-wrenching. Born in Maryland, effectively orphaned as a young child by the sale of his mother, he endured a succession of masters, sale to a slave trader from Georgia, separation from his first wife and their children, a thirty-day forced march from Maryland overland to South Carolina, severe beatings, escape, and recapture. After his owners moved him to Georgia, he managed a second escape, traveling nights and foraging for food, eventually reuniting with his family, after many years apart, in Maryland in 1808. Twenty-two years of precarious freedom followed for Ball, living quietly as an escaped slave. His first wife died and he remarried. Suddenly in 1830, he was recaptured by agents of his former owners and taken back to Georgia. Two further escape attempts finally led to his return to Maryland, where he found that in his absence his second wife and their four children—who were legally free—had been kidnapped and sold into slavery. He never saw them again. The dramatic events of this narrative so captivated its original audience that an unauthorized, quasi-fictional adaptation circulated in the 1850s under the title *Fifty Years in Chains*.

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Frightened at the sight of the cruelties inflicted upon my poor mother, I forgot my own sorrows at parting from her and clung to my new master, as an angel and a saviour, when compared with the hardened fiend into whose power she had fallen. She had been a kind and good mother to me; had warmed me in her bosom in the cold nights of winter; and had often divided the scanty pittance of food allowed her by her mistress, between my brothers, and sisters, and me, and gone supperless to bed herself. Whatever victuals she could obtain beyond the coarse food, salt fish, and corn-bread, allowed to slaves on the Patuxent and Potomac rivers, she carefully distributed among her children, and treated us with all the tenderness which her own miserable condition would permit. I have no

doubt that she was chained and driven to Carolina, and toiled out the residue of a forlorn and famished existence in the rice swamps, or indigo fields of the south.

My father never recovered from the effects of the shock, which this sudden and overwhelming ruin of his family gave him. He had formerly been of a gay social temper, and when he came to see us on a Saturday night, he always brought us some little present, such as the means of a poor slave would allow—apples, melons, sweet potatoes, or, if he could procure nothing else, a little parched corn, which tasted better in our cabin, because he had brought it.

He spent the greater part of the time, which his master permitted him to pass with us, in relating such stories as he had learned from his companions, or in singing the rude songs common amongst the slaves of Maryland and Virginia. After this time I never heard him laugh heartily, or sing a song. He became gloomy and morose in his temper, to all but me; and spent nearly all his leisure time with my grandfather, who claimed kindred with some royal family in Africa, and had been a great warrior in his native country. The master of my father was a hard penurious man, and so exceedingly avaricious, that he scarcely allowed himself the common conveniences of life. A stranger to sensibility, he was incapable of tracing the change in the temper and deportment of my father, to its true cause; but attributed it to a sullen discontent with his condition as a slave, and a desire to abandon his service, and seek his liberty by escaping to some of the free states. To prevent the perpetration of this suspected crime of *running away from slavery*, the old man resolved to sell my father to a southern slave-dealer, and accordingly applied to one of those men, who was at that time in Calvert, to become the purchaser. The price was agreed on, but, as my father was a very strong, active, and resolute man, it was deemed unsafe for the Georgian to attempt to seize him, even with the aid of others, in the day-time, when he was at work, as it was known he carried upon his person a large knife. It was therefore determined to secure him by stratagem, and for this purpose, a farmer in the neighbourhood, who was made privy to the plan, alleged that he had lost a pig, which must have been stolen by some one, and that he suspected

my father to be the thief. A constable was employed to arrest him, but as he was afraid to undertake the business alone, he called on his way, at the house of the master of my grandfather, to procure assistance from the overseer of the plantation. When he arrived at the house, the overseer was at the barn, and thither he repaired to make his application. At the end of the barn was the coach-house, and as the day was cool, to avoid the wind which was high, the two walked to the side of the coach-house to talk over the matter, and settle their plan of operations. It so happened, that my grandfather, whose business it was to keep the coach in good condition, was at work at this time, rubbing the plated handles of the doors, and brightening the other metallic parts of the vehicle. Hearing the voice of the overseer without, he suspended his work, and listening attentively, became a party to their councils. They agreed that they would delay the execution of their project until the next day, as it was then late. They supposed they would have no difficulty in apprehending their intended victim, as, knowing himself innocent of the theft, he would readily consent to go with the constable to a justice of the peace, to have the charge examined. That night, however, about midnight, my grandfather silently repaired to the cabin of my father, a distance of about three miles, aroused him from his sleep, made him acquainted with the extent of his danger, gave him a bottle of cider and a small bag of parched corn, and then praying to the God of his native country to protect his son, enjoined him to fly from the destruction which awaited him. In the morning, the Georgian could not find his newly purchased slave, who was never seen or heard of in Maryland from that day. He probably had prudence enough to conceal himself in the day, and travel only at night; by this means making his way slowly up the country, between the Patapsco and Patuxent, until he was able to strike across to the north, and reach Pennsylvania.

(1839)

## JAMES GILLESPIE BIRNEY

### *To the Slaveholders of the South; from The Sinfulness of Slaveholding in All Circumstances; Tested by Reason and Scripture*

James Gillespie Birney (1792–1857), born in Kentucky, went from being a six-year-old slave master and later an Alabama slave plantation owner, to an ambivalent supporter of gradual emancipation, to ultimately a northerner who advocated immediate and unconditional abolition as a righteous imperative. In 1819 he urged legal protections for slaves in the Alabama constitution, and then, following a conversion to Presbyterianism, he returned to Kentucky in 1833 and freed the last of his personal slaves. He moved to Ohio in 1836 to publish his antislavery journal *The Philanthropist*, in which his straightforward address “To the Slaveholders of the South” appeared. Ten years later, after a period in which his convictions deepened as a member of the American Anti-Slavery Society and he twice ran for president, in 1840 and 1844, as a member of the newly formed antislavery Liberty Party, Birney published *The Sinfulness of Slaveholding in All Circumstances* in Detroit. The excerpt here is his preface addressed, rather sharply, “To the Preachers of the Gospel in the United States.”

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### *To the Slaveholders of the South*

I was born and brought up among you, and by far the largest portion of my kindred are yet numbered among the oppressors of their brethren. I fear they are likely to remain so. Deep in error as I believe you to be on the subject of slavery: fierce as has been your anger toward those who have *only pleaded* with you to do righteousness and show mercy to your poor slaves, yet do I feel for you a solicitude that knows no diminution. I cannot but remember, that, independent of my kindred there are among you many who have been, and still would be, my warmest friends, were it not for slavery. This accursed thing has driven from me nearly the last of them. Yet, my own happiness requires, that I love you

—*enemies* to me, as I feel many of you are. This love requires that I warn you. Now, hear, I intreat you.

There are among us here—I mean in the free states—a class of men professing to be your friends, who stir up the lowest of the people to stop discussion, to destroy our presses, to demolish our property, and it may be even to seek our lives. All that they do, is said to be done for *you*. Notwithstanding the persecutions and the perils to which abolitionists have been exposed from these, your friends, their numbers have continued rapidly to increase. These persecutions have a tendency to rouse up indignant spirits, and bring them into our ranks—spirits that may prove as fierce and indomitable as any by which they could be opposed. I know not a single abolitionist now, who would hurt a hair of one of your heads. Should our persecutions be continued; should they be instigated by you, or favored by you, it will in all likelihood, force into our ranks *some*, who will become enraged at our wrongs, and who might deem it not dishonorable to retaliate on you troubles, in comparison with which ours might not be mentioned.

As you value your own peace, then—disclaim the wicked officiousness of your pretended friends in the free states. Stop it at once. Let your journals—let your public meetings, utter in the most distinct and honorable tones the judgment of their condemnation. Disclaim their acts in violation of private right or of the public peace. A perseverance in wrong will not stop the discussion. It is my calm, my deliberate opinion, that the discussion of slavery can now, no more be stopped, than the rising of to-morrow's sun. If subjected to *discussion*, you know—if Truth have not lost its overmastering energy over error—it must be *relinquished*. If it must be relinquished—as I now believe it will be in a very few years—I pray you, that you so act in the south, and so control the zeal of your friends in the north, that it may be relinquished bloodlessly, peaceably, happily.

(1836)

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from *The Sinfulness of Slaveholding in All Circumstances; Tested by  
Reason and Scripture*

*To the Preachers of the Gospel in the United States*

GENTLEMEN—

This is dedicated to you, inasmuch as it is written chiefly for you. It is intended, for the most part, for intelligent and well trained minds; therefore, it is but the suggestion of thoughts which lie still more expanded in the mind of the writer.

The writer does not believe that slavery can be established by any law. It is out of the power of man, as adultery, murder, profanity would be. No human law that requires me to speak irreverently of the Author of my existence, or to commit any of the crimes mentioned in the Decalogue, is of any binding obligation. Slavery has been *might*, prevailing for a season against *right*. The strong and unprincipled have enslaved the weak and defenceless, till it has emasculated the former. As slavery is now a sign of weakness in the nation that cherishes it, so is it a sign of weakness in the tribes that permit it.

I will not withhold my surprise, that any of you should still use the Book of God's *love* to countenance the practice of Man's *hate*. He has formed me, in some sort, to see Him as a God of love, as a God of justice—as a Father, tender and kind; as a Governor, just and inflexible. He has bestowed on me the faculties of *love* and *justice*. They must be like his own. I must, therefore, throw aside his character, and the book which reveals it, or I must throw aside its opposite, American Slavery, “the sum of villanies.” To maintain them both is impossible. Which of them I shall throw aside, I leave to you.

It is attempted in the following tract, to show you the condition of the Apostle Paul—of the country and people among whom he chiefly operated—and thence to arrive at right conclusions. It is ground, yet unattempted, so far as the writer knows. If he is not mistaken, this tract cannot fail of being useful. That it

may be, is the wish of a warm friend of the faithful among you, as well as of one who has thought much on the subject.

*(January 1, 1846)*

## JAMES FORTEN

### *from An Address Delivered before the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia*

By the time he addressed the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Meeting in 1836, the seventy-year-old Forten had become gravely concerned about the direction the country was headed. The fight over Missouri's admission, the growing wealth and political clout of the slaveholding South, and the recent passage of the Gag Rule to ban abolitionist petitions from being received in Congress all made him feel like one "who sees destruction, like a corroding cancer, eating into the very heart of his country." In words foreshadowing Lincoln's Second Inaugural, he urges abolitionists to warn the South that "the drops of blood which trickle down the lacerated back of the slave, will not sink into the barren soil" but instead "will rise to the common God of nature and humanity, and cry aloud for vengeance on his destroyer's head."

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The recent scenes in Congress are a specimen of the evil times we live in, the corrupted atmosphere we breathe. There, behold the Constitution of the United States—our national compact, the great organ of national sentiment, perjured, immolated upon the altar of expediency there; the right to petition, the right of free discussion, the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press—rights which should be the pride and boast of a republic, are trampled under foot, scoffed at by statesmen and senators, and the gag and Lynch law held up as a model of the glorious march of *Virtue, Liberty and Independence*; as the dearest gift that a noble and dignified people could transfer to posterity; why posterity would spurn such a legacy as coming from heathens, and not from their Christian forefathers. The demands of the South are growing every day more extravagant, insolent and imperative. As an evidence of this, I have only to refer you to the report and resolutions adopted in the Legislature of South Carolina, published in the 9th number of the *Liberator*. I allude to the report of the Joint Committee of Federal

Relations, on so much of Gov. M'Duffie's message as relates to the institution of domestic slavery, and the proceedings of the Abolitionists in the non-slaveholding states. It ought to be extensively read, for I think it would be the means of arousing many to a sense of the danger which threatens their own liberties. I will read a few of the resolutions offered by Mr. Hamilton, chairman of that most grave and reverend committee.

*“Resolved, That the formation of Abolition Societies, and the acts and doings of certain fanatics calling themselves Abolitionists, in the non-slaveholding states of this confederacy, are in direct violation of the obligations of the compact of Union, dissocial and incendiary in the extreme.*

*“Resolved, That the Legislature of South Carolina, having every confidence in the justice and friendship of the non-slaveholding states, announces to her co-states her confident expectations, and she earnestly requests that the governments of these states will promptly and effectually suppress all those associations within their respective limits, purporting to be Abolition Societies; and that they will make it highly penal, to print, publish and distribute newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, and pictorial representations, calculated and having an obvious tendency to excite the slaves of the southern states to insurrection and revolt.*

*“Resolved, In order that a salutary negative may be put on the mischievous and unfounded assumption of some of the Abolitionists—the non-slaveholding states are requested to disclaim, by legislative declaration, all right, either on the part of themselves or the government of the United States, to interfere in any manner with domestic slavery, either in the states or in the territories where it exists.”*

Was ever a request so modest? There never was a request more unreasonable, more abominable—evincing in its tone the greatest insult that could be afforded to a free and independent people. But what do the majority of the citizens in the North about the matter? Why, I regret to have it in my power to say, that, with few exceptions, they are yielding to this daring presumption of

the South; tamely acquiescing without venturing even as much as a word in reply. They ask of them to relinquish the sacred and legitimate right to think and act as they please. Freemen are, in one sense, threatened with slavery; the chains are shaken in their faces, and yet they appear unwilling to resist them as becomes freemen. Such votaries are they at the shrine of mammon that they have not courage enough to join the standard of patriotism which their fathers reared, and with the dignity of a free and unshackled people, repel with scorn, this unheard of infringement upon their dearest rights—this death-blow to their own liberties. My friends, do you ask why I thus speak? It is because I love America; it is my native land; because I feel as one should feel who sees destruction, like a corroding cancer, eating into the very heart of his country, and would make one struggle to save her;—because I love the stars and stripes, emblems of our National Flag—and long to see the day when not a slave shall be found resting under its shadow; when it shall play with the winds pure and unstained by the blood of “captive millions.”

Again, the South most earnestly and respectfully solicits the North to let the question of Slavery alone, and leave it to their bountiful honesty and humanity to settle. Why, honesty, I fear, has fled from the South, long ago; sincerity has fallen asleep there; pity has hidden herself; justice cannot find the way; helper is not at home; charity lies dangerously ill; benevolence is under arrest; faith is nearly extinguished; truth has long since been buried, and conscience is nailed on the wall. Now, do you think it would be better to leave it to the bountiful honesty and humanity of the South to settle? No, no. Only yield to them in this one particular and they will find you vulnerable in every other. I can tell you, my hearers, if the North once sinks into profound silence on this momentous subject, you may then bid farewell to peace, order and reform; then the condition of your fellow creatures in the southern section of our country will never be ameliorated; then may the poor slave look upon his weighty chains, and exclaim, in the agony of his heart, “To these am I immutably doomed; the glimmering rays of hope are lost to me for ever; robbed of all that is dear to man, I stand a monument of my

country's ingratitude. A *husband*, yet separated from the dearest tie which binds me to this earth. A *father*, yet compelled to stifle the feelings of a father, and witness a helpless offspring torn by a savage hand from its mother's fond embrace, no longer to call her by that endearing title. A wretched slave, I look upon the departing brightness of the setting sun, and when her glorious light revisits the morn, these clanking irons tell me I am that slave still; still am I to linger out a life of ignominious servitude, till death shall unloose these heavy bars—unfetter my body and soul.”

Will not the wrath of offended Heaven visit my guilty brethren? My friends, this is no chimera of the imagination, but it is the reality; and I beseech you to consider it as such. Cease not to do as you are now doing, notwithstanding the invidious frowns that may be cast upon your efforts; regard not these—for bear in mind that the future prosperity of the nation rests upon the successful labours of the Abolitionists; this is as certain as that there is a God above. Recollect you have this distinction—you have brought down upon your heads the anger of many foes for that good which you seek to do your country; you are insulted and sneered at because you feel for the proscribed, the defenceless, the down-trodden; you are despised because you would raise them in the scale of beings; you are charged as coming out to the world with the Bible in one hand and a firebrand in the other. May you never be ashamed of that firebrand. It is a holy fire, kindled from every page of that sacred chronicle.

You are called fanatics. Well, what if you are? Ought you to shrink from this name? God forbid. There is an eloquence in such fanaticism, for it whispers hope to the slave; there is sanctity in it, for it contains the consecrated spirit of religion; it is the fanaticism of a Benezet, a Rush, a Franklin, a Jay; the same that animated and inspired the heart of the writer of the Declaration of Independence. Then flinch not from your high duty; continue to warn the South of the awful volcano they are recklessly sleeping over; and bid them remember, too, that the drops of blood which trickle down the lacerated back of the slave, will not sink into the barren soil. No, they will rise to the common God of nature and

humanity, and cry aloud for vengeance on his destroyer's head. Bid them think of this, that they may see from what quarter the terrible tempest will come; not from the breakings out of insurrections, so much dreaded, but for which men are indebted to the imagery of their minds more than to fact; not from the fanatics, or the publication of their papers, calculated to spread desolation and blood, and sever the Union, as is now basely asserted, but it will come from HIM who has declared "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay."

You are not aiming to injure your southern brethren, but to benefit them; to save them from the impending storm. You are not seeking the destruction of the Union; but to render it still stronger; to link it together in one universal chain of *Justice*, and *Love*, and *Freedom*. The Faith you have embraced teaches you to live in bonds of charity with all mankind. It is not by the force of arms that Abolitionists expect to remove one of the greatest curses that ever afflicted or disgraced humanity; but by the majesty of moral power. Oh! how callous, how completely destitute of feeling, must that person be, who can think of the wrongs done to the innocent and unoffending captive, and not drop one tear of pity—who can look upon slavery and not shudder at its inhuman barbarities? It is a withering blight to the country in which it exists—a deadly poison to the soil on which it is suffered to breathe—and to satiate the cravings of its appetite, it feeds, like a vulture, upon the vitals of its victims. But it is in vain that I attempt to draw a proper likeness of its horrors; it is far beyond the reach of my abilities to describe to you the endless atrocities which characterize the system. Well was it said by Thomas Jefferson, that "God has no attribute which can take sides with such oppression." See what gigantic force is concentrated in these few words—God has no attribute which can take sides with such oppression.

(1836)

# SARAH MOORE GRIMKÉ

## from *An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States; Narrative and Testimony of Sarah M. Grimké*

Born and raised among the Charleston elite and the daughter of a wealthy slave-owner who served as chief judge of the South Carolina Supreme Court, Sarah Moore Grimké (1792–1873) experienced a religious epiphany in 1819 on a visit to Philadelphia. She moved there permanently in 1821 and became a Quaker. Her younger sister Angelina, who would later marry the abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld, joined Sarah in Philadelphia in 1829. Together they pursued a career of reform activism focused on abolition and women’s rights. In her *Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States*, Sarah appealed to the churchmen to resolve the contradictions in which her fellow southerners were living: “With one hand we clasp the cross of Christ, and with the other grasp the neck of the down-trodden slave.” In 1839, Sarah wrote a “Narrative and Testimony” about the horrors she had witnessed and contributed it to the compilation of testimonies and newspaper accounts that her brother-in-law Weld published as the hugely influential book *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of A Thousand Witnesses*. With her sister and brother-in-law, after 1838 she gravitated northward, first to New Jersey and then to Massachusetts. Ever the reformer, she served at age seventy-six as vice president of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association and campaigned for women’s rights until her death.

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## from *An Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States*

The present position of my country and of the church is one of deep and solemn interest. The times of our ignorance on the subject of slavery which God may have winked at, *have passed away*. We are no longer standing unconsciously and carelessly on the brink of a burning volcano. The strong arm of Almighty power has rolled back the dense cloud which hung over the terrific crater, and has exposed it to our view, and although no human eye can penetrate

the abyss, yet enough is seen to warn us of the consequences of trifling with Omnipotence. Jehovah is calling to us as he did to Job out of the whirlwind, and every blast bears on its wings the sound, Repent! Repent! God, if I may so speak, is waiting to see whether we will hearken unto his voice. He has sent out his light and his truth, and as regards us it may perhaps be said—there is now silence in heaven. The commissioned messengers of grace to this guilty nation are rapidly traversing our country, through the medium of the Anti-Slavery Society, through its agents and its presses, whilst the “ministering spirits” are marking with breathless interest the influence produced by these means of knowledge thus mercifully furnished to our land. Oh! if there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what hallelujahs of angelic praise will arise, when the slave-holder and the defender of slavery bow before the footstool of mercy, and with broken spirits and contrite hearts surrender unto God that dominion over his immortal creatures which he alone can rightly exercise.

What an appalling spectacle do we now present! With one hand we clasp the cross of Christ, and with the other grasp the neck of the down-trodden slave! With one eye we are gazing imploringly on the bleeding sacrifice of Calvary, as if we expected redemption through the blood which was shed there, and with the other we cast the glance of indignation and contempt at the representative of Him who there made his soul an offering for sin! My Christian brethren, if there is any truth in the Bible, and in the God of the Bible, *our hearts bear us witness* that he can no more acknowledge us as his disciples, if we wilfully persist in this sin, than he did the Pharisees formerly, who were strict and punctilious in the observance of the ceremonial law, and yet devoured widows’ houses. *We have added a deeper shade to their guilt*, we make widows by tearing from the victims of a cruel bondage, the husbands of their bosoms, and then devour the widow herself by robbing her of her freedom, and reducing her to the level of a brute. I solemnly appeal to your own consciences. Does not the rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees apply to some of those who are exercising the office of Gospel ministers, “Wo, unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour

widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

How long the space now granted for repentance may continue, is among the secret things which belong unto God, and my soul ardently desires that all those who are enlisted in the ranks of abolition may regard every day as possibly the last, and may pray without ceasing to God, to grant this nation repentance and forgiveness of the sin of slavery. The time is precious, unspeakably precious, and every encouragement is offered to us to supplicate the God of the master and of the slave to make a "right way" "for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." Ezra says, "so we fasted and besought the Lord, and he was entreated for us." Look at the marvellous effects of prayer when Peter was imprisoned. What did the church in that crisis? She felt that her weapons were not carnal, but spiritual, and "prayer was made without ceasing." These petitions offered in humble faith were mighty through God to the emancipation of Peter. "Is the Lord's arm shortened that it cannot save, or his ear grown heavy that it cannot hear?" If he condescended to work a miracle in answer to prayer when *one* of his servants was imprisoned, will he not graciously hear our supplications when two millions of his immortal creatures are in bondage? We entreat the Christian ministry to co-operate with us to unite in our petitions to Almighty God to deliver our land from blood guiltiness; to enable us to see the abominations of American slavery by the light of the gospel. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Then may we expect a glorious consummation to our united labors of love. Then may the Lord Jesus unto whom belongeth all power in heaven and in earth condescend to answer our prayers, and by the softening influence of his holy spirit induce our brethren and sisters of the South "to undo the heavy burdens, to break every yoke and let the oppressed go free."

My mind has been deeply impressed whilst reading the account of the anniversaries held last spring in the city of New York, with the belief that there

is in America a degree of light, knowledge and intelligence which leaves us without excuse before God for upholding the system of slavery. Nay, we not only sustain this temple of Moloch; but with impious lips consecrate it to the Most High God; and call upon Jehovah himself to sanctify our sins by the presence of his Shekinah. Now mark, the unholy combination that has been entered into between the North and the South to shut out the light on this all important subject. I copy from a speech before the "General Assembly's Board of Education." As an illustration of his position, Dr. Breckenridge referred to the influence of the Education Board in the Southern States. "Jealous as those States were, and not without reason, of all that came to them in the shape of benevolent enterprise from the North, and ready as they were to take fire in a moment at whatever threatened *their own peculiar institutions*, the plans of this Board had *conciliated* their fullest confidence: in proof of which they had placed nearly two hundred of their sons under its care, that they might be *trained and fitted to preach to their own population.*" The inference is unavoidable that the "*peculiar institution*" spoken of is domestic slavery in all its bearings and relations; and it is equally clear that the ministry educated for the South are to be thoroughly imbued with the slave-holding spirit, that they may be "*fitted to preach to their own population,*" *not* the gospel of Jesus Christ, which proclaims LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVE, but a religion which grants to man the privilege of sinning with impunity, and stamps with the signet of the King of heaven a system that embraces every possible enormity. Surely if ye are ambassadors for Christ, ye are bound to promulgate the *whole* counsel of God. But can ye preach from the language of James, "Behold the hire of your laborers which is of you kept back by fraud crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Multitudes of other texts must be virtually expunged from the Bible of the slave holding minister; every denunciation against oppression strikes at the root of slavery. God is in a peculiar manner the God of the poor and the needy, the despised and the oppressed. "The Lord said I

have surely seen the affliction of my people, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters, for I know their sorrows." And he knows the sorrows of the American slave, and he will come down in mercy, or in judgment to deliver them.

(1836)

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### *Narrative and Testimony of Sarah M. Grimké*

Miss Grimké is a daughter of the late Judge Grimké, of the Supreme Court of South Carolina, and sister of the late Hon. Thomas S. Grimké.

As I left my native state on account of slavery, and deserted the home of my fathers to escape the sound of the lash and the shrieks of tortured victims, I would gladly bury in oblivion the recollection of those scenes with which I have been familiar; but this may not, cannot be; they come over my memory like gory spectres, and implore me with resistless power, in the name of a God of mercy, in the name of a crucified Savior, in the name of humanity; for the sake of the slaveholder, as well as the slave, to bear witness to the horrors of the southern prison house. I feel impelled by a sacred sense of duty, by my obligations to my country, by sympathy for the bleeding victims of tyranny and lust, to give my testimony respecting the system of American slavery,—to detail a few facts, most of which came under my *personal observation*. And here I may premise, that the actors in these tragedies were all men and women of the highest respectability, and of the first families in South Carolina, and, with one exception, citizens of Charleston; and that their cruelties did not in the slightest degree affect their standing in society.

A handsome mulatto woman, about 18 or 20 years of age, whose independent spirit could not brook the degradation of slavery, was in the habit of running away: for this offence she had been repeatedly sent by her master and

mistress to be whipped by the keeper of the Charleston work-house. This had been done with such inhuman severity, as to lacerate her back in a most shocking manner; a finger could not be laid between the cuts. But the love of liberty was too strong to be annihilated by torture; and, as a last resort, she was whipped at several different times, and kept a close prisoner. A heavy iron collar, with three long prongs projecting from it, was placed round her neck, and a strong and sound front tooth was extracted, to serve as a mark to describe her, in case of escape. Her sufferings at this time were agonizing; she could lie in no position but on her back, which was sore from the scourgings, as I can testify, from personal inspection, and her only place of rest was the floor, on a blanket. These outrages were committed in a family where the mistress daily read the scriptures, and assembled her children for family worship. She was accounted, and was really, so far as alms-giving was concerned, a charitable woman and tender hearted to the poor; and yet this suffering slave, who was the seamstress of the family, was continually in her presence, sitting in her chamber to sew, or engaged in her other household work, with her lacerated and bleeding back, her mutilated mouth, and heavy iron collar, without, so far as appeared, exciting any feelings of compassion.

A highly intelligent slave, who panted after freedom with ceaseless longings, made many attempts to get possession of himself. For every offence he was punished with extreme severity. At one time he was tied up by his hands to a tree, and whipped until his back was one gore of blood. To this terrible infliction he was subjected at intervals for several weeks, and kept heavily ironed while at his work. His master one day accused him of a fault, in the usual terms dictated by passion and arbitrary power; the man protested his innocence, but was not credited. He again repelled the charge with honest indignation. His master's temper rose almost to frenzy; and seizing a fork, he made a deadly plunge at the breast of the slave. The man being far his superior in strength, caught his arm, and dashed the weapon on the floor. His master grasped at his throat, but the slave disengaged himself, and rushed from the apartment. Having

made his escape, he fled to the woods; and after wandering about for many months, living on roots and berries, and enduring every hardship, he was arrested and committed to jail. Here he lay for a considerable time, allowed scarcely food enough to sustain life, whipped in the most shocking manner, and confined in a cell so loathsome, that when his master visited him, he said the stench was enough to knock a man down. The filth had never been removed from the apartment since the poor creature had been immured in it. Although a black man, such had been the effect of starvation and suffering, that his master declared he hardly recognized him—his complexion was so yellow, and his hair, naturally thick and black, had become red and scanty; an infallible sign of long continued living on bad and insufficient food. Stripes, imprisonment, and the gnawings of hunger, had broken his lofty spirit for a season; and, to use his master's own exulting expression, he was "as humble as a dog." After a time he made another attempt to escape, and was absent so long, that a reward was offered for him, *dead or alive*. He eluded every attempt to take him, and his master, despairing of ever getting him again, offered to pardon him if he would return home. It is always understood that such intelligence will reach the runaway; and accordingly, at the entreaties of his wife and mother, the fugitive once more consented to return to his bitter bondage. I believe this was the last effort to obtain his liberty. His heart became touched with the power of the gospel; and the spirit which no inflictions could subdue, bowed at the cross of Jesus, and with the language on his lips—"the cup that my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" submitted to the yoke of the oppressor, and wore his chains in uncomplaining patience till death released him. The master who perpetrated these wrongs upon his slave, was one of the most influential and honored citizens of South Carolina, and to his equals was bland, and courteous, and benevolent even to a proverb.

A slave who had been separated from his wife, because it best suited the convenience of his owner, ran away. He was taken up on the plantation where his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, then lived. His only object in

running away was to return to her—no other fault was attributed to him. For this offence he was confined in the stocks *six weeks*, in a miserable hovel, not weather-tight. He received fifty lashes weekly during that time, was allowed food barely sufficient to sustain him, and when released from confinement, was not permitted to return to his wife. His master, although himself a husband and a father, was unmoved by the touching appeals of the slave, who entreated that he might only remain with his wife, promising to discharge his duties faithfully; his master continued inexorable, and he was torn from his wife and family. The owner of this slave was a professing Christian, in full membership with the church, and this circumstance occurred when he was confined to his chamber during his last illness.

A punishment dreaded more by the slaves than whipping, unless it is unusually severe, is one which was invented by a female acquaintance of mine in Charleston—I heard her say so with much satisfaction. It is standing on one foot and holding the other in the hand. Afterwards it was improved upon, and a strap was contrived to fasten around the ankle and pass around the neck; so that the least weight of the foot resting on the strap would choke the person. The pain occasioned by this unnatural position was great; and when continued, as it sometimes was, for an hour or more, produced intense agony. I heard this same woman say, that she had the ears of her waiting maid *slit* for some petty theft. This she told me in the presence of the girl, who was standing in the room. She often had the helpless victims of her cruelty severely whipped, not scrupling herself to wield the instrument of torture, and with her own hands inflict severe chastisement. Her husband was less inhuman than his wife, but he was often goaded on by her to acts of great severity. In his last illness I was sent for, and watched beside his death couch. The girl on whom he had so often inflicted punishment, haunted his dying hours; and when at length the king of terrors approached, he shrieked in utter agony of spirit, “Oh, the blackness of darkness, the black imps, I can see them all around me—take them away!” and amid such exclamations he expired. These persons were of one of the first families in

Charleston.

A friend of mine, in whose veracity I have entire confidence, told me that about two years ago, a woman in Charleston with whom I was well acquainted, had starved a female slave to death. She was confined in a solitary apartment, kept constantly tied, and condemned to the slow and horrible death of starvation. This woman was notoriously cruel. To those who have read the narrative of James Williams I need only say, that the character of young Larrimore's wife is an exact description of this female tyrant, whose countenance was ever dressed in smiles when in the presence of strangers, but whose heart was as the nether millstone toward her slaves.

As I was traveling in the lower country in South Carolina, a number of years since, my attention was suddenly arrested by an exclamation of horror from the coachman, who called out, "Look there, Miss Sarah, don't you see?"—I looked in the direction he pointed, and saw a human head stuck up on a high pole. On inquiry, I found that a runaway slave, who was outlawed, had been shot there, his head severed from his body, and put upon the public highway, as a terror to deter slaves from running away.

On a plantation in North Carolina, where I was visiting, I happened one day, in my rambles, to step into a negro cabin; my compassion was instantly called forth by the object which presented itself. A slave, whose head was white with age, was lying in one corner of the hovel; he had under his head a few filthy rags, but the boards were his only bed, it was the depth of winter, and the wind whistled through every part of the dilapidated building—he opened his languid eyes when I spoke, and in reply to my question, "What is the matter?" he said, "I am dying of a cancer in my side."—As he removed the rags which covered the sore, I found that it extended half round the body, and was shockingly neglected. I inquired if he had any nurse. "No, missey," was his answer, "but de people (the slaves) very kind to me, dey often steal time to run and see me and fetch me some ting to eat; if dey did not, I might starve." The master and mistress of this man, who had been worn out in their service, were remarkable for their

intelligence, and their hospitality knew no bounds towards those who were of their own grade in society: the master had for some time held the highest military office in North Carolina, and not long previous to the time of which I speak, was the Governor of the State.

On a plantation in South Carolina, I witnessed a similar case of suffering—an aged woman suffering under an incurable disease in the same miserably neglected situation. The “owner” of this slave was proverbially kind to her negroes; so much so, that the planters in the neighborhood said she spoiled them, and set a bad example, which might produce discontent among the surrounding slaves; yet I have seen this woman tremble with rage, when her slaves displeased her, and heard her use language to them which could only be expected from an inmate of Bridewell; and have known her in a gust of passion send a favorite slave to the workhouse to be severely whipped.

Another fact occurs to me. A young woman about eighteen, stated some circumstances relative to her young master, which were thought derogatory to his character; whether true or false, I am unable to say; she was threatened with punishment, but persisted in affirming that she had only spoken the truth. Finding her incorrigible, it was concluded to send her to the Charleston workhouse and have her whipt; she pleaded in vain for a commutation of her sentence, not so much because she dreaded the actual suffering, as because her delicate mind shrunk from the shocking exposure of her person to the eyes of brutal and licentious men; she declared to me that death would be preferable; but her entreaties were vain, and as there was no means of escaping but by running away, she resorted to it as a desperate remedy, for her timid nature never could have braved the perils necessarily encountered by fugitive slaves, had not her mind been thrown into a state of despair.—She was apprehended after a few weeks, by two slave-catchers, in a deserted house, and as it was late in the evening they concluded to spend the night there. What inhuman treatment she received from them has never been revealed. They tied her with cords to their bodies, and supposing they had secured their victim, soon fell into a deep sleep,

probably rendered more profound by intoxication and fatigue; but the miserable captive slumbered not; by some means she disengaged herself from her bonds, and again fled through the lone wilderness. After a few days she was discovered in a wretched hut, which seemed to have been long uninhabited; she was speechless; a raging fever consumed her vitals, and when a physician saw her, he said she was dying of a disease brought on by over fatigue; her mother was permitted to visit her, but ere she reached her, the damps of death stood upon her brow, and she had only the sad consolation of looking on the death-struck form and convulsive agonies of her child.

A beloved friend in South Carolina, the wife of a slaveholder, with whom I often mingled my tears, when helpless and hopeless we deplored together the horrors of slavery, related to me some years since the following circumstance.

On the plantation adjoining her husband's, there was a slave of pre-eminent piety. His master was not a professor of religion, but the superior excellence of this disciple of Christ was not unmarked by him, and I believe he was so sensible of the good influence of his piety that he did not deprive him of the few religious privileges within his reach. A planter was one day dining with the owner of this slave, and in the course of conversation observed, that all profession of religion among slaves was mere hypocrisy. The other asserted a contrary opinion, adding, I have a slave who I believe would rather die than deny his Saviour. This was ridiculed, and the master urged to prove the assertion. He accordingly sent for this man of God, and peremptorily ordered him to deny his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The slave pleaded to be excused, constantly affirming that he would rather die than deny the Redeemer, whose blood was shed for him. His master, after vainly trying to induce obedience by threats, had him terribly whipped. The fortitude of the sufferer was not to be shaken; he nobly rejected the offer of exemption from further chastisement at the expense of destroying his soul, and this blessed martyr *died in consequence of this severe infliction*. Oh, how bright a gem will this victim of irresponsible power be, in that crown which sparkles on the Redeemer's brow; and that many such will cluster there, I have

not the shadow of a doubt.

SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.

(1839)

# ANGELINA EMILY GRIMKÉ

from *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States*

Younger sister of the abolitionist Sarah Grimké, Angelina Emily Grimké (1805–1879) also left behind a life of privilege in the slaveholding upper class of South Carolina when she moved to Philadelphia in 1829 and joined her sister in the Quaker community there. Angelina’s antislavery writing first found expression in a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, published in *The Liberator* in 1835, and then in her pamphlet *An Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (1836), which deliberately paralleled her older sister’s pamphlet addressed to southern clergymen the same year. In this excerpt from her much longer tract of 1837, she makes clear her potentially shocking thesis: “dear sisters, let us not forget that *Northern* women are participators in the crime of slavery.” Angelina married the abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld in 1838, with whom she had three children, and helped him compile his *American Slavery As It Is* (1839), to which Sarah also contributed. Thereafter the three of them lived and worked together as reformers and educators in New Jersey and Massachusetts, where Angelina died six years after her sister.

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## II. WOMEN THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY.

Out of the millions of slaves who have been stolen from Africa, a very great number must have been women who were torn from the arms of their fathers and husbands, brothers and children, and subjected to all the horrors of the middle passage and the still greater sufferings of slavery in a foreign land. Multitudes of these were cast upon our inhospitable shores; some of them now toil out a life of bondage, “one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that” which our fathers rose in rebellion to oppose. But the great mass of female slaves in the southern States are the descendants of these hapless strangers; 1,000,000 of them now wear the iron yoke of slavery in this land of boasted liberty and law. They are our country women—*they are our sisters*; and to us, as

women, they have a right to look for sympathy with their sorrows, and effort and prayer for their rescue. Upon those of us especially who have named the name of Christ, they have peculiar claims, and claims which *we must answer, or we shall incur a heavy load of guilt.*

Women, too, are constituted by nature the peculiar guardians of children, and children are the victims of this horrible system. Helpless infancy is robbed of the tender care of the mother and the protection of the father. There are in this Christian land thousands of little children who have been made orphans by the “domestic institution” of the South; and whilst woman’s hand is stretched out to gather in the orphans and the half orphans whom *death* has made in our country, and to shelter them from the storms of adversity, O let us not forget the orphans whom *crime* has made in our midst; but let us plead the cause of *these* innocents. Let us expose the heinous wickedness of the internal slave-trade. It is an organized system for the disruption of family ties, a manufactory of widows and orphans.

### III. WOMEN ARE SLAVEHOLDERS.

Multitudes of the Southern women hold men, women and children as *property*. *They* are pampered in luxury, and nursed in the school of tyranny; *they* sway the iron rod of power, and *they* rob the laborer of his hire. Immortal beings tremble at *their* nod, and bow in abject submission at *their* word, and under the cowskin too often wielded by *their* own delicate hands. Women at the South hold *their own sisters* and brothers in bondage. Start not at this dreadful assertion—we speak that which some of us do know—we testify that which some of us have seen. Such facts ought to be known, that the women of the North may understand *their* duties, and be incited to perform *them*.

Southern families often present the most disgusting scenes of dissension, in which the mistress acts a part derogatory to her own character as a woman. Jefferson has so exactly described the bitter fruits of slavery in the domestic

circle that we cannot forbear re-quoting it: “The whole commerce between master and slave is a *perpetual exercise* of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one hand, and degrading submission on the other. The parent *storms*, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in a circle of smaller slaves, gives loose to the worst of passions; and thus *nursed, educated and daily exercised* in *tyranny*, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities.” We wish this picture applied only to the “commerce between *master* and slave;” but we know that there are *female tyrants* too, who are prompt to lay their complaints of misconduct before their husbands, brothers and sons, and to urge them to commit acts of violence against their helpless slaves. Others still more cruel, place the lash in the hands of some trusty domestic, and stand by whilst he lays the heavy strokes upon the unresisting victim, deaf to the cries for mercy which rend the air, or rather the more enraged at such appeals, which are only answered by the Southern lady with the prompt command of “give her more for that.” This work of chastisement is often performed by a brother, or other relative of the poor sufferer, which circumstance stings like an adder the very heart of the slave while her body writhes under the lash. Other mistresses who cannot bear that their delicate ears should be pained by the screams of the poor sufferers, write an order to the master of the Charleston work-house, or the New Orleans calaboose, where they are most cruelly stretched in order to render the stroke of the whip or the blow of the paddle more certain to produce cuts and wounds which cause the blood to flow at every stroke. And let it be remembered that these poor creatures are often *women* who are most indecently divested of their clothing and exposed to the gaze of the executioner of a *woman’s* command.

What then, our beloved sisters, must be the effects of such a system upon the domestic character of the white females? Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? Can such despotism mould the character of the Southern woman to gentleness and love? or may we not fairly conclude that all that suavity, for which slaveholding ladies are so conspicuous, is in many instances the paint and

the varnish of hypocrisy, the fashionable polish of a heartless superficiality?

But it is not the character alone of the mistress that is deeply injured by the possession and exercise of such despotic power, nor is it the degradation and suffering to which the slave is continually subject; but another important consideration is, that in consequence of the dreadful state of morals at the South, the wife and the daughter sometimes find their homes a scene of the most mortifying, heart-rending preference of the degraded domestic, or the colored daughter of the head of the family. There are, alas, too many families, of which the contentions of Abraham's household is a fair example. But we forbear to lift the veil of private life any higher; let these few hints suffice to give you some idea of what is daily passing *behind* that curtain which has been so carefully drawn before the scenes of domestic life in Christian America.

And now, dear sisters, let us not forget that *Northern* women are participators in the crime of slavery—too many of *us* have surrendered our hearts and hands to the wealthy planters of the South, and gone down with them to live on the unrequited toil of the slave. Too many of *us* have ourselves become slaveholders, our hearts have been hardened under the searing influence of the system, and we, too, have learned to be tyrants in the school of despots. Too few of us have replied to the matrimonial proposals of the slaveholder:

“Go back, haughty Southron, thy treasures of gold  
Are dimmed by the blood of the hearts thou hast sold;  
Thy home may be lovely, but round it I hear  
The crack of the whip and the footsteps of fear.

Full low at thy bidding thy negroes may kneel,  
With the iron of bondage on spirit and heel;  
Yet know that the Northerner sooner would be  
*In fetters with them than in freedom with thee.*”

But let it be so no longer. Let us henceforward resolve, that the women of the

free States *never* again will barter their principles for the blood-bought luxuries of the South—*never* again will regard with complacency, much less with the tender sentiments of love, any man “who buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong, that useth his neighbor’s service *without* wages, and giveth him *naught* for his work.”

And there are others amongst us, who, though not slaveholders ourselves, yet have those who are nearest and dearest to us involved in this sin. Ah, yes! some of us have fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, who are living in the slave States, and are daily served by the unremunerated servant; and for the enlightenment of these *we* are most solmenly bound to labor and to pray without ceasing. Vast responsibilities are rolled upon us by the fact that we believe we have received the truth on this subject, whilst they are in ignorance and error. Some Northern women too, are the wives of slaveholders, and of those who hold mortgages on the slaves of the South.

#### IV. WOMEN USE THE PRODUCTS OF SLAVE LABOR.

Multitudes of Northern women are daily making use of the products of slave labor. They are clothing themselves and their families in the cotton, and eating the rice and the sugar which they well know has cost the slave his unrequited toil, his blood and his tears; and if the maxim in law be founded in justice and truth, that “the receiver *is as bad* as the thief,” how much *greater* the condemnation of those who not merely receive the stolen products of the slave’s labor, but *voluntarily* purchase them, and *continually appropriate them to their own use*.

We frequently meet with individuals who, though very particular in not using sugar which has been raised by the slave, yet feel no compunction in purchasing slave-grown cotton, and assign as a reason, that there is not that waste of life in the culture of cotton, which attends that of sugar. *But is there less waste of blood?* We copy the following description of the *whip* which is *made by*

*Northern men*, and used by Southern overseers on *cotton plantations*. “The staff is about 20 or 22 inches in length, with a large and heavy head, which is often loaded with a quarter or half a pound of lead, wrapped in catgut, and securely fastened on, so that nothing but the greatest violence can separate it from the staff. The lash is 10 feet long, made of small strips of buckskin, tanned so as to be dry and hard, and plaited carefully and closely together, of the thickness in the larger part of a man’s little finger, but quite small at each extremity. At the furthest end of this thong is attached a cracker, nine inches in length, made of strong sewing silk, twisted and knotted, until it feels as firm as the hardest twine.

“This whip, in an unpracticed hand, is a very awkward and inefficient weapon; but the *best* qualification of the overseer of a *cotton* plantation, is the ability of using this whip with adroitness, and when wielded by an experienced arm it is one of the *keenest instruments of torture* ever invented by the ingenuity of man. The cat-o’-nine-tails, used in the British military service, is but a clumsy instrument beside this whip, which has superseded the cowhide, the hickory, and every other species of lash on the *cotton* plantations. The cowhide and the hickory bruise and mangle the flesh of the sufferer; but *this whip cuts*, when expertly applied, *almost as keen as a knife*, and never bruises the flesh nor injures the bones.” What then do our sisters say to using *cotton* which is raised under the keen and cutting lash of this whip, by the mancipated mothers, wives and daughters of the South? Can these sufferers really believe we are remembering them that are in bonds *as bound with them*, whilst we freely use what costs them so much agony?

And has the Lord uttered no rebuke to us in these fearful times? Is there no lesson for *us* to learn in recent events? Who are the men that now weep and mourn over their broken fortunes—their ruined hopes? Are they not the merchants and manufacturers, who have traded largely in the unrequited labor of the slave? Men who have joined hand in hand with the wicked, and entered into covenant to rivet the chains of the captive?

We are often told that free articles cannot be obtained; but why not? Our

answer is, because there is so little demand for them. Only let the moral sense of the free States become so pure and so elevated as to induce them to refuse to purchase slave-grown products, and the manufacturers, and merchants, and grocers, will soon devise some plan by which to supply their factories and stores with free labor cotton and goods. But we may be asked what are we to do until the market is supplied? We unhesitatingly reply, suffer the inconvenience of deprivation, and then will *you*, dear sisters, become the favored instruments in the Lord's hand, of producing that change in public feeling which will lead to such action as will bring the desired supply into our market. We find that those who really wish to obtain such articles, are almost universally able to do so, if they will pay a little higher price, and be satisfied to wear what may not be of quite so good a quality; but it is frequently the case that even this trifling self-denial is not necessary.

We would remind you of the course pursued by our revolutionary fathers and mothers when Great Britain levied upon her colonies what they regarded as unjust taxces. Read the words of the historian, and ponder well the noble self-denial of the men and *women* of this country, when they considered their own liberties endangered by the encroachments of England's bad policy. Look, then, at the influence which their measures produced in making it the interest of the merchants and manufacturers in Great Britain to second the petitions of her colonies for a redress of grievances, and judge for yourselves whether the Southern planters would not gladly second the efforts of the abolitionists, by petitioning their National and State Legislatures for the abolition of slavery, if they found they could no longer sell their slave-grown produce.

(1837)

## JOHN PIERPONT

### *A Word from a Petitioner, to Congress; The Tocsin; Plymouth Rock; 'I Would Not Live Always'*

Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, John Pierpont (1785–1866) worked early as a lawyer and merchant before turning to the Unitarian ministry, serving as pastor of the Hollis Street Church in Boston from 1819 to 1845. Known for his educational books and later for his political activism as a candidate for Congress of the Free Soil party in 1850, Pierpont poured forth his antislavery views in a stream of occasional poetry over many years. “A Word from a Petitioner, to Congress” was prompted by the Gag Rule passed by Congress in 1836 to prevent John Quincy Adams or anyone else from even *presenting* antislavery petitions to the House of Representatives (it was not lifted until 1844). “The Tocsin” traces the poisonous spread of slavery’s power in American history, while in “Plymouth Rock” (published in *The Liberty Bell*) Pierpont imagines his Pilgrim ancestors praying for future generations of Americans: “Ne’er let them wear, O God, or *forge* a bondman’s chains!” “I Would Not Live Always,” published in his collected volume *Anti-Slavery Poems* in 1843, gives voice to the pathos of a slave welcoming death as deliverance, and is typical of the many Pierpont poems that were set to music as hymns in the 1840s and ’50s. When the Civil War broke out, Pierpont, aged seventy-six, sought active duty as a chaplain with a Massachusetts regiment, then served as clerk in the Treasury Department. To his great disappointment, his son James, who lived in Savannah, served in the Confederate Army and composed songs for the Confederacy.

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### *A Word from a Petitioner, to Congress*

What! our petitions spurned! The prayer  
Of thousands—tens of thousands—cast  
Unheard beneath your Speaker’s chair!  
But ye *will* hear us, first or last.  
The thousands that, last year, ye scorned,  
Are millions now. Re warned! Re warned!

THE MILLIONS NOW. DO WANT. DO WANT.

Turn not, contemptuous, on your heel:—

It is not for an act of grace

That, suppliants, at your feet we kneel—

We stand:—we look you in the face,

And say—and we have weighed the word—

That our petitions SHALL be heard.

There are two powers above the laws

Ye make or mar:—They're our allies.

Beneath their shield we'll urge our cause,

Though *all* your hands against us rise.

We've proved them, and we know their might:

The CONSTITUTION and the RIGHT.

We say not, ye shall snap the links

That bind you to your dreadful slaves:

Hug, if ye will, a corpse that stinks,

And toil on with it to your graves!

But, that ye *may* go, coupled thus,

Ye never shall make slaves of *us*.

And what, but more than slaves, are they

Who're told they ne'er shall be denied

The right of prayer; yet, when they pray,

Their prayers, *unheard*, are thrown aside?

Such mockery they will tamely bear,

Who're fit an iron chain to wear.

'The ox, that treadeth out the corn,

Thou shalt not muzzle.'—Thus saith God.

And will ye muzzle the free-born—  
The *man*—the owner of the sod—  
Who ‘gives the grazing ox his meat,’  
And you—his servants here—your seat?

There’s a cloud, blackening up the sky!  
East, west, and north, its curtain spreads:  
Lift to its muttering folds your eye!  
Beware! for, bursting on your heads,  
It hath a force to bear you down:—  
Tis an INSULTED PEOPLE’S frown.

Ye may have heard of the Soultan,  
And how his Janissaries fell!  
Their barracks, near the Atmeidan,  
He barred, and fired;—and their death-yell  
Went to the stars,—and their blood ran  
In brooks across the Atmeidan.

The despot spake: and, in one night,  
The deed was done. He wields, alone,  
The sceptre of the Ottomite,  
And brooks no brother near his throne.  
Even now, the bow-string, at his beck,  
Springs round his mightiest subject’s neck.

Yet will *He*, in his saddle, stoop—  
I’ve seen him, in his palace-yard—  
To take petitions from a troop  
Of *women*, who, behind his guard,  
Come up, their several suits to press,  
To state their wrongs, and ask redress

TO STATE MEN WRONGS, AND ASK REDRESS.

And these, into his house of prayer,

I've seen him take; and, as he spreads

His own before his Maker there,

These women's prayers he hears or reads:—

For, while he wears the diadem,

He is instead of God to them.

And this he *must* do. He may grant,

Or may deny; but *hear* he must.

Were his Seven Towers of adamant,

They'd soon be level'd with the dust,

And 'public feeling' make short work—

Should he not hear them—with the Turk.

Nay, start not from your chairs, in dread

Of cannon shot, or bursting shell!

These shall not fall upon your head,

As once \* upon your house they fell.

We have a weapon, firmer set

And better than the bayonet:—

A weapon that comes down as still

As snow-flakes fall upon the sod;

But executes a freeman's will

As lightning does the will of God;

And from its force, nor doors nor locks

Can shield you:—'tis the ballot-box.

Black as your deed shall be the balls

That, from that box, shall pour like hail!

And, when the storm upon you falls,  
How will your craven cheeks turn pale!  
For, at its coming though ye laugh,  
'T will sweep you from your hall, like chaff.

Not women, now,—the *people* pray.  
Hear us—or *from* us ye will hear!  
Beware!—a desperate game ye play!  
The men, that thicken in your rear—  
Kings though ye be—may not be scorned.  
Look to your move! your stake!—YE'RE WARNED.

(1837)

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### *The Tocsin*

“If the pulpit be silent, whenever or wherever there may be a sinner, bloody with this guilt, within the hearing of its voice, *the pulpit is false to its trust.*”—D. WEBSTER

Wake! children of the *men* who said,  
“All are born free!”—Their spirits come  
Back to the places where they bled  
In Freedom's holy martyrdom,  
And find *you* sleeping on their graves,  
And hugging there your chains,—ye slaves!

Ay,—slaves of slaves! What, sleep ye yet,  
And dream of Freedom, while ye sleep?  
Ay,—dream, while Slavery's foot is set  
So firmly on your necks,—while deep  
The chain her quivering flesh endures

Gnaws, like a cancer, into yours?

Hah! say ye that I've falsely spoken,  
    Calling you slaves?—Then prove ye 're *not*;  
Work a free press!—ye 'll see it broken;—  
    Stand to defend it!—ye 'll be shot.†—  
O yes! but people should not dare  
Print what “the brotherhood” won't bear!

Then from your *lips* let words of grace,  
    Gleaned from the Holy Bible's pages,  
Fall, while ye 're pleading for a race  
    Whose blood has flowed through chains for ages;—  
And pray,—“Lord, let thy kingdom come!”  
And see if ye 're not stricken dumb.

Yes, men of God! ye may not speak,  
    As, by the Word of God, ye 're bidden;  
By the pressed lip,—the blanching cheek,  
    Ye feel yourselves rebuked and chidden;—  
And, if ye 're not cast out, ye fear it;—  
And why?—“The brethren” will not hear it.

Since, then, through pulpit, or through press,  
    To prove your freedom ye 're not able,  
Go,—like the Sun of Righteousness,  
    By wise men honored,—to a stable!  
Bend *there* to Liberty your knee!  
Say *there* that God made all men free!

Even there,—ere Freedom's vows ye 've plighted,  
    Ere of her form ye 've caught a glimpse,

Even there, are fires infernal lighted,  
And ye 're driven out by Slavery's imps.<sup>†</sup>  
Ah, well!—"so persecuted they  
The prophets" of a former day!

Go, then, and build yourselves a hall,  
To prove ye are not slaves, but men!  
Write "FREEDOM," on its towering wall!  
Baptize it in the name of PENN;  
And give it to her holy cause,  
Beneath the Ægis of her laws;—

Within let Freedom's anthem swell;—  
And, while your hearts begin to throb,  
And burn within you——Hark! the yell,—  
The torch,—the torrent of the MOB!—  
They 're Slavery's troops that round you sweep,  
And leave your hall a smouldering heap!\*

At Slavery's beck, the prayers ye urge  
On your own servants, through the door  
Of your own Senate,—that the scourge  
May gash your brother's back no more,—  
Are trampled underneath their feet,  
While ye stand praying in the street!

At Slavery's beck, ye send your sons<sup>†</sup>  
To hunt down Indian wives or maids,  
Doomed to the lash!—Yes, and their bones,  
Whitening 'mid swamps and everglades,  
Where no friend goes to give them graves,

Prove that ye are not Slavery's slaves!

At Slavery's beck, the very hands

Ye lift to Heaven, to swear ye 're free,  
Will break a truce, to seize the lands  
Of Seminole or Cherokee!

Yes,—tear a *flag*, that Tartar hordes  
Respect, and shield it with their swords!‡

Vengeance is thine, Almighty God!

To pay it hath thy justice bound thee;  
Even now, I see thee take thy rod,—  
Thy thunders, leashed and growling round thee;—  
Slip them not yet, in mercy!—Deign  
Thy wrath yet longer to restrain!—

Or,—let *thy* kingdom, Slavery, come!

Let Church, let State, receive thy chain!  
Let pulpit, press, and hall be dumb,  
If so “the brotherhood” ordain!  
The MUSE her own indignant spirit  
Will yet speak out;—and men shall hear it.

Yes;—while, at Concord, there 's a stone

That she can strike her fire from still;  
While there 's a shaft at Lexington,  
Or half a one on Bunker's Hill,\*

*There* shall she stand and strike her lyre,  
And Truth and Freedom shall stand by her.

But, should she *thence* by mobs be driven,

For nurer heights she 'll plume her wing:—

For perch heights she will plume her wing,  
Spurning a land of slaves, to heaven  
She 'll soar, where she can safely sing.  
God of our fathers, speed her thither!  
God of the free, let me go with her!

(1838)

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*Plymouth Rock*

Escaped from all the perils of the Sea—  
Storms, Shoals, the angry and engulfing Waves—  
Here stand we, on a savage Shore,—all free—  
Thy freemen, Lord! and not of man the slaves!  
Here will we toil and serve thee, till our graves  
On these bleak hills shall open. When the blood  
Thou pourest now, so warm, along our veins  
Shall westward flow, till Mississippi's flood  
Gives to our children's children his broad plains,  
Ne'er let them *wear*, O God, or *forge* a bondman's chains!

(1840)

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*'I Would Not Live Always'*

I would not live always; I ask not to stay,  
Where I *must* bear the burden and heat of the day:  
Where my body is cut with the lash or the cord,  
And a hovel and hunger are all my reward.

I would not live always, where life is a load

To the flesh and the spirit:—since there's an abode  
For the soul disenthralled, let me breathe my last breath,  
And repose in thine arms, my deliverer, Death!—

I would not live always to toil as a slave:  
O no, let me rest, though I rest in my grave;  
For there, from their troubling, the wicked shall cease,  
And, free from his master, the slave be at peace.

(1843)

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\* When the British entered Washington in the war of 1812–'15.

\* Bear witness, heights of Alton!

‡ Bear witness, bones of Lovejoy!

\* Bear witness, “Grounds of Complaint preferred against the Rev. John Pierpont, by a Committee of the Parish, called ‘The Proprietors of Hollis-Street Meetinghouse,’ to be submitted to a mutual Ecclesiastical Council, as Reasons for dissolving his Connexion with said Parish,” July 27th, 1840: one of which runs thus;—Because “of his too busy interference with questions of legislation on the subject of prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits;—of his too busy interference with questions of legislation on the subject of imprisonment for debt;—of his too busy interference with the popular controversy on the subject of the abolition of slavery.” And this, in the eighteen hundred and fortieth year of Him whom the Lord God sent “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”!

‡ Bear witness, that large “upper room,” the hay-loft over the stable of the Marlborough Hotel, standing upon the ground now covered by the Marlborough Chapel; the only temple in Boston, into which the friends of human liberty, that is, of the liberty of man as *man*, irrespective of color or caste, could gain admittance for the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, January 25th, 1837. Bear witness, too, that smaller room in Summer Street, where a meeting was held the same day, by members of

the same Society; where their only altar was an iron stove,—their only incense, the fumes of a quantity of cayenne pepper, that some one of the “imps” had sprinkled upon the hot stove-plates, to drive the friends of the freedom of all men out of that little asylum.

\* Bear witness, ye ruins of “Pennsylvania Hall”!—a heap of ruins made by a Philadelphia mob, May 17th, 1838,—and still allowed to remain a heap of ruins, as I was lately told in Philadelphia, from the fear, on the part of the city government, that, should the noble structure be reared again, and dedicated again to Liberty, the fiery tragedy of the 17th of May would be *encored*.

† Bear witness, Florida war, from first to last, though “the end is not yet.”

‡ Bear witness, ghost of the great-hearted, broken-hearted Osceola!

\* The Ladies are now exerting themselves to make the shaft on Bunker’s Hill a whole one. Success to them!

## MOSES ROPER

### *from A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery*

Born in North Carolina the very light-skinned offspring of his owner and a mixed-race house slave, Moses Roper (c. 1815–1891) endured cruel treatment in early life on plantations in Georgia and Florida and embarked on a 350-mile escape on foot. His *Narrative* was first published in London, Roper having fled to England in 1835 out of fear that, after he had escaped to the North, he might still be recaptured and taken back into slavery. Roper married an English woman and the couple had four children, as he continued a long career of antislavery lecturing and odd jobs across Britain, Canada, and the United States. His life seemed to unravel in later years, and apparently lacking family or friends, he was found dying in a Boston railroad station in 1891. In the passage excerpted here from the *Narrative*, emotional extremes collide. His touching reunion with his mother after years of separation is shattered by his recapture in the middle of the night, after which he never saw his family again.

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When within a mile of that town, we stopped at a brook to water the horses; while stopping here, I saw the men whispering, and fancying I overheard them say they would put me in Charlotte gaol, when they got there, I made my escape into the woods, pretending to be looking for something till I got out of their sight. I then ran on as fast as I could, but did not go through the town of Charlotte as had been my intention; being a large town, I was fearful it might prove fatal to my escape. Here I was at a loss how to get on, as houses were not very distant from each other for near 200 miles.

While thinking what I should do, I observed some waggons before, which I determined to keep behind, and never go nearer to them than a quarter of a mile—in this way I travelled till I got to Salisbury. If I happened to meet any person on the road, I was afraid they would take me up. I asked them how far the

waggons had got on before me, to make them suppose I belonged to the waggons. At night, I slept on the ground in the woods, some little distance from the waggons, but not near enough to be seen by the men belonging to them. All this time I had but little food, principally fruit, which I found on the road. On Thursday night, I got into Salisbury, having left Chester on the Monday morning preceding. After this, being afraid my master was in pursuit of me, I left the usual line of road and took another direction, through Huntsville and Salem, principally through fields and woods; on my way to Caswell Court House, a distance of nearly 200 miles from Salisbury, I was stopped by a white man, to whom I told my old story, and again succeeded in my escape. I also came up with a small cart, driven by a poor man who had been moving into some of the western territories, and was going back to Virginia to move some more of his luggage. On this, I told him I was going the same way to Hilton, thirteen miles from Caswell Court House; he took me up in his cart and we went to the Red House, two miles from Hilton, the place where Mr. Mitchell took me from when six years old, to go to the Southern States. This was a very providential circumstance, for it happened that at the time I had to pass through Caswell Court House, a fair or election was going on, which caused the place to be much crowded with people, and rendered it more dangerous for me to pass through.

At the Red House I left the cart and wandered about a long time, not knowing which way to go to find my mother. After some time, I took the road leading over Ikeo creek. I shortly came up with a little girl about six years old, and asked her where she was going, she said to her mother's, pointing to a house on a hill about half a mile off. She had been to the overseer's house, and was returning to her mother. I then felt some emotions arising in my breast, which I cannot describe, but will be fully explained in the sequel. I told her that I was very thirsty, and would go with her to get something to drink. On our way, I asked her several questions, such as her name, that of her mother; she said hers was Maria, and her mother's Nancy. I inquired if her mother had any more children? she said five besides herself, and that they had been told that one had

been sold when a little boy. I then asked the name of this child; she said it was Moses. These answers, as we approached the house, led me nearer and nearer to the finding out the object of my pursuit, and of recognising in the little girl the person of my own sister. At last I got to my mother's house!! my mother was at home. I asked her if she knew me? she said no. Her master was having a house built just by, and the men were digging a well, she supposed that I was one of the diggers. I told her I knew her very well, and thought that if she looked at me a little she would know me, but this had no effect. I then asked her if she had any sons? she said yes; but none so large as me. I then waited a few minutes, and narrated some circumstances to her, attending my being sold into slavery, and how she grieved at my loss. Here the mother's feelings on that dire occasion, and which a mother only can know, rushed to her mind: she saw her own son before her, for whom she had so often wept; and in an instant we were clasped in each other's arms, amidst the ardent interchange of caresses and tears of joy. Ten years had elapsed since I had seen my dear mother. My own feelings, and the circumstances attending my coming home, have often been brought to mind since, on a perusal of the 42nd, 43rd, 44th, and 45th chapters of Genesis. What could picture my feelings so well, as I once more beheld the mother who had brought me into the world and had nourished me, not with the anticipation of my being torn from her maternal care when only six years old, to become the prey of a mercenary and blood-stained slaveholder; I say, what picture so vivid in description of this part of my tale, as the 7th and 8th verses of the 42nd chapters of Genesis; "And Joseph saw his brethren and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him." After the first emotion of the mother, on recognising her first born, had somewhat subsided, could the reader not fancy the little one, my sister, as she told her simple tale of meeting with me to her mother, how she would say, while the parent listened with intense interest, "The man asked me straitly of our state and of our kindred, saying, is your father yet alive, and have ye another brother?" Or, when at last, I could no longer refrain from making myself known, I say I was

ready to burst into a frenzy of joy. How applicable the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd verses of the 45th chapter: "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he wept aloud, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph, doth my father still live?" Then when the mother knew her son, when the brothers and sisters owned their brother; "he kissed all his brethren and wept over them, and after that his brethren talked with him," 15th verse. At night, my mother's husband, a black-smith, belonging to Mr. Jefferson, at the Red House, came home, he was surprised to see me with the family, not knowing who I was. He had been married to my mother when I was a babe, and had always been very fond of me. After the same tale had been told him, and the same emotions filled his soul, he again kissed the object of his early affection. The next morning I wanted to go on my journey, in order to make sure of my escape to the free states. But, as might be expected, my mother, father, brothers, and sisters, could ill part with their long lost one, and persuaded me to go into the woods in the day time, and at night come home and sleep there. This I did for about a week: on the next Sunday night, I had laid me down to sleep between my two brothers, on a pallet which my mother had prepared for me; about twelve o'clock, I was suddenly awoke, and found my bed surrounded by twelve slaveholders with pistols in hand, who took me away (not allowing me to bid farewell to those I loved so dearly) to the Red House, where they confined me in a room the rest of the night, and in the morning lodged me in the gaol of Caswell Court House.

What was the scene at home, what sorrow possessed their hearts, I am unable to describe, as I never after saw any of them more. I heard, however, that my mother, who was in the family-way when I went home, was soon after confined, and was very long before she recovered the effects of this disaster. I was told afterwards, that some of those men who took me, were professing Christians, but to me they did not seem to live up to what they professed; they did not seem, by their practices, at least, to recognise that God as their God, who hath said, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee, he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that

place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him.”—Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

*(1837)*

## JAMES WILLIAMS

### *from Narrative of James Williams: An American Slave: Who Was for Several Years a Driver on a Cotton Plantation in Alabama*

Controversy surrounded the *Narrative of James Williams* even before it appeared, as southern apologists for slavery attacked its veracity and rumors circulated that it was an abolitionist fiction. After scrupulous investigation of John Greenleaf Whittier's role as the text's editor and the credibility of James Williams (1805–post-1838), the American Anti-Slavery Society went ahead with publication in New York and Boston, and the book provoked outrage across the South. Williams had been raised a household servant in Virginia, but after his master's death he suddenly found himself thrown into the role of slave-driver on an Alabama plantation under the direction of the sadistic overseer Huckstep. Williams recounts in this passage the logistics and emotional turmoil of his desperate escape from a hellhole of forced beatings, rape, slave-hunting with dogs, and other unspeakable cruelties.

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I looked up to see the North Star, which I supposed still before me. But I sought it in vain in all that quarter of the heavens. A dreadful thought came over me that I had been travelling out of my way. I turned round and saw the North Star, which had been shining directly upon my back. I then knew that I had been travelling away from freedom, and towards the place of my captivity ever since I left the woods into which I had been pursued on the 21st, five days before. Oh, the keen and bitter agony of that moment! I saw down on the decaying trunk of a fallen tree, and wept like a child. Exhausted in mind and body, nature came at last to my relief, and I fell asleep upon the log. When I awoke it was still dark. I rose and nerved myself for another effort for freedom. Taking the North Star for my guide, I turned upon my track, and left once more the dreaded frontiers of Alabama behind me. The next night, after crossing a considerable river, I came to a large road crossing the one on which I travelled, and which seemed to lead

more directly towards the North. I took this road, and the next night after, I came to a large village. Passing through the main street, I saw a large hotel which I at once recollected. I was in Augusta, and this was the hotel at which my master had spent several days when I was with him, on one of his southern visits. I heard the guards patrolling the town cry the hour of twelve; and fearful of being taken up, I turned out of the main street, and got upon the road leading to Petersburg. On reaching the latter place, I swam over the Savannah river into South Carolina, and from thence passed into North Carolina.

Hitherto I had live mainly upon peaches, which were plenty on almost all the plantations in Alabama and Georgia; but the season was now too far advanced for them, and I was obliged to resort to apples. These I obtained without much difficulty until within two or three days journey of the Virginia line. At this time I had had nothing to eat but two or three small and sour apples for twenty-four hours, and I waited impatiently for night, in the hope of obtaining fruit from the orchards along the road. I passed by several plantations, but found no apples. After midnight, I passed near a large house, with fruit trees around it. I searched under, and climbed up and shook several of them to no purpose. At last I found a tree on which there were a few apples. On shaking it, half a dozen fell. I got down, and went groping and feeling about for them in the grass, but could find only two, the rest were devoured by several hogs who were there on the same errand with myself. I pursued my way until day was about breaking, when I passed another house. The feeling of extreme hunger was here so intense, that it required all the resolution I was master of to keep myself from going up to the house and breaking into it in search of food. But the thought of being again made a slave, and of suffering the horrible punishment of a runaway restrained me. I lay in the woods all that day without food. The next evening, I soon found a large pile of excellent apples, from which I supplied myself.

The next evening I reached Halifax Court House, and I then knew that I was near Virginia. On the 7th of October, I came to the Roanoke, and crossed it in the midst of a violent storm of rain and thunder. The current ran so furiously

that I was carried down with it, and with great difficulty, and in a state of complete exhaustion, reached the opposite shore.

At about 2 o'clock, on the night of the 15th, I approached Richmond, but not daring to go into the city at that hour, on account of the patrols, I lay in the woods near Manchester, until the next evening, when I started in the twilight, in order to enter before the setting of the watch. I passed over the bridge unmolested, although in great fear, as my tattered clothes and naked head were well calculated to excite suspicion; and being well acquainted with the localities of the city, made my way to the house of a friend. I was received with the utmost kindness, and welcomed as one risen from the dead. Oh, how inexpressibly sweet were the tones of human sympathy, after the dreadful trials to which I had been subjected—the wrongs and outrages which I witnessed and suffered! For between two and three months I had not spoken with a human being, and the sound even of my own voice now seemed strange to my ears. During this time, save in two or three instances, I had tasted of no food except peaches and apples. I was supplied with some dried meat and coffee, but the first mouthful occasioned nausea and faintness. I was compelled to take my bed, and lay sick for several days. By the assiduous attention and kindness of my friends, I was supplied with every thing which was necessary during my sickness. I was detained in Richmond nearly a month. As soon as I had sufficiently recovered to be able to proceed on my journey, I bade my kind host and his wife an affectionate farewell, and set forward once more towards a land of freedom. I longed to visit my wife and children in Powhatan county, but the dread of being discovered prevented me from attempting it. I had learned from my friends in Richmond that they were living and in good health, but greatly distressed on my account.

My friends had provided me with a fur cap, and with as much lean ham, cake and biscuit, as I could conveniently carry. I proceeded in the same way as before, travelling by night and lying close and sleeping by day. About the last of November I reached the Shenandoah river. It was very cold; ice had already

formed along the margin, and in swimming the river I was chilled through; and my clothes froze about me soon after I had reached the opposite side. I passed into Maryland, and on the 5th of December, stepped across the line which divided the free state of Pennsylvania from the land of slavery.

I had a few shillings in money which were given me at Richmond, and after travelling nearly twenty-four hours from the time I crossed the line, I ventured to call at a tavern, and buy a dinner. On reaching Carlisle, I inquired of the ostler in a stable if he knew of any one who wished to hire a house servant or coachman. He said he did not. Some more colored people came in, and taking me aside told me that they knew that I was from Virginia, by my pronunciation of certain words—that I was probably a runaway slave—but that I need not be alarmed, as they were friends, and would do all in their power to protect me. I was taken home by one of them, and treated with the utmost kindness; and at night he took me in a wagon, and carried me some distance on my way to Harrisburg, where he said I should meet with friends.

He told me that I had better go directly to Philadelphia, as there would be less danger of my being discovered and retaken there than in the country, and there were a great many persons there who would exert themselves to secure me from the slaveholders. In parting he cautioned me against conversing or stopping with any man on the road, unless he wore a plain, straight collar on a round coat, and said “thee,” and “thou.” By following his directions I arrived safely in Philadelphia, having been kindly entertained and assisted on my journey, by several benevolent gentlemen and ladies, whose compassion for the wayworn and hunted stranger I shall never forget, and whose names will always be dear to me. On reaching Philadelphia, I was visited by a large number of the Abolitionists, and friends of the colored people, who, after hearing my story, thought it would not be safe for me to remain in any part of the United States. I remained in Philadelphia a few days; and then a gentleman came on to New-York with me, I being considered on board the steam-boat, and in the cars, as his servant. I arrived at New-York, on the 1st of January. The sympathy and

kindness which I have every where met with since leaving the slave states, has been the more grateful to me because it was in a great measure unexpected. The slaves are always told that if they escape into a free state, they will be seized and put in prison, until their masters send for them. I had heard Huckstep and the other overseers occasionally speak of the Abolitionists, but I did not know or dream that they were friends of the slave. Oh, if the miserable men and women, now toiling on the plantations of Alabama, could know that thousands in the free states are praying and striving for their deliverance, how would the glad tidings be whispered from cabin to cabin, and how would the slave-mother as she watches over her infant, bless God, on her knees, for the hope that this child of her day of sorrow, might never realize in stripes, and toil, and grief unspeakable, what it is to be a slave!

*(1838)*

# EDMUND QUINCY

## *Mother Cælia*

A scion of one of Boston's oldest and most distinguished families, Edmund Quincy (1808–1877) discomfited the more staid members of his social class with the ardor of his antislavery convictions. His joining in 1837 the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and a year later the American Anti-Slavery Society, marked the beginning of his long involvement as officer, editor, and writer for both organizations and the periodicals they supported, including at various times *The Abolitionist*, *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, *The Liberator*, and *The Liberty Bell*. In the last of these he published “Mother Cælia,” a biographical sketch that preserves the noble life of an African slave woman who had been owned by the Quincy family.

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**A** FEW weeks since, I paid a visit to a revered and beloved relative, who enjoys the evening of a long and well-spent life, in one of the most beautiful of our inland towns. Our conversation was chiefly of the past. We talked of the people and customs of times which preceded the Revolution; of the siege of Boston; of General Washington and Dr. Franklin; and of the officers of the French fleet, who, at a later period, were in habits of intimate intercourse with the family of her father—my great-grandfather, at Braintree, now Quincy.

Among other things, we talked of the “patriarchal system,” as it existed in New England, seventy years since. She told me of the attention which was paid to the religious instruction of her father's slaves; of their attachment to the family; (which, however, did not prevent their running away upon occasion,) and of the kind treatment they received. Distinctions, however, were made between them and the white servants, and they always sat at separate tables, though they were on the best possible terms.

My aunt spoke with particular affection of one of the slaves, who was her

nurse, and who was known in the family as Mother Cœlia. I had before heard of Mother Cœlia; for an uncertain tradition had come down in the nursery of the family, even to my times, about her. I well remember the mysterious idea I had of her, as a child; and that, after dark, I would have made any reasonable circuit to avoid passing through the room in which she was said to have died. My aunt, at my request, gave me a connected account of her; some particulars of which seem to me worth preserving.

Cœlia was brought to Boston from Africa at seven years of age, and was immediately purchased by my great-grandfather. In his family she remained till her death. She believed that she was made of the true porcelain clay of Africa, and that she would have been entitled to the rank and precedence of a princess of the Blood, had she remained in that country; and her opinion was confirmed by a sort of *tattooing*, supposed to be peculiar to royalty. She was an uncommonly handsome woman, of a strong mind and a true heart. She had, too, as good an education as was generally thought necessary at that period for women in any rank of life; that is to say, she had been taught to read and write. She received into her arms the members of a numerous family at their birth, and closed the eyes of many of them in death. She tenderly loved her master and his children, and was regarded by them rather as an humble friend, than as a slave; but her high spirit could never become reconciled to her servile condition. The draught of slavery was still bitter, though commended to her lips by a kind and friendly hand.

Mother Cœlia would gather the little inhabitants of the nursery around her, and tell them how, at their tender age, she was literally taken by force out of her father's arms, and carried away into a strange land, and sold into hopeless captivity.

"I do not tell you these things, my dears," she would add, "to make you think hardly of your father for buying me; for he only did what everybody else does, and he has always been a good master to me; but when you grow up, don't you buy slaves."

“From that time,” said my excellent aunt, “I have been an abolitionist.”

Cœlia, in the course of her pilgrimage, had been married, and had ten children, all of whom died young. One day, my aunt, when sitting at play by her side in the nursery, said in all the heedlessness of childhood: “Mother Cœlia, are you not sorry that all your children are dead?”

“No, my dear,” she replied, turning quickly upon her; “No, my dear; I do not want Slaves to live!”

Just before the revolutionary war broke out, when liberty was as familiar in men’s mouths as it now is, and somewhat nearer their hearts, many of the slaves throughout New England were unreasonable enough to think that the principles which they heard daily maintained applied to Blacks as well as Whites, and unscrupulously helped themselves to their freedom. Of this number were most of the slaves of my great-grandfather. He was a zealous Whig; and, to the credit of his consistency, be it told, he took no measures for the recovery of his “property.”

Cœlia had made up her mind to follow their example, when her intentions came to the ear of her master. He, in all kindness, expostulated with her on her determination. He told her he should make no opposition to her plan, if she chose to adhere to it; but he reminded her that they had grown old together, that she had ever received the kindest treatment at his hands; and he described to her the difference she would find in her situation, when entirely dependent on her own industry for support, compared with what it would be if she had him to look up to.

“I know very well,” said he, “that you can get a good living in Boston as a cook or confectioner, as long as your strength lasts; but the time must soon arrive when you will be too old to work; and your health may fail before that time comes. In such an event, you must be left to the charity of strangers, or come upon the parish; whereas, if you remain in my service, you may depend upon being treated, in age or in sickness, with the same tenderness I would bestow on a sister or a daughter. If you persist in your intention of leaving me, I

shall give my consent; but I wish you to take a few days to reflect upon what I have said, and then decide.”

These arguments, combined with her affection for her master’s family, prevailed over her thirst for freedom, and she remained with him to the end of her days.

A few years after, she was seized with her last illness. On her death-bed her master addressed her to this effect: “Cœlia, did I not advise you well? You have now in your last sickness all the comforts and luxuries which my fortune can command, or that I would bestow on my wife or daughter. Are you not satisfied that you are much better off now, than you would have been, had you taken your freedom, as you wished?”

“No, Sir,” replied the slave, turning her dying eyes upon her master,—“No, Sir; for then I should have died Free!”

I do not know whether others will deem these traits worthy of a record; but it appears to me, if these replies had been made by a Roman Matron, carried captive to Carthage, or into Pontus, historians would have inscribed them upon their pages, and Cœlia would have been as honored a name upon the lips of all posterity, as those of Arria or Cornelia.

(1839)

# GERRIT SMITH

## *from Letter of Gerrit Smith to Hon. Henry Clay*

A wealthy New York landowner and lifelong philanthropist, Gerrit Smith (1797–1874) supported causes such as prison reform, temperance, international peace, and women’s rights. But it was his devotion to abolition that defined him. Active in the antislavery movement from at least 1835, he financially supported abolitionist groups, gave thousands of acres of his land to black settlers in upstate New York, donated large sums to the Kansas free-state settlers in the 1850s, and backed John Brown’s momentous raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. His 1839 epistolary essay addressed to Senator Henry Clay was prompted by a speech Clay gave to the American Colonization Society denouncing radical abolition.

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I was about to take it for granted, that, although you deny the power of Congress to abolish the inter-state traffic in human beings, you do not justify the traffic—when I recollected the intimation in your speech, that there is no such traffic. For, when you speak of “the slave trade between the states,” and add —“or, as it is described in abolition petitions, the traffic in human beings between the states”—do you not intimate there is no such traffic? Whence this language? Do you not believe slaves are human beings? And do you not believe that they suffer under the disruption of the dearest earthly ties, as human beings suffer? I will not detain you to hear what we of the North think of this internal slave trade. But I will call your attention to what is thought of it in your own Kentucky and in your native Virginia. Says the “Address of the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky to the Churches in 1835:”—“Brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives, are torn asunder, and permitted to see each other no more. Those acts are daily occurring in the midst of us. The shrieks and the agony often witnessed on such occasions, proclaim with a trumpet tongue the iniquity and cruelty of the system. There is not a neighborhood where these

heart-rending scenes are not displayed. There is not a village or road that does not behold the sad procession of manacled outcasts, whose chains and mournful countenances tell that they are exiled by force from all that their hearts hold dear.” Says Thomas Jefferson Randolph, in the Virginian Legislature in 1832, when speaking of this trade: “It is a practice, and an increasing practice, in parts of Virginia, to rear slaves for market. How can an honourable mind, a patriot, and a lover of his country, bear to see this ancient dominion, rendered illustrious by the noble devotion and patriotism of her sons in the cause of liberty, converted into one grand menagerie, where men are to be reared for the market like oxen for the shambles. Is it better—is it not worse than the (foreign) slave trade—that trade which enlisted the labor of the good and wise of every creed and every clime to abolish? The (foreign) trader receives the slave, a stranger in language, aspect, and manner, from the merchant who has brought him from the interior. The ties of father, mother, husband, and child, have already been rent in twain; before he receives him, his soul has become callous. But here, sir, individuals whom the master has known from infancy, whom he has seen sporting in the innocent gambols of childhood—who have been accustomed to look to him for protection, he tears from the mother’s arms, and sells into a strange country—among strange people, subject to cruel taskmasters.”

You are in favor of increasing the number of slave states. The terms of the celebrated “Missouri compromise” warrant, in your judgment, the increase. But, notwithstanding you admit, that this unholy compromise, in which tranquillity was purchased at the expense of humanity and righteousness, does not “in terms embrace the case,” and “is not absolutely binding and obligatory;” you, nevertheless, make no attempt whatever to do away any one of the conclusive objections, which are urged against such increase. You do not attempt to show how the multiplication of slave states can consist with the constitutional duty of the “United States to guarantee to every state in the Union a republican form of government,” any more than if it were perfectly clear, that a government is republican under which one half of the people are lawfully engaged in buying

and selling the other half; or than if the doctrine that “all men are created equal” were not the fundamental and distinctive doctrine of a republican government. You no more vindicate the proposition to enlarge the realm of slavery, than if the proposition were as obviously in harmony with, as it is opposed to the anti-slavery tenor and policy of the Constitution—the rights of man—and the laws of God.

*(1839)*

# THEODORE DWIGHT WELD

## from *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*

Deeply religious and idealistic, the Connecticut-born Theodore Dwight Weld (1803–1895) was an abolitionist who enrolled in Cincinnati’s Lane Seminary, a hotbed of antislavery activism, in 1833. But as a result of disagreements with Lane’s president Lyman Beecher and others, Weld left the next year. He went on to a full-time career of writing, and especially speaking, against slavery. He published *Bible Against Slavery* in 1837 and the same year met Angelina Grimké, the abolitionist from South Carolina whom he would marry in 1838. Angelina and her sister Sarah helped Weld compile *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of A Thousand Witnesses*, a source for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and one of the most influential abolitionist books. In his introduction, Weld offers this collected evidence in what he calls a public trial of “the case of Human Rights against Slavery,” a case that “has been adjudicated in the court of conscience times innumerable.”

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### *Introduction*

READER, YOU are empannelled as a juror to try a plain case and bring in an honest verdict. The question at issue is not one of law, but of fact—“What is the actual condition of the slaves in the United States?” A plainer case never went to a jury. Look at it. TWENTY-SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND PERSONS in this country, men, women, and children, are in SLAVERY. Is slavery, as a condition for human beings, good, bad, or indifferent? We submit the question without argument. You have common sense, and conscience, and a human heart;—pronounce upon it. You have a wife, or a husband, a child, a father, a mother, a brother or a sister—make the case your own, make it theirs, and bring in your verdict. The case of Human Rights against Slavery has been adjudicated in the court of conscience times innumerable. The same verdict has always been rendered—“Guilty;” the

same sentence has always been pronounced, "Let it be accursed;" and human nature, with her million echoes, has rung it round the world in every language under heaven, "Let it be accursed. Let it be accursed." His heart is false to human nature, who will not say "Amen." There is not a man on earth who does not believe that slavery is a curse. Human beings may be inconsistent, but human *nature* is true to herself. She has uttered her testimony against slavery with a shriek ever since the monster was begotten; and till it perishes amidst the execrations of the universe, she will traverse the world on its track, dealing her bolts upon its head, and dashing against it her condemning brand. We repeat it, every man knows that slavery is a curse. Whoever denies this, his lips libel his heart. Try him; clank the chains in his ears, and tell him they are for *him*; give him an hour to prepare his wife and children for a life of slavery; bid him make haste and get ready their necks for the yoke, and their wrists for the coffle chains, then look at his pale lips and trembling knees, and you have *nature's* testimony against slavery.

Two million seven hundred thousand persons in these States are in this condition. They were made slaves and are held such by force, and by being put in fear, and this for no crime! Reader, what have you to say of such treatment? Is it right, just, benevolent? Suppose I should seize you, rob you of your liberty, drive you into the field, and make you work without pay as long as you live, would that be justice and kindness, or monstrous injustice and cruelty? Now, every body knows that the slaveholders do these things to the slaves every day, and yet it is stoutly affirmed that they treat them well and kindly, and that their tender regard for their slaves restrains the masters from inflicting cruelties upon them. We shall go into no metaphysics to show the absurdity of this pretence. The man who *robs* you every day, is, forsooth, quite too tender-hearted ever to cuff or kick you! True, he can snatch your money, but he does it gently lest he should hurt you. He can empty your pockets without qualms, but if your *stomach* is empty, it cuts him to the quick. He can make you work a life time without pay, but loves you too well to let you go hungry. He fleeces you of your *rights* with a

relish, but is shocked if you work bareheaded in summer, or in winter without warm stockings. He can make you go without your *liberty*, but never without a shirt. He can crush, in you, all hope of bettering your condition, by vowing that you shall die his slave, but though he can coolly torture your feelings, he is too compassionate to lacerate your back—he can break your heart, but he is very tender of your skin. He can strip you of all protection and thus expose you to all outrages, but if you are exposed to the *weather*, half clad and half sheltered, how yearn his tender bowels! What! slaveholders talk of treating men well, and yet not only rob them of all they get, and as fast as they get it, but rob them of *themselves*, also; their very hands and feet, all their muscles, and limbs, and senses, their bodies and minds, their time and liberty and earnings, their free speech and rights of conscience, their right to acquire knowledge, and property, and reputation;—and yet they, who plunder them of all these, would fain make us believe that their soft hearts ooze out so lovingly toward their slaves that they always keep them well housed and well clad, never push them too hard in the field, never make their dear backs smart, nor let their dear stomachs get empty.

But there is no end to these absurdities. Are slaveholders dunces, or do they take all the rest of the world to be, that they think to bandage our eyes with such thin gauzes? Protesting their kind regard for those whom they hourly plunder of all they have and all they get! What! when they have seized their victims, and annihilated all their *rights*, still claim to be the special guardians of their *happiness*! Plunderers of their liberty, yet the careful suppliers of their wants? Robbers of their earnings, yet watchful sentinels round their interests, and kind providers of their comforts? Filching all their time, yet granting generous donations for rest and sleep? Stealing the use of their muscles, yet thoughtful of their ease? Putting them under *drivers*, yet careful that they are not hard-pushed? Too humane forsooth to stint the stomachs of their slaves, yet force their *minds* to starve, and brandish over them pains and penalties, if they dare to reach forth for the smallest crumb of knowledge, even a letter of the alphabet!

It is no marvel that slaveholders are always talking of their *kind treatment*

of their slaves. The only marvel is, that men of sense can be gulled by such professions. Despots always insist that they are merciful. The greatest tyrants that ever dripped with blood have assumed the titles of “most gracious,” “most clement,” “most merciful,” &c., and have ordered their crouching vassals to accost them thus. When did not vice lay claim to those virtues which are the opposites of its habitual crimes? The guilty, according to their own showing, are always innocent, and cowards brave, and drunkards sober, and harlots chaste, and pickpockets honest to a fault. Every body understands this. When a man’s tongue grows thick, and he begins to hiccough and walk cross-legged, we expect him, as a matter of course, to protest that he is not drunk; so when a man is always singing the praises of his own honesty, we instinctively watch his movements and look out for our pocket-books. Whoever is simple enough to be hoaxed by such professions, should never be trusted in the streets without somebody to take care of him. Human nature works out in slaveholders just as it does in other men, and in American slaveholders just as in English, French, Turkish, Algerine, Roman and Grecian. The Spartans boasted of their kindness to their slaves, while they whipped them to death by thousands at the altars of their gods. The Romans lauded their own mild treatment of their bondmen, while they branded their names on their flesh with hot irons, and when old, threw them into their fish ponds, or like Cato “the Just,” starved them to death. It is the boast of the Turks that they treat their slaves as though they were their children, yet their common name for them is “dogs,” and for the merest trifles, their feet are bastinadoed to a jelly, or their heads clipped off with the scimeter. The Portuguese pride themselves on their gentle bearing toward their slaves, yet the streets of Rio Janeiro are filled with naked men and women yoked in pairs to carts and wagons, and whipped by drivers like beasts of burden.

Slaveholders, the world over, have sung the praises of their tender mercies towards their slaves. Even the wretches that plied the African slave trade, tried to rebut Clarkson’s proofs of their cruelties, by speeches, affidavits, and published pamphlets, setting forth the accommodations of the “middle passage,” and their

kind attentions to the comfort of those whom they had stolen from their homes, and kept stowed away under hatches, during a voyage of four thousand miles. So, according to the testimony of the autocrat of the Russians, he exercises great clemency towards the Poles, though he exiles them by thousands to the snows of Siberia, and tramples them down by millions, at home. Who discredits the atrocities perpetrated by Ovando in Hispaniola, Pizarro in Peru, and Cortez in Mexico,—because they filled the ears of the Spanish Court with protestations of their benignant rule? While they were yoking the enslaved natives like beasts to the draught, working them to death by thousands in their mines, hunting them with bloodhounds, torturing them on racks, and broiling them on beds of coals, their representations to the mother country teemed with eulogies of their parental sway! The bloody atrocities of Philip II., in the expulsion of his Moorish subjects, are matters of imperishable history. Who disbelieves or doubts them? And yet his courtiers magnified his virtues and chanted his clemency and his mercy, while the wail of a million victims, smitten down by a tempest of fire and slaughter let loose at his bidding, rose above the *Te Deums* that thundered from all Spain's cathedrals. When Louis XIV. revoked the edict of Nantz, and proclaimed two millions of his subjects free plunder for persecution,—when from the English channel to the Pyrennees the mangled bodies of the Protestants were dragged on reeking hurdles by a shouting populace, he claimed to be “the father of his people,” and wrote himself “His most *Christian Majesty*.”

But we will not anticipate topics, the full discussion of which more naturally follows than precedes the inquiry into the actual condition and treatment of slaves in the United States.

As slaveholders and their apologists are volunteer witnesses in their own cause, and are flooding the world with testimony that their slaves are kindly treated; that they are well fed, well clothed, well housed, well lodged, moderately worked, and bountifully provided with all things needful for their comfort, we propose—first, to disprove their assertions by the testimony of a multitude of impartial witnesses, and then to put slaveholders themselves

through a course of cross-questioning which shall draw their condemnation out of their own mouths. We will prove that the slaves in the United States are treated with barbarous inhumanity; that they are overworked, underfed, wretchedly clad and lodged, and have insufficient sleep; that they are often made to wear round their necks iron collars armed with prongs, to drag heavy chains and weights at their feet while working in the field, and to wear yokes, and bells, and iron horns; that they are often kept confined in the stocks day and night for weeks together, made to wear gags in their mouths for hours or days, have some of their front teeth torn out or broken off, that they may be easily detected when they run away; that they are frequently flogged with terrible severity, have red pepper rubbed into their lacerated flesh, and hot brine, spirits of turpentine, &c., poured over the gashes to increase the torture; that they are often stripped naked, their backs and limbs cut with knives, bruised and mangled by scores and hundreds of blows with the paddle, and terribly torn by the claws of cats, drawn over them by their tormentors; that they are often hunted with bloodhounds and shot down like beasts, or torn in pieces by dogs; that they are often suspended by the arms and whipped and beaten till they faint, and when revived by restoratives, beaten again till they faint, and sometimes till they die; that their ears are often cut off, their eyes knocked out, their bones broken, their flesh branded with red hot irons; that they are maimed, mutilated and burned to death over slow fires. All these things, and more, and worse, we shall *prove*. Reader, we know whereof we affirm, we have weighed it well; *more and worse* WE WILL PROVE. Mark these words, and read on; we will establish all these facts by the testimony of scores and hundreds of eye witnesses, by the testimony of *slaveholders* in all parts of the slave states, by slaveholding members of Congress and of state legislatures, by ambassadors to foreign courts, by judges, by doctors of divinity, and clergymen of all denominations, by merchants, mechanics, lawyers and physicians, by presidents and professors in colleges and *professional* seminaries, by planters, overseers and drivers. We shall show, not merely that such deeds are committed, but that they are frequent; not done in

corners, but before the sun; not in one of the slave states, but in all of them; not perpetrated by brutal overseers and drivers merely, but by magistrates, by legislators, by professors of religion, by preachers of the gospel, by governors of states, by “gentlemen of property and standing,” and by delicate females moving in the “highest circles of society.” We know, full well, the outcry that will be made by multitudes, at these declarations; the multiform cavils, the flat denials, the charges of “exaggeration” and “falsehood” so often bandied, the sneers of affected contempt at the credulity that can believe such things, and the rage and imprecations against those who give them currency. We know, too, the threadbare sophistries by which slaveholders and their apologists seek to evade such testimony. If they admit that such deeds are committed, they tell us that they are exceedingly rare, and therefore furnish no grounds for judging of the general treatment of slaves; that occasionally a brutal wretch in the *free* states barbarously butchers his wife, but that no one thinks of inferring from that, the general treatment of wives at the North and West.

They tell us, also, that the slaveholders of the South are proverbially hospitable, kind, and generous, and it is incredible that they can perpetrate such enormities upon human beings; further, that it is absurd to suppose that they would thus injure their own property, that self interest would prompt them to treat their slaves with kindness, as none but fools and madmen wantonly destroy their own property; further, that Northern visitors at the South come back testifying to the kind treatment of the slaves, and that the slaves themselves corroborate such representations. All these pleas, and scores of others, are bruited in every corner of the free States; and who that hath eyes to see, has not sickened at the blindness that saw not, at the palsy of heart that felt not, or at the cowardice and sycophancy that dared not expose such shallow fallacies. We are not to be turned from our purpose by such vapid babblings. In their appropriate places, we propose to consider these objections and various others, and to show their emptiness and folly.

The foregoing declarations touching the inflictions upon slaves, are not

hap-hazard assertions, nor the exaggerations of fiction conjured up to carry a point; nor are they the rhapsodies of enthusiasm, nor crude conclusions, jumped at by hasty and imperfect investigation, nor the aimless outpourings either of sympathy or poetry; but they are proclamations of deliberate, well-weighed convictions, produced by accumulations of proof, by affirmations and affidavits, by written testimonies and statements of a cloud of witnesses who speak what they know and testify what they have seen, and all these impregably fortified by proofs innumerable, in the relation of the slaveholder to his slave, the nature of arbitrary power, and the nature and history of man.

Of the witnesses whose testimony is embodied in the following pages, a majority are slaveholders, many of the remainder have been slaveholders, but now reside in the free States.

Another class whose testimony will be given, consists of those who have furnished the results of their own observation during periods of residence and travel in the slave States.

We will first present the reader with a few PERSONAL NARRATIVES furnished by individuals, natives of slave states and others, embodying, in the main, the results of their own observation in the midst of slavery—facts and scenes of which they were eye-witnesses.

In the next place, to give the reader as clear and definite a view of the actual condition of slaves as possible, we propose to make specific points, to pass in review the various particulars in the slave's condition, simply presenting sufficient testimony under each head to settle the question in every candid mind. The examination will be conducted by stating distinct propositions, and in the following order of topics.

1. THE FOOD OF THE SLAVES, THE KINDS, QUALITY AND QUANTITY, ALSO, THE NUMBER AND TIME OF MEALS EACH DAY, &C.
2. THEIR HOURS OF LABOR AND REST.
3. THEIR CLOTHING.

4. THEIR DWELLINGS.
5. THEIR PRIVATIONS AND INFLICTIONS.
6. *In conclusion*, a variety of OBJECTIONS and ARGUMENTS will be considered which are used by the advocates of slavery to set aside the force of testimony, and to show that the slaves are kindly treated.

Between the larger divisions of the work, brief personal narratives will be inserted, containing a mass of facts and testimony, both general and specific.

(1839)

# MARIA WESTON CHAPMAN

## *Pinda:—A True Tale*

Dubbed the “great goddess” by some and “Lady Macbeth” by others, the abolitionist campaigner Maria Weston Chapman (1806–1885) was legendary for her energy. Wife of a Boston businessman and mother of four, she was an active member of the Boston, New England, and American Anti-Slavery societies. For twenty-three years she organized the annual Anti-Slavery Fair, the chief fundraising instrument of the American Anti-Slavery Society, until in 1858 she replaced them with the even more lucrative “Subscription Anniversaries.” From 1836, she was the recording secretary of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. She edited *The Liberty Bell* from 1839 to 1858, and contributed as writer and editor to countless other antislavery periodicals over the years. Her dramatic short story “Pinda,” published by the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York, succeeds in being both romantic and political.

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### CHAPTER I.—A SHIP’S CABIN.

One dark night in the year 1836, an unusual stir took place on the deck of the good ship *Eli Whitney*, about to sail from Boston to Savannah. It was occasioned by the appearance of an officer, charged with a writ of *habeas corpus*, in favor of a supposed slave, who was known to have been carried on board by her master.

Slaveholders are accustomed to say that their victims cannot be persuaded to take their freedom, and to bring their own assertion as a proof of the merits of slavery. It was, therefore, an anxious moment for the friends of freedom on shore, while they waited to learn the result of the legal process by which they offered to the poor slave-woman the freedom secured by the laws of Massachusetts to all slaves brought under its jurisdiction by their masters.

Their anxiety was not without cause. Notwithstanding the statement of the

officer that she was free; notwithstanding the assurances of her master that she might do as she pleased, she refused to leave the ship. She was evidently both confused and alarmed, as well as undecided, for a few moments; but she finally persisted in remaining with her master, and, to the great pain of all the friends of freedom who were aware of the circumstance, she was carried away into slavery.

They felt a double grief; not only for the individual in question, but for the reproach her course could not fail to bring upon their cause. *They* knew, for they had felt and reflected upon this subject, and had seen and known more than the heedless community in which they lived gave them credit for, that there might exist a thousand reasons why this woman should wish to return to Savannah, without supposing her to be in love with slavery. But they knew also that advantage would be taken of the fact by the enemies of the cause, to prove that slaves do not wish to be free.

As they expected, the newspapers of the ensuing day were loud in censure of their “impertinent interference with gentlemen’s servants, who were wise enough to prefer slavery with their masters, to trusting themselves with these hare-brained philanthropists.”

## CHAPTER II.—THE SLAVE HUT.

“Dear wife,” said Abraham to Pinda, as they stood by the door of his little hut, in the yellow moonlight of a Savannah evening,—“you must never lose another chance for freedom out of regard to me. Look here!” (digging in a little sand-heap, and turning up his hoarded silver to the rays,) “See what I have saved, besides paying master ten dollars a month. You will want some of this at the North. Master has written to Mr. Mitchell to send you on to wait upon Missis in New Hampshire, because he feels sure of you, since that night on board the *Eli Whitney*. Don’t cry, Pinda. If freedom don’t part us, slavery will. When you get to the North, take the first chance and be off. Don’t cry, Pinda, don’t! See how nice I have got your trunk packed; and here is a list I got made of all the

things in it; may be they have some law by which you can get the things again, if you are obliged to leave them in master's hands at first. See! here is the key—all safe. He has sold two or three boys lately, and our turn will come sooner or later.”

This consideration helped Pinda to stifle her grief at parting from her husband. He might yet rejoin her; they might yet be free and happy.—She had no choice but to *go* to the North at the mandate of her master's agent; and she resolved, that night, to *stay* at the North, in the hope that her husband might find opportunity to follow her. When, on board the *Eli Whitney*, the chance for freedom had been presented to her, her mind had been convulsed by conflicting emotions. If she had not returned, her master, she knew, would have deemed it but a proper retribution to leave Abraham in a state of cruel uncertainty respecting her. Now, that part of the case was changed; and though the husband and wife parted in grief, it was grief mingled with hope.

### CHAPTER III.—THE ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING.

On the 25th of January, 1837, the 6th annual meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society had called together a true-hearted array of the sons and daughters of that ancient Commonwealth. “Not many rich—not many noble” were there, as the world counts riches and nobility; but of the rich in generous sympathy—the noble in their devotedness to freedom, came a goodly multitude. Farmers, traders, and artisans—the fair and the dark—of English and of African descent, men, women and children, they thronged together with one heart and with one mind: the worthiest children of Massachusetts, by this token, that the trumpet-call of freedom came not to them in vain. During one of their *thirteen* sittings on that occasion, a stranger rose to speak. He was gentlemanly and prepossessing in his appearance, and every ear gave him attention. He was announced to the assembly as MR. LOGAN, of Savannah. He added that, though a slaveholder, he was also a Christian; and could he be convinced that

slaveholding was condemned by Scripture, he would instantly renounce it; and he cited the case of Onesimus and Philemon, and the laws of Moses. The bible argument *against* slavery, (thanks to the labors of anti-slavery societies, now the only one the New England people will receive,) was fully presented to him. His reply was, "You have said much that is true, and much that is new;—but what is true is not new, and what is new is not true." He proceeded to declare that he still held himself open to conviction, and sincerely hoped that, if he were in the wrong, he might be convinced of it, though at present he saw no proof of it, either from Scripture or from the nature of slavery. "You call us men-stealers," he said, "as if that could be branded as a sin, which was universally practiced by the Patriarchs."—"Well, Sir!" exclaimed a man of color who had more than once sprung upon his feet as the discussion proceeded; "what said the patriarchs themselves of it? *Indeed I was stolen*,—said the patriarch Joseph:—*We are verily guilty* concerning our brother! said the other sons of Jacob." Driven from this ground, the Southerner proceeded to enlarge upon the felicity secured to the slaves by the system. "Our servants are very happy," he said. "One of my own people had the opportunity presented her, last year, of leaving me. We were on board the *Eli Whitney*, down in your harbor here, just about to sail for the dreadful land of slavery; but she would not quit me. They could not get her to do it. There is nothing she so much dreads as an abolitionist. She knows she is far better off as a slave than are your free women at the North. She told the other women on her return, that 'her missis' mother, in New Hampshire did more work in a day, than they were obliged to do in a week.' She saw no charms in your boasted northern liberty."

Great pains were taken by the meeting that the lonely advocate of slavery should have no reason to think himself unkindly or unfairly dealt with, because he was in a minority of one. Men checked themselves in their expressions of detestation for his sentiments, lest he should suppose that they had a disposition to deny him opportunity for the fullest presentation of them.

At the close of the meeting, more than one of the members invited the

stranger to share the hospitalities of their homes. They hoped, by their private conversation and kindly reception, to assure him that it was the best good of the South and of the whole country that they sought, in their labors for the abolition of slavery. Their houses were open day and night to the fugitive slave, and they hoped that good might, in this instance, result from opening them to the slaveholder.

“Mamma!” exclaimed a little girl of six years old, who pressed closer to the side of her parents as she heard Mr. Logan accept an invitation to dine with them, “Oh! if you please, mamma, let me dine with Aunt Mary.” “It is not convenient to-day, Elizabeth,” replied the mother. “But, mamma! I cannot bear to sit down to dinner with a man who sells little children.”

#### CHAPTER IV.—THE MORNING CALL.

If my readers are Bostonians, they cannot have failed to pass through West street, one of the avenues leading from the Common to Washington street. On the left side of it, they will recollect stables and carriage manufactories—on the right, a row of brick dwellings. It was in the drawing-room of one of these houses, that the conversation I am about to relate went on between the mistress of the mansion and a visitor. Both ladies seemed “on hospitable thoughts intent.” “The Logans are Presbyterians, I learn,” said the visitor, “and so I shall ask all our orthodox friends to meet them. I think they will be altogether more likely to be impressed by the arguments and conversation of those of their own denomination.”

“When do you receive them?” rejoined the lady of the house.

“This evening,” was the reply. “I am on my way there now, to invite them.”

Here the conversation was interrupted. “Some one wishes to speak with you a moment.” Apologizing to her friend, the lady descended to the hall. The person in waiting informed her that, as he was crossing the street near the Providence Rail-road, he had observed a woman of color standing in the way, as if doubtful

where to go. She had on her head only the turban that constitutes the head-dress of the Southern female slave, and her whole appearance bespoke her condition.

“Are you a slave?” he said. “Yes; my master sent for me to come to him, but I cannot find the way.”

“Do you wish to be free?”

“Yes.”

“Come with me, then;”—and he conducted her to the nearest anti-slavery dwelling, which chanced to be the one where we have seen our two ladies in conversation.

They set food before the travel-worn stranger, and bade her depend on them that no one thing that her case required should be left undone.

“Master sent for me to be forwarded here to him, but I cannot find the way. I should not go near him, only he has my trunk with every thing I have. We got snagged going down the river, and I was put on board one vessel and my trunk on board another, which got on first. Master’s house is here,” she said, showing a soiled scrap of paper, on which was written, though it had become almost illegible, “No. 5 Court street.”

“What is your master’s name!” exclaimed both ladies, in a breath.

“LOGAN.”

Great was the astonishment of the two friends at this wonderful coincidence. “Truth was strange—stranger than fiction.” Here than was the “happy slave” of the hero of the Massachusetts annual meeting! Here was she who had refused to take her freedom; the heroine of the Eli Whitney, who had dared slavery that she might not distress the heart of her husband.

Her new friends advised her to go openly to her master, and claim her freedom and her property, face to face. She shook her head. “He could contrive to hinder me in a thousand ways, if I let him know first. No,—I’d better take my clothes and things and go off before he knows—if I knew how to find this place.”

“Follow me,” said the projector of the Presbyterian tea-party. “I am going there this moment, and shall delight to show you the way.”

Forward they went, down Washington street, up Court street; the lady rang at No. 5, and delivered her note of invitation to the servant; Pinda squeezed past, inquiring for “my master”—and so ended this eventful morning.

#### CHAPTER V.—THE TEA PARTY.

As 7 o’clock that evening drew nigh, the guests began to gather around the pleasant hearth of the “South-end Abolitionist.” The Logans, for whom the party had been made, failed not to be of the number.

The talk naturally fell on slavery, and Mr. Logan, however open to conviction he might have kept his mind, confessed himself still unconverted. He dwelt particularly on the unfitness of the slaves for freedom, and on their unwillingness to receive it. Again “my woman” was walked over the course, as at the annual meeting, and the fact of her arrival that morning announced.

“How she ever found me,” he said, “I cannot conjecture.” The hostess, who labored under no such uncertainty as to the *modus operandi*, looked hard into the fire, the better to conceal her inclination to laugh.

“She could not even procure a carriage,” he continued, “to bring her to me from the railroad. There is much boasting of liberty at the North, but there seems to be little real justice here for her race.” This was too painfully true to excite mirth.

“I think,” he went on, smiling courteously, with a slight and general bow to the company, “that we of the South may defy even such zeal and perseverance, as I admiringly acknowledge in the abolitionists. We can rely on the attachment of our servants. I knew, when I sent to my agent for the one who arrived this morning, how much pleasure it would give her to rejoin us.”

The host, unaware of the developments of the morning, could not enter so fully as the ladies into the exquisite comedy of the scene, but the words, “I sent

to my agent," &c. arrested his attention; and by a mute glance, he took the company to witness that here was a case in which a slave might hereafter require their aid to prove her master's acknowledged agency in her transportation.

In the relative position of the company to each other, affected as it had been by the events of the morning, a free flow of conversation could hardly be expected. Some, wondering at the constrained manner of others, strove to sustain the conversation upon the scriptural arguments, and the loveliness of liberty—but it was a relief to all when the evening was at an end. To one party, that they might recount to each other the events of the day; to the other, that they might with the help of "our woman," just arrived, arrange their line of march from No. 5 Court street to New Hampshire, which was to be taken up the ensuing morning.

How many a slip is there between the cup and the lip! "Our woman," on being summoned by Mr. Logan, to attend upon the night-toilette of her mistress, was ascertained to be in society altogether unbecoming the character of "an attached slave;"—i. e. *among the missing*.

#### CHAPTER VI.—THE FREE DWELLING.

After a few weeks residence with the friend whose house had first sheltered her, Pinda expressed a desire to be no longer dependent on any one, for what her own exertions might procure. She selected a room in——street, where she lived as happily as the separation from her husband would permit. She experienced no difficulty in providing for all her wants by the labor of her hands. It was, to say the least, *as easy*, she found, to wash, iron, brew, bake, sweep or "clean paint," *for a consideration*, as to do all these things without receiving any consideration at all.

She was sometimes annoyed by Mr. Logan, who never failed, when he visited Boston, to alarm her by endeavors to find out her humble apartment, or to send her some threat, from which, in her uncertainty as to the extent of his

power, she could not help suffering.

She used, when so annoyed, to pay a visit to “her people,” as she always called those who first sheltered her, that she might obtain fresh assurance of the safety of her new position.

“Mr. Logan tells us,” said this family to her, (for they always made it a point of conscience to transmit his messages,) “that he wants you to go back with him, that he may have you nursed up, and taken care of.” “Why did not he take care of me when he had the chance?” was the reply.

“He says he wishes very much to see you.”

“I have seen as much as I want to *of him.*”

When those who had the opportunity of watching the facts here narrated, as they evolved from the arrangement of Providence, hear it said that slaves cannot take care of themselves if made free, they point to PINDA, living in freedom with industrious and provident comfort.

When they hear the ignorant and heartless assertion that slaves do not wish to be free, they point to PINDA, struggling between the claims of freedom and affection.

When they hear it denied that the North is guilty of upholding slavery, they point to the “gentlemanly and religious slaveholder,”—connected by marriage with the farthest North—bringing his slaves into the free New Hampshire homes—taking his place in the assemblies of our northern social and religious life—partaking of every symbol of Christian communion—following his letters of introduction into the first society, and disseminating every where the principles of unrighteousness and slavery: and then they bid the beholder mark the conduct of those who claim to represent the piety and intelligence of the North, towards such a man.

They claim to be ministers of Christ and conservators of morals; yet their “poor dumb mouths” are never opened on this giant iniquity, and silent they are determined to remain, till the mouths of “Garrison and the like” are shut. When

we see such men, racked by the pressure of a public sentiment in the process of regeneration, all refusing to do more than to admit that “it might, perhaps, be well for me to *begin to consider* this subject,” they point to the *slaveholder’s* unrebuked and incessant labors among us, and say, “While we have among us devotedness to slavery like this, and continue to sustain religious teachers who refuse to condemn it, while they unhesitatingly denounce abolitionists, what can be said but that the North is guilty of upholding slavery with the most powerful means she possesses?”

#### CHAPTER VII.—THE SURPRISE.

A year and seven months from the time of Pinda’s arrival in Boston, as the cold November rains began to set in, she sat lonely by her humble hearth in B. street. A melancholy feeling crept over her as she thought of her absent husband, and of the length of time that had elapsed since they parted. She thought of all the dreadful uncertainties of his situation. Had Mr. Logan sold him to the far South? Had he kept him in ignorance of her fate? Had he succeeded in making Abraham believe Pinda dishonest and unworthy? She had every reason to suppose the latter might be the case, as Mr. Logan had spared no pains to create prejudice against her in the minds of her new friends, by declaring that she had robbed Abraham of all his savings before she left Savannah, as well as himself of large sums. Her heart sunk within her as she weighed the probabilities that she might never again behold her husband. She had once procured a letter to be written to him, but how many contingencies might have prevented his receiving it. The mail does not run for slaves, nor, as abolitionists have learned to their cost, for truly freemen either. In this, at least, we are in bonds as bound with them.

Overpowered with painful reflections, she sat nourishing the expiring fire, till it seemed the emblem of her perishing hopes. A knocking at the door aroused her, and as she opened, a man of color stood in the passage, bidding her come to

a certain house he mentioned in Battery-march street that evening, and she would find a letter from her husband. He was alive then—well, perhaps—still confided in her affection and integrity. She could hardly wait for evening, and its first stars saw her on her way to the place of appointment. The same man received her on her arrival, but seemed in no haste to produce the promised letter. He talked vaguely of the many changes and chances of life, and how we ought to be prepared for whatever might take place. What—what has happened? she strove to say; but she could not speak the words. “What would you say,” continued the man, “if the person from whom you expect to receive a letter were not far from here?” Pinda rose—fear, doubt, joy, struggling within her for the mastery. She made a step towards the entrance—her consciousness gave way, and she fell fainting to the floor. The humane man, who had striven in vain to prepare her for the unexpected arrival, raised her up and succeeded in reviving her.

Her husband was called in, and all the various experiences of both recounted. “I am here,” said Abraham. “How I got here you must not tell, for it may bring kind people into difficulty, and close up the way to those who are left behind. Our two little children—it is well they are dead. We have not left them in slavery. 970 dollars I have paid master since he first hired me out 6 years ago, and have paid all my own clothes, food, doctoring, and for all the doctoring that Pinda needed, even to a spoonful of oatmeal, though she was master’s house-slave: and to hear him say that she stole!” “Yes,” interrupted Pinda, “he said that I had robbed you and himself.” Abraham could not suppress an interjection of contempt. “Is not all that I have yours, Pinda, and could it be in better hands?”

Abraham gave evidence, in all his remarks, of sound sense and right feeling. Aware that his own case differed from that of his wife, he being a fugitive, and she protected by the law in the enjoyment of her freedom, he laid his plans for safety with acuteness, and followed them out with steadiness. He keenly realized, though the fair and the wealthy find it difficult to do so, that the freest State of the twenty-six has so much to do with slavery that there is not a

foot of ground in all its fair territory where the fugitive may feel secure. Not a hamlet where he can be assured that men will let the outcast dwell with them and bewray not him that wandereth. Both the husband and wife were perfectly aware of the cares and duties of freedom—of its responsibilities, as well as of its delights. “No,” said Pinda, in reply to one who queried whether slavery were not as easy to be borne as the disadvantages and possible privations of their new condition,—“a crust here, with only cold water, is better than the greatest plenty in slavery. All my youth I have suffered under different mistresses with no enjoyment of my family. Now, Abraham is with me. I will take care of him—he will take care of me. We may suffer with the cold—we may suffer from want, but our last days will be our best days, for we are FREE.”

#### CHAPTER VIII.—THE WEEKLY CONTRIBUTION.

Two ways opened to Abraham, either of which would ensure his safety from pursuit. One was the way to Canada—the other to Guiana. While making up his mind respecting them, his thoughts often reverted to the condition of his afflicted people at the South; and he felt, what every human soul *ought* deeply to feel,—“that Freedom itself is not sweet to a man, while a brother is suffering in bondage.” Many a midnight found him in discussion with Pinda upon the “principles and measures of Anti-Slavery Societies.” It was surprising how little difficulty they found in comprehending problems that had puzzled Theological institutions, and whole bodies of clergymen. They saw, as by intuition, how their former master’s northern friends and associates might bring him to understand, if they would, that slavery was an intolerable abomination. It was no riddle to them, “What the North had to do with it.” It was to them as clear as the sun at noon-day, that the Boston man who manufactured “negro-cloths” for the Savannah man, and took his pay in cotton, had precisely the same interest in the continuance of slavery as the latter. It was no marvel to them that the members of Park St. Bowdoin St. Federal St. and Berry St. &c. who perchance held

mortgages of *Southern property*, or deeds of Alabama lands, should give their respective ministers to understand that it was disagreeable to them to hear notices read on Sunday of an anti-slavery meeting.

They had had opportunities to know how many a northern conscience is killed with kindness at the South, and how many a southern conscience strengthened in iniquity by the conduct of professors of religion at the North. It looked as clear as day to them, that the more members there were in a church, the easier the minister's salary was raised:—and they saw that as matters stood, the richest men would be the first to quit a church whose discipline forbade participation in slaveholding.

They saw why it should be as much as a minister's living was worth to be an abolitionist, and what made it so difficult to “work with Mr. Garrison.”

That enigma, “immediate emancipation,” was not too much for *their* philosophy: that dark saying, “slavery is a sin in all circumstances,” looked luminous to their ethics. Anti-Slavery Societies of men and women, helping each other to put a stop to slavery, looked to them as natural as life, and as beautiful as religion. If a man hated slavery, they saw that he would just as surely call “all hands to the work,” as he would breathe.

But then they had had those actual illuminations on the subject, before which the fashionable mental difficulties flee away like fog before the sun of a summer morning. Thirty-nine lashes, well laid on, or the severing of the first-born, would soon make a man see, they thought, that all this hanging back sprung out of selfish sympathy with the master, and the want of common human feeling for the slave.

Seeing so clearly and feeling so deeply, as these two did, their inquiry was, “What shall we do?” Poor as they were, they felt rich in the possession of liberty, and they gave their mite to extend it to others, with that effusion of heart, so lovely and so rare, that commands a blessing upon the spot where it is poured out.

“Just the thing for us!” they said; as they saw the “weekly contribution

plan,” set up in the dwelling they loved so well to visit, as it was so many centuries ago in the dwellings of the Christian Greeks. They entered their names upon the card as subscribers, each of a cent a week; and as they might so soon depart, they paid in advance. The little boxes of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, the savings banks of the cause, have the aperture made too narrow for the reception of any but small coins; and the contributors to the West street box blushed to think, that the first time that the size of a donation rendered it necessary to raise the cover for its admission, was when Pinda brought her discolored Mexican dollar, (yet encrusted with the sand of its Savannah hiding-place,) to carry on the operations of the Massachusetts Society against slavery.

*(1840)*

# HARRIET WINSLOW

## *The Lonely Hearted*

A Quaker born in Portland, Maine, and educated in Providence, Rhode Island, Harriet Winslow (1819–1889) was a supporter of antislavery and women’s rights causes who wrote poetry all her life, though little of it for publication. An exception is “The Lonely Hearted,” published in *The Liberty Bell* in 1841. This poem subtly reveals the sorrow that haunts the inner lives of even the most “privileged” domestic slaves.

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Sadly above her stricken rose-tree bending,  
    Marking its withered leaves with plaintive moan,  
Which with the summer wind’s low sigh is blending,—  
    A little child is sorrowing alone.

Vainly her playmates on her name are calling;  
    Their shouts and laughter pass unechoed by,  
And all unheeded are the sunbeams falling  
    On her dejected brow and tearful eye.

The hum of insects soothes her ear no longer;  
    The flowers spring unnoticed at her side;  
For memory, with a deeper spell, and stronger,  
    Recalls the hopes, that, one by one, have died.

She is a slave,—but not in outward seeming,  
    For she has fallen into gentle hands;  
They have supplied the body, little dreaming  
    How much more urgent are the soul’s demands.

*The insult of the lash is never offered*

THE HEART OF THE LASH IS NEVER OFFERED,

Light are her fetters, lighter are her tasks,  
And ample recompense is freely proffered,—  
All, all but love, when love is all she asks.

No gentle eyes bend over her in sleeping;  
From all her kindred she was early torn,  
And often-times her eyes are dim with weeping,  
That she is left thus utterly alone.

The heart must have its idol—and she cherished  
Each living thing, that on her love relied,  
Till bird and flower, one by one, have perished  
The rose-tree was the last,—that too has died.

She starts—for now a happy troop advances;  
Her master's children hurry gaily by;  
She marks their clinging hands, their loving glances,  
And gazes after them with wistful eye.

“Oh! that I too could know such thrilling pressure,—  
Could clasp a little sister's hand in mine!  
How lavish on her all my hoarded treasure  
Of love, the unloved only can divine.

“Your winning beauty I would never covet,  
Though well I know the power it doth possess;  
The soft eye, with the fair, pure brow above it,  
That waving hair the loving winds caress.

“Nor do I covet your abode of splendor;  
The beauty beaming from its pictured walls;  
Nor the rich robes and jewellery which render

FOR THE HER ROBES, and jewelry, which render  
New radiance to those fair and stately halls.

“But O! how oft with vain and restless longing,  
I languish for the love you do not prize;  
Sweet visions in the lonely night come thronging,  
That bend above me with fond, earnest eyes.

“Visions that wear the features of my mother,  
When last she pressed me to her breaking heart,  
Till rude hands sought her piteous shrieks to smother,  
And sternly forced her clinging arms apart.

“Come, Death! dark vision, but no longer fearful—  
Oh! lay me once more on my mother’s breast!  
I shrink not from the cold, still house, though tearful,  
My yearning heart will there, at least, find rest.”

(1840)

## JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

from *Argument of John Quincy Adams, Before the Supreme Court of the United States, in the Case of the United States, appellants, vs. Cinque, and Others, Africans, Captured in the Schooner Amistad*

The former president and eight-term congressman John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), a favorite of abolitionists for his opposition to slavery, agreed in 1841 to help represent the African captives who had freed themselves by a bloody insurrection on board the Spanish schooner *Amistad* when their case went to the Supreme Court. To the dismay of President Martin Van Buren and other supporters of slavery who had hoped the escapees would be convicted of murder or returned as slaves to their Cuban owners, a federal court in Connecticut had ruled that the Africans had been illegally enslaved and were entitled to freedom. Van Buren's administration immediately appealed. The seventy-three-year-old Adams spoke for several hours presenting his argument. The Court ruled in the African's favor, enabling Cinqué, the leader of the insurrection, and thirty-four others to return to their homeland.

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Is it possible that a President of the United States should be ignorant that the right of personal liberty is individual. That the right to it of every one, is *his own*—JUS SUMM; and that no greater violation of his official oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, could be committed, than by an order to seize and deliver up at a foreign minister's demand, thirty-six persons, in a mass, under the general denomination of *all*, the negroes, late of the *Amistad*. That he was ignorant, profoundly ignorant of this self-evident truth, inextinguishable till yonder gilt framed Declarations of Independence shall perish in the general conflagration of the great globe itself, I am constrained to believe—for to that ignorance, the only alternative to account for this order to the Marshal of the District of Connecticut, is wilful and corrupt perjury to his official presidential oath.

But ignorant or regardless as the President of the United States might be of the self-evident principles of human rights, he was bound to know that he could not lawfully direct the delivery up to a foreign minister, even of slaves, of acknowledged undisputed slaves, in an undefined, unspecified number. That the number must be defined, and individuals specifically designated, had been expressly decreed by the Supreme Court of the United States in that very case of the Antelope so often, and as I shall demonstrate so erroneously quoted as a precedent for the captives of the Amistad.

“Whatever doubts (said in that case Chief Justice Marshall) may attend the question whether the Spanish claimants are entitled to restitution of ALL the Africans taken out of their possession with the Antelope we cannot doubt the propriety of demanding ample proof of *the extent of that possession*. Every legal principle which requires the plaintiff to prove his claim in any case, applies with full force to this point; and no countervailing consideration exists. The onus probandi, as to *the number* of Africans which were on board, when the vessel was captured, unquestionably lies on the Spanish libellants. Their proof is not satisfactory beyond 93. The *individuals* who compose this number *must be designated* to the satisfaction of the Circuit Court.” 10 Wheaton 128. And this decision acquires double authority, as a precedent to establish the principles which it affirms, inasmuch as it was given upon appeal, and reversed the decision of the Circuit Court, which had resorted to the drawing of lots, both for the designation of the number, and for the specification of individuals.

Lawless and tyrannical; (may it please the Court—Truth, Justice, and the Rights of human kind forbid me to qualify these epithets) Lawless and Tyrannical, as this order thus was upon its face, the cold blooded cruelty with which it was issued—was altogether congenial to its spirit—I have said that it was issued in the dead of winter—and that the Grampus was of so small a burden as to be utterly unfit for the service upon which she was ordered. I now add that the gallant officer who commanded her remonstrated, with feelings of

indignation, controlled only by the respect officially due from him to his superiors against it. That he warned them of the impossibility of stowing this cargo of human flesh and blood beneath the deck of the vessel, and that if they should be shipped in the month of January, on her deck, and the almost certain casualty if a storm should befall them on the passage to Cuba, they must all inevitably perish. He remonstrated in vain! He was answered only by the mockery of an instruction, to treat his prisoners with all possible tenderness and attention.—If the whirlwind had swept them all into the ocean he at least would have been guiltless of their fate.

But although the order of delivery was upon its face absolute and unconditional, it was made conditional, by instructions from the Secretary of State to the District Attorney. It was to be executed only in the event of the decision of the court being favorable to the pretended application of the Spanish minister, and Lieutenant Paine was to receive the negroes from the custody of the marshal *as soon* as their delivery should have been ordered by the court.

“Letting I dare not wait upon I would,” a direct collision with the authority of the judicial tribunals was cautiously avoided; and a remarkable illustration of the thoughtless and inconsiderate character of the whole Executive action in this case, appears in the fact, that with all the cunning and intricate stratagems to grab and ship off these poor wretches to Cuba, neither the President of the United States who signed, nor the Secretary of State who transmitted the order *knew*, but both of them mistook the court, before which the trial of the Africans was pending. They supposed it was the Circuit, when in fact it was the District Court.

The *Grampus* arrived at New Haven three days before the decision of Judge Judson was pronounced. Her appearance there, in January, when the ordinary navigation of Long Island Sound is suspended, coming from the adjoining naval station at Brooklyn, naturally excited surprise, curiosity, suspicion. What could be the motive of the Secretary of the Navy for ordering a public vessel of the United States upon such a service at such a time? Why should her commander,

her officers and crew be exposed, in the most tempestuous and the coldest month of the year, at once to the snowy hurricanes of the northeast, and the ice-bound shores of the northwest? These were questions necessarily occurring to the minds of every witness to this strange and sudden apparition. Lieut. Paine and his officers were questioned why they were there, and whither they were bound? They could not tell. The mystery of iniquity sometimes is but a transparent veil and reveals its own secret. The fate of the Amistad captives was about to be decided as far as it could be by the judge of a subordinate tribunal. The surrender of them had been demanded of the Executive by a foreign minister, and earnestly pressed upon the court by the President's officer, the District Attorney. The sudden and unexpected appearance of the Grampus, with a destination unavowed, was a very intelligible signal of the readiness, of the willingness, of the wish of the President to comply with the foreign minister's demand. It was a signal equally intelligible to the political sympathies of a judge presumed to be congenial to those of a northern President with southern principles, and the District Attorney in his letter of 20th December had given soothing hopes to the Secretary of State, which he in turn had communicated in conference, on the 28th of December, to the Spanish minister, that the decree of the judge, dooming the Africans to servitude and death in Cuba, would be as pliant to the vengeful thirst of the barracoon slave-traders, as that of Herod was in olden times to the demand of his dancing daughter for the head of John the Baptist in a charger.

But when Lieut. Paine showed to the District Attorney the Executive warrant to the marshal for the delivery of the negroes, he immediately perceived its nullity by the statement that they were in custody under a process from the "Circuit Court" and that the same error had been committed in the instructions to the marshal. "In great haste," therefore, he immediately dispatched Lieut. Meade, as a special messenger to Washington, requesting a correction of the error in the warrant and instructions; giving notice that if the *pretended* friends of the negroes obtain a writ of habeas corpus, the marshal could not justify under the warrant as it was; and that the decision of the court would undoubtedly be

had by the time the bearer of the message would be able to return to New Haven.

This letter was dated the 11th of January, 1840. The trial had already been five days “progressing.” The evidence was all in, and the case was to be submitted to the court on that day. Misgivings were already entertained that the decision of the judge might not be so complacent to the longings of the Executive department as had been foretold and almost promised on the 20th of December. Mr. Holabird, therefore, at the desire of the Marshal propounds that decent question, and requests precise instructions, “whether in the event of a decree by the court requiring the Marshal to release the Negroes, or in case of an appeal by the adverse party, it was expected the EXECUTIVE warrant [to ship off the prisoners in the *Grampus* to Cuba,] would be executed?” These inquiries may account perhaps for the fact that the same Marshal, *after* the District and Circuit Courts had both decided that these negroes were free, still returned them upon the census of the inhabitants of Connecticut as *Slaves*.

The Secretary of State was more wary. The messenger, Lieut. Meade, bore his dispatch from New Haven to Washington in *one* day. On the 12th of January, Mr. Forsyth in a *confidential* letter to Mr. Holabird informs him that his missive of the day before had been received. That the order for the delivery of the Negroes to Lieut. Paine of the *Grampus* was returned, *corrected* agreeably to the District Attorney’s suggestion—by whom corrected no uninitiated man can tell. Of the final warrant of Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, to the Marshal of the District of Connecticut, to ship for transportation beyond the seas, an undefined, nameless number of human beings, not a trace remains upon the records or the files of any one of the Executive Departments, and when nearly three months after this transaction the documents relating to it were, upon a call from the House of Representatives, communicated to them by message from Mr. Van Buren himself, this original, erroneous, uncorrected order of the 7th of January, 1840, was the only one included in the communication.

But in the *confidential* answer of the Secretary of State of the 12th of

January to the inquiries of the Marshal, he says, "I have to state by direction of the President, that if the decision of the Court *is such as is anticipated*, (that is, that the captives should be delivered up as slaves,) the order of the President is to be carried into execution, unless an appeal shall actually have been interposed, *you are not to take it for granted that it will be interposed*. And if on the contrary the decision of the Court is *different*, you are to take out an appeal, and allow things to remain as they are until the appeal shall have been decided." The very phraseology of this instruction is characteristic of its origin, and might have dispensed the Secretary of State from the necessity of stating that it emanated from the President himself. The inquiry of the Marshal was barefaced enough; whether, if the Executive warrant and the judicial decree should come in direct conflict with each other, it was expected that he should obey the *President*, or the *Judge*? No! says the Secretary of State. If the decree of the Judge should be in our favor, and you can steal a march upon the negroes by foreclosing their right of appeal, ship them off without mercy and without delay: and if the decree should be in their favor, fail not to enter an instantaneous appeal to the Supreme Court where the chances may be more hostile to self-emancipated slaves.

Was ever such a scene of Liliputian trickery enacted by the rulers of a great, magnanimous, and Christian nation? Contrast it with that act of self-emancipation by which the savage, heathen barbarians Cinque and Grabeau liberated themselves and their fellow suffering countrymen from Spanish slave-traders, and which the Secretary of State, by communion of sympathy with Ruiz and Montes, denominates *lawless violence*. Cinque and Grabeau are uncouth and barbarous names. Call them Harmodius and Aristogiton, and go back for moral principle three thousand years to the fierce and glorious democracy of Athens. They too resorted to *lawless violence*, and slew the tyrant to redeem the freedom of their country. For this heroic action they paid the forfeit of their lives; but within three years the Athenians expelled their tyrants themselves, and in gratitude to their self-devoted deliverers decreed, that thenceforth no slave should ever bear either of their names. Cinque and Grabeau are not slaves. Let

them bear in future history the names of Harmodius and Aristogiton.

This review of all the proceedings of the Executive I have made with the utmost pain, because it was necessary to bring it fully before your Honors, to show that the course of that department had been dictated, throughout, not by *justice* but by *sympathy*—and a sympathy the most partial and unjust. And this sympathy prevailed to such a degree, among all the persons concerned in this business, as to have perverted their minds with regard to all the most sacred principles of law and right, on which the liberties of the people of the United States are founded; and a course was pursued, from the beginning to the end, which was not only an outrage upon the persons whose lives and liberties were at stake, but hostile to the power and independence of the judiciary itself.

I am now, may it please your Honors, obliged to call the attention of the Court to a very improper paper, in relation to this case, which was published in the Official Journal of the Executive Administration, on the very day of the meeting of this Court, and introduced with a commendatory notice by the editor, as the production of one of the brightest intellects of the South. I know not who is the author, but it appeared with that almost official sanction, on the day of meeting of this Court. It purports to be a review of the present case. The writer begins by referring to the decision of the District Court, and says the case is “one of the deepest importance to the southern states.” I ask, may it please your Honors, is that an appeal to JUSTICE? What have the southern states to do with the case, or what has the case to do with the southern states? The case, as far as it is known to the courts of this country, or cognizable by them, presents points with which the southern states have nothing to do. It is a question of slavery and freedom between foreigners; of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the African slave trade; and has not, when properly considered, the remotest connection with the interests of the southern states.

What was the purpose or intent of that article, I am not prepared to say, but it was evidently calculated to excite prejudice, to arouse all the acerbities of feeling between different sections of this country, and to connect them with this

case, in such a manner as to induce this Court to decide it in favor of the alleged interests of the southern states, and against the suppression of the African slave trade. It is not my intention to review the piece at this time. It has been done, and ably done, by more than one person. And after infinite difficulty, one of these answers has been inserted in the same official journal in which the piece appeared. I now wish simply, to refer your Honors to the original principle of slavery, as laid down by this champion of the institution. It is given by this writer as a great principle of national law and stands as the foundation of his argument. I wish, if your Honors deem a paper of this kind, published under such circumstances, worthy of consideration in the decision of a case, that your Honors would advert to that principle, and say whether it is a principle recognized by this Court, as the ground on which it will decide cases.

“The truth is, that property in man has existed in all ages of the world, and results from the *natural* state of man, *which is war*. When God created the first family and gave them the fields of the earth as an inheritance, one of the number, in obedience to the impulses and passions that had been implanted in the human heart, rose and slew his brother. This universal nature of man is alone modified by civilization and law. War, conquest, and force, have produced slavery, and it is state necessity and the internal law of self preservation, that will ever perpetuate and defend it.”

There is the principle, on which a particular decision is demanded from this Court, by the Official Journal of the Executive, on behalf of the southern states? Is that a principle recognized by this Court? Is it the principle of that DECLARATION? [Here Mr. A. pointed to the Declaration of Independence, two copies of which hang before the eyes of the Judges on the bench.] It is alleged in the Official Journal, that war gives the right to take the life of our enemy, and that this confers a right to make him a slave, on account of having spared his life. Is that the principle on which these United States stand before the world? That DECLARATION says that every man is “endowed by his Creator with certain inalienable rights,” and that “among these are life, liberty, and the

pursuit of happiness.” If these rights are inalienable, they are incompatible with the rights of the victor to take the life of his enemy in war, or to spare his life and make him a slave. If this principle is sound, it reduces to brute force all the rights of man. It places all the sacred relations of life at the power of the strongest. No man has a right to life or liberty, if he has an enemy able to take them from him. There is the principle. There is the whole argument of this paper. Now I do not deny that the only principle upon which a color of *right* can be attributed to the condition of slavery is by assuming that the natural state of man is *War*. The bright intellect of the South, clearly saw, that without this principle for a corner stone, he had no foundation for his argument. He assumes it therefore without a blush, as Hobbes assumed it to prove that government and despotism are synonymous words. I will not here discuss the right or the rights of slavery, but I say that the doctrine of Hobbes, that *War* is the natural state of man, has for ages been exploded, as equally disclaimed and rejected by the philosopher and the Christian. That it is utterly incompatible with any theory of human rights, and especially with the rights which the Declaration of Independence proclaims as self-evident truths. The moment you come, to the Declaration of Independence, that every man has a right to life and liberty, an inalienable right, this case is decided. I ask nothing more in behalf of these unfortunate men, than this Declaration. The opposite principle is laid down, not by an unintelligent or unthinking man, but is given to the public and to this Court, as coming from one of the brightest intellects of the South. Your Honors see what it comes to, when carried out. I will call the attention of the Court to one more paragraph:—

“Instead of having the negroes placed in a situation to receive punishment for what offences they may have committed against their masters, those who have been in Cuba in *undisputed possession* of property under the Spanish flag were instantly deprived of that possession, and their final title to the property peremptorily decided upon by an American court, in defiance of the plainest treaty stipulations. Not only that, but Ruiz and Montes, Spanish citizens, thus forced into our territory under appalling circumstances, where common

humanity, independent of all law, demanded that they should be treated with hospitality as unfortunate guests, were actually thrown into prison under charges which the negroes *were instigated* to make, for offences committed against the negroes while they were in Cuba, under the Spanish jurisdiction. This is the justice of an American court, bowed down in disgraceful subserviency before the bigoted mandates of that blind fanaticism which prompted the Judge upon the bench to declare in his decree, in reference to one of these negroes, that, ‘Although he might be stained with crime, yet he should not sigh in vain for Africa;’ and all because his hands were reeking with the blood of murdered white men!! It is a base outrage (I can use no milder language,) upon all the sympathies of civilized life.”

That is the complimentary manner in which the courts of the United States are treated by the brightest intellects of the South, in the Official Journal, and under the immediate supervision of the Executive Administration of the Government.

(1841)

# DANIEL HENSHAW

## *Dialogue on Slavery*

A Boston lawyer, journalist, and friend of the abolitionist senator Charles Sumner, Daniel Henshaw (fl. 1830–1860) wrote this one-act play for five characters to be used in schools, antislavery meetings, and home performances. Although intended more for dramatic readings than for full-stage productions, it is one of the first American antislavery plays.

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### *Dramatis Personæ*

MR. FREEMAN, *a New England Abolitionist*

REV. DR. FULLCREED, ‘*an Abolitionist BUT*’—*in other words, an apologist for slavery, a member of the American Board, &c.*

COL. BOMBASTO, *a Slaveholder from the South*

THOS. TURNWELL, Esq., *a Planter from Barbadoes, formerly a Slaveholder*

MISS PATRON, *a Distinguished Lady from the South, formerly a Slaveholder*

SCENE—*An Anti-Slavery Room in Boston, where a number of persons are assembled to make arrangements preparatory to the Celebration of the First of August.*

[*Enter Mr. Freeman and Rev. Dr. Fullcreed*]

*Rev. Dr. Fullcreed.* Mr. Freeman, I understood you were to hold an informal meeting here this morning, preparatory to your celebration, and for free and friendly conversation among the friends of anti-slavery. Although I do not agree with you in all your *measures*, you know I am friendly to the cause; and as it is, your practice to admit opponents as well as friends to a free discussion of our principles, I would introduce Col. Bombasto, a friend of mine, now at my

house, a slaveholder, from the South. He was on his way to New Hampshire, but hearing of your celebration, he has made his calculation to be present, provided there is no objection. The Colonel is a *very exemplary Christian*, and a member of the Rev. Dr. Fullrobe's church in Savannah, where I often visit, where I have a daughter and many friends, and where I am always treated with the utmost hospitality and kindness.

*Mr. Freeman.* Very well, Dr., bring on your slaveholding friend. We shall be glad to see and hear you both. A goodly number of our anti-slavery friends from a distance are already here, among whom are Mr. Turnwell, a wealthy and distinguished planter from Barbadoes, formerly a slaveholder; and Miss Patron, an intelligent lady of family and rank, from the South. We have no dread of seeing and meeting our opponents; aye, and of laying our hearts open before them—of telling them all our principles, views and feelings. If a slaveholder comes into our meeting, we are not seized with horror and filled with fearful apprehensions of the result. We do not order him out of our meeting, and send a mob to seize him, drag him to prison and to court to be tried as a criminal. No; so far from sending him away, we invite him to a seat, and a part in our discussions. And we are also glad to see *you*, Doctor, and as many of your reverend and learned associates as choose to be present, although you keep the subject of slavery out of your churches, and refuse to read our notices from your pulpits, and forget to mention the condition of the poor, oppressed slave in your prayers, while you are so fervently praying for the heathen abroad, and raising money to send him the gospel.

*Rev. Dr. Fullcreed.* Why, as to keeping slavery out of the church, out of the pulpit and our prayers, Mr. Freeman, I know you abolitionists have been in the habit of making objections, but there are difficulties attending the introduction of slavery. Some of our church members think it improper, and we dread getting the church divided by introducing exciting topics. For the same reason we omit the notices and prayers. But for the poor heathen there is no objection against praying or paying.

*Mr. Freeman.* So you are governed by the fear of man, rather than the fear of God. The solemn injunction, “Break every yoke and let the oppressed go free,” has no application to you. Let me tell you, Doctor, there is too much of the Priest and Levite, and not enough of the good Samaritan, in our modern clergy. They turn aside from present distress, to relieve distant sufferers. “This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.” But you are afraid of “dividing the church”—afraid of doing your duty—you cannot trust in God for the result. *I* say, a corrupt church *ought to be* divided, and the offensive members cast out. “*First pure, then peaceable,*” is the doctrine, as I read it. If an eye offend thee, pluck it out; even if a *right hand* offend, it should be *cut off*, and severed from the body. If we are to have blind leaders of the blind, we may expect the *ditch* will have its due. Priests that love the praises of men—that love to be called Rabbi, and love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, are as plenty in these days as they were in the days of Christ; and I had almost said, our churches seem as much lost to the *spirit*, and bound up in the *forms* of religion, as were the Jews of old. So long as you fellowship men-stealers, thieves and robbers, in your churches, you will find it difficult to perform your whole duty; and especially if the fault is more in *yourselves*, Doctor, you will be inclined to omit “the weightier matters of the law.”

*Rev. Dr. Fullcreed.* I think you call our brethren of the South by hard names. Your language generally is too harsh toward slaveholders. I do not think they are so bad, or so much to blame, as you represent. Many of them are good Christians—but hold! Here comes my friend from the South, whom I mentioned. He can speak for himself. Col. Bombasto, shall I make you acquainted with Mr. Freeman.

*Mr. Freeman.* I am glad to see you, sir. [*They advance and shake hands.*]

*Rev. Dr. Fullcreed.* Mr. Freeman is one of our principal abolitionists, and was just calling me to an account for not refusing to fellowship such men as yourself, who hold your fellow-men in bondage. You can now speak for yourself, Colonel, and I wish you would give your own views as to slavery, as to

slaves, and the justice and propriety of holding them in bondage.

*Col. Bombasto.* Why, as to my views, gentlemen, I can give them freely, and in a few words. I believe, first, that the slaves are better off now than they would have been in Africa. Second, that they are incapable of taking care of themselves. Third, that if there is any thing wrong in slavery, we are free from the guilt, for the slaves were forced upon us by the British Government, while we were under that authority. The slaves are well provided for—are treated with kindness—and are, many of them, church members, and good Christians, and are contented and happy. The northern people are wrongly informed on this subject. The slaves fare better than your free people of color do here in New England. I verily believe that the negroes were born to be slaves, and that the Bible itself clearly sanctions slavery. Our most pious people are slaveholders. I believe that liberty, in its purity, cannot exist without slavery—that a personal knowledge and constant sight of slavery is necessary to teach men the value of liberty—that men of the North know nothing of slavery, and have nothing to do with it. These are my sentiments. I should now like to hear yours, Mr. Freeman.

*Mr. Freeman.* So you make God a respecter of persons, and a God of injustice. You consider liberty the greatest blessing on earth, and yet you are willing, and think it right, that a large portion of the human family should be deprived of it, because God has clothed them with a different *dress*—a darker skin. I believe as you do, and much more abundantly, as to the *value* of liberty. I believe that all men ought to possess it—that all are “born free and equal;” and as to your throwing off the responsibility of slavery from yourselves to the British Government, Colonel, it is quite out of the question. When we threw off the British Government, and adopted a free government, you *might*, and *should*, as some of the states *did*, throw off this, the worst and most barbarous feature to be found under the old government. Even the British themselves have since rid themselves of this ignominy, at great expense. As to the consistency of slavery with religion, I think even your good friend Dr. Fullcreed will hardly go with you in sentiment. But I see here Miss Patron, a friend to religion, formerly a

slaveholder, from the South. As you will not allow that northern people know any thing of slavery, or have any thing to do with it, we will hear what one of your own southern sisters will say on the subject. Miss Patron, permit me to introduce you to Col. Bombasto, from Georgia, who has just been entertaining us with a eulogy on the glories of slavery, especially its consistency with religion, and its benign and happy effects on Christianity. Let us, if you please, have your views, founded, as they are, on experience.

*Miss Patron.* Does Col. Bombasto pretend to say that the influence of slavery is favorable to religion?

*Mr. Freeman.* Yes. He says your most pious people are slaveholders, and many of the slaves are church members, and good Christians—are well provided for, and contented and happy. Now I should like to know your opinion.

*Miss Patron.* Well, I must say in the outset, that I cannot agree with Col. Bombasto in any of these assertions. It is true, there are some slaveholders who are not guilty of any of the more aggravated cruelties which are common, and who provide well for their slaves. This is especially true with regard to many of the house servants.

*Col. Bombasto.* Well, Miss Patron, I wish you would give us such facts as have come within your own knowledge, and such as may be relied on. Have you ever seen or known of any outrageous conduct toward slaves? Are not many owners of slaves members of the same church with their slaves, and kind-hearted and exemplary Christians?

*Miss Patron.* Why, Col. Bombasto, my knowledge in this respect has not been very extensive, but those I have known, Christian professors as well as others, have considered it a part of their duty to whip with severity their slaves for very trifling offences. This I say of *house* slaves. It is generally acknowledged, and never disputed, that *field* slaves are treated with greater hardship and cruelty.

*Col. Bombasto.* But give us facts, Miss Patron—something which may be relied upon. What are the facts relating to the piety and exemplary walk of

slaveholders?

*Miss Patron.* Well, Col. Bombasto, I have just been reading the testimony of Mrs. Angelina Grimke Weld on this very subject; and as she will be allowed by all to be good authority, and has the happy talent of expressing herself with great clearness, I will use her own language. She says: [*Reading.*]

“I saw *nothing* of slavery in its most vulgar and repulsive forms. I saw it in the *city*, among the fashionable and the honorable, where it was garnished by refinement, and decked out for show. A few *facts* will unfold the state of society in the circle with which I was familiar, far better than any general assertions I can make.

“I will first introduce the reader to a woman of the highest respectability—one who was foremost in every benevolent enterprise, and stood for many years, I may say, at the *head* of the fashionable elite of the city of Charleston, and afterwards at the head of the moral and religious female society there. It was after she had made a profession of religion, and retired from the fashionable world, that I knew her; therefore I will present her in her religious character. This lady used to keep cowhides, or small paddles, (called pancake sticks,) in four different apartments in her house; so that when she wished to punish, or to have punished, any of her slaves, she might not have the trouble of sending for an instrument of torture.

“For many years, one or another, and often more, of her slaves were flogged *every day*; particularly the young slaves about the house, whose faces were slapped, or their hands beat with the ‘pancake stick,’ for every trifling offence—and often for no fault at all. But the floggings were not all; the scoldings and abuse daily heaped upon them all, were worse: ‘fools’ and ‘liars,’ ‘sluts’ and ‘husseys,’ ‘hypocrites’ and ‘good-for-nothing creatures,’ were the *common* epithets with which her mouth was filled, when addressing her slaves, adults as well as children. Very often she would take a position at her window, in an upper story, and scold at her slaves while working in the garden, at some distance from the house, (a large yard intervening,) and occasionally order a

flogging. I have known her thus on the watch, scolding for more than an hour at a time, in so loud a voice that the whole neighborhood could hear her; and this without the least apparent feeling of shame. Indeed, it was *no disgrace among slaveholders*, and did not in the least injure her standing, either as a lady or a Christian, in the aristocratic circle in which she moved. After the ‘revival’ in Charleston, in 1825, she opened her house to social prayer-meetings. The room in which they were held in the evening, and where the voice of prayer was heard around the family altar, and where she herself retired for private devotion thrice each day, was the very place in which, when her slaves were to be whipped with the cowhide, they were taken to receive the infliction; and the wail of the sufferer would be heard, where, perhaps only a few hours previous, rose the voices of prayer and praise. This mistress would occasionally send her slaves, male and female, to the Charleston workhouse, to be punished. One poor girl, whom she sent there to be flogged, and who was accordingly stripped *naked* and whipped, showed me the deep gashes on her back—I might have laid my whole finger in them—*large pieces of flesh had actually been cut out by the torturing lash*. She sent another female slave there, to be imprisoned, and worked on the treadmill. This girl was confined several days, and forced to work the mill while in a state of suffering from another cause. For ten days, or two weeks after her return, she was lame, from the violent exertion necessary to enable her to keep the step on the machine. She spoke to me with intense feeling of this outrage upon her, as a *woman*. Her men-servants were sometimes flogged there; and so exceedingly offensive has been the putrid flesh of their lacerated backs, for days after the infliction, that they would be kept out of the house—the smell arising from their bodies being too horrible to be endured. They were always stiff and sore for some days, and not in a condition to be seen by visitors.”

*Mr. Freeman.* Well, Colonel, as this lady was “at the head of fashion and of the moral and religious society,” you will admit this to be a fair specimen of the piety you spoke of.

*Col. Bombasto.* It is a pretty strong case, I must acknowledge, and pretty

well authenticated.

*Mr. Freeman.* She appears to have shown her faith by her works. This, too, let it be remembered, was the fashion in Charleston, the most learned and refined city in all the South. If this is a specimen of the most exalted and refined piety, what must it be among the vulgar? Verily, their tender mercies are cruelty.

*Col. Bombasto.* It is strange that I have never seen such instances, when I have lived at the South all my days.

*Mr. Freeman.* It is strange, indeed. But, Colonel, this case is mildness itself compared with some that we could relate, which come to us equally well authenticated. A gentleman who has resided several years at the South as a teacher and preacher, gives no better account of the Rev. Mr. Davis, who, it will be recollected, came all the way from Georgia to attend our anti-slavery anniversaries in Boston, in 1841, and who was treated with great attention and respect by our pro-slavery clergymen, and with great forbearance and candor by the anti-slavery people. But the same gentleman relates an anecdote which took place under his own eye and observation. He was in company with a slaveholding church-member, when one of his slaves, who was also a member of the same church, was seen returning home very early one morning, which showed that he had been away the night before, contrary to rule. Without asking the slave why he had been absent, or giving him any opportunity to tell why, or to defend himself, he called his bloodhounds and set them on to this poor slave and brother church-member, and ordered them to tear him to pieces. The poor slave got himself into a corner of the fence, and there, with a walking-stick, or club, which he held in his hand, kept them off till he found they were like to kill him, when he succeeded in getting on the top of the fence, all the time begging for his life. On this, the master and brother church-member drew his pistol, and told him he would shoot him dead if he did not surrender himself to the bloodhounds, which he did: and, after being shockingly lacerated and mangled by these fierce animals, this master, this monster, called them off. The slave was then permitted to give an account of himself. He was a millwright—a very

ingenious workman, as well as an industrious, faithful, honest slave, and exemplary Christian. A neighbor had broken the wheel of his mill. There was no other man but this slave who could mend it, and it was necessary it should be done without delay. He was sent for, but could not finish the work till into the night, when, by the slave laws, it was a high crime for him to go home, and he was compelled, after finishing the work, to stay till day-light. After this very satisfactory account, and in view of the inhuman cruelty and torture inflicted upon him, this monster master, and church-member, was asked why he suffered the bloodhounds to mangle and lacerate the slave, when he coolly replied, it would have hurt the training of the bloodhounds, and set them a bad example, to have called them off without doing their work!

*Col. Bombasto.* And yet, Paul sent back a slave to his master, Philemon.

*Mr. Freeman.* Yes, and Paul also cautioned his brethren to “beware of dogs.” But if the church-members in those days had been as much like bloodhounds as “our southern brethren,” Paul, instead of sending back the slaves, would have cautioned them to beware of their masters. Perhaps he had reference to these monsters in the shape of men, when he said, “beware of *dogs*.”

*Col. Bombasto.* Well, whatever others may have done, I am willing *my* slaves should tell how they have been treated. I know they are attached to their master, and I am willing, Mr. Freeman, that you should inquire of them. I have a female slave now with me in Boston, who came on from the South with me, and I defy you, Mr. Freeman, or any of your anti-slavery folks, to get her away. In fact, they made the attempt last year, (for she has been on here before now,) and they got out a writ of habeas corpus and took her, but she would not hear a word about leaving her master. She loves him and her own condition too well.

*Mr. Freeman.* Not too fast, sir; the abolitionists can tell you a story worth two of that. Your boasted slave has already left you: she went home last year only to see her husband, concert measures for clearing him, and bringing away her own substance—all of which she has already accomplished. She is free; and, the next you will know, her husband will be free also. So you see, Colonel, by

this instance, that the love of liberty is naturally implanted in the human breast, so deeply, too, that even *your* good treatment cannot restrain them, when liberty is once set before them.

*Col. Bombasto.* [*Aside.*] Is it possible that all this can be true? [*then turning to Mr. F.*] Well, whatever delusion may be carried to the slaves' minds in the sound of liberty, I believe they are incapable of taking care of themselves—that they were born to be slaves—and that if they were set at liberty, a general slaughter of the whites would be the inevitable consequence.

*Mr. Freeman.* Why so in the slave states, any more than in the West India Islands, where the proportion of the blacks is much greater. [*Enter Mr. Turnwell.*] But here comes Mr. Turnwell, a planter from one of those Islands, who was once a slaveholder, and can tell us all about the revolution and its effects on those Islands. Mr. Turnwell, let me introduce you to Col. Bombasto, a slaveholder from Georgia, who has just been expatiating on the glories of slavery, and the danger of immediate abolition. You are the very man to give us the result of your own experience, which I wish you would do directly, as it is about time we were gone.

*Mr. Turnwell.* Well, I must confess I have some compassion for the poor deluded *slaveholders*. I was formerly one myself, and thought, as they now think, that there is no safety in setting at liberty a large body of slaves, as they would retaliate upon us, and cut their masters' throats. Truth has taught me, that it is never too late to repent of doing wrong—that it is always safe to do right. Our colored people bear a much larger proportion to the whites than in your southern states; and when they were all to be set at liberty at once, we were under the most fearful apprehensions for the consequences. We smile now, when looking back on those groundless fears. The poor slaves were too much overjoyed at the result to harbor any malice, envy, or ill-will, toward their former masters. It is enough that the servant be as his master. The large sum which was paid us by the English Government we also feel to be a gratuity, for without pay, the slaveholders would have been greatly benefitted. The slaveholders needed

liberty as well as their slaves, and they received it at the same time. They are now free from the care and anxiety of supporting their workmen, and of much of the expense. They accomplish much more labor than they did while in bondage, and support themselves at a less expense. That is, 100 hogsheads of sugar cost the master less now, in the free state, than it did formerly in the slave state. At the same time, crimes are greatly diminished, and morals improved. In fact, our jails are now nearly useless. Churches and schools are multiplying, and we now know the luxury of living in peace, harmony and happiness. There is no part of the world where a person could sleep all night with his doors unlocked, with a trunk full of gold and silver in the doorway, unlocked, with more safety than in the island where I live. Let me assure my friend Col. Bombasto, that slavery, from beginning to end, in all its bearings, is a miserable delusion—a mere work of the devil. [*Exeunt omnes.*]

(1842)

## LUNSFORD LANE

from *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C.*

Born in North Carolina, Lunsford Lane (1803–post-1870) was an enterprising household slave who earned enough money to buy his freedom in 1834. It took him another eight years to save the money to purchase his wife and children, but when he returned to Raleigh to settle the transaction, he was captured by a mob, tarred and feathered, and nearly lynched. Despite this horrific episode, he succeeded in bringing his wife, children, and mother north with him. Sales of his narrative helped him earn money in the years that followed, and it sold well, going through four editions by 1848. The excerpt here chronicles his remarkable entrepreneurial efforts, closing with an almost poetic description of the ecstasy of freedom.

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One day, while I was in this state of mind, my father gave me a small basket of peaches. I sold them for thirty cents, which was the first money I ever had in my life. Afterwards I won some marbles, and sold them for sixty cents, and some weeks after Mr. Hogg from Fayetteville, came to visit my master, and on leaving gave me one dollar. After that Mr. Bennahan from Orange county gave me a dollar, and a son of my master fifty cents. These sums, and the hope that then entered my mind of purchasing at some future time my freedom, made me long for money; and plans for money-making took the principal possession of my thoughts. At night I would steal away with my axe, get a load of wood to cut for twenty-five cents, and the next morning hardly escape a whipping for the offence. But I persevered until I had obtained twenty dollars. Now I began to think seriously of becoming able to buy myself; and cheered by this hope, I went on from one thing to another, laboring “at dead of night,” after the long weary day’s toil for my master was over, till I found I had collected one hundred dollars. This sum I kept hid, first in one place and then in another, as I dare not put it out, for fear I should lose it.

After this I lit upon a plan which proved of great advantage to me. My father suggested a mode of preparing smoking tobacco, different from any then or since employed. It had the double advantage of giving the tobacco a peculiarly pleasant flavor, and of enabling me to manufacture a good article out of a very indifferent material. I improved somewhat upon his suggestion, and commenced the manufacture, doing as I have before said, all my work in the night. The tobacco I put up in papers of about a quarter of a pound each, and sold them at fifteen cents. But the tobacco could not be smoked without a pipe, and as I had given the former a flavor peculiarly grateful, it occurred to me that I might so construct a pipe as to cool the smoke in passing through it, and thus meet the wishes of those who are more fond of smoke than heat. This I effected by means of a reed, which grows plentifully in that region; I made a passage through the reed with a hot wire, polished it, and attached a clay pipe to the end, so that the smoke should be cooled in flowing through the stem like whiskey or rum in passing from the boiler through the worm of the still. These pipes I sold at ten cents apiece. In the early part of the night I would sell my tobacco and pipes, and manufacture them in the latter part. As the Legislature sit in Raleigh every year, I sold these articles considerably to the members, so that I became known not only in the city, but in many parts of the State, as a *tobacconist*.

Perceiving that I was getting along so well, I began, slave as I was, to think about taking a wife. So I fixed my mind upon Miss Lucy Williams, a slave of Thomas Devereaux, Esq., an eminent lawyer in the place; but failed in my undertaking. Then I thought I never would marry; but at the end of two or three years my resolution began to slide away, till finding I could not keep it longer I set out once more in pursuit of a wife. So I fell in with her to whom I am now united, Miss MARTHA CURTIS, and the bargain between *us* was completed. I next went to her master, Mr. Boylan, and asked him, according to the custom, if I might "marry his woman." His reply was, "Yes, if you will behave yourself." I told him I would. "And make her behave herself?" To this I also assented; and

then proceeded to ask the approbation of my master, which was granted. So in May, 1828, I was bound as fast in wedlock as a slave can be. God may at any time sunder that bond in a freeman; either master may do the same at pleasure in a slave. The bond is not recognized in law. But in my case it has never been broken; and now it cannot be, except by a higher power.

When we had been married nine months and one day, we were blessed with a son, and two years afterwards with a daughter. My wife also passed from the hands of Mr. Boylan into those of Mr. BENJAMIN B. SMITH, a merchant, a member and class-leader in the Methodist church, and in much repute for his deep piety and devotion to religion. But grace (of course) had not wrought in the same *manner* upon the heart of Mr. Smith, as nature had done upon that of Mr. Boylan, who made no religious profession. This latter gentleman used to give my wife, who was a favorite slave, (her mother nursed every one of his own children,) sufficient food and clothing to render her comfortable, so that I had to spend for her but little, except to procure such small articles of extra comfort as I was prompted to from time to time. Indeed Mr. Boylan was regarded as a very kind master to all the slaves about him; that is, to his house servants; nor did he inflict much cruelty upon his field hands, except by proxy. The overseer on his nearest plantation (I know but little about the rest) was a very cruel man; in one instance, as it was said among the slaves, he whipped a man *to death*; but of course denied that the man died in consequence of the whipping. Still it was the choice of my wife to pass into the hands of Mr. Smith, as she had become attached to him in consequence of belonging to the same church, and receiving his religious instruction and counsel as her class-leader, and in consequence of the peculiar devotedness to the cause of religion for which he was noted, and which he always seemed to manifest.—But when she became his slave, he withheld both from her and her children, the needful food and clothing, while he exacted from them to the uttermost all the labor they were able to perform. Almost every article of clothing worn either by my wife or children, especially

every article of much value, I had to purchase; while the food he furnished the family amounted to less than a meal a day, and that of the coarser kind. I have no remembrance that he ever gave us a blanket or any other article of bedding, although it is considered a rule at the South that the master shall furnish each of his slaves with one blanket a year. So that, both as to food and clothing, I had in fact to support both my wife and the children, while he claimed them as his property, and received all their labor. She was house servant to Mr. Smith, sometimes cooked the food for his family, and usually took it from the table, but her mistress was so particular in giving it out to be cooked, or so watched it, that she always knew whether it was all returned; and when the table was cleared away, the stern old lady would sit by and see that every dish (except the very little she would send into the kitchen) was put away, and then she would turn the key upon it, so as to be sure her slaves should not die of gluttony. This practice is common with some families in the region; but with others it is not. It was not so in that of her less pious master, Mr. Boylan, nor was it precisely so at my master's. We used to have corn bread enough, and some meat. When I was a boy, the pot-liquor, in which the meat was boiled for the "great house," together with some little corn-meal balls that had been thrown in just before the meat was done, was poured into a tray and set in the middle of the yard, and a clam shell or pewter spoon given to each of us children, who would fall upon the delicious fare as greedily as pigs. It was not generally so much as we wanted, consequently it was customary for some of the white persons who saw us from the piazza of the house where they were sitting, to order the more stout and greedy ones to eat slower, that those more young and feeble might have a chance. But it was not so with Mr. Smith: such luxuries were more than he could afford, kind and Christian man as he was considered to be. So that by the expense of providing for my wife and children, all the money I had earned and could earn by my night labor was consumed, till I found myself reduced to five dollars, and this I lost one day in going to the plantation. My light of hope now went out. My prop seemed to have given way from under me. Sunk in the very

night of despair respecting my freedom, I discovered myself, as though I had never known it before, a husband, the father of two children, a family looking up to me for bread, and I a slave, penniless, and well watched by my master, his wife and his children, lest I should, perchance, catch the friendly light of the stars to make something in order to supply the cravings of nature in those with whom my soul was bound up; or lest some plan of freedom might lead me to trim the light of diligence after the day's labor was over, while the rest of the world were enjoying the hours in pleasure or sleep.

At this time an event occurred, which, while it cast a cloud over the prospects of some of my fellow slaves, was a rainbow over mine. My master died, and his widow, by the will, became sole executrix of his property. To the surprize of all, the bank of which he had been cashier presented a claim against the estate for forty thousand dollars. By a compromise, this sum was reduced to twenty thousand dollars; and my mistress, to meet the amount, sold some of her slaves, and hired out others. I hired my time of her,\* for which I paid her a price varying from one hundred dollars to one hundred and twenty dollars per year. This was a privilege which comparatively few slaves at the South enjoy; and in this I felt truly blessed.

I commenced the manufacture of pipes and tobacco on an enlarged scale. I opened a regular place of business, labelled my tobacco in a conspicuous manner with the names of "*Edward and Lunsford Lane,*" and of some of the persons who sold it for me,—established agencies for the sale in various parts of the State, one at Fayetteville, one at Salisbury, one at Chapel Hill, and so on,—sold my articles from my place of business, and about town, also deposited them in stores on commission, and thus, after paying my mistress for my time, and rendering such support as necessary to my family, I found in the space of some six or eight years, that I had collected the sum of one thousand dollars. During this time I had found it politic to go shabbily dressed, and to appear to be very poor, but to pay my mistress for my services promptly. I kept my money hid, never venturing to put out a penny, nor to let any body but my wife know that I

was making any. The thousand dollars was what I supposed my mistress would ask for me, and so I determined now what I would do.

I went to my mistress and inquired what was her price for me. She said a thousand dollars. I then told her that I wanted to be free, and asked her if she would sell me to be made free. She said she would; and accordingly I arranged with her, and with the master of my wife, Mr. Smith, already spoken of, for the latter to take my money\* and buy of her my freedom, as I could not legally purchase it, and as the laws forbid emancipation except for “meritorious services.” This done, Mr. Smith endeavored to emancipate me formally, and to get my manumission recorded; I tried also; but the court judged that I had done nothing “meritorious,” and so I remained, nominally only, the slave of Mr. Smith for a year; when, feeling unsafe in that relation, I accompanied him to New York whither he was going to purchase goods, and was there regularly and formally made a freeman, and there my manumission was recorded. I returned to my family in Raleigh and endeavored to do by them as a freeman should. I had known what it was to be a slave, and I knew what it was to be free.

But I am going too rapidly over my story. When the money was paid to my mistress and the conveyance fairly made to Mr. Smith, I felt that I was free. And a queer and joyous feeling it is to one who has been a slave. I cannot describe it, only it seemed as though I was in heaven. I used to lie awake whole nights thinking of it. And oh, the strange thoughts that passed through my soul, like so many rivers of light; deep and rich were their waves as they rolled;—these were more to me than sleep, more than soft slumber after long months of watching over the decaying, fading frame of a friend, and the loved one laid to rest in the dust. But I cannot describe my feelings to those who have never been slaves; then why should I attempt it? He who has passed from spiritual death to life, and received the witness within his soul that his sins are forgiven, may possibly form some distant idea, like the ray of the setting sun from the far off mountain top, of the emotions of an emancipated slave. That opens heaven. To break the bonds of slavery, opens up at once both earth and heaven. Neither can be truly seen by us

while we are slaves.

(1842)

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\* It is contrary to the laws of the State for a slave to have command of his own time in this way, but in Raleigh it is sometimes winked at. I knew one slave-man who was *doing well for himself*, taken up by the public authorities and hired out for the public good, three times in succession for this offence. The time off hiring in such a case is one year. The master is subject to a fine. But generally, as I have said, if the slave is *orderly* and appears to be *making nothing*, neither he nor the master is interfered with.

\* *Legally*, my money belonged to my mistress; and she could have taken it and refused to grant me my freedom. But she was a very kind woman for a slave owner; and she would under the circumstances, scorn to do such a thing. I have known of slaves, however, served in this way.

## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

### *The Slave's Dream; The Slave in the Dismal Swamp; The Slave Singing at Midnight; The Quadroon Girl; The Witnesses*

One of the most popular American poets of the nineteenth century and famous for such works as *Evangeline*, *The Song of Hiawatha*, and "Paul Revere's Ride," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) published in 1842 a volume called *Poems on Slavery*, from which all five selections here are taken. In each of the first three poems, the lyric form enables a desperate slave's state of mind to be imagined with hallucinatory intensity. Lust and sexual vulnerability create the dramatic tension of "The Quadroon Girl," while the somber cadence of "The Witnesses" implicates the entirety of the white race as participants or onlookers in the long history of the slave trade. Unlike his great contemporary John Greenleaf Whittier, who never stopped writing about slavery, Longfellow avoided the theme in most of his writing after 1842, though historian Jill Lepore has recently suggested that "Paul Revere's Ride" (published December 20, 1860) was a veiled cry to action for northerners faced with southern secession and the coming of war.

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#### *The Slave's Dream*

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
    His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
    Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
    He saw his Native Land.

Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
    The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm-trees on the plain  
    Once more a king he strode;

And heard the tinkling caravans  
Descend the mountain road.

He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
They held him by the hand!—  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
And fell into the sand.

And then at furious speed he rode  
Along the Niger's bank;  
His bridle-reins were golden chains,  
And, with a martial clank,  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
Smiting his stallion's flank.

Before him, like a blood-red flag,  
The bright flamingoes flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts,  
And the ocean rose to view.

At night he heard the lion roar,  
And the hyena scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
Beside some hidden stream;  
And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
Through the triumph of his dream.

The forests with their myriad tongues

THE FORESTS, with their myriad tongues,  
Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
At their tempestuous glee.

He did not feel the driver's whip,  
Nor the burning heat of day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
Had broken and thrown away!

(1842)

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*The Slave in the Dismal Swamp*

In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp  
The hunted Negro lay;  
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,  
And heard at times a horse's tramp  
And a bloodhound's distant bay.

Where will-o'-the-wisps and glowworms shine,  
In bulrush and in brake;  
Where waving mosses shroud the pine,  
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine  
Is spotted like the snake;

Where hardly a human foot could pass,  
Or a human heart would dare

Of a human heart would dare,  
On the quaking turf of the green morass  
He crouched in the rank and tangled grass,  
Like a wild beast in his lair.

A poor old slave, infirm and lame;  
Great scars deformed his face;  
On his forehead he bore the brand of shame,  
And the rags, that hid his mangled frame,  
Were the livery of disgrace.

All things above were bright and fair,  
All things were glad and free;  
Lithe squirrels darted here and there,  
And wild birds filled the echoing air  
With songs of Liberty!

On him alone was the doom of pain,  
From the morning of his birth;  
On him alone the curse of Cain  
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,  
And struck him to the earth!

(1842)

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*The Slave Singing at Midnight*

Loud he sang the psalm of David!  
He, a Negro and enslaved,  
Sang of Israel's victory,  
Sang of Zion, bright and free.

In that hour, when night is calmest,  
Sang he from the Hebrew Psalmist,  
In a voice so sweet and clear  
That I could not choose but hear,

Songs of triumph, and ascriptions,  
Such as reached the swart Egyptians,  
When upon the Red Sea coast  
Perished Pharaoh and his host.

And the voice of his devotion  
Filled my soul with strange emotion;  
For its tones by turns were glad,  
Sweetly solemn, wildly sad.

Paul and Silas, in their prison,  
Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen,  
And an earthquake's arm of might  
Broke their dungeon-gates at night.

But, alas! what holy angel  
Brings the Slave this glad evangel?  
And what earthquake's arm of might  
Breaks his dungeon-gates at night?

(1842)

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*The Quadroon Girl*

The Slaver in the broad lagoon  
Lay moored with idle sail;

He waited for the rising moon,  
And for the evening gale.

Under the shore his boat was tied,  
And all her listless crew  
Watched the gray alligator slide  
Into the still bayou.

Odors of orange-flowers, and spice,  
Reached them from time to time,  
Like airs that breathe from Paradise  
Upon a world of crime.

The Planter, under his roof of thatch,  
Smoked thoughtfully and slow;  
The Slaver's thumb was on the latch,  
He seemed in haste to go.

He said, "My ship at anchor rides  
In yonder broad lagoon;  
I only wait the evening tides,  
And the rising of the moon."

Before them, with her face upraised,  
In timid attitude,  
Like one half curious, half amazed,  
A Quadroon maiden stood.

Her eyes were, like a falcon's, gray,  
Her arms and neck were bare;  
No garment she wore save a kirtle gay,  
And her own long, raven hair.

And on her lips there played a smile  
As holy, meek, and faint,  
As lights in some cathedral aisle  
The features of a saint.

“The soil is barren,—the farm is old;”  
The thoughtful Planter said;  
Then looked upon the Slaver’s gold,  
And then upon the maid.

His heart within him was at strife  
With such accursed gains;  
For he knew whose passions gave her life,  
Whose blood ran in her veins.

But the voice of nature was too weak;  
He took the glittering gold!  
Then pale as death grew the maiden’s cheek,  
Her hands as icy cold.

The Slaver led her from the door,  
He led her by the hand,  
To be his slave and paramour  
In a strange and distant land!

(1842)

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*The Witnesses*

In Ocean’s wide domains,  
Half buried in the sands,

Lie skeletons in chains,  
With shackled feet and hands.

Beyond the fall of dews,  
Deeper than plummet lies,  
Float ships, with all their crews,  
No more to sink nor rise.

There the black Slave-ship swims,  
Freighted with human forms,  
Whose fettered, fleshless limbs  
Are not the sport of storms.

These are the bones of Slaves;  
They gleam from the abyss;  
They cry, from yawning waves,  
“We are the Witnesses!”

Within Earth’s wide domains  
Are markets for men’s lives;  
Their necks are galled with chains,  
Their wrists are cramped with gyves.

Dead bodies, that the kite  
In deserts makes its prey;  
Murders, that with affright  
Scare school-boys from their play!

All evil thoughts and deeds;  
Anger, and lust, and pride;  
The foulest, rankest weeds,  
That choke Life’s groaning tide!

These are the woes of Slaves;  
They glare from the abyss;  
They cry, from unknown graves,  
“We are the Witnesses!”

*(1842)*

# JOHN NEAL

## *Duty and Safety of Emancipation*

Born into a poor Quaker family in Portland, Maine, John Neal (1793–1876) struggled through an erratic education, rebellious childhood, and haphazard early career to become one of America’s most voluminous writers in the early nineteenth century. Based in Baltimore after moving there for a business venture that failed, Neal published from 1816 to 1823 five novels, a volume of poetry, a five-act play, and hundreds of pieces of journalism. His novel *Logan* (1822) contains a harrowing passage depicting a slave ship at sea, from which “corpse after corpse was plunged into the warm blue water” and later “something that floated past, was discovered to be the naked body of a black.” After a stint in England, Neal returned to Maine, where he pursued a career as a lawyer and continued to write. In 1842 he contributed this one-act antislavery play to John A. Collins’s *Anti-Slavery Picknick: A Collection of Speeches, Poems, Dialogues and Songs*, published in Boston. Neal wrote prolifically over the next three decades, but, despite his enlightened views on race, never again focused his work on the slavery question, turning instead to the issue of women’s rights.

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### *Dramatis Personæ*

JULIA MANNING, *a Young Lady*

ALBERT CRANSTON, *Lad*

EDWARD SIMMONS, *Lad*

OLIVER SEWARD, *a Fugitive Slave*

SCENE—*Edward and Julia walking in a grove—they meet Albert*

*Edward.* Good evening, Albert, I am glad to see you, for we were just conversing on some subjects in which we feel no little interest, and would like to have your opinion concerning them.

*Albert.* Well, since there are so many things at the present day to excite our minds, it is difficult to guess, (although a yankee,) what you were speaking upon.

*Edward.* We were talking about the poor slaves of our country, and wondering how any one could be so destitute of the common feelings of humanity as to sanction in any way so abominable a system of oppression as American slaveholding.

*Albert.* Oh! I guess you are getting to be one of those hot-headed abolitionists. I wonder if you would be willing to give up your slaves, if you had them, and work yourself in a southern sun. You could not stand it all; and then what would you do for help?

*Edward.* Do? I would first make my slaves free, and then hire them as I would any other men.

*Albert.* Yes, but that would be too expensive for your business, and bankruptcy and poverty would soon be your reward for your generosity to your slaves.

*Edward.* No, Albert. I believe, if the southern planters would emancipate their slaves to-night, and pay them a fair price for their labor, it would be for their interest, as much more labor will be performed by a freeman under the same circumstances, than by the same person when he feels the galling chain of bondage continually pressing on him.

*Albert.* Yes, but great danger would arise to the people, should the slaves be emancipated. Do you not think so, cousin Julia?

*Julia.* Why so, Albert?

*Albert.* Oh! they would wish to imitate their masters in living without work, and would soon be compelled to starve, or live by robbing and plundering every one they could lay their hands upon.

*Julia.* Well, Albert, you have really conjured up quite a scarecrow story. Why, this very necessity (which tends to insubordination in the slave) would stimulate the freeman—would induce him to labor—to labor willingly and

cheerfully,—since he is his own master, and whatever he may earn is his own; and, with a bright prospect before him for the future, he would do more for the man who hired him, and treated him as a human being, in one week, than he had done before in thrice that time.

*Albert.* Do you really think so?

*Julia.* Yes, I do. Let me appeal to your own feelings. Would you be the same happy, active lad, if you were put into the situation of the slave, (allowing that you had a kind master?) Would you work as cheerfully were you driven to it by a taskmaster as you now do for your father, on his farm? Would not your better feelings be shocked, and paralyzed by such degradation?

*Albert.* But, Julia, the slaves are an ignorant race of beings, and, from their very nature, seem only fitted for servants.

*Julia.* But the slaves, if freed from the heavy yoke of bondage under which they now groan, would rise in the scale of life, and that, too, immediately.

*Albert.* You give more credit to the energies of the blacks than I had supposed belonged to them, under any circumstances.

*Julia.* We must not forget that they have always been a despised, outcast people, and have had but little chance, even when freemen, to advance much in the scale of social life.

*Albert.* Do you think, then, that they can be made useful citizens in the community, and stand on an equal footing with the whites?

*Edward.* Do you observe that well dressed, intelligent looking man, who is coming towards us? He is a fugitive slave. It is but three years since he commenced taking care of himself, yet no one is more respected for ability and activity. Let us ask him some questions.

[*Enter Oliver Seward.*]

*Edward.* We wish to ask you the reasons which induced you to leave your master. Was he cruel in his treatment of you?

*Oliver.* He was not. I had a very kind master; but it is hard to be a slave. I struggled long between my affection for my mother and brothers, and my love of liberty—and might, perhaps, have remained a slave to this day, had it not been for a flogging which I received for breaking, accidentally, one of the plantation tools. This roused my spirit, and I resolved to effect my escape, or die, rather than submit any longer.

*Albert.* But do you not fear that you may be sick, and unable to provide for yourself? You would then wish for the protection and care of your master.

*Oliver.* I hope to be able to guard against want in the case you suppose; but I would far prefer to *die* a FREEMAN, than to *live* a *slave*.

*Albert.* Would the slaves be contented to remain and labor for their masters, if they were made free, and offered fair wages?

*Oliver.* They would be glad to do so. The climate of the South is more agreeable to them than the cold winters of the Northern States, and they are attached to the places which have always been to them a home.

*Albert.* But would not many of the slaves retaliate the injury they may have received, upon the masters, if they were emancipated?

*Oliver.* Why should they? It is contrary to their nature to return injury for benefit. They would then have none but the kindest feelings towards their masters; now, they cannot but think on the wrongs they endure; and the time must come, when, if those wrongs are not redressed, the limit to their forbearance will be passed, and they will extort, by the strong hand of power, that justice so long denied. It is slavery, not freedom, which threatens violence to the masters. The happy results of emancipations in Mexico, Peru, Hayti, and the British West Indies, prove this.

*Albert.* But do you think, Edward, that we are in any way responsible for this evil, as it exists in our country?

*Edward.* I certainly do; for it is a moral blot on our country's fame, which we must speedily wipe out, or it will mar its glory forever.

*Albert.* I do believe slavery an evil, but I have not thought so deeply upon it before. The worst feature in it to my mind, however, is its cruelty in separating husbands and wives, and I had hoped that they did not feel so strong an attachment to relatives and friends as we do.

*Julia.* I am glad, Albert, you have mentioned that, for it is really a very sad view of the subject; you have already seen, from the conversation of our friend Oliver, that their sympathies are as strong as ours; but to my mind, the consideration that mind and soul are enslaved, or, more properly, destroyed, by the system, is sufficient to outweigh all others.

*Albert.* Well, I do think we should act more consistently on so important a subject, and I will give it a better place in my heart than I have heretofore done.

*Edward.* I hope you will think candidly and seriously on so momentous a question, and feel yourself bound to do all in your power to atone for past neglect.

(1842)

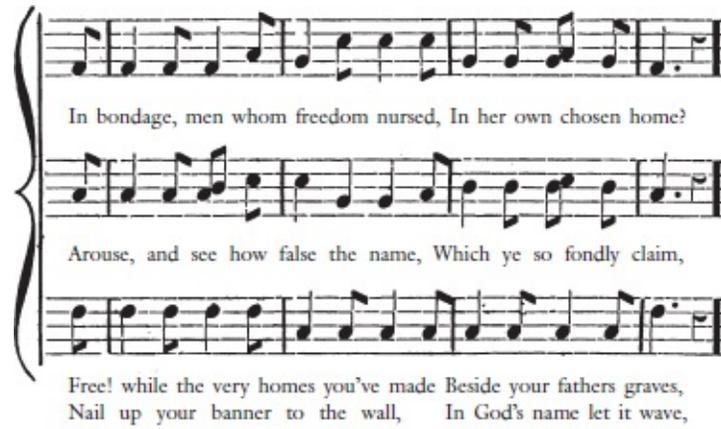
# M. L. GARDNER

## *Arouse, New-England's Sons*

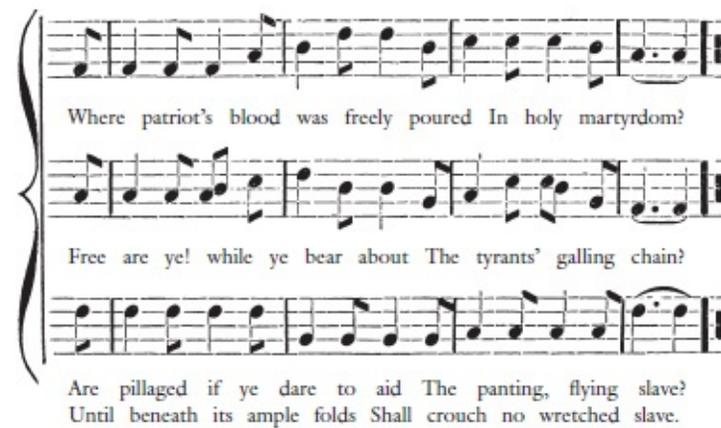
Nothing is known of “Miss M. L. Gardner” except that she submitted this original hymn to *Anti-Slavery Melodies: For the Friends of Freedom*, a collection of abolitionist songs edited by Jairus Lincoln for the Hingham Anti-Slavery Society in Massachusetts in 1843. She was probably a young member of the Society, and her song suggests the degree to which amateur poets and composers contributed to the growing body of antislavery writing.

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1. Arouse, New-England's sons, arouse! Wake from your coward sleep,  
2. Arouse, New-England's sons, arouse! A clinging curse on thee!  
3. Free! while the halls ye rear are burned? Free! while your sons are driven  
4. Arouse, New-England's sons, arouse! And lay oppression low,  
The tyrant's hand is on your neck, And shall his fetters keep,  
If here supinely ye will sleep, Dreaming that ye are free.  
By slavery's mobs, because they dare To speak the truth and heaven?  
And strike for freedom and for God, An earnest manly blow.



In bondage, men whom freedom nursed, In her own chosen home?  
Arouse, and see how false the name, Which ye so fondly claim,  
Free! while the very homes you've made Beside your fathers graves,  
Nail up your banner to the wall, In God's name let it wave,



Where patriot's blood was freely poured In holy martyrdom?  
Free are ye! while ye bear about The tyrants' galling chain?  
Are pillaged if ye dare to aid The panting, flying slave?  
Until beneath its ample folds Shall crouch no wretched slave.

# HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET

## *An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America*

Born a slave in Kent County, Maryland, Henry Highland Garnet (1815–1882) escaped with his parents and seven siblings in 1824, moving via Wilmington, Delaware, and Bucks County, Pennsylvania, to settle in New York City. Beginning at the African Free School in New York, followed by two years at sea as cabin boy and cook, Garnet pursued his education at institutions in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and upstate New York, and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1841. He became active in every aspect of the antislavery movement, harboring fugitive slaves and organizing boycotts of goods produced by slave labor. On August 21, 1843, he delivered an address to the National Convention of Colored Citizens in Buffalo, New York. His passionate call for violent resistance was too much for even such staunch abolitionists as Frederick Douglass, and the convention voted, 19–18, not to endorse the address.

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### PREFACE.

THE FOLLOWING Address was first read at the National Convention held at Buffalo, N.Y., in 1843. Since that time it has been slightly modified, retaining, however, all of its original doctrine. The document elicited more discussion than any other paper that was ever brought before that, or any other deliberative body of colored persons, and their friends. Gentlemen who opposed the Address, based their objections on these grounds. 1. That the document was war-like, and encouraged insurrection; and 2. That if the Convention should adopt it, that those delegates who lived near the borders of the slave states, would not dare to return to their homes. The Address was rejected by a small majority; and now in compliance with the earnest request of many who heard it, and in conformity to the wishes of numerous friends who are anxious to see it, the author now gives it to the public, praying God that this little book may be borne on the four winds of

heaven, until the principles it contains shall be understood and adopted by every slave in the Union.

H.H.G.

Troy, N. Y., April 15, 1848.

## ADDRESS TO THE SLAVES OF THE U. S.

BRETHREN AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

Your brethren of the north, east, and west have been accustomed to meet together in National Conventions, to sympathize with each other, and to weep over your unhappy condition. In these meetings we have addressed all classes of the free, but we have never until this time, sent a word of consolation and advice to you. We have been contented in sitting still and mourning over your sorrows, earnestly hoping that before this day, your sacred liberties would have been restored. But, we have hoped in vain. Years have rolled on, and tens of thousands have been borne on streams of blood, and tears, to the shores of eternity. While you have been oppressed, we have also been partakers with you; nor can we be free while you are enslaved. We therefore write to you as being bound with you.

Many of you are bound to us, not only by the ties of a common humanity, but we are connected by the more tender relations of parents, wives, husbands, children, brothers, and sisters, and friends. As such we most affectionately address you.

Slavery has fixed a deep gulf between you and us, and while it shuts out from you the relief and consolation which your friends would willingly render, it afflicts and persecutes you with a fierceness which we might not expect to see in the fiends of hell. But still the Almighty Father of Mercies has left to us a glimmering ray of hope, which shines out like a lone star in a cloudy sky. Mankind are becoming wiser, and better—the oppressor's power is fading, and you, every day, are becoming better informed, and more numerous. Your

grievances, brethren, are many. We shall not attempt, in this short address, to present to the world, all the dark catalogue of this nation's sins, which have been committed upon an innocent people. Nor is it indeed, necessary, for you feel them from day to day, and all the civilized world look upon them with amazement.

Two hundred and twenty-seven years ago, the first of our injured race were brought to the shores of America. They came not with glad spirits to select their homes, in the New World. They came not with their own consent, to find an unmolested enjoyment of the blessings of this fruitful soil. The first dealings which they had with men calling themselves Christians, exhibited to them the worst features of corrupt and sordid hearts; and convinced them that no cruelty is too great, no villainy, and no robbery too abhorrent for even enlightened men to perform, when influenced by avarice, and lust. Neither did they come flying upon the wings of Liberty, to a land of freedom. But, they came with broken hearts, from their beloved native land, and were doomed to unrequited toil, and deep degradation. Nor did the evil of their bondage end at their emancipation by death. Succeeding generations inherited their chains, and millions have come from eternity into time, and have returned again to the world of spirits, cursed, and ruined by American Slavery.

The propagators of the system, or their immediate ancestors very soon discovered its growing evil, and its tremendous wickedness, and secret promises were made to destroy it. The gross inconsistency of a people holding slaves, who had themselves "ferried o'er the wave," for freedom's sake, was too apparent to be entirely overlooked. The voice of Freedom cried, "emancipate your Slaves." Humanity supplicated with tears, for the deliverance of the children of Africa. Wisdom urged her solemn plea. The bleeding captive plead his innocence, and pointed to Christianity who stood weeping at the cross. Jehovah frowned upon the nefarious institution, and thunderbolts, red with vengeance, struggled to leap forth to blast the guilty wretches who maintained it. But all was vain. Slavery had stretched its dark wings of death over the land, the Church stood silently by

—the priests prophesied falsely, and the people loved to have it so. Its throne is established, and now it reigns triumphantly.

Nearly three millions of your fellow citizens, are prohibited by law, and public opinion, (which in this country is stronger than law), from reading the Book of Life. Your intellect has been destroyed as much as possible, and every ray of light they have attempted to shut out from your minds. The oppressors themselves have become involved in the ruin. They have become weak, sensual, and rapacious. They have cursed you—they have cursed themselves—they have cursed the earth which they have trod. In the language of a Southern statesman, we can truly say, “even the wolf, driven back long since by the approach of man, now returns after the lapse of a hundred years, and howls amid the desolations of slavery.”

The colonists threw the blame upon England. They said that the mother country entailed the evil upon them, and that they would rid themselves of it if they could. The world thought they were sincere, and the philanthropic pitied them. But time soon tested their sincerity. In a few years, the colonists grew strong and severed themselves from the British Government. Their Independence was declared, and they took their station among the sovereign powers of the earth. The declaration was a glorious document. Sages admired it, and the patriotic of every nation revered the Godlike sentiments which it contained. When the power of Government returned to their hands, did they emancipate the slaves? No; they rather added new links to our chains. Were they ignorant of the principles of Liberty? Certainly they were not. The sentiments of their revolutionary orators fell in burning eloquence upon their hearts, and with one voice they cried, LIBERTY OR DEATH. O, what a sentence was that! It ran from soul to soul like electric fire, and nerved the arm of thousands to fight in the holy cause of Freedom. Among the diversity of opinions that are entertained in regard to physical resistance, there are but a few found to gainsay that stern declaration. We are among those who do not.

SLAVERY! How much misery is comprehended in that single word. What mind is there that does not shrink from its direful effects? Unless the image of God is obliterated from the soul, all men cherish the love of Liberty. The nice discerning political economist does not regard the sacred right, more than the untutored African who roams in the wilds of Congo. Nor has the one more right to the full enjoyment of his freedom than the other. In every man's mind the good seeds of liberty are planted, and he who brings his fellow down so low, as to make him contented with a condition of slavery, commits the highest crime against God and man. Brethren, your oppressors aim to do this. They endeavor to make you as much like brutes as possible. When they have blinded the eyes of your mind—when they have embittered the sweet waters of life—when they have shut out the light which shines from the word of God—then, and not till then has American slavery done its perfect work.

TO SUCH DEGRADATION IT IS SINFUL IN THE EXTREME FOR YOU TO MAKE VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION. The divine commandments, you are in duty bound to reverence, and obey. If you do not obey them you will surely meet with the displeasure of the Almighty. He requires you to love him supremely, and your neighbor as yourself—to keep the Sabbath day holy—to search the Scriptures—and bring up your children with respect for his laws, and to worship no other God but him. But slavery sets all these at naught, and hurls defiance in the face of Jehovah. The forlorn condition in which you are placed does not destroy your moral obligation to God. You are not certain of Heaven, because you suffer yourselves to remain in a state of slavery, where you cannot obey the commandments of the Sovereign of the universe. If the ignorance of slavery is a passport to heaven, then it is a blessing, and no curse, and you should rather desire its perpetuity than its abolition. God will not receive slavery, nor ignorance, nor any other state of mind, for love, and obedience to him. Your condition does not absolve you from your moral obligation. The diabolical injustice by which your liberties are cloven down, NEITHER GOD, NOR ANGELS, OR

JUST MEN, COMMAND YOU TO SUFFER FOR A SINGLE MOMENT. THEREFORE IT IS YOUR SOLEMN AND IMPERATIVE DUTY TO USE EVERY MEANS, BOTH MORAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND PHYSICAL, THAT PROMISE SUCCESS. If a band of heathen men should attempt to enslave a race of Christians, and to place their children under the influence of some false religion, surely, heaven would frown upon the men who would not resist such aggression, even to death. If, on the other hand, a band of Christians should attempt to enslave a race of heathen men and to entail slavery upon them, and to keep them in heathenism in the midst of Christianity, the God of heaven would smile upon every effort which the injured might make to disenthral themselves.

Brethren, it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody foot prints of the first remorseless soul thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God, as the proudest monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God, and like its great Author, is no respecter of persons.

Brethren, the time has come when you must act for yourselves. It is an old and true saying, that “if hereditary bondmen would be free, they must themselves strike the blow.” You can plead your own cause, and do the work of emancipation better than any others. The nations of the old world are moving in the great cause of universal freedom, and some of them at least, will ere long, do you justice. The combined powers of Europe have placed their broad seal of disapprobation upon the African slave trade. But in the slave holding parts of the United States, the trade is as brisk as ever. They buy and sell you as though you were brute beasts. The North has done much—her opinion of slavery in the abstract is known. But in regard to the South, we adopt the opinion of the New York Evangelist—“We have advanced so far, that the cause apparently waits for a more effectual door to be thrown open than has been yet.” We are about to

point you to that more effectual door. Look around you, and behold the bosoms of your loving wives, heaving with untold agonies! Hear the cries of your poor children! Remember the stripes your fathers bore. Think of the torture and disgrace of your noble mothers. Think of your wretched sisters, loving virtue and purity, as they are driven into concubinage, and are exposed to the unbridled lusts of incarnate devils. Think of the undying glory that hangs around the ancient name of Africa:—and forget not that you are native-born American citizens, and as such, you are justly entitled to all the rights that are granted to the freest. Think how many tears you have poured out upon the soil which you have cultivated with unrequited toil, and enriched with your blood; and then go to your lordly enslavers, and tell them plainly, that YOU ARE DETERMINED TO BE FREE. Appeal to their sense of justice, and tell them that they have no more right to oppress you, than you have to enslave them. Entreat them to remove the grievous burdens which they have imposed upon you, and to remunerate you for your labor. Promise them renewed diligence in the cultivation of the soil, if they will render to you an equivalent for your services. Point them to the increase of happiness and prosperity in the British West Indies, since the act of Emancipation. Tell them in language which they cannot misunderstand, of the exceeding sinfulness of slavery, and of a future judgment, and of the righteous retributions of an indignant God. Inform them that all you desire, is FREEDOM, and that nothing else will suffice. Do this, and for ever after cease to toil for the heartless tyrants, who give you no other reward but stripes and abuse. If they then commence the work of death, they, and not you, will be responsible for the consequences. You had far better all die—*die immediately*, than live slaves, and entail your wretchedness upon your posterity. If you would be free in this generation, here is your only hope. However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of Redemption without the shedding of blood. If you must bleed, let it all come at once—rather, *die freemen, than live to be slaves*. It is impossible, like the children of Israel, to make a grand Exodus from the land

of bondage. THE PHARAOHS ARE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BLOOD-RED WATERS! You cannot remove en masse to the dominions of the British Queen—nor can you pass through Florida, and overrun Texas, and at last find peace in Mexico. The propagators of American slavery are spending their blood and treasure, that they may plant the black flag in the heart of Mexico, and riot in the halls of the Montezumas. In the language of the Rev. Robert Hall, when addressing the volunteers of Bristol, who were rushing forth to repel the invasion of Napoleon, who threatened to lay waste the fair homes of England, “Religion is too much interested in your behalf, not to shed over you her most gracious influences.”

You will not be compelled to spend much time in order to become inured to hardships. From the first moment that you breathed the air of heaven, you have been accustomed to nothing else but hardships. The heroes of the American Revolution were never put upon harder fare, than a peck of corn, and a few herrings per week. You have not become enervated by the luxuries of life. Your sternest energies have been beaten out upon the anvil of severe trial. Slavery has done this, to make you subservient to its own purposes; but it has done more than this, it has prepared you for any emergency. If you receive good treatment, it is what you could hardly expect; if you meet with pain, sorrow, and even death, these are the common lot of the slaves.

Fellow-men! patient sufferers! behold your dearest rights crushed to the earth! See your sons murdered, and your wives, mothers, and sisters, doomed to prostitution! In the name of the merciful God! and by all that life is worth, let it no longer be a debateable question, whether it is better to choose LIBERTY or DEATH!

In 1822, Denmark Veazie, of South Carolina, formed a plan for the liberation of his fellow men. In the whole history of human efforts to overthrow slavery, a more complicated and tremendous plan was never formed. He was betrayed by the treachery of his own people, and died a martyr to freedom. Many a brave hero fell, but History, faithful to her high trust, will transcribe his name

on the same monument with Moses, Hampden, Tell, Bruce, and Wallace, Touissaint L'Overture, Lafayette and Washington. That tremendous movement shook the whole empire of slavery. The guilty soul thieves were overwhelmed with fear. It is a matter of fact, that at that time, and in consequence of the threatened revolution, the slave states talked strongly of emancipation. But they blew but one blast of the trumpet of freedom, and then laid it aside. As these men became quiet, the slaveholders ceased to talk about emancipation: and now, behold your condition to-day! Angels sigh over it, and humanity has long since exhausted her tears in weeping on your account!

The patriotic Nathaniel Turner followed Denmark Veazie. He was goaded to desperation by wrong and injustice. By Despotism, his name has been recorded on the list of infamy, but future generations will number him among the noble and brave.

Next arose the immortal Joseph Cinque, the hero of the Amistad. He was a native African, and by the help of God he emancipated a whole ship-load of his fellow men on the high seas. And he now sings of liberty on the sunny hills of Africa, and beneath his native palm trees, where he hears the lion roar, and feels himself as free as that king of the forest. Next arose Madison Washington, that bright star of freedom, and took his station in the constellation of freedom. He was a slave on board the brig Creole, of Richmond, bound to New Orleans, that great slave mart, with a hundred and four others. Nineteen struck for liberty or death. But one life was taken, and the whole were emancipated, and the vessel was carried into Nassau, New Providence. Noble men! Those who have fallen in freedom's conflict, their memories will be cherished by the true hearted, and the God-fearing, in all future generations; those who are living, their names are surrounded by a halo of glory.

We do not advise you to attempt a revolution with the sword, because it would be inexpedient. Your numbers are too small, and moreover the rising spirit of the age, and the spirit of the gospel, are opposed to war and bloodshed. But from this moment cease to labor for tyrants who will not remunerate you.

Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. **RATHER DIE FREEMEN THAN LIVE TO BE SLAVES.** Remember that you are **THREE MILLIONS.**

It is in your power so to torment the God-cursed slaveholders, that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale was turned, and black men were the masters, and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. Yes, the tyrants would meet with plagues more terrible than those of Pharaoh. But you are a patient people. You act as though you were made for the special use of these devils. You act as though your daughters were born to pamper the lusts of your masters and overseers. And worse than all, you tamely submit, while your lords tear your wives from your embraces, and defile them before your eyes. In the name of God we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it all run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be **RESISTANCE! RESISTANCE! RESISTANCE!**—No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. What kind of resistance you had better make, you must decide by the circumstances that surround you, and according to the suggestion of expediency. Brethren, adieu. Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are three millions.

(1843)

# JAIRUS LINCOLN

## *Hymn 17*

Born and educated in Boston, Jairus Lincoln (1794–1882) was a songwriter and composer active in the Massachusetts antislavery movement in the 1840s. In 1843 he published a compendium of ninety-four abolitionist hymns, some reprinted from other sources but many of them original compositions, under the title *Anti-Slavery Melodies: For the Friends of Freedom*. Among the original works is his own “Hymn 17,” a scathing parody of the patriotic anthem “My country, ’tis of thee,” to be sung to the same tune.

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The musical score is written in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The melody is simple and rhythmic, consisting of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are arranged in four stanzas, each corresponding to a line of music. The first two stanzas are grouped together by a brace on the left. The third and fourth stanzas are also grouped together by a brace on the left. The lyrics are as follows:

1. My country! 'tis of thee, Strong hold of slavery, Of thee I sing:  
2. My native country! thee, Where all men are born free, If white their skin:  
3. Let wailing swell the breeze, And ring from all the trees, The black man's wrong;  
4. Our father's God! to thee, Author of Liberty, To thee we sing;  
Land where my fathers died, Where men man's rights deride,  
I love thy hills and dales, Thy mounts and pleasant vales,  
Let every tongue awake, Let bond and free partake,  
Soon may our land be bright, With holy freedom's right,

From every mountain-side, Thy deeds shall ring.  
But hate thy negro sales, As foulest sin.  
Let rocks their silence break, The sound prolong.  
Protect us by thy might, Great God, our King.

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics underneath. The second and third staves are piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "From every mountain-side, Thy deeds shall ring. But hate thy negro sales, As foulest sin. Let rocks their silence break, The sound prolong. Protect us by thy might, Great God, our King." The music is in a common time signature and features a simple, hymn-like melody.

(1843)

# ANONYMOUS

## *Am I not a Sister?*

This song was included in George W. Clark's *Liberty Minstrel* (New York, 1844) as a companion piece to another entitled "Am I Not A Man and Brother?" Both songs were signed "A.C.L.," an unknown author who drew on a traditional motto dating back to the British abolition movement of the 1790s. The female variant of the phrase first surfaced in American antislavery circles in the 1830s.

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Am I not a sister, say?

    Shall I then be bought and sold  
In the mart and by the way,  
    For the white man's lust and gold?  
Save me then from his foul snare,  
Leave me not to perish there!

Am I not a sister say,

    Though I have a sable hue!  
Lo! I have been dragged away,  
    From my friends and kindred true,  
And have toiled in yonder field,  
There have long been bruised and peeled.

Am I not a sister, say?

    Have I an immortal soul?  
Will you, sisters, tell me nay?  
    Shall I live in lust's control,  
To be chattled like a beast,  
By the Christian church and priest?

Am I not a sister, say?  
    Though I have been made a slave?  
Will you not then for me pray,  
    To the God whose power can save,  
High and low, and bond and free?  
Toil and pray and vote for me!

(1844)

# MARGARET LUCY SHANDS BAILEY

## *The Blind Slave Boy*

Born in Virginia, Margaret Lucy Shands Bailey (1812–1888) married the abolitionist Gamaliel Bailey in Cincinnati in 1833. Mother of six children (six other children died in infancy), she wrote for various antislavery periodicals including the *National Era*, edited by her husband, in which Harriet Beecher Stowe first serialized *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1878 Stowe revealed that the episode of Eliza crossing the Ohio River on ice floes was inspired by an article in Bailey's children's magazine *A Friend of Youth*. Her sentimental song "The Blind Slave Boy" was published in George W. Clark's *Liberty Minstrel* in 1844.

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The image shows a musical score for the song "The Blind Slave Boy" by Margaret Lucy Shands Bailey. The score is written for piano and voice, consisting of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "Come back to me moth-er! why lin - ger a - way From thy poor little blind boy, the long wea - ry day! I mark eve - ry foot-step, I list to each". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and chords in the right hand.

tone, And won - der my moth - er should leave me a-

lone! There are voi - ces of sor - row, and

voi - ces of glee, But there's no one to joy or to

sor - - ow with me; For each hath of

pleas - ure and trou - ble his share, And

none for the poor lit - tle blind boy will care.

My mother, come back to me! close to thy breast  
Once more let thy poor little blind one be pressed;  
Once more let me feel thy warm breath on my cheek,

And hear thee in accents of tenderness speak!  
O mother! I've no one to love me—no heart  
Can bear like thine own in my sorrows a part,  
No hand is so gentle, no voice is so kind,  
Oh! none like a mother can cherish the blind!

Poor blind one! No mother thy wailing can hear,  
No mother can hasten to banish thy fear;  
For the slave-owner drives her, o'er mountain and wild,  
And for one paltry dollar hath sold thee, poor child!  
Ah! who can in language of mortals reveal  
The anguish that none but a mother can feel,  
When man in his vile lust of mammon hath trod  
On her child, who is stricken and smitten of God!

Blind, helpless, forsaken, with strangers alone,  
She hears in her anguish his piteous moan;  
As he eagerly listens—but listens in vain,  
To catch the loved tones of his mother again!  
The curse of the broken in spirit shall fall  
On the wretch who hath mingled this wormwood and gall,  
And his gain like a mildew shall blight and destroy,  
Who hath torn from his mother the little blind boy!

# GEORGE W. CLARK

## *March to the Battlefield*

A white antislavery lyricist and composer based in New York, George W. Clark (fl. 1844–1845) compiled *The Liberty Minstrel*, an assemblage of more than 115 songs written by figures known and unknown. It sold for fifty cents a copy. Clark included a musical score for each song, many of them popular tunes but some of his own composition. His “March to the Battlefield” captures the militant tone of some abolitionist writing that enraged southern slaveholders.

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March to the bat - le - field, The foe is now be-

fore us; Each heart is free - dom's shield, And

heaven is smil - - ing o'er us The

woes and pains of slave - ry's chains, That

bind three mill - ions un - - der; In proud disdain we'll

**D. C.**  
burst their chain, And tear each link a - sun - - - der.

Who for his country brave,  
    Would fly from her invader?  
Who his base life to save  
    Would traitor like degrade her?  
Our hallowed cause—  
    Our homes and laws,

'Gainst tyrant hosts sustaining,  
We'll win a crown of bright renown,  
Or die, man's rights maintaining,  
March to the battlefield, &c.

(1844)

# ELIZA LEE FOLLEN

## *The Slave Boy's Wish; Pic-nic at Dedham*

A lifelong antislavery advocate, the Bostonian Eliza Lee Follen (1787– 1860) was one of the most prolific and innovative writers of children's literature in nineteenth-century America. Among her publications were the first American edition of Grimm's fairy tales and various collections and periodicals, including *The Child's Friend*; *Hymns, Songs and Fables for Children*; and *Nursery Songs*. Her poignant lyric in the voice of an enslaved child, "The Slave Boy's Wish," was published in George W. Clark's collection of antislavery songs, *The Liberty Minstrel* (1844). Also written in the voice of a child, her story "Pic-nic at Dedham" records a young person's conversion to the antislavery cause. She published it in her own collection of antislavery literature for children, *The Liberty Cap* (1846).

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### *The Slave Boy's Wish*

I wish I was that little bird,  
Up in the bright blue sky;  
That sings and flies just where he will,  
And no one asks him why.

I wish I was that little brook,  
That runs so swift along;  
Through pretty flowers and shining stones,  
Singing a merry song.

I wish I was that butterfly,  
Without a thought or care;  
Sporting my pretty, brilliant wings,  
Like a flower in the air.

I wish I was that wild, wild deer,  
I saw the other day;  
Who swifter than an arrow flew,  
Through the forest far away.

I wish I was that little cloud,  
By the gentle south wind driven;  
Floating along, so free and bright  
Far, far up into heaven.

I'd rather be a cunning fox,  
And hide me in a cave;  
I'd rather be a savage wolf,  
Than what I am—a slave.

My mother calls me her good boy,  
My father calls me brave;  
What wicked action have I done,  
That I should be a slave.

I saw my little sister sold,  
So will they do to me;  
My Heavenly Father, let me die,  
For then I shall be free.

(1844)

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*Pic-nic at Dedham*

——, August 3, 1843.

DEAR MOTHER,

You asked me when I left you, to write to you; I well remember what a choaky feeling I had in my throat, when I was standing in our porch, and I felt your arm round my neck, as you said, "You will write often to me, Hal," and yet I have written only once. Well! I mean to make up now, and write you a real long letter; and one reason is, I have got something to write about. Uncle told us the day before yesterday that he was going to take us the next day, to the pic-nic at Dedham, for they were going to celebrate the first of August, and he must be there. I did not think much what it was all for, but I knew it was a holiday, and that was enough for me.

You may be sure I was up betimes: we started soon after seven; uncle let me drive; George you know is a little chap, and he sat on the back seat with aunt. We got to Dedham a little after nine, and went directly to the Town Hall; there we found a great many people round the door, and a long stream of folks just arrived from Boston in the cars, and there was Dr. Bowditch and a number of other gentlemen with stars on their coats, arranging them so as to form a procession. They had ever so many beautiful banners. Uncle joined them, and left me in the wagon with aunt. After the procession was formed, they turned and passed directly by us, so that I saw every thing; and what was the best of the whole, the band of music was formed entirely of boys, and they played first rate. They walked so slowly that I could see what was on their banners, and read the inscriptions; I cannot remember all, but I do some of them.

One had on it a fine figure of a black man, with his arms thrown up, exultingly, and his broken chains falling to the ground, and his foot upon a whip; the words over him were, "This is the Lord's doing," and underneath, "Slavery abolished in the West Indies, August 1st, 1834, Laus Deo." The figure was finely done, and the poor negro's face was full of joy; I thought it almost handsome, and mother I do wonder that I never heard you or father speak of the 1st of August. The next one I remember was a banner borne by a boy about my

age; on it were these words, "Shall a republic which could not bear the bondage of a King, cradle a bondage which a King has abolished?" Aunt told me that the boy who bore this banner, was the son of the man who wrote the words, and that his father had gone to that land where there was no slavery, and I felt, mother, that if I had been so unhappy as to lose my father, I should love to carry a banner with his words on it, for I should feel as if I was doing something to carry on his work.

Another banner had a liberty cap on it, with these words, "God never made a tyrant or a slave." Another, "Our fanaticism: 'All men are created free and equal.'" "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." When you and father speak of the fanaticism of the abolitionists, you can't mean this, I'm sure. Another banner had these words on it, "The Almighty has no attribute that can take sides with the slave-holder," and Thomas Jefferson's name under them: and yet Jefferson held slaves, and so did Washington, but Washington freed his in his last will.

One more I particularly noticed, for our friend Dr. Channing's name was on it. These were the words, "The Union: we will yield every thing to it but truth, honor, and liberty: These we will never yield." I forgot to mention that one banner had on it the initials of Garrison's name surrounded with an oaken wreath; and underneath it this inscription, "I am in earnest! I will not equivocate! I will not excuse! I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard!" Uncle helped me remember this. Well! the whole procession, men, women, and children, all marched to the boys' music, which was real good, to a fine large pine grove about half a mile off. We went round by another road so as to get there first and see them enter: they passed under a beautiful arch of oak leaves and evergreens, and slowly ascended the side of a hill covered with seats, under the tall pines which made a fine amphitheatre; at the foot was a raised platform for the speakers, round which they placed the banners, and pictures, which I forgot to tell you about. After all had taken their places, Dr. Bowditch called for three cheers for the glorious occasion that had called them together, and oh! mother, they made the old grove ring well with their hurras, and how the hats

and handkerchiefs did fly round! my great straw hat did good service, and you know I can make a pretty good noise when I try for it. Then they sang a beautiful hymn written by Mr. Pierpont, and then Mr. Allen prayed, he did not, as you say, make a prayer, he prayed: it was heart work, his prayer, I'm sure. While he was praying I looked far, far up into the clear blue sky through the openings in the trees, and I never felt so much as if God heard our prayers; and oh, how I did wish that the time might come when we might be thanking God that our slaves were all free. Then some appropriate passages from the Bible were read. After this they sang another hymn written by Mr. James Lowell, and mother it was very beautiful, I have got it for you, and you must read it. After this Mr. Pierpont spoke, he was very entertaining, he put it to vote which was most likely to make men work, cash or lash—cash had the vote: he told us that freedom was working as well for the masters as for the slaves. Mr. Stetson spoke beautifully, but mother, some how or other he always makes me laugh. I can't tell you much about the speeches, at last the same boy that carried the banner, recited a poem called The Christian Slave. Mr. Pierpont told the audience that when they put up a slave on the auction table, the auctioneer would sometimes mention that she or he was a Christian, in order to get a higher price, and this was the subject of the poem—it made my blood run cold to think of selling Christians. The boy spoke well enough, and I think that if the men don't all do something about slavery soon, we boys had better see what we can do, for it is too wicked.

After this came the collation, we had to walk in a procession and place ourselves four or five deep at the table, and then get what we could; I hoped to get some of aunt's cake that we carried with us, but I did not, though I got enough of somebody's else; for they put the children forward, and I remembered, mother, to help my neighbors, aren't you glad of that?

After dinner there was a great deal more speaking and some real good singing; but what pleased me most was an address from a man who had been a slave. He was as white as I am, and a fine looking fellow: he spoke very well: he said that they had all come together to rejoice that eight hundred thousand

human beings who had been slaves were made free-men, but if they knew what he knew, and had felt as he had what slavery was, they would gladly all meet to rejoice that one single man was free; then he spoke of what slavery was, and oh, dear mother, I never felt so about slavery before; every boy ought to know what American slavery is. When the whole was over, and it was time to go, they all joined together before they parted, in singing Old Hundred. Now dear mother just imagine a grand large grove of tall pine trees, with their branches crossing each other, so as to look like the arches of a grand cathedral, with the blue sky for a ceiling, and at least fifteen hundred people joining most of them with their voices, and all looking as if they did with their hearts in singing "From all who dwell below the sky," and to that glorious old tune: it seemed to me as if the spirit of old Martin Luther was there. I never had such a feeling of awe in my life. I wanted you and father to be there; I never felt so religious; England may be forgiven a thousand sins for this one act. Why do not all Christians rejoice on this day?

When we were all seated in the wagon again, and on our way home, I told uncle that I had had a beautiful time. He said that "it was the most glorious day in the year to him;" "greater," I said, "than the fourth of July." "Yes," he said, "because it celebrated a bloodless victory, it was won by persevering love and justice, against selfishness and tyranny. It is such a victory as this Hal, that we abolitionists strive for, pray for, and are willing to suffer for." Then uncle told aunt an anecdote he had just heard, that I think mother, you will like to hear. He said that "five years ago on this same day, the 1st of August, a blind old man, a minister of religion, wished very much that there should be some public celebration of the event that was then taking place in the West Indies, that we republicans should join these eight hundred thousand souls in thanks to God, that they were free, that they were acknowledged to be men. The good man could not inspire those around him with his feelings about it; but all the more did he keep the hour holy in his own heart, so he and his daughter sat up that night till the clock struck twelve, and then he asked her to play a solemn tune on the piano,

and the blind old man and his child sang by themselves at midnight a song of thankfulness and praise to God, that at that moment the chains of slavery were unloosed from eight hundred thousand of their fellow beings, and that they were restored to the rights and dignity of men. “Surely,” said uncle, “those two weak voices in the stillness of that solemn night, were heard with more favor by the Almighty, than the roaring of our cannons, and the peals of our bells on the fourth of July”—and mother, I could not help thinking so too. Is not this a good long letter? I hope you will not think it is too long, but I could not help telling you all about the first of August. I shall never forget it. Give my love to father.

Your affectionate son,

HAL.

*(1846)*

# ELIZUR WRIGHT JR.

## *The Fugitive Slave to the Christian*

Born in Connecticut and educated at Yale, Elizur Wright Jr. (1804–1885) converted to Garrisonian radicalism in 1833 and left a professorship at Western Reserve College in Ohio to help found the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York City. He edited the *Massachusetts Abolitionist* in 1839–40 and joined in organizing the Liberty Party, which nominated candidates on a straight abolitionist platform in the 1840s. After 1846, estranged from his former allies in the antislavery cause and perhaps moved by the need to support his wife and eighteen children, he devoted more of his energy to the life insurance business and its reform. He composed “The Fugitive Slave to the Christian” for *The Liberty Minstrel*, edited by George W. Clark, in 1844.

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The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a 4/4 time signature. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the treble clef staff of each system.

The first system contains the lyrics: "The fet - ters galled my weary soul,— A".

The second system contains the lyrics: "soul that seemed but thrown away; I spurned the ty - rants".

The third system contains the lyrics: "base con-trol, Re-solved at last the".

**Chorus.**

man to play :- The hounds are bay - ing  
on my track; O Christ-ian! will you  
send me back? The hounds are baying on my track; O  
Christ - ian will you send me back?

I felt the stripes, the lash I saw,  
Red, dripping with a father's gore;  
And, worst of all their lawless law,  
The insults that my mother bore!  
    The hounds are baying on my track,  
    O Christian! will you send me back?

Where human law o'errules Divine,  
Beneath the sheriff's hammer fell  
My wife and babes,—I call them mine,—  
And where they suffer, who can tell?  
    The hounds are baying on my track,  
    O Christian! will you send me back?

I seek a home where man is man,  
If such there be upon this earth,  
To draw my kindred, if I can,  
Around its free, though humble hearth.  
    The hounds are baying on my track,  
    O Christian! will you send me back!

(1844)

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## *Anniversary of West Indian Emancipation*

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) had witnessed slavery early in life on visits to South Carolina and Florida; and from his base in Concord, Massachusetts, publicly opposed the institution for decades. The first of his many lectures and essays on the subject was his 1844 public address in Concord to commemorate the anniversary of the British abolition of slavery in 1833, which abolitionists customarily celebrated on August 1 every year. His address in 1845 contains some of the most direct and shocking language that he or any abolitionist ever uttered. See, for example, his tirade against the vicious power of the hateful word “nigger” in American society, in the third paragraph.

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**T**HIS OCCASION seems one of hope, not of sorrow and distrust. While I sympathise with the feelings that have been expressed by others, I cannot but wish to recall the audience to the occasion that has brought us together, and look forward to the similar occasion which we hope to celebrate in our own land.

What is the defence of Slavery? What is the irresistible argument by which every plea of humanity and reason has hitherto been borne down?

Is it a doubt of the equity of the negro’s cause? By no means. Is it a doubt of the sincerity of the reformer? No; the Abolitionists are thought partial, credulous, tedious monomaniacs; bitter—but no man doubts their sincerity. Is it a stringent self-interest? No; this acts in certain places. It acts on the seaboard, and in great thoroughfares, where the Northern merchant or manufacturer exchanges hospitalities with the Southern planter, or trades with him, and loves to exculpate himself from all sympathy with those turbulent Abolitionists. But it acts only there—not on the Northern people at large. The farmers, for example, in this Country, or in this State, feel no pinch of self-interest to court the complacency of the Southerner. If Fitchburg stock is good—if we can buy and

sell land, and wood, and hay, and corn—if we can sell shoes, and tinware, and clocks, and carriages, and chairs—we don't care whether he likes or dislikes it. What, then, is the objection? I think there is but one single argument which has any real weight with the bulk of the Northern people, and which lies in one word—a word which I hear pronounced with triumphant emphasis in bar-rooms, in shops, in streets, in kitchens, at musters, and at cattle-shows. That word is *Niggers!*—a word which, cried by rowdy boys and rowdy men in the ear of this timid and sceptical generation, is reckoned stronger than heaven; it blows away with a jeer all the efforts of philanthropy, all the expostulations of pity, the cries of millions, now for hundreds of years—all are answered by this insulting appellation, “Oh, the Niggers!” and the boys straightaway sing Jim Crow and jump Jim Crow in the streets and taverns.

It is the objection of an inferiority of race. They who say it and they who hear it, think it the voice of nature and fate pronouncing against the Abolitionist and the Philanthropist; that the *ya, ya* of the Negro, his laugh, and the imperfect articulation of his organs designate an imperfect race; and that the good-will of amiable enthusiasts in his behalf will avail him no more against this sentence of Nature than a pair of oars against the falling ocean at Niagara.

And what is the amount of this conclusion in which the men of New-England acquiesce? It is, that the Creator of the Negro has given him up to stand as a victim of a caricature of the white man beside him; to stoop under his pack, and to bleed under his whip. If that be the doctrine, then, I say, if He has given up his cause, He has also given up mine, who feel his wrong, and who in our hearts must curse the Creator who has undone him.

But no, it is not so; the Universe is not bankrupt: still stands the old heart firm in its seat, and knows that, come what will, the right is and shall be. Justice is for ever and ever. And what is the reply to this fatal allegation?

I believe there is a sound argument derived from facts collected in the United States and in the West Indies, in reply to this alleged hopeless inferiority of the colored race. But I shall not touch it. I concern myself now with the

morals of the system, which seem to scorn a tedious catalogue of particulars on a question so simple as this. The only reply, then, to this poor, sceptical ribaldry is the affirming heart. The sentiment of right, which is the principle of civilization and the reason of reason, fights against this damnable atheism. All the facts in history are fables, and untrustworthy, beside the dictates of the moral sentiment which speaks one and the same voice in all ages. And what says that to the injured Negro? If we listen to it, it assures us that in his very wrongs is his strength. The Persians have a proverb: "Beware of the orphan; for when the orphan sets a-crying, the throne of the Almighty is shaken from side to side." It is certain that, if it should come to question, all just men, all intelligent agents, must take the part of the black against the white man. Then I say, never is the planter safe; his house is a den; a just man cannot go there, except to tell him so. Whatever may appear at the moment, however contrasted the fortunes of the black and the white—though the one live in his hereditary mansion-house, and the latter in a shed; though one rides an Arabian horse, and the other is hunted by blood-hounds; though one eats, and the other sweats; one strikes, and the other dies—yet is the planter's an unsafe and unblest condition. Nature fights on the other side; and as power is always stealing from the idle to the busy hand, it seems inevitable that a revolution is preparing at no distant day to set these disjointed matters right.

See further, if you with me are believing and not unbelieving, if you are open to hope and not to despair, in what manner the moral power secures the welfare of the black man.

In the moral creation, it is appointed from everlasting, that the protection of the weak shall be in the illumination of the strong. It is in the order of things the privilege of superiority to give, to bestow, to protect, to love, to serve. This is the office and the source of power. It is power's power to do these things; and, on the other hand, it is the ruin of power to steal, to injure, and to put to death. The hope and the refuge of the weaker individual and the weaker races is here. It will not always be reputable to steal and to oppress. It will not always be possible.

Every new step taken in the true order of human life takes out something of brutality and infuses something of good will. Precisely as it is the necessity of grass to grow, of the child to be born, of light to shine, of heat to radiate, and of matter to attract, so is it of man's race and of every race to rise and to refine. "All things strive to ascend, and ascend in their striving." And it will be as natural and obvious a step with the increased dominion of right reason over the human race, for the interests of the more amicable and pacific classes to be eagerly defended by the more energetic, as it is now for Trade to displace War.

I know that this race have long been victims. They came from being preyed on by the barbarians of Africa to be preyed on by the barbarians of America. To many of them, no doubt, Slavery was a mitigation and a gain. Put the slave under negro drivers, and it is said these are more cruel than the white. Their fate now, as far as it depends on circumstances, depends on the raising of their masters. The masters are ambitious of culture and civility. Elevate, enlighten, civilize the semi-barbarous nations of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama—take away from their debauched society the Bowie-knife, the rum-bowl, the dice-box, and the stews—take out the brute, and infuse a drop of civility and generosity, and you touch those selfish lords with thought and gentleness.

Instead of racers, jockies, duelists and peacocks, you shall have a race of decent and lawful men, incapacitated to hold slaves, and eager to give them liberty. . . . I hold it, then, to be the part of right reason, to hope and to affirm well of the destinies of this portion of the human family, and to accept the humane voices which in our times have espoused their cause, as only the forerunners of vast majorities in this country and in the race.

*(August 1, 1845)*

## JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

### *A Rallying Cry for New-England, Against the Annexation of Texas*

Though his reputation declined in the twentieth century, James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) was widely viewed in his time as one of the most important American poets and intellectuals of the nineteenth century. A product of the famous Lowell family of Massachusetts, he was a prolific writer, editor, and professor at Harvard whose legacy included the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly* and collected writings that fill sixteen volumes. In 1845, Lowell argued that the annexation of Texas and the looming war against Mexico were driven by the South's desire to extend slavery. The bouncing meter of his poem "A Rallying Cry for New-England" suggests a call to arms for abolitionists opposed to war with Mexico.

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Rouse up, New-England! Buckle on your mail of proof sublime,  
Your stern old hate of tyranny, your deep contempt of crime!  
A traitor plot is hatching now, more full of woe and shame  
Than ever from the iron heart of bloodiest despot came!

Six slave States added at a breath! One flourish of a pen,  
And fetters shall be riveted on millions more of men!  
One drop of ink to sign a name, and Slavery shall find,  
For all her surplus flesh and blood, a market to her mind!

A market where good Democrats their fellow-men may sell!  
Oh, what a grin of fiendish glee runs round and round through hell!  
How all the damned leap up for joy, and half forget their fire,  
To think men take such pains to claim the notice of God's ire!

Is't not enough that we have borne the sneer of all the world,  
And bent to those whose haughty lips in scorn of us are curled?

Is't not enough that we must hunt their living chattels back,  
And cheer the hungry blood-hounds on that howl upon their track?

Is't not enough that we must bow to all that they decree,—  
These cotton and tobacco lords, these pimps of slavery?  
That we must yield our conscience up to glut Oppression's maw,  
And break our faith with God to keep the letter of Man's law?

But must we sit in silence by, and see the chain and whip  
Made firmer for all time to come in Slavery's bloody grip?  
Must we not only half the guilt and all the shame endure,  
But help to make our tyrant's throne of flesh and blood secure?

If hand and feet we *must* be bound by deeds our fathers signed,  
And *must* be cheated, gulled and scorned, because they too were blind,  
Why, let them have their pound of flesh—for that is in the bond—  
But woe to them if they but take a half hair's breadth beyond!

Is water running in our veins? Do we remember still  
Old Plymouth rock, and Lexington, and glorious Bunker Hill?  
The debt we owe our fathers' graves? and to the yet unborn,  
Whose heritage ourselves must make a thing of pride or scorn?

Gray Plymouth rock hath yet a tongue, and Concord is not dumb,  
And voices from our father' graves, and from the future come;  
They call on us to stand our ground, they charge us still to be  
Not only free from chains ourselves, but foremost to make free!

The homespun mail by mothers wove, that erst so freely met  
The British steel, clothes hearts as warm with Pilgrim virtues yet;  
Come, brethren, up! Come, mothers, cheer your sons once more to go  
Forth to a nobler battle-field than with our olden foe!

Come, grasp your ancient buckler, gird on your ancient sword,  
Let Freedom be your bastion, your armory God's word;  
Shout, 'God for our New-England!' and smite them hip and thigh,  
The cursed race of Amalek, whose armor is a lie!

They fight against the law of God, the sacred human heart:  
One charge from Massachusetts, and their counsels fall apart!  
Rock the old Cradle yet once more! let Faneuil Hall send forth  
The anger of true-hearted men, the lightning of the North!

Awake, New-England! While you sleep, the foes advance their lines!  
Already on your strong-hold's wall their bloody banner shines!  
Awake! and hurl them back again in terror and despair—  
The time has come for earnest deeds—we've not a man to spare!

(1845)

## LEWIS GARRARD CLARKE

from *Narratives of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*

Although three of his four grandparents were white, Lewis Garrard Clarke (1815–1897) was born a slave in Kentucky, where he and his mother were both owned by his maternal grandfather. Separated from his brother Milton and the rest of his family at age seven and scarred by years of hardship, Lewis escaped to Canada as a young adult and eventually reunited with his siblings in Ohio. The passage here is excerpted from the expanded 1846 edition of a narrative first published in 1845, during his later career as antislavery lecturer and campaigner. Clarke notes the relative poverty of southern slaveholders in comparison with the prosperous free people he discovered in the North. Clarke concludes that “slavery curses the master as well as the slave.”

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The slaveholders are continually telling how poor the white people are in the free states, and how much they suffer from poverty; no masters to look out for them. When, therefore, I came into Ohio, and found nearly every family living in more real comfort than almost any slaveholder, you may easily see I did not know what to make of it. I see how it is now; every man in the free states *works*; and as they work for themselves, they do twice as much as they would do for another.

In fact, my wonder at the contrast between the slave and the free states has not ceased yet. The more I see here, the more I *know* slavery curses the master as well as the slave. It curses the soil, the houses, the churches, the schools, the burying-grounds, the flocks, and the herds; it curses man and beast, male and female, old and young. It curses the child in the cradle, and heaps curses upon the old man as he lies in his grave. Let all the people, then, of the civilized world get up upon Mount Ebal, and curse it with a long and bitter curse, and with a loud voice, till it withers and dies; till the year of jubilee dawns upon the south,

till the sun of a FREE DAY sends a beam of light and joy into every cabin.

I wish here sincerely to recognize the hand of a kind Providence in leading me from that terrible house of bondage, for raising me up friends in a land of strangers, and for leading me, as I hope, to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. A slave cannot be sure that he will always enjoy his religion in peace. Some of them are beaten for acts of devotion. I can never express to God all the gratitude which I owe him for the many favors I now enjoy. I try to live in love with all men. Nothing would delight me more than to take the worst slaveholder by the hand, even Mrs. Banton, and freely forgive her, if I thought she had repented of her sins. While she, or any other man or woman, is trampling down the image of God, and *abusing* the life out of the poor slave, I cannot believe they are Christians, or that they ought to be allowed the Christian name for one moment. I testify against them now, as having none of the spirit of Christ. There will be a cloud of swift witnesses against them at the day of judgment. The testimony of the slave will be heard then. He has no voice at the tribunals of earthly justice, but he will one day be heard; and then such revelations will be made, as will fully justify the opinion which I have been compelled to form of slaveholders. They are a SEED of *evil-doers*—*corrupt* are they—they have done abominable works.

(1846)

# HANNAH TOWNSEND AND MARY TOWNSEND

## *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet*

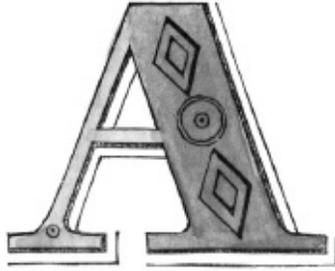
Although published anonymously, this little book for beginning readers was attributed to the Philadelphia Quakers Hannah Townsend (1812–post-1847) and Mary Townsend (1814–post-1847) by William Lloyd Garrison in the January 27, 1847, issue of *The Liberator*. The sisters wrote *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* to be sold at the Anti-Slavery Fair in Philadelphia, an annual fund-raising event. Its twenty-six simple stanzas show that abolitionists believed it was never too early to shape the sympathies of a child.

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### TO OUR LITTLE READERS.

Listen, little children, all,  
Listen to our earnest call:  
You are very young, 'tis true,  
But there's much that you can do.  
Even you can plead with men.  
That they buy not slaves again,  
And that those they have may be  
Quickly set at liberty.  
They may hearken what *you* say,  
Though from *us* they turn away.  
Sometimes, when from school you walk,  
You can with your playmates talk,  
Tell them of the slave child's fate,  
Motherless and desolate.  
And you can refuse to take  
Candy, sweetmeat, pie or cake,  
Saying "no"—unless 'tis free—

saying no unless us free  
“The slave shall not work for me.”  
Thus, dear little children, each  
May some useful lesson teach;  
Thus each one may help to free  
This fair land from slavery.



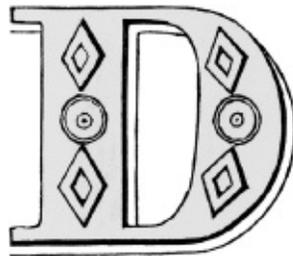
A is an Abolitionist—  
A man who wants to free  
The wretched slave—and give to all  
An equal liberty.



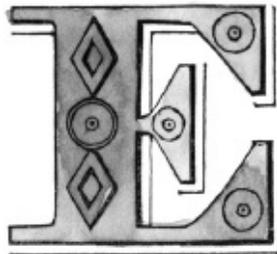
B is a Brother with a skin  
Of somewhat darker hue,  
But in our Heavenly Father's sight,  
He is as dear as you.



C is the Cotton-field, to which  
This injured brother's driven,  
When, as the white man's *slave*, he toils  
From early morn till even.



D is the Driver, cold and stern,  
Who follows, whip in hand,  
To punish those who dare to rest,  
Or disobey command.



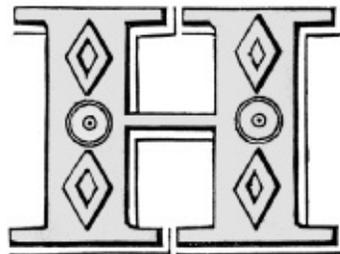
E is the Eagle, soaring high;  
An emblem of the free;  
But while we chain our brother man,  
*Our* type he cannot be.



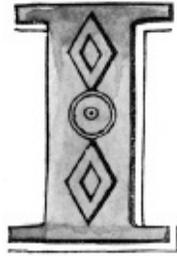
F is the heart-sick Fugitive,  
The slave who runs away,  
And travels through the dreary night,  
But hides himself by day.



G is the Gong, whose rolling sound,  
Before the morning light,  
Calls up the little sleeping slave,  
To labor until night.



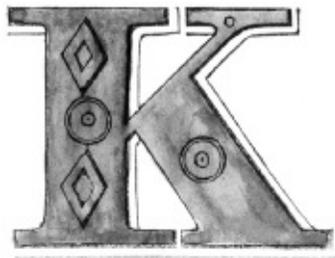
H is the Hound his master trained,  
And called to scent the track,  
Of the unhappy fugitive,  
And bring him trembling back.



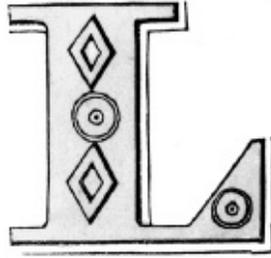
I is the Infant, from the arms  
Of its fond mother torn,  
And, at a public auction, sold  
With horses, cows, and corn.



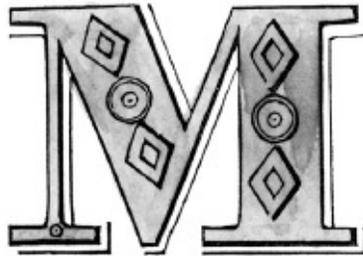
J is the Jail, upon whose floor  
That wretched mother lay,  
Until her cruel master came,  
And carried her away.



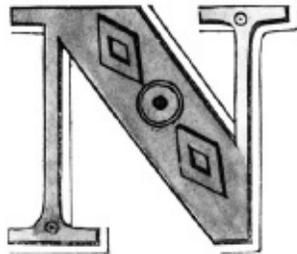
K is the Kidnapper, who stole  
That little child and mother—  
Shrieking, it clung around her, but  
He tore them from each other.



L is the Lash, that brutally  
He swung around its head,  
Threatening that “if it cried again,  
He’d whip it till ’twas dead.”



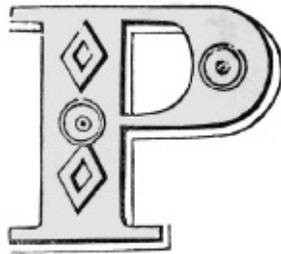
M is the Merchant of the north,  
Who buys what slaves produce—  
So they are stolen, whipped and worked,  
For his, and for our use.



N is the Negro, rambling free  
In his far distant home,  
Delighting ’neath the palm trees’ shade  
And cocoa-nut to roam.



O is the Orange tree, that bloomed  
Beside his cabin door,  
When white men stole him from his home  
To see it never more.



P is the Parent, sorrowing,  
And weeping all alone—  
The child he loved to lean upon,  
His only son, is gone!



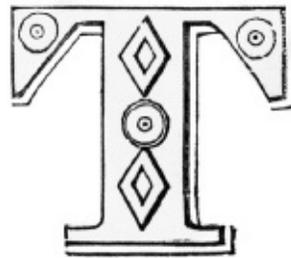
Q is the Quarter, where the slave  
On coarsest food is fed,  
And where, with toil and sorrow worn,  
He seeks his wretched bed.



R is the "Rice-swamp, dank and lone,"  
Where, weary, day by day,  
He labors till the fever wastes  
His strength and life away.



S is the Sugar, that the slave  
Is toiling hard to make,  
To put into your pie and tea,  
Your candy, and your cake.



T is the rank Tobacco plant,  
Raised by slave labor too:  
A poisonous and nasty thing,  
For gentlemen to chew.



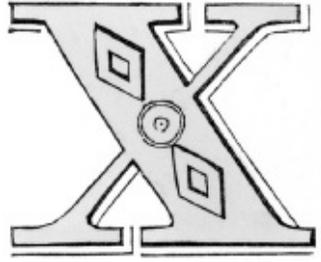
U is for Upper Canada,  
Where the poor slave has found  
Rest after all his wanderings,  
For it is British ground!



V is the Vessel, in whose dark,  
Noisome, and stifling hold,  
Hundreds of Africans are packed,  
Brought o'er the seas, and sold.



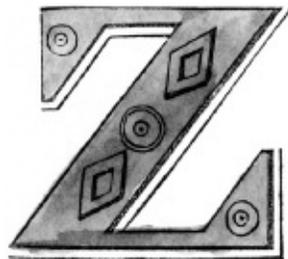
W is the Whipping post,  
To which the slave is bound,  
While on his naked back, the lash  
Makes many a bleeding wound.



X is for Xerxes, famed of yore;  
A warrior stern was he  
*He* fought with swords; let truth and love  
*Our* only weapons be.



Y is for Youth—the time for all  
Bravely to war with sin;  
And think not it can ever be  
Too early to begin.



Z is a Zealous man, sincere,  
Faithful, and just, and true;  
An earnest pleader for the slave—  
Will you not be so too?

(1847)

# HENRY WARD BEECHER

from *A Discourse Delivered at the Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.*  
*upon Thanksgiving Day*

The younger brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) was a Congregationalist minister and reformer who achieved celebrity status as a preacher and innovative theologian. His belief in a loving God, and his optimism about social progress and the capacity of people for self-fulfillment in their everyday lives, are consistent with the hopeful tone of this antislavery excerpt from his Thanksgiving Day sermon delivered in Brooklyn in November 1847. It was one of his first publications in a career that would see him write many popular books and survive an adultery scandal to earn a lasting reputation as one of the most influential and charismatic Christian leaders of his day.

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The gladness which we have for the spread of education is saddened by the aspect of the South. Education is not there making the progress which it experiences in the North and West. Nor can it, while the elements of popular good are so grievously oppressed by slavery. It is in vain to call conventions, to pass resolutions, to found ample Universities, to have nominal common-schools, in States which have, in fact, no common-people. The disease is not on the skin, but in the bones and heart; in the political and social system. The South has made slavery to be its heart. And while the laws and customs and institutions hedge in the servile mass, they all receive in turn a deadly infection. For if the slaves cannot resist, they can corrupt; they have no power to break their chains, but they put worse ones on the keepers; they cannot enlighten themselves, but they can darken those around them; they cannot preserve their own moral purity, but they can make others participators of their degradation; they cannot be free, but they can disgrace free-labor, extinguish popular enterprise, entail upon generations the curse of indolence, and luxury, and license. Themselves denied

the privilege of manhood, how awful is that Divine retribution by which those who approve and those who abet, are made to lag behind the march of civilization, and to see the whole world running past them in social elevation, popular intelligence, and industrial enterprise. If a people will have slavery, they must have its results. It is not by accident that evil accompanies despotism, and that good attends upon liberty. So God ordained it to be. If it be better to employ men as brutes, all usages must be adapted to the grade and range of brutes. If it is best for a State to have its peculiar institutions on the foundation of human degradation, then public sentiment, public law, and the fabric of social life must be adjusted thereto. A system which is obliged to make knowledge in any class a crime, and the impartation of it a penitentiary offence, cannot diffuse a powerful impulse for popular education. The burden of popular education is as heavy as can be borne in States where religion and philanthropy stimulate every energy; where trades abound, commerce flourishes, and free husbandry enriches every acre with honored labor. What then can be expected in communities where religion and philanthropy stumble at the threshold over oppression? where free labor is a disgrace; idleness, a coveted prerogative; where knowledge is not free; and where the force required to exclude it from a part, deadens the whole community?

But a better day is coming: the contrast which exists between free and slave States pleads too efficaciously to be always resisted. Indeed, against servitude and vassalage there is no such convincing argument as the well-doing of freedom. Every abuse of liberty—its arrogance, intolerance, selfishness, lawless violence are arguments for despotism; as the peace and prosperity of free-labor is unanswerably logical against slave-labor. Wherefore, the gradual return of kindness in the public mind in free States; the deeper religious tone that animates their councils; a more considerate sympathy with those who are unwillingly involved in the system—themselves bound as much as the slave; these things, together with reasons of political economy, lead us to anticipate an auspicious day. And upon the retreating footsteps of slavery ere long shall advance the

benign institutions of learning!

(1847)

## WILLIAM WELLS BROWN

*from A Lecture Delivered before the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem; from Narrative of William W. Brown, a fugitive slave. Written by himself; The American Slave-Trade; from Clotel; or, the President's Daughter; from The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*

Essayist, novelist, playwright, historian, and autobiographer William Wells Brown (c. 1814–1884) was probably the most accomplished African American man of letters of the nineteenth century. Born a slave in Kentucky, he was hired out for many kinds of work, including apprenticing in a print shop and assisting a slave trader in shipping slaves down the Mississippi for sale in New Orleans. On his second escape attempt, he succeeded in reaching Ohio, where he worked as a boatman on Lake Erie and began a career as an antislavery writer and activist. Published in Boston, his *Narrative* was a bestseller, going through four editions and ten thousand copies in just two years. A renowned lecturer, Brown could stun audiences with simple insights, as in this brief passage from his Salem lecture of November 1847: “The Slave shall have no right to speak; he shall have nothing to say. The Slave cannot speak for himself; he cannot speak for his wife or children. He is a thing.” Brown’s essay “The American Slave Trade,” published in *The Liberty Bell*, mixes sympathy for families destroyed on the auction block with indignation that “the greatest Slave-market is to be found at the capital of the country!” In 1849 Brown went to Europe, first to Paris, then to England where he reportedly delivered as many as one thousand antislavery lectures in five years. From the safe distance of London, Brown published in 1853 his most controversial work, the novel *Clotel*, inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s infamous affair with Sally Hemings. The dark mood of America in the wake of the 1857 Dred Scott decision pervades his play *The Escape*, and in this excerpt from Act III the “respectable” Dr. Gaines represents onstage the total power slave-owners exerted over their slaves—social, physical, emotional, and sexual. Brown’s skepticism about America drove him to encourage black migration to Haiti in 1861–62, but, heartened by Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, he helped recruit for black regiments during the Civil War and afterwards remained in the United States. He continued to write, producing (among many other works) the first history of blacks in the Civil War, *The Negro in the American Rebellion*

(1867).

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from *A Lecture Delivered before the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem*

My subject for this evening is Slavery as it is, and its influence upon the morals and character of the American people.

I may try to represent to you Slavery as it is; another may follow me and try to represent the condition of the Slave; we may all represent it as we think it is; and yet we shall all fail to represent the real condition of the Slave. Your fastidiousness would not allow me to do it; and if it would, I, for one, should not be willing to do it;—at least to an audience. Were I about to tell you the evils of Slavery, to represent to you the Slave in his lowest degradation, I should wish to take you, one at a time, and whisper it to you.

Slavery has never been represented; Slavery never can be represented. What is a Slave? A Slave is one that is in the power of an owner. He is a chattel; he is a thing; he is a piece of property. A master can dispose of him, can dispose of his labor, can dispose of his wife, can dispose of his offspring, can dispose of everything that belongs to the Slave, and the Slave shall have no right to speak; he shall have nothing to say. The Slave cannot speak for himself; he cannot speak for his wife, or his children. He is a thing. He is a piece of property in the hands of a master, as much as is the horse that belongs to the individual that may ride him through your streets to-morrow. Where we find one man holding an unlimited power over another, I ask, what can we expect to find his condition? Give one man power *ad infinitum* over another, and he will abuse that power; no matter if there be law; no matter if there be public sentiment in favor of the oppressed.

The system of Slavery, that I, in part, represent here this evening, is a system that strikes at the foundation of society, that strikes at the foundation of civil and political institutions. It is a system that takes man down from that lofty

position which his God designed that he should occupy; that drags him down, places him upon a level with the beasts of the field, and there keeps him, that it may rob him of his liberty. Slavery is a system that tears the husband from the wife, and the wife from the husband; that tears the child from the mother, and the sister from the brother; that tears asunder the tenderest ties of nature. Slavery is a system that has its blood-hounds, its chains, its negro-whips, its dungeons, and almost every instrument of cruelty that the human eye can look at; and all this for the purpose of keeping the Slave in subjection; all this for the purpose of obliterating the mind, of crushing the intellect, and of annihilating the soul.

(1847)

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from *Narrative of William W. Brown, a fugitive slave. Written by himself*

CHAPTER VI

ON OUR arrival at St. Louis, I went to Dr. Young, and told him that I did not wish to live with Mr. Walker any longer. I was heart-sick at seeing my fellow-creatures bought and sold. But the Dr. had hired me for the year, and stay I must. Mr. Walker again commenced purchasing another gang of slaves. He bought a man of Colonel John O'Fallon, who resided in the suburbs of the city. This man had a wife and three children. As soon as the purchase was made, he was put in jail for safe keeping, until we should be ready to start for New Orleans. His wife visited him while there, several times, and several times when she went for that purpose was refused admittance.

In the course of eight or nine weeks Mr. Walker had his cargo of human flesh made up. There was in this lot a number of old men and women, some of them with gray locks. We left St. Louis in the steamboat Carlton, Captain Swan, bound for New Orleans. On our way down, and before we reached Rodney, the

place where we made our first stop, I had to prepare the old slaves for market. I was ordered to have the old men's whiskers shaved off, and the grey hairs plucked out, where they were not too numerous, in which case he had a preparation of blacking to color it, and with a blacking-brush we would put it on. This was new business to me, and was performed in a room where the passengers could not see us. These slaves were also taught how old they were by Mr. Walker, and after going through the blacking process, they looked ten or fifteen years younger; and I am sure that some of those who purchased slaves of Mr. Walker, were dreadfully cheated, especially in the ages of the slaves which they bought.

We landed at Rodney, and the slaves were driven to the pen in the back part of the village. Several were sold at this place, during our stay of four or five days, when we proceeded to Natchez. There we landed at night, and the gang were put in the warehouse until morning, when they were driven to the pen. As soon as the slaves are put in these pens, swarms of planters may be seen in and about them. They knew when Walker was expected, as he always had the time advertised beforehand when he would be in Rodney, Natchez, and New Orleans. These were the principal places where he offered his slaves for sale.

When at Natchez the second time, I saw a slave very cruelly whipped. He belonged to a Mr. Broadwell, a merchant who kept a store on the wharf. The slave's name was Lewis. I had known him several years, as he was formerly from St. Louis. We were expecting a steamboat down the river, in which we were to take passage for New Orleans. Mr. Walker sent me to the landing to watch for the boat, ordering me to inform him on its arrival. While there, I went into the store to see Lewis. I saw a slave in the store, and asked him where Lewis was. Said he, "They have got Lewis hanging between the heavens and the earth." I asked him what he meant by that. He told me to go into the warehouse and see. I went in, and found Lewis there. He was tied up to a beam, with his toes just touching the floor. As there was no one in the warehouse but himself, I inquired the reason of his being in that situation. He said Mr. Broadwell had sold his wife

to a planter six miles from the city, and that he had been to visit her,—that he went in the night, expecting to return before daylight, and went without his master's permission. The patrol had taken him up before he reached his wife. He was put in jail, and his master had to pay for his catching and keeping, and that was what he was tied up for.

Just as he finished his story, Mr. Broadwell came in, and inquired what I was doing there. I knew not what to say, and while I was thinking what reply to make, he struck me over the head with the cowhide, the end of which struck me over my right eye, sinking deep into the flesh, leaving a scar which I carry to this day. Before I visited Lewis, he had received fifty lashes. Mr. Broadwell gave him fifty lashes more after I came out, as I was afterwards informed by Lewis himself.

The next day we proceeded to New Orleans, and put the gang in the same negro-pen which we occupied before. In a short time, the planters came flocking to the pen to purchase slaves. Before the slaves were exhibited for sale, they were dressed and driven out into the yard. Some were set to dancing, some to jumping, some to singing, and some to playing cards. This was done to make them appear cheerful and happy. My business was to see that they were placed in those situations before the arrival of the purchasers, and I have often set them to dancing when their cheeks were wet with tears. As slaves were in good demand at that time, they were all soon disposed of, and we again set out for St. Louis.

On our arrival, Mr. Walker purchased a farm five or six miles from the city. He had no family, but made a housekeeper of one of his female slaves. Poor Cynthia! I knew her well. She was a quadroon, and one of the most beautiful women I ever saw. She was a native of St. Louis, and bore an irreproachable character for virtue and propriety of conduct. Mr. Walker bought her for the New Orleans market, and took her down with him on one of the trips that I made with him. Never shall I forget the circumstances of that voyage! On the first night that we were on board the steamboat, he directed me to put her into a state-

room he had provided for her, apart from the other slaves. I had seen too much of the workings of slavery, not to know what this meant. I accordingly watched him into the state-room, and listened to hear what passed between them. I heard him make his base offers, and her reject them. He told her that if she would accept his vile proposals, he would take her back with him to St. Louis, and establish her as his housekeeper at his farm. But if she persisted in rejecting them, he would sell her as a field hand on the worst plantation on the river. Neither threats nor bribes prevailed, however, and he retired, disappointed of his prey.

The next morning, poor Cynthia told me what had past, and bewailed her sad fate with floods of tears. I comforted and encouraged her all I could; but I foresaw but too well what the result must be. Without entering into any farther particulars, suffice it to say that Walker performed his part of the contract, at that time. He took her back to St. Louis, established her as his mistress and housekeeper at his farm, and before I left, he had two children by her. But, mark the end! Since I have been at the North, I have been credibly informed that Walker has been married, and, as a previous measure, sold poor Cynthia and her four children (she having had two more since I came away) into hopeless bondage!

He soon commenced purchasing to make up the third gang. We took steamboat, and went to Jefferson City, a town on the Missouri river. Here we landed, and took stage for the interior of the State. He bought a number of slaves as he passed the different farms and villages. After getting twenty-two or twenty-three men and women, we arrived at St. Charles, a village on the banks of the Missouri. Here he purchased a woman who had a child in her arms, appearing to be four or five weeks old.

We had been travelling by land for some days, and were in hopes to have found a boat at this place for St. Louis, but were disappointed. As no boat was expected for some days, we started for St. Louis by land. Mr. Walker had purchased two horses. He rode one, and I the other. The slaves were chained

together, and we took up our line of march, Mr. Walker taking the lead, and I bringing up the rear. Though the distance was not more than twenty miles, we did not reach it the first day. The road was worse than any that I have ever travelled.

Soon after we left St. Charles, the young child grew very cross, and kept up a noise during the greater part of the day. Mr. Walker complained of its crying several times, and told the mother to stop the child's d——d noise, or he would. The woman tried to keep the child from crying, but could not. We put up at night with an acquaintance of Mr. Walker, and in the morning, just as we were about to start, the child again commenced crying. Walker stepped up to her, and told her to give the child to him. The mother tremblingly obeyed. He took the child by one arm, as you would a cat by the leg, walked into the house, and said to the lady,

“Madam, I will make you a present of this little nigger; it keeps such a noise that I can't bear it.”

“Thank you, sir,” said the lady.

The mother, as soon as she saw that her child was to be left, ran up to Mr. Walker, and falling upon her knees begged him to let her have her child; she clung around his legs, and cried, “Oh, my child! my child! master, do let me have my child! oh, do, do, do. I will stop its crying, if you will only let me have it again.” When I saw this woman crying for her child so piteously, a shudder,—a feeling akin to horror, shot through my frame. I have often since in imagination heard her crying for her child:—

“O, master, let me stay to catch  
My baby's sobbing breath,  
His little glassy eye to watch,  
And smooth his limbs in death,  
  
And cover him with grass and leaf,  
Beneath the large oak tree:

It is not sullenness, but grief,—  
O, master, pity me!

The morn was chill—I spoke no word,  
But feared my babe might die,  
And heard all day, or thought I heard,  
My little baby cry.

At noon, oh, how I ran and took  
My baby to my breast!  
I lingered—and the long lash broke  
My sleeping infant's rest.

I worked till night—till darkest night,  
In torture and disgrace;  
Went home and watched till morning light,  
To see my baby's face.

Then give me but one little hour—  
O! do not lash me so!  
One little hour—one little hour—  
And gratefully I'll go.”

Mr. Walker commanded her to return into the ranks with the other slaves. Women who had children were not chained, but those that had none were. As soon as her child was disposed of, she was chained in the gang.

The following song I have often heard the slaves sing, when about to be carried to the far south. It is said to have been composed by a slave.

“See these poor souls from Africa  
Transported to America;  
We are stolen. and sold to Georgia.

Will you go along with me?  
We are stolen, and sold to Georgia,  
Come sound the jubilee!

See wives and husbands sold apart,  
Their children's screams will break my heart;—  
There's a better day a coming,  
Will you go along with me?  
There's a better day a coming,  
Go sound the jubilee!

O, gracious Lord! when shall it be,  
That we poor souls shall all be free;  
Lord, break them slavery powers—  
Will you go along with me?  
Lord break them slavery powers,  
Go sound the jubilee!

Dear Lord, dear Lord, when slavery'll cease,  
Then we poor souls will have our peace;—  
There's a better day a coming,  
Will you go along with me?  
There's a better day a coming,  
Go sound the jubilee!"

We finally arrived at Mr. Walker's farm. He had a house built during our absence to put slaves in. It was a kind of domestic jail. The slaves were put in the jail at night, and worked on the farm during the day. They were kept here until the gang was completed, when we again started for New Orleans, on board the steamboat North America, Capt. Alexander Scott. We had a large number of slaves in this gang. One, by the name of Joe, Mr. Walker was training up to take

my place, as my time was nearly out, and glad was I. We made our first stop at Vicksburg, where we remained one week and sold several slaves.

Mr. Walker, though not a good master, had not flogged a slave since I had been with him, though he had threatened me. The slaves were kept in the pen, and he always put up at the best hotel, and kept his wines in his room, for the accommodation of those who called to negotiate with him for the purchase of slaves. One day while we were at Vicksburg, several gentlemen came to see him for this purpose, and as usual the wine was called for. I took the tray and started around with it, and having accidentally filled some of the glasses too full, the gentlemen spilled the wine on their clothes as they went to drink. Mr. Walker apologized to them for my carelessness, but looked at me as though he would see me again on this subject.

After the gentlemen had left the room, he asked me what I meant by my carelessness, and said that he would attend to me. The next morning, he gave me a note to carry to the jailer, and a dollar in money to give to him. I suspected that all was not right, so I went down near the landing where I met with a sailor, and walking up to him, asked him if he would be so kind as to read the note for me. He read it over, and then looked at me. I asked him to tell me what was in it. Said he,

“They are going to give you hell.”

“Why?” said I.

He said, “This is a note to have you whipped, and says that you have a dollar to pay for it.”

He handed me back the note, and off I started. I knew not what to do, but was determined not to be whipped. I went up to the jail—took a look at it, and walked off again. As Mr. Walker was acquainted with the jailer, I feared that I should be found out if I did not go, and be treated in consequence of it still worse.

While I was meditating on the subject, I saw a colored man about my size walk up, and the thought struck me in a moment to send him with my note. I

walked up to him, and asked him who he belonged to. He said he was a free man, and had been in the city but a short time. I told him I had a note to go into the jail, and get a trunk to carry to one of the steamboats; but was so busily engaged that I could not do it, although I had a dollar to pay for it. He asked me if I would not give him the job. I handed him the note and the dollar, and off he started for the jail.

I watched to see that he went in, and as soon as I saw the door close behind him, I walked around the corner, and took my station, intending to see how my friend looked when he came out. I had been there but a short time, when a colored man came around the corner, and said to another colored man with whom he was acquainted—

“They are giving a nigger scissors in the jail.”

“What for?” said the other. The man continued,

“A nigger came into the jail, and asked for the jailer. The jailer came out, and he handed him a note, and said he wanted to get a trunk. The jailer told him to go with him, and he would give him the trunk. So he took him into the room, and told the nigger to give up the dollar. He said a man had given him the dollar to pay for getting the trunk. But that lie would not answer. So they made him strip himself, and then they tied him down, and are now whipping him.”

I stood by all the while listening to their talk, and soon found out that the person alluded to was my customer. I went into the street opposite the jail, and concealed myself in such a manner that I could not be seen by any one coming out. I had been there but a short time, when the young man made his appearance, and looked around for me. I, unobserved, came forth from my hiding-place, behind a pile of brick, and he pretty soon saw me and came up to me complaining bitterly, saying that I had played a trick upon him. I denied any knowledge of what the note contained, and asked him what they had done to him. He told me in substance what I heard the man tell who had come out of the jail.

“Yes,” said he, “they whipped me and took my dollar, and gave me this

note.”

He showed me the note which the jailer had given him, telling him to give it to his master. I told him I would give him fifty cents for it,—that being all the money I had. He gave it to me, and took his money. He had received twenty lashes on his bare back, with the negro-whip.

I took the note and started for the hotel where I had left Mr. Walker. Upon reaching the hotel, I handed it to a stranger whom I had not seen before, and requested him to read it to me. As near as I can recollect, it was as follows:—

“DEAR SIR:—By your direction, I have given your boy twenty lashes. He is a very saucy boy, and tried to make me believe that he did not belong to you, and I put it on to him well for lying to me.

I remain,  
Your obedient servant.”

It is true that in most of the slave-holding cities, when a gentleman wishes his servants whipped, he can send him to the jail and have it done. Before I went in where Mr. Walker was, I wet my cheeks a little, as though I had been crying. He looked at me, and inquired what was the matter. I told him that I had never had such a whipping in my life, and handed him the note. He looked at it and laughed;—“and so you told him that you did not belong to me.” “Yes, sir,” said I. “I did not know that there was any harm in that.” He told me I must behave myself, if I did not want to be whipped again.

This incident shows how it is that slavery makes its victims lying and mean; for which vices it afterwards reproaches them, and uses them as arguments to prove that they deserve no better fate. I have often, since my escape, deeply regretted the deception I practised upon this poor fellow; and I heartily desire that it may be, at some time or other, in my power to make him amends for his vicarious sufferings in my behalf.

IN A few days we reached New Orleans, and arriving there in the night, remained on board until morning. While at New Orleans this time, I saw a slave killed; an account of which has been published by Theodore D. Weld, in his book entitled, "Slavery as it is." The circumstances were as follows. In the evening, between seven and eight o'clock, a slave came running down the levee, followed by several men and boys. The whites were crying out, "Stop that nigger; stop that nigger;" while the poor panting slave, in almost breathless accents, was repeating, "I did not steal the meat—I did not steal the meat." The poor man at last took refuge in the river. The whites who were in pursuit of him, ran on board of one of the boats to see if they could discover him. They finally espied him under the bow of the steamboat Trenton. They got a pike-pole, and tried to drive him from his hiding place. When they would strike at him, he would dive under the water. The water was so cold, that it soon became evident that he must come out or be drowned.

While they were trying to drive him from under the bow of the boat or drown him, he would in broken and imploring accents say, "I did not steal the meat; I did not steal the meat. My master lives up the river. I want to see my master. I did not steal the meat. Do let me go home to master." After punching him, and striking him over the head for some time, he at last sunk in the water, to rise no more alive.

On the end of the pike-pole with which they were striking him was a hook which caught his clothing, and they hauled him up on the bow of the boat. Some said he was dead, others said he was "*playing possum*," while others kicked him to make him get up, but it was of no use—he was dead.

As soon as they became satisfied of this, they commenced leaving, one after another. One of the hands on the boat informed the captain that they had killed the man, and that the dead body was lying on the deck. The captain came on deck, and said to those who were remaining, "You have killed this nigger; now take him off of my boat." The captain's name was Hart. The dead body was

dragged on shore and left there. I went on board of the boat where our gang of slaves were, and during the whole night my mind was occupied with what I had seen. Early in the morning, I went on shore to see if the dead body remained there. I found it in the same position that it was left the night before. I watched to see what they would do with it. It was left there until between eight and nine o'clock, when a cart, which takes up the trash out of the streets, came along, and the body was thrown in, and in a few minutes more was covered over with dirt which they were removing from the streets. During the whole time, I did not see more than six or seven persons around it, who, from their manner, evidently regarded it as no uncommon occurrence.

During our stay in the city, I met with a young white man with whom I was well acquainted in St. Louis. He had been sold into slavery, under the following circumstances. His father was a drunkard, and very poor, with a family of five or six children. The father died, and left the mother to take care of and provide for the children as best she might. The eldest was a boy, named Burrill, about thirteen years of age, who did chores in a store kept by Mr. Riley, to assist his mother in procuring a living for the family. After working with him two years, Mr. Riley took him to New Orleans to wait on him while in that city on a visit, and when he returned to St. Louis, he told the mother of the boy that he had died with the yellow fever. Nothing more was heard from him, no one supposing him to be alive. I was much astonished when Burrill told me his story. Though I sympathized with him, I could not assist him. We were both slaves. He was poor, uneducated, and without friends; and if living, is, I presume, still held as a slave.

After selling out this cargo of human flesh, we returned to St. Louis, and my time was up with Mr. Walker. I had served him one year, and it was the longest year I ever lived.

## *The American Slave-Trade*

OF THE many features which American Slavery presents, the most cruel is that of the Slave-trade. A traffic in the bodies and souls of native-born Americans, is carried on in the Slave-holding States to an extent little dreamed of by the great mass of the people in the non-Slave-holding States. The precise number of Slaves, carried from the Slave-raising to the Slave-consuming States, we have no means of knowing. But it must be very great, as forty thousand were sold and carried out of the State of Virginia, in one single year!

This heart-rending and cruel traffic is not confined to any particular class of persons. No person forfeits his or her character or standing in society by being engaged in raising and selling Slaves to supply the cotton, sugar, and rice plantations of the South. Few persons who have visited the Slave States, have not, on their return, told of the gangs of Slaves they had seen on their way to the Southern market. This trade presents some of the most revolting and atrocious scenes which can be imagined. Slave-prisons, Slave-auctions, hand-cuffs, whips, chains, blood-hounds, and other instruments of cruelty, are part of the furniture which belongs to the American Slave-trade. It is enough to make humanity bleed at every pore, to see these implements of torture.

Known to God, only, is the amount of human agony and suffering which sends its cry from these Slave-prisons, unheard or unheeded by man, up to His ear: mothers, weeping for their children,—breaking the night-silence with the shrieks of their breaking hearts. We wish no human being to experience emotions of needless pain, but we do wish that every man, woman and child, in New England, could visit a Southern Slave-prison and auction-stand.

I shall never forget a scene which took place in the city of St. Louis, while I was in Slavery. A man and his wife, both Slaves, were brought from the country to the city, for sale. They were taken to the rooms of AUSTIN & SAVAGE, Auctioneers. Several Slave-speculators, who are always to be found at auctions where Slaves are to be sold, were present. The man was first put up, and sold to

the highest bidder. The wife was next ordered to ascend the platform. I was present. She slowly obeyed the order. The auctioneer commenced, and soon several hundred dollars were bid. My eyes were intensely fixed on the face of the woman, whose cheeks were wet with tears. But a conversation between the Slave and his new master attracted my attention. I drew near them to listen. The Slave was begging his new master to purchase his wife. Said he, "Master, if you will only buy Fanny, I know you will get the worth of your money. She is a good cook, a good washer, and her last mistress liked her very much. If you will only buy her how happy I shall be." The new master replied that he did not want her, but if she sold cheap he would purchase her. I watched the countenance of the man while the different persons were bidding on his wife. When his new master bid on his wife you could see the smile upon his countenance, and the tears stop; but as soon as another would bid, you could see the countenance change and the tears start afresh. From this change of countenance one could see the workings of the inmost soul. But this suspense did not last long; the wife was struck off to the highest bidder, who proved not to be the owner of her husband. As soon as they became aware that they were to be separated, they both burst into tears; and as she descended from the auction-stand, the husband walking up to her, and taking her by the hand, said, "Well, Fanny, we are to part forever, on earth; you have been a good wife to me. I did all that I could to get my new master to buy you; but he did not want you, and all I have to say is, I hope you will try to meet me in heaven. I shall try to meet you there." The wife made no reply, but her sobs and cries told, too well, her own feelings. I saw the countenances of a number of whites, who were present, and whose eyes were dim with tears, at hearing the man bid his wife farewell.

Such are but common occurrences in the Slave States. At these auction-stands, bones, muscles, sinews, blood and nerves, of human beings, are sold, with as much indifference, as a farmer in the North sells a horse or sheep. And this great American nation is, at the present time, engaged in the Slave-trade. I

have before me now the Washington “UNION,” the organ of the Government, in which I find an advertisement of several Slaves to be sold for the benefit of the Government. They will, in all human probability, find homes among the rice-swamps of Georgia, or the cane-brakes of Mississippi.

With every disposition on the part of those who are engaged in it, to veil the truth, certain facts have, from time to time, transpired, sufficient to show, if not the full amount of the evil, at least that it is one of prodigious magnitude. And what is more to be wondered at, is the fact that the greatest Slave-market is to be found at the capital of the country! The American Slave-trader marches by the capitol with his “coffle-gang,”—the stars and stripes waving over their heads, and the Constitution of the United States in his pocket.

The Alexandria Gazette, speaking of the Slave-trade at the capital, says, “Here you may behold fathers and brothers leaving behind them the dearest objects of affection, and moving slowly along in the mute agony of despair; there, the young mother, sobbing over the infant whose innocent smile seems but to increase her misery. From some you will hear the burst of bitter lamentation, while from others, the loud hysteric laugh breaks forth, denoting still deeper agony.” Such is but a faint picture of the American Slave-Trade.

(1848)

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from *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter*

CHAPTER I.

THE NEGRO SALE

“Why stands she near the auction stand,

That girl so young and fair?

What brings her to this dismal place,

Why stands she weeping there?"

WITH THE growing population of slaves in the Southern States of America, there is a fearful increase of half whites, most of whose fathers are slaveowners, and their mothers slaves. Society does not frown upon the man who sits with his mulatto child upon his knee, whilst its mother stands a slave behind his chair. The late Henry Clay, some years since, predicted that the abolition of negro slavery would be brought about by the amalgamation of the races. John Randolph, a distinguished slaveholder of Virginia, and a prominent statesman, said in a speech in the legislature of his native state, that "the blood of the first American statesmen coursed through the veins of the slave of the South." In all the cities and towns of the slave states, the real negro, or clear black, does not amount to more than one in every four of the slave population. This fact is, of itself, the best evidence of the degraded and immoral condition of the relation of master and slave in the United States of America.

In all the slave states, the law says:—"Slaves shall be deemed, sold, taken, reputed, and adjudged in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors, and their executors, administrators and assigns, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever. A slave is one who is in the power of a master to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, and his labour. He can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire anything, but what must belong to his master. The slave is entirely subject to the will of his master, who may correct and chastise him, though not with unusual rigour, or so as to maim and mutilate him, or expose him to the danger of loss of life, or to cause his death. The slave, to remain a slave, must be sensible that there is no appeal from his master." Where the slave is placed by law entirely under the control of the man who claims him, body and soul, as property, what else could be expected than the most depraved social condition? The marriage relation, the oldest and most sacred institution given to man by his Creator, is unknown and unrecognised in the slave laws of the United States. Would that we

could say, that the moral and religious teaching in the slave states were better than the laws; but, alas! we cannot. A few years since, some slaveholders became a little uneasy in their minds about the rightfulness of permitting slaves to take to themselves husbands and wives, while they still had others living, and applied to their religious teachers for advice; and the following will show how this grave and important subject was treated:—

“Is a servant, whose husband or wife has been sold by his or her master into a distant country, to be permitted to marry again?”

The query was referred to a committee, who made the following report; which, after discussion, was adopted:—

“That, in view of the circumstances in which servants in this country are placed, the committee are unanimous in the opinion, that it is better to permit servants thus circumstanced to take another husband or wife.”

Such was the answer from a committee of the “Shiloh Baptist Association;” and instead of receiving light, those who asked the question were plunged into deeper darkness!

A similar question was put to the “Savannah River Association,” and the answer, as the following will show, did not materially differ from the one we have already given:—

“Whether, in a case of involuntary separation, of such a character as to preclude all prospect of future intercourse, the parties ought to be allowed to marry again.”

Answer—

“That such separation among persons situated as our slaves are, is civilly a separation by death; and they believe that, in the sight of God, it would be so viewed. To forbid second marriages in such cases would be to expose the parties, not only to stronger hardships and strong temptation, but to

church-censure for acting in obedience to their masters, who cannot be expected to acquiesce in a regulation at variance with justice to the slaves, and to the spirit of that command which regulates marriage among Christians. The slaves are not free agents; and a dissolution by death is not more entirely without their consent, and beyond their control, than by such separation.”

Although marriage, as the above indicates, is a matter which the slaveholders do not think is of any importance, or of any binding force with their slaves; yet it would be doing that degraded class an injustice, not to acknowledge that many of them do regard it as a sacred obligation, and show a willingness to obey the commands of God on this subject. Marriage is, indeed, the first and most important institution of human existence—the foundation of all civilisation and culture—the root of church and state. It is the most intimate covenant of heart formed among mankind; and for many persons the only relation in which they feel the true sentiments of humanity. It gives scope for every human virtue, since each of these is developed from the love and confidence which here predominate. It unites all which ennobles and beautifies life,—sympathy, kindness of will and deed, gratitude, devotion, and every delicate, intimate feeling. As the only asylum for true education, it is the first and last sanctuary of human culture. As husband and wife through each other become conscious of complete humanity, and every human feeling, and every human virtue; so children, at their first awakening in the fond covenant of love between parents, both of whom are tenderly concerned for the same object, find an image of complete humanity leagued in free love. The spirit of love which prevails between them acts with creative power upon the young mind, and awakens every germ of goodness within it. This invisible and incalculable influence of parental life acts more upon the child than all the efforts of education, whether by means of instruction, precept, or exhortation. If this be a true picture of the vast influence for good of the institution of marriage, what must be the moral degradation of that people to whom marriage is denied? Not content with depriving them of all the higher and holier enjoyments of this relation, by

degrading and darkening their souls, the slaveholder denies to his victim even that slight alleviation of his misery, which would result from the marriage relation being protected by law and public opinion. Such is the influence of slavery in the United States, that the ministers of religion, even in the so-called free states, are the mere echoes, instead of the correctors, of public sentiment.

We have thought it advisable to show that the present system of chattel slavery in America undermines the entire social condition of man, so as to prepare the reader for the following narrative of slave life, in that otherwise happy and prosperous country.

In all the large towns in the Southern States, there is a class of slaves who are permitted to hire their time of their owners, and for which they pay a high price. These are mulatto women, or quadroons, as they are familiarly known, and are distinguished for their fascinating beauty. The handsomest usually pays the highest price for her time. Many of these women are the favourites of persons who furnish them with the means of paying their owners, and not a few are dressed in the most extravagant manner. Reader, when you take into consideration the fact, that amongst the slave population no safeguard is thrown around virtue, and no inducement held out to slave women to be chaste, you will not be surprised when we tell you that immorality and vice pervade the cities of the Southern States in a manner unknown in the cities and towns of the Northern States. Indeed most of the slave women have no higher aspiration than that of becoming the finely-dressed mistress of some white man. And at negro balls and parties, this class of women usually cut the greatest figure.

At the close of the year—the following advertisement appeared in a newspaper published in Richmond, the capital of the state of Virginia:—“Notice: Thirty-eight negroes will be offered for sale on Monday, November 10th, at twelve o’clock, being the entire stock of the late John Graves, Esq. The negroes are in good condition, some of them very prime; among them are several mechanics, able-bodied field hands, plough-boys, and women with children at the breast, and some of them very prolific in their generating qualities, affording

a rare opportunity to any one who wishes to raise a strong and healthy lot of servants for their own use. Also several mulatto girls of rare personal qualities: two of them very superior. Any gentleman or lady wishing to purchase, can take any of the above slaves on trial for a week, for which no charge will be made.” Amongst the above slaves to be sold were Curren and her two daughters, Clotel and Althesa; the latter were the girls spoken of in the advertisement as “very superior.” Curren was a bright mulatto, and of prepossessing appearance, though then nearly forty years of age. She had hired her time for more than twenty years, during which time she had lived in Richmond. In her younger days Curren had been the housekeeper of a young slaveholder; but of later years had been a laundress or washerwoman, and was considered to be a woman of great taste in getting up linen. The gentleman for whom she had kept house was Thomas Jefferson, by whom she had two daughters. Jefferson being called to Washington to fill a government appointment, Curren was left behind, and thus she took herself to the business of washing, by which means she paid her master, Mr. Graves, and supported herself and two children. At the time of the decease of her master, Curren’s daughters, Clotel and Althesa, were aged respectively sixteen and fourteen years, and both, like most of their own sex in America, were well grown. Curren early resolved to bring her daughters up as ladies, as she termed it, and therefore imposed little or no work upon them. As her daughters grew older, Curren had to pay a stipulated price for them; yet her notoriety as a laundress of the first class enabled her to put an extra price upon her charges, and thus she and her daughters lived in comparative luxury. To bring up Clotel and Althesa to attract attention, and especially at balls and parties, was the great aim of Curren. Although the term “negro ball” is applied to most of these gatherings, yet a majority of the attendants are often whites. Nearly all the negro parties in the cities and towns of the Southern States are made up of quadroon and mulatto girls, and white men. These are democratic gatherings, where gentlemen, shopkeepers, and their clerks, all appear upon terms of perfect equality. And there is a degree of gentility and decorum in these companies that

is not surpassed by similar gatherings of white people in the Slave States. It was at one of these parties that Horatio Green, the son of a wealthy gentleman of Richmond, was first introduced to Clotel. The young man had just returned from college, and was in his twenty-second year. Clotel was sixteen, and was admitted by all to be the most beautiful girl, coloured or white, in the city. So attentive was the young man to the quadrone during the evening that it was noticed by all, and became a matter of general conversation; while Curren appeared delighted beyond measure at her daughter's conquest. From that evening, young Green became the favourite visitor at Curren's house. He soon promised to purchase Clotel, as speedily as it could be effected, and make her mistress of her own dwelling; and Curren looked forward with pride to the time when she should see her daughter emancipated and free. It was a beautiful moonlight night in August, when all who reside in tropical climes are eagerly gasping for a breath of fresh air, that Horatio Green was seated in the small garden behind Curren's cottage, with the object of his affections by his side. And it was here that Horatio drew from his pocket the newspaper, wet from the press, and read the advertisement for the sale of the slaves to which we have alluded; Curren and her two daughters being of the number. At the close of the evening's visit, and as the young man was leaving, he said to the girl, "You shall soon be free and your own mistress."

As might have been expected, the day of sale brought an unusual large number together to compete for the property to be sold. Farmers who make a business of raising slaves for the market were there; slave-traders and speculators were also numerously represented; and in the midst of this throng was one who felt a deeper interest in the result of the sale than any other of the bystanders; this was young Green. True to his promise, he was there with a blank bank check in his pocket, awaiting with impatience to enter the list as a bidder for the beautiful slave. The less valuable slaves were first placed upon the auction block, one after another, and sold to the highest bidder. Husbands and wives were separated with a degree of indifference that is unknown in any other relation of life, except that of slavery. Brothers and sisters were torn from each

other; and mothers saw their children leave them for the last time on this earth.

It was late in the day, when the greatest number of persons were thought to be present, that Curren and her daughters were brought forward to the place of sale. Curren was first ordered to ascend the auction stand, which she did with a trembling step. The slave mother was sold to a trader. Althesa, the youngest, and who was scarcely less beautiful than her sister, was sold to the same trader for one thousand dollars. Clotel was the last, and, as was expected, commanded a higher price than any that had been offered for sale that day. The appearance of Clotel on the auction block created a deep sensation amongst the crowd. There she stood, with a complexion as white as most of those who were waiting with a wish to become her purchasers; her features as finely defined as any of her sex of pure Anglo-Saxon; her long black wavy hair done up in the neatest manner; her form tall and graceful, and her whole appearance indicating one superior to her position. The auctioneer commenced by saying, that "Miss Clotel had been reserved for the last, because she was the most valuable. How much gentlemen? Real Albino, fit for a fancy girl for any one. She enjoys good health, and has a sweet temper. How much do you say?" "Five hundred dollars." "Only five hundred for such a girl as this? Gentlemen, she is worth a deal more than that sum; you certainly don't know the value of the article you are bidding upon. Here, gentlemen, I hold in my hand a paper certifying that she has a good moral character." "Seven hundred." "Ah, gentlemen, that is something like. This paper also states that she is very intelligent." "Eight hundred." "She is a devoted Christian, and perfectly trustworthy." "Nine hundred." "Nine fifty." "Ten." "Eleven." "Twelve hundred." Here the sale came to a dead stand. The auctioneer stopped, looked around, and began in a rough manner to relate some anecdotes relative to the sale of slaves, which, he said, had come under his own observation. At this juncture the scene was indeed strange. Laughing, joking, swearing, smoking, spitting, and talking kept up a continual hum and noise amongst the crowd; while the slave-girl stood with tears in her eyes, at one time looking towards her mother and sister, and at another towards the young man

whom she hoped would become her purchaser. “The chastity of this girl is pure; she has never been from under her mother’s care; she is a virtuous creature.” “Thirteen.” “Fourteen.” “Fifteen.” “Fifteen hundred dollars,” cried the auctioneer, and the maiden was struck for that sum. This was a Southern auction, at which the bones, muscles, sinews, blood, and nerves of a young lady of sixteen were sold for five hundred dollars; her moral character for two hundred; her improved intellect for one hundred; her Christianity for three hundred; and her chastity and virtue for four hundred dollars more. And this, too, in a city thronged with churches, whose tall spires look like so many signals pointing to heaven, and whose ministers preach that slavery is a God-ordained institution!

What words can tell the inhumanity, the atrocity, and the immorality of that doctrine which, from exalted office, commends such a crime to the favour of enlightened and Christian people? What indignation from all the world is not due to the government and people who put forth all their strength and power to keep in existence such an institution? Nature abhors it; the age repels it; and Christianity needs all her meekness to forgive it.

Clotel was sold for fifteen hundred dollars, but her purchaser was Horatio Green. Thus closed a negro sale, at which two daughters of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the presidents of the great republic, were disposed of to the highest bidder!

“O God! my every heart-string cries,  
Dost thou these scenes behold  
In this our boasted Christian land,  
And must the truth be told?”

“Blush, Christian, blush! for e’en the dark,  
Untutored heathen see  
Thy inconsistency; and, lo!  
They scorn thy God, and thee!”

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from *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*

Scene 5.—ROOM IN A SMALL COTTAGE ON THE POPLAR FARM, (*Ten miles from Muddy Creek, and owned by Dr. Gaines.*)

*Enter MELINDA, R.*

*Melinda.* Here I am, watched, and kept a prisoner in this place. Oh, I would that I could escape, and once more get with Glen. Poor Glen! He does not know where I am. Master took the opportunity, when Glen was in the city with his master, to bring me here to this lonely place, and fearing that mistress would know where I was, he brought me here at night. Oh, how I wish I could rush into the arms of sleep!—that sweet sleep, which visits all alike, descending, like the dews of heaven, upon the bond as well as the free. It would drive from my troubled brain the agonies of this terrible night.

*Enter DR. GAINES, L.*

*Dr. Gaines.* Good evening, Melinda! Are you not glad to see me?

*Melinda.* Sir, how can I be glad to see one who has made life a burden, and turned my sweetest moments into bitterness?

*Dr. G.* Come, Melinda, no more reproaches! You know that I love you, and I have told you, and I tell you again, that if you will give up all idea of having Glen for a husband, I will set you free, let you live in this cottage, and be your own mistress, and I'll dress you like a lady. Come now, be reasonable!

*Melinda.* Sir, I am your slave; you can do as you please with the avails of my labor, but you shall never tempt me to swerve from the path of virtue.

*Dr. G.* Now, Melinda, that black scoundrel Glen has been putting these

notions into your head. I'll let you know that you are my property, and I'll do as I please with you. I'll teach you that there is no limit to my power.

*Melinda.* Sir, let me warn you that if you compass my ruin, a woman's bitterest curse will be laid upon your head, with all the crushing, withering weight that my soul can impart to it; a curse that shall cling to you throughout the remainder of your wretched life; a curse that shall haunt you like a spectre in your dreams by night, and attend upon you by day; a curse, too, that shall embody itself in the ghastly form of the woman whose chastity you will have outraged. Command me to bury myself in yonder stream, and I will obey you. Bid me do any thing else, but I beseech you not to commit a double crime,—outrage a woman, and make her false to her husband.

*Dr. G.* You got a husband! Who is your husband, and when were you married?

*Melinda.* Glen is my husband, and I've been married four weeks. Old Uncle Joseph married us one night by moonlight. I see you are angry; I pray you not to injure my husband.

*Dr. G.* Melinda, you shall never see Glen again. I have bought him from Hamilton, and I will return to Muddy Creek, and roast him at the stake. A black villain, to get into my way in that manner! Here I've come ten miles tonight to see you, and this is the way you receive me!

*Melinda.* Oh, master, I beg you not to injure my husband! Kill me, but spare him! Do! do! he is my husband!

*Dr. G.* You shall never see that black imp again, so good night, my lady! When I come again, you'll give me a more cordial reception. Good night!

[Exit DR. GAINES, L.]

*Melinda.* I shall go distracted. I cannot remain here and know that Glen is being tortured on my account. I must escape from this place,—I must,—I must!

# CAROLINE W. HEALEY DALL

## *A Sketch from Maryland Life*

Author, reformer, and Transcendentalist Caroline W. Healey Dall (1822–1912) taught school, lectured, and wrote to make her living, particularly after her undependable husband accepted a position in India as a Unitarian missionary in 1855, leaving her behind in Boston with two children to support. Published in *The Liberty Bell*, Dall's "Sketch" builds a tragic story around an abolitionist hymnbook and the disaster it brings its black owner.

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**T**EN YEARS ago, a colored man, with an honest, straight-forward countenance and long dark hair thinly striped with grey, walked irresolutely back and forth before the window of a bookseller's shop, in the city of Philadelphia. Now he paused for a moment to gaze wistfully at some richly bound Bibles, just within the glass, now he waited without the half-open door, and finally, as if any certainty were better than suspense, he entered. For several years this faithful Christian had laid aside all he could spare from his scanty earnings, on what is called the "Eastern Shore" of Maryland, in the hope of procuring for himself and his children a copy of the Word of God.

I know not by what strange Providence it happened, but this colored man knew how to read, and as he stood, on that clear, sunny morning, by the bookseller's side, and turned over the leaves of that long desired volume, feeling that it cost more than he could spare, his heart ached and the tear sprang to his always pensive eye. "Come," said the bookseller, coaxingly, "you shall have it five cents lower, and I will throw in this hymn-book." Sherry took the hymn-book, and turned over its leaves. He caught the first lines of well-remembered hymns, and a glimpse of some short stories that his curly-headed boys would climb his knee to hear. One or two pictures decorated the book, and the innocent

man, looking on a coarse cut of a slave, holding out his hand for the iron, and another of the overseer, with his cow-skin at his side, little thought that these plain representations of fact, would be termed “libelous and insurrectionary” by the government under which he lived. He forgot that he was in a *free*, and bound for a *slave*, state; he thought only of his Bible and his songs, and trusting to God to forgive his extravagance, he emptied his pockets and went away. The happy little faces that clustered about him on his return, banished all anxious thoughts of his improvidence. The hymn-book came to be cherished like the Bible. Often had he hummed his baby to sleep by the joyous carol of “Canaan, happy Canaan,” while the mournful strains of “Come, ye disconsolate,” had checked full many a Sunday frolic of the older boys. At night it was carefully laid upon the shelf, but all day it nestled in the otherwise empty pocket of Sherry Williams, and full two years had now gone by without his ever missing the money it had cost. He was by trade a mason, and on another bright and gorgeous morning, with a far lighter heart than that with which he had waited the bookseller’s decree, Sherry threw his hod over his shoulder, and taking his trowel in his hand, started for a neighboring farm-house, where his services were wanted. He threw his jacket over the settle, and climbed up the spacious chimney of the old kitchen. While he was proceeding with his repairs, he heard the full, sweet voice of Dinah, the cook, singing what he called “spiritual songs,” below, and his work speeding all the lighter for this accompaniment, he was soon down again. To his surprise his favorite book was gone; but Dinah, who had spied a corner of it peeping from his pocket, soon came to relieve his suspense,—to beg him to stay to dinner, and read her some of the pretty hymns, which she had not the learning to spell out. “Yes,” said Sherry, “if you will sing me one of those sweet songs that made my heart dance while I was up in the chimney, I will read you all I know.” Dinah promised; while Sherry ate, she sang, and when they had finished, he opened his dear book. While they were both busied over its pages, a son of the master of the house, a pining country lawyer, on the “Shore,” came lounging in. I am glad I do not know his name. He may have come of honest blood, and I

would not give it an ignoble fame. He was longing for a client and found it in his native state. Poor Maryland, thou hast much to answer for. Standing on the brink of the free states, thou hast not been able wholly to check the flood of light which hath invaded thy border; nevertheless, thou hast turned thy back on its glory, and chosen the rather to gaze moodily on thine own shadow. A glance sufficed to reveal to the white man the character of the book, and he humbly begged to borrow it of Sherry, who smothering his love for its worn pages, unhesitatingly complied with the request. Sherry, be it understood, was a free man, and after waiting a reasonable number of weeks, he went to the lawyer's office for his book. The pettifogger put him off to an hour which he named. Sherry went again and found himself in the power of the sheriff; his book, indeed, in his pocket, but manacles on his free hands. He was torn from wife and children and carried to Baltimore to be tried; for it is thus, O, Slavery, that thou dost protect thyself! *Fifteen witnesses* testified, upon the trial, that Sherry was honest, pious, industrious and content,—he had never been heard to complain,—was the last man in the world to create an excitement. In short, nothing could be proved against him, but the fact that such a hymn-book was in his possession. Weeping children and a heart-stricken wife surrounded him, but their tears flowed over cheeks of palest bronze, and so made no impression on the heart of a judge far darker and harder. The law had taken hold of him, and it would not retract. The statute under which he was convicted, sentences the colored man who shall be found with an incendiary publication in his possession, to an imprisonment in the penitentiary of not more than twenty nor less than ten years. In consideration of the evidence to character, adduced upon his trial, and in *despite of* the public excitement on the subject, poor Sherry was sentenced to ten. The pettifogger was satisfied, his angry client gained her cause, and the miserable family of the prisoner begged their way back to the "Shore." I have forgotten how many children Williams had, but I am sure it was a round dozen, and the oldest boy was the only one able to help himself. God help him, poor man, as he climbs those prison steps, and feels the little hands fast tugging at his

heart! But Sherry knew his duty, and was faithful to what was given him to do. Every one in the building loved him, and when I saw him, six years after his imprisonment, he had *risen*, so said the overseer, to be the head baker of the establishment. In the meantime his friends had not been idle. New England blood had boiled as it listened to his story, and scores of Baltimore merchants signed, once and again, a petition to the Governor in his behalf. The last effort was founded on his exemplary conduct during the six years of his imprisonment, and was presented to a new governor, just after he had taken his chair, and while his heart, it was thought, would be inclined to mercy. Alas! how far were the petitioners mistaken. He was a little man, and measured all things by a little standard. "Gentlemen," said he, "if I were to take any action in this matter, in the present state of the public mind, a favorite though I am, I should be impeached!" and there the matter ended,—till it was carried to a higher court, and the Governor became defendant.

This happened just before my first arrival in Baltimore, two years ago. I went to see Sherry, whose tall frame had bent, and whose dark hair had whitened all over during those painful six years. He was busy at his oven, his apron was white with flour, and he seemed only intent on serving the hungry men about him,—but, deeply engraven on his fine manly features was a look of unsatisfied anxiety that I shall never forget. Once only during those six years had he heard from his home; for neither he nor his children could write; and that once, by dint of miserly thrift, his oldest son had made the long journey, and brought him welcome tidings of health and peace, about his hearth. His hymn-book, of course, had been taken from him, but his Bible, whose "anti-slavery and revolutionary" principles the government of Maryland is not yet sharp-sighted enough to discern, was his only companion in his cell. As I looked upon the gray-haired man, and saw his lip quiver, as he spoke of his family, my heart throbbed almost to bursting, and I determined that something should be done to relieve him. Once and again my husband had communication with influential persons concerning him, but all who knew anything of the matter, more

especially the intimate personal friend of the Governor, declared that all proper means had been tried,—but one resource was left him, calmly to wear out the remaining part of his sentence,—the Governor had determined to pardon no persons convicted on such counts. So I desisted, but often since, when I would have closed my eyes for a night's rest, has the image of that injured man, gray-haired and stooping, come between me and sleep, and the tears have started to my eyes, as I regretted that I did not present that petition in my single woman's strength. There were two things which made Sherry's case seem peculiarly hard. The first was that uniform testimony to his probity and excellence of character, which prevented slaveholders themselves from doubting his account of the manner in which he obtained the book; and the other was the fact that the statute which made it criminal to hold it, did not become a law till Sherry had had it full two years in his possession, and *he* was as ignorant of the statute itself as he was of any sinister interpretation which the government of Maryland might choose to put upon plain representations of *fact*. But two years of imprisonment remain to him, and doubtless he prays more and more earnestly that life may be spared, till he shall gaze once more upon that precious family circle. Yet, who but the all-wise Father of us all, can tell whether it be best that his prayer should be heard—whether that gaze would not be one of agony? We will not doubt the fidelity of his wife, we will believe that the spoiler has touched none of those whom he, by the grace of God, kept holy; but, at least, he will find her whom he loved bent under the sense of social degradation, the weight of unusual cares, and the pressure of poverty. He will hardly know her sunken eye and anxious brow. The babe who was unconscious of his fate will have grown to the active boy; the girls who clustered about his knee will be wives, perhaps mothers, and God grant that none of that dear circle may have been sold into servitude to pay the poll tax or secure the livelihood of the rest. Yet this and more things might have been in those long ten years. However joyful the return, Sherry will see with pain that the hours when he was needed in his home have passed by, principles are already decided for his children, and if they could not read the language in

which their Bible is written, before he went away, they probably never will.

I have written his history without comment, simply as it occurred. It seems to me that an expression of strong indignation would weaken the anti-slavery argument contained in these pages. Let the story burn in your hearts, American freemen, and kindle there the fire of truth. The time shall yet come, when we shall see her torches blazing on all our hills, and her God-lit barks floating even on the bosom of the Chesapeake. A system which to sustain itself among men feeds alike on the heart's blood of slave and freeman, trampling everywhere at the North and South alike on human right and human law, so surely as God is true, contains within itself the seeds of its own death.

(1847)

# JOSEPH EVANS SNODGRASS

## *The Childless Mother*

A Baltimore physician, man of letters, and friend of Edgar Allan Poe, Joseph Evans Snodgrass (1813–1880) edited such journals as *The American Museum* and the *Baltimore Saturday Visiter*, and published *Sketches of the Baltimore Pulpit* (1843) and a brief biography of the abolitionist Benjamin Lundy in 1868. In this sentimental sketch about a mother and baby submitted to *The Liberty Bell*, he crossed over into a sort of writing normally dominated by women.

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**A**FTER PRACTISING my profession for a year or two in Virginia, amid the familiar scenes of my boyhood's mountain-circled home, I removed to Williamsport, a quiet little village on the Maryland side of the romantic Potomac. During my residence in the latter place, an incident occurred, the relation of which will, perhaps, serve a useful purpose, while furnishing as I have been requested to do, "a page for the Liberty Bell."

At the dawn of a day in early spring, I was startled from slumbers rendered perhaps unusually profound by the labors of the previous day. The cause was a scream, which violently cleft the cold clear air with its piercing agony. I instantly sprang to my feet, only to have my ears saluted by shrieks still more startling. So loud had the voice now become, that it seemed to startle from the bosom of the quiet river echoes such as had perhaps never been heard since the days when its glassy tide used to reflect the war-whoop of the Indian and the scream of the panther.

The voice could readily be distinguished as that of a female, though coarse and harsh in its tones. It soon ceased, however, as if stifled by the very intensity of the agony it had expressed. On subsequent inquiry of a servant, I obtained the following solution of the soul-troubling mystery.

In a hut, a square or two distant, had lived, for some time, a colored woman, the mother of two children, whose wants she had supplied with the labor of her own hands. She had regarded herself as a “free woman”—free as the air of the surrounding hills—and she was so regarded by all who knew her. But she had no “free papers,” having omitted to secure them, it was said, through overconfidence in the source from which she had received a verbal pledge of freedom. A fatal omission, too frequently made by the virtually freed.

Little did that sable woman dream, amid the quiet darkness which enwrapped her toil-worn frame in unconsciousness, that a still harder lot—O, how hard a one—was so near in its awaiting. She was aroused at earliest dawn, by a rap at her humble door. She responded to the signal, and bade the visitants enter. They did so; but for what purpose, suppose you, reader? To talk of work to be done by those who are glad to “ask leave to toil,” or utter other words of cheer? No—alas! No—far different the errand on which they came. One of them claimed her as his “chattel,” and ordered her to be seized as his “slave.” It was done, and she was conveyed, with her oldest child, to the county jail, some six miles distant, there to await the “highest bidder” for the blood and bones of his fellow men!

“Was it the fact of being sold to Georgia, that caused those unearthly shrieks,” you ask? “Is that not a common thing in Maryland?”

It is far too common, I answer with shame; but it was not that which caused such intense agony. The cause was far worse even than this. I will tell.

Nestling warmly in the mother’s bosom, through that sadly terminated night, had lain a babe, but a few weeks old—a babe which, colored though it was, and doomed to become as deep-hued as its sable mother, was her baby still, with all the tender and helpless ways of a baby—and that mother loved it as fondly as the fairest-skinned mother of this land could love her own. But it was deemed an *incumbrance* to its mother, in the slave-mart. So they tore it rudely from her bosom! It was *that* which had caused the shriek of agonized affection,—the speechless utterance of a mother’s bereaved and tortured soul! Yes, they tore that tender child from its mother, and she became the inmate of a gloomy

prison!

“For what cause?” you ask. “Had the woman committed any crime?”

Not the least possible crime was she guilty of, except it really be a crime to wear a black skin. But she was a slave,—at least she was claimed as such. Besides, you see they only transferred her from one prison to another—for what is slavery but imprisonment? In fact, it is generally imprisonment of the worst kind—*imprisonment for life*.

“What became of her babe?” some anxious mother impatiently asks.

I cannot answer further than that it was left with a colored woman, who promised its mother to take care of it. This, it is probable, she was allowed to do, until it was old enough for the “Southern market.”

Mothers of the land—ye who have borne children, and felt the feeble pulsations of their little hearts responding to your own—know you not how to commiserate that cruelly bereft mother? I trust that you do. Then plead, and *work* for the cause of the slave! Strengthen the hands of your husbands, and fathers, and brothers, amid their stern conflict with the giant Wrong—amid their self-denials and their sufferings—in the face of private malice and public scorn! Woman can do much, if faithful to her mission—so much that, with the coöperation of the wives, and mothers, and daughters of our guilty land, the “Liberty Bell” would soon cease to send forth such heart-rending tones as the shrieks of the Childless Mother.

(1847)

# JANE ELIZABETH HITCHCOCK JONES

from *The Young Abolitionists; or, Conversations on Slavery*

A native of upstate New York, Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock Jones (1813–1896) was, together with her husband Benjamin Smith Jones, coeditor of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in Salem, Ohio, from 1845 to 1849. Active in the Western Anti-Slavery Society and similar groups, she published *The Young Abolitionists* through the American Anti-Slavery Society in Boston in 1848. Perhaps it was the prospect of the birth of her first child that same year which moved her to write this 125-page book, a series of fictional dialogues designed to inculcate in young readers a thorough understanding of the problems of slavery and racism in America.

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## CHAPTER I.

**M**OTHER! let me go to meeting too,” said young Charlie Selden, who was anxious to know all that was going on.

“No, my child, you must stay at home with Phil and Jenie, and keep Bidy company.”

“But I want to go and hear that man that was here to-day. You said he was going to lecture. I like *him*. We chased each other all round the old pasture, he helped me sail my boat, he played with old Tig, and it was rare sport we had. Mother, he asked me if I were an abolitionist. What did he mean? What is an abolitionist?”

“It is one who is endeavoring to liberate the slaves, my dear.”

“The slaves! I heard you talking about the slaves the other day. What is a slave, Mother?”

“A slave is one who is deprived of his freedom—one who is obliged to do the bidding of a master,” said the parent.

“Is Bidy a slave then? She does just what you and father tell her. She

never goes out without your consent, and in every thing waits for your orders. Does this make her a slave?"

"Oh, no! Biddy, it is true, always obeys our orders, but we pay her well for her services. Every Saturday night she receives her wages and does what she pleases with them. Then Biddy is free to leave us and seek another home whenever she likes; and besides, she spends a great deal of time in reading, and writes to all her friends in old Ireland."

"Don't slaves read and write too?" inquired Charlie.

"No, they are not permitted to learn. Their masters are afraid to have them taught, and in some States it is prohibited by law, in Louisiana, for instance."

"I know where Louisiana is very well, and on my chart I can tell by the light and dark shading which are the barbarous and which are the enlightened portions of the globe. Now I remember that the United States are all shaded very light, meaning, as my teacher says, that the people are educated. I should think Louisiana ought to be shaded very dark if they won't let the people learn. The slaves are people, mother, are they not?"

"Yes, they are men and women."

"Are the slave women just like Biddy, and the slave men like Cæsar?"

"Yes, some of them are black as Cæsar is, and some are white like Biddy," replied his mother. "Cæsar, you know, has been so unfortunate as to lose one of his ears, and several of his fingers. Sometimes the slaveholders, that is the masters, are so cruel as to cut off the ears of their slaves as a punishment for some fault; sometimes they whip them very hard and make the blood run freely; and sometimes they heat irons red hot and burn letters in their faces. Sometimes they make heavy iron collars and compel the slaves to wear them, and some have even been burned alive!"

"Oh, how horrible that is!" cried Charlie. "The slaveholders must be very cruel. Why, in the Indian wars I've read about, they didn't do worse than that! Mother, did I ever see a slave?"

"Yes, my child, you saw one the other day. Do you remember the colored

man whom we met at Mrs. Walker's?"

"Why! is *he* a slave? Do tell me all about him. How did he get away from his master? I guess *he* never was whipped; he looks too bold and too strong for that."

"My dear child, the boldest and the strongest are alike powerless in the hands of a master! They dare not resist the most severe punishment! They have no protection from the worst of injuries!"

"But I cannot talk more with you now; I must go to the meeting. At some future time I will tell you all you want to know about the slaves."

(1848)

# HENRY BIBB

from *The Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

Born in Kentucky, the son of a white plantation owner and a slave woman, Henry Bibb (1815–1854) endured a life that even by the standards of nineteenth-century slavery was extreme. Hired out to work before the age of ten, in one eight-year period he was sold more than six times and forced to move to seven different southern states. Having escaped to Indiana and Ohio in 1837, he made repeated attempts to return to Kentucky to rescue his wife and daughter, with the result that he was recaptured and the three of them were taken south in 1839 by a slave trader intending to sell them en route to New Orleans. After his extraordinary narrative was published, doubts were voiced about its authenticity. A committee of abolitionists in Detroit investigated and corroborated his story. In the passage excerpted here, the trader holds the wife and daughter hostage and sends Bibb out to find a buyer for himself, only for Bibb to discover the tragicomic irony that in a racist society his fair skin was as much a curse as blackness.

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## CHAPTER IX

*Our arrival and examination at Vicksburg.—An account of slave sales.—Cruel punishment with the paddle.—Attempts to sell myself by Garrison's direction.—Amusing interview with a slave buyer.—Deacon Whitfield's examination.—He purchases the family.—Character of the Deacon.*

WHEN WE arrived at the city of Vicksburg, he intended to sell a portion of his slaves there, and stopped for three weeks trying to sell. But he met with very poor success.

We had there to pass through an examination or inspection by a city officer, whose business it was to inspect slave property that was brought to that market

for sale. He examined our backs to see if we had been much scarred by the lash. He examined our limbs, to see whether we were inferior.

As it is hard to tell the ages of slaves, they look in their mouths at their teeth, and prick up the skin on the back of their hands, and if the person is very far advanced in life, when the skin is pricked up, the pucker will stand so many seconds on the back of the hand.

But the most rigorous examinations of slaves by those slave inspectors, is on the mental capacity. If they are found to be very intelligent, this is pronounced the most objectionable of all other qualities connected with the life of a slave. In fact, it undermines the whole fabric of his chattelhood; it prepares for what slaveholders are pleased to pronounce the unpardonable sin when committed by a slave. It lays the foundation for running away, and going to Canada. They also see in it a love for freedom, patriotism, insurrection, bloodshed, and exterminating war against American slavery.

Hence they are very careful to inquire whether a slave who is for sale can read or write. This question has been asked me often by slave traders, and cotton planters, while I was there for market. After conversing with me, they have sworn by their Maker, that they would not have me among their negroes; and that they saw the devil in my eye; I would run away, &c.

I have frequently been asked also, if I had ever run away; but Garrison would generally answer this question for me in the negative. He could have sold my little family without any trouble, for the sum of one thousand dollars. But for fear he might not get me off at so great an advantage, as the people did not like my appearance, he could do better by selling us all together. They all wanted my wife, while but very few wanted me. He asked for me and my family twenty-five hundred dollars, but was not able to get us off at that price.

He tried to speculate on my Christian character. He tried to make it appear that I was so pious and honest that I would not runaway for ill treatment; which was a gross mistake, for I never had religion enough to keep me from running away from slavery in my life.

But we were taken from Vicksburgh, to the city of New Orleans, where we were to be sold at any rate. We were taken to a trader's yard or a slave prison on the corner of St. Joseph street. This was a common resort for slave traders, and planters who wanted to buy slaves; and all classes of slaves were kept there for sale, to be sold in private or public—young or old, males or females, children or parents, husbands or wives.

Every day at 10 o'clock they were exposed for sale. They had to be in trim for showing themselves to the public for sale. Every one's head had to be combed, and their faces washed, and those who were inclined to look dark and rough, were compelled to wash in greasy dish water, in order to make them look slick and lively.

When spectators would come in the yard, the slaves were ordered out to form a line. They were made to stand up straight, and look as sprightly as they could; and when they were asked a question, they had to answer it as promptly as they could, and try to induce the spectators to buy them. If they failed to do this, they were severely paddled after the spectators were gone. The object for using the paddle in the place of a lash was, to conceal the marks which would be made by the flogging. And the object for flogging under such circumstances, is to make the slaves anxious to be sold.

The paddle is made of a piece of hickory timber, about one inch thick, three inches in width, and about eighteen inches in length. The part which is applied to the flesh is bored full of quarter inch auger holes; and every time this is applied to the flesh of a victim, the blood gushes through the holes of the paddle, or a blister makes its appearance. The persons who are thus flogged, are always stripped naked, and their hands tied together. They are then bent over double, their knees are forced between their elbows, and a stick is put through between the elbows and the bend of the legs, in order to hold the victim in that position, while the paddle is applied to those parts of the body which would not be so likely to be seen by those who wanted to buy slaves.

I was kept in this prison for several months, and no one would buy me for

fear I would run away. One day while I was in this prison, Garrison got mad with my wife, and took her off in one of the rooms, with his paddle in hand, swearing that he would paddle her; and I could afford her no protection at all, while the strong arm of the law, public opinion and custom, were all against me. I have often heard Garrison say, that he had rather paddle a female, than eat when he was hungry—that it was music for him to hear them scream, and to see their blood run.

After the lapse of several months, he found that he could not dispose of my person to a good advantage, while he kept me in that prison confined among the other slaves. I do not speak with vanity when I say the contrast was so great between myself and ordinary slaves, from the fact that I had enjoyed superior advantages, to which I have already referred. They have their slaves classed off and numbered.

Garrison came to me one day and informed me that I might go out through the city and find myself a master. I was to go to the Hotels, boarding houses, &c.—tell them that my wife was a good cook, wash-woman, &c.,—and that I was a good dining room servant, carriage driver, or porter—and in this way I might find some gentleman who would buy us both; and that this was the only hope of our being sold together.

But before starting me out, he dressed me up in a suit of his old clothes, so as to make me look respectable, and I was so much better dressed than usual that I felt quite gay. He would not allow my wife to go out with me however, for fear we might get away. I was out every day for several weeks, three or four hours in each day, trying to find a new master, but without success.

Many of the old French inhabitants have taken slaves for their wives, in this city, and their own children for their servants. Such commonly are called Creoles. They are better treated than other slaves, and I resembled this class in appearance so much that the French did not want me. Many of them set their mulatto children free, and make slaveholders of them.

At length one day I heard that there was a gentleman in the city from the

State of Tennessee, to buy slaves. He had brought down two rafts of lumber for market, and I thought if I could get him to buy me with my family, and take us to Tennessee, from there, I would stand a better opportunity to run away again and get to Canada, than I would from the extreme South.

So I brushed up myself and walked down to the river's bank, where the man was pointed out to me standing on board of his raft, I approached him, and after passing the usual compliments I said:

“Sir, I understand that you wish to purchase a lot of servants and I have called to know if it is so.”

He smiled and appeared to be much pleased at my visit on such laudable business, supposing me to be a slave trader. He commenced rubbing his hands together, and replied by saying: “Yes sir, I am glad to see you. It is a part of my business here to buy slaves, and if I could get you to take my lumber in part pay I should like to buy four or five of your slaves at any rate. What kind of slaves have you, sir?”

After I found that he took me to be a slave trader I knew that it would be of no use for me to tell him that I was myself a slave looking for a master, for he would have doubtless brought up the same objection that others had brought up,—that I was too white; and that they were afraid that I could read and write; and would never serve as a slave, but run away. My reply to the question respecting the quality of my slaves was, that I did not think his lumber would suit me—that I must have the cash for my negroes, and turned on my heel and left him!

I returned to the prison and informed my wife of the fact that I had been taken to be a slaveholder. She thought that in addition to my light complexion my being dressed up in Garrison's old slave trading clothes might have caused the man to think that I was a slave trader, and she was afraid that we should yet be separated if I should not succeed in finding some body to buy us.

Every day to us was a day of trouble, and every night brought new and fearful apprehensions that the golden link which binds together husband and wife might be broken by the heartless tyrant before the light of another day.

Deep has been the anguish of my soul when looking over my little family during the silent hours of the night, knowing the great danger of our being sold off at auction the next day and parted forever. That this might not come to pass, many have been the tears and prayers which I have offered up to the God of Israel that we might be preserved.

*(1849)*

## HENRY “BOX” BROWN

from *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself*

Nicknamed “Box” after the means of his famous escape from slavery inside a small crate shipped from Richmond to Philadelphia, Henry Brown (c. 1815–c. 1879) was a slave in Virginia who decided to escape when his wife and children were sold away to North Carolina in 1848. After reaching the North, he dictated the story of his life and ingenious means of escape to a sympathetic editor and it was published in Boston. Thereafter Brown’s life became more controversial. He traveled to England, where he lectured and published a revised version of his *Narrative* (1851), but was criticized for not trying to rescue his wife and children from slavery. He later remarried and abandoned the abolitionist effort to become a traveling entertainer for the rest of his life.

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The first thing that occurred to me, after the cruel separation of my wife and children from me, and I had recovered my senses, so as to know how to act, was, thoughts of freeing myself from slavery’s iron yoke. I had suffered enough under its heavy weight, and I determined I would endure it no longer; and those reasons which often deter the slave from attempting to escape, no longer existed in reference to me, for my family were gone, and slavery now had no mitigating circumstances, to lessen the bitterness of its cup of woe. It is true, as my master had told me, that I could “get another wife;” but no man, excepting a brute below the human species, would have proposed such a step to a person in my circumstances; and as I was not such a degraded being, I did not dream of so conducting. Marriage was not a thing of personal convenience with me, to be cast aside as a worthless garment, whenever the slaveholder’s will required it; but it was a sacred institution binding upon me, as long as the God who had “joined us together,” refrained from untying the nuptial knot. What! leave the wife of my bosom for another! and while my heart was leaping from its abode,

to pour its strong affections upon the kindred soul of my devoted partner, could I receive a stranger, another person to my embrace, as if the ties of love existed only in the presence of the object loved! Then, indeed, should I have been a traitor to that God, who had linked our hearts together in fond affection, and cemented our union, by so many additional cords, twining around our hearts; as a tree and an arbor are held together by the clinging of the tendrils of the adhering vine, which winds itself about them so closely. Slavery, and slavery abettors, seize hold of these tender scions, and cut and prune them away from both tree and arbor, as remorselessly as a gardener cuts down the briars and thorns which disturb the growth of his fair plants; but all humane, and every virtuous man, must instinctively recoil from such transactions, as they would from soul murder, or from the commission of some enormous deed of villany.

Reader, in the light of these scenes you may behold, as in a glass, your true character. Refined and delicate you may pretend to be, and may pass yourself off as a pure and virtuous person; but if you refuse to exert yourself for the overthrow of a system, which thus tramples human affection under its bloody feet, and demands of its crushed victims, the sacrifice of all that is noble, virtuous and pure, upon its smoking altars; you may rest assured, that if the balances of *purity* were extended before you, He who “searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins,” would say to you, as your character underwent his searching scrutiny, “Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.”

I went to Mr. Allen, and requested of him permission to refrain from labor for a short time, in consequence of a disabled finger; but he refused to grant me this permission, on the ground that my hand was not lame enough to justify him in so doing. Nothing daunted by this rebuff, I took some oil of vitriol, intending to pour a few drops upon my finger, to make it sufficiently sore, to disable me from work, which I succeeded in, beyond my wishes; for in my hurry, a larger quantity than it was my purpose to apply to my finger, found its way there, and my finger was soon eaten through to the bone. The overseer then was obliged to allow me to absent myself from business, for it was impossible for me to work in

that situation. But I did not waste my precious furlough in idle mourning over my fate. I armed myself with determined energy, for action, and in the words of one of old, in the name of God, "I leaped over a wall, and run through a troop" of difficulties. After searching for assistance for some time, I at length was so fortunate as to find a friend, who promised to assist me, for one half the money I had about me, which was one hundred and sixty-six dollars. I gave him eighty-six, and he was to do his best in forwarding my scheme. Long did we remain together, attempting to devise ways and means to carry me away from the land of separation of families, of whips and thumb-screws, and auction blocks; but as often as a plan was suggested by my friend, there would appear some difficulty in the way of its accomplishment. Perhaps it may not be best to mention what these plans were, as some unfortunate slaves may thereby be prevented from availing themselves of these methods of escape.

At length, after praying earnestly to Him, who seeth afar off, for assistance, in my difficulty, suddenly, as if from above, there darted into my mind these words, "Go and get a box, and put yourself in it." I pondered the words over in my mind. "Get a box?" thought I; "what can this mean?" But I was "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision," and I determined to put into practice this direction, as I considered it, from my heavenly Father.\* I went to the depot, and there noticed the size of the largest boxes, which commonly were sent by the cars, and returned with their dimensions. I then repaired to a carpenter, and induced him to make me a box of such a description as I wished, informing him of the use I intended to make of it. He assured me I could not live in it; but as it was dear liberty I was in pursuit of, I thought it best to make the trial.

When the box was finished, I carried it, and placed it before my friend, who had promised to assist me, who asked me if that was to "put my clothes in?" I replied that it was not, but to "*put Henry Brown in!*" He was astonished at my temerity; but I insisted upon his placing me in it, and nailing me up, and he finally consented.

After corresponding with a friend in Philadelphia, arrangements were made

for my departure, and I took my place in this narrow prison, with a mind full of uncertainty as to the result. It was a critical period of my life, I can assure you, reader; but if you have never been deprived of your liberty, as I was, you cannot realize the power of that hope of freedom, which was to me indeed, “an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.”

I laid me down in my darkened home of three feet by two, and like one about to be guillotined, resigned myself to my fate. My friend was to accompany me, but he failed to do so; and contented himself with sending a telegraph message to his correspondent in Philadelphia, that such a box was on its way to his care.

I took with me a bladder filled with water to bathe my neck with, in case of too great heat; and with no access to the fresh air, excepting three small gimblet holes, I started on my perilous cruise. I was first carried to the express office, the box being placed on its end, so that I started with my head downwards, although the box was directed, “this side up with care.” From the express office, I was carried to the depot, and from thence tumbled roughly into the baggage car, where I *happened* to fall “right side up,” but no thanks to my transporters. But after a while the cars stopped, and I was put aboard a steamboat, *and placed on my head*. In this dreadful position, I remained the space of an hour and a half, it seemed to me, when I began to feel of my eyes and head, and found to my dismay, that my eyes were almost swollen out of their sockets, and the veins on my temple seemed ready to burst. I made no noise however, determining to obtain “*victory or death*,” but endured the terrible pain, as well as I could, sustained under the whole by the thoughts of sweet liberty. About half an hour afterwards, I attempted again to lift my hands to my face, but I found I was not able to move them. A cold sweat now covered me from head to foot. Death seemed my inevitable fate, and every moment I expected to feel the blood flowing over me, which had burst from my veins. One half hour longer and my sufferings would have ended in that fate, which I preferred to slavery; but I lifted up my heart to God in prayer, believing that he would yet deliver me, when to

my joy, I overheard two men say, "We have been here *two* hours and have travelled twenty miles, now let us sit down, and rest ourselves." They suited the action to the word, and turned the box over, containing my soul and body, thus delivering me from the power of the grim messenger of death, who a few moments previously, had aimed his fatal shaft at my head, and had placed his icy hands on my throbbing heart. One of these men inquired of the other, what he supposed that box contained, to which his comrade replied, that he guessed it was the mail. "Yes," thought I, "it is a *male*, indeed, although not the *mail* of the United States."

Soon after this fortunate event, we arrived at Washington, where I was thrown from the wagon, and again as my luck would have it, fell on my head. I was then rolled down a declivity, until I reached the platform from which the cars were to start. During this short but rapid journey, my neck came very near being dislocated, as I felt it crack, as if it had snapped asunder. Pretty soon, I heard some one say, "there is no room for this box, it will have to remain behind." I then again applied to the Lord, my help in all my difficulties, and in a few minutes I heard a gentleman direct the hands to place it aboard, as "it came with the mail and must go on with it." I was then tumbled into the car, my heads downwards again, as I seemed to be destined to escape on my head; a sign probably, of the opinion of American people respecting such bold adventurers as myself; that our heads should be held downwards, whenever we attempt to benefit ourselves. Not the only instance of this propensity, on the part of the American people, towards the colored race. We had not proceeded far, however, before more baggage was placed in the car, at a stopping place, and I was again turned to my proper position. No farther difficulty occurred until my arrival at Philadelphia. I reached this place at three o'clock in the morning, and remained in the depot until six o'clock, A. M., at which time, a waggon drove up, and a person inquired for a box directed to such a place, "right side up." I was soon placed on this waggon, and carried to the house of my friend's correspondent, where quite a number of persons were waiting to receive me. They appeared to

be some afraid to open the box at first, but at length one of them rapped upon it, and with a trembling voice, asked, "Is all right within?" to which I replied, "All right." The joy of these friends was excessive, and like the ancient Jews, who repaired to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, each one seized hold of some tool, and commenced opening my grave. At length the cover was removed, and I arose, and shook myself from the lethargy into which I had fallen; but exhausted nature proved too much for my frame, and I swooned away.

After my recovery from this fainting fit, the first impulse of my soul, as I looked around, and beheld my friends, and was told that I was safe, was to break out in a song of deliverance, and praise to the most high God, whose arm had been so signally manifest in my escape. Great God, was I a freeman! Had I indeed succeeded in effecting my escape from the human wolves of Slavery? O what extastic joy thrilled through every nerve and fibre of my system! My labor was accomplished, my warfare was ended, and I stood erect before my equal fellow men;\* no longer a crouching slave, forever at the look and nod of a whimsical and tyrannical slave-owner. Long had seemed my journey, and terribly hazardous had been my attempt to gain my birth-right; but it all seemed a comparatively light price to pay for the precious boon of *Liberty*. O ye, who know not the value of this "pearl of great price," by having been all your life shut out from its life-giving presence; learn of how much importance its possession is regarded, by the panting fugitive, as he traces his way through the labyrinths of snares, placed between him and the object of his fond desires! Sympathize with the three millions of crushed and mangled ones who this day pine in cruel bondage, and arouse yourself to action in their behalf! This you will do, if you are not traitors to your God and to humanity.

(1849)

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\* Reader, smile not at the above idea, for if there is a God of love, we must

believe that he suggests steps to those who apply to him in times of trouble, by which they can be delivered from their difficulty. I firmly believe this doctrine, and know it to be true from frequent experience. C. S.

\* For a corroboration of this part of Mr. Brown's narrative, the reader is referred to the close of this book.

\*Rev. R. R. Raymond.

## JOSIAH HENSON

from *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada*

Widely believed to be one of the models for Harriet Beecher Stowe's character Uncle Tom, Josiah Henson (1789–1883) was renowned for his extraordinary physical strength and morality. He was so punctilious about his honor and integrity that on two occasions he passed up an opportunity to escape (on one of them, sadly, he also denied other slaves a chance for freedom) rather than go back on an oath to his master. The long grind of physical mistreatment and the repeated betrayals he experienced at the hands of whites led him, in 1830, to escape with his wife and four children. They went via Ohio to seek refuge in Canada. He became a preacher, lecturer, and leader in the Afro-Canadian community, and for the rest of his long life traveled extensively in Canada, England, and the United States. After the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, his autobiography was reprinted in 1858 and 1879, both times with a foreword by Harriet Beecher Stowe. The excerpt printed here comes from his childhood and shows his attention to recording even the most mundane details of a slave's life.

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In consequence of his decease, it became necessary to sell the estate and the slaves, in order to divide the property among the heirs; and we were all put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder, and scattered over various parts of the country. My brothers and sisters were bid off one by one, while my mother, holding my hand, looked on in an agony of grief, the cause of which I but ill understood at first, but which dawned on my mind, with dreadful clearness, as the sale proceeded. My mother was then separated from me, and put up in her turn. She was bought by a man named Isaac R., residing in Montgomery county, and then I was offered to the assembled purchasers. My mother, half distracted with the parting forever from all her children, pushed through the crowd, while the bidding for me was going on, to the spot where R. was standing. She fell at

his feet, and clung to his knees, entreating him in tones that a mother only could command, to buy her *baby* as well as herself, and spare to her one of her little ones at least. Will it, can it be believed that this man, thus appealed to, was capable not merely of turning a deaf ear to her supplication, but of disengaging himself from her with such violent blows and kicks, as to reduce her to the necessity of creeping out of his reach, and mingling the groan of bodily suffering with the sob of a breaking heart? Yet this was one of my earliest observations of men; an experience which has been common to me with thousands of my race, the bitterness of which its frequency cannot diminish to any individual who suffers it, while it is dark enough to overshadow the whole after-life with something blacker than a funeral pall.—I was bought by a stranger.—Almost immediately, however, whether my childish strength, at five or six years of age, was overmastered by such scenes and experiences, or from some accidental cause, I fell sick, and seemed to my new master so little likely to recover, that he proposed to R., the purchaser of my mother, to take me too at such a trifling rate that it could not be refused. I was thus providentially restored to my mother; and under her care, destitute as she was of the proper means of nursing me, I recovered my health, and grew up to be an uncommonly vigorous and healthy boy and man.

The character of R., the master whom I faithfully served for many years, is by no means an uncommon one in any part of the world; but it is to be regretted that a domestic institution should anywhere put it in the power of such a one to tyrannize over his fellow beings, and inflict so much needless misery as is sure to be produced by such a man in such a position. Coarse and vulgar in his habits, unprincipled and cruel in his general deportment, and especially addicted to the vice of licentiousness, his slaves had little opportunity for relaxation from wearying labor, were supplied with the scantiest means of sustaining their toil by necessary food, and had no security for personal rights. The natural tendency of slavery is, to convert the master into a tyrant, and the slave into the cringing, treacherous, false, and thieving victim of tyranny. R. and his slaves were no

exception to the general rule, but might be cited as apt illustrations of the nature of the case.

My earliest employments were, to carry buckets of water to the men at work, to hold a horse-plough, used for weeding between the rows of corn, and as I grew older and taller, to take care of my master's saddle-horse. Then a hoe was put into my hands, and I was soon required to do the day's work of a man; and it was not long before I could do it, at least as well as my associates in misery.

The every-day life of a slave on one of our southern plantations, however frequently it may have been described, is generally little known at the North; and must be mentioned as a necessary illustration of the character and habits of the slave and the slave-holder, created and perpetuated by their relative position. The principal food of those upon my master's plantation consisted of corn meal, and salt herrings; to which was added in summer a little buttermilk, and the few vegetables which each might raise for himself and his family, on the little piece of ground which was assigned to him for the purpose, called a truck patch. The meals were two, daily. The first, or breakfast, was taken at 12 o'clock, after laboring from daylight; and the other when the work of the remainder of the day was over. The only dress was of tow cloth, which for the young, and often even for those who had passed the period of childhood, consisted of a single garment, something like a shirt, but longer, reaching to the ancles; and for the older, a pair of pantaloons, or a gown, according to the sex; while some kind of round jacket, or overcoat, might be added in winter, a wool hat once in two or three years, for the males, and a pair of coarse shoes once a year. Our lodging was in log huts, of a single small room, with no other floor than the trodden earth, in which ten or a dozen persons—men, women, and children—might sleep, but which could not protect them from dampness and cold, nor permit the existence of the common decencies of life. There were neither beds, nor furniture of any description—a blanket being the only addition to the dress of the day for protection from the chillness of the air or the earth. In these hovels were we penned at night, and fed by day; here were the children born, and the sick—neglected. Such were the

provisions for the daily toil of the slave.

Notwithstanding this system of management, however, I grew to be a robust and vigorous lad, and at fifteen years of age, there were few who could compete with me in work, or in sport—for not even the condition of a slave can altogether repress the animal spirits of the young negro. I was competent to all the work that was done upon the farm, and could run faster and farther, wrestle longer, and jump higher, than anybody about me. My master and my fellow slaves used to look upon me, and speak of me, as a wonderfully smart fellow, and prophesy the great things I should do when I became a man. A casual word of this sort, sometimes overheard, would fill me with a pride and ambition which some would think impossible in a negro slave, degraded, starved, and abused as I was, and had been, from my earliest recollection. But the love of superiority is not confined to kings and emperors; and it is a positive fact, that pride and ambition were as active in my soul as probably they ever were in that of the greatest soldier or statesman. The objects I pursued, I must admit, were not just the same as theirs. Mine were to be first in the field, whether we were hoeing, mowing, or reaping; to surpass those of my own age, or indeed any age, in athletic exercises; and to obtain, if possible, the favorable regard of the petty despot who ruled over us. This last was an exercise of the understanding, rather than of the affections; and I was guided in it more by what I supposed would be effectual, than by a nice judgment of the propriety of the means I used.

I obtained great influence with my companions, as well by the superiority I showed in labor and in sport, as by the assistance I yielded them, and the favors I conferred upon them, from impulses which I cannot consider as wrong, though it was necessary for me to conceal sometimes the act as well as its motive. I have toiled, and induced others to toil, many an extra hour, in order to show my master what an excellent day's work had been accomplished, and to win a kind word, or a benevolent deed from his callous heart. In general, indifference, or a cool calculation of my value to him, were my reward, chilling those hopes of an improvement in my condition, which was the ultimate object of my efforts. I was

much more easily moved to compassion and sympathy than he was; and one of the means I took to gain the good-will of my fellow sufferers, was by taking from him some things that he did not give, in part payment of my extra labor. The condition of the male slave is bad enough, Heaven knows; but that of the female, compelled to perform unfit labor, sick, suffering, and bearing the burdens of her own sex unpitied and unaided, as well as the toils which belong to the other, has often oppressed me with a load of sympathy. And sometimes, when I have seen them starved, and miserable, and unable to help themselves, I have helped them to some of the comforts which they were denied by him who owned them, and which my companions had not the wit or the daring to procure. Meat was not a part of our regular food; but my master had plenty of sheep and pigs, and sometimes I have picked out the best one I could find in the flock, or the drove, carried it a mile or two into the woods, slaughtered it, cut it up, and distributed it among the poor creatures, to whom it was at once food, luxury, and medicine. Was this wrong? I can only say that, at this distance of time, my conscience does not reproach me for it, and that then I esteemed it among the best of my deeds.

(1849)

# LUCRETIA MOTT

## from *A Sermon to the Medical Students*

Born in Nantucket, Massachusetts, the lifelong Quaker activist Lucretia Coffin Mott (1793–1880) emerged as one of the most fearless and dynamic campaigners for abolition and women’s rights in the nineteenth century. Active in boycotting products of slave labor as early as the 1820s, and a close friend of Garrison, she helped found the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, attended the first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in 1837, and with her husband James Mott, represented Pennsylvania at the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. She lectured and preached constantly. In her long life of activism, Mott never slowed down, joining at age eighty-five in the anniversary celebration of the Seneca Falls convention for women’s rights, which she had organized with Susan B. Anthony thirty years earlier. Here, in this 1849 sermon addressed to medical students in Philadelphia, Mott stressed that doctors had moral as well as clinical responsibilities and suggested that to be a serious physician meant that one must oppose slavery.

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Your growing knowledge of the system of man impresses the importance of observing every law of his physical being, in order to be preserved a perfect whole. The light of truth has revealed to you your noble powers, and the responsibility of exercising them in the purity with which they have been bestowed. If then by your studies you are made intelligently acquainted with these things, and if superadded, you have a quick sense of the divinity in the soul, responding to and according with this knowledge, how increasingly incumbent is it upon you to carry out your principles among your associates, so that you be not found in the back ground in the great reformation that is taking place in human society.

This is a part of my religion—a part of true Christianity, and you must bear with me, my friends, if I press upon you duties, having reference to your

different relations in society, to your intercourse with men, wherever you are placed. It has been my privilege and pleasure to meet with some of you in our Anti-Slavery Rooms. When these have been disposed to come there, though perhaps from mere curiosity, to see what the despised abolitionist was doing, I have been glad to meet them, and to offer such considerations as would induce a reflection upon the relation which they bear to our fellow beings in their own country and neighborhood. This, in the view of many, is a subject of delicacy—lightly to be touched. Still it is an essential part of Christianity; and one object in asking your audience this evening, was to offer for your consideration some views connected with it, in the hope that you would at least patiently hear, and “suffer the word of exhortation.”

There are many now looking at the subject of slavery in all its bearings, who are sympathizing with the condition of the poor and oppressed in our land. Although many of you may be more immediately connected with this system, yet it is coming to be regarded as not a mere sectional question, but a national and an individual one. It is interwoven throughout our country, into so much with which we have to do, that we may well acknowledge we are all, all “verily guilty concerning our brother.” There is, therefore, the greater responsibility that we first examine ourselves and ascertain what there is for us to do in order that we may speedily rid ourselves of the great evil that is clinging to us. *Evil?*—this mighty *sin* which so easily besets us. There are those here who have had their hearts touched, who have been led to feel and have entered into sympathy with the bondman, and have known where the evil lies. I believe there is a work for you to do, when you return home, if you will be faithful to yourselves. You will be brought more deeply to enter into feeling with the poor and oppressed slave; you will find that the mission of the gospel is “to bind up the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive.” It would be a reflection upon the intelligence and the conscience of those who are here, to suppose that they would always resist the wisdom and power with which truth is speaking to their hearts upon this subject. There are many disposed to examine, to cultivate their minds and

hearts in relation to their duties in this respect. May you be faithful, and enter into a consideration as to how far you are partakers in this evil, even in other men's sins. How far, by permission, by apology, or otherwise, you are found lending your sanction to a system which degrades and brutalizes three millions of our fellow beings; which denies to them the rights of intelligent education, rights essential to them, and which we acknowledge to be dear to us.

Is this an evil that cannot be remedied? A remedy is nigh at hand, even at the door. The voice has been heard saying, "Proclaim liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "Proclaim ye liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." To this land peculiarly is this language applicable. In this land especially are we called to be faithful in this subject. Be true to your convictions of duty then, oh my brethren, and you will have the blessing of beholding your own country purged of this iniquity, and be brought to acknowledge that the divine hand of mercy and love has been stretched over our land.

[Here a few persons, irritated by this reference to the question of slavery, left the meeting.]

It is not strange that the allusion to this subject should create some little agitation among you; and while I can but regret it, I stand here on behalf of the suffering and the dumb, and must express the desire, that there may be a disposition to hear and reflect, and then judge. I speak unto those who have ears to hear, who have hearts to feel. May their understandings not be closed! May they be willing to receive that which conflicts with their education, their prejudices and preconceived opinions. The subject of slavery you must know, is now agitating the country from one end to the other. The Church and the Legislative Hall are occupied with its discussion. It will be presented to you in all its various bearings, and let me urge such faithfulness to the light which you have, as shall prepare you to become able advocates for the oppressed. So shall the blessing descend upon you as well as upon those for whom the appeal is made. I should not be true to myself did I not thus urge this subject upon your

consideration. When you have opportunities for meditation and reflection, when your feelings are soothed by the circumstances around you, may you be led to reflect upon your duties, and the responsibility of your position in society.

*(1849)*

# JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

## *Compromise*

Compromise on the slavery question, which had prevailed in American politics at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and during the resolution of the Missouri crisis of 1818–20, was again at the forefront when Lowell wrote this wryly satiric essay for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in March 1850. Beneath his irony, Lowell discerns real danger for the future of the Union: “Do they think that the Union can be stuck together with mouth-glue, when the eternal forces are rending it asunder?”

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IF THERE were a Saint Compromise, it would be his image that ought to be stamped upon the coins of our Republic. Our very existence as a Nation at all is due, we are told, to a Compromise, and one of a somewhat ignoble sort, not between God and Satan, but between Trade and Slavery. So that Satan and Mammon were represented at the formation of the compact, but not God. Since the sticking together of the Union, this patron Saint Compromise has intervened on several occasions to preserve the work of his clients.

This patching up of expedients is justified by a system of reasoning falsely termed common sense. Everything, they say, is the result of Compromises. Conventionalism is a Compromise between the individual and Society. Respectability is a Compromise between Virtue and Vice. Nay, life itself is a Compromise between Health and Disease. We are taught to believe that half a loaf is not only better than no bread at all, but better than any amount of bread.

Now this is not truly common sense at all, for that is the result of experience and practical sagacity teaching the *best* means of reaching a desired point, not a makeshift for getting halfway to it. Facts are things to which we must all make up our minds, however distasteful they may be to us. No matter what our own hurry may be, we must consent that Destiny shall not make

advances *per saltum*, but with an almost inappreciable slowness. The most vehement Reformer must endure that his very existence shall depend upon that of his opposite pole, the unyielding Conservative. We must either get out of the way of facts or be run over by them, like the old philosopher who denied the existence of matter.

One of these tough facts is the presence and force of Evil, Unwisdom, Satan, or whatever we choose to call it, in human affairs. We may say what we please, there it is, and we must make the best of it. A great part of valuable human activity is wasted in the futile work of building barriers against the Inevitable. This, then, is the true problem—to find out what the Inevitable *is*. It is inevitable that when two forces join at an angle, a new direction is generated proportioned to the relative quantities of force. And this is the truth on which is based the fallacy that Compromise is the dictate of common sense. Practical wisdom, it is said, lies in the neutral ground, the balance between opposite poles. In spite of this, nevertheless, all that mankind has ever recognized as *uncommon* sense has been that which has come bluntly and face to face against whatever was established theory or usage.

The difficulty is that all *our* Compromises have been no Compromises at all, at least in this sense. They have rather realized the old meaning of the word, which implied a Conspiracy. They have not been modifications springing from a meeting of the two antagonistic principles of Good and Evil, but conspiracies by which Good has been uniformly betrayed. In the great game which began with the birth of the Constitution, Slavery has all along played with loaded dice. She has put on the mask of Destiny, and acted the part so well that our Statesmen have always taken defeat for granted beforehand.

Slavery, being an acknowledged evil, the very permission to exist was at first a concession and a surrender. This was called a Compromise. Then Slavery desired to extend itself, and treachery allowed it. This was called a Compromise. Again the monster felt the pains of hunger, and Texas was thrown to it. This was called a Compromise. Now, affairs have thriven so well, that Freedom sits, an

outcast and a beggar, at the gates of her own ancestral dwelling. And this is also called a Compromise. Better strangle at once that “bird of our Country” of which our orators are so fond of talking, than let her go hatching the eggs of all manner of unclean birds.

It is hardly a year since the Northern Whig presses were vying with each other in their zeal for the Wilmot Proviso. The universal Whig Dough of the Country, fermenting with the yeast of an expected victory, forgot for a moment that it was dough. Nothing was too bad for that sour and heavy Democratic batch which would not rise. Now that aspiring dough is flat and lifeless. Even General Taylor *was* in favor of the Wilmot Proviso, and Northern Whigs were seduced to vote for him upon that pretence. Let a man cheat his neighbor out of a few hundred dollars and he goes to the State-Prison. But to what Penitentiary of public contempt shall a Party be consigned, which obtains a President under false pretences? When the eye of the People becomes *clairvoyant*, it will behold, we fancy, certain unconscious gentlemen working in Congressional Committees, clad in symbolic suits of blue and red perpendicularly halved, such as are the uniform in some other public institutions.

The Wilmot Proviso was truly a Compromise. It allowed the South to keep all it had hitherto unjustly gained, but declared that it should steal no more. Our Statesmanship which has brought itself more and more into accordance with that of Europe was desirous of reproducing an American type of that greatest of Old-World humbugs, the Balance of Power. Accordingly we are now told that the beam must be kept exactly even between the Free and the Slave States, in other words, that when we make a great hole for our great cat to go through, we must also make a still greater for the little cat not yet littered.

All history is the record of a struggle, gradually heightening in fierceness, between reason and unreason between right and wrong. Of what good is it that we can put off the evil time a century, which is but a day in the history of the human race? Our statutes are subject to revision in that higher Congress where the laws of Nature are enacted. “Trent shall not wind him with so deep indent,”

exclaim our Glendowers.—“He must, he will, you see he *doth*,” answers the progress of events. This very neutral ground of Compromise is that which is trampled at last by the contending forces of the good and evil principle. Our legislators might as well try to stay Niagara with a dip-net, or pass acts against the laws of gravitation, as endeavor to stunt the growth of avenging Conscience. Do they think that the Union can be stuck together with mouth-glue, when the eternal forces are rending it asunder? There is something better than Expediency, and that is Wisdom; something stronger than Compromise, and that is Justice.

—J. R. L.

(1850)

## HORACE MANN

*from Speech of Horace Mann of Massachusetts, on the Subject of Slavery in the Territories, and the Consequences of a Dissolution of the Union; from Speech on the Fugitive Slave Law*

A lawyer, elected official, and reformer, Horace Mann (1796–1859) was from 1848 to 1852 a congressman from Massachusetts occupying the seat formerly held by John Quincy Adams. Known for his activism in many fields—education, temperance, mental health care—during his congressional years Mann fought against the slave powers, delivering impassioned orations such as those excerpted here. Exploding the supposed rationale for the Compromise of 1850, Mann argued that because of slavery, the nation was already, in fact, at war. With comparably bold rhetoric, in an 1851 speech in Lancaster, Massachusetts, Mann dared to discuss the sexual vulnerability of slave women in lines addressed to the women in his audience. He died before the onset of the Civil War that he had so clearly predicted.

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*from Speech of Horace Mann of Massachusetts, on the Subject of Slavery in the Territories, and the Consequences of a Dissolution of the Union*

Under God, the men of education, of talent, and of attainment, turn the tides of human affairs. Where great social distinctions exist, the intelligence and the wealth of a few stimulate or suppress the volition of the masses. They are the sensorium of the body politic, and their social inferiors are the mighty limbs, which, for good or for evil, they wield. Such is the relation in which the three hundred thousand, or less than three hundred thousand slave owners of the South, hold to their fellow citizens. They can light the torch of civil war, or they can quench it. But if civil war once blazes forth, it is not given to mortal wisdom to extinguish or control it. It comes under other and mightier laws, under other

and mightier agencies. Human passions feed the combustion; and the flame which the breath of man has kindled, the passions of the multitude,—stronger than the breath of the hurricane,—will spread. Among these passions, one of the strongest and boldest is the love of liberty, which dwells in every bosom. In the educated and civilized, this love of liberty is a regulated but paramount desire; in the ignorant and debased it is a wild, vehement instinct. It is an indestructible part of the nature of man. Weakened it may be, but it cannot be destroyed. It is a thread of asbestos in the web of the soul, which all the fires of oppression cannot consume.

With the creation of every human being, God creates this love of liberty anew. The slave shares it with his master, and it has descended into his bosom from the same high source. Whether dormant or wakeful, it only awaits an opportunity to become the mastering impulse of the soul. Civil war is that opportunity. Under oppression it bides its time. Civil war is the fullness of time. It is literal truth that the South fosters within its homes three millions of latent rebellions. Imbedded in a material spontaneously combustible, it laughs at fire. Has it any barriers to keep the spirit of liberty, which has electrified the old world, from crossing its own borders, and quickening its bondmen into mutinous life?—not all of them, but one in ten thousand, one in a hundred thousand of them. If there is no Spartacus among them, with his lofty heroism and his masterly skill for attack and defence, is the race of Nat Turners extinct, who, in their religious musings, and their dumb melancholy, take the impulses of their own passions for the inspiration of God, and, after prayer and the eucharist, proceed to massacre and conflagration? In ignorant and imbruted minds, a thousand motives work which we cannot divine. A thousand excitements madden them, which we cannot control. It may be a text of Scripture, it may be the contents of a wine-vault; but the result will be the same,—havoc wherever there is wealth, murder wherever there is life, violation wherever there is chastity. Let but this wild-fire of a servile insurrection break out in but one place in a State; nay, in but ten places, or in five places in all the fifteen States; and

then, in all their length and breadth, there will be no more quiet sleep. Not Macbeth, but the Angel of Retribution will “murder sleep.” The mother will clasp her infant to her breast, and, while she clasps it, die a double death. But, where will the slaves find arms? “*Furor arma ministrat.*” Rage will supply their weapons. Read the history of those slaves who have escaped from bondage; mark their endurance and their contrivance, and let incredulity cease forever. They have hid themselves under coverts, dug holes and burrowed in the earth for concealment, sunk themselves in ponds, and sustained life by breathing through a reed, until their pursuers had passed by; crushed themselves into boxes, but of half a coffin’s dimensions, to be nailed up and transported hundreds of miles, as merchandise; and, in this horrible condition, have endured hunger and thirst, and standing upon the head, without a groan or a sigh; have wandered abroad, almost fasting for forty days and forty nights, like Christ in the wilderness;—and, will men, who devise such things, and endure such things, be balked in their purposes of hope and of revenge, when the angel of destruction, in the form of the angel of Liberty descends into their breasts?

The state of slavery is always a state of war. In its deepest tranquility, it is but a truce. Active hostilities are liable at any hour to be resumed. Civil war between the North and the South,—any thing that brings the quickening idea of freedom home to the mind of the slave, that supplies him with facilities of escape, or immunities for revenge,—will unleash the bloodhounds of insurrection. Can you muster armies in secret, and march them in secret, so that the slave shall not know that they are mustered and marched to perpetuate his bondage, and to extend the bondage of his race? Was not Major Dade’s whole command supposed to be massacred through the treachery of a slave? A forray within your borders places you in such a relation to the slave that you are helpless without him, and in danger of assassination with him. He that defends slavery by war, wars against the eternal laws of God, and rushes upon the thick bosses of Jehovah’s buckler. Such are some of the “hazards” which the leaders of public opinion at the South, the legislators and guides of men in this dark and

perilous hour, are invoking upon themselves and their fellows; not for the interests of the whole, but for the fancied interests of the slaveholders alone, and against the real interest of a vast majority of the people. May God give that wisdom to the followers which he seems not yet to have imparted to the leaders.

(1850)

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from *Speech on the Fugitive Slave Law*

Ladies, there are now in this land of pretended freedom and pretended gospel a million and a half of women who have no practical knowledge of what a woman's higher life should be, or what a woman's most precious rights are. Since the Declaration of Independence, the number of slaves in this country has increased from less than five hundred thousand to more than three millions; and before the close of this century, their descendants will increase to more than thrice three millions. And yet, neither as to the living nor as to the dead, has there ever been a lawful marriage among them all. There has never been a man slave who could say, "This is my wife, heart of my heart, and life of my life, and no mortal power shall pluck her from my side." There has never been a woman slave who could say, "This is my lawful, wedded husband, whom I promise to love and cherish, and to whom I vow inviolable constancy." "For this cause," says Christ, "shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." But the "twain" of slaves are never one. And even when any sham ceremony is observed, to distinguish this holy relation of husband and wife from the cohabitations of beasts, and he who officiates comes to those other words of Christ, "What therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder," he stops; for he knows, and they all know, that a few dollars, at any time, will bring bereavement upon both,—a double bereavement, he a widower and she a widow, both still surviving. Their life, at best, is but a life of

concubinage;—not even that concubinage, which, though not founded upon a lawful contract, has still something like conjugal fidelity in it, and therefore a semblance of virtue; but a various and vagrant concubinage, traversing the circle of overseer, master, master's guests, and master's sons. The fate of the children born to the slave mother you all know. Those objects upon which all maternal affections meet and glow as in a focus, are torn from her bosom, like lambs from the flock when the shambles are empty.

And as to those females who are young, sprightly, and handsome:—

Charge me not with indelicacy in touching upon this theme. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*. I speak not to fastidious ears, but to the pure in heart, to whom all things are pure. I speak of eternal verities, before whose massive force the heart trembles and bows itself, as reeds before the tempest. It is the grossest and most shameless of all indelicacies to patronize and multiply vice, through pusillanimity in exposing it,—

As to those females, I say, who are young, sprightly, and handsome, whom God has damned with beauty of form and beauty of face, because they only attract the gloating eye of passion, who can describe the loathsomeness of their life? They are ripened for the New Orleans, or for some other market, whence southern harems are supplied; as, under the Mahometan religion, white Caucasian beauties are sent to the slave marts of the darker-skinned Turk.

(1851)

## SOJOURNER TRUTH

from *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave, Emancipated from Bodily Servitude by the State of New York, in 1828*

The famous black abolitionist and women's rights advocate was born a slave named Isabella in Ulster County, New York, and didn't rename herself Sojourner Truth (c. 1799–1883) until a pivotal moment of spiritual awakening in June 1843. After her emancipation in 1827 and her conversion to evangelical Methodism in 1843, she lived a largely itinerant life, preaching and exploring alternate belief systems such as spiritualism and communitarianism. Illiterate but a gifted speaker, she dictated the narrative of her life to Olive Gilbert in 1850 and William Lloyd Garrison arranged for it to be published in Boston. In this passage from the *Narrative*, "Isabella" is the young Sojourner, helpless to relieve the miseries of her aged father's final destitution.

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### LAST DAYS OF BOMEFREE.

Isabella and Peter were permitted to see the remains of their mother laid in their last narrow dwelling, and to make their bereaved father a little visit, ere they returned to their servitude. And most piteous were the lamentations of the poor old man, when, at last, *they* also were obliged to bid him 'Farewell!' Juan Fernandes, on his desolate island, was not so pitiable an object as this poor lame man. Blind and crippled, he was too superannuated to think for a moment of taking care of himself, and he greatly feared no persons would interest themselves in his behalf. 'Oh,' he would exclaim, 'I had thought God would take me first,—Mau-mau was so much smarter than I, and could get about and take care of herself;—and I am *so old*, and *so helpless*. What *is* to become of me? I can't do any thing more—my children are all gone, and here I am left helpless and alone.' 'And then, as I was taking leave of him,' said his daughter, in

relating it, 'he raised his voice, and cried aloud like a child—*Oh, how he DID cry!* I HEAR it *now*—and remember it as well as if it were but yesterday—*poor old man!!!* He thought *God* had done it all—and my heart bled within me at the sight of his misery. He begged me to get permission to come and see him sometimes, which I readily and heartily promised him.' But when all had left him, the Ardinburghs, having some feeling left for their faithful and favorite slave, 'took turns about' in keeping him—permitting him to stay a few weeks at one house, and then awhile at another, and so around. If, when he made a removal, the place where he was going was not too far off, he took up his line of march, staff in hand, and asked for no assistance. If it was twelve or twenty miles, they gave him a ride. While he was living in this way, Isabella was twice permitted to visit him. Another time she walked twelve miles, and carried her infant in her arms to see him, but when she reached the place where she hoped to find him, he had just left for a place some twenty miles distant, and she never saw him more. The last time she *did* see him, she found him seated on a rock, by the road-side, alone, and far from any house. He was then migrating from the house of one Ardinburgh to that of another, several miles distant. His hair was white like wool—he was almost blind—and his gait was more a creep than a walk—but the weather was warm and pleasant, and he did not dislike the journey. When Isabella addressed him, he recognized her voice, and was exceeding glad to see her. He was assisted to mount the wagon, was carried back to the famous cellar of which we have spoken, and there they held their last earthly conversation. He again, as usual, bewailed his loneliness,—spoke in tones of anguish of his many children, saying, 'They are all taken away from me! I have now not one to give me a cup of cold water—why should I live and not die?' Isabella, whose heart yearned over her father, and who would have made any sacrifice to have been able to be with, and take care of him, tried to comfort, by telling him that 'she had heard the white folks say, that all the slaves in the State would be freed in ten years, and that then she would come and take care of him.' 'I would take just

as good care of you as Mau-mau would, if she was here’—continued Isabel. ‘Oh, my child,’ replied he, ‘I cannot *live* that long.’ ‘Oh *do*, daddy, do live, and I will take such *good* care of you,’ was her rejoinder. She now says, ‘Why, I thought then, in my ignorance, that he *could* live, if he *would*. I just as much thought so, as I ever thought *any* thing in my life—and I *insisted* on his living: but he shook his head, and insisted he could not.’

But, before Bomefree’s good constitution would yield either to age, exposure, or a strong desire to die, the Ardinburghs again tired of him, and offered freedom to two old slaves—Cæsar, brother of Mau-mau Bett, and his wife Betsey—on condition that they should take care of James. (I was about to say, ‘their brother-in-law’—but as slaves are neither *husbands* nor *wives* in law, the idea of their being brothers-in-law is truly ludicrous.) And although they were too old and infirm to take care of themselves, (Cæsar having been afflicted for a long time with fever-sores, and his wife with the jaundice,) they eagerly accepted the boon of freedom, which had been the life-long desire of their souls—though at a time when emancipation was to them little more than destitution, and was a freedom more to be desired by the master than the slave. Sojourner declares of the slaves in their ignorance, that ‘their thoughts are no longer than her finger.’

(1850)

# WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

from *The Great Apostate*

From about 1837, Garrison's extremism on issues such as women's rights and the corruption of established Christianity alienated more and more of his fellow antislavery campaigners, and the movement began to divide into Garrisonian and anti-Garrisonian factions. In 1840, a group led by Arthur and Lewis Tappan, James Gillespie Birney, and others split off to form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and Garrison was left leading the more broadly ambitious, but more marginal, American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1842, Garrison denounced the U.S. Constitution as "a covenant with death—an agreement with hell," and in 1854 he publicly burned a copy of the Constitution on the Fourth of July. Meanwhile, he actively campaigned for desegregation and equal rights for blacks. His essay "The Great Apostate," in typically feverish language, attacks Daniel Webster for his shifting views on slavery and mocks him as one who "humbled himself even to the dust in the presence of the Slave Power, and has ever since been prostituting his great powers to the work of crushing the Anti-Slavery spirit of the age!"

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**I**N A speech delivered in Niblo's Garden, New York, in 1837, DANIEL WEBSTER said, with an emphasis which elicited from the vast assembly almost deafening cheers,—

'On the general question of Slavery, a great portion of the community is already strongly excited.— The question has not only attracted attention as a question of politics, but it has struck a far deeper chord. **IT HAS ARRESTED THE RELIGIOUS FEELING OF THE COUNTRY; IT HAS TAKEN STRONG HOLD OF THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN.** *He is a rash man, indeed, little conversant with human nature, and especially has he a very erroneous estimate of the character of the people of this country, who supposes that a feeling of this kind is to be trifled with or despised.* **IT WILL ASSUREDLY CAUSE ITSELF TO BE RESPECTED.** It may be reasoned with; it may be made willing—I believe it is entirely willing—to fulfil all existing engagements and all existing duties; to

uphold and defend the Constitution as it is established, with whatever regrets about some provisions which it does actually contain. But, *to coerce it into silence—to endeavor to restrain its free expression—to seek to compress and confine it, warm as it is, and more heated as such endeavors would inevitably render it*—should all this be attempted, I KNOW NOTHING EVEN IN THE CONSTITUTION, OR IN THE UNION ITSELF, WHICH WOULD NOT BE ENDANGERED BY THE EXPLOSION WHICH MIGHT FOLLOW.’

This estimate of the spirit which animates and controls the Anti-Slavery movement is justified by all the facts connected with the rise and progress of that movement.

Slavery is not only inhuman and anti-christian, but ATHEISTICAL, in the most depraved sense of that term. Indeed, there has never been any other form of atheism, as a system, known to the world. This is none the less true, because Slaveholders profess to revere God, to believe in Christ, and to receive the Bible as an inspired volume. Their religious profession only deepens their condemnation, and makes their daily practice all the more appalling. In respect to those whom they have chattelized, their conduct is thoroughly atheistical.

Exalting themselves ‘above all that is called God,’ they claim and exercise absolute authority over their victims, to the annihilation of all personality. A Slave is one who must have no other God than his master—no higher law than the will of him who claims him as his property; whose intellect must not be developed; whose conscience is not to be governed by moral considerations; whose soul may lay no claim to immortality. In Slavery, all human ties are abrogated; the parent has no child, the child no parent; there is neither father nor mother, neither husband nor wife, neither brother nor sister; no genealogical descent or relationship is recognised. Hence the appearance in the Southern journals of advertisements like the following:

‘Will be sold on Monday and Tuesday, the second and third day of December next, . . . all the right, title and interest of the subscriber, in and to the contents of a Country Store, consisting of a quantity

of Dry Goods, Shoes, Umbrellas, Medicines, Hardware, Wines, Champagne Cider, and a variety of other articles. *Also, three Negroes, Levinia, and her two children.* Also, a Horse, Carriage, Dray, and Cart.'

What is this but a bold denial of the accountability and immortality of those who are created 'in the image of God'?

Now if Christianity has any work to accomplish, surely it is the utter subversion of an atheistical system like this; if the religious sentiment is to be arrayed against any form of iniquity, it must be against this, which is unparalleled for its enormity.

Since the advent of the Founder of Christianity, no effort for the melioration of the condition of man has been more largely imbued with the religious element, in its purest and most vital form, than the Anti-Slavery movement. This declaration may astonish, and even shock, some who have been taught, by their religious teachers, to regard this movement as disorganizing in its tendencies and infidel in its spirit. Are not the Abolitionists everywhere stigmatized as infidels, fanatics, incendiaries, madmen—equally hostile to the peace of the nation and the stability of the Christian Church? Yes—but this stigma is not less malignant than was the accusation brought against Jesus—'He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. . . . We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar. . . . He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.' In what manner, in any age, is true piety best authenticated? Not by professions of reverence for dead saints or heroes; not by conformity to the usages of popular religion; not by the observance of rites and ceremonies, or of times and seasons; not by the surrender of reason to arbitrary authority, or of conscience to ecclesiastical dictation; not by a dread of dissent, or fear of change, or dislike of investigation; not by making public opinion the standard of action, or what is customary the rule of duty; not by exclaiming, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful

works?’ These things are easily said and done. The test is in regarding principles more than persons, the present more than the past, truth more than tradition, humanity more than parchment; in refusing to go with the multitude in any evil way; in letting the dead bury their dead; in stemming the tide of popular corruption, arraigning unjust laws, exciting the fury of the oppressor, returning good for evil, and living above that ‘fear of man which bringeth a snare;’ in being willing to be made of no reputation, and to suffer the loss of all things, for righteousness’ sake.

Consider, now, the actual condition of the colored population of this country; despised, shunned, insulted, outraged, enslaved, by common consent, with deliberate purpose, systematically and perseveringly, by all that is respectable, wealthy, and powerful—by all that is vulgar, brutal, and fiendish! They are universally treated as a leprous race on account of their complexion; so that to such of them as are nominally free, nearly every avenue to political and social equality, to wealth and station, to learning and improvement, is closed; and it is deemed ridiculous and impudent for them to aspire to be anything else than hewers of wood and drawers of water for their white contemners. The great body of them registered with cattle and swine, and stripped of all their rights as human beings, to interpose for their deliverance is to come into collision with a spirit more unrelenting, murderous, and God-defying than any other that ever assumed the despotic form, and which rules this whole nation ‘with a rod of iron.’

Again, consider the degradation, helplessness, and utter destitution of these oppressed millions. They are ignorant, and cannot read; in a hopeless minority as to physical strength; cut off from all correspondence even with those who desire to befriend them; without anything in the world that they may call their own;—hence, the espousal of their cause requires rare disinterestedness, as well as great moral courage.

Consider, moreover, that in the immediate presence of the Slave Power, no one can demand the liberation of its victims, or enter his protest against their

enslavement, except at the imminent peril of his life. So dreadful is that Power, that, of a thousand pulpits on its soil, not one has the martyr-spirit to confront it—of a thousand churches, whether Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Methodist, not one has the courage to unchristianize it. No meetings can be held to discuss the question of human rights, in relation to the Slave population; no press is tolerated that speaks out boldly and uncompromisingly against making man the property of man; a dead silence is everywhere enforced, a gag is put into every mouth, except when Slavery is to be defended, or the friends of impartial liberty are to be denounced. Not only are there the severest legal penalties to be incurred by agitating the subject, but outrage and death in their most appalling forms, by what is called the ‘lynch’ process. No parallel to this state of society can be found in any despotic government on earth.

Consider, finally, that by its professed expounders and teachers in this country, generally, Christianity has been made to sanction the right to ‘trade in slaves and the souls of men,’ to any extent! Yes, in the Law given by Moses, in the Gospel as promulgated by Christ, they maintain that divine authority is given to one portion of the human family to enslave another! Hence to own a thousand Slaves is no barrier to religious fellowship, no stain upon the Christian profession, no cause for church discipline. Hence it is common for ministers and church members at the South to be Slaveholders; and none are more angry than they at any proposition for emancipation, or more ready to instigate the infliction of summary and cruel punishment on any one suspected of being an Abolitionist.

It is under such circumstances, that Slavery must be assailed—with the certainty of no reward on the part of its victims, as they have nothing to give, and know not when or by whom their claims are advocated—with the certainty of being derided, caricatured, hated, calumniated, in the North, and tarred and feathered, or hung, at the South—with the certainty of being branded with ‘infidelity,’ and charged with rejecting the Bible, in all parts of the country!

Now, then, when was it ever known that bad men became the advocates of suffering humanity, in the midst of fiery trials like these? Never! If an

unfaltering faith in the promises of God—the deepest sympathy with Christ, and love for his character—were ever demanded or exemplified, it has been in the prosecution of the Anti-Slavery movement, from its commencement to the present hour. As, on the other side of the Atlantic, in the struggle for the abolition of British West India Slavery, the purest, the most disinterested, the most philanthropic, the most truly pious, rallied together; so, on this side, the same elements have mingled for the deliverance of a much larger number from bondage, but through tribulation and peril unknown abroad. The men and the women whom God has inspired to demand liberty for the enslaved in this land are worthy of the apostolic age. They need no defence. The position which they serenely maintain in the midst of a scoffing and merciless nation—feared, abhorred, proscribed by the pharisaical, the powerful, and the despotic—howled at and hunted by the lewd, the profane, and the riotous—honored and blest by the suffering and the oppressed—is their noblest eulogy. They are neither fanatical nor mad, neither foolish nor ignorant, neither violent nor impracticable, but speak ‘the words of truth and soberness,’ plainly and unequivocally. They ask nothing more than that liberty may be ‘proclaimed throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.’ As friends, neighbors, citizens—in all the relations and duties of life—they have no cause to shrink from a comparison with their traducers. In their company the ungodly take no delight. It is their aim to keep their consciences void of offence toward God and toward man. Nor is the abolition of Slavery the only enterprise in which their sympathies are enlisted. The temperance cause has no more thorough and reliable supporters; they constitute the backbone of the peace enterprise, in its radical form; in all the reform movements of the age, they feel a friendly interest. For the last twenty years, they have been a ‘spectacle to angels and to men’—but where is the evidence of their misconduct to be found, except in opening their mouths for the suffering and the dumb? The cry of ‘fanaticism’ and ‘infidelity’ against them is raised to divert attention from the true issue, to excite popular odium, and to hide conscious guilt. Their fanaticism is all embraced in the American Declaration of

Independence: they are infidel to the Slave Power, and will not bow down to a corrupt public sentiment. What motive, but reverence for God and love for man, could have induced them to take their position by the side of the imbruted slave? Were they not connected with the various religious sects and political parties—clinging to these with characteristic tenacity, and highly esteemed for their zeal and fidelity? And what have they not yielded to their convictions of duty, their regard for principle, their love of right? The ties of sect and of party, reputation, the hope of worldly preferment, pecuniary interest, personal safety, in some instances life itself. They are intelligently and deeply religious, without cant or pretence; but neither expect nor desire any recognition of their Christian character on the part of a people ‘whose feet run to evil, and who make haste to shed innocent blood.’

*(1850)*

## J. M. EELLS

### *Impromptu Stanzas, Suggested by the Working of the Fugitive Slave Act, as Illustrated in the Case of Rev. Doctor Pennington*

J. M. Eells (fl. 1841–1851), the author of this protest poem in ballad form, described himself as a “workshop Bard” and lived in Oberlin, Ohio, in 1841 before moving to Troy, New York, later in the 1840s. Little more is known of him. The details of the Pennington case, however, were widely known in antislavery circles. An escaped slave, James Pennington attended classes at Yale Divinity School and, after publishing his autobiography *The Fugitive Blacksmith* (1849), was awarded a doctorate from Heidelberg University in 1850. He held pastorates in Connecticut, and, from 1847 to 1855, at Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 made him vulnerable to re-enslavement, so his supporters on both sides of the Atlantic arranged to purchase him from his former owner and officially manumit him.

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Bring out the handcuffs, clank the rusted gyves;  
Rain down your curses on the doomed race;  
Hang out a terror that shall haunt their lives,

In every place.

Unloose the blood-hounds from oppression's den;  
Arm every brigand in the name of law,  
And triple shield of pulpit, press, and pen,

Around them draw.

Ho! politicians, orators, divines!

Ho! cotton-mongers of the North and South!  
Strike now for slavery, or our Union's shrines

Are gone forsooth!

Down from their glory into chaos hurled,  
Your thirty States in shivered fragments go,  
Like the seared leaves by autumn tempests whirled

To depths below.

Closed be each ear, let every tongue be dumb;  
Nor one sad pitying tear o'er man be shed,  
Though fainting at your threshold he should come,

And ask for bread.

Though woman, fleeing from the cruel grip  
Of foul oppression, scarred and stained with blood,  
Where from the severed veins the driver's whip

Hath drank its flood.

Though helpless childhood ask—O pitying Heaven!—  
The merest crumb which falls upon the floor,  
Tho' faint and famished, bread must not be given,

Bolt fast the door.

And must it be, thou just and holy God!  
That in our midst thy peeled and stricken poor  
Shall kneel and plead amid their tears and blood,

For evermore?

Shall those whom thou hast sent baptized from heaven,  
To preach the Gospel the wide world around,  
To teach the erring they may be forgiven,

Be seized and bound?

Placed on the auction-block with chattels sold

Placed on the auction-block, with chattels sold,  
Driven like beasts of burden day by day,  
The flock be scattered from the shepherd's fold,

The spoiler's prey?

How long—thy people cry—O Lord, how long!  
Shall not thine arm “shake down the bolted fire!”  
Can deeds like these of God-defying wrongs,

Escape His ire?

Must judgments—such as swept with fearful tread  
O'er Egypt when she made thy people slaves,  
Where thy hand strewed with their unburied dead

The Red Sea waves?

Must fire and hail from heaven upon us fall,  
Our first-born perish 'neath the Avenger's brand,  
And sevenfold darkness, like a funeral pall

O'erspread the land?

We kneel before thy footstool, gracious God,  
Spare thou our nation, in thy mercy spare;  
We perish quickly 'neath thy lifted rod

And arm made bare.

*J. M. Eddy.*

(1851)

## HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

from *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Caste and Christ; The Sale of Little Harry; Eliza Crossing the River; Legree Striking Tom; The Two Altars; or, Two Pictures in One*

Because *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a best-selling novel throughout the English-speaking world and was translated into dozens of other languages, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) may be the most famous antislavery writer in history. An intellectual star even within the talented Beecher family, Stowe wrote professionally throughout her fifty-year marriage to the theologian Calvin Ellis Stowe, producing novels, children's books, women's literature, and journalism of every kind. According to Stowe, the death of her infant son Charley in 1849 awakened her to “what a poor slave mother may feel when her child is torn away from her.” She began writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shortly thereafter. In chapter 41, reprinted here, the slave-driver Simon Legree's tirade against Tom as a “rebellious, saucy, impudent dog,” whom he flogged mercilessly for refusing to divulge the whereabouts of runaway slaves, gives the lie to the negative twentieth-century stereotype associated with an “Uncle Tom.” “Caste and Christ” shows Stowe as a poet of Christian piety. The three short lyric poems are selected from some simple verses Stowe wrote in 1853 to engage young children with key episodes in the novel. “The Two Altars” is Stowe's fictional response to the Fugitive Slave Law, depicting the violence of slave-catchers against a free black family and ruefully suggesting how far the nation has fallen from the ideals of 1776.

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from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

### XLI. THE YONG MASTER

TWO DAYS after, a young man drove a light wagon up through the avenue of china-trees, and, throwing the reins hastily on the horses' neck, sprang out and

inquired for the owner of the place.

It was George Shelby; and, to show how he came to be there, we must go back in our story.

The letter of Miss Ophelia to Mrs. Shelby had, by some unfortunate accident, been detained, for a month or two, at some remote post-office, before it reached its destination; and, of course, before it was received, Tom was already lost to view among the distant swamps of the Red river.

Mrs. Shelby read the intelligence with the deepest concern; but any immediate action upon it was an impossibility. She was then in attendance on the sick-bed of her husband who lay delirious in the crisis of a fever. Master George Shelby, who, in the interval, had changed from a boy to a tall young man, was her constant and faithful assistant, and her only reliance in super-intending his father's affairs. Miss Ophelia had taken the precaution to send them the name of the lawyer who did business for the St. Clares; and the most that, in the emergency, could be done, was to address a letter of inquiry to him. The sudden death of Mr. Shelby, a few days after, brought, of course, an absorbing pressure of other interests, for a season.

Mr. Shelby showed his confidence in his wife's ability, by appointing her sole executrix upon his estates; and thus immediately a large and complicated amount of business was brought upon her hands.

Mrs. Shelby, with characteristic energy, applied herself to the work of straightening the entangled web of affairs; and she and George were for some time occupied with collecting and examining accounts, selling property and settling debts; for Mrs. Shelby was determined that everything should be brought into tangible and recognizable shape, let the consequences to her prove what they might. In the mean time, they received a letter from the lawyer to whom Miss Ophelia had referred them, saying that he knew nothing of the matter; that the man was sold at a public auction, and that, beyond receiving the money, he knew nothing of the affair.

Neither George nor Mrs. Shelby could be easy at this result; and,

accordingly, some six months after, the latter, having business for his mother, down the river, resolved to visit New Orleans, in person, and push his inquiries, in hopes of discovering Tom's whereabouts, and restoring him.

After some months of unsuccessful search, by the merest accident, George fell in with a man, in New Orleans, who happened to be possessed of the desired information; and with his money in his pocket, our hero took steamboat for Red river, resolving to find out and re-purchase his old friend.

He was soon introduced into the house, where he found Legree in the sitting-room.

Legree received the stranger with a kind of surly hospitality.

"I understand," said the young man, "that you bought, in New Orleans, a boy, named Tom. He used to be on my father's place, and I came to see if I could n't buy him back."

Legree's brow grew dark, and he broke out, passionately: "Yes, I did buy such a fellow,—and a h—1 of a bargain I had of it, too! The most rebellious, saucy, impudent dog! Set up my niggers to run away; got off two gals, worth eight hundred or a thousand dollars apiece. He owned to that, and, when I bid him tell me where they was, he up and said he knew, but he would n't tell; and stood to it, though I gave him the cussedest flogging I ever gave nigger yet. I b'lieve he's trying to die; but I don't know as he 'll make it out."

"Where is he?" said George, impetuously. "Let me see him." The cheeks of the young man were crimson, and his eyes flashed fire; but he prudently said nothing, as yet.

"He 's in dat ar shed," said a little fellow, who stood holding George's horse.

Legree kicked the boy, and swore at him; but George, without saying another word, turned and strode to the spot.

Tom had been lying two days since the fatal night; not suffering, for every nerve of suffering was blunted and destroyed. He lay, for the most part, in a quiet stupor; for the laws of a powerful and well-knit frame would not at once

release the imprisoned spirit. By stealth, there had been there, in the darkness of the night, poor desolated creatures, who stole from their scanty hours' rest, that they might repay to him some of those ministrations of love in which he had always been so abundant. Truly, those poor disciples had little to give,—only the cup of cold water; but it was given with full hearts.

Tears had fallen on that honest, insensible face,—tears of late repentance in the poor, ignorant heathen, whom his dying love and patience had awakened to repentance, and bitter prayers, breathed over him to a late-found Saviour, of whom they scarce knew more than the name, but whom the yearning ignorant heart of man never implores in vain.

Cassy, who had glided out of her place of concealment, and, by overhearing, learned the sacrifice that had been made for her and Emmeline, had been there, the night before, defying the danger of detection; and, moved by the few last words which the affectionate soul had yet strength to breathe, the long winter of despair, the ice of years, had given way, and the dark, despairing woman had wept and prayed.

When George entered the shed, he felt his head giddy and his heart sick.

“Is it possible,—is it possible?” said he, kneeling down by him. “Uncle Tom, my poor, poor old friend!”

Something in the voice penetrated to the ear of the dying. He moved his head gently, smiled, and said,

“Jesus can make a dying-bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”

Tears which did honor to his manly heart fell from the young man's eyes, as he bent over his poor friend.

“O, dear Uncle Tom! Do wake,—do speak once more! Look up! Here 's Mas'r George,—your own little Mas'r George. Don't you know me?”

“Mas'r George!” said Tom, opening his eyes, and speaking in a feeble

voice; "Mas'r George!" He looked bewildered.

Slowly the idea seemed to fill his soul; and the vacant eye became fixed and brightened, the whole face lighted up, the hard hands clasped, and tears ran down the cheeks.

"Bless the Lord! it is,—it is,—it 's all I wanted! They have n't forgot me. It warms my soul; it does my old heart good! Now I shall die content! Bless the Lord, oh my soul!"

"You shan't die! you *must n't* die, nor think of it! I 've come to buy you, and take you home," said George, with impetuous vehemence.

"O, Mas'r George, ye 're too late. The Lord's bought me, and is going to take me home,—and I long to go. Heaven is better than Kintuck."

"O, don't die! It 'll kill me!—it 'll break my heart to think what you 've suffered,—and lying in this old shed, here! Poor, poor fellow!"

"Don't call me poor fellow!" said Tom, solemnly. "I *have* been poor fellow; but that's all past and gone, now. I 'm right in the door, going into glory! O, Mas'r George! *Heaven has come!* I 've got the victory!—the Lord Jesus has given it to me! Glory be to His name!"

George was awe-struck at the force, the vehemence, the power, with which these broken sentences were uttered. He sat gazing in silence.

Tom grasped his hand, and continued,—“Ye must n't, now, tell Chloe, poor soul! how ye found me;—'t would be so drefful to her. Only tell her ye found me going into glory; and that I could n't stay for no one. And tell her the Lord 's stood by me everywhere and al'ays, and made everything light and easy. And oh, the poor chil'en, and the baby!—my old heart 's been most broke for 'em, time and agin! Tell 'em all to follow me—follow me! Give my love to Mas'r, and dear good Missis, and everybody in the place! Ye don't know! 'Pears like I loves 'em all! I loves every creatur', everywhar!—it's nothing *but* love! O, Mas'r George! what a thing 't is to be a Christian!”

At this moment, Legree sauntered up to the door of the shed, looked in, with a dogged air of affected carelessness, and turned away.

“The old satan!” said George, in his indignation. “It ’s a comfort to think the devil will pay *him* for this, some of these days!”

“O, don’t!—oh, ye must n’t!” said Tom, grasping his hand; “he’s a poor mis’able critter! it’s awful to think on ’t! O, if he only could repent, the Lord would forgive him now; but I ’m ’feared he never will!”

“I hope he won’t!” said George; “I never want to see *him* in heaven!”

“Hush, Mas’r George!—it worries me! Don’t feel so! He an’t done me no real harm,—only opened the gate of the kingdom for me; that’s all!”

At this moment, the sudden flush of strength which the joy of meeting his young master had infused into the dying man gave way. A sudden sinking fell upon him; he closed his eyes; and that mysterious and sublime change passed over his face, that told the approach of other worlds.

He began to draw his breath with long, deep inspirations; and his broad chest rose and fell, heavily. The expression of his face was that of a conqueror.

“Who,—who,—who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” he said, in a voice that contended with mortal weakness; and, with a smile, he fell asleep.

George sat fixed with solemn awe. It seemed to him that the place was holy; and, as he closed the lifeless eyes, and rose up from the dead, only one thought possessed him,—that expressed by his simple old friend,—“What a thing it is to be a Christian!”

He turned: Legree was standing, sullenly, behind him.

Something in that dying scene had checked the natural fierceness of youthful passion. The presence of the man was simply loathsome to George; and he felt only an impulse to get away from him, with as few words as possible.

Fixing his keen dark eyes on Legree, he simply said, pointing to the dead, “You have got all you ever can of him. What shall I pay you for the body? I will take it away, and bury it decently.”

“I don’t sell dead niggers,” said Legree, doggedly. “You are welcome to bury him where and when you like.”

“Boys,” said George, in an authoritative tone, to two or three negroes, who

were looking at the body, “help me lift him up, and carry him to my wagon; and get me a spade.”

One of them ran for a spade; the other two assisted George to carry the body to the wagon.

George neither spoke to nor looked at Legree, who did not countermand his orders, but stood, whistling, with an air of forced unconcern. He sulkily followed them to where the wagon stood at the door.

George spread his cloak in the wagon, and had the body carefully disposed of in it,—moving the seat, so as to give it room. Then he turned, fixed his eyes on Legree, and said, with forced composure,

“I have not, as yet, said to you what I think of this most atrocious affair;—this is not the time and place. But, sir, this innocent blood shall have justice. I will proclaim this murder. I will go to the very first magistrate, and expose you.”

“Do!” said Legree, snapping his fingers, scornfully. “I ’d like to see you doing it. Where you going to get witnesses?—how you going to prove it?—Come, now!”

George saw, at once, the force of this defiance. There was not a white person on the place; and, in all southern courts, the testimony of colored blood is nothing. He felt, at that moment, as if he could have rent the heavens with his heart’s indignant cry for justice; but in vain.

“After all, what a fuss, for a dead nigger!” said Legree.

The word was as a spark to a powder magazine. Prudence was never a cardinal virtue of the Kentucky boy. George turned, and, with one indignant blow, knocked Legree flat upon his face; and, as he stood over him, blazing with wrath and defiance, he would have formed no bad personification of his great namesake triumphing over the dragon.

Some men, however, are decidedly bettered by being knocked down. If a man lays them fairly flat in the dust, they seem immediately to conceive a respect for him; and Legree was one of this sort. As he rose, therefore, and brushed the dust from his clothes, he eyed the slowly-retreating wagon with

some evident consideration; nor did he open his mouth till it was out of sight.

Beyond the boundaries of the plantation, George had noticed a dry, sandy knoll, shaded by a few trees: there they made the grave.

“Shall we take off the cloak, Mas’r?” said the negroes, when the grave was ready.

“No, no,—bury it with him! It ’s all I can give you, now, poor Tom, and you shall have it.”

They laid him in; and the men shovelled away, silently. They banked it up, and laid green turf over it.

“You may go, boys,” said George slipping a quarter into the hand of each. They lingered about, however.

“If young Mas’r would please buy us—” said one.

“We ’d serve him so faithful!” said the other.

“Hard times here, Mas’r!” said the first. “Do, Mas’r, buy us, please!”

“I can’t!—I can’t!” said George, with difficulty, motioning them off; “it’s impossible!”

The poor fellows looked dejected, and walked off in silence.

“Witness, eternal God!” said George, kneeling on the grave of his poor friend; “oh, witness, that, from this hour, I will do *what one man can* to drive out this curse of slavery from my land!”

There is no monument to mark the last resting-place of our friend. He needs none! His Lord knows where he lies, and will raise him up, immortal, to appear with him when he shall appear in his glory.

Pity him not! Such a life and death is not for pity! Not in the riches of omnipotence is the chief glory of God; but in self-denying, suffering love! And blessed are the men whom he calls to fellowship with him, bearing their cross after him with patience. Of such it is written, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

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*Caste and Christ*

HE is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Ho! thou dark and weary stranger  
From the tropic's palmy strand,  
Bowed with toil, with mind benighted,  
What wouldst thou upon our land?

Am I not, O man, thy brother?  
Spake the stranger patiently,  
All that makes thee, man, immortal,  
Tell me, dwells it not in me?

I, like thee, have joy, have sorrow,  
I, like thee, have love and fear,  
I, like thee, have hopes and longings  
Far beyond this earthly sphere.

Thou art happy,—I am sorrowing,  
Thou art rich, and I am poor;  
In the name of our *one* Father  
Do not spurn me from your door.

Thus the dark one spake, imploring,  
To each stranger passing nigh,  
But each child and man and woman,  
Priest and Levite passed him by.

Spurned of men,—despised, rejected,  
Spurned from school and church and hall

Spurned from school and church and hall,  
Spurned from business and from pleasure,  
Sad he stood, apart from all.

Then I saw a form all glorious,  
Spotless as the dazzling light,  
As He passed, men veiled their faces,  
And the earth, as heaven, grew bright.

Spake he to the dusky stranger,  
Awe-struck there on bended knee,  
Rise! for *I* have called thee *brother*,  
I am not ashamed of thee.

When I wedded mortal nature  
To my Godhead and my throne,  
Then I made all mankind sacred,  
Sealed all human for mine own.

By Myself, the Lord of ages,  
I have sworn to right the wrong,  
I have pledged my word, unbroken,  
For the weak against the strong.

And upon my gospel banner  
I have blazed in light the sign,  
He who scorns his lowliest brother,  
Never shall have hand of mine.

Hear the word!—who fight for freedom!  
Shout it in the battle's van!  
Hope! for bleeding human nature!

Christ the *God*, is Christ the *man*!



(1852)

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*The Sale of Little Harry*

Come read my book good boys and girls  
That live on freedom's ground,  
With pleasant homes, and parents dear,  
And blithesome playmates round;  
And you will learn a woeful tale,  
Which a good woman told,  
About the poor black negro race,  
How they are bought and sold.

Within our own America  
Where these bad deeds are done,  
A father and a mother lived  
Who had a little son;  
As slaves, they worked for two rich men,  
Whose fields were fair and wide—  
But Harry was their only joy,  
They had no child beside.

Now Harry's hair was thick with curls  
And softly bright his eyes,  
And he could play such funny tricks  
And look so wondrous wise,  
That all about the rich man's house

Were pleased to see him play,  
Till a wicked trader buying slaves  
Came there one winter day.

The trader and the rich man sat  
Together, at their wine,  
When in poor simple Harry slipped  
In hopes of something fine.  
He shewed them how the dandy danced,  
And how old Cudjoe walked,  
Till loud they laughed and gave him grapes,  
And then in whispers talked.

The young child knew not what they said,  
But at the open door  
Eliza, his poor mother, stood,  
With heart all sick and sore.  
Oh children dear, 'twas sad to hear,  
That for the trader's gold,  
To that hard-hearted evil man  
Her own sweet boy was sold.

And he would take him far away,  
To where the cotton grew,  
And sell him for a slave to men  
More hard and wicked too.  
She knew that none would heed his woe,  
His want, or sickness there,  
Nor ever would she see his face,  
Or hear his evening prayer.

So then the house was all asleep

so when the house was all asleep,  
And when the stars were bright,  
She took her Harry in her arms,  
And fled through that cold night:—  
Away through bitter frost and snow  
Did that poor mother flee;  
And how she fared, and what befell,  
Read on, and you shall see.

(1853)

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*Eliza Crossing the River*

From her resting-place by the trader chased,  
Through the winter evening cold,  
Eliza came with her boy at last,  
Where a broad deep river rolled.

Great blocks of the floating ice were there,  
And the water's roar was wild,  
But the cruel trader's step was near,  
Who would take her only child.

Poor Harry clung around her neck,  
But a word he could not say,  
For his very heart was faint with fear,  
And with flying all that day.

Her arms about the boy grew tight,  
With a loving clasp, and brave;  
“Hold fast! Hold fast, now, Harry dear,

And it may be God will save.”

From the river’s bank to the floating ice  
She took a sudden bound,  
And the great block swayed beneath her feet  
With a dull and heavy sound.

So over the roaring rushing flood,  
From block to block she sprang,  
And ever her cry for God’s good help  
Above the waters rang.

And God did hear that mother’s cry,  
For never an ice-block sank;  
While the cruel trader and his men  
Stood wondering on the bank.

A good man saw on the further side,  
And gave her his helping hand;  
So poor Eliza, with her boy,  
Stood safe upon the land.

A blessing on that good man’s arm,  
On his house, and field, and store;  
May he never want a friendly hand  
To help him to the shore!

A blessing on all that make such haste,  
Whatever their hands can do!  
For they that succour the sore distressed,  
Our Lord will help them too.

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*Legree Striking Tom*

Tom's good wife Chloe, far at home,  
And his boys so blythe and black,  
Are all working hard, in hopes to win  
The dollars, to buy him back.

And George, who taught him long ago,  
Has many a pleasant plan,  
To pay his price, and set him free,  
When he comes to be a man.

But little does that wicked man,  
In his angry madness, know,  
That God himself will take account  
Of each cruel word and blow.

And children dear, who see him here,  
At night and morning pray,  
That you may never have aught like this  
Laid up for the judgment day!

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*The Two Altars;  
or,  
Two Pictures in One*

I.—THE ALTAR OF LIBERTY, OR 1776.

THE WELL-SWEEP of the old house on the hill was relieved, dark and clear, against the reddening sky, as the early winter sun was going down in the west. It was a brisk, clear, metallic evening; the long drifts of snow blushed crimson red on their tops, and lay in shades of purple and lilac in the hollows; and the old wintry wind brushed shrewdly along the plain, tingling people's noses, blowing open their cloaks, puffing in the back of their necks, and showing other unmistakable indications that he was getting up steam for a real roustering night.

"Hurra! how it blows!" said little Dick Ward, from the top of the mossy wood-pile.

Now Dick had been sent to said wood-pile, in company with his little sister Grace, to pick up chips, which, every-body knows, was in the olden time considered a wholesome and gracious employment, and the peculiar duty of the rising generation. But said Dick, being a boy, had mounted the wood-pile, and erected there a flag-staff, on which he was busily tying a little red pocket-handkerchief, occasionally exhorting Gracie "to be sure and pick up fast." "O, yes, I will," said Grace; "but you see the chips have got ice on 'em, and make my hands so cold!"

"O! don't stop to suck your thumbs!—who cares for ice? Pick away, I say, while I set up the flag of Liberty."

So Grace picked away as fast as she could, nothing doubting but that her cold thumbs were in some mysterious sense an offering on the shrine of Liberty; while soon the red handkerchief, duly secured, fluttered and snapped in the brisk evening wind.

"Now you must hurra, Gracie, and throw up your bonnet," said Dicky, as he descended from the pile.

"But won't it lodge down in some place in the wood-pile?" suggested Gracie, thoughtfully.

“O, never fear; give it to me, and just holler now, Gracie, ‘Hurra for Liberty;’ and we ’ll throw up your bonnet and my cap; and we ’ll play, you know, that we were a whole army, and I ’m General Washington.”

So Gracie gave up her little red hood, and Dick swung his cap, and up they both went into the air; and the children shouted, and the flag snapped and fluttered, and altogether they had a merry time of it. But then the wind—good-for-nothing, roguish fellow!—made an ungenerous plunge at poor Gracie’s little hood, and snipped it up in a twinkling, and whisked it off, off, off,—fluttering and bobbing up and down, quite across a wide, waste, snowy field, and finally lodged it on the top of a tall strutting rail, that was leaning very independently, quite another way from all the other rails of the fence.

“Now see, do see!” said Gracie; “there goes my bonnet! What will Aunt Hitty say?” and Gracie began to cry.

“Don’t you cry, Gracie; you offered it up to Liberty, you know,—it’s glorious to give up everything for Liberty.”

“O! but Aunt Hitty won’t think so.”

“Well, don’t cry, Gracie, you foolish girl! Do you think I can’t get it? Now, only play that that great rail was a fort, and your bonnet was a prisoner in it, and see how quick I’ll take the fort, and get it!” and Dick shouldered a stick, and started off.

“What upon ’arth keeps those children so long? I should think they were making chips!” said Aunt Mehetabel; “the fire’s just a-going out under the tea-kettle.”

By this time Gracie had lugged her heavy basket to the door, and was stamping the snow off her little feet, which were so numb that she needed to stamp, to be quite sure they were yet there. Aunt Mehetabel’s shrewd face was the first that greeted her, as the door opened.

“Gracie—what upon ’airth!—wipe your nose, child; your hands are frozen. Where alive is Dick, and what ’s kept you out all this time,—and where ’s your

bonnet?”

Poor Gracie, stunned by this cataract of questions, neither wiped her nose nor gave any answer; but sidled up into the warm corner, where grandmamma was knitting, and began quietly rubbing and blowing her fingers, while the tears silently rolled down her cheeks, as the fire made their former ache intolerable.

“Poor little dear!” said grandmamma, taking her hands in hers; “Hitty shan’t scold you. Grandma knows you ’ve been a good girl,—the wind blew poor Gracie’s bonnet away;” and grandmamma wiped both eyes and nose, and gave her, moreover, a stalk of dried fennel out of her pocket, whereat Gracie took heart once more.

“Mother always makes fools of Roxy’s children,” said Mehetabel, puffing zealously under the tea-kettle. “There’s a little maple sugar in that saucer up there, mother, if you will keep giving it to her,” she said, still vigorously puffing. “And now, Gracie,” she said, when, after a while, the fire seemed in tolerable order, “will you answer my question?—Where is Dick?”

“Gone over in the lot, to get my bonnet.”

“How came your bonnet off?” said Aunt Mehetabel. “I tied it on firm enough.”

“Dick wanted me to take it off for him, to throw up for Liberty,” said Grace.

“Throw up for fiddlestick! just one of Dick’s cut-ups, and you was silly enough to mind him!”

“Why, he put up a flag-staff on the wood-pile, and a flag to Liberty, you know, that papa’s fighting for,” said Grace, more confidently, as she saw her quiet, blue-eyed mother, who had silently walked into the room during the conversation.

Grace’s mother smiled, and said, encouragingly, “And what then?”

“Why, he wanted me to throw up my bonnet and he his cap, and shout for Liberty; and then the wind took it and carried it off, and he said I ought not to be sorry if I did lose it,—it was an offering to Liberty.”

“And so I did,” said Dick, who was standing as straight as a poplar behind the group; “and I heard it in one of father’s letters to mother, that we ought to offer up everything on the altar of Liberty! And so I made an altar of the wood-pile.”

“Good boy!” said his mother, “always remember everything your father writes. He has offered up everything on the altar of Liberty, true enough; and I hope you, son, will live to do the same.”

“Only, if I have the hoods and caps to make,” said Aunt Hitty, “I hope he won’t offer them up every week—that’s all!”

“O! well, Aunt Hitty, I’ve got the hood,—let me alone for that. It blew clear over into the Daddy Ward pasture-lot, and there stuck on the top of the great rail; and I played that the rail was a fort, and besieged it, and took it.”

“O! yes, you’re always up to taking forts, and anything else that nobody wants done. I’ll warrant, now, you left Gracie to pick up every blessed one of them chips!”

“Picking up chips is girl’s work,” said Dick; “and taking forts and defending the country is men’s work.”

“And pray, Mister Pomp, how long have you been a man?” said Aunt Hitty.

“If I a’nt a man, I soon shall be; my head is ’most up to my mother’s shoulder, and I can fire off a gun too. I tried, the other day, when I was up to the store. Mother, I wish you’d let me clean and load the old gun; so that, if the British should come!”

“Well, if you are so big and grand, just lift me out that table, sir,” said Aunt Hitty, “for it’s past supper-time.”

Dick sprung, and had the table out in a trice, with an abundant clatter, and put up the leaves with quite an air. His mother, with the silent and gliding motion characteristic of her, quietly took out the table-cloth and spread it, and began to set the cups and saucers in order, and to put on the plates and knives, while Aunt Hitty bustled about the tea.

“I’ll be glad when the war’s over, for one reason,” said she. “I’m pretty

much tired of drinking sage-tea, for one, I know.”

“Well, Aunt Hitty, how you scolded that pedler, last week, that brought along that real tea.”

“To be sure I did. S’pose I’d be taking any of his old tea, bought of the British?—fling every tea-cup in his face, first!”

“Well, mother,” said Dick, “I never exactly understood what it was about the tea, and why the Boston folks threw it all overboard.”

“Because there was an unlawful tax laid upon it, that the government had no right to lay. It was n’t much in itself; but it was a part of a whole system of oppressive meanness, designed to take away our rights, and make us slaves of a foreign power!”

“Slaves!” said Dicky, straightening himself proudly. “Father a slave!”

“But they would not be slaves! They saw clearly where it would all end, and they would not begin to submit to it in ever so little,” said the mother.

“I would n’t, if I was they,” said Dicky.

“Besides,” said his mother, drawing him towards her, “it was n’t for themselves alone they did it. This is a great country, and it will be greater and greater: and it’s very important that it should have free and equal laws, because it will by and by be so great. This country, if it is a free one, will be a light of the world,—a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid; and all the oppressed and distressed from other countries shall come here to enjoy equal rights and freedom. This, dear boy, is why your father and uncles have gone to fight, and why they do stay and fight, though God knows what they suffer, and—” and the large blue eyes of the mother were full of tears; yet a strong, bright beam of pride and exultation shone through those tears.

“Well, well, Roxy, you can always talk, everybody knows,” said Aunt Hitty, who had been not the least attentive listener of this little patriotic harangue; “but, you see, the tea is getting cold, and yonder I see the sleigh is at the door, and John’s come,—so let’s set up our chairs for supper.”

The chairs were soon set up, when John, the eldest son, a lad of about

fifteen, entered with a letter. There was one general exclamation, and stretching out of hands towards it. John threw it into his mother's lap;—the tea-table was forgotten, and the tea-kettle sang unnoticed by the fire, as all hands piled themselves up by mother's chair to hear the news. It was from Captain Ward, then in the American army, at Valley Forge. Mrs. Ward ran it over hastily, and then read it aloud. A few words we may extract: "There is still," it said, "much suffering. I have given away every pair of stockings you sent me, reserving to myself only one; for I will not be one whit better off than the poorest soldier that fights for his country. Poor fellows! it makes my heart ache sometimes to go round among them, and see them with their worn clothes and torn shoes, and often bleeding feet, yet cheerful and hopeful, and every one willing to do his very best. Often the spirit of discouragement comes over them, particularly at night, when, weary, cold, and hungry, they turn into their comfortless huts, on the snowy ground. Then sometimes there is a thought of home, and warm fires, and some speak of giving up; but next morning out comes Washington's general orders,—little short note, but it's wonderful the good it does! and then they all resolve to hold on, come what may. There are commissioners going all through the country to pick up supplies. If they come to you, I need not tell you what to do. I know all that will be in your hearts."

"There, children, see what your father suffers," said the mother, "and what it costs these poor soldiers to gain our liberty."

"Ephraim Scranton told me that the commissioners had come as far as the Three-mile Tavern, and that he rather 'spected they'd be along here to-night," said John, as he was helping round the baked beans to the silent company at the tea-table.

"To-night?—Do tell, now!" said Aunt Hitty. "Then it's time we were awake and stirring. Let's see what can be got."

"I'll send my new over-coat, for one," said John. "That old one an't cut up yet, is it, Aunt Hitty?"

"No," said Aunt Hitty; "I was laying out to cut it over, next Wednesday,

when Desire Smith could be here to do the tailoring.”

“There’s the south room,” said Aunt Hitty, musing; “that bed has the two old Aunt Ward blankets on it, and the great blue quilt, and two comforters. Then mother’s and my room, two pair—four comforters—two quilts—the best chamber has got——”

“O! Aunt Hitty, send all that’s in the best chamber. If any company comes, we can make it up off from our beds!” said John. “I can send a blanket or two off from my bed, I know;—can’t but just turn over in it, so many clothes on, now.”

“Aunt Hitty, take a blanket off from our bed,” said Grace and Dicky, at once.

“Well, well, we’ll see,” said Aunt Hitty, bustling up.

Up rose grandmamma, with great earnestness, now, and going into the next room, and opening a large cedar-wood chest, returned, bearing in her arms two large snow-white blankets, which she deposited flat on the table, just as Aunt Hitty was whisking off the table-cloth.

“Mortal! mother, what are you going to do?” said Aunt Hitty.

“There,” she said, “I spun those, every thread of ’em, when my name was Mary Evans. Those were my wedding blankets, made of real nice wool, and worked with roses in all the corners. I’ve got *them* to give!” and grandmamma stroked and smoothed the blankets, and patted them down, with great pride and tenderness. It was evident she was giving something that lay very near her heart; but she never faltered.

“La! mother, there’s no need of that,” said Aunt Hitty. “Use them on your own bed, and send the blankets off from that;—they are just as good for the soldiers.”

“No, I shan’t!” said the old lady, waxing warm; “’tan’t a bit too good for ’em. I’ll send the very best I’ve got, before they shall suffer. Send ’em the *best!*” and the old lady gestured oratorically!

They were interrupted by a rap at the door, and two men entered, and announced themselves as commissioned by Congress to search out supplies for

the army. Now the plot thickens. Aunt Hitty flew in every direction,—through entry-passage, meal-room, milk-room, down cellar, up chamber,—her cap-border on end with patriotic zeal; and followed by John, Dick, and Gracie, who eagerly bore to the kitchen the supplies that she turned out, while Mrs. Ward busied herself in quietly sorting, bundling, and arranging in the best possible travelling order, the various contributions that were precipitately launched on the kitchen floor.

Aunt Hitty soon appeared in the kitchen with an armful of stockings, which, kneeling on the floor, she began counting and laying out.

“There,” she said, laying down a large bundle on some blankets, “that leaves just two pair apiece all round.”

“La!” said John, “what’s the use of saving two pair for me? I can do with one pair, as well as father.”

“Sure enough,” said his mother; “besides, I can knit you another pair in a day.”

“And I can do with one pair,” said Dickey.

“Yours will be too small, young master, I guess,” said one of the commissioners.

“No,” said Dicky; “I’ve got a pretty good foot of my own, and Aunt Hitty will always knit my stockings an inch too long, ’cause she says I grow so. See here,—these will do;” and the boy shook his, triumphantly.

“And mine, too,” said Gracie, nothing doubting, having been busy all the time in pulling off her little stockings.

“Here,” she said to the man who was packing the things into a wide-mouthed sack; “here’s mine,” and her large blue eyes looked earnestly through her tears.

Aunt Hitty flew at her.—“Good land! the child’s crazy! Don’t think the men could wear your stockings,—take ’em away!”

Gracie looked around with an air of utter desolation, and began to cry. “I wanted to give them something,” said she. “I’d rather go barefoot on the snow

all day, than not send 'em anything."

"Give me the stockings, my child," said the old soldier, tenderly. "There, I'll take 'em, and show 'em to the soldiers, and tell them what the little girl said that sent them. And it will do them as much good as if they could wear them. They've got little girls at home, too." Gracie fell on her mother's bosom completely happy, and Aunt Hitty only muttered,

"Everybody does spile that child; and no wonder, neither!"

Soon the old sleigh drove off from the brown house, tightly packed and heavily loaded. And Gracie and Dicky were creeping up to their little beds.

"There's been something put on the altar of Liberty to-night, has n't there, Dick?"

"Yes, indeed," said Dick; and, looking up to his mother, he said, "But, mother, what did you give?"

"I?" said the mother, musingly.

"Yes, you, mother; what have you given to the country?"

"All that I have, dears," said she, laying her hands gently on their heads,—"my husband and my children!"

## II.—THE ALTAR OF——, OR 1850.

The setting sun of chill December lighted up the solitary front window of a small tenement on——street, which we now have occasion to visit. As we push gently aside the open door, we gain sight of a small room, clean as busy hands can make it, where a neat, cheerful young mulatto woman is busy at an ironing-table. A basket full of glossy-bosomed shirts, and faultless collars and wristbands, is beside her, into which she is placing the last few items with evident pride and satisfaction. A bright, black-eyed boy, just come in from school, with his satchel of books over his shoulder, stands, cap in hand, relating to his mother how he has been at the head of his class, and showing his school-tickets, which his mother, with untiring admiration, deposits in the little real

china tea-pot,—which, as being their most reliable article of gentility, is made the deposit of all the money and most especial valuables of the family.

“Now, Henry,” says the mother, “look out and see if father is coming along the street;” and she begins filling the little black tea-kettle, which is soon set singing on the stove.

From the inner room now daughter Mary, a well-grown girl of thirteen, brings the baby, just roused from a nap, and very impatient to renew his acquaintance with his mamma.

“Bless his bright eyes!—mother will take him,” ejaculates the busy little woman, whose hands are by this time in a very floury condition, in the incipient stages of wetting up biscuit,—“in a minute;” and she quickly frees herself from the flour and paste, and, deputing Mary to roll out her biscuit, proceeds to the consolation and succor of young master.

“Now, Henry,” says the mother, “you’ll have time, before supper, to take that basket of clothes up to Mr. Sheldin’s;—put in that nice bill, that you made out last night. I shall give you a cent for every bill you write out for me. What a comfort it is, now, for one’s children to be gettin’ learnin’ so!”

Henry shouldered the basket, and passed out the door, just as a neatly-dressed colored man walked up, with his pail and white-wash brushes.

“O, you’ve come, father, have you?—Mary, are the biscuits in?—you may as well set the table, now. Well, George, what’s the news?”

“Nothing, only a pretty smart day’s work. I’ve brought home five dollars, and shall have as much as I can do, these two weeks;” and the man, having washed his hands, proceeded to count out his change on the ironing-table.

“Well, it takes you to bring in the money,” said the delighted wife; “nobody but you could turn off that much in a day!”

“Well, they do say—those that’s had me once—that they never want any other hand to take hold in their rooms. I s’pose it’s a kinder practice I’ve got, and kinder natural!”

“Tell ye what,” said the little woman, taking down the family strong box,—

to wit, the china tea-pot, aforementioned,—and pouring the contents on the table, “we’re getting mighty rich, now! We can afford to get Henry his new Sunday-cap, and Mary her muslin-de-laine dress;—take care, baby, you rogue!” she hastily interposed, as young master made a dive at a dollar bill, for his share in the proceeds.

“He wants something, too, I suppose,” said the father; “let him get his hand in while he’s young.”

The baby gazed, with round, astonished eyes, while mother, with some difficulty, rescued the bill from his grasp; but, before any one could at all anticipate his purpose, he dashed in among the small change with such zeal as to send it flying all over the table.

“Hurra!—Bob’s a smasher!” said the father, delighted; “he’ll make it fly, he thinks;” and, taking the baby on his knee, he laughed merrily, as Mary and her mother pursued the rolling coin all over the room.

“He knows now, as well as can be, that he’s been doing mischief,” said the delighted mother, as the baby kicked and crowed uproariously;—“he’s such a forward child, now, to be only six months old!—O, you’ve no idea, father, how mischievous he grows,” and therewith the little woman began to roll and tumble the little mischief-maker about, uttering divers frightful threats, which appeared to contribute, in no small degree, to the general hilarity.

“Come, come, Mary,” said the mother, at last, with a sudden burst of recollection; “you must n’t be always on your knees fooling with this child!—Look in the oven at them biscuits.”

“They’re done exactly, mother,—just the brown!”—and, with the word, the mother dumped baby on to his father’s knee, where he sat contentedly munching a very ancient crust of bread, occasionally improving the flavor thereof by rubbing it on his father’s coat-sleeve.

“What have you got in that blue dish, there?” said George, when the whole little circle were seated around the table.

“Well, now, what *do* you suppose?” said the little woman, delighted;—“a

quart of nice oysters,—just for a treat, you know. I would n't tell you till this minute," said she, raising the cover.

"Well," said George, "we both work hard for our money, and we don't owe anybody a cent; and why shouldn't we have our treats, now and then, as well as rich folks?"

And gayly passed the supper hour; the tea-kettle sung, the baby crowed, and all chatted and laughed abundantly.

"I'll tell you," said George, wiping his mouth, "wife, these times are quite another thing from what it used to be down in Georgia. I remember then old Mas'r used to hire me out by the year; and one time, I remember, I came and paid him in two hundred dollars,—every cent I'd taken. He just looked it over, counted it, and put it in his pocket-book, and said, 'You are a good boy, George,'—and he gave me *half-a-dollar!*"

"I want to know, now!" said his wife.

"Yes, he did, and that was every cent I ever got of it; and, I tell you, I was mighty bad off for clothes, them times."

"Well, well, the Lord be praised, they're over, and you are in a free country now!" said the wife, as she rose thoughtfully from the table, and brought her husband the great Bible. The little circle were ranged around the stove for evening prayers.

"Henry, my boy, you must read,—you are a better reader than your father,—thank God, that let you learn early!"

The boy, with a cheerful readiness, read, "The Lord is my shepherd," and the mother gently stilled the noisy baby, to listen to the holy words. Then all kneeled, while the father, with simple earnestness, poured out his soul to God.

They had but just risen,—the words of Christian hope and trust scarce died on their lips,—when lo! the door was burst open, and two men entered; and one of them advancing, laid his hand on the father's shoulder. "This is the fellow," said he.

"You are arrested in the name of the United States!" said the other.

“Gentlemen, what is this?” said the poor man, trembling.

“Are you not the property of *Mr. B.*, of Georgia?” said the officer.

“Gentlemen, I’ve been a free, hard-working man, these ten years.”

“Yes, but you are arrested, on suit of *Mr. B.*, as his slave.”

Shall we describe the leave-taking?—the sorrowing wife, the dismayed children, the tears, the anguish,—that simple, honest, kindly home, in a moment so desolated! Ah, ye who defend this because it is law, think, for one hour, what if this that happens to your poor brother should happen to you!

It was a crowded court-room, and the man stood there to be tried—for life?—no; but for the life of life—for liberty!

Lawyers hurried to and fro, buzzing, consulting, bringing authorities,—all anxious, zealous, engaged,—for what?—to save a fellow-man from bondage?—no; anxious and zealous lest he might escape,—full of zeal to deliver him over to slavery. The poor man’s anxious eyes follow vainly the busy course of affairs, from which he dimly learns that he is to be sacrificed—on the altar of the Union; and that his heart-break and anguish, and the tears of his wife, and the desolation of his children, are, in the eyes of these well-informed men, only the bleat of a sacrifice, bound to the horns of the glorious American altar!

Again it is a bright day, and business walks brisk in this market. Senator and statesman, the learned and patriotic, are out, this day, to give their countenance to an edifying and impressive, and truly American spectacle,—the sale of a man! All the preliminaries of the scene are there; dusky-browed mothers, looking with sad eyes while speculators are turning round their children,—looking at their teeth, and feeling of their arms; a poor, old, trembling woman, helpless, half-blind, whose last child is to be sold, holds on to her bright boy with trembling hands. Husbands and wives, sisters and friends, all soon to be scattered like the chaff of the threshing-floor, look sadly on each other with poor nature’s last tears; and among them walk briskly glib, oily politicians, and

thriving men of law, letters, and religion, exceedingly sprightly and in good spirits,—for why?—it is n't *they* that are going to be sold; it's only somebody else. And so they are very comfortable, and look on the whole thing as quite a matter-of-course affair; and, as it is to be conducted to-day, a decidedly valuable and judicious exhibition.

And now, after so many hearts and souls have been knocked and thumped this way and that way by the auctioneer's hammer, comes the *instructive* part of the whole; and the husband and father, whom we saw in his simple home, reading and praying with his children, and rejoicing, in the joy of his poor ignorant heart, that he lived in a free country, is now set up to be admonished of his mistake.

Now there is great excitement, and pressing to see, and exultation and approbation; for it is important and interesting to see a man put down that has tried to be a *free man*.

"That's he, is it?—Couldn't come it, could he?" says one.

"No, and he will never come it, that's more," says another, triumphantly.

"I don't generally take much interest in scenes of this nature," says a grave representative;—"but I came here to-day for the sake of the *principle!*"

"Gentlemen," says the auctioneer, "we've got a specimen here that some of your Northern abolitionists would give any price for; but they shan't have him!—no! we've looked out for that. The man that buys him must give bonds never to sell him to go North again!"

"Go it!" shout the crowd, "good!—good!—hurra!" "An impressive idea!" says a senator; "a noble maintaining of principle!" and the man is bid off, and the hammer falls with a last crash on his hearth, and hopes, and manhood, and he lies a bleeding wreck on the altar of Liberty!

Such was the altar in 1776;—such is the altar in 1850!

(1851)

## GEORGE L. AIKEN

### from *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life Among the Lowly, A Domestic Drama*

A lifelong theater professional whose only connection to antislavery literature was through his unauthorized stage adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, George L. Aiken (1830–1876) lived in Troy, New York, when the novel came out. He completed his first version of the play in the course of a week. After it succeeded in performance he revised his text further, ultimately bringing the finished six-act version to New York City, where it was a long-running hit. Productions of the play toured the United States and England, and the play, along with songs and skits adapted from it, remained popular for the rest of the century.

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*Hal.* You've got a friend here—partner, perhaps?

*Loker.* Yes, I have. Here, Marks—here's that ar fellow that I was with in Natchez.

*Marks.* [*Grasping HALEY'S hand.*] Shall be pleased with his acquaintance. Mr. Haley, I believe?

*Hal.* The same, sir. The fact is, gentlemen, this morning I bought a young 'un of Shelby up above here. His mother got wind of it, and what does she do but cut her lucky with him; and I'm afraid by this time that she has crossed the river, for I tracked her to this very place.

*Marks.* So, then, ye're fairly sewed up, ain't ye? He! he! he! It's neatly done, too.

*Hal.* This young 'un business makes lots of trouble in the trade.

*Marks.* Now, Mr. Haley, what is it? Do you want us to undertake to catch this gal?

*Hal.* The gal's no matter of mine—she's Shelby's—it's only the boy. I was

a fool for buying the monkey.

*Loker.* You're generally a fool!

*Marks.* Come now, Loker, none of your huffs; you see, Mr. Haley's a-puttin' us in a way of a good job, I reckon; just hold still—these yer arrangements are my forte. This yer gal, Mr. Haley—how is she?—what is she?

[*ELIZA appears, with HARRY, R. H. D., listening.*

*Hal.* Well, white and handsome—well brought up. I'd have given Shelby eight hundred or a thousand, and then made well on her.

*Marks.* White and handsome—well brought up! Look here, now, Loker, a beautiful opening. We'll do a business here on our own account. We does the catchin'; the boy, of course, goes to Mr. Haley—we takes the gal to Orleans to speculate on. Ain't it beautiful?

[*They confer together.*

*Eliza.* Powers of mercy, protect me! How shall I escape these human bloodhounds? Ah! the window—the river of ice! That dark stream lies between me and liberty! Surely the ice will bear my trifling weight. It is my only chance of escape—better sink beneath the cold waters, with my child locked in my arms, than have him torn from me and sold into bondage. He sleeps upon my breast—Heaven, I put my trust in thee! [*Gets out of window.*

*Marks.* Well, Tom Loker, what do you say?

*Loker.* It'll do!

[*Strikes his hand violently on the table.—ELIZA screams.—They all start to their feet.—ELIZA disappears.—Music, chord.*

*Hal.* By the land, there she is now!

[*They all rush to the window.*

*Marks.* She's making for the river!

*Loker.* Let's after her!

[*Music.—They all leap through the window.—Change.*

SCENE V.—*Snow Landscape.—Music*

*Enter ELIZA, with HARRY, hurriedly, L. 1 E.*

*Eliza.* They press upon my footsteps—the river is my only hope. Heaven grant me strength to reach it, ere they overtake me! Courage, my child!—we will be free—or perish!

*[Rushes off, R. H.—Music continued.*

*Enter LOKER, HALEY and MARKS, L. 1 E.*

*Hal.* We'll catch her yet; the river will stop her!

*Marks.* No, it won't, for look! she has jumped upon the ice! She's a brave gal, anyhow!

*Loker.* She'll be drowned!

*Hal.* Curse that young 'un! I shall lose him, after all.

*Loker.* Come on, Marks, to the ferry!

*Hal.* Aye, to the ferry!—a hundred dollars for a boat!

*Music.—They rush off, R. H.*

SCENE VI.—*The entire depth of stage, representing the Ohio River filled with Floating Ice.—Set bank on R. H. and in front. ELIZA appears, with HARRY, R. H., on a cake of ice, and floats slowly across to L. H.—Haley, LOKER, and MARKS, on bank, R. H., observing.—PHINEAS on opp.*

(1852)

# FREDERICK DOUGLASS

## *What to the Slave Is the 4th of July?;* from *The Heroic Slave*

The preeminent black abolitionist of the nineteenth century, Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, a slave on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. After his escape in 1838, he adopted his new surname to evade pursuit and began to forge a career as an orator, writer, and campaigner against slavery. By the time President Lincoln welcomed him personally into the White House on inauguration day in 1865, Douglass was arguably the most influential black man in America. Among his many great orations, his July 1852 speech in Rochester is one of his angriest and most eloquent. His novella *The Heroic Slave*, the only work of fiction Douglass ever wrote, was based on a real episode in 1841, when slaves aboard the *Creole* en route from Virginia to New Orleans captured the ship and fled to freedom on the island of Nassau, where blacks had been free since British emancipation in 1833. After many years of disillusionment with the United States, Douglass changed his views during the Civil War, especially after the Emancipation Proclamation. He helped recruit black troops for the Union Army, supported President Lincoln, and campaigned for changes within the political system, such as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. A Republican in the postwar years, he gained various government appointments, eventually serving as U.S. minister, resident and consul general to Haiti.

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## *What to the Slave Is the 4th of July?*

**M**R. PRESIDENT, FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS: He who could address this audience without a quailing sensation, has stronger nerves than I have. I do not remember ever to have appeared as a speaker before any assembly more shrinkingly, nor with greater distrust of my ability, than I do this day. A feeling has crept over me, quite unfavorable to the exercise of my limited powers of

speech. The task before me is one which requires much previous thought and study for its proper performance. I know that apologies of this sort are generally considered flat and unmeaning. I trust, however, that mine will not be so considered. Should I seem at ease, my appearance would much misrepresent me. The little experience I have had in addressing public meetings, in country school houses, avails me nothing on the present occasion.

The papers and placards say, that I am to deliver a 4th of July oration. This certainly sounds large, and out of the common way, for me. It is true that I have often had the privilege to speak in this beautiful Hall, and to address many who now honor me with their presence. But neither their familiar faces, nor the perfect gage I think I have of Corinthian Hall, seems to free me from embarrassment.

The fact is, ladies and gentlemen, the distance between this platform and the slave plantation, from which I escaped, is considerable—and the difficulties to be overcome in getting from the latter to the former, are by no means slight. That I am here to-day is, to me, a matter of astonishment as well as of gratitude. You will not, therefore, be surprised, if in what I have to say, I evince no elaborate preparation, nor grace my speech with any high sounding exordium. With little experience and with less learning, I have been able to throw my thoughts hastily and imperfectly together; and trusting to your patient and generous indulgence, I will proceed to lay them before you.

This, for the purpose of this celebration, is the 4th of July. It is the birthday of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, is what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. This celebration also marks the beginning of another year of your national life; and reminds you that the Republic of America is now 76 years old. I am glad, fellow-citizens, that your nation is so young. Seventy-six years, though a good old age for a man, is but a mere speck in the life of a nation. Three score years and ten is the allotted time

for individual men; but nations number their years by thousands. According to this fact, you are, even now, only in the beginning of your national career, still lingering in the period of childhood. I repeat, I am glad this is so. There is hope in the thought, and hope is much needed, under the dark clouds which lower above the horizon. The eye of the reformer is met with angry flashes, portending disastrous times; but his heart may well beat lighter at the thought that America is young, and that she is still in the impressible stage of her existence. May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny? Were the nation older, the patriot's heart might be sadder, and the reformer's brow heavier. Its future might be shrouded in gloom, and the hope of its prophets go out in sorrow. There is consolation in the thought that America is young. Great streams are not easily turned from channels, worn deep in the course of ages. They may sometimes rise in quiet and stately majesty, and inundate the land, refreshing and fertilizing the earth with their mysterious properties. They may also rise in wrath and fury, and bear away, on their angry waves, the accumulated wealth of years of toil and hardship. They, however, gradually flow back to the same old channel, and flow on as serenely as ever. But, while the river may not be turned aside, it may dry up, and leave nothing behind but the withered branch, and the unsightly rock, to howl in the abyss-sweeping wind, the sad tale of departed glory. As with rivers so with nations.

Fellow-citizens, I shall not presume to dwell at length on the associations that cluster about this day. The simple story of it is that, 76 years ago, the people of this country were British subjects. The style and title of your "sovereign people" (in which you now glory) was not then born. You were under the British Crown. Your fathers esteemed the English Government as the home government; and England as the fatherland. This home government, you know, although a considerable distance from your home, did, in the exercise of its parental prerogatives, impose upon its colonial children, such restraints, burdens and limitations, as, in its mature judgement, it deemed wise, right and proper.

But, your fathers, who had not adopted the fashionable idea of this day, of the infallibility of government, and the absolute character of its acts, presumed to differ from the home government in respect to the wisdom and the justice of some of those burdens and restraints. They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers. Such a declaration of agreement on my part would not be worth much to anybody. It would, certainly, prove nothing, as to what part I might have taken, had I lived during the great controversy of 1776. To say *now* that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discant on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! *here* lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems unfashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers. But, to proceed.

Feeling themselves harshly and unjustly treated by the home government, your fathers, like men of honesty, and men of spirit, earnestly sought redress. They petitioned and remonstrated; they did so in a decorous, respectful, and loyal manner. Their conduct was wholly unexceptionable. This, however, did not answer the purpose. They saw themselves treated with sovereign indifference, coldness and scorn. Yet they persevered. They were not the men to look back.

As the sheet anchor takes a firmer hold, when the ship is tossed by the storm, so did the cause of your fathers grow stronger, as it breasted the chilling blasts of kingly displeasure. The greatest and best of British statesmen admitted its justice, and the loftiest eloquence of the British Senate came to its support.

But, with that blindness which seems to be the unvarying characteristic of tyrants, since Pharoah and his hosts were drowned in the Red Sea, the British Government persisted in the exactions complained of.

The madness of this course, we believe, is admitted now, even by England; but we fear the lesson is wholly lost on our present rulers.

Oppression makes a wise man mad. Your fathers were wise men, and if they did not go mad, they became restive under this treatment. They felt themselves the victims of grievous wrongs, wholly incurable in their colonial capacity. With brave men there is always a remedy for oppression. Just here, the idea of a total separation of the colonies from the crown was born! It was a startling idea, much more so, than we, at this distance of time, regard it. The timid and the prudent (as has been intimated) of that day, were, of course, shocked and alarmed by it.

Such people lived then, had lived before, and will, probably, ever have a place on this planet; and their course, in respect to any great change, (no matter how great the good to be attained, or the wrong to be redressed by it), may be calculated with as much precision as can be the course of the stars. They hate all changes, but silver, gold and copper change! Of this sort of change they are always strongly in favor.

These people were called tories in the days of your fathers; and the appellation, probably, conveyed the same idea that is meant by a more modern, though a somewhat less euphonious term, which we often find in our papers, applied to some of our old politicians.

Their opposition to the then dangerous thought was earnest and powerful; but, amid all their terror and affrighted vociferations against it, the alarming and revolutionary idea moved on, and the country with it.

On the 2d of July, 1776, the old Continental Congress, to the dismay of the lovers of ease, and the worshippers of property, clothed that dreadful idea with all the authority of national sanction. They did so in the form of a resolution; and as we seldom hit upon resolutions, drawn up in our day, whose transparency is at

all equal to this, it may refresh your minds and help my story if I read it.

“Resolved, That these united colonies *are*, and of right, ought to be free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain *is*, and ought to be, dissolved.”

Citizens, your fathers made good that resolution. They succeeded; and to-day you reap the fruits of their success. The freedom gained is yours; and you, therefore, may properly celebrate this anniversary. The 4th of July is the first great fact in your nation’s history—the very ring-bolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny.

Pride and patriotism, not less than gratitude, prompt you to celebrate and to hold it in perpetual remembrance. I have said that the Declaration of Independence is the ring-bolt to the chain of your nation’s destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.

From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen. Heavy billows, like mountains in the distance, disclose to the leeward huge forms of flinty rocks! That *bolt* drawn, that *chain* broken, and all is lost. *Cling to this day—cling to it*, and to its principles, with the grasp of a storm-tossed mariner to a spar at midnight.

The coming into being of a nation, in any circumstances, is an interesting event. But, besides general considerations, there were peculiar circumstances which make the advent of this republic an event of special attractiveness.

The whole scene, as I look back to it, was simple, dignified and sublime.

The population of the country, at the time, stood at the insignificant number of three millions. The country was poor in the munitions of war. The population was weak and scattered, and the country a wilderness unsubdued. There were then no means of concert and combination, such as exist now. Neither steam nor

lightning had then been reduced to order and discipline. From the Potomac to the Delaware was a journey of many days. Under these, and innumerable other disadvantages, your fathers declared for liberty and independence and triumphed.

Fellow Citizens, I am not wanting in respect for the fathers of this republic. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too—great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly, the most favorable; and yet I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory.

They loved their country better than their own private interests; and, though this is not the highest form of human excellence, all will concede that it is a rare virtue, and that when it is exhibited, it ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty, they lost sight of all other interests.

They were peace men; but they preferred revolution to peaceful submission to bondage. They were quiet men; but they did not shrink from agitating against oppression. They showed forbearance; but that they knew its limits. They believed in order; but not in the order of tyranny. With them, nothing was “*settled*” that was not right. With them, justice, liberty and humanity were “*final*,” not slavery and oppression. You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times.

How circumspect, exact and proportionate were all their movements! How unlike the politicians of an hour! Their statesmanship looked beyond the passing

moment, and stretched away in strength into the distant future. They seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defence. Mark them!

Fully appreciating the hardship to be encountered, firmly believing in the right of their cause, honorably inviting the scrutiny of an on-looking world, reverently appealing to heaven to attest their sincerity, soundly comprehending the solemn responsibility they were about to assume, wisely measuring the terrible odds against them, your fathers, the fathers of this republic, did, most deliberately, under the inspiration of a glorious patriotism, and with a sublime faith in the great principles of justice and freedom, lay deep the corner-stone of the national superstructure, which has risen and still rises in grandeur around you.

Of this fundamental work, this day is the anniversary. Our eyes are met with demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm. Banners and pennants wave exultingly on the breeze. The din of business, too, is hushed. Even Mammon seems to have quitted his grasp on this day. The ear-piercing fife and the stirring drum unite their accents with the ascending peal of a thousand church bells. Prayers are made, hymns are sung, and sermons are preached in honor of this day; while the quick martial tramp of a great and multitudinous nation, echoed back by all the hills, valleys and mountains of a vast continent, bespeak the occasion one of thrilling and universal interest—a nation's jubilee.

Friends and citizens, I need not enter further into the causes which led to this anniversary. Many of you understand them better than I do. You could instruct me in regard to them. That is a branch of knowledge in which you feel, perhaps, a much deeper interest than your speaker. The causes which led to the separation of the colonies from the British crown have never lacked for a tongue. They have all been taught in your common schools, narrated at your firesides, unfolded from your pulpits, and thundered from your legislative halls, and are as familiar to you as household words. They form the staple of your national poetry and eloquence.

I remember, also, that, as a people, Americans are remarkably familiar with

all facts which make in their own favor. This is esteemed by some as a national trait—perhaps a national weakness. It is a fact, that whatever makes for the wealth or for the reputation of Americans, and can be had *cheap!* will be found by Americans. I shall not be charged with slandering Americans, if I say I think the American side of any question may be safely left in American hands.

I leave, therefore, the great deeds of your fathers to other gentlemen whose claim to have been regularly descended will be less likely to be disputed than mine!

#### THE PRESENT.

My business, if I have any here to-day, is with the present. The accepted time with God and his cause is the ever-living now.

“Trust no future, however pleasant,  
Let the dead past bury its dead;  
Act, act in the living present,  
Heart within, and God overhead.”

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future. To all inspiring motives, to noble deeds which can be gained from the past, we are welcome. But now is the time, the important time. Your fathers have lived, died, and have done their work, and have done much of it well. You live and must die, and you must do your work. You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. Sydney Smith tells us that men seldom eulogize the wisdom and virtues of their fathers, but to excuse some folly or wickedness of their own. This truth is not a doubtful one. There are illustrations of it near and remote, ancient and modern. It was fashionable, hundreds of years ago, for

the children of Jacob to boast, we have “Abraham to our father,” when they had long lost Abraham’s faith and spirit. That people contented themselves under the shadow of Abraham’s great name, while they repudiated the deeds which made his name great. Need I remind you that a similar thing is being done all over this country to-day? Need I tell you that the Jews are not the only people who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous? Washington could not die till he had broken the chains of his slaves. Yet his monument is built up by the price of human blood, and the traders in the bodies and souls of men, shout—“We have Washington to *our father.*” Alas! that it should be so; yet so it is.

“The evil that men do, lives after them,  
The good is oft’ interred with their bones.”

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions! Then would my task be light, and my burden easy and delightful. For *who* is there so cold, that a nation’s sympathy could not warm him? Who so obdurate and dead to the claims of gratitude, that would not thankfully acknowledge such priceless benefits? Who so stolid and selfish, that would not give his voice to swell the hallelujahs of a nation’s jubilee, when the chains of servitude had been torn from his limbs? I am not that man. In a case like that, the dumb might eloquently speak, and the “lame man leap as an hart.”

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day? If so, there is a parallel to your conduct. And let me warn you that it is dangerous to copy the example of a nation whose crimes, towering up to heaven, were thrown down by the breath of the Almighty, burying that nation in irrecoverable ruin! I can to-day take up the plaintive lament of a peeled and woe-smitten people!

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea! we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they who wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, “may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!” To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then, fellow-citizens,

is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see, this day, and its popular characteristics, from the slave's point of view. Standing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America! “I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;” I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgement is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be right and just.

But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say, it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more, and denounce less, would you persuade more, and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed. But, I submit, where all is plain there is nothing to be argued. What point in the anti-slavery creed would you have me argue? On what branch of the subject do the people of this country need light? Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave. There are seventy-two crimes in the State of Virginia, which, if committed by a black man, (no matter how ignorant he be), subject him to the

punishment of death; while only two of the same crimes will subject a white man to the like punishment. What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded. It is admitted in the fact that Southern statute books are covered with enactments forbidding, under severe fines and penalties, the teaching of the slave to read or to write. When you can point to any such laws, in reference to the beasts of the field, then I may consent to argue the manhood of the slave. When the dogs in your streets, when the fowls of the air, when the cattle on your hills, when the fish of the sea, and the reptiles that crawl, shall be unable to distinguish the slave from a brute, *then* will I argue with you that the slave is a man!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the negro race. Is it not astonishing that, while we are ploughing, planting and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver and gold; that, while we are reading, writing and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets, authors, editors, orators and teachers; that, while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men, digging gold in California, capturing the whale in the Pacific, feeding sheep and cattle on the hill-side, living, moving, acting, thinking, planning, living in families as husbands, wives and children, and, above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian's God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave, we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look to-day, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? speaking of it relatively, and positively, negatively, and affirmatively. To do so,

would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong *for him*.

What, am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their masters? Must I argue that a system thus marked with blood, and stained with pollution, is *wrong*? No! I will not. I have better employments for my time and strength, than such arguments would imply.

What, then, remains to be argued? Is it that slavery is not divine; that God did not establish it; that our doctors of divinity are mistaken? There is blasphemy in the thought. That which is inhuman, cannot be divine! *Who* can reason on such a proposition? They that can, may; I cannot. The time for such argument is past.

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation's ear, I would, to-day, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity;

your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour.

Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the everyday practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.

#### THE INTERNAL SLAVE TRADE.

Take the American slave-trade, which, we are told by the papers, is especially prosperous just now. Ex-Senator Benton tells us that the price of men was never higher than now. He mentions the fact to show that slavery is in no danger. This trade is one of the peculiarities of American institutions. It is carried on in all the large towns and cities in one-half of this confederacy; and millions are pocketed every year, by dealers in this horrid traffic. In several states, this trade is a chief source of wealth. It is called (in contradistinction to the foreign slave-trade) "*the internal slave-trade.*" It is, probably, called so, too, in order to divert from it the horror with which the foreign slave-trade is contemplated. That trade has long since been denounced by this government, as piracy. It has been denounced with burning words, from the high places of the nation, as an execrable traffic. To arrest it, to put an end to it, this nation keeps a squadron, at immense cost, on the coast of Africa. Everywhere, in this country, it is safe to speak of this foreign slave-trade, as a most inhuman traffic, opposed alike to the laws of God and of man. The duty to extirpate and destroy it, is

admitted even by our DOCTORS OF DIVINITY. In order to put an end to it, some of these last have consented that their colored brethren (nominally free) should leave this country, and establish themselves on the western coast of Africa! It is, however, a notable fact that, while so much execration is poured out by Americans upon those engaged in the foreign slave-trade, the men engaged in the slave-trade between the states pass without condemnation, and their business is deemed honorable.

Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and American religion. Here you will see men and women reared like swine for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human flesh-jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowie-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers. They are food for the cotton-field, and the deadly sugar-mill. Mark the sad procession, as it moves wearily along, and the inhuman wretch who drives them. Hear his savage yells and his blood-chilling oaths, as he hurries on his affrighted captives! There, see the old man, with locks thinned and gray. Cast one glance, if you please, upon that young mother, whose shoulders are bare to the scorching sun, her briny tears falling on the brow of the babe in her arms. See, too, that girl of thirteen, weeping, *yes!* weeping, as she thinks of the mother from whom she has been torn! The drove moves tardily. Heat and sorrow have nearly consumed their strength; suddenly you hear a quick snap, like the discharge of a rifle; the fetters clank, and the chain rattles simultaneously; your ears are saluted with a scream, that seems to have torn its way to the centre of your soul! The crack you heard, was the sound of the slave-whip; the scream you heard, was from the woman you saw with the babe. Her speed had faltered under the weight of her

child and her chains! that gash on her shoulder tells her to move on. Follow this drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated forever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, WHERE, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

I was born amid such sights and scenes. To me the American slave-trade is a terrible reality. When a child, my soul was often pierced with a sense of its horrors. I lived on Philpot Street, Fell's Point, Baltimore, and have watched from the wharves, the slave ships in the Basin, anchored from the shore, with their cargoes of human flesh, waiting for favorable winds to waft them down the Chesapeake. There was, at that time, a grand slave mart kept at the head of Pratt Street, by Austin Woldfolk. His agents were sent into every town and county in Maryland, announcing their arrival, through the papers, and on flaming "*hand-bills*," headed CASH FOR NEGROES. These men were generally well dressed men, and very captivating in their manners. Ever ready to drink, to treat, and to gamble. The fate of many a slave has depended upon the turn of a single card; and many a child has been snatched from the arms of its mother by bargains arranged in a state of brutal drunkenness.

The flesh-mongers gather up their victims by dozens, and drive them, chained, to the general depot at Baltimore. When a sufficient number have been collected here, a ship is chartered, for the purpose of conveying the forlorn crew to Mobile, or to New Orleans. From the slave prison to the ship, they are usually driven in the darkness of night; for since the anti-slavery agitation, a certain caution is observed.

In the deep still darkness of midnight, I have been often aroused by the dead heavy footsteps, and the piteous cries of the chained gangs that passed our

door. The anguish of my boyish heart was intense; and I was often consoled, when speaking to my mistress in the morning, to hear her say that the custom was very wicked; that she hated to hear the rattle of the chains, and the heart-rending cries. I was glad to find one who sympathized with me in my horror.

Fellow-citizens, this murderous traffic is, to-day, in active operation in this boasted republic. In the solitude of my spirit, I see clouds of dust raised on the highways of the South; I see the bleeding footsteps; I hear the doleful wail of fettered humanity, on the way to the slave-markets, where the victims are to be sold like *horses, sheep, and swine*, knocked off to the highest bidder. There I see the tenderest ties ruthlessly broken, to gratify the lust, caprice and rapacity of the buyers and sellers of men. My soul sickens at the sight.

“Is this the land your Fathers loved.

The freedom which they toiled to win?

Is this the earth whereon they moved?

Are these the graves they slumber in?”

But a still more inhuman, disgraceful, and scandalous state of things remains to be presented.

By an act of the American Congress, not yet two years old, slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form. By that act, Mason & Dixon’s line has been obliterated; New York has become as Virginia; and the power to hold, hunt, and sell men, women, and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. The power is co-extensive with the star-spangled banner and American Christianity. Where these go, may also go the merciless slave-hunter. Where these are, man is not sacred. He is a bird for the sportsman’s gun. By that most foul and fiendish of all human decrees, the liberty and person of every man are put in peril. Your broad republican domain is hunting ground for *men*. *Not* for thieves and robbers, enemies of society, merely, but for men guilty of no crime.

Your lawmakers have commanded all good citizens to engage in this hellish sport. Your President, your Secretary of State, your *lords, nobles*, and ecclesiastics, enforce, as a duty you owe to your free and glorious country, and to your God, that you do this accursed thing. Not fewer than forty Americans have, within the past two years, been hunted down and, without a moment's warning, hurried away in chains, and consigned to slavery and excruciating torture. Some of these have had wives and children, dependent on them for bread; but of this, no account was made. The right of the hunter to his prey stands superior to the right of marriage, and to *all* rights in this republic, the rights of God included! For black men there are neither law, justice, humanity, nor religion. The Fugitive Slave *Law* makes MERCY TO THEM, A CRIME; and bribes the judge who tries them. An American JUDGE GETS TEN DOLLARS FOR EVERY VICTIM HE CONSIGNS to slavery, and five, when he fails to do so. The oath of any two villains is sufficient, under this hell-black enactment, to send the most pious and exemplary black man into the remorseless jaws of slavery! His own testimony is nothing. He can bring no witnesses for himself. The minister of American justice is bound by the law to hear but *one* side; and *that* side, is the side of the oppressor. Let this damning fact be perpetually told. Let it be thundered around the world, that, in tyrant-killing, king-hating, people-loving, democratic, Christian America, the seats of justice are filled with judges, who hold their offices under an open and palpable *bribe*, and are bound, in deciding in the case of a man's liberty, *to hear only his accusers!*

In glaring violation of justice, in shameless disregard of the forms of administering law, in cunning arrangement to entrap the defenceless, and in diabolical intent, this Fugitive Slave Law stands alone in the annals of tyrannical legislation. I doubt if there be another nation on the globe, having the brass and the baseness to put such a law on the statute-book. If any man in this assembly thinks differently from me in this matter, and feels able to disprove my statements, I will gladly confront him at any suitable time and place he may

select.

#### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

I take this law to be one of the grossest infringements of Christian Liberty, and, if the churches and ministers of our country were not stupidly blind, or most wickedly indifferent, they, too, would so regard it.

At the very moment that they are thanking God for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, and for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, they are utterly silent in respect to a law which robs religion of its chief significance, and makes it utterly worthless to a world lying in wickedness. Did this law concern the “*mint, anise and cummin*”—abridge the right to sing psalms, to partake of the sacrament, or to engage in any of the ceremonies of religion, it would be smitten by the thunder of a thousand pulpits. A general shout would go up from the church, demanding *repeal, repeal, instant repeal!* And it would go hard with that politician who presumed to solicit the votes of the people without inscribing this motto on his banner. Further, if this demand were not complied with, another Scotland would be added to the history of religious liberty, and the stern old Covenanters would be thrown into the shade. A John Knox would be seen at every church door, and heard from every pulpit, and Fillmore would have no more quarter than was shown by Knox, to the beautiful, but treacherous Queen Mary of Scotland. The fact that the church of our country, (with fractional exceptions), does not esteem “the Fugitive Slave Law” as a declaration of war against religious liberty, implies that that church regards religion simply as a form of worship, an empty ceremony, and *not* a vital principle, requiring active benevolence, justice, love and good will towards man. It esteems sacrifice above mercy; psalm-singing above right doing; solemn meetings above practical righteousness. A worship that can be conducted by persons who refuse to give shelter to the houseless, to give bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and who enjoin obedience to a law forbidding these acts of

mercy, is a curse, not a blessing to mankind. The Bible addresses all such persons as “scribes, pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithes of *mint, anise, and cummin*, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith.”

#### THE CHURCH RESPONSIBLE.

But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system. They have taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the relation of master and slave is ordained of God; that to send back an escaped bondman to his master is clearly the duty of all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this horrible blasphemy is palmed off upon the world for Christianity.

For my part, I would say, welcome infidelity! welcome atheism! welcome anything! in preference to the gospel, *as preached by those Divines!* They convert the very name of religion into an engine of tyranny, and barbarous cruelty, and serve to confirm more infidels, in this age, than all the infidel writings of Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke, put together, have done! These ministers make religion a cold and flinty-hearted thing, having neither principles of right action, nor bowels of compassion. They strip the love of God of its beauty, and leave the throne of religion a huge, horrible, repulsive form. It is a religion for oppressors, tyrants, man-stealers, and *thugs*. It is not that “*pure and undefiled religion*” which is from above, and which is “*first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*” But a religion which favors the rich against the poor; which exalts the proud above the humble; which divides mankind into two classes, tyrants and slaves; which says to the man in chains, *stay there*; and to

the oppressor, *oppress on*; it is a religion which may be professed and enjoyed by all the robbers and enslavers of mankind; it makes God a respecter of persons, denies his fatherhood of the race, and tramples in the dust the great truth of the brotherhood of man. All this we affirm to be true of the popular church, and the popular worship of our land and nation—a religion, a church, and a worship which, on the authority of inspired wisdom, we pronounce to be an abomination in the sight of God. In the language of Isaiah, the American church might be well addressed, “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth. They are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them; and when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea! when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgement; relieve the oppressed; judge for the fatherless; plead for the widow.”

The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in connection with its ability to abolish slavery.

The sin of which it is guilty is one of omission as well as of commission. Albert Barnes but uttered what the common sense of every man at all observant of the actual state of the case will receive as truth, when he declared that “There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it.”

Let the religious press, the pulpit, the Sunday school, the conference meeting, the great ecclesiastical, missionary, Bible and tract associations of the land array their immense powers against slavery and slave-holding; and the whole system of crime and blood would be scattered to the winds; and that they do not do this involves them in the most awful responsibility of which the mind can conceive.

In prosecuting the anti-slavery enterprise, we have been asked to spare the

church, to spare the ministry; but *how*, we ask, could such a thing be done? We are met on the threshold of our efforts for the redemption of the slave, by the church and ministry of the country, in battle arrayed against us; and we are compelled to fight or flee. From what *quarter*, I beg to know, has proceeded a fire so deadly upon our ranks, during the last two years, as from the Northern pulpit? As the champions of oppressors, the chosen men of American theology have appeared—men, honored for their so-called piety, and their real learning. The LORDS of Buffalo, the SPRINGS of New York, the LATHROPS of Auburn, the COXES and SPENCERS of Brooklyn, the GANNETS and SHARPS of Boston, the DEWEYS of Washington, and other great religious lights of the land, have, in utter denial of the authority of *Him*, by whom they professed to be called to the ministry, deliberately taught us, against the example of the Hebrews and against the remonstrance of the Apostles, they teach “*that we ought to obey man’s law before the law of God.*”

My spirit wearies of such blasphemy; and how such men can be supported, as the “standing types and representatives of Jesus Christ,” is a mystery which I leave others to penetrate. In speaking of the American church, however, let it be distinctly understood that I mean the *great mass* of the religious organizations of our land. There are exceptions, and I thank God that there are. Noble men may be found, scattered all over these Northern States, of whom Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn, Samuel J. May of Syracuse, and my esteemed friend\* on the platform, are shining examples; and let me say further, that upon these men lies the duty to inspire our ranks with high religious faith and zeal, and to cheer us on in the great mission of the slave’s redemption from his chains.

#### RELIGION IN ENGLAND AND RELIGION IN AMERICA.

One is struck with the difference between the attitude of the American church towards the anti-slavery movement, and that occupied by the churches in England towards a similar movement in that country. There, the church, true to

its mission of ameliorating, elevating, and improving the condition of mankind, came forward promptly, bound up the wounds of the West Indian slave, and restored him to his liberty. There, the question of emancipation was a highly religious question. It was demanded, in the name of humanity, and according to the law of the living God. The Sharps, the Clarksons, the Wilberforces, the Buxtons, and Burchells and the Knibbs, were alike famous for their piety, and for their philanthropy. The anti-slavery movement *there* was not an anti-church movement, for the reason that the church took its full share in prosecuting that movement: and the anti-slavery movement in this country will cease to be an anti-church movement, when the church of this country shall assume a favorable, instead of a hostile position towards that movement.

Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen. You hurl your anathemas at the crowned headed tyrants of Russia and Austria, and pride yourselves on your Democratic institutions, while you yourselves consent to be the mere *tools* and *bodyguards* of the tyrants of Virginia and Carolina. You invite to your shores fugitives of oppression from abroad, honor them with banquets, greet them with ovations, cheer them, toast them, salute them, protect them, and pour out your money to them like water; but the fugitives from your own land you advertise, hunt, arrest, shoot and kill. You glory in your refinement and your universal education; yet you maintain a system as barbarous and dreadful as ever stained the character of a nation—a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty. You shed tears over fallen Hungary, and make the sad story of her wrongs the theme of your poets, statesmen and orators, till your gallant sons are ready to fly to arms to vindicate her cause against her oppressors; but, in regard to the ten thousand wrongs of the American slave, you would enforce the strictest silence,

and would hail him as an enemy of the nation who dares to make those wrongs the subject of public discourse! You are all on fire at the mention of liberty for France or for Ireland; but are as cold as an iceberg at the thought of liberty for the enslaved of America. You discourse eloquently on the dignity of labor; yet, you sustain a system which, in its very essence, casts a stigma upon labor. You can bare your bosom to the storm of British artillery to throw off a threepenny tax on tea; and yet wring the last hard-earned farthing from the grasp of the black laborers of your country. You profess to believe “that, of one blood, God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of all the earth,” and hath commanded all men, everywhere to love one another; yet you notoriously hate, (and glory in your hatred), all men whose skins are not colored like your own. You declare, before the world, and are understood by the world to declare, that you “*hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; and that, among these are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;*” and yet, you hold securely, in a bondage which, according to your own Thomas Jefferson, “*is worse than ages of that which your fathers rose in rebellion to oppose,*” a seventh part of the inhabitants of your country.

Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a byword to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your *Union*. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation’s bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; *for the love of*

*God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!*

THE CONSTITUTION.

But it is answered in reply to all this, that precisely what I have now denounced is, in fact, guaranteed and sanctioned by the Constitution of the United States; that the right to hold and to hunt slaves is a part of that Constitution framed by the illustrious Fathers of this Republic.

*Then*, I dare to affirm, notwithstanding all I have said before, your fathers stooped, basely stooped

“To palter with us in a double sense:  
And keep the word of promise to the ear,  
But break it to the heart.”

And instead of being the honest men I have before declared them to be, they were the veriest impostors that ever practised on mankind. *This* is the inevitable conclusion, and from it there is no escape. But I differ from those who charge this baseness on the framers of the Constitution of the United States. *It is a slander upon their memory*, at least, so I believe. There is not time now to argue the constitutional question at length; nor have I the ability to discuss it as it ought to be discussed. The subject has been handled with masterly power by Lysander Spooner, Esq., by William Goodell, by Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., and last, though not least, by Gerritt Smith, Esq. These gentlemen have, as I think, fully and clearly vindicated the Constitution from any design to support slavery for an hour.

Fellow-citizens! there is no matter in respect to which, the people of the North have allowed themselves to be so ruinously imposed upon, as that of the pro-slavery character of the Constitution. In *that* instrument I hold there is

neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it *ought* to be interpreted, the Constitution is a GLORIOUS LIBERTY DOCUMENT. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. Is slavery among them? Is it at the gateway? or is it in the temple? It is neither. While I do not intend to argue this question on the present occasion, let me ask, if it be not somewhat singular that, if the Constitution were intended to be, by its framers and adopters, a slaveholding instrument, why neither *slavery*, *slaveholding*, nor *slave* can anywhere be found in it. What would be thought of an instrument, drawn up, *legally* drawn up, for the purpose of entitling the city of Rochester to a tract of land, in which no mention of land was made? Now, there are certain rules of interpretation, for the proper understanding of all legal instruments. These rules are well established. They are plain, common-sense rules, such as you and I, and all of us, can understand and apply, without having passed years in the study of law. I scout the idea that the question of the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of slavery is not a question for the people. I hold that every American citizen has a right to form an opinion of the constitution, and to propagate that opinion, and to use all honorable means to make his opinion the prevailing one. Without this right, the liberty of an American citizen would be as insecure as that of a Frenchman. Ex-Vice-President Dallas tells us that the constitution is an object to which no American mind can be too attentive, and no American heart too devoted. He further says, the constitution, in its words, is plain and intelligible, and is meant for the home-bred, unsophisticated understandings of our fellow-citizens. Senator Berrien tells us that the Constitution is the fundamental law, that which controls all others. The charter of our liberties, which every citizen has a personal interest in understanding thoroughly. The testimony of Senator Breese, Lewis Cass, and many others that might be named, who are everywhere esteemed as sound lawyers, so regard the constitution. I take it, therefore, that it is not presumption in a private citizen to form an opinion of that instrument.

Now, take the constitution according to its plain reading, and I defy the

presentation of a single pro-slavery clause in it. On the other hand it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely hostile to the existence of slavery.

I have detained my audience entirely too long already. At some future period I will gladly avail myself of an opportunity to give this subject a full and fair discussion.

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. "*The arm of the Lord is not shortened,*" and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with *hope*. While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference. The time *was* when such could be done. Long established customs of hurtful character could formerly fence themselves in, and do their evil work with social impunity. Knowledge was then confined and enjoyed by the privileged few, and the multitude walked on in mental darkness. But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the earth. Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are distinctly heard on the other.

The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire, the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty,

“*Let there be Light,*” has not yet spent its force. No abuse, no outrage whether in taste, sport or avarice, can now hide itself from the all-pervading light. The iron shoe, and crippled foot of China must be seen, in contrast with nature. *Africa must rise and put on her yet unwoven garment. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hand unto God.”* In the fervent aspirations of William Lloyd Garrison, I say, and let every heart join in saying it:

God speed the year of jubilee  
The wide world o’er!  
When from their galling chains set free,  
Th’ oppress’d shall vilely bend the knee,  
And wear the yoke of tyranny  
Like brutes no more.  
That year will come, and freedom’s reign,  
To man his plundered rights again  
Restore.

God speed the day when human blood  
Shall cease to flow!  
In every clime be understood,  
The claims of human brotherhood,  
And each return for evil, good,  
Not blow for blow;  
That day will come all feuds to end,  
And change into a faithful friend  
Each foe.

God speed the hour, the glorious hour,  
When none on earth  
Shall exercise a lordly power,

Nor in a tyrant's presence cower;  
But all to manhood's stature tower,  
    By equal birth!  
THAT HOUR WILL COME, to each, to all,  
And from his prison-house, the thrall  
    Go forth.

Until that year, day, hour, arrive,  
With head, and heart, and hand I'll strive,  
To break the rod, and rend the gyve,  
The spoiler of his prey deprive—  
    So witness Heaven!  
And never from my chosen post,  
Whate'er the peril or the cost,  
    Be driven.

(July 5, 1852)

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from *The Heroic Slave*

PART III

—His head was with his heart,  
And that was far away!

*Childe Harold*

JUST UPON the edge of the great road from Petersburg, Virginia, to Richmond, and only about fifteen miles from the latter place, there stands a somewhat ancient and famous public tavern, quite notorious in its better days, as being the grand resort for most of the leading gamblers, horse-racers, cock-fighters, and

slave-traders from all the country round about. This old rookery, the nucleus of all sorts of birds, mostly those of ill omen, has, like everything else peculiar to Virginia, lost much of its ancient consequence and splendor; yet it keeps up some appearance of gaiety and high life, and is still frequented, even by respectable travellers, who are unacquainted with its past history and present condition. Its fine old portico looks well at a distance, and gives the building an air of grandeur. A nearer view, however, does little to sustain this pretension. The house is large, and its style imposing, but time and dissipation, unfailing in their results, have made ineffaceable marks upon it, and it must, in the common course of events, soon be numbered with the things that were. The gloomy mantle of ruin is, already, outspread to envelop it, and its remains, even but now remind one of a human skull, after the flesh has mingled with the earth. Old hats and rags fill the places in the upper windows once occupied by large panes of glass, and the moulding boards along the roofing have dropped off from their places, leaving holes and crevices in the rented wall for bats and swallows to build their nests in. The platform of the portico, which fronts the highway is a rickety affair, its planks are loose, and in some places entirely gone, leaving effective man-traps in their stead for nocturnal rambles. The wooden pillars, which once supported it, but which now hang as encumbrances, are all rotten, and tremble with the touch. A part of the stable, a fine old structure in its day, which has given comfortable shelter to hundreds of the noblest steeds of "the Old Dominion" at once, was blown down many years ago, and never has been, and probably never will be, rebuilt. The doors of the barn are in wretched condition; they will shut with a little human strength to help their worn out hinges, but not otherwise. The side of the great building seen from the road is much discolored in sundry places by slops poured from the upper windows, rendering it unsightly and offensive in other respects. Three or four great dogs, looking as dull and gloomy as the mansion itself, lie stretched out along the door-sills under the portico; and double the number of loafers, some of them completely rum-ripe, and others ripening, dispose themselves like so many

sentinels about the front of the house. These latter understand the science of scraping acquaintance to perfection. They know every-body, and almost every-body knows them. Of course, as their title implies, they have no regular employment. They are (to use an expressive phrase) *hangers on*, or still better, they are what sailors would denominate *holders-on to the slack, in everybody's mess, and in nobody's watch*. They are, however, as good as the newspaper for the events of the day, and they sell their knowledge almost as cheap. Money they seldom have; yet they always have capital the most reliable. They make their way with a succeeding traveller by intelligence gained from a preceding one. All the great names of Virginia they know by heart, and have seen their owners often. The history of the house is folded in their lips, and they rattle off stories in connection with it, equal to the guides at Dryburgh Abbey. He must be a shrewd man, and well skilled in the art of evasion, who gets out of the hands of these fellows without being at the expense of a treat.

It was at this old tavern on a second visit to the State of Virginia in 1841, that Mr. Listwell, unacquainted with the fame of the place, turned aside, about sunset, to pass the night. Riding up to the house, he had scarcely dismounted, when one of the half dozen bar-room fraternity met and addressed him in a manner exceedingly bland and accommodating.

“Fine evening, sir.”

“Very fine,” said Mr. Listwell. “This is a tavern, I believe?”

“O yes, sir, yes; although you may think it looks a little the worse for wear, it was once as good a house as any in Virginy. I make no doubt if ye spend the night here, you'll think it a good house yet; for there aint a more accommodating man in the country than you'll find the landlord.”

*Listwell*. “The most I want is a good bed for myself, and a full manger for my horse. If I get these, I shall be quite satisfied.”

*Loafer*. “Well, I alloys like to hear a gentleman talk for his horse; and just becace the horse can't talk for itself. A man that don't care about his beast, and don't look arter it when he's travelling, aint much in my eye anyhow. Now, sir, I

likes a horse, and I'll guarantee your horse will be taken good care on here. That old stable, for all you see it looks so shabby now, once sheltered the great *Eclipse*, when he run here agin *Batchelor* and *Jumping Jemmy*. Them was fast horses, but he beat 'em both."

*Listwell*. "Indeed."

*Loafer*. "Well, I rather reckon you've travelled a right smart distance to-day, from the look of your horse?"

*Listwell*. "Forty miles only."

*Loafer*. "Well! I'll be darned if that aint a pretty good *only*. Mister, that beast of yours is a singed cat, I warrant you. I never see'd a creature like that that wasn't good on the road. You've come about forty miles, then?"

*Listwell*. "Yes, yes, and a pretty good pace at that."

*Loafer*. "You're somewhat in a hurry, then, I make no doubt? I reckon I could guess if I would, what you're going to Richmond for? It wouldn't be much of a guess either; for it's rumored hereabouts, that there's to be the greatest sale of niggers at Richmond to-morrow that has taken place there in a long time; and I'll be bound you're a going there to have a hand in it."

*Listwell*. "Why, you must think, then, that there's money to be made at that business?"

*Loafer*. "Well, 'pon my honor, sir, I never made any that way myself; but it stands to reason that it's a money making business; for almost all other business in Virginia is dropped to engage in this. One thing is sartain, I never see'd a nigger-buyer yet that hadn't a plenty of money, and he wasn't as free with it as water. I has known one on 'em to treat as high as twenty times in a night; and, ginerally speaking, they's men of edication, and knows all about the government. The fact is, sir, I alloys like to hear 'em talk, bekase I alloys can learn something from them."

*Listwell*. "What may I call your name, sir?"

*Loafer*. "Well, now, they calls me Wilkes. I'm known all around by the gentlemen that comes here. They all knows old Wilkes."

*Listwell.* “Well, Wilkes, you seem to be acquainted here, and I see you have a strong liking for a horse. Be so good as to speak a kind word for mine to the hostler to-night, and you’ll not lose anything by it.”

*Loafer.* “Well, sir, I see you don’t say much, but you’ve got an insight into things. It’s alloys wise to get the good will of them that’s acquainted about a tavern; for a man don’t know when he goes into a house what may happen, or how much he may need a friend.” Here the loafer gave Mr. Listwell a significant grin, which expressed a sort of triumphant pleasure at having, as he supposed, by his tact succeeded in placing so fine appearing a gentleman under obligations to him.

The pleasure, however, was not mutual; for there was something so insinuating in the glance of this loquacious customer, that Mr. Listwell was very glad to get quit of him, and to do so more successfully, he ordered his supper to be brought to him in his private room, private to the eye, but not to the ear. This room was directly over the bar, and the plastering being off, nothing but pine boards and naked laths separated him from the disagreeable company below,— he could easily hear what was said in the bar-room, and was rather glad of the advantage it afforded, for, as you shall see, it furnished him important hints as to the manner and deportment he should assume during his stay at that tavern.

Mr. Listwell says he had got into his room but a few moments, when he heard the officious Wilkes below, in a tone of disappointment, exclaim, “Whar’s that gentleman?” Wilkes was evidently expecting to meet with his friend at the bar-room, on his return, and had no doubt of his doing the handsome thing. “He has gone to his room,” answered the landlord, “and has ordered his supper to be brought to him.”

Here some one shouted out, “Who is he, Wilkes? Where’s he going?”

“Well, now, I’ll be hanged if I know; but I’m willing to make any man a bet of this old hat agin a five dollar bill, that that gent is as full of money as a dog is of fleas. He’s going down to Richmond to buy niggers, I make no doubt. He’s no fool, I warrant ye.”

“Well, he acts d——d strange,” said another, “anyhow. I likes to see a man, when he comes up to a tavern, to come straight into the bar-room, and show that he’s a man among men. Nobody was going to bite him.”

“Now, I don’t blame him a bit for not coming in here. That man knows his business, and means to take care on his money,” answered Wilkes.

“Wilkes, you’re a fool. You only say that, because you hope to get a few coppers out on him.”

“You only measure my corn by your half-bushel, I won’t say that you’re only mad because I got the chance of speaking to him first.”

“O Wilkes! you’re known here. You’ll praise up any body that will give you a copper; besides, ’tis my opinion that that fellow who took his long slab-sides up stairs, for all the world just like a half-scared woman, afraid to look honest men in the face, is a *Northerner*, and as mean as dish-water.”

“Now what will you bet of that,” said Wilkes.

The speaker said, “I make no bets with you, ’kase you can get that fellow up stairs there to say anything.”

“Well,” said Wilkes, “I am willing to bet any man in the company that *that* gentleman is a *nigger*-buyer. He didn’t tell me so right down, but I reckon I knows enough about men to give a pretty clean guess as to what they are arter.”

The dispute as to *who* Mr. Listwell was, what his business, where he was going, etc., was kept up with much animation for some time, and more than once threatened a serious disturbance of the peace. Wilkes had his friends as well as his opponents. After this sharp debate, the company amused themselves by drinking whiskey, and telling stories. The latter consisting of quarrels, fights, *rencontres*, and duels, in which distinguished persons of that neighborhood, and frequenters of that house, had been actors. Some of these stories were frightful enough, and were told, too, with a relish which bespoke the pleasure of the parties with the horrid scenes they portrayed. It would not be proper here to give the reader any idea of the vulgarity and dark profanity which rolled, as “a sweet morsel,” under these corrupt tongues. A more brutal set of creatures, perhaps,

never congregated.

Disgusted, and a little alarmed withal, Mr. Listwell, who was not accustomed to such entertainment, at length retired, but not to sleep. He was *too* much wrought upon by what he had heard to rest quietly, and what snatches of sleep he got, were interrupted by dreams which were anything than pleasant. At eleven o'clock, there seemed to be several hundreds of persons crowding into the house. A loud and confused clamour, cursing and cracking of whips, and the noise of chains startled him from his bed; for a moment he would have given the half of his farm in Ohio to have been at home. This uproar was kept up with undulating course, till near morning. There was loud laughing,—loud singing,—loud cursing,—and yet there seemed to be weeping and mourning in the midst of all. Mr. Listwell said he had heard enough during the forepart of the night to convince him that a buyer of men and women stood the best chance of being respected. And he, therefore, thought it best to say nothing which might undo the favorable opinion that had been formed of him in the bar-room by at least one of the fraternity that swarmed about it. While he would not avow himself a purchaser of slaves, he deemed it not prudent to disavow it. He felt that he might, properly, refuse to cast such a pearl before parties which, to him, were worse than swine. To reveal himself, and to impart a knowledge of his real character and sentiments would, to say the least, be imparting intelligence with the certainty of seeing it and himself both abused. Mr. Listwell confesses, that this reasoning did not altogether satisfy his conscience, for, hating slavery as he did, and regarding it to be the immediate duty of every man to cry out against it, “without compromise and without concealment,” it was hard for him to admit to himself the possibility of circumstances wherein a man might, properly, hold his tongue on the subject. Having as little of the spirit of a martyr as Erasmus, he concluded, like the latter, that it was wiser to trust the mercy of God for his soul, than the humanity of slave-traders for his body. Bodily fear, not conscientious scruples, prevailed.

In this spirit he rose early in the morning, manifesting no surprise at what

he had heard during the night. His quondam friend was soon at his elbow, boring him with all sorts of questions. All, however, directed to find out his character, business, residence, purposes, and destination. With the most perfect appearance of good nature and carelessness, Mr. Listwell evaded these meddlesome inquiries, and turned conversation to general topics, leaving himself and all that specially pertained to him, out of discussion. Disengaging himself from their troublesome companionship, he made his way towards an old bowling-alley, which was connected with the house, and which, like all the rest, was in very bad repair.

On reaching the alley Mr. Listwell saw, for the first time in his life, a slave-gang on their way to market. A sad sight truly. Here were one hundred and thirty human beings,—children of a common Creator—guilty of no crime—men and women, with hearts, minds, and deathless spirits, chained and fettered, and bound for the market, in a christian country,—in a country boasting of its liberty, independence, and high civilization! Humanity converted into merchandise, and linked in iron bands, with no regard to decency or humanity! All sizes, ages, and sexes, mothers, fathers, daughters, brothers, sisters,—all huddled together, on their way to market to be sold and separated from home, and from each other *forever*. And all to fill the pockets of men too lazy to work for an honest living, and who gain their fortune by plundering the helpless, and trafficking in the souls and sinews of men. As he gazed upon this revolting and heart-rending scene, our informant said he almost doubted the existence of a God of justice! And he stood wondering that the earth did not open and swallow up such wickedness.

In the midst of these reflections, and while running his eye up and down the fettered ranks, he met the glance of one whose face he thought he had seen before. To be resolved, he moved towards the spot. It was MADISON WASHINGTON! Here was a scene for the pencil! Had Mr. Listwell been confronted by one risen from the dead, he could not have been more appalled.

He was completely stunned. A thunderbolt could not have struck him more dumb. He stood, for a few moments, as motionless as one petrified; collecting himself, he at length exclaimed, "*Madison! is that you?*"

The noble fugitive, but little less astonished than himself, answered cheerily, "O yes, sir, they've got me again."

Thoughtless of consequences for the moment, Mr. Listwell ran up to his old friend, placing his hands upon his shoulders, and looked him in the face! Speechless they stood gazing at each other as if to be doubly resolved that there was no mistake about the matter, till Madison motioned his friend away, intimating a fear lest the keepers should find him there, and suspect him of tampering with the slaves.

"They will soon be out to look after us. You can come when they go to breakfast, and I will tell you all."

Pleased with this arrangement, Mr. Listwell passed out of the alley; but only just in time to save himself, for, while near the door, he observed three men making their way to the alley. The thought occurred to him to await their arrival, as the best means of diverting the ever ready suspicions of the guilty.

While the scene between Mr. Listwell and his friend Madison was going on, the other slaves stood as mute spectators,—at a loss to know what all this could mean. As he left, he heard the man chained to Madison ask, "Who is that gentleman?"

"He is a friend of mine. I cannot tell you now. Suffice it to say he is a friend. You shall hear more of him before long, but mark me! whatever shall pass between that gentleman and me, in your hearing, I pray you will say nothing about it. We are all chained here together,—ours is a common lot; and that gentleman is not less *your* friend than *mine*." At these words, all mysterious as they were, the unhappy company gave signs of satisfaction and hope. It seems that Madison, by that mesmeric power which is the invariable accompaniment of genius, had already won the confidence of the gang, and was a sort of general-in-chief among them.

By this time the keepers arrived. A horrid trio, well fitted for their demoniacal work. Their uncombed hair came down over foreheads “*villainously low*,” and with eyes, mouths, and noses to match. “Hallo! hallo!” they growled out as they entered. “Are you all there!”

“All here,” said Madison.

“Well, well, that’s right! your journey will soon be over. You’ll be in Richmond by eleven to-day, and then you’ll have an easy time on it.”

“I say, gal, what in the devil are you crying about?” said one of them. “I’ll give you something to cry about, if you don’t mind.” This was said to a girl, apparently not more than twelve years old, who had been weeping bitterly. She had, probably, left behind her a loving mother, affectionate sisters, brothers, and friends, and her tears were but the natural expression of her sorrow, and the only solace. But the dealers in human flesh have *no* respect for such sorrow. They look upon it as a protest against their cruel injustice, and they are prompt to punish it.

This is a puzzle not easily solved. *How* came he here? what can I do for him? may I not even now be in some way compromised in this affair? were thoughts that troubled Mr. Listwell, and made him eager for the promised opportunity of speaking to Madison.

The bell now sounded for breakfast, and keepers and drivers, with pistols and bowie-knives gleaming from their belts, hurried in, as if to get the best places. Taking the chance now afforded, Mr. Listwell hastened back to the bowling-alley. Reaching Madison, he said, “Now *do* tell me all about the matter. Do you know me?”

“Oh, yes,” said Madison, “I know you well, and shall never forget you nor that cold and dreary night you gave me shelter. I must be short,” he continued, “for they’ll soon be out again. This, then, is the story in brief. On reaching Canada, and getting over the excitement of making my escape, sir, my thoughts turned to my poor wife, who had well deserved my love by her virtuous fidelity and undying affection for me. I could not bear the thought of leaving her in the

cruel jaws of slavery, without making an effort to rescue her. First, I tried to get money to buy her; but oh! the process was *too slow*. I despaired of accomplishing it. She was in all my thoughts by day, and my dreams by night. At times I could almost hear her voice, saying, ‘O Madison! Madison! will you then leave me here? can you leave me here to die? No! no! you will come! you will come!’ I was wretched. I lost my appetite. I could neither work, eat, nor sleep, till I resolved to hazard my own liberty, to gain that of my wife! But I must be short. Six weeks ago I reached my old master’s place. I laid about the neighborhood nearly a week, watching my chance, and, finally, I ventured upon the desperate attempt to reach my poor wife’s room by means of a ladder. I reached the window, but the noise in raising it frightened my wife, and she screamed and fainted. I took her in my arms, and was descending the ladder, when the dogs began to bark furiously, and before I could get to the woods the white folks were roused. The cool night air soon restored my wife, and she readily recognized me. We made the best of our way to the woods, but it was now *too late*,—the dogs were after us as though they would have torn us to pieces. It was all over with me now! My old master and his two sons ran out with loaded rifles, and before we were out of gunshot, our ears were assailed with ‘*Stop! stop! or be shot down.*’ Nevertheless we ran on. Seeing that we gave no heed to their calls, they fired, and my poor wife fell by my side dead, while I received but a slight flesh wound. I now became desperate, and stood my ground, and awaited their attack over her dead body. They rushed upon me, with their rifles in hand. I parried their blows, and fought them ’till I was knocked down and overpowered.”

“Oh! it was madness to have returned,” said Mr. Listwell.

“Sir, I could not be free with the galling thought that my poor wife was still a slave. With her in slavery, my body, not my spirit, was free. I was taken to the house,—chained to a ring-bolt,—my wounds dressed. I was kept there three days. All the slaves, for miles around, were brought to see me. Many slaveholders came with their slaves, using me as proof of the completeness of their

power, and of the impossibility of slaves getting away. I was taunted, jeered at, and berated by them, in a manner that pierced me to the soul. Thank God, I was able to smother my rage, and to bear it all with seeming composure. After my wounds were nearly healed, I was taken to a tree and stripped, and I received sixty lashes on my naked back. A few days after, I was sold to a slave-trader, and placed in this gang for the New Orleans market.”

“Do you think your master would sell you to me?”

“O no, sir! I was sold on condition of my being taken South. Their motive is revenge.”

“Then, then,” said Mr. Listwell, “I fear I can do nothing for you. Put your trust in God, and bear your sad lot with the manly fortitude which becomes a man. I shall see you at Richmond, but don’t recognize me.” Saying this, Mr. Listwell handed Madison ten dollars; said a few words to the other slaves; received their hearty “God bless you,” and made his way to the house.

Fearful of exciting suspicion by too long delay, our friend went to the breakfast table, with the air of one who half reproved the greediness of those who rushed in at the sound of the bell. A cup of coffee was all that he could manage. His feelings were too bitter and excited, and his heart was too full with the fate of poor Madison (whom he loved as well as admired) to relish his breakfast; and although he sat long after the company had left the table, he really did little more than change the position of his knife and fork. The strangeness of meeting again one whom he had met on two several occasions before, under extraordinary circumstances, was well calculated to suggest the idea that a supernatural power, a wakeful providence, or an inexorable fate, had linked their destiny together; and that no efforts of his could disentangle him from the mysterious web of circumstances which enfolded him.

On leaving the table, Mr. Listwell nerved himself up and walked firmly into the bar-room. He was at once greeted again by that talkative chatter-box, Mr. Wilkes.

“Them’s a likely set of niggers in the alley there,” said Wilkes.

“Yes, they’re fine looking fellows, one of them I should like to purchase, and for him I would be willing to give a handsome sum.”

Turning to one of his comrades, and with a grin of victory, Wilkes said, “Aha, Bill, did you hear that? I told you I know’d that gentleman wanted to buy niggers, and would bid as high as any purchaser in the market.”

“Come, come,” said Listwell, “don’t be too loud in your praise, you are old enough to know that prices rise when purchasers are plenty.”

“That’s a fact,” said Wilkes, “I see you knows the ropes—and there’s not a man in old Virginy whom I’d rather help to make a good bargain than you, sir.”

Mr. Listwell here threw a dollar at Wilkes, (which the latter caught with a dexterous hand,) saying, “Take that for your kind good will.” Wilkes held up the dollar to his right eye, with a grin of victory, and turned to the morose grumbler in the corner who had questioned the liberality of a man of whom he knew nothing.

Mr. Listwell now stood as well with the company as any other occupant of the bar-room.

We pass over the hurry and bustle, the brutal vociferations of the slave-drivers in getting their unhappy gang in motion for Richmond; and we need not narrate every application of the lash to those who faltered in the journey. Mr. Listwell followed the train at a long distance, with a sad heart; and on reaching Richmond, left his horse at a hotel, and made his way to the wharf in the direction of which he saw the slave-coffle driven. He was just in time to see the whole company embark for New Orleans. The thought struck him that, while mixing with the multitude, he might do his friend Madison one last service, and he stept into a hardware store and purchased three strong *files*. These he took with him, and standing near the small boat, which lay in waiting to bear the company by parcels to the side of the brig that lay in the stream, he managed, as Madison passed him, to slip the files into his pocket, and at once darted back among the crowd.

All the company now on board, the imperious voice of the captain sounded,

and instantly a dozen hardy seamen were in the rigging, hurrying aloft to unfurl the broad canvas of our Baltimore built American Slaver. The sailors hung about the ropes, like so many black cats, now in the round-tops, now in the cross-trees, now on the yard-arms; all was bluster and activity. Soon the broad fore topsail, the royal and top gallant sail were spread to the breeze. Round went the heavy windlass, clank, clank went the fall-bit,—the anchors weighed,—jibs, mainsails, and topsails hauled to the wind, and the long, low, black slaver, with her cargo of human flesh, careened and moved forward to the sea.

Mr. Listwell stood on the shore, and watched the slaver till the last speck of her upper sails faded from sight, and announced the limit of human vision. “Farewell! farewell! brave and true man! God grant that brighter skies may smile upon your future than have yet looked down upon your thorny pathway.”

Saying this to himself, our friend lost no time in completing his business, and in making his way homewards, gladly shaking off from his feet the dust of Old Virginia.

PART IV

Oh, where's the slave so lowly  
Condemn'd to chains unholy,  
Who could he burst  
His bonds at first  
Would pine beneath them slowly?

*Moore*

——Know ye not

Who would be free, *themselves* must strike the blow.

*Childe Harold*

WHAT A world of inconsistency, as well as of wickedness, is suggested by the smooth and gliding phrase, AMERICAN SLAVE TRADE; and how strange and perverse is that moral sentiment which loathes, execrates, and brands as piracy and as deserving of death the carrying away into captivity men, women, and children from the *African coast*; but which is neither shocked nor disturbed by a similar traffic, carried on with the same motives and purposes, and characterized by even *more* odious peculiarities on the coast of our MODEL REPUBLIC. We execrate and hang the wretch guilty of this crime on the coast of Guinea, while we respect and applaud the guilty participators in this murderous business on the enlightened shores of the Chesapeake. The inconsistency is so flagrant and glaring, that it would seem to cast a doubt on the doctrine of the innate moral sense of mankind.

Just two months after the sailing of the Virginia slave brig, which the reader has seen move off to sea so proudly with her human cargo for the New Orleans market, there chanced to meet, in the Marine Coffee-house at Richmond, a company of *ocean birds*, when the following conversation, which throws some

light on the subsequent history, not only of Madison Washington, but of the hundred and thirty human beings with whom we last saw him chained.

“I say, shipmate, you had rather rough weather on your late passage to Orleans?” said Jack Williams, a regular old salt, tauntingly, to a trim, compact, manly looking person, who proved to be the first mate of the slave brig in question.

“Foul play, as well as foul weather,” replied the firmly knit personage, evidently but little inclined to enter upon a subject which terminated so ingloriously to the captain and officers of the American slaver.

“Well, betwixt you and me,” said Williams, “that whole affair on board of the Creole was miserably and disgracefully managed. Those black rascals got the upper hand of ye altogether; and, in my opinion, the whole disaster was the result of ignorance of the real character of *darkies* in general. With half a dozen *resolute* white men, (I say it not boastingly,) I could have had the rascals in irons in ten minutes, not because I’m so strong, but I know how to manage ’em. With my back against the *caboose*, I could, myself, have flogged a dozen of them; and had I been on board, by every monster of the deep, every black devil of ’em all would have had his neck stretched from the yard-arm. Ye made a mistake in yer manner of fighting ’em. All that is needed in dealing with a set of rebellious *darkies*, is to show that yer not afraid of ’em. For my own part, I would not honor a dozen niggers by pointing a gun at one on ’em,—a good stout whip, or a stiff rope’s end, is better than all the guns at Old Point to quell a *nigger* insurrection. Why, sir, to take a gun to a *nigger* is the best way you can select to tell him you are afraid of him, and the best way of inviting his attack.”

This speech made quite a sensation among the company, and a part of them indicated solicitude for the answer which might be made to it. Our first mate replied, “Mr. Williams, all that you’ve now said sounds very well *here* on shore, where, perhaps, you have studied negro character. I do not profess to understand the subject as well as yourself; but it strikes me, you apply the same rule in dissimilar cases. It is quite easy to talk of flogging niggers here on land, where

you have the sympathy of the community, and the whole physical force of the government, State and national, at your command; and where, if a negro shall lift his hand against a white man, the whole community, with one accord, are ready to unite in shooting him down. I say, in such circumstances, it's easy to talk of flogging negroes and of negro cowardice; but, sir, I deny that the negro is, naturally, a coward, or that your theory of managing slaves will stand the test of *salt* water. It may do very well for an overseer, a contemptible hireling, to take advantage of fears already in existence, and which his presence has no power to inspire; to swagger about whip in hand, and discourse on the timidity and cowardice of negroes; for they have a smooth sea and a fair wind. It is one thing to manage a company of slaves on a Virginia plantation, and quite another thing to quell an insurrection on the lonely billows of the Atlantic, where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty. For the negro to act cowardly on shore, may be to act wisely; and I've some doubts whether *you*, Mr. Williams, would find it very convenient were you a slave in Algiers, to raise your hand against the bayonets of a whole government."

"By George, shipmate," said Williams, "you're coming rather *too* near. Either I've fallen very low in your estimation, or your notions of negro courage have got up a button-hole too high. Now I more than ever wish I'd been on board of that luckless craft. I'd have given ye practical evidence of the truth of my theory. I don't doubt there's some difference in being at sea. But a nigger's a nigger, on sea or land; and is a coward, find him where you will; a drop of blood from one on 'em will skeer a hundred. A knock on the nose, or a kick on the shin, will tame the wildest '*darkey*' you can fetch me. I say again, and will stand by it, I could, with half a dozen good men, put the whole nineteen on 'em in irons, and have carried them safe to New Orleans too. Mind, I don't blame you, but I do say, and every gentleman here will bear me out in it, that the fault was somewhere, or them niggers would never have got off as they have done. For my part I feel ashamed to have the idea go abroad, that a ship load of slaves can't be safely taken from Richmond to New Orleans. I should like, merely to redeem the

character of Virginia sailors, to take charge of a ship load on 'em to-morrow."

Williams went on in this strain, occasionally casting an imploring glance at the company for applause for his wit, and sympathy for his contempt of negro courage. He had, evidently, however, waked up the wrong passenger; for besides being in the right, his opponent carried that in his eye which marked him a man not to be trifled with.

"Well, sir," said the sturdy mate, "you can select your own method for distinguishing yourself;—the path of ambition in this direction is quite open to you in Virginia, and I've no doubt that you will be highly appreciated and compensated for all your valiant achievements in that line; but for myself, while I do not profess to be a giant, I have resolved never to set my foot on the deck of a slave ship, either as officer, or common sailor again; I have got enough of it."

"Indeed! indeed!" exclaimed Williams, derisively.

"Yes, *indeed*," echoed the mate; "but don't misunderstand me. It is not the high value that I set upon my life that makes me say what I have said; yet I'm resolved never to endanger my life again in a cause which my conscience does not approve. I dare say *here* what many men *feel*, but *dare not speak*, that this whole slave-trading business is a disgrace and scandal to Old Virginia."

"Hold! hold on! shipmate," said Williams, "I hardly thought you'd have shown your colors so soon,—I'll be hanged if you're not as good an abolitionist as Garrison himself."

The mate now rose from his chair, manifesting some excitement. "What do you mean, sir," said he, in a commanding tone. "*That man does not live who shall offer me an insult with impunity.*"

The effect of these words was marked; and the company clustered around. Williams, in an apologetic tone, said, "Shipmate! keep your temper. I meant no insult. We all know that Tom Grant is no coward, and what I said about your being an abolitionist was simply this: you *might* have put down them black mutineers and murderers, but your conscience held you back."

"In that, too," said Grant, "you were mistaken. I did all that any man with

equal strength and presence of mind could have done. The fact is, Mr. Williams, you underrate the courage as well as the skill of these negroes, and further, you do not seem to have been correctly informed about the case in hand at all.”

“All I know about it is,” said Williams, “that on the ninth day after you left Richmond, a dozen or two of the niggers ye had on board, came on deck and took the ship from you;—had her steered into a British port, where, by the by, every woolly head of them went ashore and was free. Now I take this to be a discreditable piece of business, and one demanding explanation.”

“There are a great many discreditable things in the world,” said Grant. “For a ship to go down under a calm sky is, upon the first flush of it, disgraceful either to sailors or caulkers. But when we learn, that by some mysterious disturbance in nature, the waters parted beneath, and swallowed the ship up, we lose our indignation and disgust in lamentation of the disaster, and in awe of the Power which controls the elements.”

“Very true, very true,” said Williams, “I should be very glad to have an explanation which would relieve the affair of its present discreditable features. I have desired to see you ever since you got home, and to learn from you a full statement of the facts in the case. To me the whole thing seems unaccountable. I cannot see how a dozen or two of ignorant negroes, not one of whom had ever been to sea before, and all of them were closely ironed between decks, should be able to get their fetters off, rush out of the hatchway in open daylight, kill two white men, the one the captain and the other their master, and then carry the ship into a British port, where every ‘*darkey*’ of them was set free. There must have been great carelessness, or cowardice somewhere!”

The company, which had listened in silence during most of this discussion, now became much excited. One said, I agree with Williams; and several said the thing looks black enough. After the temporary tumultuous exclamations had subsided,—

“I see,” said Grant, “how you regard this case, and how difficult it will be for me to render our ship’s company blameless in your eyes. Nevertheless, I will

state the facts precisely as they came under my own observation. Mr. Williams speaks of 'ignorant negroes,' and, as a general rule, they are ignorant; but had he been on board the *Creole* as I was, he would have seen cause to admit that there are exceptions to this general rule. The leader of the mutiny in question was just as shrewd a fellow as ever I met in my life, and was as well fitted to lead in a dangerous enterprise as any one white man in ten thousand. The name of this man, strange to say, (ominous of greatness,) was MADISON WASHINGTON. In the short time he had been on board, he had secured the confidence of every officer. The negroes fairly worshipped him. His manner and bearing were such, that no one could suspect him of a murderous purpose. The only feeling with which we regarded him was, that he was a powerful, good-disposed negro. He seldom spake to any one, and when he did speak, it was with the utmost propriety. His words were well chosen, and his pronunciation equal to that of any schoolmaster. It was a mystery to us *where* he got his knowledge of language; but as little was said to him, none of us knew the extent of his intelligence and ability till it was too late. It seems he brought three files with him on board, and must have gone to work upon his fetters the first night out; and he must have worked well at that; for on the day of the rising, he got the irons *off eighteen* besides himself.

“The attack began just about twilight in the evening. Apprehending a squall, I had commanded the second mate to order all hands on deck, to take in sail. A few minutes before this I had seen Madison's head above the hatchway, looking out upon the white-capped waves at the leeward. I think I never saw him look more good-natured. I stood just about midship, on the larboard side. The captain was pacing the quarter-deck on the starboard side, in company with Mr. Jameson, the owner of most of the slaves on board. Both were armed. I had just told the men to lay aloft, and was looking to see my orders obeyed, when I heard the discharge of a pistol on the starboard side; and turning suddenly around, the very deck seemed covered with fiends from the pit. The nineteen negroes were

all on deck, with their broken fetters in their hands, rushing in all directions. I put my hand quickly in my pocket to draw out my jack-knife; but before I could draw it, I was knocked senseless to the deck. When I came to myself, (which I did in a few minutes, I suppose, for it was yet quite light,) there was not a white man on deck. The sailors were all aloft in the rigging, and dared not come down. Captain Clarke and Mr. Jameson lay stretched on the quarter-deck,—both dying,—while Madison himself stood at the helm unhurt.

“I was completely weakened by the loss of blood, and had not recovered from the stunning blow which felled me to the deck; but it was a little too much for me, even in my prostrate condition, to see our good brig commanded by a *black murderer*. So I called out to the men to come down and take the ship, or die in the attempt. Suiting the action to the word, I started aft. ‘You murderous villain,’ said I, to the imp at the helm, and rushed upon him to deal him a blow, when he pushed me back with his strong, black arm, as though I had been a boy of twelve. I looked around for the men. They were still in the rigging. Not one had come down. I started towards Madison again. The rascal now told me to stand back. ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘your life is in my hands. I could have killed you a dozen times over during this last half hour, and could kill you now. You call me a *black murderer*. I am not a murderer. God is my witness that Liberty, not *malice*, is the motive for this night’s work. I have done no more to those dead men yonder, than they would have done to me in like circumstances. We have struck for our freedom, and if a true man’s heart be in you, you will honor us for the deed. We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, *so were they*.’

“I felt little disposition to reply to this impudent speech. By heaven, it disarmed me. The fellow loomed up before me. I forgot his blackness in the dignity of his manner, and the eloquence of his speech. It seemed as if the souls of both the great dead (whose names he bore) had entered him. To the sailors in the rigging he said: ‘Men! the battle is over,—your captain is dead. I have complete command of this vessel. All resistance to my authority will be in vain.

My men have won their liberty, with no other weapons but their own BROKEN FETTERS. We are nineteen in number. We do not thirst for your blood, we demand only our rightful freedom. Do not flatter yourselves that I am ignorant of chart or compass. I know both. We are now only about sixty miles from Nassau. Come down, and do your duty. Land us in Nassau, and not a hair of your heads shall be hurt.'

"I shouted, '*Stay where you are, men,*'—when a sturdy black fellow ran at me with a handspike, and would have split my head open, but for the interference of Madison, who darted between me and the blow. 'I know what you are up to,' said the latter to me. 'You want to navigate this brig into a slave port, where you would have us all hanged; but you'll miss it; before this brig shall touch a slave-cursed shore while I am on board, I will myself put a match to the magazine, and blow her, and be blown with her, into a thousand fragments. Now I have saved your life twice within these last twenty minutes,—for, when you lay helpless on deck, my men were about to kill you. I held them in check. And if you now (seeing I am your friend and not your enemy) persist in your resistance to my authority, I give you fair warning, YOU SHALL DIE.'

"Saying this to me, he cast a glance into the rigging where the terror-stricken sailors were clinging, like so many frightened monkeys, and commanded them to come down, in a tone from which there was no appeal; for four men stood by with muskets in hand, ready at the word of command to shoot them down.

"I now became satisfied that resistance was out of the question; that my best policy was to put the brig into Nassau, and secure the assistance of the American consul at that port. I felt sure that the authorities would enable us to secure the murderers, and bring them to trial.

"By this time the apprehended squall had burst upon us. The wind howled furiously,—the ocean was white with foam, which, on account of the darkness, we could see only by the quick flashes of lightning that darted occasionally from

the angry sky. All was alarm and confusion. Hideous cries came up from the slave women. Above the roaring billows a succession of heavy thunder rolled along, swelling the terrific din. Owing to the great darkness, and a sudden shift of the wind, we found ourselves in the trough of the sea. When shipping a heavy sea over the starboard bow, the bodies of the captain and Mr. Jameson were washed overboard. For awhile we had dearer interests to look after than slave property. A more savage thunder-gust never swept the ocean. Our brig rolled and creaked as if every bolt would be started, and every thread of oakum would be pressed out of the seams. To the pumps! to the pumps! I cried, but not a sailor would quit his grasp. Fortunately this squall soon passed over, or we must have been food for sharks.

“During all the storm, Madison stood firmly at the helm,—his keen eye fixed upon the binnacle. He was not indifferent to the dreadful hurricane; yet he met it with the equanimity of an old sailor. He was silent but not agitated. The first words he uttered after the storm had slightly subsided, were characteristic of the man. ‘Mr. mate, you cannot write the bloody laws of slavery on those restless billows. The ocean, if not the land, is free.’ I confess, gentlemen, I felt myself in the presence of a superior man; one who, had he been a white man, I would have followed willingly and gladly in any honorable enterprise. Our difference of color was the only ground for difference of action. It was not that his principles were wrong in the abstract; for they are the principles of 1776. But I could not bring myself to recognize their application to one whom I deemed my inferior.

“But to my story. What happened now is soon told. Two hours after the frightful tempest had spent itself, we were plump at the wharf in Nassau. I sent two of our men immediately to our consul with a statement of facts, requesting his interference in our behalf. What he did, or whither he did anything, I don’t know; but, by order of the authorities, a company of *black* soldiers came on board, for the purpose, as they said, of protecting the property. These impudent rascals, when I called on them to assist me in keeping the slaves on board,

sheltered themselves adroitly under their instructions only to protect property,— and said they did not recognize *persons* as *property*. I told them that by the laws of Virginia and the laws of the United States, the slaves on board were as much property as the barrels of flour in the hold. At this the stupid blockheads showed their *ivory*, rolled up their white eyes in horror, as if the idea of putting men on a footing with merchandise were revolting to their humanity. When these instructions were understood among the negroes, it was impossible for us to keep them on board. They deliberately gathered up their baggage before our eyes, and, against our remonstrances, poured through the gangway,—formed themselves into a procession on the wharf,—bid farewell to all on board, and, uttering the wildest shouts of exultation, they marched, amidst the deafening cheers of a multitude of sympathizing spectators, under the triumphant leadership of their heroic chief and deliverer, MADISON WASHINGTON.”

Frederick Douglass.

(1853)

# WENDELL PHILLIPS

from *Speech of Wendell Phillips at the Melodeon*

Youngest son of a prominent Boston family, the Harvard-educated Wendell Phillips (1811–1884) was inspired in 1837 by his new wife, Ann Terry Greene, to begin campaigning for abolition and women’s rights. A supporter of Garrison and radical immediate emancipation, Phillips was a forceful and relentless orator who also produced a stream of influential writings that included *The Constitution—A Pro-Slavery Compact* (1844) and *No Slave-Hunting in the Old Bay State* (1859). In this fiery speech delivered January 27, 1853, in Boston (reprinted the same year in London), Phillips denounced the South as “one great brothel” and warned slaveholders that “their sins are never to be forgotten.”

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WENDELL PHILLIPS came forward, and was received with loud cheering. He presented, from the Business Committee, the following resolution:—

*Resolved*, That the object of this Society is now, as it has always been, to convince our countrymen, by arguments addressed to their hearts and consciences, that Slaveholding is a heinous crime, and that the duty, safety, and interest of all concerned, demand its immediate abolition, without expatriation.

I WISH, Mr. Chairman, to notice some objections that have been made to our course, ever since Mr. GARRISON began his career, and which have been lately urged again, with considerable force and emphasis, in the columns of the *London Leader*, the able organ of a very respectable and influential class in England. I hope, Sir, you will not think it waste of time to bring such a subject before you. I know these objections have been made a thousand times; that they have been often answered; though we have generally submitted to them in silence, willing

to let results speak for us. But there are times when justice to the Slave will not allow us to be silent. There are many in this country, many in England, who have had their attention turned, recently, to the Anti-Slavery cause. They are asking, "which is the best and most efficient method of helping it?" Engaged ourselves in an effort for the Slave, which time has tested and success hitherto approved, we are, very properly, desirous that they should join us in our labors, and pour into this channel the full tide of their new zeal and great resources. Thoroughly convinced ourselves that our course is wise, we can honestly urge others to adopt it. Long experience gives us a right to advise. The fact that our course, more than all other efforts, has caused that agitation which has awakened these new converts, gives us a right to counsel them. They are our spiritual children: for their sakes, we would free the cause we love and trust from every seeming defect and plausible objection. For the Slave's sake, we reiterate our explanations, that he may lose no tittle of help by the mistakes or misconceptions of his friends.

All that I have to say on these points will be to you, Mr. Chairman, very trite and familiar; but the facts may be new to some, and I prefer to state them here, in Boston, where we have lived and worked, because if our statements are incorrect, if we claim too much, our assertions can be easily answered and disproved.

The charges to which I refer are these: That in dealing with Slaveholders and their apologists, we indulge in fierce denunciations, instead of appealing to their reason and common sense by plain statements and fair argument;—that we might have won the sympathies and support of the nation, if we would have submitted to argue this question with a manly patience; but instead of this, we have outraged the feelings of the community by attacks, unjust and unnecessarily severe, on its most valued institutions, and gratified our spleen by indiscriminate abuse of leading men, who were often honest in their intentions, however mistaken in their views;—that we have utterly neglected the ample means that lay around us to convert the nation, submitted to no discipline, formed no plan, been guided by no foresight, but hurried on in childish, reckless, blind, and hot-

headed zeal—bigots in the narrowness of our views, and fanatics in our blind fury of invective, and malignant judgment of other men's motives.

There are some who come upon our platform, and give us the aid of names and reputations less burdened than ours with popular odium, who are perpetually urging us to exercise charity in our judgments of those about us, and to consent to argue these questions. These men are ever parading their wish to draw a line between themselves and us, because *they must be permitted* to wait—to trust more to reason than feeling—to indulge a generous charity—to rely on the sure influence of simple truth, uttered in love, &c., &c. I reject with scorn all these implications that *our* judgments are uncharitable,—that *we* are lacking in patience,—that *we* have any other dependence than on the simple truth, spoken with Christian frankness yet with Christian love. These lectures, to which you, Sir, and all of us, have so often listened, would be impertinent, if they were not rather ridiculous for the gross ignorance they betray of the community, of the cause, and of the whole course of its friends.

The article in the *Leader* to which I refer is signed “ION,” and may be found in *The Liberator* of December 17, 1852. The writer is cordial and generous in his recognition of Mr. GARRISON's claim to be the representative of the Anti-Slavery movement, and does entire justice to his motives and character. The criticisms of ION were reprinted in the *Christian Register*, of this city, the organ of the Unitarian denomination. The editors of that paper, with their usual Christian courtesy, love of truth, and fair-dealing, omitted all ION's expressions of regard for Mr. GARRISON and appreciation of his motives, and reprinted only those parts of the article which undervalue his sagacity and influence, and endorse the common objections to his method and views. You will see in a moment, Mr. President, that it is with such men and presses, ION thinks Mr. GARRISON has not been sufficiently wise and patient, in trying to win their help for the Anti-Slavery cause. Perhaps, were he on the spot, it would tire even his patience and puzzle even his sagacity to make any other use of them than that of the drunken Helot—

a warning to others how disgusting mean vice is. Perhaps, were he here, he would see that the best and only use to be made of them is to let them unfold their own characters, and then show the world how rotten our Politics and Religion are, that they naturally bear such fruit. ION quotes Mr. GARRISON'S original declaration, in *The Liberator*:—

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I *will* be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.

It is *pretended* that I am retarding the cause of emancipation by the coarseness of my invective, and the precipitancy of my measures. *The charge is not true.* On this question, my influence, humble as it is, is felt at this moment to a considerable extent, and shall be felt in coming years—not perniciously, but beneficially—not as a curse, but as a blessing; and posterity will bear testimony that I was right. I desire to thank God that he enables me to disregard “the fear of man which bringeth a snare,” and to speak his truth in its simplicity and power.

He then goes on to say:—

This is a defence which has been generally accepted on this side of the Atlantic, and many are the Abolitionists among us whom it has encouraged in honesty and impotence; and whom it has converted into conscientious hindrances. \* \* \*

We would have Mr. GARRISON to say, “I will be as harsh as *progress*, as uncompromising as *success*.” If a man speaks for his own gratification, he may be as “harsh” as he pleases; but if he speaks for the down-trodden and oppressed, he must be content to put a curb upon the tongue of holiest passion, and speak only as harshly as is compatible with the amelioration of the evil he proposes to redress. Let the question be again repeated: Do you seek for the Slave vengeance or redress? If you seek retaliation, go on denouncing. But distant Europe honors WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, because it credits him with seeking for the Slave simply redress. We say, therefore, that “uncompromising” policy is not to be measured by absolute justice, but by practical amelioration of the Slave's condition. Amelioration as fast as you can get it—absolute justice as soon as you can reach it.

He quotes the sentiment of Confucius, that he would choose for a leader “a man who would maintain a steady vigilance in the direction of affairs; who was capable of forming plans, and of executing them,” and says:—

The philosopher was right in placing wisdom and executive capacity above courage; for down to this day, our popular movements are led by heroes who *fear* nothing, and who *win* nothing. \* \* \*

There is no question raised in these articles as to the work to be done, but only as to the mode of *really* doing it. The platform resounds with announcements of principle, which is but *asserting* a right, while nothing but contempt is showered on policy which is the *realization* of right. The air is filled with all high cries and spirited denunciations; indignation is at a premium; and this is called advocacy. \* \* \* But to calculate, to make sure of your aim, is to be decried as one who is too cold to feel, too genteel to strike.

Further on, he observes:—

If an artillery officer throws shell after shell which never reach the enemy, he is replaced by some one with a better eye and a surer aim. But in the artillery battle of opinion, *to mean* to hit is quite sufficient; and if you have a certain grand indifference as to whether you hit or not, you may count on public applause. \* \* \*

A man need be no less militant, as the soldier of facts, than as the agent of swords. But the arena of argument needs discipline no less than that of arms. It is this which the Anti-Slavery party seem to me not only to overlook, but to despise. They do not put their valor to drill. Neither on the field nor the platform has courage any inherent capacity of taking care of itself.

The writer then proceeds to make a quotation from Mr. EMERSON, the latter part of which I will read:—

Let us withhold every *reproachful*, and, if we can, every *indignant* remark. In this cause, we must renounce our temper and the risings of pride. If there be any man who thinks the ruin of a race of men a small matter compared with the last decorations and completions of his own comfort—who would not so much as part with his ice-cream to save them from rapine and manacles—I think I must not hesitate to satisfy *that* man, that also his cream and vanilla are safer and cheaper by placing the

negro nation on a fair footing than by robbing them. If the Virginian piques himself on the picturesque luxury of his vassalage, on the heavy Ethiopian manners of his house servants, their silent obedience, their hue of bronze, their turbaned heads, and would not exchange them for the more intelligent but precarious hired services of whites, I shall not refuse to show *him* that when their free papers are made out, it will still be their interest to remain on his estates; and that the oldest planters of Jamaica are convinced that it is cheaper to pay wages than to own Slaves.

The critic takes exception to Mr. GARRISON'S approval of the denunciatory language in which DANIEL O'CONNELL rebuked the giant sin of America, and concludes his article with this sentence:—

When WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON praises the great Celtic Monarch of invective for this dire outpouring, he acts the part of the boy who fancies that the terror is in the war-whoop of the savage, unmindful of the quieter muskets of the civilized infantry, whose unostentatious execution blows whoop and tomahawk to the devil.

Before passing to a consideration of these remarks of ION, let me say a word in relation to Mr. EMERSON. I do not consider him as endorsing any of these criticisms on the Abolitionists. His services to the most radical Anti-Slavery movement have been generous and marked. He has never shrunk from any odium which lending his name and voice to it would incur. Making fair allowance for his peculiar taste, habits, and genius, he has given a generous amount of aid to the Anti-Slavery movement, and never let its friends want his cordial "God-speed."

ION'S charges are the old ones, that we Abolitionists are hurting our own cause—that, instead of waiting for the community to come up to our views, and endeavoring to remove prejudice and enlighten ignorance, by patient explanation and fair argument, we fall at once, like children, to abusing everything and everybody—that we imagine zeal will supply the place of common sense—that we have never shown any sagacity in adapting our means to our ends, have never studied the national character, or attempted to make use of the materials

which lay all about us, to influence public opinion, but by blind, childish, obstinate fury and indiscriminate denunciation, have become “honestly impotent and conscientious hindrances.”

These, Sir, are the charges which have uniformly been brought against all reformers in all ages. Ion thinks the same faults are chargeable on the leaders of all the “popular movements” in England, which, he says, “are led by heroes who *fear* nothing, and who *win* nothing.” If the leaders of popular movements in Great Britain for the last fifty years have been *losers*, I should be curious to know what party, in ION’S opinion, have won? My Lord DERBY and his friends seem to think Democracy has made and is making dangerous headway. If the men who, by popular agitation, outside of Parliament, wrung from a powerful oligarchy Parliamentary Reform, and the Abolition of the Test Acts, of high Post Rates, of Catholic Disability, of Negro Slavery and the Corn Laws, did “not win anything,” it would be hard to say what winning is. If the men who, without the ballot, made PEEL their tool and conquered the DUKE OF WELLINGTON, are considered unsuccessful, pray what kind of a thing would success be? Those who now, at the head of that same middle class, demand the separation of Church and State, and the Extension of the Ballot, may well guess, from the fluttering of Whig and Tory dovecotes, that soon they will “win” that same “nothing.” Heaven grant they may enjoy the same *ill success* with their predecessors! On our side of the ocean, too, we ought deeply to sympathize with the leaders of the Temperance movement in their entire want of success! If ION’S mistakes about the Anti-Slavery cause lay as much on the surface as those I have just noticed, it would be hardly worth while to reply to him; for as to these, he certainly exhibits only “the extent and variety of his mis-information.”

His remarks upon the Anti-Slavery movement are, however, equally inaccurate. I claim, before you who know the true state of the case, I claim for the Anti-Slavery movement with which this Society is identified, that, looking back over its whole course, and considering the men connected with it in the

mass, it has been marked by sound judgment, unerring foresight, the most sagacious adaptation of means to ends, the strictest self-discipline, the most thorough research, and an amount of patient and manly argument addressed to the conscience and intellect of the nation, such as no other cause of the kind, in England or this country, has ever offered. I claim, also, that its course has been marked by a cheerful surrender of all individual claims to merit or leadership—the most cordial welcoming of the slightest effort, of every honest attempt to lighten or to break the chain of the Slave. I need not waste time by repeating the superfluous confession that we are men, and therefore do not claim to be perfect. Neither would I be understood as denying that we use denunciation, and ridicule, and every other weapon that the human mind knows. We must plead guilty, if there be guilt in not knowing how to separate the sin from the sinner. With all the fondness for abstractions attributed to us, we are not yet capable of that. We are fighting a momentous battle at desperate odds—one against a thousand. Every weapon that ability or ignorance, wit, wealth, prejudice or fashion can command, is pointed against us. The guns are shotted to their lips. The arrows are poisoned. Fighting against such an array, we cannot afford to confine ourselves to any one weapon. The cause is not ours, so that we might, rightfully, postpone or put in peril the victory by moderating our demands, stifling our convictions, or filing down our rebukes, to gratify any sickly taste of our own, or to spare the delicate nerves of our neighbor. Our clients are three million of Slaves, standing dull suppliants at the threshold of the Christian world. They have no voice but ours to utter their complaints, or to demand justice. The press, the pulpit, the wealth, the literature, the prejudices, the political arrangements, the present self-interest of the country, are all against us. God has given us no weapon but the truth, faithfully uttered, and addressed, with the old prophet's directness, to the conscience of the individual sinner. The elements which control public opinion and mould the masses are against us. We can but pick off here and there a man from the triumphant majority. We have facts for those who think—arguments for those who reason; but he who cannot be reasoned out of

his prejudices, must be laughed out of them; he who cannot be argued out of his selfishness, must be shamed out of it by the mirror of his hateful self held up relentlessly before his eyes. We live in a land where every man makes broad his phylactery, inscribing thereon, “All men are created equal”—“God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” It seems to us that in such a land there must be, on this question of Slavery, sluggards to be awakened as well as doubters to be convinced. Many more, we verily believe, of the first, than of the last. There are far more dead hearts to be quickened, than confused intellects to be cleared up—more dumb dogs to be made to speak, than doubting consciences to be enlightened. (Loud cheers.) We have use, then, sometimes, for something beside argument.

What is the denunciation with which we are charged? It is endeavoring, in our faltering human speech, to decare the enormity of the sin of making merchandise of men—of separating husband and wife—taking the infant from its mother, and selling the daughter to prostitution—of a professedly Christian nation denying, by statute, the Bible to every sixth man and woman of its population, and making it illegal for “two or three” to meet together, except a white man be present! What is this harsh criticism of motives with which we are charged? It is simply holding the intelligent and deliberate actor responsible for the character and consequences of his acts. Is there anything inherently wrong in such denunciation or such criticism? This we may claim—we have never judged a man but out of his own mouth. We have seldom, if ever, held him to account, except for acts of which he and his own friends were proud. All that we ask the world and thoughtful men to note are the principles and deeds on which the American pulpit and American public men plume themselves. We always allow our opponents to paint their own pictures. Our humble duty is to stand by and assure the spectators, that what they would take for a knave or a hypocrite is really, in American estimation, a Doctor of Divinity or Secretary of State.\*

The South is one great brothel, where half a million of women are flogged to prostitution, or, worse still, are degraded to believe it honorable. The public

squares of half our great cities echo to the wail of families torn asunder at the auction-block—no one of our fair rivers that has not closed over the negro seeking in death a refuge from a life too wretched to bear—thousands of fugitives skulk along our highways, afraid to tell their names, and trembling at the sight of a human being—free men are kidnapped in our streets, to be plunged into that hell of Slavery, and now and then one, as if by miracle, after long years, returns to make men aghast with his tale. The Press says, “It is all right;” and the Pulpit cries, “Amen.” We print the Bible in every tongue in which man utters his prayers—and get the money to do so, by agreeing never to give the book, in the language our mothers taught us, to any negro, free or bond, South of Mason and Dixon’s line. The Press says, “It is all right;” and the Pulpit cries, “Amen.” The Slave lifts up his imploring eyes, and sees in every face, but ours, the face of an enemy. Prove to me now that harsh rebuke, indignant denunciation, scathing sarcasm, and pitiless ridicule, are wholly and always unjustifiable; else we dare not, in so desperate a case, throw away any weapon which ever broke up the crust of an ignorant prejudice, roused a slumbering conscience, shamed a proud sinner, or changed, in any way, the conduct of a human being. Our aim is to alter public opinion. Did we live in a market, our talk should be of dollars and cents, and we would seek to prove only that Slavery was an unprofitable investment. Were the nation one great, pure Church, we would sit down and reason of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” Had Slavery fortified itself in a College, we would load our cannons with cold facts, and wing our arrows with arguments. But we happen to live in the world—the world made up of thought and impulse, of self-conceit and self-interest, of weak men and wicked. To conquer, we must reach all. Our object is not to make every man a Christian or a philosopher, but to induce every one to aid in the abolition of Slavery. We expect to accomplish our object long before the nation is made over into saints, or elevated into philosophers. To change public opinion, we use the very tools by which it was formed. That is, all such as an honest man may touch.

All this I am not only ready to allow, but I should be ashamed to think of

the Slave, or to look into the face of my fellow-man, if it were otherwise. It is the only thing that justifies us to our own consciences, and makes us able to say we have done, or at least tried to do, our duty.

So far, however you distrust my philosophy, you will not doubt my statements. That we have denounced and rebuked with unsparing fidelity will not be denied. Have we not also addressed ourselves to that other duty, of arguing our question thoroughly—of using due discretion and fair sagacity in endeavoring to promote our cause? Yes, we have. Every statement we have made has been doubted. Every principle we have laid down has been denied by overwhelming majorities against us. No one step has ever been gained but by the most laborious research and the most exhausting argument. And no question has ever, since Revolutionary days, been so thoroughly investigated or argued here, as that of Slavery. Of that research and that argument, of the whole of it, the old-fashioned, fanatical, crazy, Garrisonian Anti-Slavery movement has been the author. From this band of men has proceeded every important argument or idea that has been broached on the Anti-Slavery question from 1830 to the present time. (Cheers.) I am well aware of the extent of the claim I make. I recognise, as fully as any one can, the ability of the new laborers—the eloquence and genius with which they have recommended this cause to the nation, and flashed conviction home on the conscience of the community. I do not mean, either, to assert that they have in every instance borrowed from our treasury their facts and arguments. Left to themselves, they would probably have looked up the one, and originated the other. As a matter of fact, however, they have generally made use of the materials collected to their hands. But there are some persons about us, sympathizers, to a great extent, with ION, who pretend that the Anti-Slavery movement has been hitherto mere fanaticism, its only weapon angry abuse. They are obliged to assert this, in order to justify their past indifference or hostility. At present, when it suits their purpose to give it some attention, they endeavor to explain the change by alleging that now it has been taken up by men of

thoughtful minds, and its claims are urged by fair discussion and able argument. My claim, then, is this: that neither the charity of the most timid of sects, the sagacity of our wisest converts, nor the culture of the ripest scholars, though all have been aided by our twenty years' experience, has yet struck out any new method of reaching the public mind, or originated any new argument or train of thought, or discovered any new fact bearing on the question. When once brought fully into the struggle, they have found it necessary to adopt the same means, to rely on the same arguments, to hold up the same men and the same measures to public reprobation, with the same bold rebuke and unsparing invective that we have used. All their conciliatory bearing, their pains-taking moderation, their constant and anxious endeavor to draw a broad line between their camp and ours, have been thrown away. Just so far as they have been effective laborers, they have found, as we have, their hands against every man, and every man's hand against them. The most experienced of them are ready to acknowledge that our plan has been wise, our course efficient, and that our unpopularity is no fault of ours, but flows necessarily and unavoidably from our position. "I should suspect," says old FULLER, "that his preaching had no salt in it, if no galled horse did wince." Our friends find, after all, that men do not so much hate us as the truth we utter and the light we bring. They find that the community are not the honest seekers after truth which they fancied, but selfish politicians and sectarian bigots, who shiver, like Alexander's butler, whenever the sun shines on them. Experience has driven these new laborers back to our method. We have no quarrel with them—would not steal one wreath of their laurels. All we claim is, that if they are to be complimented as prudent, moderate, Christian, sagacious, statesmanlike reformers, we deserve the same praise; for they have done nothing that we, in our measures, did not attempt before. (Cheers.)

I claim this, that the cause, in its recent aspect, has put on nothing but timidity. It has taken to itself no new weapons of recent years; it has become more compromising—that is all! It has become neither more persuasive, more

learned, more Christian, more charitable, nor more effective, than for the twenty years preceding. Mr. HALE, the head of the Free Soil movement, after a career in the Senate that would do honor to any man—after a six years' course which entitles him to the respect and confidence of the Anti-Slavery public—can put his name, within the last month, to an appeal from the city of Washington, signed by a HOUSTON and a CASS, for a monument to be raised to HENRY CLAY! If that be the test of charity and courtesy, we cannot give it to the world. (Loud cheers.) Some of the leaders of the Free Soil party of Massachusetts, after exhausting the whole capacity of our language to paint the treachery of DANIEL WEBSTER to the cause of liberty, and the evil they thought he was able and seeking to do;—after that, could feel it in their hearts to parade themselves in the funeral procession got up to do him honor! In this we allow we cannot follow them. The deference which every gentleman owes to the proprieties of social life, that self-respect and regard to consistency which is every man's duty, these, if no deeper feelings, will ever prevent us from giving such proofs of this newly-invented Christian courtesy. (Great cheering.) We do not *play* politics; Anti-Slavery is no half-jest with us; it is a terrible earnest, with life or death, worse than life or death, on the issue. It is no law-suit, where it matters not to the good feeling of opposing counsel which way the verdict goes, and where advocates can shake hands after the decision as pleasantly as before. When we look upon such a man as HENRY CLAY, his long life, his mighty influence cast always into the scale against the Slave; of that irresistible fascination with which he moulded every one to his will; when we remember that, his conscience acknowledging the justice of our cause, and his heart open on every other side to the gentlest impulses, he could sacrifice so remorselessly his convictions and the welfare of millions to his low ambition; when we think how the Slave trembled at the sound of his voice, and that, from a multitude of breaking hearts, there went up nothing but gratitude to God when it pleased Him to call that great sinner from this world,—we cannot find it in our hearts, we could not shape our lips to ask any

man to do him honor. (Great sensation.) No amount of eloquence, no sheen of official position, no loud grief of partisan friends, would ever lead us to ask for monuments or walk in fine processions for pirates; and the sectarian zeal or selfish ambition which gives up, deliberately and in full knowledge of the facts, three million of human beings to hopeless ignorance, daily robbery, systematic prostitution, and murder, which the law is neither able nor undertakes to prevent or avenge, is more monstrous, in our eyes, than the love of gold which takes a score of lives with merciful quickness on the high seas. HAYNAU on the Danube is no more hateful to us than HAYNAU on the Potomac. Why give mobs to one, and monuments to the other?

If these things be necessary to courtesy, I cannot claim that we are courteous. We seek only to be honest men, and speak the same of the dead as of the living. If the grave that hides their bodies could swallow also the evil they have done and the example they leave, we might enjoy at least the luxury of forgetting them. But the evil that men do lives after them, and Example acquires tenfold authority when it speaks from the grave. History, also, is to be written. How shall a feeble minority, without weight or influence in the country, with no jury of millions to appeal to,—denounced, vilified, and contemned,—how shall we make way against the overwhelming weight of some colossal reputation, if we do not turn from the idolatrous Present, and appeal to the Human Race; saying to your idols of to-day, “Here we are defeated, but we will write our judgment with the iron pen of a century to come, and it shall never be forgotten, if we can help it, that you were false in your generation to the claims of the Slave!” (Loud cheers.)

At present, our leading men, strong in the support of large majorities, and counting safely on the prejudices of the community, can afford to despise us. They know they can overawe or cajole the present; their only fear is the judgment of the future. Strange fear, perhaps, considering how short and local their fame! But however little, it is their all. Our only hold upon them is the

thought of that bar of posterity, before which we are all to stand. Thank God! there is the elder brother of the Saxon race across the water—there is the army of honest men to come! Before that jury we summon you. We are weak here—out-talked, out-voted. You load our names with infamy, and shout us down. But our words bide their time. We warn the living that we have terrible memories, and that their sins are never to be forgotten. We will gibbet the name of every apostate so black and high that his children’s children shall blush to bear it. Yet we bear no malice—cherish no resentment. We thank God that the love of fame, “that last infirmity of noble mind,” is shared by the ignoble. In our necessity, we seize this weapon in the Slave’s behalf, and teach caution to the living by meting out relentless justice to the dead. How strange the change death produces in the way a man is talked about here! While leading men live, they avoid as much as possible all mention of Slavery, from fear of being thought Abolitionists. The moment they are dead, their friends rake up every word they ever contrived to whisper in a corner for liberty, and parade it before the world; growing angry, all the while, with us, because we insist on explaining these chance expressions by the tenor of a long and base life. While drunk with the temptations of the present hour, men are willing to bow to any Moloch. When their friends bury them, they feel what bitter mockery, fifty years hence, any epitaph will be, if it cannot record of one living in this era, some service rendered to the Slave! These, Mr. Chairman, are the reasons why we take care that “the memory of the wicked shall rot.”

(January 27, 1853)

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\* A paragraph from the *New England Farmer*, of this city, has gone the rounds of the Press, and is generally believed. It says:—

“We learn, on reliable authority, that Mr. WEBSTER confessed to a warm political friend, a short time before his death, that the great mistake of his life was the famous seventh of March speech, in which, it will

be remembered, he defended the Fugitive Slave Law, and fully committed himself to the Compromise measures. Before taking his stand on that occasion, he is said to have corresponded with Prof. STUART and other eminent divines, to ascertain how far the religious sentiment of the North would sustain him in the position he was about to assume.”

Some say this “warm political friend” was a clergyman! Consider a moment the language of this statement, the form it takes on every lip and in every press. “The great *mistake* of his life”! Seventy years old, brought up in New England churches, with all the culture of the world at his command, his soul melted by the repeated loss of those dearest to him, a great statesman, with a heart, according to his admirers, yet tender and fresh, one who bent in such agony over the death-bed of his first daughter—he looks back on this Speech, which his friends say changed the feelings of ten millions of people, and made it possible to enact and execute the Fugitive Slave Law. He sees that it flooded the hearthstones of thousands of colored men with wretchedness and despair—crazed the mother, and broke the heart of the wife—putting the virtue of woman and the liberty of man in the power of the vilest—and all, as he at least now saw, for nothing. Yet one, who, according to his worshippers, was “the grandest growth of our soil and our institutions,” looked back on such an act, and said what? With one foot in the grave, said what of it? “I did wrong”? “I committed a foul outrage on my brother man”? “I sported too carelessly with the welfare of the poor”? Was there no moral chord in that heart, “the grandest growth of our soil and our institutions”? No! He said, “I made a mistake!” Not, “I was false in my stewardship of these great talents and this high position!” No! But on the chess-board of the political game, I made a bad move! I threw away my chances! A gambler, I did not understand my cards! And to whom does he offer this acknowledgment? To a clergyman! the representative of the moral sense of the community! What a picture! We laugh at the lack of heart in TALLEYRAND, when he says, “It is worse than a crime, a blunder.” Yet all our New Englander can call this momentous crime of his life is, a *mistake*!

Whether this statement be entirely true or not, we all know it is exactly the tone in which all about us talk of that Speech. If the statement be true, what an entire want of right feeling and moral sensibility it shows in Mr. WEBSTER! If it be unfounded, still the welcome it has received, and the ready belief it has gained, show the popular appreciation of him, and of such a crime. Such is the public with whom Abolitionists have to deal.

# MARY B. HARLAN

from *Ellen, or The Chained Mother*

No information survives about Mary B. Harlan (fl. 1853–1855), but her novel provoked an angry response from defenders of slavery. A reviewer in the Philadelphia weekly magazine *Bizarre, for Fireside and Wayside* labeled it “another negro romance or ‘tomitude’” and accused Harlan of merely following in “the cloven foot-tracks of Stoweism.” The reviewer goes on to predict that such antislavery literature will lead to a national “insurrection, which will incarnadine the memory of ‘Uncle Tom,’ and consign its author to an infamy greater than that which attaches to the name of Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot.” The scene reprinted here is the tragic denouement of Ellen’s story, when unbeknownst to her, the child she lost when she was sold south is buried far away, in a grave she will never see.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE BURIAL.

WE WILL now leave the mother in the gay metropolis of the South, and return to Kentucky, that we may look for a while after the child.

One extremely hot Sabbath afternoon, about the middle of August, some groups of slaves were seen standing near the same kitchen from which the mother had been driven away in chains. An empty cradle stood in the yard, with its little bed and quilts scattered around on the grass. The creaking door stood wide open. In this dilapidated abode, Cyrena, the half blind cook, was still groping about at her work as in former years. Having a little respite from her toils, she was now sitting in a corner, smoking her pipe, and conversing with a neighbor woman who sat in an opposite corner. Three or four more women and some girls were sitting, with Sal, near the door. At the foot of Cyrena’s bed, on a rough plank, supported by some chairs, lay the corpse of an infant. It was the

little Billy, that had long since been left, as in a state of orphanage. Poor Ellen! when forced away from her child, in that last farewell embrace dedicated him to God, and he had kindly taken him from the evils to come. A sturdy negro man now entered with a little white pine box on his shoulder, which he sat down on the rough floor beside the corpse. Two women went up and raised the coarse sheet which enveloped the form of the little sleeper, and there lay the child arrayed in a white muslin dress and a lace cap which his mother had left him.

“How sweet he looks!” said Sal, weeping, while the negroes crowded around. “I wish his mother could see him, but she don’t know nothin’ about him now.”

“O how cruel it was!” said Cyrena, “to take its mother ’way from it. Poor thing! he neber got ober it; he jes bin pinin’ eber since. I thinks I’ll neber be done hearin’ on him scream. He was too young to git ’long widout his mamma. Me and Sal, we done our best for de poor thing, and we jess fed him, we did, and kep tryin’ to git him to eat and grow, and look thrivin’—but no; he kep on pinin’ and gittin’ wusser, and he jes natally die, in spite ob us. But, poor child, he’s dead now,” and she wiped the tears from her withered face.

Two women now laid the corpse in the little box and covered it over with a piece of white muslin. The negro man then nailed down the lid, and, taking this plain coffin on his shoulder, proceeded to the grave-yard, followed by a train of negroes. They went their way through a field that was grown up with weeds and briars, till they came to the back fence, and crossing this, they went on and came at length to a spot of ground that was too poor and rough for cultivation. They stopped here by some nameless graves that were over-grown by the wild briar. Some scrub oaks and dogwood shaded this lonely spot, and here, amid the gravel and yellow clay, a grave was dug for little Billy. It was a rough grave, but to the innocent little sleeper it was soft and pleasant as a bed of down. As the negro man approached and set the coffin down upon the brink of the grave, the whole company collected, and looked silently on, while the coffin was let down into the vault. The grave was now filled up, but there was no mother to weep as the

clods rattled upon the coffin-lid. After the little mound was heaped up and smoothed, an old negro man came forward, and taking off his hat, commenced reading the following hymn!

“And must this body die,  
    This well-wrought frame decay;  
And must these active limbs of mine,  
    Lie mouldering in the clay?

“Corruption, earth and worms  
    Shall but refine this flesh;  
Till my triumphant spirit comes,  
    To put it on afresh.

“God, my Redeemer lives,  
    And ever from the skies,  
Looks down and watches all my dust,  
    Till he shall bid it rise.

“Arrayed in glorious grace,  
    Shall these vile bodies shine,  
And every shape and every face,  
    Be heavenly and divine.

“These lively hopes we owe,  
    Lord, to thy dying love,  
O, may we bless thy grace below,  
    And sing thy praise above!”

## SOLOMON NORTHUP

from *Twelve Years a Slave, Narrative of Solomon Northup*

What makes the story of Solomon Northup (1808–c. 1863) unique as a slave narrative is that until his abduction while in Washington D.C. in 1841, he had lived his whole life a northern-born free man who owned property and was even registered to vote in his hometown of Saratoga Springs, New York. He spent twelve hellish years on plantations in the bayou country of Louisiana before managing to secretly send a letter to friends back home who, after months of effort, secured Northup's freedom. Though court proceedings did not lead to any convictions or compensation for Northup, he earned \$3,000 from the publication of his *Narrative*, with which he purchased a farm for his family. In this passage, Northup presents a detailed sketch of the sadistic slave master Edwin Epps that is almost mesmerizing in its graphic horror.

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During the two years Epps remained on the plantation at Bayou Huff Power, he was in the habit, as often as once in a fortnight at least, of coming home intoxicated from Holmesville. The shooting-matches almost invariably concluded with a debauch. At such times he was boisterous and half-crazy. Often he would break the dishes, chairs, and whatever furniture he could lay his hands on. When satisfied with his amusement in the house, he would seize the whip and walk forth into the yard. Then it behooved the slaves to be watchful and exceeding wary. The first one who came within reach felt the smart of his lash. Sometimes for hours he would keep them running in all directions, dodging around the corners of the cabins. Occasionally he would come upon one unawares, and if he succeeded in inflicting a fair, round blow, it was a feat that much delighted him. The younger children, and the aged, who had become inactive, suffered then. In the midst of the confusion he would slyly take his stand behind a cabin, waiting with raised whip, to dash it into the first black face

that peeped cautiously around the corner.

At other times he would come home in a less brutal humor. Then there must be a merry-making. Then all must move to the measure of a tune. Then Master Epps must needs regale his melodious ears with the music of a fiddle. Then did he become buoyant, elastic, gaily “tripping the light fantastic toe” around the piazza and all through the house.

Tibeats, at the time of my sale, had informed him I could play on the violin. He had received his information from Ford. Through the importunities of Mistress Epps, her husband had been induced to purchase me one during a visit to New-Orleans. Frequently I was called into the house to play before the family, mistress being passionately fond of music.

All of us would be assembled in the large room of the great house, whenever Epps came home in one of his dancing moods. No matter how worn out and tired we were, there must be a general dance. When properly stationed on the floor, I would strike up a tune.

“Dance, you d—d niggers, dance,” Epps would shout.

Then there must be no halting or delay, no slow or languid movements; all must be brisk, and lively, and alert. “Up and down, heel and toe, and away we go,” was the order of the hour. Epps’ portly form mingled with those of his dusky slaves, moving rapidly through all the mazes of the dance.

Usually his whip was in his hand, ready to fall about the ears of the presumptuous thrall, who dared to rest a moment, or even stop to catch his breath. When he was himself exhausted, there would be a brief cessation, but it would be very brief. With a slash, and crack, and flourish of the whip, he would shout again, “Dance, niggers, dance,” and away they would go once more, pell-mell, while I, spurred by an occasional sharp touch of the lash, sat in a corner, extracting from my violin a marvelous quick-stepping tune. The mistress often upbraided him, declaring she would return to her father’s house at Cheneyville; nevertheless, there were times she could not restrain a burst of laughter, on witnessing his uproarious pranks. Frequently, we were thus detained until almost

morning. Bent with excessive toil—actually suffering for a little refreshing rest, and feeling rather as if we could cast ourselves upon the earth and weep, many a night in the house of Edwin Epps have his unhappy slaves been made to dance and laugh.

Notwithstanding these deprivations in order to gratify the whim of an unreasonable master, we had to be in the field as soon as it was light, and during the day perform the ordinary and accustomed task. Such deprivations could not be urged at the scales in extenuation of any lack of weight, or in the cornfield for not hoeing with the usual rapidity. The whippings were just as severe as if we had gone forth in the morning, strengthened and invigorated by a night's repose. Indeed, after such frantic revels, he was always more sour and savage than before, punishing for slighter causes, and using the whip with increased and more vindictive energy.

Ten years I toiled for that man without reward. Ten years of my incessant labor has contributed to increase the bulk of his possessions. Ten years I was compelled to address him with down-cast eyes and uncovered head—in the attitude and language of a slave. I am indebted to him for nothing, save undeserved abuse and stripes.

Beyond the reach of his inhuman thong, and standing on the soil of the free State where I was born, thanks be to Heaven, I can raise my head once more among men. I can speak of the wrongs I have suffered, and of those who inflicted them, with upraised eyes. But I have no desire to speak of him or any other one otherwise than truthfully. Yet to speak truthfully of Edwin Epps would be to say—he is a man in whose heart the quality of kindness or of justice is not found. A rough, rude energy, united with an uncultivated mind and an avaricious spirit, are his prominent characteristics. He is known as a “nigger breaker,” distinguished for his faculty of subduing the spirit of the slave, and priding himself upon his reputation in this respect, as a jockey boasts of his skill in managing a refractory horse. He looked upon a colored man, not as a human being, responsible to his Creator for the small talent entrusted to him, but as a

“chattel personal,” as mere live property, no better, except in value, than his mule or dog. When the evidence, clear and indisputable, was laid before him that I was a free man, and as much entitled to my liberty as he—when, on the day I left, he was informed that I had a wife and children, as dear to me as his own babes to him, he only raved and swore, denouncing the law that tore me from him, and declaring he would find out the man who had forwarded the letter that disclosed the place of my captivity, if there was any virtue or power in money, and would take his life. He thought of nothing but his loss, and cursed me for having been born free. He could have stood unmoved and seen the tongues of his poor slaves torn out by the roots—he could have seen them burned to ashes over a slow fire, or gnawed to death by dogs, if it only brought him profit. Such a hard, cruel, unjust man is Edwin Epps.

*(1853)*

# ANNIE PARKER

## *Passages in the Life of a Slave Woman*

Nothing is known of Annie Parker (fl. 1852–1853) except that she published an antislavery poem, “Story Telling,” in 1852 and wrote this short story for *Autographs for Freedom* in 1853. Possibly she was a former slave; she tells this tale, charged with incest and gothic intrigue, in the voice of a household slave who unravels the mystery, but never divulges the family’s secret.

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“THE SLAVES at Oak Grove did not mourn for poor Elsie when she died,” said aunt Phillis, continuing her narrative. “She was never a favorite, and from the time her beauty attracted the notice of the young master, and he began to pet her, she grew prouder and prouder, and treated the other slaves as if she were their mistress, rather than their equal. They hated her for her influence over the master, and she knew it, and that made matters worse between them.

When she died in giving birth to her second child, her little boy and I were the only ones who felt any sorrow. The master had grown tired of her, though he had once been very fond of her. Besides, he was at this time making arrangements for his marriage with a beautiful Northern lady, so that whatever he might have felt, nobody knew anything about it.

Elsie was my younger sister. I loved her dearly, and had been almost as proud as she was of her remarkable beauty. Her little boy was very fond of his mother, and she doated upon him. He mourned and mourned for her, after her death, till I almost thought he would die too. He was a beautiful boy, and at that time looked very much like his father, which was probably the reason why the master sold him, before he brought his bride to Oak Grove.

It was very hard for me to part with poor Elsie’s little boy. But the master chose to sell him, and my tears availed nothing. Zilpha, Elsie’s infant, was given

me to take care of when her mother died, and with that I was obliged to be content.

Marion Lee, the young mistress, was very beautiful, but as different from poor Elsie as light from darkness. She had deep blue eyes, with long silken lashes, and a profusion of soft brown hair. She always made me think of a half-blown rosebud, she was so delicate and fair. She proved a kind and gentle mistress. All the slaves loved her, as well they might, for she did everything in her power to make them comfortable and happy.

When she came to Oak Grove, she chose me to be her waiting-maid. Zilpha and I occupied a large pleasant room next to her dressing-room.

She made a great pet of Zilpha. No one ever told her that she was her husband's child. No one would have dared to tell her, even if she had not been too much beloved, for any one to be willing to grieve her, as the knowledge of this fact must have done.

In due time she, too, had a little girl, beautiful like herself. Zilpha was delighted with the baby. She never wearied of kissing its tiny hands, and talking to it in her sweet coaxing tones. Mrs. Lee said Zilpha should be Ida's little maid. The children, accordingly, grew up together, and when they were old enough to be taught from books, everything that Ida learned, Zilpha learned also.

When Zilpha was seventeen, she was more beautiful than her mother had ever been, and she was as gentle and loving as Elsie had been passionate and proud. There was a beautiful, pleading look in her large dark eyes, when she lifted the long lashes so that you could see into their clear depths. She was graceful as a young fawn, and playful as a kitten, and she had read and studied so many books, that *I* thought she knew almost as much as the master himself.

Mr. Minturn lived at Lilybank, the estate joining Oak Grove. He was an old friend of Mr. Lee, and the families were very intimate. About this time a relative of Mrs. Minturn died at the far South, and left her a large number of slaves. I don't know how they were *all* disposed of, but one of the number, a very handsome young man, named Jerry, was brought to Lilybank, and became Mr.

Minturn's coachman. He was considered a great prize, for he had a large muscular frame, and was capable of enduring a great amount of bodily fatigue. He was, also, for a slave, very intelligent, and from being at first merely the coachman, he soon became the confidential servant of his master.

Owing to the intimacy between the heads of the two families, the young people of both were much together. Ida often spent whole days at Lilybank, and as Zilpha always accompanied her, she had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the new man Jerry.

It so happened that I, being more closely confined by my duties at home, had never seen Jerry, when in the summer following his coming to Lilybank, Mrs. Lee went to visit her friends at the North, and took me with her. Ida and Zilpha remained at home. We were gone three months. A few days after our return, Zilpha told me that she was soon to be married to Jerry. The poor child was very happy. She had evidently given him her whole heart. We talked long that day, for I wanted to know how it had been brought about, and she told me all, with the simplicity and artlessness of a child. They had felt great anxiety lest their masters should oppose the marriage. But that fear was removed. Mr. Lee had himself proposed it, and Mr. Minturn gladly consented. I rejoiced to see my darling so happy, and felt truly thankful to God that the warm love of her heart had not been blighted.

That same evening Jerry came to see Zilpha. She called me immediately, for I had never seen him, and she wished us to meet. The moment I looked upon his face, I knew he was my poor Elsie's son. I grew sick and faint, and thought I should have fallen.

Zilpha made me sit down, and brought me a glass of water, wondering all the time, poor thing, what had made me ill so suddenly. I soon recovered sufficiently to remember that I must not betray the cause of my agitation. I did not speak much, but watched Jerry's face as closely as I could, without arresting their attention. Every moment strengthened the conviction that my suspicion was correct. There was the same proud look that Elsie had, the same flashing eye,

and slightly curled lip, and when he carelessly brushed back the hair from his forehead, I saw a scar upon it, which I knew was caused by a fall but a little while before his mother died. O God! I thought, what will become of my darling child!

I soon left the room, on the pretence that my mistress wanted me, but really that I might shut myself into my own room and think. I did not close my eyes that night, and when the morning dawned, I was as far as ever from knowing what I ought to do. At last I resolved to see the master as early as I could, and tell him all.

After breakfast I went to the library to fetch a book for my mistress, and found the master there. He was reading, but looked up as I entered, and said kindly, "What do you wish for, Phillis?" I named the book my mistress wanted. He told me where it was. I took it from the shelf, and stood with it in my hand. The opportunity which I desired had come, but I trembled from head to foot, and had no power to speak. I don't know how I ever found words to tell him that Jerry was his own child. I tried, afterwards, to remember what I said, but I could not recall a word. He turned deadly pale, and sat for some minutes silent. At length in a low, husky voice, he said, "You will not be likely to speak of this, and it is well, for it must not be known. I shall satisfy myself if what you have told me is true. If I find that it is, I shall know what to do. You may go."

I took the book to my mistress, and was sent by her to find Zilpha. She was in the garden with Ida, and when I called her, she came bounding towards me with such a bright, happy face, that I could scarcely restrain my tears. Zilpha was a beautiful reader. She often read aloud to her mistress, by the hour together. I liked to take my sewing and sit with them at such times, but that day I was glad to shut myself up alone in my room.

The next day the master sent for me to the library. "It is true, Phillis," he said to me, "Jerry is without doubt poor Elsie's child." If an arrow had pierced my heart at that moment, I could not have felt worse, for though I had thought I was sure it was so, all the while a hope was lingering in my heart that I was

mistaken. I did not speak, and the master seeing how I trembled, kindly told me to sit down, and went on; "I did not see Jerry myself," he said, "Mr. Minturn made all necessary inquiries for me. Jerry remembers his mother, and describes her in a way that admits of no mistake. He remembers, too, that a gentleman used sometimes to visit his mother, who took a great deal of notice of him, and would let him sit upon his lap and play with his watch seals. His mother used to be very happy when this gentleman came, and when he went away she would almost smother the little boy with kisses, and talk to him of his papa. I offered to buy Jerry, but Mr. Minturn would not part with him. If he would have consented, I might easily have disposed of the whole matter."

A horrible fear took possession of me at these words. Would he *dare* to sell my darling Zilpha? The thought almost maddened me. Scarce knowing what I did, I threw myself on my knees before him, and begged him not to think a second time of selling his own flesh and blood. He angrily bade me rise, and not meddle with that in which I had no concern. That he had a right, which he should exercise, to do what he would with his own. He had thought it proper, he said, to tell me what I had just heard, but charged me never again to name the subject to any living being, and not to let any one suspect from my appearance that anything unusual had occurred. With this he dismissed me.

What I suffered during that dreadful week, is known only to God. I could neither eat nor sleep. It seemed to me I should lose my reason.

Jerry came once to Oak Grove, but I would not see him. Zilpha I avoided as much as possible. I could not bear to look upon her innocent happiness, knowing as I did that it would soon be changed into unspeakable misery.

The first three days the master was away from home. On Thursday he returned. When I chanced to meet him, he looked uneasy; and if he came to his wife's room and found me with her, he would make some excuse for sending me away.

Saturday was a beautiful bright October day, and Ida proposed to Zilpha that they should take their books and spend the forenoon in the woods. They

went off in high spirits. I thought I had never seen my Zilpha look so lovely. Love and happiness had added a softer grace to her whole being. I followed them to the door, and she kissed me twice before leaving me; then looking back, when she had gone a little way, and seeing me still standing there, she threw a kiss to me with her little hand, and looked so bright and joyous, that my aching heart felt a new pang of sorrow. What was it whispered to me then that I should never see her again?

I went back to my work, and presently the master came and asked for Ida. He wished her to ride with him. I told him where she was, and he went in search of her. Zilpha did not come back with them. "We told her to stay if she wished," Ida said. But my heart misgave me. I should at once have gone in search of her, but Mrs. Lee wanted me, and I could not go.

I cannot bear, even now, to recall the events of that day. My worst fears were realized. During my master's absence, he had sold my darling to a Southern trader, who only waited a favorable opportunity to take her away without the knowledge of the family. He had been that morning with Mr. Lee, and was in the house when Mr. Lee returned with Ida from the woods.

I don't know how the master ever satisfied his wife and Ida about Zilpha's disappearance. There was a report that she had run away. But I don't think they believed it. Certainly *I* never did.

I almost forgot my own sorrow when I saw how poor Jerry felt when he knew what had happened. Of course he did not know what I did. He *never* knew why Zilpha was sent away, but he knew she was sold, and that there was little reason to hope he should ever see her again. He went about his work as usual, but there was a look in his eye which made one tremble.

Before many days he was missing, and though his master searched the country, and took every possible means to find him, he could discover no trace of the fugitive. I felt satisfied he had followed the North Star, but I said nothing, and was glad the poor fellow had gone from what would constantly remind him of Zilpha.

During the following winter, Mrs. Lee had a dangerous illness. I watched over her night and day, and when she recovered, my master was so grateful for what I had done, that he gave me my freedom, and money enough to bring me to the North.

Of Zilpha's fate I have been able to learn nothing. I can only leave her with God, who though his vengeance is long delayed, hears and treasures up every sigh and tear of his poor slave-children.

I saw, a few days since, a man who knows Jerry. He is living not many miles from me, and I shall try to see him before I die. But I shall never tell him the whole extent of the wrongs he suffered in slavery.

*Annie Parker.*

(1853)

# JOHN PIERPONT

## *Ode*

Still indignant, like many New Englanders, that in April 1851 Boston police had seized the escaped slave Thomas Sims under the Fugitive Slave Law and transported him back to Georgia, Pierpont invokes the patriotism of the Revolutionary War generation to hint that it may again be time for civil disobedience. (In 1863, Sims escaped to the Union lines near Vicksburg, and returned to Boston.)

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Sung at the celebration of the First Anniversary of the kidnapping, at Boston, of Thomas Sims, a fugitive slave:—the kidnapping done under the forms of law, and by its officers, 12 April 1851. The deed *celebrated* at the Melodeon, Boston, 12 April 1852.

Souls of the patriot dead,  
On Bunker's height who bled!  
    The pile, that stands  
On your long-buried bones,—  
Those monumental stones,—  
Should not suppress the groans,  
    This day demands.

For Freedom there ye stood;  
There gave the earth your blood;  
    There found your graves;  
That men of every clime,  
Faith, color, tongue, and time,  
Might, through your death sublime,  
    Never be slaves.

Over your bed, so low,  
Heard ye not, long ago,  
    A voice of power\*  
Proclaim to earth and sea,  
That, where ye sleep, should be  
A home for Liberty,  
    Till Time's last hour?

Hear ye the chains of slaves,  
Now clanking round your graves?  
    Hear ye the sound  
Of that same voice, that calls  
From out our Senate halls,\*  
“Hunt down those fleeing thralls,  
    With horse and hound!”

That voice your sons hath swayed!  
'Tis heard, and is obeyed!  
    This gloomy day  
Tells you of ermine stained,  
Of Justice' name profaned,  
Of a poor bondman, chained  
    And borne away!

Over Virginia's Springs,  
Her eagles spread their wings,  
    Her Blue Ridge towers:—  
That voice,†—once heard with awe,—  
Now asks,—“Who ever saw,  
Up there, a higher law  
    Than this of ours?”

Must we obey that voice?  
When God, or man's the choice,  
    Must we postpone  
HIM, who from Sinai spoke?  
Must we wear slavery's yoke?  
Bear of her lash the stroke,  
    And prop her throne?

Lashed with her hounds, must we  
Run down the poor, who flee  
    From Slavery's hell?  
Great God! when we *do* this,  
Exclude us from thy bliss;  
At us let angels hiss,  
    From heaven that fell!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely reading 'D. Webster', with a decorative flourish underneath.

(1853)

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\* Daniel Webster's oration, at the laying the corner-stone of Bunker Hill Monument, 17 June 1825.

\* Daniel Webster's speech in the Senate of the U. S. 7 March 1850.

† Daniel Webster's speech at the Capron Springs, Virginia, 1851.

# WILLIAM H. SEWARD

## *Be Up and Doing*

A lawyer and career politician, William H. Seward (1801–1872) was by turns governor of New York, U.S. senator, and secretary of state under Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. In 1853, he was one of the leading antislavery voices in the Senate. In this optimistic essay, published in the abolitionist collection *Autographs for Freedom*, Seward favors moral suasion and personal enlightenment over legal compulsion as the means to end slavery. His aversion to war was even greater than Lincoln's, but he served Lincoln loyally in his Civil War cabinet. He supported the Thirteenth Amendment but sided with Andrew Johnson in his opposition to Radical Reconstruction after the war.

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**C**AN NOTHING be done for Freedom? Yes, much can be done. Everything can be done. Slavery can be confined within its present bounds. It can be meliorated. It can be, and it must be abolished. The task is as simple as its performance would be beneficent and as its rewards would be glorious. It requires only that we follow this plain rule of conduct and course of activity, namely, to do, everywhere, and on every occasion what we can, and not to neglect nor refuse to do what we can at any time, because at that precise time and on that particular occasion we cannot do more. Circumstances define possibilities. When we have done our best to shape them and to make them propitious, we may rest satisfied that superior wisdom has, nevertheless, controlled them and us, and that it will be satisfied with us if we do all the good that shall then be found possible.

But we can, and we must begin deeper and lower than the composition and combination of factions. Wherein do the security and strength of slavery consist? You answer, in the constitution of the United States, and in the constitutions and laws of the slave-holding States. Not at all. It is in the erroneous sentiments of

the American people. Constitutions and laws can no more rise above the virtue of the people than the limped stream can climb above its native spring. Inculcate the love of freedom and the sacredness of the rights of man under the paternal roof. See to it, that they are taught in the schools and in the churches. Reform your own codes and expurgate the vestiges of slavery. Reform your own manners and customs and rise above the prejudices of caste. Receive the fugitive who lays his weary limbs at your door, and defend him as you would your household gods, for he, not they, has power to bring down blessings on your hearth. Correct your error that slavery has any constitutional guarantee that may not be released, and that ought not to be relinquished. Say to slavery, when it shows its bond and demands its pound of flesh, that if it draws one drop of blood its life shall pay the forfeit. Inculcate that the free States can exercise the rights of hospitality and humanity, that Congress knows no finality and can debate, that Congress can at least mediate with the slave-holding States, that at least future generations may be bought and given up to freedom. Do all this, and inculcate all this, in the spirit of moderation and benevolence, and not of retaliation and fanaticism, and you will ultimately bring the parties of this country into a common condemnation and even the slave-holding States themselves into a renunciation of slavery, which is not less necessary for them than for the common security and welfare. Whenever the public mind shall be prepared, and the public conscience shall demand the abolition of slavery the way to do it will open before us, and then mankind will be surprised at the ease with which the greatest of social and political evils can be removed.

*William A. Seward.*

(1853)

# HORACE GREELEY

## *The Domestic Slave Trade*

The New Hampshire–born self-educated newspaperman Horace Greeley (1811–1872) achieved his greatest fame as the founder of the highly influential *New York Tribune*, which he edited from 1841 to 1872. From the 1840s on, Greeley maintained a steadily antislavery stance in the *Tribune*. The piece reprinted here consists of an exchange of letters with a southern slaveholder. Along with his ready wit, it conveys Greeley’s deep indignation at the self-serving rationalizations proffered by apologists for slavery. When Lincoln was elected in 1860, Greeley was ambivalent about secession, but once the Civil War began he pushed hard for Union victory.

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WARREN Co., (Miss.) Sept. 28, 1854.

*Hon.* HORACE GREELEY, *New York City*:

My object in addressing you these lines is this: I own a negro girl named Catharine, a bright mulatto, aged between 28 and 30 years, who is intelligent and beautiful. The girl wishes to obtain her freedom and reside in either Ohio or New York State; and, to gratify her desire, I am willing to take the sum of \$1,000, which the friends of Liberty will no doubt make up. Catharine, as she tells me, was born near Savanna, Ga., and was a daughter of a Judge Hopkins, and at the age of 7 years, accompanied her young mistress (who was a legitimate daughter of the Judge’s) on a visit to New Orleans, where she (the legitimate) died.—Catharine was then seized and sold by the Sheriff of New Orleans, under attachment, to pay the debts contracted in the city by her young mistress, and was purchased by a Dutchman named Shinoski. Shinoski, being pleased with the young girl’s looks, placed her in a quadroon school and gave her a good education. The girl can read and write as well or better than myself, and speaks the Dutch and French languages almost to perfection. When the girl attained the

age of 18, Shinoski died, and she was again sold, and fell into a trader's hands, by the name of John Valentine, a native of your State. Valentine brought her up to Warrenton, where I purchased her, in 1844, for the sum of \$1,150. Catharine is considered the best seamstress and cook in this county, (Warren,) and I could to-morrow sell her for \$1,600, but I prefer letting her go for \$1,000, so that she may obtain her freedom. She has had opportunities to get to a free State and obtain her freedom, but she says that she will never run away to do it. Her father she says promised to free her, and so did Shinoski. If I was able, I would free her without any compensation, but losing \$15,000 on the last Presidential election has taken very near my all.

Mr. Geo. D. Prentice, editor of *the Louisville (Ky.) Journal*, knows me very well by character, to whom (if you wish to make any inquiries regarding this matter) you are at liberty to refer.

If you should make any publication in your paper in relation to this matter, you will please NOT mention my name in connexion with it, nor *the place* whence this letter was written. Catharine is honest; and, for the ten years that I have owned her, I never struck her a lick, about her work or anything else.

If it was not that I intend to emigrate to California, money could not buy her.

I have given you a complete and accurate statement concerning this girl, and am willing that she shall be examined here or in Louisville, Ky., before the bargain is closed.

Very respectfully,

THOS. K. KNOWLAND

Post-Office, Warrenton, Miss.

*Reply.*

Mr. K. I have carried your letter of the 28th ult. in my hat for several days, awaiting an opportunity to answer it. I now seize the first opportune moment, and, as yours is one of a class with which I am frequently favored, I will send

you my reply through THE TRIBUNE, wishing it regarded as a general answer to all such applications.

Let me begin by frankly stating that I am not engaged in the Slave Trade, and do not now contemplate embarking in that business; but no man can say confidently what he may or may not become; and, if I ever should engage in the traffic you suggest, it will be but fair to remember you as among my prompters to undertake it. Yet even then I must decline any such examination as you proffer of the property you wish to dispose of. Your biography is so full and precise, so frank and straight forward, that I prefer to rest satisfied with your assurance in the premises.

You will see that I have disregarded your request that your name and residence should be suppressed by me. That request seems to me inspired by a modesty and self-sacrifice unsuited to the Age of Brass we live in. Are you not seeking to do a humane and generous act? Are you not proposing to tax yourself \$600 in order to raise an intelligent, capable, deserving woman from Slavery to Freedom? Are you not proposing to do this in a manner perfectly lawful and unobjectionable, involving no surrender or compromise of "Southern Rights?" My dear Sir! such virtue must not be allowed to "blush unseen." Our age needs the inspiration of heroic examples, and those who would "do good by stealth, and blush to find it Fame," must—by gentle violence, if need be—stand revealed to an amazed, admiring world.—True, it might (and might not) have been still more astounding but for your unlucky gambling on the last Presidential Election, wherein it is hard to tell whether you who lost your money or those who won their President were most unfortunate. I affectionately advise you both never to do so again.

—And now as to this daughter of the late Judge Hopkins of Savannah, Ga., whom you propose to sell me:

I cannot now remember that I have ever heard Slavery justified on any ground which did not assert or imply that *it is the best condition for the negro.*

The blacks you are daily told cannot take care of themselves, but sink into idleness, debauchery, squalid poverty and utter brutality, the moment the master's sustaining rule and care are withdrawn. If this is true, how dare you turn this poor dependent, for whose well-being you are responsible, over to me, who neither would nor could exert a master's control over her? If this slave ought not to be set at liberty, why do you ask me to bribe you with \$1,000 to do her that wrong? If she ought to be, why should I pay you \$1,000 for doing your duty in the premises? *You* hold a peculiar and responsible relation to her, through your own voluntary act, but *I* am only related to her through Adam, the same as to every Esquemux, Patagonian or New Zelander. Whatever may be *your* duty in the premises, why should I be called on to help you discharge it?

Full as your account of this girl is, you say nothing of her children, though such she undoubtedly has, whether they be also those of her several masters, as she was, or their fathers were her fellow-slaves. If she is liberated and comes North, what is to become of them? How is she to be reconciled to leaving them in slavery? How can we be assured that the masters who own or to whom you will sell them before leaving for California, will prove as humane and liberal as you are?

You inform me that "the friends of Liberty" in New-York or hereabout, "will no doubt make up" the \$1,000 you demand, in order to give this daughter of a Georgia Judge her freedom. I think and trust you misapprehend them. For though they have, to my certain knowledge, under the impulse of special appeals to their sympathies and in view of peculiar dangers or hardships, paid a great deal more money than they could comfortably spare (few of them being rich) to buy individual slaves out of bondage, yet their judgement has never approved such payments of tribute to man-thieves, and every day's earnest consideration causes it to be regarded with less and less favor. For it is not the snatching of here and there a person from Slavery, at the possible rate of one for every thousand increase of our slave population, that they desire, but the overthrow and extermination of *the slaveholding system*; and this end, they realize, is rather

hindered than helped by their buying here and there a slave into freedom. If by so buying ten thousand a year, at cost of Ten Millions of Dollars, they should confirm you and other slaveholders in the misconception that Slavery is regarded without abhorrence by intelligent Christian freemen at the North, they would be doing great harm to their cause and injury to their fellow-Christians in bondage. You may have heard, perhaps, of the sentiment proclaimed by Decatur to the Slaveholders of the Barbary Coast—"Millions for defense—not a cent for 'tribute!'"—and perhaps also of its counterpart in the Scotch ballad—

"Instead of broad pieces, we'll pay them broadswords"—

but "the friends of Liberty" in this quarter will fight her battle neither with lead nor steel—much less with gold. Their trust is in the might of Opinion—in the resistless power of Truth where Discussion is untrammelled and Commercial Intercourse constant—in the growing Humanity of our age—in the deepening sense of Common Brotherhood—in the swelling hiss of Christendom and the just benignity of God. In the earnest faith that these must soon eradicate a wrong so gigantic and so palpable as Christian Slavery, they serenely await the auspicious hour which must surely come.

Requesting you, Mr. K., *not* to suppress my name in case you see fit to reply to this, and to be assured that I write no letter that I am ashamed of, I remain,

Yours, so-so,

HORACE GREELEY.

Mr. T. K. Knowland, Warrenton, Miss.

# THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

## from *Massachusetts in Mourning*

Minister, author, and radical reformer Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911) was an ardent abolitionist from the beginning of his adult life. Active in the New England antislavery movement and on behalf of fugitive slaves, Higginson traveled to Kansas in 1856 to bring weapons and aid to free-state settlers. He organized a Disunion Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1857, and he was one of the “Secret Six” who backed John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. In 1862 he took command of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, a regiment of freed slaves, and later wrote about his experiences in *Army life in a Black Regiment* (1870). In the bleak and angry sermon excerpted below, Higginson despairs of political reform and seems to advocate civil disobedience, even violence, to defy the slave powers. After a prodigious career, he lived long enough to welcome the ideas of W.E.B. Du Bois and the founding of the NAACP.

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The nation is intoxicated and depraved. It takes all the things you count as influential,—all the “spirit of the age,” and the “moral sentiment of Christendom,” and the best eloquence and literature of the time,—to balance the demoralization of a single term of Presidential patronage. Give the offices of the nation to be controlled by the Slave Power, and I tell you that there is not one in ten, even of professed Anti-Slavery men, who can stand the fire in that furnace of sin; and there is not a plot so wicked but it will have, like all its predecessors, a sufficient majority when the time comes.

Do you doubt this? Name, if you can, a victory of Freedom, or a defeat of the Slave Power, within twenty years, except on the right of petition, and even that was only a recovery of lost ground. Do you say, the politicians are false, but the people mark the men who betray them! True, they mark them, but as merchants mark goods, with the cost price, that they may raise the price a little

when they want to sell the same article again. You must go back to the original Missouri Compromise, if you wish to prove that even Massachusetts punishes traitors to Freedom, by any severer penalty than a seat on her Supreme Bench. For myself, I do not believe in these Anti-Slavery spasms of our people, for the same reason that Coleridge did not believe in ghosts, because I have seen too many of them myself. I remember when our Massachusetts delegation in Congress, signed a sort of threat that the State would withdraw from the Union if Texas came in, but it never happened. I remember the State Convention at Faneuil Hall in 1845, where the lion and the lamb lay down together, and George T. Curtis and John G. Whittier were Secretaries; and the Convention solemnly pronounced the annexation of Texas to be “the overthrow of the Constitution, the bond of the existing Union.” I remember how one speaker boasted that if Texas was voted in by joint resolution, it might be voted out by the same. But somehow, we have never mustered that amount of resolution; and when I hear of State Street petitioning for the repeal of its own Fugitive Slave Law, I remember the lesson.

For myself, I do not expect to live to see that law repealed by the votes of politicians at Washington. It can only be repealed by ourselves, upon the soil of Massachusetts. For one, I am glad to be deceived no longer. I am glad of the discovery—(no hasty thing, but gradually dawning upon me for ten years)—that I live under a despotism. I have lost the dream that ours is a land of peace and order. I have looked thoroughly through our “Fourth of July,” and seen its hollowness; and I advise you to petition your City Government to revoke their appropriation for its celebration, (or give the same to the Nebraska Emigration Society,) and only toll the bells in all the churches, and hang the streets in black from end to end. O shall we hold such ceremonies when only some statesman is gone, and omit them over dead Freedom, whom all true statesmen only live to serve!

At any rate my word of counsel to you is to learn this lesson thoroughly—*a revolution is begun!* not a Reform, but a Revolution. If you take part in politics

henceforward, let it be only to bring nearer the crisis which will either save or sunder this nation—or perhaps save in sundering. I am not very hopeful, even as regards you; I know the mass of men will not make great sacrifices for Freedom, but there is more need of those who will. I have lost faith forever in numbers; I have faith only in the constancy and courage of a “forlorn hope.” And for aught we know, a case may arise, this week, in Massachusetts, which may not end like the last one.

Let us speak the truth. Under the influence of Slavery, we are rapidly relapsing into that state of barbarism in which every man must rely on his own right hand for his protection. Let any man yield to his instinct of Freedom, and resist oppression, and his life is at the mercy of the first drunken officer who orders his troops to fire. For myself, existence looks worthless under such circumstances; and I can only make life worth living for, by becoming a revolutionist. The saying seems dangerous; but why not say it if one means it, as I certainly do. I respect law and order, but as the ancient Persian sage said, “*always* to obey the laws, virtue must relax much of her vigor.” I see, now, that while Slavery is national, law and order must constantly be on the wrong side. I see that the case stands for me precisely as it stands for Kossuth and Mazzini, and I must take the consequences.

Do you say that ours is a Democratic Government, and there is a more peaceable remedy? I deny that we live under a Democracy. It is an oligarchy of Slaveholders, and I point to the history of a half century to prove it. Do you say, that oligarchy will be propitiated by submission? I deny it. It is the plea of the timid in all ages. Look at the experience of our own country. Which is most influential in Congress—South Carolina, which never submitted to anything, or Massachusetts, with thrice the white population, but which always submits to everything? I tell you, there is not a free State in the Union which would dare treat a South Carolinian as the State treated Mr. Hoar; or, if it had been done, the Union would have been divided years ago. The way to make principles felt is to assert them—peaceably, if you can; forcibly, if you must. The way to promote

Free Soil is to have your own soil free; to leave courts to settle constitutions, and to fall back (for your own part,) on first principles: then it will be seen that you mean something. How much free territory is there beneath the Stars and Stripes? I know of four places—Syracuse, Wilkesbarre, Milwaukee, and Chicago: I remember no others. “Worcester,” you say. Worcester has not yet been tried. If you think Worcester County is free, say so and act accordingly. Call a County Convention, and declare that you leave legal quibbles to lawyers, and parties to politicians, and plant yourselves on the simple truth that God never made a Slave, and that man shall neither make nor take one here! Over your own city, at least, you have power; but will you stand the test when it comes? Then do not try to avoid it. For one thing only I blush—that a Fugitive has ever fled from here to Canada. Let it not happen again, I charge you, if you are what you think you are. No longer conceal Fugitives and help them on, but show them and defend them. Let the Underground Railroad stop here! Say to the South that Worcester, though a part of a Republic, shall be as free as if ruled by a Queen! *Hear, O Richmond! and give ear, O Carolina! henceforth Worcester is Canada to the Slave!* And what will Worcester be to the kidnapper? I dare not tell; and I fear that the poor sinner himself, if once recognized in our streets, would scarcely get back to tell the tale.

I do not discourage more peaceable instrumentalities; would to God that no other were ever needful. Make laws, if you can, though you have State processes already, if you had officers to enforce them; and, indeed, what can any State process do, except to legalize nullification? Use politics, if you can make them worth using, though a coalition administration proved as powerless, in the Sims case, as a Whig administration has proved now. But the disease lies deeper than these remedies can reach. It is all idle to try to save men by law and order, merely, while the men themselves grow selfish and timid, and are only ready to talk of Liberty, and risk nothing for it. Our people have no active physical habits; their intellects are sharpened, but their bodies, and even their hearts, are left untrained; they learn only (as a French satirist once said,) the fear of God and the

love of money; they are taught that they owe the world nothing, but that the world owes them a living, and so they make a living; but the fresh, strong spirit of Liberty droops and decays, and only makes a dying. I charge you, parents, do not be so easily satisfied; encourage nobler instincts in your children, and appeal to nobler principles; teach your daughter that life is something more than dress and show, and your son that there is some nobler aim in existence than a good bargain, and a fast horse, and an oyster supper. Let us have the brave, simple instincts of Circassian mountaineers, without their ignorance; and the unfaltering moral courage of the Puritans, without their superstition; so that we may show the world that a community may be educated in brain without becoming cowardly in body; and that a people without a standing army may yet rise as one man, when Freedom needs defenders.

May God help us to redeem this oppressed and bleeding State, and to bring this people back to that simple love of Liberty, without which it must die amidst its luxuries, like the sad nations of the elder world. May we gain more iron in our souls, and have it in the right place;—have soft hearts and hard wills, not as now, soft wills and hard hearts. Then will the iron break the Northern iron and the steel no longer; and “God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!” will be at last a hope fulfilled.

*(1854)*

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## *from Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois*

A frontier lawyer and one-term congressman from 1847 to 1849, Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) was spurred to reenter public life by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. For those who would later interpret his First Inaugural Address as a sign of his indifference to slavery, Lincoln’s speech at Peoria is an essential corrective. Speaking in response to Senator Stephen Douglas’s three-hour oration, Lincoln made clear how fundamentally slavery, in his view, plagued America.

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I particularly object to the new position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes that there CAN be MORAL RIGHT in the enslaving of one man by another. I object to it as a dangerous dalliance for a free people—a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity we forget right—that liberty, as a principle, we have ceased to revere. I object to it because the fathers of the republic eschewed, and rejected it. The argument of “Necessity” was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery; and so far, and so far only as it carried them, did they ever go. They found the institution existing among us, which they could not help; and they cast blame upon the British King for having permitted its introduction. BEFORE the constitution, they prohibited its introduction into the north-western Territory—the only country we owned, then free from it. AT the framing and adoption of the constitution, they forbore to so much as mention the word “slave” or “slavery” in the whole instrument. In the provision for the recovery of fugitives, the slave is spoken of as a “PERSON HELD TO SERVICE OR LABOR.” In that prohibiting the abolition of the African slave trade for twenty years, that trade is spoken of as “The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States NOW EXISTING, shall think proper to admit,” &c. These are the only provisions alluding to

slavery. Thus, the thing is hid away, in the constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer, which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death; with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at the end of a given time. Less than this our fathers COULD not do; and MORE they WOULD not do. Necessity drove them so far, and farther, they would not go. But this is not all. The earliest Congress, under the constitution, took the same view of slavery. They hedged and hemmed it in to the narrowest limits of necessity.

In 1794, they prohibited an out-going slave-trade—that is, the taking of slaves from the United States to sell.

In 1798, they prohibited the bringing of slaves from Africa, INTO the Mississippi Territory—this territory then comprising what are now the States of Mississippi and Alabama. This was TEN YEARS before they had the authority to do the same thing as to the States existing at the adoption of the constitution.

In 1800 they prohibited AMERICAN CITIZENS from trading in slaves between foreign countries—as, for instance, from Africa to Brazil.

In 1803 they passed a law in aid of one or two State laws, in restraint of the internal slave trade.

In 1807, in apparent hot haste, they passed the law, nearly a year in advance, to take effect the first day of 1808—the very first day the constitution would permit—prohibiting the African slave trade by heavy pecuniary and corporal penalties.

In 1820, finding these provisions ineffectual, they declared the trade piracy, and annexed to it, the extreme penalty of death. While all this was passing in the general government, five or six of the original slave States had adopted systems of gradual emancipation; and by which the institution was rapidly becoming extinct within these limits.

Thus we see, the plain unmistakable spirit of that age, towards slavery, was hostility to the PRINCIPLE, and toleration, ONLY BY NECESSITY.

But NOW it is to be transformed into a “sacred right.” Nebraska brings it

forth, places it on the high road to extension and perpetuity; and, with a pat on its back, says to it, "Go, and God speed you." Henceforth it is to be the chief jewel of the nation—the very figure-head of the ship of State. Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giving up the OLD for the NEW faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the OTHER declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a "sacred right of self-government." These principles can not stand together. They are as opposite as God and mammon; and whoever holds to the one, must despise the other. When Pettit, in connection with his support of the Nebraska bill, called the Declaration of Independence "a self-evident lie" he only did what consistency and candor require all other Nebraska men to do. Of the forty odd Nebraska Senators who sat present and heard him, no one rebuked him. Nor am I apprized that any Nebraska newspaper, or any Nebraska orator, in the whole nation, has ever yet rebuked him. If this had been said among Marion's men, Southerners though they were, what would have become of the man who said it? If this had been said to the men who captured André, the man who said it, would probably have been hung sooner than André was. If it had been said in old Independence Hall, seventy-eight years ago, the very door-keeper would have throttled the man, and thrust him into the street.

Let no one be deceived. The spirit of seventy-six and the spirit of Nebraska, are utter antagonisms; and the former is being rapidly displaced by the latter.

Fellow countrymen—Americans south, as well as north, shall we make no effort to arrest this? Already the liberal party throughout the world, express the apprehension "that the one retrograde institution in America, is undermining the principles of progress, and fatally violating the noblest political system the world ever saw." This is not the taunt of enemies, but the warning of friends. Is it quite safe to disregard it—to despise it? Is there no danger to liberty itself, in discarding the earliest practice, and first precept of our ancient faith? In our

greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware, lest we “cancel and tear to pieces” even the white man’s charter of freedom.

Our republican robe is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of “moral right,” back upon its existing legal rights, and its arguments of “necessity.” Let us return it to the position our father gave it; and there let it rest in peace. Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it. Let north and south—let all Americans—let all lovers of liberty everywhere—join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving. We shall have so saved it, that the succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up, and call us blessed, to the latest generations.

*(October 16, 1854)*

## MARY HAYDEN GREEN PIKE

from *Ida May: A Story of Things Actual and Possible*

Born into a Maine family of abolitionists and married to the future Republican congressman Frederick Augustus Pike, Mary Hayden Green Pike (1824–1908) was inspired by the success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to attempt her own antislavery novel. The result was *Ida May*, an immediate success that sold sixty thousand copies within two years and went through multiple editions in Britain and the United States. In the chilling passage excerpted here, a band of child-snatching slave traders hold six terrified black children in a cave as they prepare to head south and sell them.

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The joints of this door were concealed by the strips of board that had been taken down, and it opened directly into the cave, which was spacious, dry, and well ventilated by a large aperture in the roof. This opening, which had evidently been formed by the same stream of water that originally hollowed out the cave, led, by a winding subterranean course, nearly to the top of the mountain, where it had a small outlet under a flat rock; and the sound of human voices, the neighing of horses, the shouts of laughter, and the screams of distress, which, thus mysteriously conducted, had been sometimes heard around that spot by the solitary wood-cutter or huntsman, had given the whole vicinity an evil name. There were few who ascended the mountain, even by day, without a thrill of superstitious fear, and not a man in all the country round would have lingered upon it after dark; so that the unearthly horror which had gradually invested the place was an additional shield to the perpetrators of these deeds of wickedness.

In one side of the cavern a few rude stalls had been constructed, and here the three horses of the kidnappers were tied, while, on the other side, huddled together on a heap of straw, were six negro children, who had been stolen within a few months from different parts of the country, and brought here for safe-

keeping, until a sufficient number were collected to fill the wagon, and make it worth while to proceed southward with them. It was pitiable to see the condition to which these children had been reduced by their confinement in this dark place, and the discipline that Chloe had found necessary to make them docile and fit them for the condition of slavery into which they were to be sold. True, they had been fed daily with wholesome food, and taken out separately for exercise, under the care of their jailer, who knew that her masters wished to find them in good saleable condition; but being seldom washed, they were all more or less dirty and ragged, and in their faces the careless gayety of childhood had given place to the cowering expression of abject terror. They had evidently been well “broken in,” and would make no opposition to whatever fate might await them.

“Well now, my little dears,” said Bill, ironically, as he held the candle close to their faces, “a’n’t ye tired stayin’ in this dark place? Won’t ye like a little ride by way of variety?”

The children shrank together, as if for protection, but made no reply, until one of them ventured to ask, in a timid whisper,

“Will you take us home?”

“No, my little dears,” replied Bill, “could n’t do that nohow; ’t would n’t be convenient jest now. Besides, we ’re goin’ to do better than that for ye; we ’re goin’ to *sell* ye to some nice man, that ’ll be kind enough to larn ye what yer ought to do, and take care o’ yer; and yer can’t think how much better off ye ’ll be than if yer was to home, where ye ’d have no good master, nor be nothin’ but a poor devil of a free nigger when ye got growed up. Yer can’t think how happy yer ’ll be. We be your real benefactors; ’t a’n’t many folks ’t would take the pains we does, all for nothin’ hardly but your good. Yer ought to be thankful to us, instead o’ snivellin’ that way. But folks is allers ongrateful in this world, especially niggers,” he added, rolling up his eyes, and laying his hand on the place where his heart was supposed to be, with a gesture of mock humility and resignation. Chloe laughed aloud, but Kelly, who was not in a mirthful mood, said gruffly, “Come, now, stop your foolin’. We ’ve got some work to do to-

night, and the sooner we 're at it, the better.”

“Foolin! me foolin’!” said Bill; “I never was so serious in my life. I 'm tryin' to enlighten these little heathen,—kind of a missionary preacher like, ye know,—to show 'em the blessings o' slavery, that they've been growin' up in ignorance of. I hearn' a minister preach about it once, at Baltimore, and he proved it all right out o' the Bible,—how slavery was what the Lord made the niggers for, and how them was particular lucky as was slaves in this land o' light and liberty, where they was treated so much better 'n they would be if they was in Africa, and all that. I can't remember jest how 't was done, but I know he give it to the abolitionists powerful, for tryin' to disturb 'em when they was so happy, and he proved out o' the Bible, too, how they ought to send 'em back, instead o' helpin' 'em away.”

“Out of the Bible!” replied Kelly, who had been putting the harness upon the horses, in which occupation he was now joined by his companion. “Yes, it's enough to make the devil laugh to see what some folks will try to prove out of the Bible. If there is a God, and if he made that book, as they say he did, I reckon he feels mighty nigh used up, when he sees some of the preachers get up in the pulpit, and twist and turn his words all sorts of ways, to prove what will be most for their own interest out of 'm. For my part, I don't believe in any such things hereafter, as they tell for; but if there is, won't some of these confounded humbugs have to take it?”

“P'rhaps they will,” said Bill, laughing; “and p'rhaps some other folks will stand a smart chance o' takin' it, too.”

“Well,” replied Kelly, with a faint smile, “I believe I have a right to do as I 'm a mind to, and I do it; and if I can make more money tradin' niggers than any other way, I 'll do it, jist the same as the wolf eats the lamb when he 's hungry; it's a law of nature, and always will be, for the strong to prey upon the weak; but I tell you what, if I did believe those things, and then shut my eyes and served the devil, I would n't try to cheat myself and other folks into thinking the Lord would be fool enough to believe I could n't open my eyes if I wanted to, and so

let me off because 't was a mistake.”

(1854)

# HENRY DAVID THOREAU

## *Slavery in Massachusetts*

Author, naturalist, and Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) was also a radical abolitionist. His hometown of Concord, Massachusetts, was a center of antislavery activity, sheltering escaped slaves on the Underground Railroad. In 1843 Thoreau followed the example of Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa May Alcott, in refusing to pay taxes as a protest against government complicity in perpetuating slavery. Principled civil disobedience would be Thoreau's chief legacy for political thinkers and activists, later influencing Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and countless others. In 1854, the year he published *Walden*, he delivered this lecture on July 4 at the Anti-Slavery Celebration in Framingham, Massachusetts. Most remarkable is not that Thoreau attacks federal policies on slavery, but that he focuses his anger on the state government and his fellow citizens for cooperating: "What should concern Massachusetts is not the Nebraska Bill, nor the Fugitive Slave Bill, but her own slaveholding and servility. Let the State dissolve her union with the slaveholder."

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**I** LATELY attended a meeting of the citizens of Concord, expecting, as one among many, to speak on the subject of slavery in Massachusetts; but I was surprised and disappointed to find that what had called my townsmen together was the destiny of Nebraska, and not of Massachusetts, and that what I had to say would be entirely out of order. I had thought that the house was on fire, and not the prairie; but though several of the citizens of Massachusetts are now in prison for attempting to rescue a slave from her own clutches, not one of the speakers at that meeting expressed regret for it, not one even referred to it. It was only the disposition of some wild lands a thousand miles off, which appeared to concern them. The inhabitants of Concord are not prepared to stand by one of their own bridges, but talk only of taking up a position on the highlands beyond the Yellowstone river. Our Buttricks, and Davises, and Hosmers are retreating

thither, and I fear that they will have no Lexington Common between them and the enemy. There is not one slave in Nebraska; there are perhaps a million slaves in Massachusetts.

They who have been bred in the school of politics fail now and always to face the facts. Their measures are half measures and make-shifts, merely. They put off the day of settlement indefinitely, and meanwhile, the debt accumulates. Though the Fugitive Slave Law had not been the subject of discussion on that occasion, it was at length faintly resolved by my townsmen, at an adjourned meeting, as I learn, that the compromise compact of 1820 having been repudiated by one of the parties, 'Therefore, . . . the Fugitive Slave Law must be repealed.' But this is not the reason why an iniquitous law should be repealed. The fact which the politician faces is merely, that there is less honor among thieves than was supposed, and not the fact that they are thieves.

As I had no opportunity to express my thoughts at that meeting, will you allow me to do so here?

Again it happens that the Boston Court House is full of armed men, holding prisoner and trying a MAN, to find out if he is not really a SLAVE. Does any one think that Justice or God awaits Mr. Loring's decision? For him to sit there deciding still, when this question is already decided from eternity to eternity, and the unlettered slave himself, and the multitude around, have long since heard and assented to the decision, is simply to make himself ridiculous. We may be tempted to ask from whom he received his commission, and who he is that received it; what novel statutes he obeys, and what precedents are to him of authority. Such an arbiter's very existence is an impertinence. We do not ask him to make up his mind, but to make up his pack.

I listen to hear the voice of a Governor, Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Massachusetts. I hear only the creaking of crickets and the hum of insects which now fill the summer air. The Governor's exploit is to review the troops on muster days. I have seen him on horseback, with his hat off, listening to a

chaplain's prayer. It chances that is all I have ever seen of a Governor. I think that I could manage to get along without one. If *he* is not of the least use to prevent my being kidnapped, pray of what important use is he likely to be to me? When freedom is most endangered, he dwells in the deepest obscurity. A distinguished clergyman told me that he chose the profession of a clergyman, because it afforded the most leisure for literary pursuits. I would recommend to him the profession of a Governor.

Three years ago, also, when the Simms tragedy was acted, I said to myself, there is such an officer, if not such a man, as the Governor of Massachusetts,—what has he been about the last fortnight? Has he had as much as he could do to keep on the fence during this moral earthquake? It seemed to me that no keener satire could have been aimed at, no more cutting insult have been offered to that man, than just what happened—the absence of all inquiry after him in that crisis. The worst and the most I chance to know of him is, that he did not improve that opportunity to make himself known, and worthily known. He could at least have *resigned* himself into fame. It appeared to be forgotten that there was such a man, or such an office. Yet no doubt he was endeavoring to fill the gubernatorial chair all the while. He was no Governor of mine. He did not govern me.

But at last, in the present case, the Governor was heard from. After he and the United States Government had perfectly succeeded in robbing a poor innocent black man of his liberty for life, and, as far as they could, of his Creator's likeness in his breast, he made a speech to his accomplices, at a congratulatory supper!

I have read a recent law of this State, making it penal for 'any officer of the Commonwealth' to 'detain, or aid in the . . . detention,' any where within its limits, 'of any person, for the reason that he is claimed as a fugitive slave.' Also, it was a matter of notoriety that a writ of replevin to take the fugitive out of the custody of the United States Marshal could not be served, for want of sufficient force to aid the officer.

I had thought that the Governor was in some sense the executive officer of

the State; that it was his business, as a Governor, to see that the laws of the State were executed; while, as a man, he took care that he did not, by so doing, break the laws of humanity; but when there is any special important use for him, he is useless, or worse than useless, and permits the laws of the State to go unexecuted. Perhaps I do not know what are the duties of a Governor; but if to be a Governor requires to subject one's self to so much ignominy without remedy, if it is to put a restraint upon my manhood, I shall take care never to be Governor of Massachusetts. I have not read far in the statutes of this Commonwealth. It is not profitable reading. They do not always say what is true; and they do not always mean what they say. What I am concerned to know is, that that man's influence and authority were on the side of the slaveholder, and not of the slave—of the guilty, and not of the innocent—of injustice, and not of justice. I never saw him of whom I speak; indeed, I did not know that he was Governor until this event occurred. I heard of him and Anthony Burns at the same time, and thus, undoubtedly, most will hear of him. So far am I from being governed by him. I do not mean that it was any thing to his discredit that I had not heard of him, only that I heard what I did. The worst I shall say of him is, that he proved no better than the majority of his constituents would be likely to prove. In my opinion, he was not equal to the occasion.

The whole military force of the State is at the service of a Mr. Suttle, a slaveholder from Virginia, to enable him to catch a man whom he calls his property; but not a soldier is offered to save a citizen of Massachusetts from being kidnapped! Is this what all these soldiers, all this *training* has been for these seventy-nine years past? Have they been trained merely to rob Mexico, and carry back fugitive slaves to their masters?

These very nights, I heard the sound of a drum in our streets. There were men *training* still; and for what? I could with an effort pardon the cockerels of Concord for crowing still, for they, perchance, had not been beaten that morning; but I could not excuse this rub-a-dub of the 'trainers.' The slave was carried back by exactly such as these, i.e., by the soldier, of whom the best you can say

in this connection is, that he is a fool made conspicuous by a painted coat.

Three years ago, also, just a week after the authorities of Boston assembled to carry back a perfectly innocent man, and one whom they knew to be innocent, into slavery, the inhabitants of Concord caused the bells to be rung and the cannons to be fired, to celebrate their liberty—and the courage and love of liberty of their ancestors who fought at the bridge. As if *those* three millions had fought for the right to be free themselves, but to hold in slavery three million others. Now-a-days, men wear a fool's cap, and call it a liberty cap. I do not know but there are some, who, if they were tied to a whipping-post, and could but get one hand free, would use it to ring the bells and fire the cannons, to celebrate *their* liberty. So some of my townsmen took the liberty to ring and fire; that was the extent of their freedom; and when the sound of the bells died away, their liberty died away also; when the powder was all expended, their liberty went off with the smoke.

The joke could be no broader, if the inmates of the prisons were to subscribe for all the powder to be used in such salutes, and hire the jailers to do the firing and ringing for them, while they enjoyed it through the grating.

This is what I thought about my neighbors.

Every humane and intelligent inhabitant of Concord, when he or she heard those bells and those cannons, thought not with pride of the events of the 19th of April, 1775, but with shame of the events of the 12th of April, 1851. But now we have half buried that old shame under a new one.

Massachusetts sat waiting Mr. Loring's decision, as if it could in any way affect her own criminality. Her crime, the most conspicuous and fatal crime of all, was permitting him to be the umpire in such a case. It was really the trial of Massachusetts. Every moment that she hesitated to set this man free—every moment that she now hesitates to atone for her crime, she is convicted. The Commissioner on her case is God; not Edward G. God, but simple God.

I wish my countrymen to consider, that whatever the human law may be, neither an individual nor a nation can ever commit the least act of injustice

against the obscurest individual, without having to pay the penalty for it. A government which deliberately enacts injustice, and persists in it, will at length ever become the laughing-stock of the world.

Much has been said about American slavery, but I think that we do not even yet realize what slavery is. If I were seriously to propose to Congress to make mankind into sausages, I have no doubt that most of the members would smile at my proposition, and if any believed me to be in earnest, they would think that I proposed something much worse than Congress had ever done. But if any of them will tell me that to make a man into a sausage would be much worse,—would be any worse, than to make him into a slave,—than it was to enact the Fugitive Slave Law, I will accuse him of foolishness, of intellectual incapacity, of making a distinction without a difference. The one is just as sensible a proposition as the other.

I hear a good deal said about trampling this law under foot. Why, one need not go out of his way to do that. This law rises not to the level of the head or the reason; it's natural habitat is in the dirt. It was born and bred, and has its life only in the dust and mire, on a level with the feet, and he who walks with freedom, and does not with Hindoo mercy avoid treading on every venomous reptile, will inevitably tread on it, and so trample it under foot,—and Webster, its maker, with it, like the dirt-bug and its ball.

Recent events will be valuable as a criticism on the administration of justice in our midst, or, rather, as showing what are the true resources of justice in any community. It has come to this, that the friends of liberty, the friends of the slave, have shuddered when they have understood that his fate was left to the legal tribunals of the country to be decided. Free men have no faith that justice will be awarded in such a case; the judge may decide this way or that; it is a kind of accident, at best. It is evident that he is not a competent authority in so important a case. It is no time, then, to be judging according to his precedents, but to establish a precedent for the future. I would much rather trust to the sentiment of the people. In their vote, you would get something of some value, at

least, however small; but, in the other case, only the trammelled judgment of an individual, of no significance, be it which way it might.

It is to some extent fatal to the courts, when the people are compelled to go behind them. I do not wish to believe that the courts were made for fair weather, and for very civil cases merely,—but think of leaving it to any court in the land to decide whether more than three millions of people, in this case, a sixth part of a nation, have a right to be freemen or not! But it has been left to the courts of *justice*, so-called—to the Supreme Court of the land—and, as you all know, recognizing no authority but the Constitution, it has decided that the three millions are, and shall continue to be, slaves. Such judges as these are merely the inspectors of a pick-lock and murderer's tools, to tell him whether they are in working order or not, and there they think that their responsibility ends. There was a prior case on the docket, which they, as judges appointed by God, had no right to skip; which having been justly settled, they would have been saved from this humiliation. It was the case of the murderer himself.

The law will never make men free; it is men who have got to make the law free. They are the lovers of law and order, who observe the law when the government breaks it.

Among human beings, the judge whose words seal the fate of a man furthest into eternity, is not he who merely pronounces the verdict of the law, but he, whoever he may be, who, from a love of truth, and unprejudiced by any custom or enactment of men, utters a true opinion or *sentence* concerning him. He it is that *sentences* him. Whoever has discerned truth, has received his commission from a higher source than the chiefest justice in the world, who can discern only law. He finds himself constituted judge of the judge.—Strange that it should be necessary to state such simple truths.

I am more and more convinced that, with reference to any public question, it is more important to know what the country thinks of it, than what the city thinks. The city does not *think* much. On any moral question, I would rather have the opinion of Boxboro than of Boston and New York put together. When

the former speaks, I feel as if somebody *had* spoken, as if *humanity* was yet, and a reasonable being had asserted its rights,—as if some unprejudiced men among the country's hills had at length turned their attention to the subject, and by a few sensible words redeemed the reputation of the race. When, in some obscure country town, the farmers come together to a special town meeting, to express their opinion on some subject which is vexing the land, that, I think, is the true Congress, and the most respectable one that is ever assembled in the United States.

It is evident that there are, in this Commonwealth, at least, two parties, becoming more and more distinct—the party of the city, and the party of the country. I know that the country is mean enough, but I am glad to believe that there is a slight difference in her favor. But as yet, she has few, if any organs, through which to express herself. The editorials which she reads, like the news, come from the sea-board. Let us, the inhabitants of the country, cultivate self-respect. Let us not send to the city for aught more essential than our broadcloths and groceries, or, if we read the opinions of the city, let us entertain opinions of our own.

Among measures to be adopted, I would suggest to make as earnest and vigorous an assault on the Press as has already been made, and with effect, on the Church. The Church has much improved within a few years; but the Press is almost, without exception, corrupt. I believe that, in this country, the press exerts a greater and a more pernicious influence than the Church did in its worst period. We are not a religious people, but we are a nation of politicians. We do not care for the Bible, but we do care for the newspaper. At any meeting of politicians,—like that at Concord the other evening, for instance,—how impertinent it would be to quote from the Bible! how pertinent to quote from a newspaper or from the Constitution! The newspaper is a Bible which we read every morning and every afternoon, standing and sitting, riding and walking. It is a Bible which every man carries in his pocket, which lies on every table and counter, and which the mail, and thousands of missionaries, are continually dispensing. It is, in short, the only

book which America has printed, and which America reads. So wide is its influence. The editor is a preacher whom you voluntarily support. Your tax is commonly one cent daily, and it costs nothing for pew hire. But how many of these preachers preach the truth? I repeat the testimony of many an intelligent foreigner, as well as my own convictions, when I say, that probably no country was ever ruled by so mean a class of tyrants as, with a few noble exceptions, are the editors of the periodical press in *this* country. And as they live and rule only by their servility, and appealing to the worst, and not the better nature of man, the people who read them are in the condition of the dog that returns to his vomit.

The *Liberator* and the *Commonwealth* were the only papers in Boston, as far as I know, which made themselves heard in condemnation of the cowardice and meanness of the authorities of that city, as exhibited in '51. The other journals, almost without exception, by their manner of referring to and speaking of the Fugitive Slave Law, and the carrying back of the slave Simms, insulted the common sense of the country, at least. And, for the most part, they did this, one would say, because they thought so to secure the approbation of their patrons, not being aware that a sounder sentiment prevailed to any extent in the heart of the Commonwealth. I am told that some of them have improved of late; but they are still eminently time-serving. Such is the character they have won.

But, thank fortune, this preacher can be even more easily reached by the weapons of the reformer than could the recreant priest. The free men of New England have only to refrain from purchasing and reading these sheets, have only to withhold their cents, to kill a score of them at once. One whom I respect told me that he purchased Mitchell's *Citizen* in the cars, and then threw it out the window. But would not his contempt have been more fatally expressed, if he had not bought it?

Are they Americans? are they New Englanders? are they inhabitants of Lexington, and Concord, and Framingham, who read and support the *Boston Post, Mail, Journal, Advertiser, Courier, and Times*? Are these the Flags of our

Union? I am not a newspaper reader, and may omit to name the worst.

Could slavery suggest a more complete servility than some of these journals exhibit? Is there any dust which their conduct does not lick, and make fouler still with its slime? I do not know whether the *Boston Herald* is still in existence, but I remember to have seen it about the streets when Simms was carried off. Did it not act its part well—serve its master faithfully? How could it have gone lower on its belly? How can a man stoop lower than he is low? do more than put his extremities in the place of the head he has? than make his head his lower extremity? When I have taken up this paper with my cuffs turned up, I have heard the gurgling of the sewer through every column. I have felt that I was handling a paper picked out of the public gutters, a leaf from the gospel of the gambling-house, the groggery and the brothel, harmonizing with the gospel of the Merchants' Exchange.

The majority of the men of the North, and of the South, and East, and West, are not men of principle. If they vote, they do not send men to Congress on errands of humanity, but while their brothers and sisters are being scourged and hung for loving liberty, while—I might here insert all that slavery implies and is,—it is the mismanagement of wood and iron and stone and gold which concerns them. Do what you will, O Government! with my wife and children, my mother and brother, my father and sister, I will obey your commands to the letter. It will indeed grieve me if you hurt them, if you deliver them to overseers to be hunted by hounds or to be whipped to death; but nevertheless, I will peaceably pursue my chosen calling on this fair earth, until perchance, one day, when I have put on mourning for them dead, I shall have persuaded you to relent. Such is the attitude, such are the words of Massachusetts.

Rather than do thus, I need not say what match I would touch, what system endeavor to blow up,—but as I love my life, I would side with the light, and let the dark earth roll from under me, calling my mother and my brother to follow.

I would remind my countrymen, that they are to be men first, and Americans only at a late and convenient hour. No matter how valuable law may

be to protect your property, even to keep soul and body together, if it do not keep you and humanity together.

I am sorry to say, that I doubt if there is a judge in Massachusetts who is prepared to resign his office, and get his living innocently, whenever it is required of him to pass sentence under a law which is merely contrary to the law of God. I am compelled to see that they put themselves, or rather, are by character, in this respect, exactly on a level with the marine who discharges his musket in any direction he is ordered to. They are just as much tools and as little men. Certainly, they are not the more to be respected, because their master enslaves their understandings and consciences, instead of their bodies.

The judges and lawyers,—simply as such, I mean,—and all men of expediency, try this case by a very low and incompetent standard. They consider, not whether the Fugitive Slave Law is right, but whether it is what they call *constitutional*. Is virtue constitutional, or vice? Is equity constitutional, or iniquity? In important moral and vital questions like this, it is just as impertinent to ask whether a law is constitutional or not, as to ask whether it is profitable or not. They persist in being the servants of the worst of men, and not the servants of humanity. The question is not whether you or your grandfather, seventy years ago, did not enter into an agreement to serve the devil, and that service is not accordingly now due; but whether you will not now, for once and at last, serve God,—in spite of your own past recreancy, or that of your ancestor,—by obeying that eternal and only just CONSTITUTION, which He, and not any Jefferson or Adams, has written in your being.

The amount of it is, if the majority vote the devil to be God, the minority will live and behave accordingly, and obey the successful candidate, trusting that some time or other, by some Speaker's casting vote, perhaps, they may reinstate God. This is the highest principle I can get out of or invent for my neighbors. These men act as if they believed that they could safely slide down hill a little way—or a good way—and would surely come to a place, by and by, where they

could begin to slide up again. This is expediency, or choosing that course which offers the slightest obstacles to the feet, that is, a down-hill one. But there is no such thing as accomplishing a righteous reform by the use of 'expediency.' There is no such thing as sliding up hill. In morals, the only sliders are backsliders.

Thus we steadily worship Mammon, both School, and State, and Church, and the Seventh Day curse God with a tintamar from one end of the Union to the other.

Will mankind never learn that policy is not morality—that it never secures any moral right, but considers merely what is expedient? chooses the available candidate, who is invariably the devil,—and what right have his constituents to be surprised, because the devil does not behave like an angel of light? What is wanted is men, not of policy, but of probity—who recognize a higher law than the Constitution, or the decision of the majority. The fate of the country does not depend on how you vote at the polls—the worst man is as strong as the best at that game; it does not depend on what kind of paper you drop into the ballot-box once a year, but on what kind of man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning.

What should concern Massachusetts is not the Nebraska Bill, nor the Fugitive Slave Bill, but her own slaveholding and servility. Let the State dissolve her union with the slaveholder. She may wriggle and hesitate, and ask leave to read the Constitution once more; but she can find no respectable law or precedent which sanctions the continuance of such a Union for an instant.

Let each inhabitant of the State dissolve his union with her, as long as she delays to do her duty.

The events of the past month teach me to distrust Fame. I see that she does not finely discriminate, but coarsely hurrahs. She considers not the simple heroism of an action, but only as it is connected with its apparent consequences. She praises till she is hoarse the easy exploit of the Boston tea party, but will be comparatively silent about the braver and more disinterestedly heroic attack on

the Boston Court-House, simply because it was unsuccessful!

Covered with disgrace, the State has sat down coolly to try for their lives and liberties the men who attempted to do its duty for it. And this is called *justice!* They who have shown that they can behave particularly well may perchance be put under bonds for *their good behavior*. They whom truth requires at present to plead guilty, are of all the inhabitants of the State, pre-eminently innocent. While the Governor, and the Mayor, and countless officers of the Commonwealth, are at large, the champions of liberty are imprisoned.

Only they are guiltless, who commit the crime of contempt of such a Court. It behoves every man to see that his influence is on the side of justice, and let the courts make their own characters. My sympathies in this case are wholly with the accused, and wholly against the accusers and their judges. Justice is sweet and musical; but injustice is harsh and discordant. The judge still sits grinding at his organ, but it yields no music, and we hear only the sound of the handle. He believes that all the music resides in the handle, and the crowd toss him their coppers the same as before.

Do you suppose that that Massachusetts which is now doing these things,—which hesitates to crown these men, some of whose lawyers, and even judges, perchance, may be driven to take refuge in some poor quibble, that they may not wholly outrage their instinctive sense of justice,—do you suppose that she is any thing but base and servile? that she is the champion of liberty?

Show me a free State, and a court truly of justice, and I will fight for them, if need be; but show me Massachusetts, and I refuse her my allegiance, and express contempt for her courts.

The effect of a good government is to make life more valuable,—of a bad one, to make it less valuable. We can afford that railroad, and all merely material stock, should lose some of its value, for that only compels us to live more simply and economically; but suppose that the value of life itself should be diminished! How can we make a less demand on man and nature, how live more economically in respect to virtue and all noble qualities, than we do? I have lived

for the last month,—and I think that every man in Massachusetts capable of the sentiment of patriotism must have had a similar experience,—with the sense of having suffered a vast and indefinite loss. I did not know at first what ailed me. At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country. I had never respected the Government near to which I had lived, but I had foolishly thought that I might manage to live here, minding my private affairs, and forget it. For my part, my old and worthiest pursuits have lost I cannot say how much of their attraction, and I feel that my investment in life here is worth many per cent. less since Massachusetts last deliberately sent back an innocent man, Anthony Burns, to slavery. I dwelt before, perhaps, in the illusion that my life passed somewhere only *between* heaven and hell, but now I cannot persuade myself that I do not dwell *wholly within* hell. The site of that political organization called Massachusetts is to me morally covered with volcanic scoriæ and cinders, such as Milton describes in the infernal regions. If there is any hell more unprincipled than our rulers, and we, the ruled, I feel curious to see it. Life itself being worth less, all things with it, which minister to it, are worth less. Suppose you have a small library, with pictures to adorn the walls—a garden laid out around—and contemplate scientific and literary pursuits, &c., and discover all at once that your villa, with all its contents, is located in hell, and that the justice of the peace has a cloven foot and a forked tail—do not these things suddenly lose their value in your eyes?

I feel that, to some extent, the State has fatally interfered with my lawful business. It has not only interrupted me in my passage through Court street on errands of trade, but it has interrupted me and every man on his onward and upward path, on which he had trusted soon to leave Court street far behind. What right had it to remind me of Court street? I have found that hollow which even I had relied on for solid.

I am surprised to see men going about their business as if nothing had happened. I say to myself—Unfortunates! they have not heard the news. I am surprised that the man whom I just met on horseback should be so earnest to

overtake his newly-bought cows running away—since all property is insecure—and if they do not run away again, they may be taken away from him when he gets them. Fool! does he not know that his seed-corn is worth less this year—that all beneficent harvests fail as you approach the empire of hell? No prudent man will build a stone house under these circumstances, or engage in any peaceful enterprise which it requires a long time to accomplish. Art is as long as ever, but life is more interrupted and less available for a man's proper pursuits. It is not an era of repose. We have used up all our inherited freedom. If we would save our lives, we must fight for them.

I walk toward one of our ponds, but what signifies the beauty of nature when men are base? We walk to lakes to see our serenity reflected in them; when we are not serene, we go not to them. Who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk. My thoughts are murder to the State, and involuntarily go plotting against her.

But it chanced the other day that I scented a white water-lily, and a season I had waited for had arrived. It is the emblem of purity. It bursts up so pure and fair to the eye, and so sweet to the scent, as if to show us what purity and sweetness reside in, and can be extracted from, the slime and muck of earth. I think I have plucked the first one that has opened for a mile. What confirmation of our hopes is in the fragrance of this flower! I shall not so soon despair of the world for it, notwithstanding slavery, and the cowardice and want of principle of Northern men. It suggests what kind of laws have prevailed longest and widest, and still prevail, and that the time may come when man's deeds will smell as sweet. Such is the odor which the plant emits. If Nature can compound this fragrance still annually, I shall believe her still young and full of vigor, her integrity and genius unimpaired, and that there is virtue even in man, too, who is fitted to perceive and love it. It reminds me that Nature has been partner to no Missouri Compromise. I scent no compromise in the fragrance of the water-lily. It is not a *Nymphæa Douglassii*. In it, the sweet, and pure, and innocent, are

wholly sundered from the obscene and baleful. I do not scent in this the time-serving irresolution of a Massachusetts Governor, nor of a Boston Mayor. So behave that the odor of your actions may enhance the general sweetness of the atmosphere, that when we behold or scent a flower, we may not be reminded how inconsistent your deeds are with it; for all odor is but one form of advertisement of a moral quality, and if fair actions had not been performed, the lily would not smell sweet. The foul slime stands for the sloth and vice of man, the decay of humanity; the fragrant flower that springs from it, for the purity and courage which are immortal.

Slavery and servility have produced no sweet-scented flower annually, to charm the senses of men, for they have no real life: they are merely a decaying and a death, offensive to all healthy nostrils. We do not complain that they *live*, but that they do not *get buried*. Let the living bury them; even they are good for manure.

(1854)

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## *Lecture on Slavery*

Following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the overthrow of the Missouri Compromise by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, Emerson, like so many others, felt a renewed antipathy to slavery. On January 25, 1855, he delivered this lecture to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society at the Tremont Temple in Boston. Emerson's fury and frustration are evident: "Who can long continue to feel an interest in condemning homicide, or counterfeiting, or wife-beating?" Having so long proclaimed the intolerable evil of slavery to no avail, the desperate abolitionist "must write with a red hot iron to make any impression."

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Gentlemen,

I approach the grave and bitter subject of American slavery with diffidence and pain. It has many men of ability and devotion who have consecrated their lives to it. I have not found in myself the right qualifications to serve this any more than other political questions, by my speech, and have therefore usually left it in their honored hands. I have not either the taste or the talent that is needed for the disposition of political questions, and I leave them to those who have. Still there is somewhat exceptional in this question, which seems to require of every citizen at one time or other, to show his hand, and to cast his suffrage in such manner as he uses. And, whilst I confide that heaven too has a hand in these events, and will surely give the last shape to these ends which we hew very roughly, yet I remember that our will and obedience is one of its means.

The subject seems exhausted. An honest man is soon weary of crying 'Thief!' Who can long continue to feel an interest in condemning homicide, or counterfeiting, or wife-beating? Tis said, endless negation is a flat affair.

One must write with a red hot iron to make any impression. I thought therefore the policy of those societies which have opened courses of instruction

on the aspects of slavery, wise, when they invited southern planters, the patrons and fathers of the system, to come hither and speak for it. Nay, I think it would not have been ill-advised had they asked only such, and put the whole duty of expressing it on the slave-holders. I am sure it would have surprised northern men to see how little was to say on its behalf. But a difficulty arose in inducing them to come. The inviting committee were hospitable and urgent; but, most unfortunately, all the persons invited, with one or two brave exceptions, were absolutely pre-engaged. No solicitations were of any avail. It was left to us to open the subject, each as he could. And it is for us to treat it not as a thing that stands by itself;—that quickly tires and cloy, —but as it stands in our system;—how it can consist with the advantages and superiorities we fondly ascribe to ourselves. A high state of general health cannot coexist with a mortal disease in any part. If any one member suffers, all the members suffer. Then, again, we must find relief from the uniform gloom of the theme, in large considerations of history, whereinto slavery and war enter as necessary shadows in the vast picture of Providence.

We have to consider that, however strongly the tides of public sentiment have set or are setting towards freedom, the code of slavery in this country is at this hour more malignant than ever before. The recent action of Congress has brought it home to New England, and made it impossible to avoid complicity.

The crying facts are these, that, in a Republic professing to base its laws on liberty, and on the doctrines of Christianity, slavery is suffered to subsist: and, when the poor people who are the victims of this crime, disliking the stripping and peeling process, run away into states where this practice is not permitted,—a law has been passed requiring us who sit here to seize these poor people, tell them they have not been plundered enough, and must go back to be stripped and peeled again, and as long as they live.

But this was not yet the present grief. It was shocking to hear of the sufferings of these men: But the district was three hundred, five hundred, and a thousand miles off, and, however leagued with ours, was yet independent. And,

for the national law which enacted this complicity, and threw us into conspiracy with the thief, it was an old dead law, which had been made in an hour of weakness and fear, and which we had guarded ourselves from executing,—now revived and made stringent. But there was no fear that it would be valid.

But the destitution was here. We found well-born, well-bred, well-grown men among ourselves, not outcasts, not foreigners, not beggars, not convicts, but baptised, vaccinated, schooled, high-placed, official men, who abetted this law. ‘O by all means, catch the slave, and drag him back.’ And when we went to the courts, the interpreters of God’s right between man and man said, ‘catch the slave, and force him back.’

Now this was disheartening. Slavery is an evil, as cholera or typhus is, that will be purged out by the health of the system. Being unnatural and violent, I know that it will yield at last, and go with cannibalism, tattooing, inquisition, duelling, burking; and as we cannot refuse to ride in the same planet with the New Zealander, so we must be content to go with the southern planter, and say, you are you, and I am I, and God send you an early conversion.

But to find it here in our sunlight, here in the heart of Puritan traditions in an intellectual country, in the land of schools, of sabbaths and sermons, under the shadow of the White Hills, of Katahdin, and Hoosac; under the eye of the most ingenious, industrious, and self-helping men in the world,—staggeres our faith in progress.

It is an accident of a larger calamity. It rests on skepticism, which is not local, but universal. The tone of society and of the press on slavery is only an index of the moral pulse. And I call slavery and the tolerance it finds, worst in this,—the stupendous frivolity it betrays in the heart and head of a society without faith, without aims, dying of inanition. An impoverishing skepticism scatters poverty, disease, and cunning through our opinions, then through practice. The Dark Ages did not know that they were dark; and what if it should turn out, that our material civilization has no sun, but only ghastly gas-lights?

I find this skepticism widely spread. Young men want object, want

foundation. They would gladly have somewhat to do, adequate to the powers they feel, somewhat that calls them with trumpet note to be heroes, some foeman worthy of their steel, some love that would make them greater than they are; which not finding, they take up some second-best ground, finding no first-best—they slip into some niche or crevice of the state, some counting-room or railroad, or whatever creditable employment,—not the least of whose uses is the covert it affords. They are not supported by any sense of greatness, and this reputable office screens them from criticism.

We are led to cast shrewd glances into our society. Among intellectual men, you will find a waiting for, an impatient quest for more satisfying knowledge. It is believed that ordinarily the mind grows with the body, that the moment of thought comes with the power of action, and, that, in nations, it is in the time of great external power, that their best minds have appeared. But, in America, a great imaginative soul, a broad cosmopolitan mind, has not accompanied the immense industrial energy. Among men of thought and education, the unbelief is found as it is in the laymen. A dreary superficiality,—critics instead of thinkers, punsters instead of poets. They think the age of poetry is past. They think the Imagination belongs to the savage era. Yes and serious men are found who think our Christianity and religion itself effete;—forms and sentiments that belonged to the infancy of mankind. I say intellectual men; but are there such—if we see to what uses the Intellect is applied? I think the atheism as much shown in the absence of intellectual action, as in the absence of profound morals.

Go into the festooned and tempered brilliancy of the drawing rooms, and see the fortunate youth of both sexes, the flower of our society, for whom every favor, every accomplishment, every facility has been secured. Will you find genius and courage expanding those fair and manly forms? Or is their beauty only a mask for an aged cunning? Have they already grown worldly-wise? No illusions for them. A few cherished their early dream, and resisted to contumacy the soft appliances of fashion. But they tired of resistance and ridicule: they fell into file, and great is the congratulation of the refined companions that these

self-willed protestants had settled down into sensible opinions and practices. Time was when a heroic soul conversing with eternity disdained the trifles of hard or easy lot, enamoured of honor and right.

The same career invites us. The method of nature is ever the same. God instructs men through the Imagination. But the opera-glasses of our young men do not reach to ideas and realities.

The ebb of thought drains the law, the religion, the education of the land. We send our boys to the universities. But do those institutions inspire the hope and gratitude, which, at great moments, have filled them with enthusiastic crowds? men eager to impart the light which has kindled them, and to set the whole land on flame? The boy looks at the professor and the textbook, with frightful penetration, and says, 'Has not the professor read his own books? I do not see that he is better or stronger for it all.' He looks into the stable at the horses, and, after a few trials, concludes that the horses can teach him the most. They give him health, courage, and address, with no false pretences. The horse is what he stands for: perhaps he will break the rider's neck, but he never prated of ethics or of humanity, whilst the presidents and professors of the colleges were in this very rabble that voted down the moral sentiments of mankind.

Look at our politics. The great parties coeval with the origin of the government,—do they inspire us with any exalted hope? Does the Democracy stand really for the good of the many? of the poor? for the elevation of entire humanity? Have they ever addressed themselves to the enterprize of relieving this country of the pest of slavery?

The Party of Property, of education, has resisted every progressive step. Did Free Trade come from them? Have they urged the abolition of Capital Punishment? Have they urged any of the prophetic action of the time? No. They would nail the stars to the sky. With their eyes over their shoulders, they adore their ancestors, the framers of the Constitution. *Nolumus mutari*. We do not wish to touch the Constitution. They wish their age should be absolutely like the last. There is no confession of destitution like this fierce conservatism. Can any thing

proclaim so loudly the absence of all aim or principle? What means this desperate grasp on the past, if not that they find no principle, no hope, no future in their own mind? Some foundation we must have, and, if we can see nothing, we cling desperately to those whom we believe can see.

Our politics have run very low, and men of character will not willingly touch them. This is fast becoming, if it has not already become, discreditable work. Those who have gone to Congress were honest well-meaning men. I heard congratulations from good men, their friends, in relation to certain recent members, that "these were honest and thoroughly trustworthy, obstinately honest." Yet they voted on the late criminal measures with the basest of the populace. They ate dirt, and saw not the sneer of the bullies who duped them with an alleged state-necessity: and all because they had no burning splendor of law in their own minds. Well, what refuge for them? They had honor enough left to feel degraded: they could have a place in which they could not preserve appearances. They become apathized and indifferentists. We leave them in their retreats. They represented the property of their constituency. Our merchants do not believe in anything but their trade. They loll in republican chairs, they eat and drink in republican Astor, Tremont, and Girard Houses. They roll in easy and swift trains, telegraphing their wishes before them. And the power of money is so obtrusive as to exclude the view of the larger powers that control it.

I am sorry to say, that, even our political reforms show the same desperation. What shall we think of the new movement? We are clear that the old parties could not lead us. They were plainly bankrupt, their machineries and politicians discredited. We will have none of them. Yes, but shall we therefore abdicate our common sense? I employed false guides and they misled me; shall I therefore put my head in a bag?

The late revolution in Massachusetts no man will wonder at who sees how far our politics had departed from the path of simple right. The reigning parties had forfeited the awe and reverence which always attaches to a wise and honest government. And as they inspired no respect, they were turned out by an

immense frolic. But to persist in a joke;—I don't like joking with edge-tools, and there is no knife so sharp as legislation.

An Indian Rajah, Yokasindra, had a poor porter in his gate who resembled him in person. He put his royal robes on him, and seated him on his throne: then he put on his own head the porter's cap, and stood in the gate, and laughed to see his ministers deceived, bowing down before the porter. But Datto the porter said, "Who is that fellow there on the threshold, laughing in my face? Off with his head." They obeyed him, and decapitated the Rajah, and Datto the porter reigned in his stead.

What happens after periods of extraordinary prosperity, happened now. They could not see beyond their eye-lids, they dwell in the senses;—cause being out of sight is out of mind:—They see meat and wine, steam and machinery, and the career of wealth. I should find the same ebb of thought from all the wells alike. I should find it in science. I should find it in the philosophy of France, of England, and everywhere alike, a want of faith in laws, a worship of success. Everywhere dreary superficiality, ignorance and disbelief in principles, a civilization magnifying trifles.

I saw a man in a calico-printing-mill, who fancied there was no reason why this pattern should please, and that pattern should not. They were all jumbles of color, of which one had the luck to take, and the other had the luck not to take, and that was all. I asked him, if he had that blue jelly he called his eye, by chance?

But geometry survives, though we have forgotten it. Everything rests on foundations, alike the globe of the world, the human mind, and the calico print. The calico print pleases, because the arrangement of colors and forms agrees with the imperative requirements of the human eye. Is the reputation of the Parthenon, of the Elgin marbles, the Apollo, and the Torso, a caprice? Greek architecture was made by men of correcter eyes than others, who obeyed the necessities of their work, namely, the use of the building, the necessary support, the best aspect, entrance, light, etc., and, having satisfied these conditions, pared

away all that could be spared for strength,—and behold beauty.

Is the arch of the rainbow, the beauty of stars and sunshine, the joy of love, a caprice and an opinion? Or does any man suppose the reputation of Jesus accidental: the saint whom in different forms and opinions, but with unanimity of veneration as to character, the whole race of man worships? Or is the reputation of Socrates, of the Stoics, of Alfred, of Luther, of Washington whimsical and unfounded?

There are periods of occultation when the light of mind seems to be partially withdrawn from nations as well as from individuals. This devastation reached its crisis in the acquiescence in slavery in this country,—in the political servitude of Europe, during the same age. And there are moments of greatest darkness, and of total eclipse. In the French Revolution, there was a day when the Parisians took a strumpet from the street, seated her in a chariot, and led her in procession, saying, “This is the Goddess of Reason.” And, in 1850, the American Congress passed a statute which ordained that justice and mercy should be subject to fine and imprisonment, and that there existed no higher law in the universe than the Constitution and this paper statute which uprooted the foundations of rectitude and denied the existence of God.

Thus in society, in education, in political parties, in trade, and in labor, in expenditure, or the direction of surplus capital, you may see the credence of men; how deeply they live, how much water the ship draws. In all these, it is the thought of men, what they think, which is the helm that turns them all about. When thus explored, instead of rich belief, of minds great and wise sounding the secrets of nature, announcing the laws of science, and glowing with zeal to act and serve, and life too short to read the revelations inscribed on earth and heaven, I fear you will find non-credence, which produces nothing, but leaves sterility and littleness.

This skepticism assails a vital part when it climbs into the Courts, which are the brain of the state. The idea of abstract right exists in the human mind, and lays itself out in the equilibrium of nature, in the equalities and periods of our

system, in the level of seas, in the action and reaction of forces, that nothing is allowed to exceed or absorb the rest; if it do, it is disease, and is quickly destroyed.

Among men, this limitation of my liberty by yours,—allowing the largest liberty to each compatible with the liberty of all,—protection in seeking my benefit, as long as it does not interfere with your benefit,—is justice,—which satisfies everybody.

It was an early discovery of the human mind—this beneficent rule. This law is: Render to each his own. As thou doest, shall it be done to thee. As thou sowest, thou shall reap. Smite and thou shalt smart; serve, and thou shalt be served. If you love and serve men, you cannot by any dodge or stratagem escape the remuneration. Secret retributions are always restoring the level, when disturbed, of the Divine justice. It is impossible to tilt the beam. All the tyrants and proprietors and monopolists of the world in vain set their shoulders to heave the bar:—settles forevermore the ponderous equator to its line, and man and mote and star and sun must range with it, or be pulverized by the recoil. Any attempt to violate it, is punished, and recoils on you. If you treat a man nobly, though he be of a mean habit, he will make an exception in your behalf, and will aim to do you justice. You cannot use a man as an instrument, without being used by him as an instrument. If you take advantage and steal from him, he watches his opportunity to make accounts square with you. If he is not strong enough to resist, then he will be cunning and cheat you. Lord Coke said, “Any departure from the established principles of law, although at the time wearing the specious appearance of advantage, never fails to bring along with it such train of unforeseen inconveniences, as to demonstrate their excellence, and the necessity of return to them.”

Nature is not so helpless but it can rid itself at last of every crime. An Eastern poet, in describing the Golden Age, said, that God had made justice so dear to the heart of Nature, that, if any injustice lurked anywhere under the sky, the blue vault would shrivel to a snake-skin and cast it out by spasms.

The fathers, in July 1787, consented to adopt population as the basis of representation, and to count only three-fifths of the slaves, and to concede the reclamation of fugitive slaves;—for the consideration, that there should be no slavery in the Northwest Territory. They agreed to this false basis of representation and to this criminal complicity of restoring fugitives: and the splendor of the bribe, namely, the magnificent prosperity of America from 1787, is their excuse for the crime. It was a fatal blunder. They should have refused it at the risk of making no Union. Many ways could have been taken. If the southern section had made a separate alliance with England, or gone back into colonies, the slaves would have been emancipated with the West Indians, and then the colonies could have been annexed to us. The bribe, if they foresaw the prosperity we have seen, was one to dazzle common men, and I do not wonder that common men excuse and applaud it. But always so much crime brings so much ruin. A little crime, a minor penalty; a great crime, a great disaster.

If the south country thinks itself enriched by slavery, read the census, read the valuation tables, or weigh the men. I think it impoverished. Young men are born in that country, I suppose, of as much ability as elsewhere, and yet some blight is on their education: in the present generation is there one living son to make good the reputation of the Past? If the north think it a benefit, I find the north saddled with a load which has all the effect of a partnership in a crime, on a virtuous and prosperous youth. It stops his mouth, ties his hands, forces him to submit to every sort of humiliation, and now it is a fountain of poison which is felt in every transaction and every conversation in this country.

Well, certain men were glad perceivers of this Right, with more clearness and steadiness than others, and labored to establish the application of it to human affairs. They were Lawgivers or Judges. And all men hailed the Laws of Menu, the Laws of Lycurgus, laws of Moses, laws of Confucius, laws of Jesus, the laws of Alfred, and of men of less fame, who in their place, believing in an ideal right, strove to make it practical,—the Code of Justinian, the famous jurists, Grotius, Vattel, Daguesseau, Blackstone, and Mansfield. These were original judges,

perceivers that this is no child's play, no egotistic opinion, but stands on the original law of the world. And the reputation of all the judges on earth stands on the real perception of these few natural or God-anointed judges. All these men held that law was not an opinion, not an egotism of any king or the will of any mob, but a transcript of natural right. The judge was there as its organ and expounder, and his first duty was to read the law in accordance with equity. And, if it jarred with equity, to disown the law. All the great lawgivers and jurists of the world have agreed in this, that an immoral law is void. So held Cicero, Selden, Hooker; and Coke, Hobart, Holt, and Mansfield, chief justices of England. Even the Canon law says, "Neither allegiance nor oath can bind to obey that which is unlawful." Grotius, Vattel, Daguesseau, and Blackstone teach the same. Of course they do. What else could they? You cannot enact a falsehood to be true, nor a wrong act to be right.

And I name their names, not of course to add authority to a self-evident proposition, but only to show that black-letter lawyers supposed to be more than others tied to precedent and statute, saw the exquisite absurdity of enacting a crime.

And yet in America justice was poisoned at its fountain. In our northern states, no judge appeared of sufficient character and intellect to ask not whether it was constitutional, but whether it was right.

This outrage of giving back a stolen and plundered man to his thieves was ordained and under circumstances the most painful. There was enough law of the State of Massachusetts to resist the dishonor and the crime, but no judge had the heart to invoke, no governor was found to execute it. The judges feared collision of the State and the Federal Courts. The Governor was a most estimable man—we all knew his sterling virtues, but he fell in an era when governors do not govern, when judges do not judge, when Presidents do not preside, and when representatives do not represent.

The judges were skeptics too and shared the sickness of the time. The open secret of the world was hid from their eyes, the art of subliming a private soul

with inspirations from the great and public and divine soul from which we live. A man is a little thing whilst he works by and for himself. A judge who gives voice as a judge should, to the rules of love and justice, is godlike; his word is current in all countries. But a man sitting on the Bench servile to precedent, or a windy politician, or a dangler trying to give authority to the notions of his superiors or of his set, pipes and squeaks and cheeps ridiculously. Judges are rare, and must be born such. King James said, “O, ay, I can mak him a lord, but I canna mak him a gentleman.” And governors and presidents can give a commission to sit on the Bench, but only wisdom can make a judge.

When the city is on fire, you will make but a feeble spray with your engine whilst you draw from your buckets. But once get your pipe screwed on to a hose which is dipped in the river, or in the harbor, and you can pump as long as the Atlantic Ocean holds out.

This was the hiding of the light. But the light shone, if it was intercepted from us. Truth exists, though all men should deny it. There is a sound healthy universe whatever fires or plagues or desolation transpire in diseased corners. The sky has not lost its azure because your eyes are inflamed. Seas and waters, lime and oxygen, magnesia and iron, salts and metals, are not wasted, their virtues are safe, if an individual or a species sicken. And there’s a healthy interior universe as well, and men are great and powerful as they conform to, or become recipient of, the great equal general laws.

Now what is the effect of this evil government? To discredit government. When the public fails in its duty, private men take its place. When the British ministry is weak, the Times’ editor governs the realm. When the American government and courts are false to their trust, men disobey the government, put it in the wrong; the government is forced into all manner of false and ridiculous attitudes. Men hear reason and truth from private men who have brave hearts and great minds. This is the compensation of bad governments,—the field it affords for illustrious men. And we have a great debt to the brave and faithful men who in the very hour and place of the evil act, made their protest for themselves and

their countrymen by word and deed. They are justified, and the law is condemned.

It is not to societies that the secrets of nature are revealed, but to private persons, to each man in his organization, in his thoughts. A serious man who has used his opportunities will early discover that he only works and thinks securely when he is acting on his own experience. All forcible men will agree that books and learned societies could not supply what their own good sense taught them.

It is common to say that the invention of gunpowder has equalized the strong and the weak. Never believe it. It has not made any deep difference, and Lord Wellington's weighing the soldiers proves it. Audacity and good sense have their old superiority, whatever weapons they wield. My political economy is very short, a man's capital must be in him.

'Tis a maxim in our politics that a man cannot be formidable in Congress, unless he is strong at home. I am glad to hear that confession, but I say more,—that he must have his own support. 'Tis only what strength he carries with him everywhere, that can serve him anywhere. Paper money is good only as far as it represents real labor. A member who “walks into the chamber attended only by his own insignificance, cannot get any strength by the distant shouts of electors.” All the British batteries can not give comfort to the coward. If he knows there is weakness in his heart, tear off his epaulettes, break his sword, boot him out of the camp.

But whilst I insist on the doctrine of the independence and the inspiration of the individual, I do not cripple but exalt the social action. Patriotism, public opinion, have a real meaning, though there is so much counterfeit rag money abroad under it, that the name is apt to disgust. A wise man delights in the powers of many people. Charles Fourier noting that each man had a different talent, computed that you must collect 1800 or 2000 souls to make one complete man. We shall need to call them all out.

Certainly the social state, patriotism, law, government, all did cover ideas, though the words have wandered from the things. The King or head of the state

was godlike in the eyes of the people, whilst he was the foremost man of all the tribe, exponent of the laws, the genius, and the future of the tribe. It was so once in this country when Washington, Adams, Jefferson, really embodied the ideas of Americans. But now we put obscure persons into the chairs, without character or representative force of any kind, and get a figure awful to office hunters.

And as the state is a reality, so it is certain that societies of men, a race, a people, have a public function, a part to play in the history of humanity. Thus, the theory of our government is Liberty. The thought and experience of Europe had got thus far, a century ago, to believe, that, as soon as favorable circumstances permitted, the experiment of self-government should be made. America afforded the circumstances, and the new order began. All the mind in America was possessed by that idea. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the States, the Parties; the newspapers, the songs, star-spangled banner, land of the brave and home of the free, the very manners of the Americans, all showed them as the receivers and propagandists of this lesson to the world. For this cause were they born and for this cause came they into the world. Liberty; to each man the largest liberty compatible with the liberty of every other man. It was not a sect, it was not a private opinion, but a gradual and irresistible growth of the human mind. That is the meaning of our national pride. It is a noble office. For liberty is a very serious thing. It is the severest test by which a government can be tried. All history goes to show, that it is the measure of all national success. Religion, arts, science, material production are as is the degree of liberty. Montesquieu said, "Countries are not cultivated in proportion to their population, but in proportion to their freedom."

Most unhappily, this universally accepted duty and feeling has been antagonized by the calamity of southern slavery. And that institution in its perpetual encroachment has had through the stronger personality, shall I say, of the southern people, and through their systematic devotion to politics, the art so to league itself with the government, as to check and pervert the natural sentiment of the people by their respect for law and statute.

And this country exhibits an abject regard to the forms, whilst we are swindled out of the liberty.

Lord Nelson was a man of sterling English sense, and knowing himself to mean rightly, and being a rough plain man being much annoyed by the pedantic rules of the service, he went back to first principles, and once for all made up his mind. "To obey orders," he said, "is thought to be all perfection but the great order of all is to serve your country, and down with the French; and, whenever any statute militates with that, I go back," he said, "to the great order of all, and of which the little orders spring." And he was careful to explain to his officers, that, in case of no signals, or, in case of not understanding signals, no captain could go wrong who brought his ship close alongside an enemy's ship.

So every wise American will say, "in the collision of statutes, or in the doubtful interpretation, liberty is the great order which all lesser orders are to promote." That is the right meaning of the statute, which extirpates crime, and obtains to every man the largest liberty compatible with the liberty of every other man. No citizen will go wrong who on every question leans to the side of general liberty. And whilst thus the society is no fiction, but has real rank, (he who represents the ideas of the society being the head,) it has a real function. That of our race is to liberty. So it has public actions which it performs with electric energy.

Men inspire each other. The affections are Muses. Hope is a muse. Love is, Despair is not, and selfishness drives away the angels. It is so delicious to act with great masses to great aims. For instance the summary or gradual abolition of slavery. Why in the name of common sense and the peace of mankind is not this made the subject of instant negotiation and settlement? Why do not the men of administrative ability in whose brain the prosperity of Philadelphia is rooted; —the multitude of able men who lead each enterprize in the City of New York; in Boston, in Baltimore; why not the strong courageous leaders of the south; join their heads and hearts to form some basis of negotiation to settle this dangerous dispute on some ground of fair compensation, on one side, and of satisfaction, on

the other, to the conscience of the Free States. Is it impossible to speak of it with reason and good nature? Why? Because it is property? Why, then it has a price. Because it is political? Well then, it ultimately concerns us, threatens us, and there will never be a better time than the present time. It is really the great task fit for this country to accomplish, to buy that property of the planters, as the British nation bought the West Indian slaves. I say *buy*,—never conceding the right of the planter to own, but that we may acknowledge the calamity of his position, and bear a countryman's share in relieving him, and because it is the only practicable course, and is innocent.

Well, here is a right social or public function which one man cannot do, which all men must do. We shall one day bring the states shoulder to shoulder, and the citizens man to man, to exterminate slavery. It is said, it will cost two thousand millions of dollars. Was there ever any contribution levied that was so enthusiastically paid as this will be? The United States shall give every inch of the public lands. The states shall give their surplus revenues, their unsold lands. The citizen his private contribution. We will have a chimney-tax. We will give up our coaches, and wine, and watches. The churches will melt their plate. The Father of his country shall wait well-pleased a little longer for his monument: Franklin for his; the Pilgrim Fathers for theirs. We will call on those rich benefactors who found Asylums, Hospitals, Athenaeums, Lowell Institutes, Peabody Institutes, Bates and Astor City Libraries. On wealthy bachelors and wealthy maidens to make the State their heir as they were wont in Rome. The merchant will give his best voyage. The mechanic will give his fabric. The needlewomen will give. Children will have cent societies. If really the matter could come to negotiation and a price were named, I do not think any price founded on an estimate that figures could tell would be quite unmanageable. Every man in the land would give a week's work to dig away this accursed mountain of sorrow once and forever out of the world.

(January 25, 1855)

# HERMAN MELVILLE

from *Benito Cereno*

Herman Melville (1819–1891) serialized the novella *Benito Cereno* in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1855 and published a slightly revised version in his collection *The Piazza Tales* in 1856. The plot was derived from Amasa Delano's *Narrative of Voyages and Travels* (1817), which recounts an actual slave insurrection in 1804–5. Critics have debated Melville's views on race and slavery, but as the excerpt here shows, he recognized the danger and violence of the slave trade, its damaging effects on human psychology, and the blind innocence of Americans like Captain Delano who couldn't or wouldn't comprehend its sinister influence.

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“Then if master means to talk more to Don Amasa,” said the servant, “why not let Don Amasa sit by master in the cuddy, and master can talk, and Don Amasa can listen, while Babo here lathers and strops.”

“Yes,” said Captain Delano, not displeased with this sociable plan, “yes, Don Benito, unless you had rather not, I will go with you.”

“Be it so, Señor.”

As the three passed aft, the American could not but think it another strange instance of his host's capriciousness, this being shaved with such uncommon punctuality in the middle of the day. But he deemed it more than likely that the servant's anxious fidelity had something to do with the matter; inasmuch as the timely interruption served to rally his master from the mood which had evidently been coming upon him.

The place called the cuddy was a light deck-cabin formed by the poop, a sort of attic to the large cabin below. Part of it had formerly been the quarters of the officers; but since their death all the partitionings had been thrown down, and the whole interior converted into one spacious and airy marine hall; for absence

of fine furniture and picturesque disarray, of odd appurtenances, somewhat answering to the wide, cluttered hall of some eccentric bachelor-squire in the country, who hangs his shooting-jacket and tobacco-pouch on deer antlers, and keeps his fishing-rod, tongs, and walking-stick in the same corner.

The similitude was heightened, if not originally suggested, by glimpses of the surrounding sea; since, in one aspect, the country and the ocean seem cousins-german.

The floor of the cuddy was matted. Overhead, four or five old muskets were stuck into horizontal holes along the beams. On one side was a claw-footed old table lashed to the deck; a thumbed missal on it, and over it a small, meager crucifix attached to the bulk-head. Under the table lay a dented cutlass or two, with a hacked harpoon, among some melancholy old rigging, like a heap of poor friar's girdles. There were also two long, sharp-ribbed settees of malacca cane, black with age, and uncomfortable to look at as inquisitors' racks, with a large, misshapen arm-chair, which, furnished with a rude barber's crutch at the back, working with a screw, seemed some grotesque, middle-age engine of torment. A flag locker was in one corner, open, exposing various colored bunting, some rolled up, others half unrolled, still others tumbled. Opposite was a cumbrous wash-stand, of black mahogany, all of one block, with a pedestal, like a font, and over it a railed shelf, containing combs, brushes, and other implements of the toilet. A torn hammock of stained grass swung near; the sheets tossed, and the pillow wrinkled up like a brow, as if whoever slept here slept but illy, with alternate visitations of sad thoughts and bad dreams.

The further extremity of the cuddy, overhanging the ship's stern, was pierced with three openings, windows or port holes, according as men or cannon might peer, socially or unsocially, out of them. At present neither men nor cannon were seen, though huge ring-bolts and other rusty iron fixtures of the wood-work hinted of twenty-four-pounders.

Glancing towards the hammock as he entered, Captain Delano said, "You sleep here, Don Benito?"

“Yes, Señor, since we got into mild weather.”

“This seems a sort of dormitory, sitting-room, sail-loft, chapel, armory, and private closet all together, Don Benito,” added Captain Delano, looking around.

“Yes, Señor; events have not been favorable to much order in my arrangements.”

Here the servant, napkin on arm, made a motion as if waiting his master’s good pleasure. Don Benito signified his readiness, when, seating him in the malacca arm-chair, and for the guest’s convenience drawing opposite it one of the settees, the servant commenced operations by throwing back his master’s collar and loosening his cravat.

There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one’s person. Most negroes are natural valets and hair-dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvelous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its way, singularly pleasing to behold, and still more so to be the manipulated subject of. And above all is the great gift of good humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune.

When to all this is added the docility arising from the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind, and that susceptibility of blind attachment sometimes inhering in indisputable inferiors, one readily perceives why those hypochondriacs, Johnson and Byron—it may be something like the hypochondriac, Benito Cereno—took to their hearts, almost to the exclusion of the entire white race, their serving men, the negroes, Barber and Fletcher. But if there be that in the negro which exempts him from the inflicted sourness of the morbid or cynical mind, how, in his most prepossessing aspects, must he appear to a benevolent one? When at ease with respect to exterior things, Captain Delano’s nature was not only benign, but familiarly and humorously so. At

home, he had often taken rare satisfaction in sitting in his door, watching some free man of color at his work or play. If on a voyage he chanced to have a black sailor, invariably he was on chatty, and half-gamesome terms with him. In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs.

Hitherto the circumstances in which he found the San Dominick had repressed the tendency. But in the cuddy, relieved from his former uneasiness, and, for various reasons, more sociably inclined than at any previous period of the day, and seeing the colored servant, napkin on arm, so debonair about his master, in a business so familiar as that of shaving, too, all his old weakness for negroes returned.

Among other things, he was amused with an odd instance of the African love of bright colors and fine shows, in the black's informally taking from the flag-locker a great piece of bunting of all hues, and lavishly tucking it under his master's chin for an apron.

The mode of shaving among the Spaniards is a little different from what it is with other nations. They have a basin, specifically called a barber's basin, which on one side is scooped out, so as accurately to receive the chin, against which it is closely held in lathering; which is done, not with a brush, but with soap dipped in the water of the basin and rubbed on the face.

In the present instance salt-water was used for lack of better; and the parts lathered were only the upper lip, and low down under the throat, all the rest being cultivated beard.

These preliminaries being somewhat novel to Captain Delano, he sat curiously eyeing them, so that no conversation took place, nor for the present did Don Benito appear disposed to renew any.

Setting down his basin, the negro searched among the razors, as for the sharpest, and having found it, gave it an additional edge by expertly strapping it on the firm, smooth, oily skin of his open palm; he then made a gesture as if to begin, but midway stood suspended for an instant, one hand elevating the razor,

the other professionally dabbling among the bubbling suds on the Spaniard's lank neck. Not unaffected by the close sight of the gleaming steel, Don Benito nervously shuddered; his usual ghastliness was heightened by the lather, which lather, again, was intensified in its hue by the contrasting sootiness of the negro's body. Altogether the scene was somewhat peculiar, at least to Captain Delano, nor, as he saw the two thus postured, could he resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white, a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free.

Meantime the agitation of the Spaniard had a little loosened the bunting from around him, so that one broad fold swept curtain-like over the chair-arm to the floor, revealing, amid a profusion of armorial bars and ground-colors—black, blue, and yellow—a closed castle in a blood-red field diagonal with a lion rampant in a white.

“The castle and the lion,” exclaimed Captain Delano—“why, Don Benito, this is the flag of Spain you use here. It's well it's only I, and not the King, that sees this,” he added with a smile, “but”—turning towards the black,—“it's all one, I suppose, so the colors be gay;” which playful remark did not fail somewhat to tickle the negro.

“Now, master,” he said, readjusting the flag, and pressing the head gently further back into the crotch of the chair; “now master,” and the steel glanced nigh the throat.

Again Don Benito faintly shuddered.

“You must not shake so, master.—See, Don Amasa, master always shakes when I shave him. And yet master knows I never yet have drawn blood, though it's true, if master will shake so, I may some of these times. Now master,” he continued. “And now, Don Amasa, please go on with your talk about the gale, and all that, master can hear, and between times master can answer.”

“Ah yes, these gales,” said Captain Delano; “but the more I think of your voyage, Don Benito, the more I wonder, not at the gales, terrible as they must

have been, but at the disastrous interval following them. For here, by your account, have you been these two months and more getting from Cape Horn to St. Maria, a distance which I myself, with a good wind, have sailed in a few days. True, you had calms, and long ones, but to be becalmed for two months, that is, at least, unusual. Why, Don Benito, had almost any other gentleman told me such a story, I should have been half disposed to a little incredulity.”

Here an involuntary expression came over the Spaniard, similar to that just before on the deck, and whether it was the start he gave, or a sudden gawky roll of the hull in the calm, or a momentary unsteadiness of the servant’s hand; however it was, just then the razor drew blood, spots of which stained the creamy lather under the throat; immediately the black barber drew back his steel, and remaining in his professional attitude, back to Captain Delano, and face to Don Benito, held up the trickling razor, saying, with a sort of half humorous sorrow, “See, master,—you shook so—here’s Babo’s first blood.”

No sword drawn before James the First of England, no assassination in that timid King’s presence, could have produced a more terrified aspect than was now presented by Don Benito.

Poor fellow, thought Captain Delano, so nervous he can’t even bear the sight of barber’s blood; and this unstrung, sick man, is it credible that I should have imagined he meant to spill all my blood, who can’t endure the sight of one little drop of his own? Surely, Amasa Delano, you have been beside yourself this day. Tell it not when you get home, sappy Amasa. Well, well, he looks like a murderer, doesn’t he? More like as if himself were to be done for. Well, well, this day’s experience shall be a good lesson.

Meantime, while these things were running through the honest seaman’s mind, the servant had taken the napkin from his arm, and to Don Benito had said—“But answer Don Amasa, please, master, while I wipe this ugly stuff off the razor, and strop it again.”

As he said the words, his face was turned half round, so as to be alike visible to the Spaniard and the American, and seemed by its expression to hint,

that he was desirous, by getting his master to go on with the conversation, considerately to withdraw his attention from the recent annoying accident. As if glad to snatch the offered relief, Don Benito resumed, rehearsing to Captain Delano, that not only were the calms of unusual duration, but the ship had fallen in with obstinate currents; and other things he added, some of which were but repetitions of former statements, to explain how it came to pass that the passage from Cape Horn to St. Maria had been so exceedingly long, now and then mingling with his words, incidental praises, less qualified than before, to the blacks, for their general good conduct.

These particulars were not given consecutively, the servant, at convenient times, using his razor, and so, between the intervals of shaving, the story and panegyric went on with more than usual huskiness.

To Captain Delano's imagination, now again not wholly at rest, there was something so hollow in the Spaniard's manner, with apparently some reciprocal hollowness in the servant's dusky comment of silence, that the idea flashed across him, that possibly master and man, for some unknown purpose, were acting out, both in word and deed, nay, to the very tremor of Don Benito's limbs, some juggling play before him. Neither did the suspicion of collusion lack apparent support, from the fact of those whispered conferences before mentioned. But then, what could be the object of enacting this play of the barber before him? At last, regarding the notion as a whimsy, insensibly suggested, perhaps, by the theatrical aspect of Don Benito in his harlequin ensign, Captain Delano speedily banished it.

The shaving over, the servant bestirred himself with a small bottle of scented waters, pouring a few drops on the head, and then diligently rubbing; the vehemence of the exercise causing the muscles of his face to twitch rather strangely.

His next operation was with comb, scissors and brush; going round and round, smoothing a curl here, clipping an unruly whisker-hair there, giving a graceful sweep to the temple-lock, with other impromptu touches evincing the

hand of a master; while, like any resigned gentleman in barber's hands, Don Benito bore all, much less uneasily, at least, than he had done the razoring; indeed, he sat so pale and rigid now, that the negro seemed a Nubian sculptor finishing off a white statue-head.

All being over at last, the standard of Spain removed, tumbled up, and tossed back into the flag-locker, the negro's warm breath blowing away any stray hair which might have lodged down his master's neck; collar and cravat readjusted; a speck of lint whisked of the velvet lapel; all this being done; backing off a little space, and pausing with an expression of subdued self-complacency, the servant for a moment surveyed his master, as, in toilet at least, the creature of his own tasteful hands.

Captain Delano playfully complimented him upon his achievement; at the same time congratulating Don Benito.

But neither sweet waters, nor shampooing, nor fidelity, nor sociality, delighted the Spaniard. Seeing him relapsing into forbidding gloom, and still remaining seated, Captain Delano, thinking that his presence was undesired just then, withdrew, on pretense of seeing whether, as he had prophesied, any signs of a breeze were visible.

Walking forward to the mainmast, he stood a while thinking over the scene, and not without some undefined misgivings, when he heard a noise near the cuddy, and turning, saw the negro, his hand to his cheek. Advancing, Captain Delano perceived that the cheek was bleeding. He was about to ask the cause, when the negro's wailing soliloquy enlightened him.

"Ah, when will master get better from his sickness; only the sour heart that sour sickness breeds made him serve Babo so; cutting Babo with the razor, because, only by accident, Babo had given master one little scratch; and for the first time in so many a day, too. Ah, ah, ah," holding his hand to his face.

Is it possible, thought Captain Delano; was it to wreak in private his Spanish spite against this poor friend of his, that Don Benito, by his sullen manner, impelled me to withdraw? Ah, this slavery breeds ugly passions in man.

—Poor fellow!

He was about to speak in sympathy to the negro, but with a timid reluctance he now reëntered the cuddy.

Presently master and man came forth; Don Benito leaning on his servant as if nothing had happened.

But a sort of love-quarrel, after all, thought Captain Delano.

He accosted Don Benito, and they slowly walked together. They had gone but a few paces, when the steward—a tall, rajah-looking mulatto, orientally set off with a pagoda turban formed by three or four Madras handkerchiefs wound about his head, tier on tier—approaching with a salaam, announced lunch in the cabin.

On their way thither, the two captains were preceded by the mulatto, who, turning round as he advanced, with continual smiles and bows, ushered them on, a display of elegance which quite completed the insignificance of the small bare-headed Babo, who, as if not unconscious of inferiority, eyed askance the graceful steward. But in part, Captain Delano imputed his jealous watchfulness to that peculiar feeling which the full-blooded African entertains for the adulterated one. As for the steward, his manner, if not bespeaking much dignity of self-respect, yet evidenced his extreme desire to please; which is doubly meritorious, as at once Christian and Chesterfieldian.

Captain Delano observed with interest that while the complexion of the mulatto was hybrid, his physiognomy was European; classically so.

“Don Benito,” whispered he, “I am glad to see this usher-of-the-golden-rod of yours; the sight refutes an ugly remark once made to me by a Barbadoes planter; that when a mulatto has a regular European face, look out for him; he is a devil. But see, your steward here has features more regular than King George’s of England; and yet there he nods, and bows, and smiles; a king, indeed—the king of kind hearts and polite fellows. What a pleasant voice he has, too!”

“He has, Señor.”

“But, tell me, has he not, so far as you have known him, always proved a

good, worthy fellow?” said Captain Delano, pausing, while with a final genuflection the steward disappeared into the cabin; “come, for the reason just mentioned, I am curious to know.”

“Francesco is a good man,” sort of sluggishly responded Don Benito, like a phlegmatic appreciator, who would neither find fault nor flatter.

“Ah, I thought so. For it were strange indeed, and not very creditable to us white-skins, if a little of our blood mixed with the African’s, should, far from improving the latter’s quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, perhaps, but not the wholesomeness.”

“Doubtless, doubtless, Señor, but”—glancing at Babo—“not to speak of negroes, your planter’s remark I have heard applied to the Spanish and Indian intermixtures in our provinces. But I know nothing about the matter,” he listlessly added.

And here they entered the cabin.

(1855)

# JAMES McCUNE SMITH

## from *Introduction to Douglass's My Bondage and My Freedom*

A graduate of the African Free School in New York and the first university-trained black physician in America, James McCune Smith (1813–1865) began his antislavery work as soon as he returned from medical training in Scotland in 1837 (American medical schools had denied him admission). Active in the American Anti-Slavery Society, the Liberty Party, and the New York Abolition Society, he wrote frequently for black newspapers such as the *Weekly Anglo-African* and *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. In 1857, as nominee of the Radical Abolition Party for New York secretary of state, he became one of the first African Americans to run for elected office. When Frederick Douglass published his second autobiography in 1855, he turned to Smith, whom he admired, to write the introduction. The result was this vivid sketch of the great abolitionist in whose early struggles Smith discerned the heroic temperament of a man who would “strike a blow which would make slavery reel and stagger.”

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WHEN A man raises himself from the lowest condition in society to the highest, mankind pay him the tribute of their admiration; when he accomplishes this elevation by native energy, guided by prudence and wisdom, their admiration is increased; but when his course, onward and upward, excellent in itself, furthermore proves a possible, what had hitherto been regarded as an impossible, reform, then he becomes a burning and a shining light, on which the aged may look with gladness, the young with hope, and the downtrodden, as a representative of what they may themselves become. To such a man, dear reader, it is my privilege to introduce you.

The life of Frederick Douglass, recorded in the pages which follow, is not merely an example of self-elevation under the most adverse circumstances; it is, moreover, a noble vindication of the highest aims of the American anti-slavery movement. The real object of that movement is not only to disenthral, it is, also,

to bestow upon the negro the exercise of all those rights, from the possession of which he has been so long debarred.

But this full recognition of the colored man to the right, and the entire admission of the same to the full privileges, political, religious and social, of manhood, requires powerful effort on the part of the enthralled, as well as on the part of those who would disenthral them. The people at large must feel the conviction, as well as admit the abstract logic, of human equality; the negro, for the first time in the world's history, brought in full contact with high civilization, must prove his title to all that is demanded for him; in the teeth of unequal chances, he must prove himself equal to the mass of those who oppress him—therefore, absolutely superior to his apparent fate, and to their relative ability. And it is most cheering to the friends of freedom, to-day, that evidence of this equality is rapidly accumulating, not from the ranks of the half-freed colored people of the free states, but from the very depths of slavery itself; the indestructible equality of man to man is demonstrated by the ease with which black men, scarce one remove from barbarism—if slavery can be honored with such a distinction—vault into the high places of the most advanced and painfully acquired civilization. Ward and Garnett, Wells Brown and Pennington, Loguen and Douglass, are banners on the outer wall, under which abolition is fighting its most successful battles, because they are living exemplars of the practicability of the most radical abolitionism; for, they were all of them born to the doom of slavery, some of them remained slaves until adult age, yet they all have not only won equality to their white fellow citizens, in civil, religious, political and social rank, but they have also illustrated and adorned our common country by their genius, learning and eloquence.

The characteristics whereby Mr. Douglass has won first rank among these remarkable men, and is still rising toward highest rank among living Americans, are abundantly laid bare in the book before us. Like the autobiography of Hugh Miller, it carries us so far back into early childhood, as to throw light upon the question, “when positive and persistent memory begins in the human being.”

And, like Hugh Miller, he must have been a shy old fashioned child, occasionally oppressed by what he could not well account for, peering and poking about among the layers of right and wrong, of tyrant and thrall, and the wonderfulness of that hopeless tide of things which brought power to one race, and unrequited toil to another, until, finally, he stumbled upon his “first-found Ammonite,” hidden away down in the depths of his own nature, and which revealed to him the fact that liberty and right, for all men, were anterior to slavery and wrong. When his knowledge of the world was bounded by the visible horizon on Col. Lloyd’s plantation, and while every thing around him bore a fixed, iron stamp, as if it had always been so, this was, for one so young, a notable discovery.

To his uncommon memory, then, we must add a keen and accurate insight into men and things; an original breadth of common sense which enabled him to see, and weigh, and compare whatever passed before him, and which kindled a desire to search out and define their relations to other things not so patent, but which never succumbed to the marvelous nor the supernatural; a sacred thirst for liberty and for learning, first as a means of attaining liberty, then as an end in itself most desirable; a will; an unfaltering energy and determination to obtain what his soul pronounced desirable; a majestic self-hood; determined courage; a deep and agonizing sympathy with his embruted, crushed and bleeding fellow slaves, and an extraordinary depth of passion, together with that rare alliance between passion and intellect, which enables the former, when deeply roused, to excite, develop and sustain the latter.

With these original gifts in view, let us look at his schooling; the fearful discipline through which it pleased God to prepare him for the high calling on which he has since entered—the advocacy of emancipation by the people who are not slaves. And for this special mission, his plantation education was better than any he could have acquired in any lettered school. What he needed, was facts and experiences, welded to acutely wrought up sympathies, and these he could not elsewhere have obtained, in a manner so peculiarly adapted to his

nature. His physical being was well trained, also, running wild until advanced into boyhood; hard work and light diet, thereafter, and a skill in handicraft in youth.

For his special mission, then, this was, considered in connection with his natural gifts, a good schooling; and, for his special mission, he doubtless “left school” just at the proper moment. Had he remained longer in slavery—had he fretted under bonds until the ripening of manhood and its passions, until the drear agony of slave-wife and slave-children had been piled upon his already bitter experiences—then, not only would his own history have had another termination, but the drama of American slavery would have been essentially varied; for I cannot resist the belief, that the boy who learned to read and write as he did, who taught his fellow slaves these precious acquirements as he did, who plotted for their mutual escape as he did, would, when a man at bay, strike a blow which would make slavery reel and stagger. Furthermore, blows and insults he bore, at the moment, without resentment; deep but suppressed emotion rendered him insensible to their sting; but it was afterward, when the memory of them went seething through his brain, breeding a fiery indignation at his injured self-hood, that the resolve came to resist, and the time fixed when to resist, and the plot laid, how to resist; and he always kept his self-pledged word. In what he undertook, in this line, he looked fate in the face, and had a cool, keen look at the relation of means to ends. Henry Bibb, to avoid chastisement, strewed his master’s bed with charmed leaves—and *was whipped*. Frederick Douglass quietly pocketed a like *fetiché*, compared his muscles with those of Covey—and *whipped him*.

In the history of his life in bondage, we find, well developed, that inherent and continuous energy of character which will ever render him distinguished. What his hand found to do, he did with his might; even while conscious that he was wronged out of his daily earnings, he worked, and worked hard. At his daily labor he went with a will; with keen, well set eye, brawny chest, lithe figure, and fair sweep of arm, he would have been king among calkers, had that been his

mission.

It must not be overlooked, in this glance at his education, that Mr. Douglass lacked one aid to which so many men of mark have been deeply indebted—he had neither a mother’s care, nor a mother’s culture, save that which slavery grudgingly meted out to him. Bitter nurse! may not even her features relax with human feeling, when she gazes at such offspring! How susceptible he was to the kindly influences of mother-culture, may be gathered from his own words: “It has been a life-long, standing grief to me, that I know so little of my mother, and that I was so early separated from her. The counsels of her love must have been beneficial to me. The side view of her face is imaged on my memory, and I take few steps in life, without feeling her presence; but the image is mute, and I have no striking words of hers treasured up.”

From the depths of chattel slavery in Maryland, our author escaped into the caste-slavery of the north, in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Here he found oppression assuming another, and hardly less bitter, form; of that very handicraft which the greed of slavery had taught him, his half-freedom denied him the exercise for an honest living; he found himself one of a class—free colored men—whose position he has described in the following words:

“Aliens are we in our native land. The fundamental principles of the republic, to which the humblest white man, whether born here or elsewhere, may appeal with confidence, in the hope of awakening a favorable response, are held to be inapplicable to us. The glorious doctrines of your revolutionary fathers, and the more glorious teachings of the Son of God, are construed and applied against us. We are literally scourged beyond the beneficent range of both authorities, human and divine. \* \* \* \* American humanity hates us, scorns us, disowns and denies, in a thousand ways, our very personality. The outspread wing of American christianity, apparently broad enough to give shelter to a perishing world, refuses to cover us. To us, its bones are brass, and its features iron. In running thither for shelter and succor, we have only fled from the hungry blood-hound to the devouring wolf—from a corrupt and selfish world, to a hollow and

hypocritical church.”—*Speech before American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, May, 1854.*

Four years or more, from 1837 to 1841, he struggled on, in New Bedford, sawing wood, rolling casks, or doing what labor he might, to support himself and young family; four years he brooded over the scars which slavery and semi-slavery had inflicted upon his body and soul; and then, with his wounds yet unhealed, he fell among the Garrisonians—a glorious waif to those most ardent reformers. It happened one day, at Nantucket, that he, diffidently and reluctantly, was led to address an anti-slavery meeting. He was about the age when the younger Pitt entered the House of Commons; like Pitt, too, he stood up a born orator.

William Lloyd Garrison, who was happily present, writes thus of Mr. Douglass’ maiden effort; “I shall never forget his first speech at the convention—the extraordinary emotion it excited in my own mind—the powerful impression it created upon a crowded auditory, completely taken by surprise. \* \* \* I think I never hated slavery so intensely as at that moment; certainly, my perception of the enormous outrage which is inflicted by it on the godlike nature of its victims, was rendered far more clear than ever. There stood one in physical proportions and stature commanding and exact—in intellect richly endowed—in natural eloquence a prodigy.”\*

(1855)

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\* Letter, Introduction to Life of Frederick Douglass, Boston, 1845.

## LYDIA ADAMS

from *The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*

One of more than one hundred former slaves whose life stories were transcribed by the Boston abolitionist Benjamin Drew in 1856, Lydia Adams (fl. c. 1786–1856) spent most of her life as a slave in Virginia and Missouri, before escaping and eventually settling in Canada in 1855. The gentle, understated tone of this elderly woman belies the shocking content of her narrative.

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[Mrs. A. lives in a very comfortable log-house on the road from Windsor to the Refugees' Home.]

I am seventy or eighty years old. I was from Fairfax county, old Virginia. I was married and had three children when I left there for Wood county, where I lived twenty years: thence to Missouri, removing with my master's family. One by one they sent four of my children away from me, and sent them to the South: and four of my grandchildren all to the South but one. My oldest son, Daniel—then Sarah—all gone. "It's no use to cry about it," said one of the young women, "she's got to go." That's what she said when Esther went away. Esther's husband is here now, almost crazy about her: they took her and sold her away from him. They were all Methodist people—great Methodists—all belonged to the church. My master died—he left no testimony whether he was willing to go or not. . . . I have been in Canada about one year, and like it as far as I have seen.

I've been wanting to be free ever since I was a little child. I said to them I did n't believe God ever meant me to be a slave, if my skin was black—at any rate not all my lifetime: why not have it as in old times, seven years' servants? Master would say, "No, you were made to wait on white people: what was niggers made for?—why, just to wait on us all."

I am afraid the slaveholders will go to a bad place—I am really afraid they

will. I do n't think any slaveholder can get to the kingdom.

(1856)

## HARRY THOMAS

from *The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*

Harry Thomas (fl. 1856) was, like Lydia Adams, one of the former slaves whom Benjamin Drew interviewed in Canada for his 1856 book *The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves*, published in Boston. As a slave in Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi, and elsewhere, Thomas endured terrible physical abuse. He did not forgive or forget: "Slaveholders, judged by the way they treat colored people, are the worst persons on earth."

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I WAS born in Brunswick, partly raised in Southampton, ten miles below Bethlehem, Virginia. Was then bought by a "nigger-trader," J—— B——, and was sold to J—— S——, in South Carolina. The treatment there was barbarous. At sixteen years old, they gave me a task, splitting rails, which I did in the time, then went to take my rest. His wife was harder than he was,—she told me to make lights in the road, setting fire to rubbish, it being a new place. I got through at ten o'clock: boss came home, I went in again. She ordered me to put on water to scour the floors, etc. I would n't,—I went over to her father's "nigger-house" all night. Next morning, the master came for me, took me home, stripped me stark naked, made a paddle of thick oak board, lashed me across a pine log, secured my hands and feet, and whipped me with the paddle. His little boy saw it and cried,—he cursed him away,—his wife came,—he cursed her away. He whipped till he broke the paddle. After that, he took me to the house, and hit me with a hickory stick over the head and shoulders, a dozen times or more: then he got salt and water, and a corn cob, and scrubbed me. Then he sent me to water the hogs, naked as I was, in January. I ran into the woods, and went back to the same house, and the colored people gave me some old rags to keep me from freezing.

I recovered from that beating, and at length ran away again, because he refused to let me go to see my friends. I was caught by a colored man, who took me to my master's step-father's,—he whipped me till he was satisfied, then master came, and whipped me with a leather strap. I ran right off again; was caught and put in a potato house. After that I was put in the field to knock along the best way I could, but I was not able to work.

My master removed to Mississippi, taking me with him, the year before Gen. Jackson commenced fighting the Creek Indians.

This big scar on my left cheek, I got in a runaway scrape. A man who got up with me, jobbed me with the muzzle of a gun, which knocked me back into the mud: then he tied me. That time, I received three hundred lashes; one of the slaves who helped tie me, fainted at seeing me so abused. I have a cut with a knife made by J—— S—— after I had worked for him all day, because he could not flog me, as he liked.

I staid awhile, then ran away again,—then a man caught me, and another came with him home, who wished to buy me. I was a smart-looking boy—he offered one thousand dollars for me: master would n't sell. For running away, I received a hundred lashes on the bare back. I was then sold to his cousin, J—— Y——, in Mississippi. I lived with him ten years; I suppose I must have been about thirty-two. At first, Y.'s treatment was fair. I was foreman. He got rich, and grew mean, and I left him. I was caught and taken back again. He took me to the blacksmith's shop and had a ring made of axe-bar iron, which I wore on my right leg from the middle of May to the middle of September. I worked with it on, and slept with it on, all that time.

After he got it off, I worked awhile,—again I went off, went into Alabama, was out from October to March,—then was put in jail, where I lay three months, as they could not hear from my owner, who had moved off to the Choctaw purchase. My boss came and took me out of jail, chained me to his horse with plough traces, and was taking me on his way, when Gen. S——, of Georgia bought me. He put me in his kitchen to cook for him. But I was not satisfied with

him, although he used me well. The fact is, I wanted to be free. I ran away and left him,—he had me caught, and sold me to S—— N——, who took me to New Orleans. Nobody there liked my countenance at all—no one would give a cent for me. N—— took me to Natchez and sold me, after a week, to a young man named G—— S——, who had a cotton plantation a few miles above Natchez. He treated me well at first. He would not allow any to leave the place to see their friends without a pass from him or the overseer. I went out to see my friends, and was flogged with a bull whip on the bare back—a whip heavier and larger than a horse-whip, with a buck-skin cracker on the lash. I ran away again—they caught me and put plough traces around my body, and put me to work hoeing cotton and corn. Not long after, they put on an iron collar. I made an errand—went to the woods—and the overseer sent all hands to hunt for me. They found me, and brought me back to the driver. The old driver gave me two blows with the bull whip; the young driver stopped him. The overseer came up and knocked me down with his fist by a blow on the head. I fainted, was taken to a tree, and when I came to, the overseer was bleeding me. Word came to the overseer, from my master's grandmother, the same day, that my master was gone away, and unless he took off my chains, I would die before his return. The overseer took them all off.

At night, I dressed up and started off, steering by the north star. I walked seven hundred and fifty miles nights,—then, in Kentucky, I was betrayed by a colored man, and lay in jail fifteen months. I would n't tell them where I belonged. Then, under terror of the whip, I told them all about it. A Dr. J—— N—— had bought the chance of me,—he took me to Nashville, where I waited on him, his partner, and took care of his horses about four years. I started to run away from him on his partner's horse—I had one hundred and fifty dollars with me. He overtook me and took away my money. Then he put me in jail and sold me to an old broken down trader. I left him, proceeded north, was caught in Indiana, and taken to Evansville jail. They would not receive me there, and I was taken to Henderson, on the Kentucky side, and put in jail there. My owner put on

handcuffs and locked me into the wagon besides with plough chains. I travelled three days thus in succession—he chaining me at night to his bedstead. On the third night, I was eating in the tavern kitchen where we stopped; I concluded to try for the North once more. I went out and hammered off my chains—found some assistance to get off my cuffs, and came on my way, travelling altogether nights by the north star, and lying by in the day. In Ohio, I found the best kind of friends, and soon reached Canada. When I first came, I joined the soldiers just after the rebellion: then practised up and down the province as a physician, from the knowledge I had obtained from a colored man in Mississippi, who knew roots and herbs,—but there were many kinds I wanted which I could not find here.

I am now hiring a piece of land in Buxton. My calculation is, if I live, to own a farm if I can. My health is good, and the climate agrees with me—and it does with colored men generally.

Slavery is barbarous. In my view, slaveholders, judged by the way they treat colored people, are the worst persons on earth.

(1856)

## HARRIET TUBMAN

from *The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*

Unlike other former slaves who wrote narratives of their lives, the famous abolitionist Harriet Tubman (c. 1820–1913) never did, and thus this short reflection is the only text to capture anything of Tubman in her own voice. A woman of action, she led scores of slaves to freedom as a guide on the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, she volunteered as a nurse among the Union wounded, and she organized and led networks of black spies behind Confederate lines.

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I GREW up like a neglected weed,—ignorant of liberty, having no experience of it. Then I was not happy or contented: every time I saw a white man I was afraid of being carried away. I had two sisters carried away in a chain-gang,—one of them left two children. We were always uneasy. Now I've been free, I know what a dreadful condition slavery is. I have seen hundreds of escaped slaves, but I never saw one who was willing to go back and be a slave. I have no opportunity to see my friends in my native land. We would rather stay in our native land, if we could be as free there as we are here. I think slavery is the next thing to hell. If a person would send another into bondage, he would, it appears to me, be bad enough to send him into hell, if he could.

(1856)

# MARTHA GRIFFITH BROWNE

## from *Autobiography of a Female Slave*

Born into a slave-owning family in Kentucky, Mattie Griffith Browne (c. 1825–1906) faced the dilemma of having inherited slaves while holding antislavery views. She moved to Philadelphia in about 1854 and published this fictionalized slave narrative with the aim of raising money to emancipate her slaves and resettle them. Griffith thus became one of the few white writers to speak in the voice of a black slave. The book failed financially. Not until the American Anti-Slavery Society gave her a grant of \$100 in 1858 was Griffith able to officially free the six slaves she owned and relocate them to Ohio. She remained active against slavery and racism through the Civil War, married Albert Gallatin Browne of Boston in 1866, and focused in her later years on the women’s rights movement.

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“Come on, Ann,” she said, coaxingly; but, seeing that my amazement increased, she added, in a more persuasive tone, “Don’t be afraid, I am a friend to the colored race.”

This seemed to me the strangest fiction. A white lady, and yet a friend to the colored race! Oh, impossible! such condescension was unheard of! What! she a refined woman, with a snowy complexion, to stoop from her proud elevation to befriend the lowly Ethiopian! Why, she could not, she dare not! Almost stupefied with amazement, I stood, with my eyes intently fixed upon her.

“Come, child,” she said, in a kind tone, and placing her hand upon my shoulder, she endeavored to seat me beside her, “look up,—be not ashamed, for I am truly your friend. Your downcast look and melancholy manner have often struck me with sorrow.”

To this I could make no reply. Utterance was denied me. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth; a thick, filmy veil gathered before my sight; and there I stood like one turned to stone. But upon being frequently reassured by her gentle

manner and kind words, I at length controlled my emotions, and, seating myself at her feet, awaited her communication.

“Ann, you are not happy here?”

I said nothing, but she understood my look.

“Were you happy at home?”

“I was;” and the words were scarcely audible.

“Did they treat you kindly there?”

“Indeed they did; and there I had a mother, and was not lonely.”

“They did not beat you?”

“No, no, they did not,” and large tears gushed from my burning eyes;—for I remembered with anguish, how many a smarting blow had been given to me by Mr. Jones, how many a cuff by Mr. Peterkin, and ten thousand knocks, pinches, and tortures, by the young ladies.

“Don’t weep, child,” said Miss Bradley, in a soothing tone, and she laid her arm caressingly around my neck. This kindness was too much for my fortitude, and bursting through all restraints I gave vent to my feelings in a violent shower of tears. She very wisely allowed me some time for the gratification of this luxury. I at length composed myself, and begged her pardon for this seeming disrespect.

“But ah, my dear lady, you have spoken so kindly to me that I forgot myself.”

“No apology, my child, I tell you again that I am your friend, and with me you can be perfectly free. Look upon me as a sister; but now that your excited feelings have become allayed, let me ask you why your master sold you?”

I explained to her that it was necessary to the equal division of the estate that some of the slaves should be sold, and that I was among the number.

“A bad institution is this one of slavery. What fearful entailments of anguish! Manage it as the most humane will, or can, still it has horrible results. Witness your separation from your mother. Did these thoughts never occur to you?”

I looked surprised, but dared not tell her that often had vague doubts of the justice of slavery crossed my mind. Ah, too much I feared the lash, and I answered only by a mournful look of assent.

“Ann, did you never hear of the Abolition Society?”

I shook my head. She paused, as if doubtful of the propriety of making a disclosure; but at length the better principle triumphed, and she said, “There is in the Northern States an organization which devotes its energies and very life to the cause of the slave. They wish to abolish the shameful system, and make you and all your persecuted race as free and happy as the whites.”

“Does there really exist such a society; or is it only a wild fable that you tell me, for the purpose of allaying my present agony?”

“No, child; I do not deceive you. This noble and beneficent society really lives; but it does not, I regret to say, flourish as it should.”

“And why?” I asked, whilst a new wonder was fastening on my mind.

“Because,” she answered, “the larger portion of the whites are mean and avaricious enough to desire, for the sake of pecuniary aggrandizement, the enslavement of a race, whom the force of education and hereditary prejudice have taught them to regard as their own property.”

I did but dimly conceive her meaning. A slow light was breaking through my cloudy brain, kindling and inflaming hopes that now shine like beacons over the far waste of memory. Should I, could I, ever be *free*? Oh, bright and glorious dream! how it did sparkle in my soul, and cheer me through the lonely hours of bondage! This hope, this shadow of a hope, shone like a mirage far away upon the horizon of a clouded future.

Miss Bradley looked thoughtfully at me, as if watching the effect of her words; but she could not see that the seed which she had planted, perhaps carelessly, was destined to fructify and flourish through the coming seasons. I longed to pour out my heart to her; for she had, by this ready “sesame,” unlocked its deepest chambers. I dared not unfold even to her the wild dreams and strange hopes which I was indulging.

I spied Melinda coming up, and signified to Miss Bradly that it would be unsafe to prolong the conversation, and quickly she departed; not, however, without reassuring me of the interest which she felt in my fate.

“What was Miss Emily Bradly talking wid you ’bout?” demanded Melinda, in a surly tone.

“Nothing that concerns you,” I answered.

“Well, but you’ll see that it consarns yerself, when I goes and tells Masser on you.”

“What can you tell him on me?”

“Oh, I knows, I hearn you talking wid dat ar’ woman;” and she gave a significant leer of her eye, and lolled her tongue out of her mouth, à la mad dog.

I was much disturbed lest she had heard the conversation, and should make a report of it, which would redound to the disadvantage of my new friend. I went about my usual duties with a slow and heavy heart; still, sometimes, like a star shining through clouds, was that little bright hope of liberty.

(1856)

## THOMAS MAYNE REID

from *The Quadroon; or,  
A Lover's Adventures in Louisiana*

An Irishman who immigrated to Louisiana at the age of twenty-one, Thomas Mayne Reid (1818–1883) was an adventurer who was wounded fighting in the Mexican-American War and who explored the American West on several expeditions, including one overland to the Pacific coast. He drew on all these experiences to produce a stream of novels and magazine fiction in a career divided between America and England. In 1856 he published his novel *The Quadroon*, an interracial love story, in New York and London. It is unknown whether he based the novel on his own life, but in the passage below he sympathetically explores the inner turmoil of a white man who has fallen in love with an enslaved woman.

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*“Aurore loves me!”*

This was my exclamation, as one morning I emerged from the village upon the road leading to the plantation. Three times a-week—sometimes even more frequently—I made this journey. Sometimes I encountered strangers at the house—friends of Mademoiselle. Sometimes I found her alone, or in company with Aurore. The latter I could never find alone! Oh! how I longed for that opportunity!

My visits, of course, were ostensibly to Mademoiselle. I dared not seek an interview with the slave.

Eugénie still preserved the air of melancholy, that now appeared to have settled upon her. Sometimes she was even sad,—at no time cheerful. As I was not made the confidant of her sorrows, I could only guess at the cause. Gayarre, of course, I believed to be the fiend.

Of him I had learnt little. He shunned me on the road, or in the fields; and upon his grounds I never trespassed. I found that he was held in but little respect,

except among those who worshipped his wealth. How he was prospering in his suit with Eugénie I knew not. The world talked of such a thing as “among the probabilities”—though one of the strange ones it was deemed. I had sympathy for the young Creole, but I might have felt it more profoundly under other circumstances. As it was, my whole soul was under the influence of a stronger passion—my love for Aurore.

“Yes—Aurore loves me!” I repeated to myself as I passed out from the village, and faced down the Levee road.

I was mounted. Reigart, in his generous hospitality, had even made me master of a horse—a fine animal that rose buoyantly under me, as though he was also imbued by some noble passion.

My well-trained steed followed the path without need of guidance, and dropping the bridle upon his neck, I left him to go at will, and pursued the train of my reflections.

I loved this young girl—passionately and devotedly I loved her. She loved me. She had not declared it in words, but her looks; and now and then a slight incident—scarce more than a fleeting glance or gesture—had convinced me that it was so.

Love taught me its own language. I needed no interpreter—no tongue to tell me I was beloved.

These reflections were pleasant, far more than pleasant; but others followed them of a very different nature.

With whom was I in love? A slave! True, a beautiful slave—but still a slave! How the world would laugh! how Louisiana would laugh—nay, scorn and persecute! The very proposal to make her my wife would subject me to derision and abuse. “What! marry a slave! ’Tis contrary to the laws of the land!” Dared I to marry her—even were she free?—she, a quadroon!—I should be hunted from the land, or shut up in one of its prisons!

All this I knew, but not one straw cared I for it. The world’s obloquy in one scale, my love for Aurore in the other—the former weighed but a feather.

True I had deep regret that Aurore was a slave, but it sprang not from that consideration. Far different was the reason of my regret. How was I to obtain her freedom? That was the question that troubled me.

Up to this time I had made light of the matter. Before I knew that I was beloved, it seemed a sequence very remote. But it was now brought nearer, and all the faculties of my mind became concentrated on that one thought—"How was I to obtain her freedom?" Had she been an ordinary slave, the answer would have been easy enough; for though not rich, my fortune was still equal to the purchase.

In my eyes Aurore was priceless. Would she also appear so in the eyes of her young mistress? Was my bride for sale on any terms? But even if money should be deemed an equivalent would Mademoiselle sell her to me? An odd proposal, that of buying her slave for my wife! What would Eugénie Besançon think of it?

The very idea of this proposal awed me; but the time to make it had not yet arrived.

"I must first have an interview with Aurore, demand a confession of her love, and then, if she consent to become mine,—my wife—the rest may be arranged. I see not clearly the way, but a love like mine will triumph over everything. My passion nerves me with power, with courage, with energy. Obstacles must yield; opposing wills be coaxed or crushed; everything must give way that stands between myself and my love! "Aurore! I come! I come!"

(1856)

# CHARLES SUMNER

from *The Crime Against Kansas*

The great abolitionist and senator from Massachusetts Charles Sumner (1811–1874) was a leading force against slavery in the U.S. Congress from his election in 1851 through the Civil War. Active in the movement as early as 1835, he opposed the annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War, campaigned for the desegregation of Boston public schools, and once the Civil War began, lobbied Lincoln for immediate emancipation. His May 19–20, 1856 Senate speech is one of his most famous not only for its colorful rhetoric, lambasting “the harlot, Slavery” and the deluded southern Don Quixotes who worshipped her, but for the vicious response it provoked. Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina assaulted Sumner with a cane on the floor of the Senate, beating him unconscious. It would be three years before Sumner returned to the Senate.

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**M**R. PRESIDENT, you are now called to redress a great transgression. Seldom in the history of nations has such a question been presented. Tariffs, Army bills, Navy bills, Land bills, are important, and justly occupy your care; but these all belong to the course of ordinary legislation. As means and instruments only, they are necessarily subordinate to the conservation of Government itself. Grant them or deny them, in greater or less degree, and you will inflict no shock. The machinery of Government will continue to move. The State will not cease to exist. Far otherwise is it with the eminent question now before you, involving, as it does, Liberty in a broad Territory, and also involving the peace of the whole country with our good name in history for evermore.

Take down your map, sir, and you will find that the Territory of Kansas, more than any other region, occupies the middle spot of North America, equally distant from the Atlantic on the east, and the Pacific on the west; from the frozen waters of Hudson’s Bay on the north, and the tepid Gulf Stream on the south,

constituting the precise territorial center of the whole vast Continent. To such advantages of situation, on the very highway between two oceans, are added a soil of unsurpassed richness, and a fascinating, undulating beauty of surface, with a health-giving climate, calculated to nurture a powerful and generous people, worthy to be a central pivot of American Institutions. A few short months only have passed since this spacious mediterranean country was open only to the savage, who ran wild in its woods and prairies; and now it has already drawn to its bosom a population of freemen larger than Athens crowded within her historic gates, when her sons, under Miltiades, won Liberty for mankind on the field of Marathon; more than Sparta contained when she ruled Greece, and sent forth her devoted children, quickened by a mother's benediction, to return with their shields or on them; more than Rome gathered on her seven hills, when, under her kings, she commenced that sovereign sway, which afterwards embraced the whole earth; more than London held, when, on the fields of Crecy and Agincourt, the English banner was carried victoriously over the chivalrous hosts of France.

Against this Territory, thus fortunate in position and population, a Crime has been committed, which is without example in the records of the Past. Not in plundered provinces or in the cruelties of selfish governors will you find its parallel; and yet there is an ancient instance, which may show at least the path of justice. In the terrible impeachment by which the great Roman Orator has blasted through all time the name of Verres, amidst charges of robbery and sacrilege, the enormity which most aroused the indignant voice of his accuser, and which still stands forth with strongest distinctness, arresting the sympathetic indignation of all who read the story, is, that away in Sicily he had scourged a citizen of Rome—that the cry “I am a Roman citizen” had been interposed in vain against the lash of the tyrant governor. Other charges were, that he had carried away productions of art, and that he had violated the sacred shrines. It was in the presence of the Roman Senate that this arraignment proceeded; in a temple of the Forum; amidst crowds—such as no orator had ever before drawn

together—thronging the porticos and colonnades, even clinging to the house-tops and neighboring slopes—and under the anxious gaze of witnesses summoned from the scene of crime. But an audience grander far—of higher dignity—of more various people and of wider intelligence—the countless multitude of succeeding generations, in every land, where eloquence has been studied or where the Roman name has been recognized—has listened to the accusation, and throbbed with condemnation of the criminal. Sir, speaking in an age of light and in a land of constitutional liberty, where the safeguards of elections are justly placed among the highest triumphs of civilization, I fearlessly assert that the wrongs of much-abused Sicily, thus memorable in history, were small by the side of the wrongs of Kansas, where the very shrines of popular institutions, more sacred than any heathen altar, have been desecrated; where the ballot-box, more precious than any work, in ivory or marble, from the cunning hand of art, has been plundered; and where the cry “I am an American citizen” has been interposed in vain against outrage of every kind, even upon life itself. Are you against sacrilege? I present it for your execration. Are you against robbery? I hold it up to your scorn. Are you for the protection of American citizens? I show you how their dearest rights have been cloven down, while a Tyrannical Usurpation has sought to install itself on their very necks!

But the wickedness which I now begin to expose is immeasurably aggravated by the motive which prompted it. Not in any common lust for power did this uncommon tragedy have its origin. It is the rape of a virgin Territory, compelling it to the hateful embrace of Slavery; and it may be clearly traced to a depraved longing for a new slave State, the hideous offspring of such a crime, in the hope of adding to the power of Slavery in the National Government. Yes, sir, when the whole world, alike Christian and Turk, is rising up to condemn this wrong, and to make it a hissing to the nations, here in our Republic, *force*—ay, sir, **FORCE**—has been openly employed in compelling Kansas to this pollution, and all for the sake of political power. There is the simple fact, which you will vainly attempt to deny, but which in itself presents an essential wickedness that

makes other public crimes seem like public virtues.

But this enormity, vast beyond comparison, swells to dimensions of wickedness which the imagination toils in vain to grasp, when it is understood, that for this purpose are hazarded the horrors of intestine feud, not only in this distant Territory, but everywhere throughout the country. Already the muster has begun. The strife is no longer local, but national. Even now, while I speak, portents hang on all the arches of the horizon, threatening to darken the broad land, which already yawns with the mutterings of civil war. The fury of the propagandists of Slavery, and the calm determination of their opponents, are now diffused from the distant Territory over wide-spread communities, and the whole country, in all its extent—marshaling hostile divisions, and foreshadowing a strife, which, unless happily averted by the triumph of Freedom, will become war—fratricidal, parricidal war—with an accumulated wickedness beyond the wickedness of any war in human annals; justly provoking the avenging judgment of Providence and the avenging pen of history, and constituting a strife, in the language of the ancient writer, more than *foreign*, more than *social*, more than *civil*; but something compounded of all these strifes, and in itself more than war; *sed potius commune quoddam ex omnibus, et plus quam bellum*.

Such is the Crime which you are to judge. But the criminal also must be dragged into day, that you may see and measure the power by which all this wrong is sustained. From no common source could it proceed. In its perpetration was needed a spirit of vaulting ambition which would hesitate at nothing; a hardihood of purpose which was insensible to the judgment of mankind; a madness for Slavery which should disregard the Constitution, the laws, and all the great examples of our history; also a consciousness of power such as comes from the habit of power; a combination of energies found only in a hundred arms directed by a hundred eyes; a control of Public Opinion, through venal pens and a prostituted press; an ability to subsidize crowds in every vocation of life—the politician with his local importance, the lawyer with his subtile tongue, and even

the authority of the judge on the bench; and a familiar use of men in places high and low, so that none, from the President to the lowest border postmaster, should decline to be its tool; all these things and more were needed; and they were found in the Slave Power of our Republic. There, sir, stands the criminal—all unmasked before you—heartless, grasping, and tyrannical—with an audacity beyond that of Verres, a subtlety beyond that of Machiavel, a meanness beyond that of Bacon, and an ability beyond that of Hastings. Justice to Kansas can be secured only by the prostration of this influence; for this is the power behind—greater than any President—which succors and sustains the Crime. Nay, the proceedings I now arraign derive their fearful consequence only from this connection.

In now opening this great matter, I am not insensible to the austere demands of the occasion; but the dependence of the crime against Kansas upon the Slave Power is so peculiar and important, that I trust to be pardoned while I impress it by an illustration, which to some may seem trivial. It is related in Northern mythology, that the god of Force, visiting an enchanted region, was challenged by his royal entertainer to what seemed a humble feat of strength—merely, sir, to lift a cat from the ground. The god smiled at the challenge, and, calmly placing his hand under the belly of the animal, with superhuman strength, strove, while the back of the feline monster arched far upwards, even beyond reach, and one paw actually forsook the earth, until at last the discomfited divinity desisted; but he was little surprised at his defeat, when he learned that this creature, which seemed to be a cat, and nothing more, was not merely a cat, but that it belonged to and was a part of the great Terrestrial Serpent, which, in its innumerable folds, encircled the whole globe. Even so the creature, whose paws are now fastened upon Kansas, whatever it may seem to be, constitutes in reality a part of the Slave Power, which, with loathsome folds, is now coiled about the whole land. Thus do I expose the extent of the present contest, where we encounter not merely local resistance, but also the unconquered sustaining arm behind. But out of the vastness of the Crime attempted, with all its woe and shame, I derive a

well-founded assurance of a commensurate vastness of effort against it, by the aroused masses of the country, determined not only to vindicate Right against Wrong, but to redeem the Republic from the thralldom of that Oligarchy, which prompts, directs, and concentrates, the distant wrong.

Such is the Crime, and such the criminal, which it is my duty in this debate to expose, and, by the blessing of God, this duty shall be done completely to the end. But this will not be enough. The Apologies, which, with strange hardihood, have been offered for the Crime, must be torn away, so that it shall stand forth, without a single rag, or fig-leaf, to cover its vileness. And, finally, the True Remedy must be shown. The subject is complex in its relations, as it is transcendent in importance; and yet, if I am honored by your attention, I hope to exhibit it clearly in all its parts, while I conduct you to the inevitable conclusion that Kansas must be admitted at once, with her present Constitution, as a State of this Union, and give a new star to the blue field of our National Flag. And here I derive satisfaction from the thought, that the cause is so strong in itself as to bear even the infirmities of its advocates; nor can it require anything beyond that simplicity of treatment and moderation of manner which I desire to cultivate. Its true character is such, that, like Hercules, it will conquer just so soon as it is recognized.

My task will be divided under three different heads; *first*, THE CRIME AGAINST KANSAS, in its origin and extent; *secondly*, THE APOLOGIES FOR THE CRIME; and *thirdly*, THE TRUE REMEDY.

But, before entering upon the argument, I must say something of a general character, particularly in response to what has fallen from Senators who have raised themselves to eminence on this floor in championship of human wrongs; I mean the Senator from South Carolina, [Mr. BUTLER,] and the Senator from Illinois, [Mr. DOUGLAS,] who, though unlike as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, yet, like this couple, sally forth together in the same adventure. I regret much to miss the elder Senator from his seat; but the cause, against which he has run a

tilt, with such activity of animosity, demands that the opportunity of exposing him should not be lost; and it is for the cause that I speak. The Senator from South Carolina has read many books of chivalry, and believes himself a chivalrous knight, with sentiments of honor and courage. Of course he has chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him; though polluted in the sight of the world, is chaste in his sight—I mean the harlot, Slavery. For her, his tongue is always profuse in words. Let her be impeached in character, or any proposition made to shut her out from the extension of her wantonness, and no extravagance of manner or hardihood of assertion is then too great for this Senator. The frenzy of Don Quixote, in behalf of his wench, Dulcinea del Toboso, is all surpassed. The asserted rights of slavery, which shock equality of all kinds, are cloaked by a fantastic claim of equality. If the slave States cannot enjoy what, in mockery of the great fathers of the Republic, he misnames equality under the Constitution—in other words, the full power in the National Territories to compel fellow-men to unpaid toil, to separate husband and wife, and to sell little children at the auction block—then, sir, the chivalric Senator will conduct the State of South Carolina out of the Union! Heroic knight! Exalted Senator! A second Moses come for a second exodus!

But not content with this poor menace, which we have been twice told was “measured,” the Senator, in the unrestrained chivalry of his nature, has undertaken to apply opprobrious words to those who differ from him on this floor. He calls them “sectional and fanatical;” and opposition to the usurpation in Kansas he denounces as “an uncalculating fanaticism.” To be sure, these charges lack all grace of originality, and all sentiment of truth; but the adventurous Senator does not hesitate. He is the uncompromising, unblushing representative on this floor of a flagrant *sectionalism*, which now domineers over the Republic, and yet with a ludicrous ignorance of his own position—unable to see himself as others see him—or with an effrontery which even his white head ought not to protect from rebuke, he applies to those here who resist his *sectionalism* the very

epithet which designates himself. The men who strive to bring back the Government to its original policy, when Freedom and not Slavery was national, while Slavery and not Freedom was sectional, he arraigns as *sectional*. This will not do. It involves too great a perversion of terms. I tell that Senator, that it is to himself, and to the "organization" of which he is the "committed advocate," that this epithet belongs. I now fasten it upon them. For myself, I care little for names; but since the question has been raised here, I affirm that the Republican party of the Union is in no just sense *sectional*, but, more than any other party, *national*; and that it now goes forth to dislodge from the high places of the Government the tyrannical sectionalism of which the Senator from South Carolina is one of the maddest zealots.

To the charge of fanaticism I also reply. Sir, fanaticism is found in an enthusiasm or exaggeration of opinions, particularly on religious subjects; but there may be a fanaticism for evil as well as for good. Now, I will not deny, that there are persons among us loving Liberty too well for their personal good, in a selfish generation. Such there may be, and, for the sake of their example, would that there were more! In calling them "fanatics," you cast contumely upon the noble army of martyrs, from the earliest day down to this hour; upon the great tribunes of human rights, by whom life, liberty, and happiness, on earth, have been secured; upon the long line of devoted patriots, who, throughout history, have truly loved their country; and, upon all, who, in noble aspirations for the general good and in forgetfulness of self, have stood out before their age, and gathered into their generous bosoms the shafts of tyranny and wrong, in order to make a pathway for Truth. You discredit Luther, when alone he nailed his articles to the door of the church at Wittenberg, and then, to the imperial demand that he should retract, firmly replied, "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God!" You discredit Hampden, when alone he refused to pay the few shillings of ship-money, and shook the throne of Charles I.; you discredit Milton, when, amidst the corruptions of a heartless Court, he lived on, the lofty friend of Liberty, above question or suspicion; you discredit Russell and Sidney, when,

for the sake of their country, they calmly turned from family and friends, to tread the narrow steps of the scaffold; you discredit those early founders of American institutions, who preferred the hardships of a wilderness, surrounded by a savage foe, to injustice on beds of ease; you discredit our later fathers, who, few in numbers and weak in resources, yet strong in their cause, did not hesitate to brave the mighty power of England, already encircling the globe with her morning drum-beats. Yes, sir, of such are the fanatics of history, according to the Senator. But I tell that Senator, that there are characters badly eminent, of whose fanaticism there can be no question. Such were the ancient Egyptians, who worshipped divinities in brutish forms; the Druids, who darkened the forests of oak, in which they lived, by sacrifices of blood; the Mexicans, who surrendered countless victims to the propitiation of their obscene idols; the Spaniards, who, under Alva, sought to force the Inquisition upon Holland, by a tyranny kindred to that now employed to force Slavery upon Kansas; and such were the Algerines, when in solemn conclave, after listening to a speech not unlike that of the Senator from South Carolina, they resolved to continue the slavery of white Christians, and to extend it to the countrymen of Washington! Ay, sir, extend it! And in this same dreary catalogue faithful history must record all who now, in an enlightened age and in a land of boasted Freedom, stand up, in perversion of the Constitution and in denial of immortal truth, to fasten a new shackle upon their fellow-man. If the Senator wishes to see fanatics, let him look round among his own associates; let him look at himself.

*(May 19–20, 1856)*

# JOHN T. TROWBRIDGE

from *Neighbor Jackwood*

Born to a family of farmers in Ogden, New York, and largely self-educated, John Townsend Trowbridge (1827–1916) pursued a successful career as a popular novelist and journalist. As editor of the *American Sentinel* in 1851, he issued a scathing attack on the Fugitive Slave Act that was the beginning of his steady outpouring of antislavery writing. In 1856, he devoted his novel *Neighbor Jackwood* to the evils of legally sanctioned slave-catching in the North. The novel sold well and Trowbridge was inspired to adapt it for the stage in Boston, where it was performed and printed in the spring of 1857. Trowbridge wrote a second major antislavery novel, *Cudjo's Cave*, published in 1864 (see p. [867](#) in this volume). This chapter from *Neighbor Jackwood* dramatizes the physical and psychological terror of an escaped slave, the lovely Charlotte Woods, being hunted by slave-catchers in rural Vermont.

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## XXXIII

### HOUSELESS

“THE LAW, Mrs. Dunbury,” said Oliver Dole, with the grimace of authority, “the LAW must be put in force. It is a painful duty we have to perform,—but, then, you know, the LAW!”

He was a gaunt, bony individual, with a hooked nose, and a massive nether jaw. He was the third person of Dickson's party, being an officer resident in the county, who had been selected to give character and dignity to the enterprise. A fitter choice could hardly have been made. The man was sunk in the officer; the waters of human feeling were in him congealed into the fixed, unswerving ice of public conscience. But Mrs. Dunbury was a mere woman. She fondly believed that the elements of love and mercy enthroned in the heart were a law above all

laws. When Dickson and his companion rushed in pursuit of the cutter, she clung to Oliver Dole. With clasped hands, with sobs and tears, she pleaded for Charlotte.

“She is a being like one of us! She has all human attributes and feelings! She is a woman—a wife—my son’s wife; my own beloved child! Do not subject her to the ignominy, the horror, the death, of such an ordeal. If money can satisfy the claims upon her, they shall be satisfied. Even now my son has gone to treat for her. Spare her, spare him, spare us, this terrible exposure! You are a man, a citizen; it is in your power to save her!”

“Mrs. Dunbury,” responded Oliver Dole, with an official smack of his lips, “nothing is in my power that is not the law. I cannot be detained from my duty; and I charge you, Mrs. Dunbury, not to resist the law!”

Still she clung to him. She seemed endowed with a strength above her own. She would not loose her hold.

“Mr. Dunbury!” cried Oliver Dole, “I appeal to you!”

Mr. Dunbury stood by, a picture of apoplectic rage. His face was purple, his eyes blood-shot, the muscles of his mouth and throat moved convulsively. He heeded the officer no more than the eaves that dripped. The latter wrenched away the invalid’s hands, and she fell upon the floor.

“Mr. Dunbury,” then said Oliver Dole, “I anticipated nothing of this; and now I call upon you for support in the performance of my duty. If the girl escapes, this resistance may cost you dear. If you have a horse in your stable, I will take it, and follow on.”

No word from Mr. Dunbury; but, with a look of strangulation,—clutching his breast as if to free his lungs,—he strode over his wife’s prostrate form, and followed the officer from the room. At the entrance to the barn stood Etty, white and trembling. It was well the stanch Oliver did not observe the look she gave him, as he stepped into the stall of the remaining horse. A gleam of hope and joy broke through the pale anxiety of her features when she saw him untie the halter, and lead the animal out. To slip on a bridle, and leap upon the horse’s back, was

the work of a moment for Oliver Dole; and an instant after, riding over the broken gate, he joined in the noble chase. ETTY clasped her hands, and ran to Mr. Dunbury.

“Here she is!” she uttered, hurriedly. “It was Bridget that went in the cutter! Be quick, and hide her somewhere!”

As she spoke, from beneath the manger crept a pitiful human figure, slender, bent, and trembling with excessive fear. It was Charlotte. She tottered forward, and fell down at Mr. Dunbury’s feet. As she covered her face from his sight, one might have seen that her hand was wounded and bloody. Oliver Dole had crushed it with his iron heel, in leading the horse from the stall. It was doubtful if she had felt the pain at the time. Certainly she was insensible to it now; but ETTY cried out with pity at the sight.

“O, Mr. Dunbury!” said the child, “what can she do? Don’t let them take her away!”

No word yet from Mr. Dunbury; none from Charlotte; but shrinkingly she knelt there, as if it was his wrath alone she feared, and only his forgiveness she implored.

“O, Charlotte!” cried ETTY, trying to lift her up; “there is some place where they cannot find you! Come! O, sir, why do you let her be here?”

Mr. Dunbury raised his remorseless arm. “Begone!”—his words flamed and hissed with fury,—“lose yourself, drown yourself, I care not,—but BEGONE!”

Charlotte arose and fled.

There was a cow-path trodden through the snow, leading across the meadows, over the bridge and along the banks of the stream. This path Charlotte took; passing in her flight scenes which she had first visited in company with Hector, and which had become linked in her memory with warm and dear associations. But now how changed, how cold, how desolate, were they all! The snow lay heavy and deep on the interval; the willows were naked and dark; the stream was blocked with ice. Beyond, frowned the inhospitable forest on the

mountain side. The heavens above were leaden, with grayish streaks; and now the slow, dull, wintry rain began to fall.

Beyond the bridge, the track threw out branches in several directions; for here, all winter long, Mr. Dunbury's cattle and sheep had been foddered from the stacks in the valley. But the main path led along the banks of the creek; this Charlotte chose, perhaps because among the willows her flight would be concealed, or it may be that she cherished some half-formed design of reaching Mr. Jackwood's house.

But the way was rude and difficult for her unaccustomed feet. Since the thaw, the track had been broken through by sharp hoofs; water had settled in the low places; and often, slipping upon the icy cakes, she fell, hurting her naked hands, bruising her limbs, and saturating her garments in the pools. Then, palpitating and breathless from the shock, she would pause, and glance up and down the wide, white valley, with fearful looks, as if expecting momentarily to see her pursuers appear.

A glimpse she caught of Mr. Jackwood's house in the distance inspired her with courage to keep on. She saw the red-painted kitchen dimly defined upon the field of snow; the trees and fences speckling the ground; the heavy plume of smoke from the chimney, trailing low across the plain; and a vision of hope, and help, and rest, in that humble home, flitted before her mind. But the path by the willows had now dwindled to a scarcely-trodden track. At each step, her feet sank down in the soft, wet snow. Her efforts to proceed cost all her remaining strength. Only the desperate extremity in which she was sustained her. But hope and fear alike failed her at last; and, having climbed the tangled brush of a valley fence, she fell powerless in the snow, upon the other side.

The short winter's day was drawing to a close. The shades of the solemn hills shut in the plain. A dreary silence reigned, broken only by the lowing of cattle, and the faint, sad bleating of sheep in the distance, the sighing of the wind among the willows, and the melancholy drip of the rain. Having got a little rest, Charlotte summoned her energies for a fresh attempt to traverse the snowy track.

But now formidable doubts stood in her way. She had faith in her old friends; but would Mr. Jackwood's house, which had twice received her in its hospitable retreat, be overlooked by her pursuers? Perhaps already they were there, before her; and to proceed might be to fall at once into their hands. In her deep perplexity, she crept under the fence, with a wild thought of passing the night in that wretched place. But the rain beat upon her still; her bruised hands ached from contact with the snow; and her feet were drenched and cold.

The approach of footsteps startled her; but she dared not look around, nor move; she lay still as death in her retreat. The sounds drew near, and presently a dog began to bark, plunging into the snow, close by where she lay.

"Come here, Rove!" cried an authoritative voice.

It was the voice of Abimelech Jackwood, the younger. The dog ran back, with excited yelps, and jumped upon his arm; then rushed to the attack again, bristling up, and barking furiously at the object by the fence. Charlotte spoke, "Rover!" Instantly he sprang towards her, with a joyous demonstration; hesitated at half way, and ran back again to his master; whisked about in the snow; and finally, having fulfilled all the requirements of canine etiquette on the occasion, leaped upon her lap, wagging his tail violently, caressing her with his feet, and licking her wounded hand.

Abimelech stood at a discreet distance, and cried to Rover to come there. Charlotte arose to her feet, and called his name.

"Hello!" cried Bim; "that you?"

She tottered forward. The boy, not so easily satisfied as the dog, showed a disposition to retire. But, in a few hurried words, she gave him to understand that she was no apparition,—that it was indeed Charlotte who spoke to him,—and that he was not to fear, but to aid her.

"Be ye goin' up to the house?" asked the boy.

"Abimelech, some men are hunting for me! I would rather die than have them find me! And I don't know where to go!"

"Who be they?" demanded Bim, with forced courage, looking around. "I'll

set Rover on to 'em! Here!"

"Where is your father?"

"Up to the house, I guess," replied Bim.

"Will you go for him," said Charlotte; "and tell him I am here, and tell no one else?"

"Yes, I'll go!" cried Bim. "But,"—hesitatingly,—“had n't you better go up to the stack, and wait there? I'd rather ye would; I come down here to fodder the steers and lambs, and father told me not to go and look at my muskrat-trap, 'cause 't was goin' to rain. It's righ' down here; an' if he knows where I found ye, he 'll s'pect I was goin' there."

Charlotte accepted the boy's guidance; and immediately around the bend in the creek, they came in sight of the stack. It was a low, gloomy mass, in the midst of a dark, trodden space, around the edges of which appeared Abimelech's steers and lambs, feeding on wisps of hay he had scattered over the snow. The stack was defended by a fence, on one side of which was a temporary shelter, formed of rails and boards, thatched with straw.

"If you 'd like to hide," observed Bim, "I know a place,—only I don't want father to find it out, for he tells me not to be makin' holes in the stack."

"Is it here?"

"I'll show ye!" and Bim, slipping a couple of rails from their place, crept through the fence, and began to pull away the hay from the stack. A dark cavity was exposed. "It's a den I made for me an' Rove! Once I had a notion o' runnin' away, an' I was goin' to live here, and have him bring me my victuals! It's real slick an' warm in there!"

The opening was extremely narrow, and the cavity itself was small. But it was all Charlotte wished for then. She could not have entered a palace with more grateful emotions.

"Shall I leave ye a breathin'-place?" asked Abimelech, putting back the hay. "Hello! what's that Rover's barkin' at?"

He crept around the stack, leaving Charlotte listening breathlessly in her

hiding-place. In a moment he returned, and whispered hoarsely in the hay, "There's a man a comin' with a big hoss-whip! Say! is he one of 'em?"

Charlotte knew not what she said, if indeed she uttered any reply. She heard the boy hastily smoothing the hay at the entrance of her cell; then all was still, only the dog barked; and as she strained her ear to listen, the straw beneath her rustled with every throb of her heart.

Having climbed the stack, and thrown down a quantity of hay before the mouth of the cavity, Bim began to arrange some boards in a manner to shed rain.

"Git out!" growled the man with the whip, making a cut at the dog.

"He won't bite ye," cried Bim. "Here, Rove!"

"Say, boy! have ye seen anybody pass this way, within half an hour or so?"

"Pass which way?"

"Any way—along by the crick."

"What crick?"

"Answer my question!"

"I han't ben here half an hour, I should n't think," said Bim.

"Look a' here!" thundered Dickson, "none o' yer trash with me! I cut a boy's trouse's-legs right off with this black snake, t' other day! He was a boy about your size, and his trouse's was stouter stuff than yours, too, I reck'n! Which way did that gal go?"

"What gal?" said Bim, stepping cautiously back upon the stack.

"Let me reach you with this lash, and I 'll tickle your recollections! You'll look paler than that, when I draw about a quart of blood out of ye! I mean that gal that come along about twenty minutes ago."

"If there was any,"—Bim looked very candid, but very pale,—“she must a' come along when I was off arter my traps; or else I should think I'd seen her.”

"That won't do, boy!" Dickson cracked his whip savagely. "I'll give ye jest about a minute 'n' a ha'f to think about it; then, if ye don't walk straight up to the scratch, and spit out what ye know, you may expect to have your clo's cut right off'm your back, and your hide with 'm!"

Then Charlotte heard a sound as of some one climbing the stack-yard fence, and a heavy body jumped down upon the ground at the very entrance to her retreat. There was a shaking in the hay which Bim had thrown before it; Dickson was kicking it open with his foot; he trod it down by the stack.

Bim looked anxious, but his wits did not desert him. "If ye 'll help me with these 'ere boards, I'll go up to the house with ye, an' see if she's been by there."

"Where do you live?"

"In that house, up yonder."

"What 's yer name?"

"Bim!"

"What 's yer whole name?"

"Bim'lech!"

"What 's yer father's name?"

"His name 's Bim'lech, too!"

"Bim'lech what?"

"Bim'lech Jackwood, of course!"

"Jackwood, hey? she used to live to your house, did n't she?"

"Yes, I guess not! *Who* used to?"

"We 'll see!" said Dickson. Having, during the dialogue, struck a match under his coat and lighted a cigar, he inserted the latter between his teeth, and, once more measuring out his whip, cracked it at the boy's ears. "Time's up! now, what ye got to say?"

"If you 're goin' to smoke," said Bim, from a safe position, "you better git over the fence; you'll set the stack afire. Ow!" as the whip-lash whistled by his face, "you had n't better hit me with that! There 's father, an' I 'm darned glad!"

Dickson changed his tactics; perhaps because he found threats of no avail; perhaps because the boy had an adroit way of dodging over the stack beyond reach of his whip; or in consequence, it may be, of misgivings with regard to the parent Jackwood. He therefore opened a parley, and offered Bim half a dollar to tell him which way Charlotte went.

“I guess so!” said Bim. “You want me to come down an’ git it, then you’ll ketch me, an’ gi’ me a lickin’, I know!” And he made preparations to slide off the opposite side, in case Dickson attempted to climb the stack.

But Dickson had a more important matter to attend to. Either the match he had thrown down after lighting his cigar, or cinders falling in the hay, had set fire to the heap. The flame, shooting up with a sudden crackling and glare, was the first warning he received of the danger. He had left the spot, and was standing by the cattle-shed, when the blaze caught his eye. He rushed to extinguish it, stamping, and trampling, and calling to the boy to bring snow.

“There an’t no fire!” cried Bim, who thought it a ruse to bring him down.

“By——!” said Dickson, “you ‘ll find out whether there ’s a fre!”

Already Charlotte had smelt the burning straw. Then, through chinks in the opening of her cell, she caught fearful glimpses of the struggling flame and smoke. She heard the alarm, the oaths, the trample of feet. The stack was burning!

Her first impulse was to cry out, and rush from her retreat. But the certainty of falling into the hands of Dickson paralyzed her tongue, and chained her limbs. Death was nothing; a moment since, she would have risked a hundred deaths sooner than be taken; but to be burned, to perish in a slowly consuming mass, to die by torment in a tomb of fire! the thought was maddening; it filled her with an insensate fear, that caused her for the instant to forget all other danger. With frantic hands she tore the hay that blocked the opening. But a volume of smoke, pouring in upon her, changed her purpose. She thrust back the hay, while at the same time it was trampled and packed from without. She heard the simmer of snow upon the flames; she thought the fire was being extinguished. She hoped, she prayed, that she might yet be preserved.

But now the trampling feet, and snow packed down upon the burning hay, drove the smoke into the cell. Charlotte was suffocating. The torture almost forced her to cry out. O, that she might have power to endure yet a little while! She thought of Hector. For his sake she conquered her agony. Writhing in

torment, she clasped her hands upon her face to stifle her own cries. Yet a little while! yet a little while! O, yet one moment more!

It could not be. She fought with death itself. It seemed that almost the last struggle, the last mortal throe, had come. Still Hector filled her soul. She might have endured and died; but, no! for him she would risk all things; for him she would suffer on; for him she would live! Again she tore the hay from the opening of the cell. But the act was forestalled. A hand, thrust in, met hers.

“Keep still!” whispered Bim, at the entrance. “Can ye breathe?”

She breathed, she lived, she hoped. The fire was extinguished. Dickson, enraged at the delay, had departed in haste, and the boy was left alone to trample out the smouldering sparks with snow.

“Hello, boy!” suddenly shouted Dickson, turning back, “fling me my whip!”

There was no service Bim would more gladly have performed. Anything rather than that Dickson should return to the stack. He looked for the whip, but could not find it. The man had thrown it down whilst extinguishing the fire, and thought it must have become trodden in the hay. He returned; they looked for it together,—Bim keeping at a respectful distance, and holding himself ready to run the instant the whip appeared,—Dickson growling and swearing. Suddenly, the end of the lash was discovered hanging off the cattle-shed, close by the stack. Dickson seized it; Abimelech fled; Charlotte, who had listened all the time with a fluttering heart, began to breathe again. But at the moment there was a movement at the mouth of the cell. The hay was opening; some object forced its way into her retreat. She was shrinking away in terror, when Rover, scrambling through, leaped into her face, and expressed his delight by barking playfully, licking her hands, and thumping the sides of the niche with his animated tail.

Fortunately Dickson had turned again to go, and was at that moment making long strides across the field. Bim returned to Charlotte just in time to bump noses with Rover, who, not liking the smoke, was leaping out of the hay.

“He’s gone!” whispered the boy. “Darn his old whip, I say! Did ye know he

set the stack afire?”

“Did I know it!” murmured Charlotte.

“I’m all of a tremble yit!” said Bim. “I was a little bit scart; but, confound his pictur’! he did n’t find ye, after all, did he? That’s all I care for!”

“And it ’s all I care for, now! I feel faint! Will you give me a handful of snow?”

The boy brought the snow: she pressed it on her forehead, as she lay panting upon the hay.

“Shall I go up an’ tell father, now?”

“If you will; but be careful, let no one else know—”

“I’ll keep it from Pheobe, anyway! She always tells everything. Say! shall I leave Rover for company?”

A faint “no” was the response; and the excited boy, having thrown the superfluous hay over the fence, and rearranged that at the mouth of the cell, leaving only a breathing-place, as he called it, went off whistling, to appear unconcerned. She listened in her retreat; the sounds grew faint and fainter, ceasing at last; and she was left alone, in darkness and silence, hemmed in by the low roof and prickly walls of her cell.

For some minutes she lay still, and prayed. In that simple and childlike act new strength was given her, and she was enabled to think calmly of her state. She took care of her feet, removing their wet covering, and drying them in the warm hay. Then, finding that Abimelech had shut her in too closely, and that the air of the cell was still poisoned with smoke, she moved the hay from the opening, and lay down upon it, where she could look out upon the thickening darkness, and listen to the sighing wind and pattering rain.

# HARRIET HAMLIN BIGELOW

from *The Curse Entailed*

A late-blooming author, Harriet Hamline Bigelow (1800–1879) was an antislavery activist based in Oberlin, Ohio, who, with the financial support of her husband Isaac J. Bigelow, published her only novel, *The Curse Entailed*, in 1857. In the passage excerpted here, a group of northerners opposed to slavery debate the legitimacy of buying slaves in order to free them.

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“I am constantly thinking of Fanny,” observed Emily. “It is almost as hard for Fanny to be a slave, as for me; and I have no doubt she is as much entitled to her freedom as I am to mine; and, had I the means to purchase her, she should not remain a slave another hour.”

“I might possibly purchase her,” said Dr. Willis, as he seated himself by her side, “although my expenditures have been considerable of late, and I find my business in the city neglected just now. But it is against my principle. I consider that it would be a sin for me to pay slaveholders for that to which they have no just claim. Think of buying from one human being another human being!”

“You are right, doctor,” said Mr. Le Roy. “Had I not been so scrupulous on that point, I would have bought my own blood in these children, and returned to France ere now; but my mind so revolted at the unjust idea, that I was determined, if such a step was taken at all, it should be only as a last resort; and I sometimes felt that, in the sight of God, I would be more justified in leaving them in slavery, and returning without them, than to recognize the unholy claims which were asserted to the bodies and souls of my children.”

“I have been exceedingly tried upon the subject,” said Mr. Brinsmade. “When I first saw the sin of slavery in its true light, I felt as if I could devote my whole life to earning money for the purchase and emancipation of slaves. But I

soon became convinced that it would serve to fasten slavery tighter upon the nation.”

“But is there not, now and then, an exception?” asked Emily.

“Well, where will you fix a limit to these exceptions?” responded Mr. Brinsmade. “I will make one exception, Dr. Willis another, Mr. Le Roy two exceptions, Frank ten, and no doubt Miss Le Rux would make a great many more, and so to an infinite extent, all over the North. Every philanthropist, who could spare a few thousand dollars, would make one or more exceptions; and in a short time, we should have a flourishing slave-trade between the North and South. The South, if black ones became scarce, would even breed white slaves, on purpose for good exceptions. It would soon become an extra stimulus for them to kidnap our children, that they might sell them back to us as slaves. It looks to me like the Lord’s encouraging the devil to entrap all the sinners he can, so that by his grace he may redeem innumerable hosts. It would destroy all God’s government for him to compromise with the devil; so it also destroys freedom for the friends of freedom to compromise with slavery. I have seen, here at the South, ministers of the gospel, who claimed that they were opposed to slavery; yet who buy men, women, and children, on the plea of doing the slaves a kindness, while they sanctioned this enslavement. I have noticed also that such men usually make the hardest masters; and I regard such professions as the sheerest hypocrisy.”

“Since I took that view of the subject,” said Dr. Willis, “I have seen those held as slaves for whom I felt I could willingly risk my life to secure their freedom. But I never could acknowledge the tyrant’s claim to them, by buying from him their freedom.”

“Right,” said Mr. Brinsmade. “If slavery ever ceases in this guilty land, it will be by making no compromises with it. It must be met on its own intrinsic merits. If human slavery is a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to redeem men from sin, as claimed by its friends, then let every one be sure to obtain enough of it to save their guilty souls. And, if the poor wicked masters cannot get their

share of this divine blessing otherwise, the slaves should change places with them, half the time, that their hard hearts may become soft and tender, under its holy influence. But, if it is a putrid sacrifice, placed on the altar of God by bold, blaspheming men, then let it become not only 'a stench in the nostrils of Jehovah,' but a loathing to all nations of men. Who does not know that the assumptions of slavery are bold, self-evident falsehoods, and cannot stand the light of a golden-rule gospel one moment? On what ground do our theologians expect us to account for their sanctioning human slavery? Will they have us to understand that their minds are in so dark and ignorant a condition that the system of American slavery appears to them holy, just, and good, and in accordance with the golden rule of Christ? Or will they admit that slavery is the sum of all villanies, and then support it, and force us to the conclusion that they are so corrupt at heart, that they mean to sustain it at all hazards?"

"I do not despair," continued the good physician, "dark as the prospect seems. Hideous as are the principles and results of the Compromise Measures, they will soon bring about their own overthrow, by blasphemously usurping the prerogatives of God over men. An omnipotent and just God can never submit to be dethroned from his supremacy over the human beings he has made, by slavery's power in the American government. Wicked men will yet compel the Almighty to stand on the defensive, and, by his just indignation, teach them that there is a 'higher law' than American slavery, notwithstanding their constant denial of it. A little more light among the people, and they will cease to send to our legislative halls those wicked, imbecile doughfaces, who, like Esau, are ever ready to sell their God-given birthrights, for one sip of slavery pottage."

(1857)

# AUSTIN STEWARD

from *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman*

Born a slave in Virginia and moved by his owner to upstate New York in 1800, Austin Steward (1793–1865) escaped in 1815 and claimed his freedom under New York laws. He established a grocery business, married in 1825, and worked as agent for two black newspapers. From 1831 to 1837, he and his family lived in Ontario, Canada, as members of an expatriate black community known as the Wilberforce Colony, which Steward served as president. When Wilberforce ultimately failed, Steward moved back to New York State, where he struggled to support his eight children and remained marginally involved with the antislavery movement. In this passage from his autobiography, Steward wrestles with the ambivalence a black American feels about his patriotic obligations.

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Of my enslaved brethren, nothing so gratifies me, as to hear of their escape from bondage; and since the passage of that iniquitous “Fugitive Slave Bill,” I have watched with renewed interest the movements of the fugitives, not only from Slavery direct, but those who have been compelled to flee from the nominally free States, and ask the protection of a monarchial government, to save them from their owners in a land of boasted liberty!

The knowledge I have of the colored men in Canada, their strength and condition, would cause me to tremble for these United States, should a war ever ensue between the English and American governments, which I pray may never occur. These fugitives may be thought to be a class of poor, thriftless, illiterate creatures, like the Southern slaves, but it is not so. They are no longer slaves; many of whom have been many years free men, and a large number were never slaves. They are a hardy, robust class of men; very many of them, men of superior intellect; and men who feel deeply the wrongs they have endured. Driven as they have been from their native land; unprotected by the government

under which they were born, and would gladly have died,—they would in all probability, in case of a rupture, take up arms in defense of the government which has protected them and the country of their adoption. England could this day, very readily collect a regiment of stalwart colored men, who, having felt the oppression of our laws, would fight with a will not inferior to that which actuated our revolutionary forefathers.

And what inducement, I ask, have colored men to defend with their lives the United States in any case; and what is there to incite them to deeds of bravery?

Wherever men are called upon to take up arms in defense of a country, there is always a consciousness of approaching wrong and oppression, which arouses their patriotism and incites to deeds of daring. They look abroad over fields of their own cultivation; they behold too, churches, schools, and various institutions, provided by their labor, for generations yet to come; they see their homes, their cherished hearthstone, about to be desecrated, and their wives and little ones, with their aged sires, exposed to the oppression of a ruthless foe. Then, with what cheerful and thrilling enthusiasm, steps forward the husband, the father, the brother, and bares his bosom to the sword,—his head to the storm of the battle-field, in defence of his country's freedom, and the God-given rights of himself and family! But what sees the oppressed negro? He sees a proud and haughty nation, whose Congressmen yearly meet to plot his ruin and perpetuate his bondage! He beholds, it is true, a few Christlike champions, who rise up with bleeding hearts to defend his cause; but while his eye kindles with grateful emotion, he sees the bludgeon of the South—already reeking in the blood of freemen—raised and ready to fall with murderous intent upon the head of any one, who, like the illustrious Sumner, dare open his mouth in defence of Freedom, or speak of the wrongs of the poor negro, and the sins of the Southern autocrat!

What inducement then, has the slave to shoulder his musket, when the American drum beats the call, "To Arms! To Arms!" Does he not remember that

the wife of his bosom; the children,—“bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,”—and the rude hearthstone they for a time are allowed to surround, belong not to himself, but to the tyrannical master, who claims dominion over all he possesses. As his property then, let the slave owner go forth in defence of his own, and lay down his life if he please; but the poor slave has no home, no family to protect; no country to defend; nor does he care to assist in sustaining a government that instead of offering him protection, drives him from the soil which has been cultivated by his own labor,—to beg at the hand of England’s Queen, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Humiliating as it is for an American citizen to name these things, they are nevertheless true; and I would to God that America would arise in her native majesty, and divest herself of the foul stain, which Slavery has cast upon her otherwise pure drapery! Then would she be no longer a hissing and by-word among the nations; but indeed what she professes to be, “the land of the free, and the home of the brave;” an asylum for the oppressed of every clime.

(1857)

## ANONYMOUS

### *Lucy; or, The Slave Girl of Kentucky*

This children's story appeared with another entitled "Jemmy and His Mother, A Tale for Children," both by an anonymous female author, in a chapbook published in Cincinnati by the American Reform Tract and Book Society. While its attempts at black dialect may grate on modern ears, the story works to cultivate empathy among young white readers for slaves and their sufferings.

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"I've got it!" shouted little Arthur Morton, as he came bounding in from school one day. "Here is my report, that shows I've not missed a question, or got a black mark for any thing for two weeks; and now, aunty, for a story; for you know that you promised when I got this, you would spend two hours telling me stories."

"Very true, Arthur, so I did," said the good aunty, "and I am right glad you have been so good a boy. But I hope the promise of the story was not all that induced you to do your best?"

"Oh no, because I found out a good while ago, that the more I tried to be good, the happier I grew, and the easier it grew, too, to learn my lesson, and always be in season; but of course, aunty, I could not help thinking about the fine stories every day that I got no black marks. There couldn't have been harm in that, could there?"

"To be sure not; I only wanted to know what had been your highest motive; and am more than ever pleased to think you are learning to prize an approving conscience, and to do right simply because or for the sake of right; and now, as you have fairly earned a story, or several of them, I will be very happy to commence the two hours' talk whenever you are ready. But tell me first what it shall be about? Something somebody has *written*, or a true story of what has

really happened?

“Oh, something *true*, aunty, and I do want to hear what you told cousin Ben the other day, that made him say he should lay up all the money he could get, to free little colored boys and girls with. He was going to tell me the story, only he said you could tell it so much better, that I finally chose to wait for it.”

“I think it must have been about little Lucy, whom I saw once on my way to New Orleans.”

“Yes, that is it, I know,” said Arthur, and he drew his chair close up in front of aunty’s sofa, where he could watch the expression of her face as she told the following true story:

Just imagine yourself on board one of those enormous Mississippi river steamers, that carry not only hundreds of passengers, but all articles of merchandise, from a Jew’s harp to barrels of pork, and of live animals, from a chicken to the largest oxen. You would like to see in reality one of those steamers loaded for the Southern market, though you would be sorry for the poor animals, herded so close that they cannot have any comfort—pigs, sheep, lambs, oxen, and horses, in their different pens on the lower deck. The middle deck is empty, but the upper one is usually covered with long coops filled with hens, chickens, geese, ducks, pigeons, doves, and turkeys. When I first heard these little creatures eating their breakfast above my head, I could not imagine what the noise was—they made such a tapping picking up the corn. They are so crowded together, that sometimes several die in a day, and then again, some of those that are only tied by the legs to the outside of the coops and cages, now and then break their fastenings, and fly or fall off into the river. It was sad enough to see them struggle and drown in the cold muddy water. If you will look upon the map, Arthur, some time, you can find the town of Paducah on the north-western boundary of Kentucky, a place at which our boat stopped late one evening. It was a clear frosty night, and the moon and stars shone almost as bright as suns in the dark sky, and gave a magic beauty to almost every thing beneath them. Your uncle came to my state-room for me to go out out upon deck

to look at the town. It was a lovely landscape, though I am not sure it would have appeared so charming at midday. Nothing could exceed its serenity and beauty then, as it stretched out before us in the bright moonlight—the town seemingly cradled among the gentler slopes, as I said to brother, “as quiet and still as a sleeping child,” that the stars themselves were watching with twinkling pleasure.

“That,” said he, “is just a piece of nonsense; for to me those stars seem to blaze with indignation quite as manifestly as to you they twinkle with pleasure, and with far more reason, for I cannot forget that this is slave soil, every inch of it a cradle of tyranny and oppression, and the very beauty of those residences suggests the human miseries which have both directly and indirectly been involved in their construction.”

I was unwilling that my enjoyment should be marred by any such reflections, and had turned our conversation to a happier subject, when the air was suddenly rent by the most piercing, distracting shrieks I had ever heard. One after another they followed, unearthly and wild, as though the agony and despair of twenty souls might have been concentrated in that one. Neither of us could speak for a few moments, so fearful and startling were those terrible shrieks, that seemed likely never to stop. They came from the shore near the bow of the boat, but the huge wheelhouses hid the cause from our sight, and the length of the boat prevented us from hearing any *sounds* that could give a clue to the mystery. Still they continued!—what could it mean? We knew it could be no slave-whipping, else we should hear the crack of the terrible whip; but we could not even guess a torture that should wring from any human being shrieks like those. After some little time, they stopped as suddenly as they began, and all was still as before, save the noise of the boat as it was preparing to leave the wharf. Then we heard a different sort of cry just beneath our feet—a poor little lamb, in its careless capers in the moonlight, had fallen overboard into the river. Its little white head was all we could see above the black freezing water, and its piteous bleatings made me shiver in sympathy. We knew it must drown, too, for we could hear by

its gurgling cry that the pitiless water was filling its little throat, and that each answer it made to its mother's calls was less and less loud. We tried to save it by a lasso, but the swinging about of the boat prevented our success, and drew the poor thing entirely under the water. You may think it strange, but the excitement of the last incident had thrust from my mind the one that went before it, and the boat had not gone far on its way when I returned to my state-room, all unmindful of human sorrow, and little dreaming that there were beings only a few feet beneath me who would gladly have shared the poor lamb's fate, or that there were heartaches there which, if made apparent by a sound proportioned to their intensity, would have brought upon their feet the many sleepers within the boat, and made it seem like a floating volcano.

The next morning, as I was passing through the lower cabin, I saw, sitting on a rug before the grate, a little girl about a dozen years old apparently.

"Just my age," interrupted Arthur.

Yes, but she was not so large as you thought, and was withal very slender looking. I never saw such a picture of distress in a child. She sat staring into the fire as though she saw in its bright flames what no one else could see, her hands clenched convulsively upon her sides, and even her little toes, which appeared from under her blue checked frock, were curled up tight as her fingers, and every few minutes her little body shook with convulsive sobs, that were evidently the remains of a tempest of passion. On the floor beside her was a tempting breakfast of chicken, ham and eggs, rolls and coffee; but she gave no signs of caring for it. Neither did she notice me, though I stood quite close to her. After watching the poor creature a few moments I said, "Good morning, Netty dear, how do you do this morning?" She looked up at this with the most hopeless expression imaginable, and answered, "Please, missis, my name ain't Netty, it's Lucy; an' I ain't well at all dis yer morning."

"I am sorry if you are sick; what is the matter?" I asked.

"Oh, my head hurts me—I nebber was a well chile, nebber. Granny says as how I'se giben her more trouble dan all de res' de chil'en she eber had.

Sometimes I'se a little better, but now I'se wus again. Specs I hurted myself a-cryin' so las' night—did missus hear me? De Cappan said I'd scar all de people to death der was on de boat."

"No, I didn't hear you," I answered, "I have never heard any crying on the boat; what time was it, and what made you cry?"

"Oh, twasn't on de boat at all—'twas back dar at Paducket."

"Why, that could not have been you who screamed so at the wharf where the boat stopped!"

"Oh yes, 'twas, missus. You see dey wouldn't nudder let me come wid mammy, nor take me back to granny, and so I couldn't do nothin' but scream."

"Where *is* your granny?"

"Oh, she's back dar to massa Tom's house—yer see massa Tom got broke de oder day, an had to sell most all his folks; dat is, de young hands an de little folks, but he said he wouldn't sell de ole uns, what his fader had on de place afore him, no-how; an yer see, missus, granny's one o' de ole uns, and stays dar yet; but mammy's 'mong de young hands, and I'se 'mong de little uns, an so we'se done got sold!"

And here the poor child clenched tightly again her little thin fingers that had been gradually loosened during our talk, and turning her face toward the fire, commenced rocking her body to and fro, and talking as if to herself.

"Oh, I wish I'se wid poor granny again; she hain't got no more sick chil'n to take care on now, an' I hasn't got nobody to take care o' me, no more neber."

"Where is your mammy?" I asked.

"Oh, she's forrard dar 'mong dose people, dat missus can see," she answered, pointing to a group which I had not noticed at the other end of the cabin;—such a group as I hope never to see again—men and women of different ages and appearances, some of whom had just been sold from all they loved in the world, to a new master who was again to sell them to another, and probably to a more severe bondage than they had ever known—while others among them had been bought by different individuals then on the boat, who had been up into

the country to buy fresh hands for the next cotton crop, to supply the places of those who had died during the harvesting of the last.

“Dat ar is mammy,” continued Lucy, “dat ar one dat sits by de man dat takes on so—an’ dat’s Sam. Dey’re de only two what’s come from massa Tom’s place; an’ he don’t like, nudder, to go away from aunt Sukey, an’ Johnny, an’ little Snowball; nor to go down de river at all; an’ I specs he’d a drowned hisself in de riber las’ night, if dey hadn’t tied him so he couldn’t.”

The poor man sat upon the floor, his head bowed upon his knees, with his hands clasped over his neck, silent as a statue, but his whole appearance bespeaking the most hopeless grief. Mrs. Stowe had not then told us Northerners what a horror the poor negroes have of being sold down the river, and so I supposed that all his grief was occasioned by the separation from his wife and little ones, and I felt that to be a sufficient cause for it. I could not endure to look at them, but went on talking with the child.

“I thought you said, Lucy, that they wouldn’t let you and your mammy go together?”

“An’ so dey wouldn’t,” she answered, “for when de massa buyed mammy in Paducah, he wouldn’t tink o’ me at all, ’cause he said as how I’s a poor little sick good-for-nothin’ lookin’ ting, and aint o’ no account nohow; an’ arter all, said he hadn’t got no more money dan jus’ enuff to buy mammy; but I cried so, he wasn’t goin’ for to take her nudder, but de oder massa said he’d sell me for fifty dollars if dey took us togedder, so massa said he’d come aboard de boat to try an’ borrow de money. But de Cappan was out dar, an’ told him he’d lend de money if I’d stop cryin’, an’ let go o’ mammy, an’ so dey took me, an’ here I’s be missus!”

“Well, Lucy, now I think you had better eat your breakfast; it will soon be entirely cold, if it is not so already.”

“No, missus, I ain’t a-goin’ for to eat no more,” she said determinedly.

“Why not?”

“’Cause dey want to hab me eat, an’ say I’ll die if I don’t!”

“Why, child, you don’t want to starve yourself, I hope!”

“Not ’zac’ly, missus, but I hopes I’ll die anyhow afore dey has time to take me from mammy agin; an’ if I don’t eat, specs I shall, an’ den I’ll be glad.”

“Which would you like best, Lucy, to be free and go and live with me, or go with mammy and be a slave?”

“I’d radder go back to granny dan to go wid eider ob yees—an’ yer see, missus, ‘taint o’ no kind o’ use a freein a little sick nigger chile like I’ll be, anyhow, cause I’s agwine for to die one o’ dese yer days, an’ be buried up in de groun’, an’ go an’ lib wid de Lord, an’ den I’ll be done free for sartain. Ebrybody ’ll be free an’ equal wen dey’s dead! Didn’t missus know *dat*?” she said, her face lighting up with something of hope and triumph.

“Yes,” I replied, “if we have first been freed from sin by Christ, and unless we have been, I fear none of us will go to live with the Lord.”

“Why, how’s dat,” she said, astonished; “what’s bein’ freed from sin?”

“Free from the power of our own willful, selfish spirits, made willing to submit to God’s will concerning us, and to obey all His commands; to bear patiently and cheerfully all that happens to us. Now, Lucy, are you sure you do all this? White people don’t expect, when they are unwilling to live, and try to starve themselves, that the Lord will take them to live with him; and I am afraid he looks into the hearts of little colored children, and wants to see a good spirit in them, just as he does into the hearts of white children, because we suppose they are of equal value in His sight *before* their bodies are buried in the ground. The heart of a colored child may be free from sin while the body is a slave, and the heart of a white child may be a slave to sin, while its body is free; all hearts must have good spirits in them if they would be taken to live with the Lord when the body is dead.”

“Nobody neber told me dat afore; but what can I do, missus?” she said, sorrowfully; “white ladies what neber knowed nottin’ at all ’bout sickness an’ trouble, don’t know how hard ’tis for us colored people to be good an’ wan’ to lib, when we’s done sold, an’ down de riber too! But granny said the Lord

knowed.”

“Well, Lucy, I will tell you, that first you must try to eat your breakfast, and be thankful it is so nice—try to think how much better your condition is than it would be if God had not put it into the heart of the man to buy you with your mammy. Ask God every day to forgive your wicked wishes, to help you to be patient and cheerful, and to help you to comfort your poor mammy and to make her happier; and ask Him to make you fit to live with Him when you die, and He certainly will hear you, and make you willing to wait here till He calls you to a home where you never will be sold again.” The poor child stretched out her hand slowly toward the food, but let it fall listlessly by the plate, and though big tears rolled over her little swollen cheeks as I told her of our Savior’s love for her, and of His readiness and pleasure in helping her to do all her little duties, it was evident that they were not so bitter as those she had shed during the past few days. Presently a happier expression came over her face, and she looked up almost with a smile as she said, “Oh, I’ll try for sartin. And does missus tink He’ll call me afore long?”

“I hope so,” I answered, “and that He will make you happier till he does.” Then after persuading her to commence her breakfast, I left her with a promise to talk with her again the next day.

So on the following morning I went down and found the little thing evidently watching for me, and I had no sooner opened the door than she commenced a sort of pirouetting first upon one foot and then upon the other, looking at me intently at the same time, as much as to say, “Do you see how I try to be happy?” When I inquired how she felt, she said, “I’se ’sidable better dis yer morning, tank yer, missus.” Then, as if afraid that I had not noticed the pranks she was really too weak to keep up, continued, “an’ I’se a-tryin’ to be happy; but mammy took on mighty bad las’ night in de night ’bout Dinah an’ little Dickey, an’ all de res’ on ’em, cause as how we’re a-goin’ furder and furder ’way from ’em, and neber ’ll see none on ’em no more, an’ she don’t know whar dey all is.”

The mother came forward while we were talking, and with a very gracious courtesy commenced saying she was much obliged to me for talking to Lucy as I had the previous day, and hoped I would excuse all her bad ways, because she had always been a sick little thing, and lived with her granny, who let her have her own way: and when she went up to the hall to stay, massa Tom always petted her, and would never have her ruled by the servants, or crossed any way, “cause as how (to use her own words) he sot such a heap by her.” The poor woman was suffering badly from asthma, with which she had always been so troubled as never to have done much hard work, being only called upon to sew a little, or help in the kitchen, at the hall, when there was extra work to be done. She declared “massa Tom” to be the best kind of a master, and said he made the man who bought her promise that she should not be sold for anything but a house servant, and also that none of the people should be sold down the river. But spite of all that, she had been bought by a cotton planter on Red river, where she would be compelled to work in the field early and late, in the dews and fog and rain, which would probably soon kill her. But worse than all, she said the man had broken another promise, not to separate the families to go in different directions, but that the members of one family should be sold in the same county, or, if possible, in the same town or neighborhood; and now he had scarcely any two members of the same family to go the same way. When I asked her if she had other children than Lucy, she answered, “Oh yes, indeed, missus, only three weeks ago I had a home, a husband, and eight children, and didn’t ’spect no kind o’ trouble, cause massa Tom was always so good; but all sorts o’ trouble comes soon enough arter de officer what come wid de writins, an massa Tom couldn’t help us bein’ sold, an now I’m goin’ down de riber; home, husband, and chil’en all gone different ways, all but dis yer poor little sick thing, an de good Lor only knows what’ll become o’ *her* when *I’m* gone, as I soon shall be;”—and the poor woman covered her face with her hands, and bursting into a violent fit of weeping, walked hastily away to the other end of the cabin. “I am sorry I cannot tell you, Arthur, what became of the poor things after; but

that night they were taken off the boat at the mouth of Red river, and I was thankful that it was while I slept, for I wouldn't like to have seen them grieve at bidding good-by to their dear friends going further down the river."

"That's a right sad story, aunty," said Arthur; "and I can't help thinking that they are both dead before this."

"They probably died long ago," said aunty; "but the saddest part of the story is, that it is *less* than what might be told of what passes every day in a slave country."

"Oh aunty, can it be so?"

"Yes, Arthur, I have no doubt that those foul, muddy Mississippi waters bear down on their surface, every day, even worse evidences than this of that more foul and filthy system of slavery, in the shape of manacled limbs, bruised backs, and broken hearts; parents mourning for children, and children for parents, who loved each other as you love your home and parents—brothers and sisters grieving for each other, and husbands and wives who are as much one in the sight of our Heavenly Father as are *your* father and mother, Arthur!"

"Well, I cannot bear to think of it, aunty."

"But I want you to think of it, at least till you sicken and hate it as every Christian ought, so that when you are a man you will resist its aggressions with your whole soul."

"I hate it now, aunty," and he continued to say what I hope all boys and girls who read this will join him in saying; "I'll pray that I may continue to hate the whole thing with all my might, and I'll give thanks, too, every day, that I was not born a colored child, to be sold away from all I love and be taken down the Mississippi river."

(1858)

## JERMAIN WESLEY LOGUEN

### from *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman: A Narrative of Real Life*

Born Jarm Logue, a slave in Davidson County, Tennessee, Jermain Wesley Loguen (c. 1813–1872) escaped to Canada in about 1835, modified his name to reflect his new identity, and soon settled in upstate New York. After training at the Oneida Institute, he was ordained a Methodist minister, eventually becoming a bishop. In the 1840s and '50s he worked closely with Frederick Douglass and Gerrit Smith to advance the antislavery campaign and to help fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad to Canada. (One of Loguen's daughters would marry a son of Frederick Douglass, and Loguen named a son after Gerrit Smith.) During the Civil War he recruited black troops for the Union Army and after the war he worked to establish African Methodist Episcopal Zion congregations among freed slaves. In this excerpt from his autobiography, Loguen boldly records his open defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law.

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Mr. Loguen was then called on, and took the stand. He looked over the great assembly, and said:

“He was a slave; he knew the dangers he was exposed to. He had made up his mind as to the course he was to take. On that score he needed no counsel, nor did the colored citizens generally. They had taken their stand—they would not be taken back to slavery. If to shoot down their assailants should forfeit their lives, such result was the least of the evil. They will have their liberties or die in their defence. What is life to me if I am to be a slave in Tennessee? My neighbors! I have lived with you many years, and you know me. My home is here, and my children were born here. I am bound to Syracuse by pecuniary interests, and social and family bonds. And do you think I can be taken away from you and from my wife and children, and be a slave in Tennessee? Has the President and his Secretary sent this enactment up here, to you, Mr. Chairman, to

enforce on me in Syracuse?—and will you obey him? Did I think so meanly of you—did I suppose the people of Syracuse, strong as they are in numbers and love of liberty—or did I believe their love of liberty was so selfish, unmanly and unchristian—did I believe them so sunken and servile and degraded as to remain at their homes and labors, or, with none of that spirit which smites a tyrant down, to surround a United States Marshal to see me torn from my home and family, and hurled back to bondage—I say did I think so meanly of you, I could never come to live with you. Nor should I have stopped, on my return from Troy, twenty-four hours since, but to take my family and moveables to a neighborhood which would take fire, and arms, too, to resist the least attempt to execute this diabolical law among them. Some kind and good friends advise me to quit my country, and stay in Canada, until this tempest is passed. I doubt not the sincerity of such counsellors. But my conviction is strong, that their advice comes from a lack of knowledge of themselves and the case in hand. I believe that their own bosoms are charged to the brim with qualities that will smite to the earth the villains who may interfere to enslave any man in Syracuse. I apprehend the advice is suggested by the perturbation of the moment, and not by the tranquil spirit that rules above the storm, in the eternal home of truth and wisdom. Therefore have I hesitated to adopt this advice, at least until I have the opinion of this meeting. Those friends have not canvassed this subject. I have. They are called suddenly to look at it. I have looked at it steadily, calmly, resolutely, and at length defiantly, for a long time. I tell you the people of Syracuse and of the whole North must meet this tyranny and crush it by force, or be crushed by it. This hellish enactment has precipitated the conclusion that white men must live in dishonorable submission, and colored men be slaves, or they must give their physical as well as intellectual powers to the defence of human rights. The time has come to change the tones of submission into tones of defiance,—and to tell Mr. Fillmore and Mr. Webster, if they propose to execute this measure upon us, to send on their blood-hounds. Mr. President, long ago I was beset by over prudent and good men and women to purchase my freedom. Nay, I was

frequently importuned to consent that they purchase it, and present it as an evidence of their partiality to my person and character. Generous and kind as those friends were, my heart recoiled from the proposal. I owe my freedom to the God who made me, and who stirred me to claim it against all other beings in God's universe. I will not, nor will I consent, that any body else shall countenance the claims of a vulgar despot to my soul and body. Were I in chains, and did these kind people come to buy me out of prison, I would acknowledge the boon with inexpressible thankfulness. But I feel no chains, and am in no prison. I received my freedom from Heaven, and with it came the command to defend my title to it. I have long since resolved to do nothing and suffer nothing that can, in any way, imply that I am indebted to any power but the Almighty for my manhood and personality.

“Now, you are assembled here, the strength of this city is here to express their sense of this fugitive act, and to proclaim to the despots at Washington whether it shall be enforced here—whether you will permit the government to return me and other fugitives who have sought an asylum among you, to the Hell of slavery. The question is with you. If you will give us up, say so, and we will shake the dust from our feet and leave you. But we believe better things. We know you are taken by surprize. The immensity of this meeting testifies to the general consternation that has brought it together, necessarily, precipitately, to decide the most stirring question that can be presented, to wit, whether, the government having transgressed constitutional and natural limits, you will bravely resist its aggressions, and tell its soulless agents that no slave-holder shall make your city and county a hunting field for slaves.

“Whatever may be your decision, my ground is taken. I have declared it everywhere. It is known over the State and out of the State—over the line in the North, and over the line in the South. I don't respect this law—I don't fear it—I won't obey it! It outlaws me, and I outlaw it, and the men who attempt to enforce it on me. I place the governmental officials on the ground that they place me. I will not live a slave, and if force is employed to re-enslave me, I shall

make preparations to meet the crisis as becomes a man. If you will stand by me—and I believe you will do it, for your freedom and honor are involved as well as mine—it requires no microscope to see that—I say if you will stand with us in resistance to this measure, you will be the saviours of your country. Your decision to-night in favor of resistance will give vent to the spirit of liberty, and it will break the bands of party, and shout for joy all over the North. Your example only is needed to be the type of popular action in Auburn, and Rochester, and Utica, and Buffalo, and all the West, and eventually in the Atlantic cities. Heaven knows that this act of noble daring will break out somewhere—and may God grant that Syracuse be the honored spot, whence it shall send an earthquake voice through the land!”

The words of a strong and brave man in the hour of peril fall like coals of fire on human hearts. The people knew Mr. Loguen and loved him. They knew he was a slave, and trembled for him. They listened with keen sympathy and breathless attention to his brief speech. They knew it was no occasion for Buncomb for any body, and least of all for him. His manliness and courage in a most trying crisis electrified them. He uncapped the volcano, and oppressed sympathy broke forth in a tempest of applause.

(1859)

## JOHN BROWN

### *Speech to the Court; Letter to Mrs. George L. Stearns, November 29, 1859*

The most militant abolitionist in American history, John Brown (1800–1859) had campaigned against slavery and racism for decades before his historic raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown himself claimed to have hated slavery since the age of twelve. As an adult, Brown helped fugitive slaves, promoted schools for free blacks, and lived for a time in a predominantly black settlement in the Adirondacks. During the fighting in Kansas in 1856 he participated in the murder of five proslavery settlers and later led a free-state militia against proslavery guerillas. In October 1859 he led twenty-one men on a raid that was meant to spark a massive slave insurrection, but resulted instead in death for most of his men, heightened sectional tensions, and his own execution. Brown delivered his “Last Speech” at his sentencing on November 2, which, like the letter written from jail three days before his execution on December 2, contributed to his legendary status—at least among antislavery activists—as a martyr to the cause.

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### *Speech to the Court*

I HAVE, may it please the Court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, of a design on my part to free slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter when I went into Missouri, and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moving them through the country, and finally leaving them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again on a larger scale. That was all I intended to do. I never did intend murder or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite the slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection. I have another objection, and that is that it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has

been fairly proved—for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right, and every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment. This Court acknowledges, too, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed, which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament, which teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me further to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them. I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of His despised poor, is no wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say let it be done. Let me say one word further. I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances, it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention, and what was not. I never had any design against the liberty of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason or excite slaves to rebel or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind. Let me say also in regard to the statements made by some of those who were connected with me, I fear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me, but the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. Not one but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of

conversation with till the day they came to me, and that was for the purpose I have stated. Now, I am done.

(November 2, 1859)

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*Letter to Mrs. George L. Stearns*

29.th Nov. 1859.

Charlestown, Jefferson Co Va.

Mrs George L Stearns

Boston

Mass

My Dear Friend

No letter I have received since my imprisonment here, has given me more satisfaction, or comfort; than yours of the 8th inst. I am quite cheerful: & was never more happy. Have only time write you a word. May God forever reward you & *all yours My love to All* who love their neighbours. I have asked to be *spared* from having any *mock*; or *hypocritical prayers made over me*, when I am publicly *murdered*: & that my *only religious attendants* be *poor little, dirty, ragged, bare headed, & barefooted Slave Boys; & Girls*; led by some old *grey headed Slave Mother*. Farewell. Farewell.

Your Friend

John Brown

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON

## *Speech by Ralph Waldo Emerson*

On January 6, 1860, scarcely a month after John Brown's execution on December 2, Emerson delivered this public encomium on the militant abolitionist in Salem, Massachusetts. Avoiding any mention of Brown's responsibility for the violence and death caused by the raid, Emerson seems almost to beatify Brown as "a romantic character absolutely without any vulgar trait; living to ideal ends, without any mixture of self-indulgence or compromise."

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**M**R. CHAIRMAN: I have been struck with one fact, that the best orators who have added their praise to his fame—and I need not go out of this house to find the purest eloquence in the country—have one rival who comes off a little better, and that is John Brown. Every thing that is said of him leaves people a little dissatisfied; but as soon as they read his own speeches and letters they are heartily contented—such is the singleness of purpose which justifies him to the head and the heart of all. Taught by this experience, I mean, in the few remarks I have to make, to cling to his history, or let him speak for himself.

John Brown, the founder of liberty in Kansas, was born in Torrington, Litchfield County, Conn., in 1800. When he was five years old his father emigrated to Ohio, and the boy was there set to keep sheep, and to look after cattle, and dress skins; he went bareheaded and barefooted, and clothed in buckskin. He said that he loved rough play, could never have rough play enough; could not see a seedy hat without wishing to pull it off. But for this it needed that the playmates should be equal; not one in fine clothes and the other in buckskin; not one his own master, hale and hearty, and the other watched and whipped. But it chanced that in Pennsylvania, where he was sent by his father to collect cattle, he fell in with a boy whom he heartily liked, and whom he looked upon as

his superior. This boy was a slave; he saw him beaten with an iron shovel, and otherwise maltreated; he saw that this boy had nothing better to look forward to in life, whilst he himself was petted and made much of; for he was much considered in the family where he then stayed, from the circumstance that this boy of twelve years had conducted alone a drove of cattle a hundred miles. But the colored boy had no friend, and no future. This worked such indignation in him that he swore an oath of resistance to Slavery as long as he lived. And thus his enterprise to go into Virginia and run off five hundred or a thousand slaves, was not a piece of spite or revenge, a plot of two years or of twenty years, but the keeping of an oath made to heaven and earth forty-seven years before. Forty-seven years at least, though I incline to accept his own account of the matter, at Charlestown, which makes the date a little older, when he said, "This was all settled millions of years before the world was made."

He grew up a religious and manly person in severe poverty; a fair specimen of the best stock of New England; having that force of thought and that sense of right which are the warp and woof of greatness. Our farmers were Orthodox Calvinists, mighty in the Scriptures; had learned that life was a preparation, a "probation," to use their word, for a higher world, and was to be spent in loving and serving mankind.

Thus was formed a romantic character absolutely without any vulgar trait; living to ideal ends, without any mixture of self-indulgence or compromise, such as lowers the value of benevolent and thoughtful men we know; abstemious, refusing luxuries, not sourly and reproachfully, but simply as unfit for his habit; quiet and gentle as a child in the house. And, as happens usually to men of romantic character, his fortunes were romantic. Walter Scott would have delighted to draw his picture and trace his adventurous career. A shepherd and herdsman, he learned the manners of animals, and knew the secret signals by which animals communicate. He made his hard bed on the mountains with them; he learned to drive his flock through thickets all but impassable; he had all the skill of a shepherd by choice of breed, and by wise husbandry to obtain the best

wool, and that for a course of years. And the anecdotes preserved show a far-seeing skill and conduct which, in spite of adverse accidents, should secure, one year with another, an honest reward, first to the farmer, and afterwards to the dealer. If he kept sheep, it was with a royal mind; and if he traded in wool, he was a merchant prince, not in the amount of wealth, but in the protection of the interests confided to him.

I am not a little surprised at the easy effrontery with which political gentlemen, in and out of Congress, take it upon them to say that there are not a thousand men in the North who sympathize with John Brown. It would be far safer and nearer the truth to say that all people, in proportion to their sensibility and self-respect, sympathize with him. For it is impossible to see courage, and disinterestedness, and the love that casts out fear, without sympathy.

All women are drawn to him by their predominance of sentiment. All gentlemen, of course, are on his side. I do not mean by "gentlemen," people of scented hair and perfumed handkerchiefs, but men of gentle blood and generosity, "fulfilled with all nobleness," who, like the Cid, give the outcast leper a share of their bed; like the dying Sidney, pass the cup of cold water to the wounded soldier who needs it more. For what is the oath of gentle blood and knighthood? What but to protect the weak and lowly against the strong oppressor?

Nothing is more absurd than to complain of this sympathy, or to complain of a party of men united in opposition to Slavery. As well complain of gravity, or the ebb of the tide. Who makes the Abolitionist? The Slaveholder. The sentiment of mercy is the natural recoil which the laws of the universe provide to protect mankind from destruction by savage passions. And our blind statesmen go up and down, with committees of vigilance and safety, hunting for the origin of this new heresy. They will need a very vigilant committee indeed to find its birthplace, and a very strong force to root it out. For the arch-Abolitionist, older than Brown, and older than the Shenandoah Mountains, is Love, whose other name is Justice, which was before Alfred, before Lycurgus, before Slavery, and

will be after it.

(1860)

# LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

## *With A Rose, That bloomed on the day of John Brown's martyrdom; An Hour*

Known primarily for her novel *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) published a wide range of works over a long writing career while also supporting the antislavery and women's rights movements. Like her friend Emerson and so many other sympathizers, Alcott interpreted John Brown's death as martyrdom in a sacred cause and promptly published the poem below in Garrison's *Liberator* of January 20, 1860. Alcott's short story "An Hour" combines interracial romance, a midnight deathbed scene, and an insurrection drama in a tale of psychological intensity worthy of Edgar Allan Poe.

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### *With a Rose, That bloomed on the day of John Brown's martyrdom*

In the long silence of the night,  
Nature's benignant power  
Woke aspirations for the light  
Within the folded flower.  
Its presence and the gracious day  
Made summer in the room,  
While woman's eyes dropped tender dew  
On the little rose in bloom.

Then blossomed forth a grander flower,  
In the wilderness of wrong,  
Untouched by Slavery's bitter frost,  
A soul devout and strong.  
God-watched, that century plant uprose,

Far shining through the gloom,  
Filling a nation with the breath  
Of a noble life in bloom.

A life so powerful in its truth,  
A nature so complete,  
It conquered ruler, judge and priest,  
And held them at its feet.  
Grim Death seemed proud to a soul  
So beautifully given,  
And the gallows only proved to him  
A stepping-stone to heaven.

Each cheerful word, each valiant act,  
So simple, so sublime,  
Spoke to us through the reverent hush  
Which sanctified that time.  
That moment when the brave old man  
Went so serenely forth,  
With footsteps whose unfaltering tread  
Re-echoed through the North.

The sword he wielded for the right  
Turns to a victor's palm;  
His memory sounds forevermore,  
A spirit-stirring psalm.  
No breath of shame can touch his shield,  
Nor ages dim its shine;  
Living, he made life beautiful,  
Dying, made death divine.

No monument of quarried stone,  
    No eloquence of speech,  
Can grave the lessons on the land  
    His martyrdom will teach.  
No eulogy like his own words,  
    With hero-spirit rife,  
'I truly serve the cause I love,  
    By yielding up my life.'

(1860)

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*An Hour*

**T**HE CLOCK struck eleven.

“Look again, Gabriel; is there no light coming?”

“Not a ray, mother, and the night seems to darken every instant.”

“Surely, half an hour is time enough to reach the main land and find Dr. Firth.”

“Ample time; but Alec probably found the doctor absent, and is waiting for him.”

“But I bade the boy leave my message, and return at once. Every moment is precious; what can we do?”

“Nothing but wait.”

An impatient sigh was the only answer vouchsafed to the unpalatable advice, and silence fell again upon the anxious watchers in the room. Still leaning in the deep recess of the window, the young man looked out into the murky night, listened to the flow of the great river rolling to the sea, and let the unquiet current of his thoughts drift him whithersoever it would. His imaginative temperament found a sad similitude between the night and his own mood, for neither his physical nor mental eye could see what lay before him, and in his life

there seemed to have come an hour as full of suspense, as prophetic of storm, as that which now oppressed the earth and lowered in the sky.

Every instant that brought the peace of death nearer to the father, also brought the cares of life nearer to the son, and their grim aspect daunted him. The child of a Northern mother, bred at the North by her dying desire, he had been summoned home to take the old man's place, and receive a slave-cursed inheritance into his keeping. Had he stood alone, his task would have been an easy one; for an upright nature, an enthusiastic spirit, would have found more sweetness than bitterness in a sacrifice made for conscience sake, more pride than pain in a just deed generously performed. But a step-mother and her daughters were dependent on him now, for the old man's sudden seizure left him no time to make provision for them; and the son found a double burden laid upon his shoulders when he returned to what for years had been a loveless home to him. To reduce three delicately nurtured women to indigence seemed a cruel and Quixotic act to others, a very hard, though righteous one to him; for poverty looked less terrible than affluence founded upon human blood and tears. He had resolved to set aside all private ambitions and aspirations that he might dedicate his life to his kindred; had manfully withstood their ridicule and reproaches, and only faltered when, in their hour of bereavement, they appealed to him with tears and prayers. Then pity threatened to conquer principle, for Gabriel's heart was as gentle as it was generous. Three days of sorrowful suspense and inward strife had passed; now death seemed about to set its seal upon one life, and irresolution to mar another, for Gabriel still wavered between duty and desire, crying within himself, "Lord, help me! I see the right, but I am not strong enough to do it; let it be decided for me."

It was—suddenly, entirely, and forever!

The tinkle of a bell roused him from his moody reverie, and, without quitting the shadow of the half-drawn curtain, he watched the scene before him with the interest of one in whom both soul and sense were alert to interpret and accept the divine decree which he had asked, in whatever guise it came.

The bell summoned a person whose entrance seemed to bring warmth, vitality and light into that gloomy room, although she was only a servant, with the blood of a despised race in her veins. More beautiful than either of her young mistresses, she looked like some brilliant flower of the tropics beside two pale exotics, and the unavoidable consciousness of this showed itself in the skill with which she made her simple dress a foil to her beauty, in the carriage of her graceful head and the sad pride of her eyes, as if, being denied all the other rights of womanhood, the slave clung to and cherished the one possession which those happier women lacked. As she entered, noiselessly, she gave one keen, comprehensive glance about the room,—a glance that took in the gray head and pallid face upon the pillow, the languid lady sitting at the bedside, the young sisters spent with weeping and watching, half asleep in either corner of a couch, and the man's glove that lay beside a brace of pistols on a distant table. Then her eyes fell, all expression faded from her face, and she stood before her mistress with a meek air, curiously at variance with the animated aspect she had worn on entering.

“Milly, are you sure you gave Alec my message correctly?” asked Mrs. Butler, imperiously, with a look of unconcealed dislike.

“Yes, missis, I gave it word for word.”

The voice that answered would have gone straight to a stranger's heart and made it ache, for a world of hopeless patience rendered its music pathetic, and dignified the little speech, as if the woman's spirit uttered a protest in every word that passed her lips.

“He has been gone nearly an hour. I can wait no longer. Tell Andy to go at once and see what keeps him.”

“Andy's down at the landing, seeing to the boats before the storm, missis.”

“Let Tony do that, and send Andy off at once.”

“Tony's too cut up with his last whipping to stir.”

“How very tiresome! Where is overseer Neal?”

“Sick, missis.”

“Sick! I saw him two hours ago, and he was perfectly well then.”

“He was taken very suddenly, but he’ll be out of pain by morning.”

As Milly spoke, with a slight motion of the lips that would have been a scornful smile had she not checked it, a faint, far-off cry came on the wind; a cry of mortal fear or pain it seemed, and so full of ominous suggestion that, though inured to sounds of suffering, Mrs. Butler involuntarily exclaimed,—

“What is that?”

“It’s only Rachel screaming for her baby; the last thing old master did was to sell it, and she’s been crazy ever since,” answered Milly, with a peculiar quickening of the breath and a sidelong glance.

“Foolish creature! but never mind her now: tell me who is about that I can send for Dr. Firth.”

“There’s no one in the house but blind Sandra and me.”

“What do you mean? Who gave the people leave to go?”

“I did.”

Hitherto the girl had spoken in the subdued tone of a well-trained servant, though there was no trace of her race in her speech but a word or two here and there; for Milly’s beauty had secured for her all the advantages which would increase her value as a chattel. But in the utterance of the last two words her voice rose with a sudden ring that arrested Mrs. Butler’s attention, and caused her to glance sharply at the girl. Milly stood before her meek and motionless, and not an eyelash stirred during that brief scrutiny. Her mistress could not see the mingled triumph and abhorrence burning in those averted eyes, did not observe the close clenching of the hand that hung at her side, nor guess what a sea of black and bitter memories was surging in her comely handmaid’s heart.

“How dared you send the servants away without my orders?” demanded Mrs. Butler, in an irritated and irritating voice.

“Master Gabriel said the house must be kept very quiet on old master’s account; I couldn’t make the boys mind, so I sent them to the quarters.”

“This is not the first time you have presumed upon my son’s favor, and

exceeded my orders. You have been spoiled by indulgence, but that shall be altered soon.”

“Yes, missis,—it shall;” and as the girl added the latter words below her breath, there was a glitter as of white teeth firmly set lest some impetuous speech should break loose in spite of her. Her mistress did not mark that little demonstration, for her mind was occupied with its one care, as she said, half aloud, half to herself,—

“What shall I do? The night is passing, your master needs help, and Alec has evidently forgotten, or never received, my message.”

For the first time an expression of anxiety was visible on Milly’s face, and there was more eagerness than deference in her suggestion:

“Master Gabriel might go; it would save time and make the matter sure, as missis doubts my word.”

“It is impossible; his father might rouse and ask for him, and I will not be left alone. It is not his place to carry messages, nor yours to propose it. Quick! lift your master’s head, and chafe his hands. God help us all!”

A low sigh from the bed caused the sudden change from displeasure to distress, as Mrs. Butler bent over her husband, forgetful of all else. What a strange smile flashed across Milly’s face, and kindled the dark fire of her eyes, as she looked down upon the master and mistress, whose helplessness and grief touched no chord of pity or sympathy in her heart! Only an instant did she stand so, but in that instant the expression of her face was fully revealed, not to the drowsy sisters, but to Gabriel in his covert. He saw it, but before he could fathom its significance it was hidden from him; and when his mother looked up there was nothing to be seen but the handsome head bending over the pale hand that Milly was assiduously chafing. Something in the touch of those warm palms seemed to rouse in the old man a momentary flicker of memory and strength, for the last thought that had disturbed his failing consciousness found utterance in broken words:

“I promised her her liberty,—she shall have it; wait a little, Milly,—wait till

I am better.”

“Yes, master, I can wait now;” and the girl’s eye turned toward the clock with an impatient glance.

The old man did not hear her, for, with an incoherent murmur, he seemed to sink into a deeper lethargy than before. His wife believed him dying; and cried, as she wrung her hands in a paroxysm of despairing helplessness,—

“Look out, Milly, look out! and if no one is coming, run to the quarters and send of the first boy you meet.”

Milly moved deliberately toward the window, but paused half-way to ask, with the same shade of anxiety flitting over her face,—

“Where is Master Gabriel? shouldn’t he be called?”

“He was here a moment ago, and has gone to the landing, doubtless; you can call him as you go.”

With sudden eagerness the girl glided to the window, now too intent upon some purpose of her own to see the dark outline of a figure half concealed in the deep folds of the curtain; and, leaning far out, she peered into the gloom with an intentness that sharpened every feature.

“There is no one coming, missis,” she said, raising her voice unnecessarily, as one listener thought, unless the momentary stillness made any sound seem unusually loud. As the words left her lips, from below there came a soft chirp as of some restless bird; it was twice repeated, then came a pause, and in it, with a rapid, noiseless gesture, Milly drew a handkerchief from her pocket and dropped it from the window. It fluttered whitely for a moment, and as it disappeared an acute ear might have caught the sound of footsteps stealing stealthily away. Milly evidently heard them, for an expression of relief began to dawn upon her face. Suddenly it changed to one of terror, as, in the act of withdrawing her arm, a strong hand grasped it, and Gabriel’s voice demanded,—

“What does this mean, Milly?”

For a moment she struggled like some wild creature caught in a net, then steadied herself by a desperate effort, exclaiming, breathlessly,—

“Oh, Master Gabriel, how you frightened me!”

“I meant to. Now tell what all this means, at once and truly,” he said, in a tone intended to be stern, but which was only serious and troubled.

“All what means, sir?” she answered, feigning innocent surprise, though her eye never met his, and she still trembled in his hold.

“You know; the signals, the dropping of the handkerchief, the steps below there, and the figure creeping through the grass.”

“Master must have quick eyes and ears to see and hear all that in such a minute. I only saw my handkerchief drop by accident; I only heard a bird chirp, and one of the dogs creep round the house;” but as she spoke she cast an uneasy glance over her shoulder into the night without.

“Why lie to me, Milly? I have watched you ever since you came in, and you are not yourself to-night. Something is wrong; I’ve felt it all day, but thought it was anxiety for my poor father. Why are all the people sent off to the quarters? Why is Andy meddling with the boats without my orders? and why do you look, speak, and act in this inexplicable manner?”

“If master gets worried and imagines mischief when there is none, I can’t help it,” she said, doggedly.

Both while speaking and listening Gabriel had scrutinized her closely, and all he saw confirmed his suspicion that something serious was amiss. In the slender wrist he held the pulse thrilled quick and strong; he heard the rapid beating of her heart, the flutter of the breath upon her lips; saw that her face was colorless, her eyes both restless and elusive. He was sure that no transient fear agitated her, but felt that some unwonted excitement possessed her, threatening to break out in spite of the self-control which years of servitude had taught her. What he had just seen and heard alarmed him; for his father had been a hard master, the island was governed by fear alone, and he never trod the dykes that bounded the long, low rice-fields without feeling as if he walked upon a crater-crust which might crack and spew fire any day. Many small omens of evil had occurred of late, which now returned to his recollection with sinister

significance; and the vague disquiet that had haunted him all day now seemed an instinctive premonition of impending danger. Many fears flashed through his mind, and one resolution was firmly fixed. His face grew stern, his voice commanding, and his hand tightened its hold as he said,—

“Speak, Milly, or I shall be tempted to use my authority as a master, and that I never wish to do. If there is any devilry afloat I must know it; and if you will not tell it me I shall search the island till I find it for myself.”

She looked at him for the first time, as he spoke, with a curious blending of defiance for the master and admiration for the man. His last words changed it to one of fear; and her free hand was extended as if to bar his way, while she said, below her breath, and with another glance into the outer gloom,—

“You are safe here, but if you leave the house it will cost you your life.”

“Then it must; for if you will not show me the peril, I swear I’ll go to meet it blindly.”

“No, no, wait a little; I dare not tell!”

“You shall tell. I am the mistress here, and have borne enough. Speak, girl, at once, or this proud spirit of yours shall be broken till you do.”

Mrs. Butler had heard all that passed, had approached them, and being a woman who was by turns imperious, peevish, and passionate, she yielded to the latter impulse as she spoke, and gave the girl’s shoulder an impatient shake, as if to force the truth out of her. The touch, the tone, were like sparks to powder; for the smouldering fire blazed up as Milly flung her off, wrenched herself free from Gabriel, and turned on his mother with a look that sent her back to her husband trembling and dismayed.

“Yes, I will speak, though it is too soon!” cried Milly, with a short, sharp laugh. “They may kill me for telling before the time; I can’t help it; I must have one hour of freedom, if I die the next. There *is* devilry afloat to-night, and it is yourselves you may blame for it. We can’t bear any more, and before a new master comes to torment us like the old one, we’ve determined to try for liberty, though there’ll be bloody work before we get it. The boys are not at the quarters,

but fifty are waiting at the rice-mill till midnight, and then they'll come up here to do as they've been done by. While they wait they're beginning with overseer Neal; whipping, burning, torturing him, for all I know, as other men, and women too, have been whipped, burnt and tortured there. That was his scream you heard. Alec never went for the doctor; Andy's guarding the boats till we want them; big Mose is watching round the house; the alarm bell's down; I've cleared the house of arms, and spoilt the pistols that I dared not take; Master Gabriel's the only white man on the island, and there's no help for you unless the Lord turns against us. Who is the mistress now?"

The girl paused there, breathless but exultant, for the words had poured from her lips as if the pent-up degradation, wrath and wrong of nineteen years had broken bounds at last and must overflow, even though they wrecked her by their vehemence. Some spirit stronger than herself seemed to possess and speak out of her, making her look like an embodied passion, beautiful, yet terrible, as she glanced from face to face, seeing how pale and panic-stricken each became, as her rapid words made visible the retribution that hung over them. Gabriel stood aghast at the swift and awful answer given to his prayer; the daughters fled to their mother's arms for shelter; the wife clung to her husband for the protection which he could no longer give, and, as if dragged back to life by the weight of a woe, such as he had himself inflicted upon others, the old man rose up in his bed, speechless, helpless, yet conscious of the dangers of the hour, and doubly daunted by death's terrors, because so powerless to succor those for whom he had periled his own soul. A bitter cry broke from him as his last look showed him the impending doom which all his impotent remorse could not avert, and in that cry the old man's spirit passed, to find that, even for such as he, Infinite justice was tempered by Infinite mercy.

During the few moments in which the wife and daughters forgot fear in sorrow, and the son took hurried counsel with himself how best to meet the coming danger, Milly was learning that the bitter far exceeds the sweet in human vengeance. The slave exulted in the freedom so dearly purchased, but the woman

felt that in avenging them her wrongs had lost their dignity, and though she had changed places with her mistress, she found that power did not bring her peace. She had no skill to analyze the feeling, no words in which to express it, even to herself, but she was so strongly conscious of it, that its mysterious power marred the joy she thought to feel, and forced her to confess that in the hour of expected triumph she was baffled and defeated by her own conscience. With women doomed to a fate like hers, the higher the order of intelligence the deeper the sense of degradation, the more intense the yearning for liberty at any price. Milly had always rebelled against her lot, although, compared with that of her class, it had not been a hard one till the elder Butler bought her, that his son, seeing slavery in such a lovely form, might learn to love it. But Gabriel, in his brief visits, soon convinced his father that no temptation could undermine his sturdy Northern sense of right and justice, and though he might easily learn to love the beautiful woman, he could not learn to oppress the slave whose utter helplessness appealed to all that was manliest in him.

Milly felt this deeply, and knew that the few black drops in her veins parted herself and Gabriel more hopelessly than the widest seas that ever rolled between two lovers. This inexorable fact made all the world look dark to her; life became a burden, and one purpose alone sustained her,—the resolution to achieve her own liberty, to enjoy a brief triumph over those who had wronged her, then to die, and find compensation for a hapless human love in the fatherly tenderness of a Divine one. She had prayed, worked and waited for this hour, with all the ardor, energy and patience of her nature. Yet when it came she was not satisfied; a sense of guilt oppressed her, and the loss seemed greater than the gain. Gabriel had given her a look which wounded more deeply than the sharpest reproach; and the knowledge that she had forfeited the confidence he had always shown her, now made her gloomy when she would have been glad, humble when she thought to have been proudest. Gabriel saw and understood her mood, felt that their only hope of deliverance lay in her, and while his mother and sisters lamented for the dead he bestirred himself to save the living.

“Milly,” he began, with sad seriousness, “we deserve no mercy, and I ask none for myself; I only implore you to spare the women and give me time to atone for the weak, the wicked hesitation which has brought us to this pass. I meant to free you all as soon as you were legally mine, as it was too late for my father to endear his memory by one just act. But it was hard to make my mother and my sisters poor, and so I waited, hoping to be shown some way by which I could be just and generous both to you and them.”

“Three women were more precious than two hundred helpless creatures in the eyes of a Christian gentleman from the free North! I’m glad you told me this;” and there was something like contempt in the look she gave her master.

There was no answer to that, for it was true; and in the remorseful shame that sent the blood to Gabriel’s forehead, he confessed the fact which he was too honest to deny. Still looking at her, with eyes that pleaded for him better than his words, he said, with a humility that conquered her disdain,—

“I shall expiate that sin if I die to-night; and I will give myself up to be dealt with as you please, if you will save my mother and my sisters, and let them free you in my name. Before God and my dead father I promise this, upon my honor!”

“There are no witnesses to that but those whom I’ll not trust; honor means nothing to us who are not allowed to keep our own,” said Milly, looking moodily upon the ground, as if she feared to look up lest she should relent, for excitement was ebbing fast, and a flood of regretful recollections rising in her heart.

“I did not expect that reproach from you,” Gabriel answered, taking courage from the signs he saw. “Do you remember, when my father gave you to me, how indignantly I rejected the gift, and promised that in my eyes you should be as sacred as either of those poor girls? Have I not kept my word, Milly?”

“Yes! O yes!” she said, with trembling lips, and eyes she dared not lift, they were so full of grateful tears. Carefully steadying her traitorous voice, she added, earnestly, “Master Gabriel! I *do* remember, and I’ve tried all day to save you, but you wouldn’t go. I will trust your word, and do my best to help the ladies, if

they'll promise to free us all to-morrow, and you will leave the island at once. Mose will let you pass; for that handkerchief was dropped to tell him that you were abroad, and were to be got off against your will, if you wouldn't go quietly. Both he and Andy will save you for my sake; the others won't, because they don't know you as we do. Please go, Master Gabriel, before it is too late."

"No, I shall stay. What would you think of me, if I deserted these helpless women in such danger, to save myself at their expense? I cannot quite trust you, Milly, after treachery like this."

"Who taught us to be treacherous, and left us nothing but our own cunning to help ourselves with?"

The first part of Gabriel's speech made the last less hard to bear; and Milly's question was put in a tone that was more apologetic than accusatory, for Gabriel cared what she thought of him, and that speech comforted her.

"Not I, Milly; but let the sins of the dead rest, and tell me if you will not help my mother and Grace and Clara off, instead of me? The promise will be all the sooner and the better kept, or, if it comes too late, I shall be the only and the fittest person to pay the penalty."

Milly's face darkened, and she turned away with an expression of keen disappointment. Mrs. Butler and her daughters had restrained their lamentations to listen; but at the sound of Gabriel's proposal, the sisters ran to Milly, and, clinging about her knees, implored her to pity, forgive, and save them. Well for them that they did so; for Milly felt as if many degradations were cancelled by that act, and, as she saw her young mistresses at her feet, the sense of power soothed her sore heart, and added the grace of generosity to the duty of forgiveness. She did not speak, yet she did not deny their prayer, and stood wavering between doubt and desire as the fateful moments rapidly flew by; Gabriel remembered that, and, taking her hand, said, in a voice whose earnestness was perilously persuasive to the poor girl's ear,—

"Milly, you said there was no hope for us unless God turned against you. I think He has, and, speaking through that generous heart of yours, pleads for us

better than we can plead for ourselves. It is so beautiful to pity, so magnanimous to forgive; and the greater the wrong, the more pardon humbles the transgressor and ennobles the bestower. Dear Milly, spare these poor girls as you have been spared; prove yourself the truer woman, the nobler mistress; teach them a lesson which they never can forget, and sweeten your liberty with the memory of this act.”

Milly listened still with downcast eyes and averted face, but every word went straight to her heart, soothing, strengthening, inspiring all that was best and bravest in that poor heart, so passionate, and yet so warm and womanly withal. No man had ever spoken to her before of magnanimity, of proving herself superior to those who had shown no mercy to her faults, accorded no praise to her virtues, nor lightened a hard servitude with any touch of friendliness. No man had ever looked into her face before with eyes in which admiration for her beauty was mingled with pity for her helpless womanhood; and, better than all, no man, old or young, had ever until now recognized in her a fellow-creature, born to the same rights, gifted with the same powers, and capable of the same sufferings and sacrifices as himself. That touched and won her; that appealed to the spirit which lives through all oppression in the lowest of God’s children; and through all her frame there went a glow of warmth and joy, as if some strong, kind hand had lifted her from the gloom of a desolate despair into the sunshine of a happier world. Her eye wandered toward the faces of dead master, conquered mistress, and darkened as it looked; passed to the pale girls still clinging to her skirts, and softened visibly; was lifted to Gabriel, and kindled with the new-born desire to prove herself worthy of the confidence which would be her best reward. A smile broke beautifully across her face, and her lips were parted to reply, when Mrs. Butler, who sat trembling behind her, cried, in a shrill, imploring whisper,—

“Remember all I’ve done for you, Milly, all I still have it in my power to do. I promise to free you, if you will only save us now. Be merciful, for your old master’s sake, if not for mine.”

The sound of that querulous voice seemed to sting Milly like a lash, threatening to undo all Gabriel's work. Her eye grew fiery again, her mouth hard, her face bitterly scornful, as she said, with a glance which her mistress never forgot,—

“I'm not likely to forget all you've done for me; I would not accept my liberty from you if you could give it; and if a word of mine could save you, I'd not say it for old master's sake, much less for yours.”

With a warning gesture to his mother, Gabriel turned that defiant face toward himself, and holding it firmly yet gently between his hands, bent on it a look that allayed the rising storm by the magic of a power which the young man had never used till now, though conscious of possessing it,—for Milly's tell-tale countenance had betrayed her secret long ago. As he looked deep into her eyes, with a glance which was both commanding and compassionate, they first fell with sudden shame, then, as if controlled by the power of those other eyes, they rose again and met them with a sad sincerity that made their beauty tragical, as they filled slowly till two great tears rolled down her cheeks, wetting the hands that touched them; and when Gabriel said, softly, “For my sake you will save us?” she straightway answered, “Yes.”

“God bless you, Milly! Now tell me how I am to help you, for time is going, and lives hang on the minutes.”

He released her as he spoke; and, though she still looked at him as if he were the one saving power of her thwarted life, she answered, pleadingly,—

“Hush, Master Gabriel! please don't speak to me, for then I only feel,—now I must think.”

How still the room grew as they waited! The presence of death was less solemn than that of fear, for the dead seemed forgotten, and the living all unconscious of the awesome contrast between the pale expectancy of their panic-stricken faces and the repose of that one untroubled countenance. How suddenly the night grew full of ominous sounds! How intently all eyes were fixed upon the beautiful woman who stood among them holding their lives in her

hands, and how they started, when, through the hush, came a soft chime as the half-hour struck! Milly heard and answered that silvery sound as the anxious watchers would have had her:

“It can be done,” she said, in a tone which carried hope to every heart. “It can be done, but I must do it alone, for I can pass Mose and get Andy across the river without their suspecting that I’m going for help. You must stay here and do your best to guard the ladies, Master Gabriel; it won’t be safe for any of you to go now.”

“But, Milly, the boys may not wait till twelve, or you may be delayed, and then we are lost.”

“I have thought of that; and as I go out I’ll take old Sandra with me; she’ll understand in a minute. She’ll go down to the mill and talk to them and keep them, if anything can do it, for they love and fear her more than any one on the island. Be quiet, trust to me, and I’ll save you, Master Gabriel.”

He silently held out his hand, as if pledging his word to obey and trust. With the warmth and grace of her impulsive temperament, Milly bent her head, laid her cheek against that friendly hand, wet it with grateful tears, kissed it with loving lips, and went her way, feeling as if all things were possible to her for Gabriel’s sake.

Listening breathlessly, they heard her foot-falls die away, heard Sandra’s voice below, a short parley with Mose, then watched the old woman and the young depart in opposite directions, leaving them to feel the bitterness of dependence in a strange, stern fashion, which they had never thought to know. Man-like, Gabriel could not long stand idle while danger menaced and women faced it for him. Anxious to take such precautions as might hold the expected assailants at bay, even for a moment, he bade his mother and sisters remain quiet, that no suspicion might be excited, and crept down to test the capabilities of the house to withstand a short siege, if other hopes failed. The slight, many-doored and windowed mansion, built for a brief occupancy when the winter months rendered the region habitable for whites, was but ill-prepared to repel

any attack; and a hasty survey convinced Gabriel that it was both hazardous and vain to attempt a barricade which a few strong arms could instantly destroy. As he stood disheartened, unarmed, and alone in the long hall, dimly lighted by the lamp he carried, a sense of utter desolation came over him, dampening his courage, and oppressing his mind with the dreariest forebodings. Thinking of the many true hearts and stout arms far away there at the North, which would have come to his aid so readily could his need have been known, he yearned for a single friend, a single weapon, that he might conquer or die like a man. And both were given him.

Pausing before a door that opened out upon the rear of the house, his eye caught sight of a heavy whip, whose loaded handle had felled men before now, and might easily do so again, if wielded by a strong arm. He took it down, saying to himself, "It is the first time I ever touched the accursed thing; God grant that it may be the last." A low sound behind him caused the blood to chill an instant in his veins, then to rush on with a quicker flow, as, poisoning the weapon in one hand, he lifted the lamp above his head, and searched the gloom. Far at the other end of the long hall a dark figure crept along, and a pair of glittering eyes were fixed upon his own. "Come on; I'm ready," he said, steadily, and was answered by the patter of rapid steps, the sight of an unexpected ally, as a great black hound came leaping upon him in a rapture of canine delight. Old Mort had been the fiercest, most efficient blood-hound on the island; and still, in spite of age, was a formidable beast, ready to track or assault a negro, and pull him down or throttle him, at word of command. He had been his possessor's favorite till Gabriel came; then he deserted the old master for the young, and was always left at large when he was at home. Mort had been missing all day, and now the rope trailing behind him was sufficient evidence that he had been decoyed away, lest his vigilance should warn his master, and that, having freed himself, he had stolen home, to lie concealed till night and his master's presence reassured him.

As the great creature reared himself before the young man, with a paw on

either shoulder, and looked into his face with eyes that seemed almost human in their intelligent affection, Gabriel dropped the whip, put down the lamp, and caressed the hound with an almost boyish gratitude and fondness; for, with the sense of security this powerful ally brought, there came a remorseful memory, that, though the possessor of two hundred human beings, he had no friend but a dog. At this point Mort suddenly pricked up his ears, slipped from his master's hold, and snuffed suspiciously at the closed door. Some one was evidently without, and the creature's keen scent detected the unseen listener. With a noiseless command to the dog to keep quiet, Gabriel caught up his only weapon, and stood waiting for whatever demonstration should follow. None came; and presently Mort returned to him with a sagacious glance and a sleepy yawn, sure evidences that Mose had paused a moment in his round, and had gone on again. Big Mose was, with one exception, the strongest, most rebellious slave on the place; and though Gabriel had longed to rush out and attack him, he had not dared to try it, for his strength was as a child's compared to the stalwart slave's. Now, with Mort to help him, the thing was possible; and as he stood there, with only a door between him and the man who had sworn to take his life, a strange consciousness of power came to him; his muscles seemed to grow firm as iron, his blood flowed calm and cool, and in his mind there rose a purpose, desperately simple, yet wise, despite its seeming rashness. He would master Mose, and, leaving Mort to guard him, would go down to the mill, and, if both Sandra's and his own appeals and promises proved unavailing, would give himself up, hoping that his death or torture would delay the doom of those defenceless women, and give Milly time to bring them better help than any he could give. Some atonement must be made, he thought, and perhaps innocent blood would wash the black stain from his father's memory better than the deed he had hoped to do in that father's name on the morrow. He had held a precious opportunity in his hands, had delayed through a mistaken kindness; now it was lost, perhaps forever, and he must pay the costly price which God exacts of those who palter with their consciences. As the thought came, and the purpose grew, it

brought with it that high courage, that entire self-abnegation which we call heroism; and that fateful moment made Gabriel a man.

A word, a gesture, put the dog upon his mettle; then cutting away the long rope, Gabriel threw it over his arm, unbarred the door, set it ajar, and, standing behind it, with the hound under his hand, he waited for Mose to make his round. Soon Mort's restless ears gave token of his approach; and, as the stealthy steps came stealing on, he was with difficulty restrained; for now instinct showed him danger, and he was as eager as his master to be up and doing. The streak of light attracted the man's eye. He paused, drew nearer, listened; then softly pushed the door open, and leaned in to reconnoitre. That instant Mort was on him, a heavy blow half stunned him, and, before his scattered wits could be collected, he was down, his hands fast bound, and both master and dog standing over him panting, but unhurt.

"Now, Mose, if you want to save your life, be still, and answer my questions truly," said Gabriel, with one hand on the man's throat, the other holding back Mort, whose tawny eye was savage now. "I know your plot, and have found means to spoil it. How do you think I'm going to punish you all?"

"Dun'no, massa," muttered Mose, with a grim resignation to any fate.

"I'm going to free every man, woman, and child on the island, and fling that devilish thing into the river," he said, as he spurned the whip with his foot.

An incredulous look and derisive grin was the only thanks and answer he received.

"You don't believe it? Well, who can blame you, poor soul? Not I. Now tell me how many men are on the watch between here and the rice-mill?" Gabriel spoke with a flash of the eye and a sudden deepening of the voice; for both indignation and excitement stirred him. The look, the tone, did more to convince Mose than a flood of words; for he had learned to try men by tests of his own, and had more faith in the promises of their faces than those of their tongues. More respectfully, he said,—

"No one, 'sides me, massa. Andy's at de landin', and de rest at de mill

'ceptin' dem as isn't in de secret."

"Mind, no lies, Mose, or your free papers will be the last I sign to-morrow. Get up, and come quietly with me; for if you try to run, Mort will pin you. I'm going to the mill, and want you safely under lock and key first."

"Is massa gwine alone?" asked Mose, glancing about him, for Gabriel spoke as if he had a score of men at his command.

"Yes, I'm going alone; why not?"

"Massa knows dere's fifty of de boys dar sworn to kill him, if Milly don't git him 'way 'fore dey comes up?"

"I know, and Milly's done her best to get me off, but I'd rather stay; I'm not afraid."

Gabriel's blood was up now: danger had no terrors for him; and, beyond the excitement of the moment, his purpose lent him a calm courage which impressed the slave as something superhuman. Like one in a maze of doubt and fear, he obediently followed his master to an out-house, where, binding feet as well as hands, Gabriel left him with the promise and the warning,—

"Sit here till I come to let you out a free man, if I live to do it. Don't stir nor call, for Mort will be at the door to silence you and howl for me, if you try any tricks. I'll not keep you long, if I can help it."

The slave only stared dumbly at him, incapable of receiving the vast idea of liberty, pardon, and kindness all at once; and bidding Mort guard both prisoner and house, Gabriel stole along the path that wound away through grove and garden to the rice-mill, where so many fates were soon to be decided. As he went he glanced from earth to sky, and found propitious omens everywhere. No flowery thicket concealed a lurking foe to clutch at him in the dark; but the fragrance of trodden grass, the dewy touch of leaves against his cheek, the peaceful night-sounds that surrounded him, gave him strange comfort and encouragement; for when his fellow-creatures had deserted, Nature took him to her motherly heart. From above, fitful glimpses of the moon guided him on his perilous way; for the wind had changed, the black clouds were driving seaward,

and the storm was passing without either thunderbolt or hurricane. Coming, at length, within sight of the half-ruined mill, he paused to reconnoitre. Through chinks in the rude walls a dim light shone, muffled voices rose and fell; and once there was a hoarse sound, as of a half-uttered shout. Creeping warily to a dark nook among the ruins, Gabriel made his way to a crevice in an inner wall, and, looking through it, saw a sight little fitted to reassure him, either as a master or a man.

The long, low-raftered portion of the mill, which once had been the threshing-floor, was now lighted by the red glare of several torches, which filled the place with weird shadows, and sudden glimpses of objects that seemed the more mysterious or terrible for being but half seen. In one corner, under a coarse covering, something lay stark and still; a clenched hand was visible, and several locks of light hair dabbled with blood, but nothing more. Fifty men, old and young, of all shades of color, all types of their unhappy race, stood or sat about three, who evidently were the leaders of the league. One, a young man, so fair that the red lines across his shoulders looked doubly barbarous there, was half-kneeling, and steadily filing at a chain that held his feet together as his hands had been held till some patient friend had freed them, and left him to finish the slow task. He worked so eagerly that the drops stood thick upon his haggard face, and his scarred chest heaved with his painful breath; for this was the Tony who was too much cut up with his last whipping to run on Mrs. Butler's errand, but not too feeble to strike a blow for liberty. The second man was as near an animal as a human creature could become, and yet be recognized as such. A burly, brutal-looking negro, maimed and distorted by every cruelty that could be invented or inflicted, he was a sight to daunt the stoutest heart, as he sat sharpening the knife which had often threatened him in the overseer's hand, and was still red with the overseer's blood.

Standing erect between the two, and in striking contrast to them, was a gigantic man, with a fine, dark face, a noble head, and the limbs of an ebony Hercules. A native African, from one of those tribes whose wills are never

broken,—who can be subdued by kindness, but who often kill themselves rather than suffer the degradation of the lash. No one had dared to subject him to that chastisement, as was proved by the unmarred smoothness of the muscular body, bare to the waist; but round his neck was riveted an iron collar, with four curved spikes. It was a shameful badge of serfdom; it prevented him from lying down, it galled him with its ceaseless chafing, yet he wore it with an air which would have made the hideous necklace seem some barbaric ornament, if that had been possible; and faced the excited crowd with a native dignity which nothing could destroy, and which proved him their master in intelligence, as well as strength and courage.

Before them all, yet lifted a little above them by her position on a fallen fragment of the roof, stood old Cassandra. A tall, gaunt woman, with a countenance which age, in making venerable, had not robbed of its vigor; her sightless eyes were wide open with a weird effect of seeing without sight, and her high white turban, her long staff, and the involuntary tremor of her shrivelled hands, gave her the air of some ancient sorceress or priestess, bearing her part in some heathen rite. The majestic-looking slave with the collar had apparently been speaking, for his face was turned toward her, and his dark features were still alive with the emotions which had just found vent in words. As Gabriel looked, old Sandra struck the floor with her staff, as if commanding silence; and, as the stir of some momentary outbreak subsided, she said, in a strong voice, which rose and fell in a sort of solemn chant as her earnestness increased and her listeners grew obedient to its spell,—

“Chil’en, I’s e heard yer plans,—now I wants ter len’ a han’ and help you in dis hour of tribbleation. You’s killed oberseer Neal, and d’rectly you’s all gwine up ter de house to kill massa, missis and de young folks. Now what’s you gwine to do dat fer? and what’s dey eber done bad nuf ter make you willin’ ter fro ’way yer souls dis night?”

“Kase we can’t b’ar no more.” “Old massa hunted my boy wid hounds and dey tore him ter def.” “He sold my chil’en and drove Rachel crazy wid de

partin'." "Old missis had my pore girl whipped kase she was too sick ter stan' and dress her." "Massa Gabriel may be harder dan de ole one, and we's tired ob hell."

These, and many another short, stern answer, came to Sandra's question; she expected them, was ready to meet them, and knew how best to reach the outraged hearts now hungering for vengeance. Her well-known afflictions, her patience, her piety, gave a certain sanctity to her presence, great weight to her words, and an almost marvellous power to her influence over her own people, who believed her to be half saint, half seer. She felt her power, and, guided by an instinct that seldom failed, she used it wisely in this perilous hour, remembering that her listeners, though men in their passions, were children in their feelings.

"You pore boys, I knows de troof ob all dat, and I'se had my trubbles hard and heavy as you has, but I'se learnt to fergib 'em, and dey don't hurt now. Ole massa bought me thirty year' ago 'way from all I keered fer, and I'se slaved for him widout no t'anks, no wages, eber since; but I'se fergived him dat. He sole my chil'en, all ten; my boys up de riber, my perty little girls down to Orleans, and bringed up his chil'en on de money; dat come bery hard, but de Lord helped me, and I fergived him dat. He shot my ole Ben kase he couldn't whip me hisself, nor stan' by and see it done; dat mos' broke my heart, but in de end I foun' I could fergib him one time more. He made me nuss him when de fever come and every one was 'fraid ob him; de long watchin', de hard work and de cryin' fer my chil'en made me bline at last; but I fergived him dat right hearty, fer though dey took my eyes away dey couldn't bline my soul, and in de darkness I hab seen de Lord."

The truth, the pathos, the devout assurance of her words, impressed and controlled the sympathetic creatures to whom she spoke, as no reproach or denunciation would have done. A murmur went through the crowd, and more than one savage face lost something of its brutality, gained something of its former sad patience, as the old woman touched, with wondrous skill, the chords that still made music in these tried and tempted hearts.

“Yes, chil’en, I hab seen de Lord, and He has made de night into day fer me, has held me up in all my trubbles, tole me to hole fas’ by Him, and promised He would bring me safe ter glory. I’s e faith ter feel He will, and while I wait, I’s e savin’ up my soul fer Him. Boys, He says de same to you froo me; He says hole fas’, b’ar all dat’s sent, beleebe in Him, and wait the coming ob de Lord.”

“We’s done tired a-waitin’, de Lord’s so bery long a comin’, Sandra.”

It was a weary, hopeless voice that answered, as an old man shook his white head and lifted up the dim eyes that for eighty years had watched in vain.

“It’s you dat’s long a-comin’ ter Him, Uncle Dave, but He ain’t tired ob waitin’ for yer. De places dar in heaven is all ready, de shinin’ gowns, de harps ob gole, de eberlastin’ glory, and de peace. No rice-swamps dar, no sugar-mills, no cotton-fields, no houn’s, no oberseer, no massa but de blessed Lord. Dar’s yer chil’en, Uncle Dave, growed beautiful white angels, and a-waitin’ till yer comes. Dar’s yer wife, Pete, wid no lashes on her back, no sobbin’ in her heart, a-waiting fer yer, anxious. Dar’s yer fader, Jake; he don’t need no proppin’ now, and he’ll run to meet yer when yer comes. Dar’s yer pore sister Rachel, Ned; she ain’t crying fer baby now; de Lord’s got her in de holler ob His han’, and she’s a-waitin’ fer de little one and you to come. Dar’s my Ben, my chil’en all saved up for me, and when I comes I’ll see ’em waitin’ fer me at de door. But, best ob all, dar’s de dear Lord waitin’ fer us; He’s holdin’ out his arm, He’s beckonin’ all de while, He’s sayin’, in dat lovin’ voice ob His, ‘I sees yer sorrows, my pore chil’en, I hears yer sobbin’ and yer prayers, I fergives yer sins, I knows yer won’t ’spoint me ob dese yere fifty precious souls, and I’s e a-waitin’, waitin’, waitin’ fer yer all.’”

Strange fervor was in the woman’s darkened face, strange eloquence in her aged voice, strange power in the persuasive gestures of her withered hands outstretched above them, warning, pleading, beckoning, as if, in truth, the Lord spoke through her, illuminating that poor place with the light of His divine compassion, the promises of His divine salvation. A dead silence followed as the last yearning cadence of the one voice rose, fell, and died away. Sandra let the

strong contrast between the here and the hereafter make its due impression, then broke the silence, saying briefly, solemnly,—

“Boys, de Lord has spared yer one great sin dis night; ole massa’s dead.”

“Glory be to God, amen!” “Halleluyer! dat I’s libed ter see dis happy day!” “De Debble’s got him, shore!” “Don’t give up de chance, boys; young massa and de missis is lef’ for us.”

Such exclamations of gratitude, joy, and revenge, were the only demonstration which the news produced, and, mingling with them, a gust of wind came sweeping through the mill, as if nature gave a long sigh of relief that another tyrant had ceased to blight and burden her fair domain. Sandra’s quick ear caught the last words, and a deep oath or two, as several men rose with the fierce fire rekindling in their eyes.

“Yes!” she cried, in a tone that held them even against their will,—“yes, young massa’s lef’; but not to die, for if yer gives up your chancce of damnation dis night, you’ll all be free to-morrer. He’s promised it; he’ll do it, and dere’ll be no blood but dat bad man’s yonder, to cry from de groun’, and b’ar witness ’ginst yer at de Judgment-Day.”

“Free! to-morrer! Who’s gwine to b’lieve dat, Sandra? We’s been tole such stories often; but de morrer’s never come, and now we’s gwine to bring one for ourselves.”

The gigantic man with the spiked collar on his neck said that, with a smile of grim determination, as he took up the iron bar, which in his desperate hands became a terribly formidable weapon.

A low growl, as of muttering thunder, answered him, and Sandra’s heart sunk within her. But one hope remained; and, desperately clinging to it, she found that even in these betrayed, benighted creatures there still lived a sense of honor, a loyalty to truth, born of the manhood God had given them, the gratitude which one man had inspired.

“Hear me, jes once more, ’fore yer goes, boys. Tell me, what has young massa done ter make yer want his blood? Has he ever lashed yer, kicked, and

cussed yer? Has he sole yer chil'ren, 'bused yer wives, or took yer ole folks from yer? Has he done anything but try to make old massa kinder, to do his best fer us while he's here; and when he can't do nor b'ar no more, don't he go 'way to pray de Lord ter help us fer His sake?"

Not a voice answered; not one complaint, accusation, or reproach was made, and Prince, the fierce leader of the insurrection, paused, with his foot upon the threshold of the door; for a grateful memory confronted and arrested him. One little daughter, the last of many children, had been taken from him to be sold, when Gabriel, moved by his despair, had bought and freed and given her back to him, with the promise that she never should be torn from him again. For an instant the clasp of little clinging arms seemed to make the sore chafing of the iron ring unfelt; the touch of the hand that gave the precious gift now made that rude weapon weigh heavily in his own, and from the darkness which lay between him and the doomed home there seemed to rise the shadow of the face which once had looked compassionately into his and recognized him as a man. He turned, and, standing with his magnificent yet mournful figure fully revealed by the red flicker of the torches, put out one hand as if to withhold the desperate crowd before him, and asked, with an air of authority which well became a prince by birth as well as name,—

“Sandra, who tole you massa meant ter free us right away? You has blessed dreams sometimes, and maybe dis is one ob 'em. It's too good to be de troof.”

“It is de troof, de livin' troof, and no dream ob mine was eber half so blessed as dis yere will be, if we has faith. Milly tole me jes now dat Massa Gabriel swore before de Lord and his dead father dat he'd free us all ter-morrer; and I come here ter save yer from de sin dat won't help, but hinder yer awful in dis world and de next. Dere's more good news 'sides dat. I heerd 'em talkin' 'bout de Norf. It's risin', boys, it's risin'!—de tings we's heerd is shore, and de day ob jubilee is comin' fas'.”

It was well she added that last hope, for its effect was wonderful. Men lifted up their heads, hope quenched hatred in eyes that grew joyfully expectant, and

for a moment the black sky seemed to glimmer with the first rays of the North star which should lead them up from that Dismal Swamp to a goodly land. Sandra felt the change, knew that only one more effective touch was needed to secure the victory, and, like the pious soul she was, turned in her hour of need to the only Friend who never had deserted her. Painfully bending her stiff knees, she knelt down before them, folded her hard hands, lifted her sightless eyes, and cried, in an agony of supplication,—

“Dear Lord, speak to dese yere pore chil’en, fer I’se done my bes’! Help ’em, save ’em, don’t let ’em spile de freedom dat’s comin’ by a sin like dis to-night, but let ’em take it sweet and clean from Thy han’ in de mornin’. Stan’ by young massa, hole him up, don’t let him ’spoint us, fer we’se ben bery patient, Lord; and help us to wait one night more, shore dat he’ll keep de promise fer Thy blessed sake.”

“I will!”

The voice rang through the place like a voice from heaven; and out from the darkness Gabriel came among them. To their startled, superstitious eyes he seemed no mortal man, but a beautiful, benignant angel, bringing tidings of great joy, as he stood there, armed with no weapon but a righteous purpose, gifted with no eloquence but the truth, stirred to his heart’s core by strong emotion, and lifted above himself by the high mood born of that memorable hour.

“My people! mine only while I speak; break up your league, lay down your arms, dry your tears, and forgive as you are forgiven, for this island no longer holds a master or a slave; but all are free forever and forever.”

An awful silence fell upon the place, unbroken till old Sandra cried, with a glad, triumphant voice,—

“Chil’en! de Lord hab heerd, de Lord hab answered! Bless de Lord! O bless de Lord!”

Then, as a strong wind bows a field of grain, the breath of liberty swept over fifty souls, and down upon their knees fell fifty free men, while a great cry went up to heaven. Shouts, sobs, prayers and praises; the clash of falling arms;

the rattle of fetters wrenched away; the rush of men gathered to each other's breasts,—all added to the wild abandonment of a happiness too mighty for adequate expression, as that wave of gratitude and love rolled up and broke at Gabriel's feet. With face hidden in his hands he stood; and while his heart sung for joy, tears from the deepest fountains of a man's repentant spirit fitly baptized the freedmen, who, clinging to his garments, kissing his feet and pouring blessings on his head, bestowed upon him a far nobler inheritance than that which he had lost.

“Hark!”

The word, and Sandra's uplifted hand, hushed the tumultuous thanksgiving, as if she were in truth the magician they believed her. A far-off murmur of many voices, the tramp of many feet was heard; all knew what it portended, yet none trembled, none fled; for a mightier power than either force or fear had conquered, and the victory was already won.

Through widening rifts in the stormy sky the moon broke clear and calm, gliding, like a visible benediction, from the young man's bent head to the dusky faces lifted toward the promised light; and in that momentary hush, solemn and sweet, across the river a distant clock struck twelve.

(1864)

# ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

## *The Slave's Appeal*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was born into a prominent New York family whose social conservatism she left behind, under the influence of her cousin Gerrit Smith, to embrace progressive causes. Already active in antislavery circles in the 1830s, she traveled to England in 1840 with her new husband, Henry Brewster Stanton, to attend the World's Anti-Slavery Convention. Even as she turned her energies to the nascent women's rights movement, convening in 1848 the Seneca Falls Convention, she never lost her antislavery zeal. In 1860, writing in the imaginary voice of the whole slave population, she addressed this "Appeal" to the "men and women of New York," imploring a supposedly free state to defy the Fugitive Slave Law and make New York a true refuge for escaped slaves.

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### MEN AND WOMEN OF NEW YORK:

From the tobacco fields, the rice swamps, the cotton and sugar plantations and the orange groves on your southern states, we have, for near a century, sent up one long, agonizing cry for help. With eyes and ears and souls expectant, we have stood on tiptoe to catch from northern breezes the first sound of hope. Cold winds from New York's harbor have sometimes roused our sluggish natures, and waked us up to thought. Oft have we watched the coming of each whitening sail on sea and river, with vague hopes of some relief, but by the receding wave to be o'erwhelmed afresh in blank despair. We know, beyond the bounds our eyes can penetrate, there is a land where man is free, and above the clouds a beacon-light to point the way. Feeling that God is just and good and true, in simple faith, long have we waited, with hope and prayer, and conviction strong as death, that his almighty arm, sooner or later, would strike the blow for the millions of immortal souls shrouded in the thick darkness of ignorance and slavery.

Men and women of New York, the God of thunder speaks through you. He

bids you once more proclaim the law, given to his chosen people on Sinai's mount, mid clouds of dazzling brightness. He bids you dig up those mighty tables of stone from beneath the rubbish of ages—from forms and ceremonies, creeds and commentaries, constitutions, canons, codes and statute laws—and hold them up before all Republicans and the sun, that the Ten Living Commandments of the great "I AM" may be daguerreotyped on the hearts of this guilty people. Command your priests at the altar to read the Decalogue with a new and holy unction; to make a higher, broader, deeper application than in their ignorance and falsehood, they have thought or dared to do.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Love justice, speak the truth, do the right ever and always, though like the martyr John Brown—the slave's Christ—you give yourself a living sacrifice. Bow down neither to cotton or gold; to union, constitution or law; to false judges or fawning priests; but in thy brother man behold thy God.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." When those who claim to be the servants of the living God, go up to you from our land of bondage—from the midst of violence, and robbery and wrong—proclaim them the base hypocrites, the whited sepulchres, the canting Pharisees, the blasphemous pretenders they really are; who, with the name of God upon their lips, crucify him afresh each hour; who baptize the sins and iniquities of the people as ordinances of God, and while, with *consecrated* hands, in the name of the "Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," the sign of redemption is set on the infant brow, perchance in that very hour, the child just born into the kingdom of Christ is weighed in the balance and sold by the pound to the highest bidder, and the price thereof paid to the board of missions in the city of New York, to carry the light of the gospel to the nations that sit in darkness!

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." What day, what time, what work is holy, with a nation that has no fear of God before its eyes?

"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and

sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

“Honor thy father and thy mother.” How can the beautiful daughter of a southern master, honor the father who with cold indifference could expose her on the auction block to the coarse gaze of licentious bidders; or the ignoble slave mother, who could consent to curse her with such a life of agony and shame? Or, do you tell us, Sinai’s thunders were never meant for Afric’s ears?

“Thou shalt not kill.” Go to, now, take God’s image, put out its eyes, cut off its ears, knock out its teeth, burn, and brand, and scarify, and catmaul its flesh! hang it on trees, or head downwards in deep pits, choke it in stocks, hunt it with pikes and guns, and bows, and hounds! Make it a target for all your cruel jests, your spite, your spleen! use all your hellish arts to blot out, if you can, the faintest vestige of immortality; then, in white robes, from God’s altar, on each returning Sabbath day, with holy unction, read to the kneeling saints!! “Thou shalt not kill.”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” The trembling girl for whom thou didst pay a price but yesterday in a New Orleans market, is not thy lawful wife. Foul and damning, both to the master and the slave, is this wholesale violation of the immutable laws of God.

“Thou shalt not steal.” Not even a black man, six feet high and well proportioned, found on the banks of the Niger, idly and ignorantly wasting the whole sum of his existence: not even though the slaver be fitted out under the very shadow and sanction of the diocese of Bishop Potter of New York.

We ask the ten thousand priests who minister at your altars, to speak God’s truth—and speak it loud enough for us to hear, that our glad hearts may echo

back each word to heaven. Go tell your sheriffs, marshals, legislators, judges, courts, that in the resurrection of the Decalogue there is a new offense to be recorded in your civil code. At every bar of justice in the Empire State, proclaim the law, "that he who steals a man shall surely die." That in all your broad, rich acres, there is no spot on which a slave can breathe.

Go tell Ontario's waters, they need no longer scorn to wash your shores, for freedom has built her temples there; no longer bear the sad complainings of the exiled African to royal ears to find redress, for you have vouchsafed to us peace and protection in all your valleys, plains and forests, on the hilltops and green banks of all your inland lakes and rivers, and on the outposts of your vast domain; and the four million jubilees that will simultaneously burst forth in thanks to heaven would drown, for once, your great Niagara's roar.

Until New York can do all this, let her not claim that she is free. On the soul of every man, and woman and child, rests the guilt of this Bastille of horrors, so long as they are not pledged with all their power and influence to pull it down.

Your Republican party, claiming to be for freedom, is now triumphant. Its victories come booming down to us on every breeze. Your greatest statesman has said:

"That by no word, no act, no combination into which I might enter, should any one human being, of all the generations to which I belong, much less any class of human beings of any nation, race or kindred, be oppressed and kept down in the least degree in their efforts to rise to a higher state of liberty and happiness. Amid all the glosses of the times, amid all the essays and discussions to which the constitution of the United States has been subjected, this has been the simple, plain, broad light in which I have read every article and every section of that great instrument. Whenever it requires of me that this hand shall keep down the humblest of the human race, then I will lay down power, place, position, fame, everything, rather than adopt such a construction of such a rule. If, therefore, in this land there are any who would rise, I say to them, in God's name, Good speed!"

Republicans, follow your leader, and make New York sacred to freedom, that when the panting fugitive shall touch your soil, his chains must fall forever. Give to his exiled countrymen all the rights, privileges and immunities of citizenship, and shut your harbor against the barbarous and Heaven-defying commerce of man in man.

In these demands, we ask no more than you have freely given to the oppressed of other lands. The heroes of Hungary and Poland, of Greece and Italy, have ever had your admiration, your protection and your aid. Is Garibaldi, the hero of this hour, more brave than he who takes the high resolve, alone, to face a nation; to fight his battles by night with reptiles, beasts and hounds, through swamp, and wood, and river; and all day long to flee before the wrath of man, his footprints traced in blood, oftentimes on frozen plains and ice-bound waters; no martial music, fame or glory, or hope of high renown, to buoy up his soul; friendless, homeless, naked, starving, beset with foes on every side? Who can count all our brave countrymen, who, for the love of freedom, have, one by one, trod all those weary miles from the everglades of Florida, guided, perchance, by the spirits of the Revolution through Camden, Yorktown, Brandywine, Monmouth, West Point, Bemis' Heights and Ticonderoga, with no higher hope, in escaping from the talons of your Eagle of conquest, than to lie down by the Royal Lion, and die in peace under the free shadow of a Monarch's Throne?

(1860)

# CHARLES SUMNER

from *The Barbarism of Slavery*.

In this speech of June 4, 1860, Sumner marshals some of the most powerful language ever uttered in the U.S. Senate. He summarizes his view of the effect of slavery on the humanity of slave-owners, including his fellow senators: “The meat that is eaten by man enters into and becomes a part of his body . . . and the slavery on which men live, in all its five-fold foulness, must become a part of themselves, discoloring their very souls, blotting their characters, and breaking forth in moral leprosy.”

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Can Barbarism further go? Here is an irresponsible power, rendered more irresponsible still by the seclusion of the plantation, and absolutely fortified by the supplementary law excluding the testimony of slaves. That under its shelter enormities should occur, stranger than fiction, too terrible for imagination, and surpassing any individual experience, is simply according to the course of nature and the course of history. The visitation of the abbeys in England disclosed vice and disorder in startling forms, cloaked by the irresponsible privacy of monastic life. A similar visitation of plantations, would disclose more fearful results, cloaked by the irresponsible privacy of Slavery. Every Slave-master on his plantation is a Bashaw, with all the prerogatives of a Turk. According to Hobbes, he is a “petty king.” This is true; and every plantation is of itself a petty kingdom, with more than the immunities of an abbey. Six thousand skulls of infants are said to have been taken from a single fish-pond near a nunnery, to the dismay of Pope Gregory. Under the law of Slavery, infants the offspring of masters “who dream of Freedom in a slave’s embrace,” are not thrown into a fish-pond, but something worse is done. They are sold. But this is only a single glimpse. Slavery, in its recesses, is another Bastille, whose horrors will never be known until it all is razed to the ground; it is the dismal castle of Giant Despair,

which, when captured by the Pilgrims, excited their wonder, as they saw “the dead bodies that lay here and there in the castle-yard, and how full of dead men’s bones the dungeon was.” The recorded horrors of Slavery seem to be infinite, and each day, by the escape of its victims, they are still further attested, while the door of the vast prison-house is left ajar. But, alas! unless the examples of history and the lessons of political wisdom are alike delusive, its unrecorded horrors must assume a form of yet more fearful dimensions, as we try to contemplate them. Baffling all attempts at description, they sink into that chapter of Sir Thomas Browne, entitled, *Of some Relations whose Truth we fear*; and among kindred things whereof, according to this eloquent philosopher, there remains no register but that of hell.

If this picture of the relations of Slave masters with their slaves could receive any further darkness, it would be by introducing the figures of the congenial agents through which the Barbarism is maintained; *the Slave-overseer*, *the Slave-breeder*, and *the Slave-hunter*, each without a peer except in his brother, and the whole constituting the triumvirate of Slavery, in whom its essential brutality, vulgarity, and grossness, are all embodied. There is the Slave-overseer, with his bloody lash, fitly described in his Life of Patrick Henry by Mr. Wirt, who, born in Virginia, knew the class, as “last and lowest, most abject, degraded, unprincipled,” and his hands wield at will the irresponsible power. There is the Slave-breeder, who assumes a higher character, and even enters legislative halls, where, in unconscious insensibility, he shocks civilization by denying, like Mr. Gholson, of Virginia, any alleged distinction between the “female slave” and “the brood mare,” by openly asserting the necessary respite from work during the gestation of the female slave as the ground of property in her offspring, and by proclaiming that in this “vigintial” crop of human flesh consists much of the wealth of his State, while another Virginian, not yet hardened to this debasing trade, whose annual sacrifice reaches 25,000 human souls, confesses the indignation and shame with which he beholds his State “converted into *one grand menagerie*, where men are reared for the market, like

oxen for the shambles.” And lastly there is the Slave-hunter, with the blood-hounds as his brutal symbol, who pursues slaves, as the hunter pursues game, and does not hesitate in the public prints to advertise his Barbarism thus:

“BLOOD-HOUNDS.—I have TWO of the FINEST DOGS for CATCHING NEGROES in the Southwest. They can take the trail TWELVE HOURS after the NEGRO HAS PASSED, and catch him with ease. I live four miles southwest of Bolivar, on the road leading from Bolivar to Whitesville. I am ready at all times to catch runaway negroes. DAVID TURNER.

“March 2, 1853.”—*West Tennessee Democrat*

The blood-hound was known in early Scottish history; it was once vindictively put upon the trail of Robert Bruce, and in barbarous days, by a cruel license of war, it was directed against the marauders of the Scottish border; but more than a century has passed since the last survivor of the race, kept as a curiosity, was fed on meal in Etrick Forest.\* The blood-hound was employed by Spain, against the natives of this continent, and the eloquence of Chatham never touched a truer chord than when, gathering force from the condemnation of this brutality, he poured his thunder upon the kindred brutality of the scalping-knife, adopted as an instrument of war by a nation professing civilization. Tardily introduced into our Republic, some time after the Missouri Compromise, when Slavery became a political passion and Slave-masters began to throw aside all disguise, the blood-hound has become the representative of our Barbarism in one of its worst forms, when engaged in the pursuit of a fellow-man who is asserting his inborn title to himself; and this brute is, indeed, typical of the whole brutal leash of Slave-hunters, who, whether at home on Slave-soil, under the name of Slave-catchers, and kidnappers, or at a distance, under politer names, insult Human Nature by the enforcement of this Barbarism.

(3.) From this dreary picture of Slave-masters with their slaves and their triumvirate of vulgar instruments, I pass to another more dreary still, and more completely exposing the influence of Slavery; I mean the *relations of Slave-*

*masters with each other, also with Society and Government, or, in other words, the Character of Slave-masters, as displayed in the general relations of life. And here I need your indulgence. Not in triumph or in taunt do I approach this branch of the subject. Yielding only to the irresistible exigency of the discussion and in direct response to the assumptions on this floor, especially by the Senator from Virginia, [Mr. MASON,] I shall proceed. If I touch Slavery to the quick, and enable Slave-masters to see themselves as others see them, I shall do nothing beyond the strictest line of duty in this debate.*

One of the choicest passages of the master Italian poet, Dante, is where a scene of transcendent virtue is described as sculptured in “visible speech” on the long gallery which led to the Heavenly Gate. The poet felt the inspiration of the scene, and placed it on the way side, where it could charm and encourage. This was natural. Nobody can look upon virtue and justice, if it be only in images and pictures, without feeling a kindred sentiment. Nobody can be surrounded by vice and wrong, by violence and brutality, if it be only in images and pictures, without coming under their degrading influence. Nobody can live with the one without advantage; nobody can live with the other without loss. Who could pass his life in the secret chamber where are gathered the impure relics of Pompeii, without becoming indifferent to loathsome things? But if these loathsome things are not merely sculptured and painted, if they exist in living reality—if they enact their hideous capers in life, as in the criminal pretensions of Slavery—while the lash plays and the blood spurts—while women are whipped and children are sold—while marriage is polluted and annulled—while the parental tie is rudely torn—while honest gains are filched or robbed—while the soul itself is shut down in all the darkness of ignorance, and while God himself is defied in the pretension that man can have property in his fellow-man; if all these things are present, not merely in images and pictures, but in reality, their influence on character must be incalculable.

It is according to irresistible law that men are fashioned by what is about

them, whether climate, scenery, life, or institutions. Like produces like, and this ancient proverb is verified always. Look at the miner, delving low down in darkness, and the mountaineer, ranging on airy heights, and you will see a contrast in character, and even in personal form. The difference between a coward and a hero may be traced in the atmosphere which each has breathed; and how much more in the institutions under which each has been reared. If institutions generous and just ripen souls also generous and just, then other institutions must exhibit their influence also. Violence, brutality, injustice, barbarism, must be reproduced in the lives of all who live within their fatal sphere. The meat that is eaten by man enters into and becomes a part of his body; the madder which is eaten by a dog changes his bones to red; and the Slavery on which men live, in all its five-fold foulness, must become a part of themselves, discoloring their very souls, blotting their characters, and breaking forth in moral leprosy. This language is strong; but the evidence is even stronger. Some there may be of happy natures—like honorable Senators—who can thus feed and not be harmed. Mithridates fed on poison, and lived; and it may be that there is a moral Mithridates, who can swallow without bane the poison of Slavery.

Instead of “ennobling” the master, nothing can be clearer than that the slave drags his master down, and this process begins in childhood, and is continued through life. Living much in association with his slave, the master finds nothing to remind him of his own deficiencies, to prompt his ambition or excite his shame. Without these provocations to virtue, and without an elevating example, he naturally shares the Barbarism of the society which he keeps. Thus the very inferiority which the Slave-master attributes to the African race explains the melancholy condition of the communities in which his degradation is declared by law.

(1860)

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[\\*](#) Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel—*Notes, Canto V.*

# WALT WHITMAN

## *Mannahatta*

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) celebrated his country in an exuberant, innovative style that unleashed new energies and possibilities in American literature. In his streaming poem of praise for his beloved New York City, called by its “aboriginal name” “Mannahatta,” Whitman rejoices above all at the absence of slaves and slave-owners among its throngs of freedom-loving citizens.

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I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city, Whereupon lo!  
upsprang the aboriginal name.

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-  
sufficient,

I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,

Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb,

Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships, an island sixteen  
miles long, solid-founded,

Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender, strong, light,  
splendidly uprising toward clear skies,

Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,

The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining islands, the heights,  
the villas,

The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the  
black sea-steamers well-model'd,

The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the houses of business  
of the ship-merchants and money-brokers, the river-streets,

Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week,

The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses, the brown-faced

THE CARTS HAULING GOODS, THE MERRY FACE OF DRIVERS OF HORSES, THE BROWN-FACED  
sailors,  
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds aloft,  
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the river, passing along up  
or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,  
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-faced, looking  
you straight in the eyes,  
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops and shows,  
The parades, processions, bugles playing, flags flying, drums beating;  
A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—hospitality—the  
most courageous and friendly young men,  
The free city! no slaves!no owners of slaves!  
The beautiful city! the city of hurried and sparkling waters! the city of spires and  
masts!  
The city nested in bays! my city!  
The city of such women, I am mad to be with them! I will return after death to  
be with them.  
The city of such young men, I swear I cannot live happy, without I often go talk,  
walk, eat, drink, sleep with them!

(1860)

# JULIA WARD HOWE

## *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*

The daughter of an affluent New York family, an accomplished woman of letters, and a leader in the women's rights movement, Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910) is best remembered for composing the lyrics of this inspirational hymn. Inspired by a favorite marching song of the Union Army, "John Brown's Body," Howe recorded that on November 18, 1861, she awoke during the night and, in her words, "scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper." The lyrics proved popular with Union soldiers and, months before Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, they identified the war's aim as the abolition of slavery.

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Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;  
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;  
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:

His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:  
"As ye deal with my comtemners, so with you my grace shall deal;  
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,

Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:  
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:  
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,

While God is marching on.

*(February 1862)*

# HARRIET ANN JACOBS

## from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Born a slave in Edenton, North Carolina, Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897) endured a life of unrelenting sexual harassment and violence from an early age. Her story is remarkable for two particular stratagems she employed to evade the sexual predations of her master. She took a local white man as her lover, hoping to use him as a protector and counterforce to her owner, and later she hid for seven years in the attic of her grandmother’s house to deceive the master into thinking she had fled north. In 1842 she did escape, arriving in New York City and beginning a career as an antislavery campaigner, all the while worrying about her own recapture and seeking to reunite with her children. Her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, narrated as “Linda Brent,” shocked even knowledgeable readers with the sordidness and depravity of the master’s behavior. The chapter reprinted here, “The Lover,” reveals the enormous emotional cost of living subject to such brutality.

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### VII. THE LOVER

WHY DOES the slave ever love? Why allow the tendrils of the heart to twine around objects which may at any moment be wrenched away by the hand of violence? When separations come by the hand of death, the pious soul can bow in resignation, and say, “Not my will, but thine be done, O Lord!” But when the ruthless hand of man strikes the blow, regardless of the misery he causes, it is hard to be submissive. I did not reason thus when I was a young girl. Youth will be youth. I loved, and I indulged the hope that the dark clouds around me would turn out a bright lining. I forgot that in the land of my birth the shadows are too dense for light to penetrate. A land

“Where laughter is not mirth; nor thought the mind;  
Nor words a language: nor e’en men mankind.

Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,  
And each is tortured in his separate hell.”

There was in the neighborhood a young colored carpenter; a free born man. We had been well acquainted in childhood, and frequently met together afterwards. We became mutually attached, and he proposed to marry me. I loved him with all the ardor of a young girl's first love. But when I reflected that I was a slave, and that the laws gave no sanction to the marriage of such, my heart sank within me. My lover wanted to buy me; but I knew that Dr. Flint was too wilful and arbitrary a man to consent to that arrangement. From him, I was sure of experiencing all sorts of opposition, and I had nothing to hope from my mistress. She would have been delighted to have got rid of me, but not in that way. It would have relieved her mind of a burden if she could have seen me sold to some distant state, but if I was married near home I should be just as much in her husband's power as I had previously been,—for the husband of a slave has no power to protect her. Moreover, my mistress, like many others, seemed to think that slaves had no right to any family ties of their own; that they were created merely to wait upon the family of the mistress. I once heard her abuse a young slave girl, who told her that a colored man wanted to make her his wife. “I will have you peeled and pickled, my lady,” said she, “if I ever hear you mention that subject again. Do you suppose that I will have you tending *my* children with the children of that nigger?” The girl to whom she said this had a mulatto child, of course not acknowledged by its father. The poor black man who loved her would have been proud to acknowledge his helpless offspring.

Many and anxious were the thoughts I revolved in my mind. I was at a loss what to do. Above all things, I was desirous to spare my lover the insults that had cut so deeply into my own soul. I talked with my grandmother about it, and partly told her my fears. I did not dare to tell her the worst. She had long suspected all was not right, and if I confirmed her suspicions I knew a storm would rise that would prove the overthrow of all my hopes.

This love-dream had been my support through many trials; and I could not bear to run the risk of having it suddenly dissipated. There was a lady in the neighborhood, a particular friend of Dr. Flint's, who often visited the house. I had a great respect for her, and she had always manifested a friendly interest in me. Grandmother thought she would have great influence with the doctor. I went to this lady, and told her my story. I told her I was aware that my lover's being a free-born man would prove a great objection; but he wanted to buy me; and if Dr. Flint would consent to that arrangement, I felt sure he would be willing to pay any reasonable price. She knew that Mrs. Flint disliked me; therefore, I ventured to suggest that perhaps my mistress would approve of my being sold, as that would rid her of me. The lady listened with kindly sympathy, and promised to do her utmost to promote my wishes. She had an interview with the doctor, and I believe she pleaded my cause earnestly; but it was all to no purpose.

How I dreaded my master now! Every minute I expected to be summoned to his presence; but the day passed, and I heard nothing from him. The next morning, a message was brought to me: "Master wants you in his study." I found the door ajar, and I stood a moment gazing at the hateful man who claimed a right to rule me, body and soul. I entered, and tried to appear calm. I did not want him to know how my heart was bleeding. He looked fixedly at me, with an expression which seemed to say, "I have half a mind to kill you on the spot." At last he broke the silence, and that was a relief to both of us.

"So you want to be married, do you?" said he, "and to a free nigger."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll soon convince you whether I am your master, or the nigger fellow you honor so highly. If you *must* have a husband, you may take up with one of my slaves."

What a situation I should be in, as the wife of one of *his* slaves, even if my heart had been interested!

I replied, "Don't you suppose, sir, that a slave can have some preference about marrying? Do you suppose that all men are alike to her?"

“Do you love this nigger?” said he, abruptly.

“Yes, sir.”

“How dare you tell me so!” he exclaimed, in great wrath. After a slight pause, he added, “I suppose you thought more of yourself; that you felt above the insults of such puppies.”

I replied, “If he is a puppy I am a puppy, for we are both of the negro race. It is right and honorable for us to love each other. The man you call a puppy never insulted me, sir; and he would not love me if he did not believe me to be a virtuous woman.”

He sprang upon me like a tiger, and gave me a stunning blow. It was the first time he had ever struck me; and fear did not enable me to control my anger. When I had recovered a little from the effects, I exclaimed, “You have struck me for answering you honestly. How I despise you!”

There was silence for some minutes. Perhaps he was deciding what should be my punishment; or, perhaps, he wanted to give me time to reflect on what I had said, and to whom I had said it. Finally, he asked, “Do you know what you have said?”

“Yes, sir; but your treatment drove me to it.”

“Do you know that I have a right to do as I like with you,—that I can kill you, if I please?”

“You have tried to kill me, and I wish you had; but you have no right to do as you like with me.”

“Silence!” he exclaimed, in a thundering voice. “By heavens, girl, you forget yourself too far! Are you mad? If you are, I will soon bring you to your senses. Do you think any other master would bear what I have borne from you this morning? Many masters would have killed you on the spot. How would you like to be sent to jail for your insolence?”

“I know I have been disrespectful, sir,” I replied; “but you drove me to it; I couldn’t help it. As for the jail, there would be more peace for me there than there is here.”

“You deserve to go there,” said he, “and to be under such treatment, that you would forget the meaning of the word *peace*. It would do you good. It would take some of your high notions out of you. But I am not ready to send you there yet, notwithstanding your ingratitude for all my kindness and forbearance. You have been the plague of my life. I have wanted to make you happy, and I have been repaid with the basest ingratitude; but though you have proved yourself incapable of appreciating my kindness, I will be lenient towards you, Linda. I will give you one more chance to redeem your character. If you behave yourself and do as I require, I will forgive you and treat you as I always have done; but if you disobey me, I will punish you as I would the meanest slave on my plantation. Never let me hear that fellow’s name mentioned again. If I ever know of your speaking to him, I will cowhide you both; and if I catch him lurking about my premises, I will shoot him as soon as I would a dog. Do you hear what I say? I’ll teach you a lesson about marriage and free niggers! Now go, and let this be the last time I have occasion to speak to you on this subject.”

Reader, did you ever hate? I hope not. I never did but once; and I trust I never shall again. Somebody has called it “the atmosphere of hell;” and I believe it is so.

For a fortnight the doctor did not speak to me. He thought to mortify me; to make me feel that I had disgraced myself by receiving the honorable addresses of a respectable colored man, in preference to the base proposals of a white man. But though his lips disdained to address me, his eyes were very loquacious. No animal ever watched its prey more narrowly than he watched me. He knew that I could write, though he had failed to make me read his letters; and he was now troubled lest I should exchange letters with another man. After a while he became weary of silence; and I was sorry for it. One morning, as he passed through the hall, to leave the house, he contrived to thrust a note into my hand. I thought I had better read it, and spare myself the vexation of having him read it to me. It expressed regret for the blow he had given me, and reminded me that I myself was wholly to blame for it. He hoped I had become convinced of the

injury I was doing myself by incurring his displeasure. He wrote that he had made up his mind to go to Louisiana; that he should take several slaves with him, and intended I should be one of the number. My mistress would remain where she was; therefore I should have nothing to fear from that quarter. If I merited kindness from him, he assured me that it would be lavishly bestowed. He begged me to think over the matter, and answer the following day.

The next morning I was called to carry a pair of scissors to his room. I laid them on the table, with the letter beside them. He thought it was my answer, and did not call me back. I went as usual to attend my young mistress to and from school. He met me in the street, and ordered me to stop at his office on my way back. When I entered, he showed me his letter, and asked my why I had not answered it. I replied, "I am your daughter's property, and it is in your power to send me, or take me, wherever you please." He said he was very glad to find me so willing to go, and that we should start early in the autumn. He had a large practice in the town, and I rather thought he had made up the story merely to frighten me. However that might be, I was determined that I would never go to Louisiana with him.

Summer passed away, and early in the autumn Dr. Flint's eldest son was sent to Louisiana to examine the country, with a view to emigrating. That news did not disturb me. I knew very well that I should not be sent with *him*. That I had not been taken to the plantation before this time, was owing to the fact that his son was there. He was jealous of his son; and jealousy of the overseer had kept him from punishing me by sending me into the fields to work. Is it strange that I was not proud of these protectors? As for the overseer, he was a man for whom I had less respect than I had for a bloodhound.

Young Mr. Flint did not bring back a favorable report of Louisiana, and I heard no more of that scheme. Soon after this, my lover met me at the corner of the street, and I stopped to speak to him. Looking up, I saw my master watching us from his window. I hurried home, trembling with fear. I was sent for, immediately, to go to his room. He met me with a blow. "When is mistress to be

married?” said he, in a sneering tone. A shower of oaths and imprecations followed. How thankful I was that my lover was a free man! that my tyrant had no power to flog him for speaking to me in the street!

Again and again I revolved in my mind how all this would end. There was no hope that the doctor would consent to sell me on any terms. He had an iron will, and was determined to keep me, and to conquer me. My lover was an intelligent and religious man. Even if he could have obtained permission to marry me while I was a slave, the marriage would give him no power to protect me from my master. It would have made him miserable to witness the insults I should have been subjected to. And then, if we had children, I knew they must “follow the condition of the mother.” What a terrible blight that would be on the heart of a free, intelligent father! For *his* sake, I felt that I ought not to link his fate with my own unhappy destiny. He was going to Savannah to see about a little property left him by an uncle; and hard as it was to bring my feelings to it, I earnestly entreated him not to come back. I advised him to go to the Free States, where his tongue would not be tied, and where his intelligence would be of more avail to him. He left me, still hoping the day would come when I could be bought. With me the lamp of hope had gone out. The dream of my girlhood was over. I felt lonely and desolate.

Still I was not stripped of all. I still had my good grandmother, and my affectionate brother. When he put his arms round my neck, and looked into my eyes, as if to read there the troubles I dared not tell, I felt that I still had something to love. But even that pleasant emotion was chilled by the reflection that he might be torn from me at any moment, by some sudden freak of my master. If he had known how we loved each other, I think he would have exulted in separating us. We often planned together how we could get to the north. But, as William remarked, such things are easier said than done. My movements were very closely watched, and we had no means of getting any money to defray our expenses. As for grandmother, she was strongly opposed to her children’s undertaking any such project. She had not forgotten poor Benjamin’s sufferings,

and she was afraid that if another child tried to escape, he would have a similar or a worse fate. To me, nothing seemed more dreadful than my present life. I said to myself, "William *must* be free. He shall go to the north, and I will follow him." Many a slave sister has formed the same plans.

(1861)

# MARTIN R. DELANY

from *Blake: or the Huts of America*

Born to a free black mother and an enslaved father in what is now West Virginia, Martin Robison Delany (1812–1885) trained as a physician in Pittsburgh and became an antislavery advocate and pioneering black nationalist. In 1843 he founded the short-lived abolitionist publication *The Mystery* and in the late 1840s he coedited the newspaper *The North Star* with Frederick Douglass, while also beginning his career as an antislavery lecturer. In 1850 he became one of the first three blacks to be admitted to Harvard Medical School; all three men were forced to leave because of student opposition. From 1856 to 1861, he traveled to Chatham, Ontario, Great Britain, and West Africa to promote a project for black emigration to the Niger Valley. Returning to the United States in 1861, Delany recruited black troops for the Union Army and in 1865 was commissioned a major in the 104th U.S. Colored Infantry, becoming the second African American field officer. He retained his commission after the war to work for the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina. The first novel by an African American serialized in the U.S., Delany's *Blake* appeared in *The Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859 and *The Weekly Anglo-African* in 1861–1862. Its hero's insurrectionist campaign across the southern states and Cuba leads to this scene in chapter VIII of part II, when Blake explains his life and mission to Placido, a poet and slave rebel in Cuba based on Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (1809–1844).

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## CHAPTER VIII

THE INTERVIEW—BLAKE.

HAVING PLACED his money in the keeping of his wife, Henry suggested that, having enjoyed a good rest of two days pleasure in her company, a visit in the city to make some acquaintances was indispensable at such a juncture.

His first object was to find the residence of the distinguished poet of Cuba,

Placido; being directed to a large building occupied below, in the upper story of which was the study of the poet. On giving a light tap at the door, a voice in a somewhat suppressed but highly musical tone, said: 'Come in!' On entering, the stare of a person of slender form, lean and sinewy, rather morbid, orange-peel complexion, black hair hanging lively quite to the shoulders, heavy deep brow and full moustache, with great expressive black piercing eyes, with pen in hand sitting with right side to the table looking over the left shoulder toward the door, occupied the study.

'Be seated, sir!' said the yellow gentleman, as Henry politely bowing raised his cap, advancing toward the table.

'I am looking, sir, for the proprietor of the room,' said Henry.

'I am the person,' replied the gentleman.

'The poet, sir, I believe,' continued he.

'I may not answer your expectation, sir!' modestly answered the gentleman.

'Your name, sir?' inquired Henry.

'Placido,' was the reply; at which Henry rose to his feet, respectfully bowing.

'May I inquire your name?' asked the poet.

'Blacus, sir,' replied he.

'A familiar name to me. Many years ago I had a cousin of that name, an active, intelligent youth, the son of a wealthy black tobacco, cigar, and snuff manufacturer, who left school and went to sea, since when his parents still living, who doted in him with high hopes of his future usefulness, have known nothing of him,' explained Placido.

'What was his Christian name, sir?'

'Carolus Henrico.'

'Cousin, don't you know me?' said Henry in a familiar voice, after nearly twenty years absence, 'I am Carolus Henrico Blacus, your cousin and school-mate, who nineteen years ago went to the Mediterranean. I dropped Carolus and Anglicised my name to prevent identity, going by the name of Henry Blake.'

‘Is it delusion or reality!’ replied Placido with emotion.

‘It is reality. I am the lost boy of Cuba,’ said Henry; when they mutually rushed into each others arms.

‘Where in God’s name have you been, cousin Henry—and what have you been doing?’

‘My story, Placido, is easily told—the particulars you may get from one who will be more ready than I to give you details.’

‘Who is that you——’

‘I will tell you presently; but first to my story. When I left father’s house at the age of seventeen, I went to sea on what I believed to be a Spanish man of war. I was put as apprentice, stood before the mast, the ship standing east for the Western coast of Africa, as I thought for the Mediterranean. On arriving on the coast, she put into the Bight of Benin near Wydah; was freighted with slaves—her true character then being but too well known—when she again put to sea, standing as I thought for Cuba, but instead, put into Key West, where she quickly disposed of her cargo to Americans. My expression of dissatisfaction at being deceived, offended the commander, who immediately sold me to a noted trader on the spot—one Col. Franks, of Mississippi, near Natchez. He seized me under loud and solemn protest, collared and choked me, declaring me to be his slave. By recommendations from the commander whose name was Maria Gomez, that I would become a good sailor, I was left with him, to return as apprentice to marine services, making three voyages, returning with as many cargoes, once to Brazil, once more to Key West, and once to Matanzas, Cuba, each of which times I was put in irons on landing, and kept in close confinement during the vessel’s stay lest I ran away. The last cargo was taken to Key West, where Franks was in waiting, when a final settlement of the affairs resulted in my being taken by him to the United States, and there held as a slave, where in a few years I became enamored with a handsome young slave girl, a daughter of his (the mother being a black slave) married, have one living child, and thus entangled, had only to wait and watch an opportunity for years to do what has

just now been affected,' narrated Henry to the astonishment of his intelligent auditor, who, during the time, stood pen in hand, with eyes fixed upon him.

'Just God!' exclaimed Placido; 'how merciful He is! Who could have believed it! And you are also a sailor, Henry.'

'I am, cousin, and have served the hardest apprenticeship at the business, I do assure you; I have gone through all the grades, from common seaman to first mate, and always on the coast had full command, as no white men manage vessels in the African waters, that being entirely given up to the blacks.'

'I really was not aware of that before; you surprise me!' said Placido.

'That is so! every vessel of every nation, whether trader or man of war, so soon as they enter African waters are manned and managed by native blacks, the whites being unable to stand the climate.'

'That, then, opens up to me an entirely new field of thought.'

'And so it does. It did to me, and I've no doubt it does so to every man of thought, black or white.'

'Give me your hand, Henry'—both clasping hands—'now by the instincts of our nature, and mutual sympathy in the common cause of our race, pledge to me on the hazard of our political destiny what you intend to do.'

'Placido, the hazard is too much! were it lost, the price is too great—I could not pay it. But I read across the water, in a Cuba journal at New Orleans, a lyric from your pen, in which the fire of liberty blazed as from the altar of a freeman's heart. I therefore make no hazard when I this to you impart: I have come to Cuba to help to free my race; and that which I desire here to do, I've done in another place.'

'Amen!' exclaimed Placido; 'Heaven certainly designed it, and directed you here at this most auspicious moment, that the oppressed of Cuba also may "declare the glory of God!"'

'Have you thought much in that direction, Placido?'

'I have, though I've done but little, and had just finished the last word of the last stanza of a short poem intended to be read at a social gathering to be held

at the house of a friend one evening this week, which meets for the express purpose of maturing some plan of action.'

'Read it.'

'I will; tell me what you think of it:

Were I a slave I would be free

I would not live to live a slave;

But rise and strike for liberty,

For Freedom, or a martyr's grave!

One look upon the bloody scourge,

Would rouse my soul to brave the fight,

And all that's human in me urge,

To battle for my innate right!

One look upon the tyrant's chains,

Would draw my sabre from its sheath,

And drive the hot blood through my veins,

To rush for liberty or death!

One look upon my tortured wife,

Shrieking beneath the driver's blows,

Would nerve me on to desp'rate strife,

Nor would I spare her dastard foes!

Arm'd with the vindicating brand,

For once the tyrant's heart should feel;

No milk-sop plea should stay my hand,

The slave's great wrong would drive the steel!

Away the unavailing plea!

Of peace, the tyrant's blood to spare;

If you would set the captive free,  
Teach him for freedom bold to dare!

To throw his galling fetters by,  
To wing the cry on every breath,  
Determined manhood's conquering cry,  
For Justice, Liberty, or death!

'If Heaven decreed my advent here—and I believe it did—it was to have my spirits renewed and soul inspired by that stimulating appeal, such as before never reached the ear of a poor, weary, faltering bondman, Placido. I thank God that it has been my lot to hear it, culled fresh from your fertile brain. Were there but a smouldering spark nearly extinguished in the smothered embers of my doubts and fears, it is now kindled into a flame, which can only be quenched by the regenerating waters of unconditional emancipation.'

'Ah, cousin, though you consider us here free—those I mean who are not the slaves of some white man—I do assure you that my soul as much as yours pants for a draft from the fountain of liberty! We are not free, but merely exist by suffrance—a miserable life for intelligent people, to be sure!'

'You, Placido, are the man for the times!'

'Don't flatter, Henry, I'm not.'

'You are, and it's no flattery to say so. The expression of an honest conviction is not flattery. When the spirits of the Christian begin to droop, to hear the word of life, is refreshing to the soul. That is precisely my case at present.'

'Then you have the vital spark in you?'

'Ah, Placido, I often think of the peaceful hours I once enjoyed at the common altar of the professing Christian. I then believed in what was popularly termed religion, as practised in all the slave States of America; I was devoted to my church, and loved to hear on a Sabbath the word of God spoken by him

whom I believed to be a man of God. But how sadly have I been deceived! I still believe in God, and have faith in His promises; but serving Him in the way that I was, I had only “the shadow without the substance,” the religion of my oppressors. I thank God that He timely opened my eyes.’

‘In this, Henry, I believe you are right; I long since saw it, but you are clear on the subject. I had not thought so much as that.’

‘Then as we agree, let us at once drop the religion of our oppressors, and take the Scriptures for our guide and Christ as our example.’

‘What difference will that make to us? I merely ask for information, seeing you have matured the subject.’

‘The difference will be just this, Placido—that we shall not be disciplined in our worship, obedience as slaves to our masters, the slaveholders, by associating in our mind with that religion, submission to the oppressor’s will.’

‘I see, Henry, it is plain; and every day convinces me that we have much yet to learn to fit us for freedom.’

‘I differ with you, Placido; we know enough now, and all that remains to be done, is to make ourselves free, and then put what we know into practice. We know much more than we dare attempt to do. We want space for action—elbow room; and in order to obtain it, we must shove our oppressors out of the way.’

‘Heaven has indeed, I repeat, decreed your advent here to——’

‘Learn of you!’ interrupted Henry.

‘No; but to teach us just what we needed,’ replied Placido.

‘God grant us, then, a successful harmony of sentiment!’ responded Henry.

‘Grant that we may see eye to eye!’ exclaimed Placido.

‘Amen, amen!’ concluded Henry when relinquishing hands they mutually clasped, embracing in each others’ arms.

‘Tell me now, cousin, to whom did you allude when you first came in, as the person from whom I should obtain details of your life?’

‘My wife.’

‘Is she here?’

‘She is,’ replied Henry, relating all the particulars of their separation and reunion.

‘Where have you got her?’

‘At the house of an old family, west of the Plaza; Zoda and Huldah Ghu are their names; the man is a stevedore.’

‘She must not remain there.’

‘Why?’ asked Henry.

‘I deem it an unsafe quarter under the circumstances—that’s all,’ suggested Placido.

‘Then she is committed to your charge. Come with me to see her.’

‘Gladly will I do so; but tell me this before we leave—whither are you bound, cousin?’

‘I go directly to Matanzas, to take out a slaver as sailing master, with the intention of taking her in mid ocean as a prize for ourselves, as we must have a vessel at our command before we make a strike. She is also freighted with powder for Dahomi, with several fine field pieces, none of which, I learned, were to be disposed of, but safely deposited at the slaver’s rendezvous in an island which I know off the African coast, for future use in trade. I am well acquainted with the native Krumen on the coast, many of the heads of whom speak several European tongues, and as sailing-master, I can obtain as many as I wish, who will make a powerful force in carrying out my scheme on the vessel.’

‘I thank God for this interview. Henry, I thank God. Come, let’s go and see your wife,’ said Placido in conclusion, when they left the poet’s study for the hut of Zoda Ghu, back of the Plazas.

(1862)

# HORACE GREELEY

## *The Prayer of Twenty Millions*

In the *New York Tribune* for August 20, 1862, Greeley, who had initially hoped to avoid war, printed this open letter to President Lincoln calling on him to emancipate the slaves as an act of justice and a means to prosecute the war more effectively. In Lincoln's famous response, he deftly hinted that freeing the slaves was indeed one option: "If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that." One month later, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

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To Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States:

Dear Sir:—I do not intrude to tell you—for you must know already—that a great portion of those who triumphed in your election, and of all who desire the unqualified suppression of the Rebellion now desolating our country, are sorely disappointed and deeply pained by the policy you seem to be pursuing with regard to the slaves of Rebels. I write only to set succinctly and unmistakably before you what we require, what we think we have a right to expect, and of what we complain.

I. We require of you, as the first servant of the Republic, charged especially and pre-eminently with this duty, that you EXECUTE THE LAWS. Most emphatically do we demand that such laws as have been recently enacted, which therefore may fairly be presumed to embody the *present* will, and to be dictated by the *present* needs of the *Republic*, and which, after due consideration, have received your personal sanction, shall by you be carried into full effect, and that you publicly and decisively, instruct your subordinates that such laws exist, that they are binding on all functionaries and citizens, and that they are to be obeyed to the letter.

II. We think you are strangely and disastrously remiss in the discharge of your official and imperative duty with regard to the emancipating provisions of the new Confiscation Act. Those provisions were designed to fight Slavery with Liberty. They prescribe that men loyal to the Union, and willing to shed their blood in her behalf, shall no longer be held, with the nation's consent, in bondage to persistent, malignant traitors, who for twenty years have been plotting, and for sixteen months have been fighting to divide and destroy our country. Why these traitors should be treated with tenderness by you, to the prejudice of the dearest rights of loyal men, we cannot conceive.

III. We think you are unduly influenced by the counsels, the representations, the menaces, of certain fossil politicians hailing from the Border Slave States. Knowing well that the heartily, unconditionally loyal portion of the white citizens of those States, do not expect nor desire that slavery shall be upheld to the prejudice of the Union, (for the truth of which we appeal not only to every Republican residing in those States, but to such eminent loyalists as H. Winter Davis, Parson Brownlow, the Union Central Committee of Baltimore, and to the *Nashville Union*;) we ask you to consider that slavery is everywhere the inciting cause, and sustaining base of treason: the most slaveholding sections of Maryland and Delaware being this day, though under the Union flag, in full sympathy with the Rebellion, while the free labor portions of Tennessee, and of Texas, though writhing under the bloody heel of treason, are unconquerably loyal to the Union. So emphatically is this the case, that a most intelligent Union banker of Baltimore recently avowed his confident belief that a majority of the present Legislature of Maryland, though elected as and still professing to be Unionists, are at heart desirous of the triumph of the Jeff. Davis conspiracy; and when asked how they could be won back to loyalty, replied—"Only by the complete Abolition of Slavery." It seems to us the most obvious truth, that whatever strengthens or fortifies slavery in the Border States strengthens also treason, and drives home the wedge intended to divide the Union. Had you from the first refused to recognize in those States, as here, any other than

unconditional loyalty—that which stands for the Union, whatever may become of slavery—those States would have been, and would be, far more helpful and less troublesome to the defenders of the Union, than they have been, or now are.

IV. We think timid counsels in such a crisis calculated to prove perilous, and probably disastrous. It is the duty of a government as wantonly, wickedly assailed by Rebellion as ours has been, to oppose force to force in a defiant, dauntless spirit. It cannot afford to temporize with traitors nor with semi-traitors. It must not bribe them to behave themselves, nor make them fair promises in the hope of disarming their causeless hostility. Representing a brave and high-spirited people, it can afford to forfeit anything else better than its own self-respect, or their admiring confidence. For our Government even to seek, after war has been made on it, to dispel the affected apprehensions of armed traitors that their cherished privileges may be assailed by it, is to invite, insult and encourage hopes of its own downfall. The rush to arms of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, is the true answer at once to the rebel raids of John Morgan, and the traitorous sophistries of Beriah Magoffin.

V. We complain that the Union cause has suffered, and is now suffering immensely, from mistaken deference to Rebel Slavery. Had you, Sir, in your Inaugural Address, unmistakably given notice that, in case the Rebellion already commenced were persisted in, and your efforts to preserve the Union and enforce the laws, should be resisted by armed force *you would recognize no loyal person as rightfully held in slavery by a traitor*, we believe the Rebellion would therein have received a staggering if not fatal blow. At that moment, according to the returns of the most recent elections, the Unionists were a large majority of the voters of the slave States. But they were composed in good part of the aged, the feeble, the wealthy, the timid—the young, the reckless, the aspiring, the adventurous, had already been largely lured by the gamblers and negro-traders, the politicians by trade and the conspirators by instinct, into the toils of treason. Had you then proclaimed that rebellion would strike the shackles from the slaves of every traitor, the wealthy and the cautious would have been

supplied with a powerful inducement to remain loyal. As it was, every coward in the South soon became a traitor from fear; for loyalty was perilous, while treason seemed comparatively safe. Hence, the boasted unanimity of the South—a unanimity based on Rebel terrorism, and the fact that immunity and safety were found on that side, danger and probable death on ours. The Rebels from the first have been eager to confiscate, imprison, scourge and kill; we have fought wolves with the devices of sheep. The result is just what might have been expected. Tens of thousands are fighting in the Rebel ranks to-day whose original bias and natural leanings would have led them into ours.

VI. We complain that the Confiscation Act which you approved is habitually disregarded by your Generals, and that no word of rebuke for them from you has yet reached the public ear. Fremont's Proclamation and Hunter's Order favoring Emancipation were promptly annulled to you; while Halleck's No. 3, forbidding fugitives from slavery to Rebels to come within his lines—an order as unmilitary as inhuman, and which received the hearty approbation of every traitor in America—with scores of like tendency have never provoked even your remonstrance. We complain that the officers of your armies have habitually repelled, rather than invited the approach of slaves who would have gladly taken the risks of escaping from the Rebel masters to our camps, bringing intelligence often of inestimable value to the Union cause. We complain that those who have thus escaped to us, avowing a willingness to do for us whatever might be required, have been brutally and madly repulsed, and often surrendered to be scourged, maimed and tortured by the ruffian traitors, who pretend to own them. We complain that a large proportion of our regular Army Officers, with many of the Volunteers, evince far more solicitude to uphold slavery than to put down the Rebellion. And finally, we complain that you, Mr. President, elected as a Republican, knowing well what an abomination Slavery is, and how emphatically it is the core and essence of this atrocious Rebellion, seem never to interfere with those atrocities, and never give a direction to your military subordinates, which does not appear to have been conceived in the interest of

slavery rather than of freedom.

VII. Let me call your attention to the recent tragedy in New Orleans, whereof the facts are obtained entirely through pro-slavery channels. A considerable body of resolute, able-bodied men, held in slavery by two Rebel sugar-planters in defiance of the Confiscation Act, which you have approved, left plantations thirty miles distant, and made their way to the great mart of the south-west, which they knew to be in the undisputed possession of the Union forces. They made their way safely and quietly through thirty miles of Rebel territory, expecting to find freedom under the protection of our flag. Whether they had or had not heard of the passage of the Confiscation Act, they reasoned logically that we could not kill them for deserting the service of their lifelong oppressors, who had through treason become our implacable enemies. They came to us for liberty and protection, for which they were willing to render their best service; they met with hostility, captivity, and murder. The barking of the base curs of slavery in this quarter deceives no one—not even themselves. They say, indeed, that the negroes had no right to appear in New Orleans armed (with their implements of daily labor in the canefield); but no one doubts that they would gladly have laid these down if assured that they should be free. They were set upon and maimed, captured and killed, because they sought the benefit of that Act of Congress which they may not specifically have heard of, but which was none the less the law of the land—which they had a clear *right* to the benefit of—which it was *somebody's* duty to publish far and wide, in order that so many as possible should be impelled to desist from serving Rebels and the Rebellion, and come over to the side of the Union. They sought their liberty in strict accordance with the law of the land—they were butchered or reenslaved, for so doing, by the help of the Union soldiers enlisted to fight against slaveholding treason. It was *somebody's* fault that they were murdered—if others shall hereafter suffer in like manner, in default of explicit and public direction to your Generals that they are to be recognized and obey the Confiscation Act, the world will lay the blame on you. Whether you will choose to bear it though future

history and at the bar of God, I will not judge. I can only hope.

VIII. On the face of this wide earth, Mr. President, there is not one disinterested, determined, intelligent champion of the Union cause who does not feel that all attempts to put down the Rebellion and at the same time uphold its inciting cause are preposterous and futile—that the Rebellion, if crushed out tomorrow, would be renewed within a year if slavery were left in full vigor—that Army Officers who remain to this day devoted to slavery can at best be but half-way loyal to the Union—and that every hour of deference to slavery is an hour of added and deepened peril to the Union. I appeal to the testimony of your ambassadors in Europe. It is freely at your service, not at mine. Ask them to tell you candidly whether the seeming subserviency of your policy to the slaveholding, slavery-upholding interest, is not the perplexity, the despair of statesmen of all parties, and be admonished by the general answer.

IX. I close as I began with the statement that what an immense majority of the loyal millions of your countrymen require of you is a frank, declared, unqualified, ungrudging execution of the laws of the land, more especially of the Confiscation Act. That Act gives freedom to the slaves of Rebels coming within our lines, or whom those lines may at any time inclose—we ask you to render it due obedience by publicly requiring all your subordinates to recognize and obey it. The Rebels are everywhere using the late anti-negro riots in the North, as they have long used your officers' treatment of negroes in the South, to convince the slaves that they have nothing to hope from a Union success—that we mean in that case to sell them into a bitterer bondage to defray the cost of the war. Let them impress this as a truth on the great mass of their ignorant and credulous bondmen, and the Union will never be restored—never. We cannot conquer ten millions of people united in solid phalanx against us, powerfully aided by Northern sympathizers and European allies. We must have scouts, guides, spies, cooks, teamsters, diggers, and choppers, from the blacks of the South, whether we allow them to fight for us or not, or we shall be baffled and repelled. As one of the millions who would gladly have avoided this struggle at any sacrifice but

that of principle and honor, but who now feel that the triumph of the Union is indispensable not only to the existence of our country, but to the well-being of mankind, I entreat you to render a hearty and unequivocal obedience to the law of the land.

Yours,  
Horace Greeley

*(August 19, 1862)*

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## *The Emancipation Proclamation*

Once unfairly derided for having “the moral grandeur of a bill of lading,” Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation gained its power precisely from its careful legal diction. Lincoln specified down to the county level where he could, as commander-in-chief during wartime, order the freeing of slaves. Had Lincoln overstepped his constitutional authority, the Supreme Court, led by the proslavery Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (author of the *Dred Scott* decision), stood ready to nullify the measure. The proclamation transformed the Civil War into a war against slavery, struck a major blow against the Confederacy, and led to the enlistment of almost two hundred thousand black men in the U.S. military.

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January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:  
A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twentysecond day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, towit:

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

“That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the

States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States.”

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to-wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New-Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the fortyeight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth); and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will

recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

# LUCRETIA MOTT

## *No Greater Joy Than to See These Children Walking in the Anti-Slavery Path*

In this speech to the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia in December 1863, the seventy-year-old Lucretia Mott looks back on the roots of the antislavery movement in the early 1700s and traces its progress. She rejoices that the abolitionists, for all the abuse they long endured for being too radical, have now been vindicated by the nation's commitment to ending slavery.

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WHEN I see these young men and strong coming forward with acknowledgments of their indebtedness to the cause, and rejoicing that they have been among its later advocates; and when I look around upon this platform, and see here a LUCY STONE, an ELIZABETH JONES, and a THEODORE TILTON, all laboring so effectively in the field, I feel that we older ones may indeed retire, and thank God that he who has blessed us all our lives long is now blessing the lads; for there is surely no greater joy than to see these children walking in the anti-slavery path.

I feared yesterday that we were dwelling too much upon the past. We were so deeply interested in the earliest movements of this Anti-Slavery Society, that we did not go back, except by mere incidental mention, to BENJAMIN LAY and RALPH SANGERFORD, who dwelt in caves and dens of the earth, of whom the world was not worthy, to ELIAS HICKS, THOMAS CLARKSON, and all those earlier laborers; we did not go back as far as that. I feared, however, that we were not enough leaving the things that were behind, and pressing forward toward those that were before. Although I did not entirely agree with our friend FOSTER, and was glad that he was answered as he was—for I have so large Hope that I always

take encouraging views of things when I can—yet I felt that there were duties to be performed in our case in regard to freedmen as well as in regard to those still held as slaves in our land. It is of little consequence to us now what we have suffered in the past, what obloquy, reproach and contumely we have endured in our religious societies, and in other relations in society. We might, as women, dwell somewhat upon our own restrictions, as connected with this Anti-Slavery movement. When persons interested in the cause were invited to send delegates to the London Convention of 1840, and some of those delegates were women, it was found out in time for them to send forth a note declaring that women were not included in the term “persons,” but only men; and therefore, when we arrived in London, we were excluded from the platform. Yet, let me say, in justice to the Abolitionists there, that we were treated with all courtesy, and with a good deal of flattery in lieu of our rights. But all those things we may pass by.

Last evening, when we were listening, some of us, to the eloquent and earnest appeals made by HENRY WARD BEECHER, we saw in the assemblage some who, a few years ago, rushed from their seats in the church, because they could not bear to hear WILLIAM FURNESS speak so plainly on the subject of slavery, and who warned friends from abroad that they must not come to our houses because we were Abolitionists. When Madame Pulsky and her friends came, and were asked to go with me on a visit to the Penitentiary, and the carriage was at the door, word came that they were discouraged from coming, because we were Abolitionists! When I see those men coming forward now, and joining in the applause for the thorough anti-slavery sentiments of HENRY WARD BEECHER and others, so far from blaming them, or setting them at nought, I would rather welcome them at this eleventh hour, and I hope they may receive their full penny, if they work diligently to the end. I have felt sometimes almost, with the Apostle, willing to be accursed of my brethren for this cause’s sake; but willing afterwards, when they come forward and mingle with us, to give them the right hand and invite them upon the platform, and glad to hear them, if they

have any thing to say on the right side. When I saw these things last evening, I remembered the remark of RAY POTTER, one of the signers of the Declaration, who, in a speech in Rhode Island, said that Abolitionists had the great Temple of Liberty to rear, and must do all the rough and hard work; but when it was near the top, he said, then would come forth people to lay their little fingers upon it, and say, "We have got it up!" I could not but remember this last evening, and also a few weeks ago, when I rejoiced to see the crowds listening to the words that proceeded out of the mouths of PHILLIPS BROOKS and others upon this very platform. When I heard some of the members of the Freedmen's Association, in this meeting, talking about the objections that were met and answered again and again by the Abolitionists years ago, of the duties connected with the liberation of the slave which we must perform, I felt that, after all, we were but unprofitable servants, and had not done as we ought to have done in regard to doing away with that deep-rooted prejudice which is the concomitant of slavery, and which we know can never be removed while slavery exists. Some of us women can perhaps more fully sympathize with the slave, because the prejudice against him is somewhat akin to that against our sex; and we ought to have been more faithful than we have been, so that when we hear the words applied to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," we might be ready to ask, "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or in prison, and ministered unto thee?" It seems to me, therefore, as has been recommended here to-day, that we should keep on our armor. It may not be necessary to continue our operations in precisely the same way. But it will be necessary to multiply our periodicals, and scatter them, as we have done heretofore, with good effect. When our friends were talking of what was done, and how we were received in the beginning, and when Church and State were, as our friend GARRISON showed so clearly, arrayed against us, I remembered that then, just as in olden times, the common people heard us gladly. In truth, the original good heart of the people—excuse my theology—cannot resist the wisdom and the power with which Truth speaks to their

understanding; and therefore it was that we were gladly received among them. Many have come and made their acknowledgments, that when we were mobbed, when Pennsylvania Hall was burned, they were in the wrong, they were in the mob; but now they say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see, and I am willing now to be faithful to what I see." Let us welcome them, hail them in their coming, and gladly receive them. And with all these coadjutors, the work will go on, emancipation will be proclaimed, and we may be just as confident and earnest as we were before our friend FOSTER reproved us. I think we may rejoice and take courage. I like a little addition to the rejoicing of good old Simeon: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *of* thy salvation;" for the whole salvation has not come, but we have seen *of* the salvation.

(1863)

# EMILY DICKINSON

## *“Color—Caste—Denomination”*

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) made no overt comment against slavery in her poetry. Yet in this poem she seems to be concerned about racism and (taking up a charged word that Stowe also used) “caste.” The intimations of racial equality as the natural condition of humankind, and the wrongness of dividing and labeling human beings by race or color, are inescapable.

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Color—Caste—Denomination—

These—are Time’s Affair—

Death’s diviner Classifying

Does not know they are—

As in sleep—all Hue forgotten—

Tenets—put behind—

Death’s large—Democratic fingers

Rub away the Brand—

If Circassian—He is careless—

If He put away

Chrysalis of Blonde—or Umber—

Equal Butterfly—

They emerge from His Obscuring—

What Death—knows so well—

Our minuter intuitions—

Deem unplausible

(1864)

# JOHN T. TROWBRIDGE

## from *Cudjo's Cave*

After finding success with his popular novel *Neighbor Jackwood* in 1856, Trowbridge wrote this, his second antislavery novel, during the Civil War. As he narrates the heroic adventures of rebellious slaves and sympathetic whites, he brings the action down to the present, explicitly dating the final chapter as “Nov., 1863.” Conversion rather than condemnation seems to be Trowbridge’s aspiration, as the novel depicts fugitives reclaiming their natural rights and humane southerners beginning to acknowledge the legitimacy of slave resistance.

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The fugitives, in passing a field of corn, had thrust into their pockets a plentiful supply of green ears, which they now husked and roasted. There was a spring in the rocks near by, from which they drank lying on their faces, and dipping in their beards. This was their breakfast; during which Penn’s mission to the blacks was fully discussed, and finally decided upon.

The meal concluded, the refugees resumed their march, and entered an immense thick wood farther up the mountain. In a cool and shadowy spot they halted once more; and here Penn took leave of them, setting out on his visit to the cave.

He had a mile to travel over a rough, wild region, where the fires that had formerly devastated it had left the only visible marks of a near civilization. In a tranquil little dell that had grown up to wild grass, he came suddenly upon a horse feeding. It was Stackridge’s useful nag, which looked up from his lofty grove-shaded pasture with a low whinny of recognition as Penn patted his neck and passed along.

A furlong or two farther on the well-known ravine opened,—dark, silent, profound, with its shaggy sides, one in shadow and the other in the sun, and its

little embowered brook trickling far down there amid mossy stones;—as lonesome, wild, and solitary as if no human eye had ever beheld it before.

Penn glided over the ledges, and descended along the narrow shelf of rock, behind the thickets that screened the entrance to the cave. Sunlight, and mountain wind, and summer heat he left behind, and entered the cool, still, gloomy abode.

Cudjo ran to the mouth of the cave to meet him. “Lef me frow dis yer blanket ober your shoulders, while ye cool off; cotch yer de’f cold, if ye don’t. De ol’ man’s a ’speekin’ ye.”

Penn was relieved to learn that Mr. Villars had arrived in safety, and gratified to find him lying comfortably on the bed conversing with Pomp.

“By the blessing of God, I am very well indeed, my dear Penn. These excellent fellow-Christians have taken the best care of me. The atmosphere of the cave, which I thought at first chilly, I now find deliciously pure and refreshing. And its gloom, you know, don’t trouble me,” added the blind old man with a smile. “Have you had any more trouble since Pomp left you?”

“No,” said Penn; “thanks to him. Pomp, our friends want to see you and thank you, and they have sent me to bring you to them.”

The negro merely shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

“What good der tanks do to we?” cried Cudjo. “Ain’t one ob dem ar men but what would been glad to hab us cotched and licked for runnin’ away, fur de ’xample to de tudder niggers.”

“If that was true of them once, it is not now,” said Penn. “Yet, Pomp, if you feel that there is the least danger in going to them, do not go.”

“Danger?” The negro’s proud and lofty look showed what he thought of that. “Cudjo, make Mr. Hapgood a cup of coffee; he looks tired. You have had a hard time, I reckon, since you left us.”

“Him stay wid us now till he chirk up again,” said Cudjo, running to his coffee-box. “Him and de ol’ gemman stay—nobody else.”

While the coffee was making, Penn, sitting on one of the stone blocks

which he had named giant's stools, repeated such parts of the late breakfast talk of Stackridge and his friends as he thought would interest Pomp and win his confidence. Then he drank the strong, black beverage in silence, leaving the negro to his own reflections.

"Are you going again?" said Pomp.

"Yes; I promised them I would return."

"Take some coffee and a kettle to boil it in; they will be glad of it, I should think."

"O Pomp! you know how to do good even to your enemies! What shall I say to them for you?"

"What I have to say to them I will say myself," said Pomp, taking his rifle in one hand, and the kettle in the other, to Cudjo's great wrath and disgust.

He set out with Penn immediately. They found the patriots reposing themselves about the roots of the forest trees, on the banks of a stream that came gurgling and plashing down the mountain side. Above them spread the beautiful green tops of maples, tinted with sunshine and softly rustling in the breeze. The curving banks formed here a little natural amphitheatre, carpeted with moss and old leaves, on which they sat or reclined, with their hats off and their guns at their sides.

A sentry posted on the edge of the forest brought in Penn and his companion. There was a stir of interest among the patriots, and some of them rose to their feet. Stackridge, Grudd, and two or three others cordially offered the negro their hands, and pledged him their gratitude and friendship. Pomp accepted these tokens of esteem in silence,—his countenance maintaining a somewhat haughty expression, his lips firm, his eyes kindling with a strange light.

Penn took the kettle, and proceeded, with Carl's help, to make a fire and prepare coffee for the company, intently listening the while to all that was said.

Jutting from one bank of the stream, which washed its base, was a huge, square block covered with dark-green moss. Upon this Pomp stepped, and rested

his rifle upon it, and bared his massive and splendid head, and stood facing his auditors with a placid smile, under the canopy of leaves. There was not among them all so noble a figure of a man as he who stood upon the rock; and he seemed to have chosen this somewhat theatrical attitude in order to illustrate, by his own imposing personal presence, the words that rose to his lips.

“You will excuse me, gentlemen, if I cannot forget that I am talking with those who buy and sell men like me!”

Men like him! The suggestion seemed for a moment to strike the slave-owning patriots dumb with surprise and embarrassment.

“No, no, Pomp,” cried Stackridge, “not men like you—there are few like you anywhere.”

“I wish there was more like him, and that I owned a good gang of ’em!” muttered the man Deslow.

“I don’t,” replied Withers, with a drawl which had a deep meaning in it; “twould be too much like sleeping on a row of powder barrels, with lighted candles stuck in the bung holes. Dangerous, them big knowin’ niggers be.”

Pomp did not answer for a minute, but stood as if gathering power into himself, with one long, deep breath inflating his chest, and casting a glance upward through the sun-lit summer foliage.

“You buy and sell men, and women, and children of my race. If I am not like them, it is because circumstances have lifted me out of the wretched condition in which it is your constant policy and endeavor to keep us. By your laws—the laws you make and uphold—I am this day claimed as a slave; by your laws I am hunted as a slave;—yes, some of you here have joined your neighbor in the hunt for me, as if I was no more than a wild beast to be hounded and shot down if I could not be caught. Now tell me what union or concord there can be between you and me!”

“I own,” said Deslow,—for Pomp’s gleaming eyes had darted significant lightnings at him,—“I did once come up here with Bythewood to see if we could find you. Not that I had anything against you, Pomp,—not a thing; and as for

your quarrel with your master, I ain't sure but you had the right on't; but you know as well as we do that we can't countenance a nigger's running away, under any circumstances."

"No!" said Pomp, with sparkling sarcasm. "Your secessionist neighbors revolt against the mildest government in the world, and resort to bloodshed on account of some fancied wrongs. You revolt against them because you prefer the old government to theirs. Your forefathers went to war with the mother country on account of a few taxes. But a negro must not revolt, he must not even attempt to run away, although he feels the relentless heel of oppression grinding into the dust all his rights, all that is dear to him, all that he loves! A white man may take up arms to defend a bit of property; but a black man has no right to rise up and defend either his wife, or his child, or his liberty, or even his own life, against his master!"

Only the narrow-minded Deslow had the confidence to meet this stunning argument, enforced as it was by the speaker's powerful manner, superb physical manhood, and superior intelligence.

"You know, Pomp, that your condition, to begin with, is very different from that of any white man. Your relation to your master is not that of a man to his neighbor, or of a citizen to the government; it is that of property to its owner."

"Property!" There was something almost wicked in the wild, bright glance with which the negro repeated this word. "How came we property, sir?"

"Our laws make you so, and you have been acquired as property," said Deslow, not unkindly, but in his bigoted, obstinate way. "So, really, Pomp, you can't blame us for the view we take of it, though it does conflict a little with your choice in the matter."

"But suppose I can show you that you are wrong, and that even by your own laws we are not, and cannot be, property?" said Pomp, with a princely courtesy, looking down from the rock upon Deslow, so evidently in every way his inferior. "I will admit your title to a lot of land you may purchase, or reclaim from nature; or to an animal you have captured, or bought, or raised. But a man's

natural, original owner is—himself. Now, I never sold myself. My father never sold himself. My father was stolen by pirates on the coast of Africa, and brought to this country, and sold. The man who bought him bought what had been stolen. By your own laws you cannot hold stolen property. Though it is bought and sold a thousand times, let the original owner appear, and it is his,—nobody else has the shadow of a claim. My father was stolen property, if he was property at all. He was his own rightful owner. Though he had been robbed of himself, that made no difference with the justice of the case. It was so with my mother. It is so with me. It is the same with every black man on this continent. Not one ever sold himself, or can be sold, or can be owned. For to say that what a man steals or takes by force is his, to dispose of as he chooses, is to go back to barbarism: it is not the law of any Christian land. So much,” added Pomp, blowing the words from him, as if all the false arguments in favor of slavery were no more to the man’s soul, and its eternal, God-given rights, than the breath he blew contemptuously forth into those mountain woods,—“so much for the claim of PROPERTY!”

Penn was so delighted with this triumphant declaration of principles that he could have flung his hat into the maple boughs and shouted “Bravo!” He deemed it discreet, however, to confine the expression of his enthusiasm to a tight grasp on Carl’s sympathetic hand, and to watch the effect of the speech on the rest.

“Deslow,” laughed Stackridge, himself not ill pleased with Pomp’s arguments, “what do you say to that?”

“Wal,” said Deslow, I never thought on’t in just that light before; and I own he makes out a pooty good show of a case. But yet—” He hesitated, scratching for an idea among the stiff black hair that grew on his low, wrinkled forehead.

“But yet, but yet, but yet!” said Pomp, ironically. “It’s so hard, when our selfish interests are at stake, to confess our injustice or give up a bad cause! But I did not come here to argue my right to my own manhood. I take it without arguing. Neither did I come to ask anything for myself. You can do nothing for

me but get me into trouble. Yet I believe in the cause in which you have taken up arms. I have served you this morning without being asked by you to do it; and I may assist you again when the time comes. In the mean while, if you want anything that I have, it is yours; for I recognize that we are brothers, though you do not. But I will not join you, for I am neither slave nor inferior, and I have no wish to be acknowledged an equal.” And Pomp stepped off the rock with an air that seemed to say, “*I* know who is the equal of the best of you; and that is enough.” If this man had any fault more prominent than another, it was pride; yet that haughty self-assertion which would have been offensive in a white man, was vastly becoming to the haughty and powerful black.

“I, for one,” said the impulsive Stackridge, again grasping his hand, “honor the position you take. What I wanted was to thank you for what you have done, and to promise that you are safe from danger as far as regards us. I’m glad you’ve got your liberty. I hope you will keep it. You deserve it. Every slave deserves the same that has the manliness to strike a blow for the good old government——”

“That has kept him a slave,” added Pomp, with a bitter smile.

(1864)

# JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

## *Laus Deo*

The indefatigable abolitionist poet was sitting in a Quaker meeting in Amesbury, Massachusetts, when he heard bells ringing to signal the news that the Thirteenth Amendment had been adopted by Congress on January 31, 1865. Whittier immediately began composing a poem in his head, which he recited when he reached home. "It wrote itself, or rather sang itself, while the bells rang," he wrote a friend. It was published as "Laus Deo" ("Praise God") in *The Independent* in New York on February 9, 1865, and was set to music in 1868 by the American composer Francis Boott.

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*On hearing the bells ring for the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery in the United States.*

It is done!

Clang of bell and roar of gun  
Send the tidings up and down.  
How the belfries rock and reel,  
How the great guns, peal on peal,  
Fling the joy from town to town!

Ring, O bells!

Every stroke exulting tells  
Of the burial hour of crime.  
Loud and long, that all may hear,  
Ring for every listening ear  
Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel:

God's own voice is in that peal,

And this spot is holy ground.

Lord, forgive us! What are we,  
That our eyes this glory see,  
That our ears have heard the sound!

For the Lord  
On the whirlwind is abroad;  
In the earthquake he has spoken;  
He has smitten with his thunder  
The iron walls asunder,  
And the gates of brass are broken!

Loud and long  
Lift the old exulting song,  
Sing with Miriam by the sea:  
He has cast the mighty down;  
Horse and rider sink and drown;  
He hath triumphed gloriously!

Did we dare,  
In our agony of prayer,  
Ask for more than he has done?  
When was ever his right hand  
Over any time or land  
Stretched as now beneath the sun!

How they pale,  
Ancient myth, and song, and tale,  
In this wonder of our days,  
When the cruel rod of war  
Blossoms white with righteous law,  
And the wrath of man is praise

And the width of man is praise.

Blotted out!

All within and all about  
Shall a fresher life begin;  
Freer breathe the universe  
As it rolls its heavy curse  
On the dead and buried sin.

It is done!

In the circuit of the sun  
Shall the sound thereof go forth.  
It shall bid the sad rejoice,  
It shall give the dumb a voice,  
It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing

Bells of joy! on morning's wing  
Send the song of praise abroad;  
With a sound of broken chains,  
Tell the nations that He reigns,  
Who alone is Lord and God!

(1865)

# HENRY HIGHLAND GARNET

## from *A Memorial Discourse*

In the years since Garnet's controversial 1843 address to the National Convention of Negro Citizens in Buffalo, the distinguished abolitionist and clergyman had been active in the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, served as a missionary in Jamaica, toured Britain as a lecturer, founded the African Civilization Society to promote African American settlement of the Niger Valley, become pastor of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., and during the Civil War helped recruit black soldiers for the Union Army. On February 12, 1865, Garnet became the first African American to deliver a sermon to the House of Representatives. Later he served as president of Avery College in Pittsburgh and pastor of Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York, before being appointed in 1881 U.S. ambassador to Liberia, where he died in 1882.

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We ask no special favors, but we plead for justice. While we scorn unmanly dependence; in the name of God, the universal Father, we demand the right to live, and labor, and to enjoy the fruits of our toil. The good work which God has assigned for the ages to come, will be finished, when our national literature shall be so purified as to reflect a faithful and a just light upon the character and social habits of our race, and the brush, and pencil, and chisel, and Lyre of Art, shall refuse to lend their aid to scoff at the afflictions of the poor, or to caricature, or ridicule a long-suffering people. When caste and prejudice in Christian churches shall be utterly destroyed, and shall be regarded as totally unworthy of Christians, and at variance with the principles of the gospel. When the blessings of the Christian religion, and of sound, religious education, shall be freely offered to all, then, and not till then, shall the effectual labors of God's people and God's instruments cease.

If slavery has been destroyed merely from *necessity*, let every class be

enfranchised at the dictation of *justice*. Then we shall have a Constitution that shall be revered by all: rulers who shall be honored, and revered, and a Union that shall be sincerely loved by a brave and patriotic people, and which can never be severed.

Great sacrifices have been made by the people; yet, greater still are demanded ere atonement can be made for our national sins. Eternal justice holds heavy mortgages against us, and will require the payment of the last farthing. We have involved ourselves in the sin of unrighteous gain, stimulated by luxury, and pride, and the love of power and oppression; and prosperity and peace can be purchased only by blood, and with tears of repentance. We have paid some of the fearful installments, but there are other heavy obligations to be met.

The great day of the nation's judgment has come, and who shall be able to stand? Even we, whose ancestors have suffered the afflictions which are inseparable from a condition of slavery, for the period of two centuries and a half, now pity our land and weep with those who weep.

Upon the total and complete destruction of this accursed sin depends the safety and perpetuity of our Republic and its excellent institutions.

Let slavery die. It has had a long and fair trial. God himself has pleaded against it. The enlightened nations of the earth have condemned it. Its death warrant is signed by God and man. Do not commute its sentence. Give it no respite, but let it be ignominiously executed.

Honorable Senators and Representatives! illustrious rulers of this great nation! I cannot refrain this day from invoking upon you, in God's name, the blessings of millions who were ready to perish, but to whom a new and better life has been opened by your humanity, justice, and patriotism. You have said, "Let the Constitution of the country be so amended that slavery and involuntary servitude shall no longer exist in the United States, except in punishment for crime." Surely, an act so sublime could not escape Divine notice; and doubtless the deed has been recorded in the archives of heaven. Volumes may be appropriated to your praise and renown in the history of the world. Genius and

art may perpetuate the glorious act on canvass and in marble, but certain and more lasting monuments in commemoration of your decision are already erected in the hearts and memories of a grateful people.

The nation has begun its exodus from worse than Egyptian bondage; and I beseech you that you say to the people, "*that they go forward.*" With the assurance of God's favor in all things done in obedience to his righteous will, and guided by day and by night by the pillars of cloud and fire, let us not pause until we have reached the other and safe side of the stormy and crimson sea. Let freemen and patriots mete out complete and equal justice to all men, and thus prove to mankind the superiority of our Democratic, Republican Government.

Favored men, and honored of God as his instruments, speedily finish the work which he has given you to do. *Emancipate, Enfranchise, Educate, and give the blessings of the gospel to every American citizen.*

(1865)

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## *Second Inaugural Address*

In what many regard as his finest speech, delivered March 4, 1865, Lincoln used his rhetorical gifts to console the nation and help its people interpret the horrendous suffering brought by the Civil War. Framing his address in biblical terms, he points to American slavery as an offense against God for which both North and South must pay, even if by the war's end, "every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword."

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**F**ELLOW COUNTRYMEN:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeing to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would *accept* war

rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

*(March 4, 1865)*

# WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

## *The Death of Lincoln*

According to the editor of the 1883 edition of Bryant's works, this poem was "written by request, when the funeral procession of the martyred President passed through the streets of New York" in April 1865. Bryant's is thus among the very first elegies for Lincoln, and already proclaims the emancipation of the slaves as his greatest achievement.

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Oh, slow to smite and swift to spare,  
Gentle and merciful and just!  
Who, in the fear of God, didst bear  
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,  
Amid the awe that hushes all,  
And speak the anguish of a land  
That shook with horror at thy fall.

Thy task is done; the bond are free:  
We bear thee to an honored grave,  
Whose proudest monument shall be  
The broken fetters of the slave.

Pure was thy life; its bloody close  
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,  
Among the noble host of those  
Who perished in the cause of Right.

*(April 1865)*

# CHARLES SUMNER

## from *Eulogy on Abraham Lincoln*

On June 1, 1865, Sumner delivered this two-hour eulogy on Abraham Lincoln. Alluding to the end of the war and the assassination of Lincoln falling within days of each other, Sumner proclaims at the outset, “Perhaps never in history has . . . Providence been more conspicuous than in that recent procession of events, where the final triumph was wrapt in the gloom of tragedy.” The passage excerpted here captures the emotional crescendo of Sumner’s address and reminds the audience of the unfinished mission, now that slavery is ended, to pursue racial equality.

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Traitorous assassination struck him down. But do not be too vindictive in heart towards the poor atom that held the weapon. Reserve your rage for the responsible Power, which not content with assailing the life of the Republic by atrocious Rebellion, has outraged all laws human and divine; has organized Barbarism as a principle of conduct; has taken the lives of faithful Unionists at home; has prepared robbery and murder on the northern borders; has fired hotels, filled with women and children; has plotted to scatter pestilence and poison; has perpetrated piracy and ship-burning at sea; has starved American citizens, held as prisoners; has inflicted the slow torture of Andersonville and Libby; has menaced assassination always; and now at last, true to itself, has assassinated our President; and this responsible Power is none other than Slavery. It is Slavery that has taken the life of our beloved Chief Magistrate, and here is another triumph of its Barbarism. On Slavery let vengeance fall. Spare if you please the worms it employs; but do not—I entreat you—yield any amnesty to this murderous wickedness. Ravailac, who took the life of Henry IV. of France, was torn in pieces on the public square in front of the City Hall, by four powerful horses, each of them attached to one of his limbs, and tearing in

opposite directions, until at last, after a fearful struggle, nothing of the wretched assassin remained in the hands of the executioner, except his bloody shirt,—which was at once handed over to be burned. Such be our vengeance; and let Slavery be the victim.

And not only Slavery, which is another name for property in man, but so also that other pretension, which is not less irrational and hateful, that Human Rights can depend on color. This is the bloody shirt of the assassin; and it must be handed over to be burned.

Such a vengeance will be like a kiss of reconciliation; for it will remove every obstacle to peace and harmony. The people where Slavery once ruled will bless the blow which destroyed it. The people where the kindred tyranny of Caste once ruled, will rejoice that this too fell under the same blow. They will yet confess that it was dealt in no harshness to them, in no unkindness, in no desire to humiliate, but simply and solemnly, in the name of the Republic, and of Human Nature; for their good as well as ours; ay, for their good more than ours.

It is by ideas that we have conquered, more than by armies. The sword of the Archangel was less mighty than the mission which he bore from the Lord. But if the ideas which have given us the victory are now neglected; if the promises of the Declaration, which the Rebellion openly assailed, are still left unfulfilled, then will our blood and treasure have been lavished in vain. Alas! for the dead who have given themselves so bravely to their country; alas! for the living who have been left to mourn the dead;—if any relic of Slavery is allowed to continue; especially if this bloody impostor, defeated in the pretension of property in man, is allowed to perpetuate an *Oligarchy of the skin!*

And how shall these ideas be saved? In other words, how shall the war waged by Abraham Lincoln be brought to an end, so as to secure peace, tranquillity and reconciliation? At this moment all turns on the colored suffrage in the rebel States. *This is now the pivot of national safety.* A mistake on this point is worse than the loss of a battle. And yet here again we encounter the

Rebellion in all its odious pretensions, hardly less audacious than when it took up arms. As its camp-fires expire, the men who have trimmed them—taking fresh oaths of allegiance on their lips—renew their early activity in plotting how still to preserve an oligarchical power. The demon of Caste takes the place of the demon of Slavery. In setting ourselves against this fearful demon, we only follow the solemn behests of the great Declaration, of which our martyred President was the champion.

*(1865)*

# LYMAN TRUMBULL ET AL.

## *The Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution*

Proposals to end slavery by amending the Constitution were introduced in the House of Representatives by Republican congressmen James M. Ashley of Ohio and James F. Wilson of Iowa on December 14, 1863, and in the Senate by Missouri Unionist John B. Henderson on January 11, 1864. Illinois Republican Lyman Trumbull (1813–1896), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, drew on these proposals to give the Thirteenth Amendment its final form and reported it to the Senate on February 10. The Senate approved the amendment on April 8, by a vote of 38–6, but on June 15, in a 93–65 vote, it failed to win the necessary two-thirds majority in the House. Following his reelection in November 1864, President Lincoln called for its immediate passage and lobbied border state representatives. On January 31, 1865, the House approved the amendment by a vote of 119–56; Congressman George W. Julian wrote that when the measure passed, some representatives “embraced one another, others wept like children.” Although it was in no way required, Lincoln displayed his commitment to the amendment by signing the resolution submitting it to the states. He did not live to see its ratification completed, which occurred on December 6, 1865, when Georgia became the twenty-seventh state to ratify. Six more states voted for the Thirteenth Amendment before 1870, though three states rejected it and did not ratify it until the twentieth century.

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### Article XIII.

SECTION 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

SECTION 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

*(Ratification declared December 18, 1865)*

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## *Chronology*

### **1430s–90s**

Portuguese mariners explore West Africa and import slaves into Iberia and the Canary Islands. Spanish merchants begin to trade in African slaves in the 1470s.

### **1492**

Columbus's first voyage to America opens the way for transatlantic slave trade; Columbus brings Indian slaves back to Spain and in 1498 recommends transporting African slaves already present in Seville, Valencia, and other cities to America. Spanish and Portuguese traders begin carrying black slaves to the New World in the early 1500s. (European slave traders brought to the Western Hemisphere an estimated 10–11 million Africans, of whom more than 90 percent were carried to Caribbean, Central American, and South American ports. Approximately 6 percent of the total, some 600,000, were carried into British North American colonies and the United States. More than one million Africans died during the Atlantic passage.)

### **1562**

Sir John Hawkins makes first of three voyages carrying slaves from Africa to Hispaniola. Queen Elizabeth I disapproves, but nonetheless provides ships for Hawkins's second and third voyages. Thereafter English involvement ceases until 1603.

### **1619**

Dutch slave traders sell twenty Africans into servitude at the English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia.

### **1641**

Massachusetts Bay becomes first English colony in North America to give statutory recognition to slavery, followed by Connecticut, 1650; Virginia, 1661; Maryland, 1663; New York and New Jersey, 1664; South Carolina, 1682; Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, 1700; North Carolina, 1715; and Georgia, 1750.

### **1655–58**

England seizes Jamaica from Spain, dramatically expanding its slavery-based economic interests in the Americas.

### **1662**

Virginia adopts law making children born to enslaved mothers slaves from birth. (Other colonies adopt similar laws in the decades to come as part of legal codes defining the status of slaves.)

### **1663**

The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa (renamed Royal African Company in 1672) is chartered by Charles II of England. Granted a monopoly in Africa, the company is primarily interested in trade in gold and slaves. Slaves are acquired in exchange for manufactured goods from England and then sold to plantation owners in the West Indies and the American colonies in return for sugar, tobacco, and other staples for the English market, constituting what becomes known as the “Atlantic Triangular Trade.”

### **1688**

First formal protest against slavery in English America is circulated in Quaker meetings in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

### **1693**

George Keith’s *Exhortation & Caution to Friends* is presented at the August 13, 1693, meeting of the Philadelphia Quakers and then published the same year by William Bradford in New York, making it the earliest antislavery publication in

America.

**1698**

Parliament ends the Royal African Company's monopoly; new competitors enter the slave trade and the number of slaves transported on English ships considerably increases.

**1700**

*The Selling of Joseph* published by Massachusetts judge Samuel Sewall.

**1712**

Eight whites and twenty-five blacks are killed in slave uprising in New York City.

**1713**

The Treaty of Utrecht grants Great Britain the Asiento, an exclusive thirty-year contract to supply slaves to the Spanish colonies; exploitation of these rights by the British South Sea Company causes a rapid escalation of the British slave trade.

**1739**

At least thirty whites and forty-four blacks are killed during the Stono slave rebellion in South Carolina.

**1741**

Rumors circulate in New York City of an alleged conspiracy between slaves and poor whites to destroy the city with a series of fires. After a fire in the governor's house, two slaves confess and name dozens of co-conspirators, setting off mass arrests and the execution of thirty blacks and four whites.

**1750**

Estimated population of thirteen British colonies in North America is 236,000

blacks, almost all of them slaves, and 934,000 whites.

### **1758**

Philadelphia Quakers pass measure condemning the ownership of slaves by their members.

### **1770**

After twenty years of providing free classes for black students in his home, Anthony Benezet persuades the Society of Friends to open an “Africans’ School” in Philadelphia.

### **1772**

In *Somerset’s Case*, Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, rules that no positive law in England permits a slave-owner to forcibly send a slave overseas. Interpretation of his decision by other judges will make slavery legally unenforceable in Britain, eventually resulting in de facto emancipation. Publication in Britain of the *Narrative* of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, the first English-language slave narrative.

### **1773**

Phillis Wheatley travels to England, where she publishes her landmark *Poems on Various Subjects*.

### **1775**

As American Revolutionary War commences, Virginia royal governor Lord Dunmore issues a proclamation offering freedom to slaves of American rebels who run away from their masters and fight for the British, a tactic British commanders will repeat throughout the war. Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery is founded.

### **1776**

Declaration of Independence adopted after Continental Congress deletes

language in Thomas Jefferson's draft condemning the slave trade.

### **1777**

Vermont adopts constitution prohibiting slavery, the first of the newly independent United States of America to do so.

### **1780**

Pennsylvania adopts law mandating the gradual abolition of slavery.

### **1781–83**

Several Massachusetts court decisions find slavery incompatible with the state constitution, which declared in 1780 that all men "are born free and equal." (No slaves are reported in Massachusetts in 1790 census.)

### **1783**

As Revolutionary War formally ends, at least 3,000 former slaves leave New York City with evacuating British forces, many bound for resettlement in Nova Scotia. Over the eight-year course of the war, some 15,000 slaves were transported from the United States as the property of Loyalist émigrés.

### **1784**

Connecticut and Rhode Island adopt laws for gradual emancipation of slaves.

### **1787**

British Abolition Society forms in London, under leadership of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and others. Continental Congress passes the Northwest Ordinance, banning slavery in the territory north of the Ohio River. U.S. Constitution is framed; it counts slaves as three-fifths of free persons in apportioning representation and taxes, provides for the return of fugitive slaves, and forbids ending the importation of slaves before 1808.

### **1788**

Inspired by the British Abolition Society, Jacques Pierre Brissot and others found the Société des Amis des Noirs in Paris. Massive petition campaign against the slave trade is mounted in Britain.

### **1789**

Wilberforce introduces bill in British Parliament to abolish the slave trade (bill will eventually pass in 1807). *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* published in London.

### **1790**

Quakers in Pennsylvania and New York petition Congress to abolish the slave trade.

### **1791**

Toussaint L'Ouverture leads slave insurrection in French colony of Saint-Domingue, which will culminate in the end of slavery there and the founding of the Haitian republic in 1804.

### **1792**

African American scientist and writer Benjamin Banneker publishes first of his six almanacs.

### **1793**

Congress passes Fugitive Slave Law, allowing slaveholders to use federal courts to regain possession of runaway slaves. Invention of the cotton gin leads to expansion of cotton cultivation in the South.

### **1794**

First national Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies meets in Philadelphia (nine societies from six states attend). These conventions continued almost annually through 1806, then met four more times between 1818 and

1828. Methodist Richard Allen founds the Bethel Church in Philadelphia, an African American congregation. French National Convention abolishes slavery throughout the French Empire.

**1795**

Peter Williams Sr. founds African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the first black church in New York.

**1797**

Four former slaves petition Congress on behalf of free blacks in North Carolina whose manumissions were being invalidated for lack of prior court approval.

**1799**

New York adopts law for gradual emancipation of slaves.

**1800**

Gabriel Prosser and thirty-five followers are executed for plotting slave rebellion in Richmond, Virginia. United States census lists 108,395 free colored people, 893,041 black slaves, and 4,304,489 whites. Free blacks in Philadelphia petition Congress to end the slave trade and rescind the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.

**1802**

Allegations surface of President Thomas Jefferson's affair with his slave Sally Hemings. Napoleon reinstates slavery throughout the French Empire.

**1804**

New Jersey adopts law for gradual emancipation of slaves.

**1807**

Congress bans importation of slaves into the United States, effective January 1, 1808. Britain abolishes slave trade throughout its empire and begins using its navy to suppress slave trading by other nations. With the closure of the slave

trade, and the widespread adoption of the cotton gin, slave trade within the United States increases as large numbers of slaves are sent from tobacco-growing states of the upper South to cotton-growing states of the lower South.

### **1808**

Celebrations to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade begin in African American communities in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, and continue annually.

### **1812–14**

During the War of 1812, British forces again encourage American slaves to flee to their side.

### **1815**

The Congress of Vienna issues a decree against the slave trade, but France and Portugal continue their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade.

### **1816**

American Colonization Society formed to emancipate slaves and send free blacks to establish settlements in Africa.

### **1820**

Congress adopts Missouri Compromise, allowing the admission of Maine as a free state and Missouri as a slave state while prohibiting slavery in the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30' N.

### **1822**

Denmark Vesey and thirty-five other blacks are executed in Charleston, South Carolina, for plotting a slave revolt. Founding of colony (later named Liberia) on the West African coast for American free blacks.

### **1827**

The last slaves are freed in New York state.

### **1829**

David Walker, a black abolitionist, publishes pamphlet *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, arguing for the necessity of slave insurrections. It is distributed throughout the South despite being banned in several states.

### **1831**

William Lloyd Garrison founds the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*. Slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, ends with the deaths of fifty-seven whites and at least one hundred blacks; Turner and nineteen followers are hanged.

### **1832**

New England Anti-Slavery Society founded by Garrison to advocate the immediate abolition of slavery through nonviolent means and to oppose the colonization of free blacks.

### **1833**

Parliament abolishes slavery in the British Caribbean, with full emancipation taking effect in 1838. The American Anti-Slavery Society, a national organization, is founded.

### **1839**

Fifty-four Africans captured and brought to Cuba seize control of the Spanish schooner *Amistad*, killing two crew-members. They demand that the surviving crew return them to Africa, but the crew instead sail north. After entering Long Island Sound, the ship is captured by the revenue cutter *Washington* and the Africans are imprisoned in Connecticut. In 1841 the Supreme Court rules in their favor, and thirty-six of the surviving Africans are freed and sent to Sierra Leone.

## **1840**

Liberty Party, the first antislavery political party, founded in Albany, New York.

## **1845–48**

Annexation of Texas and the U.S.-Mexican War renew debate over the expansion of slavery. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* published in 1845. Slavery is abolished in the French Caribbean in 1848.

## **1850**

U.S. Congress adopts series of measures regarding slavery (“Compromise of 1850”), including stronger Fugitive Slave Law that denies alleged fugitives legal protection and compels northern authorities to cooperate in returning runaway slaves; law provokes widespread opposition and resistance in the free states. United States census lists 434,495 free colored people, 3,204,313 slaves, and 19,553,068 whites.

## **1851**

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly*, novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published in installments in the *National Era*. It appears as a book the next year, published by J. P. Jewett in Boston, selling an unprecedented 3,000 copies the first day and 300,000 copies the first year.

## **1853**

William Wells Brown, while living in London, publishes the first novel by an African American, his controversial *Clotel*, inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s affair with Sally Hemings.

## **1854–56**

Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 repeals Missouri Compromise and leads to fighting between pro- and antislavery factions in Kansas and formation of

Republican Party opposed to the further expansion of slavery.

### **1857**

Supreme Court rules in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision that Congress cannot exclude slavery from federal territories and that African Americans cannot be U.S. citizens, having “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

### **1859**

John Brown seizes federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in an unsuccessful attempt to start slave uprising; fifteen people are killed during the raid, and Brown is tried, convicted, and hanged along with four other men. His actions are memorialized by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, and others. *Blake: or the Huts of America* by Martin R. Delany is serialized first in *The Anglo-African Magazine* and then, in 1861–62, in the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*. It is the first novel serialized in the U.S. by an African American.

### **1860**

Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln is elected president November 6 on a platform opposing the extension of slavery. South Carolina secedes on December 20 (ten other states secede by May 1861).

### **1861**

Harriet Ann Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is published in Boston under the pseudonym Linda Brent. Confederate forces shell Fort Sumter, South Carolina, on April 12, beginning Civil War. Lincoln drafts emancipation plan, in which slave-owners are to be compensated for freeing their slaves either monetarily or by the “apprenticeship” of minors (measure is later rejected by Delaware legislature). Three Virginia slaves escape and seek freedom with Union general Benjamin Butler’s army at Fort Monroe; Butler grants them refuge. Congress passes Confiscation Act, authorizing the federal government to

confiscate slaves being used to militarily aid the rebellion.

### **1862**

Congress prohibits Union officers from returning fugitive slaves and abolishes slavery in the District of Columbia and the federal territories. Lincoln issues preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, declaring that all slaves in Confederate-held territory will be freed on January 1, 1863. U.S. Attorney General Edward Bates issues opinion in November declaring that free black persons born in the United States are American citizens.

### **1863**

Emancipation Proclamation issued January 1, freeing slaves in Confederate-held territory and authorizing the enlistment of freed slaves in the Union army. More than 180,000 black men (including free blacks from northern states) will eventually serve in the Union forces.

### **1865**

Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States, passed by Congress on January 31. Lincoln endorses amendment by signing joint resolution, submitting it to the states for ratification, although his signature is not legally required. Confederate armies surrender, April 9–May 26. Lincoln is assassinated on April 14. Ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment is completed December 6.

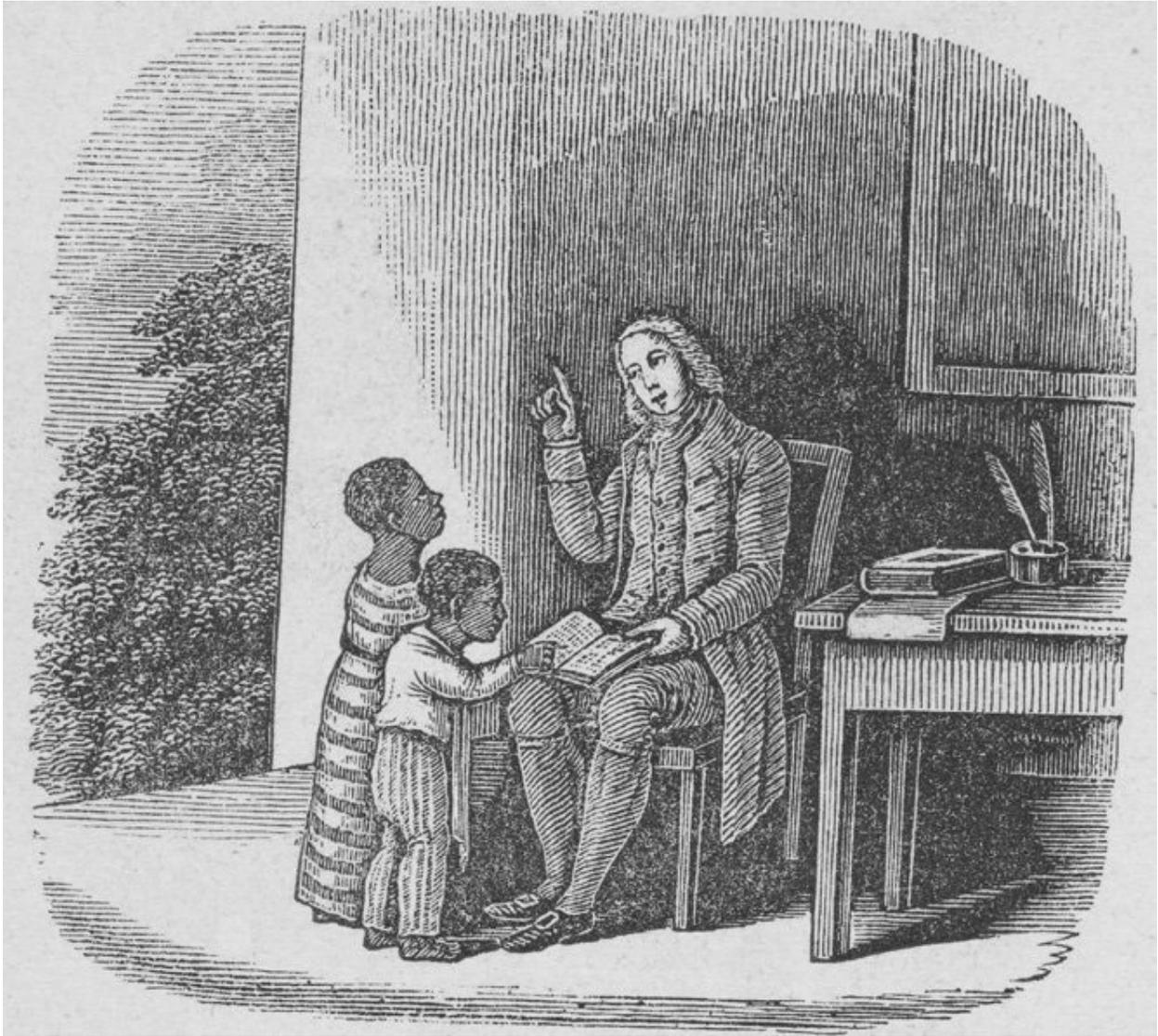
*Illustrations*



1. Samuel Sewall.<sup>1</sup>



2. and Benjamin Lay. <sup>2</sup>



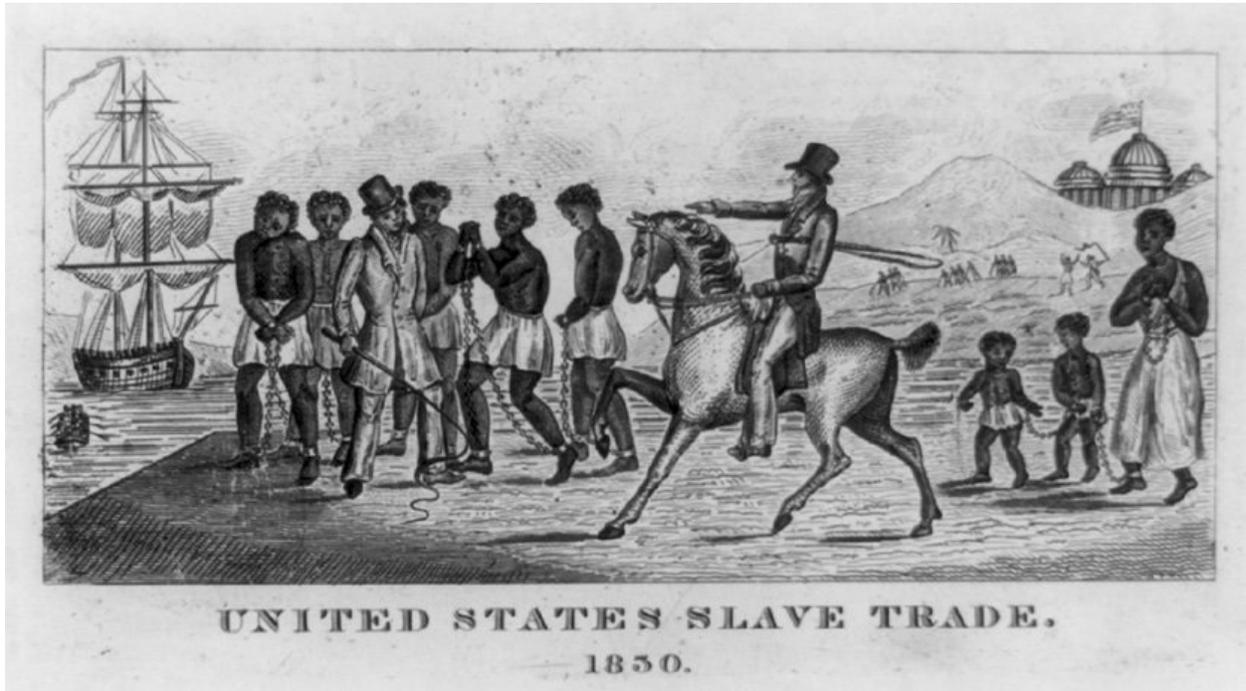
3. Anthony Benezet with two students.<sup>3</sup>



4. Frontispiece of Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773).<sup>4</sup>



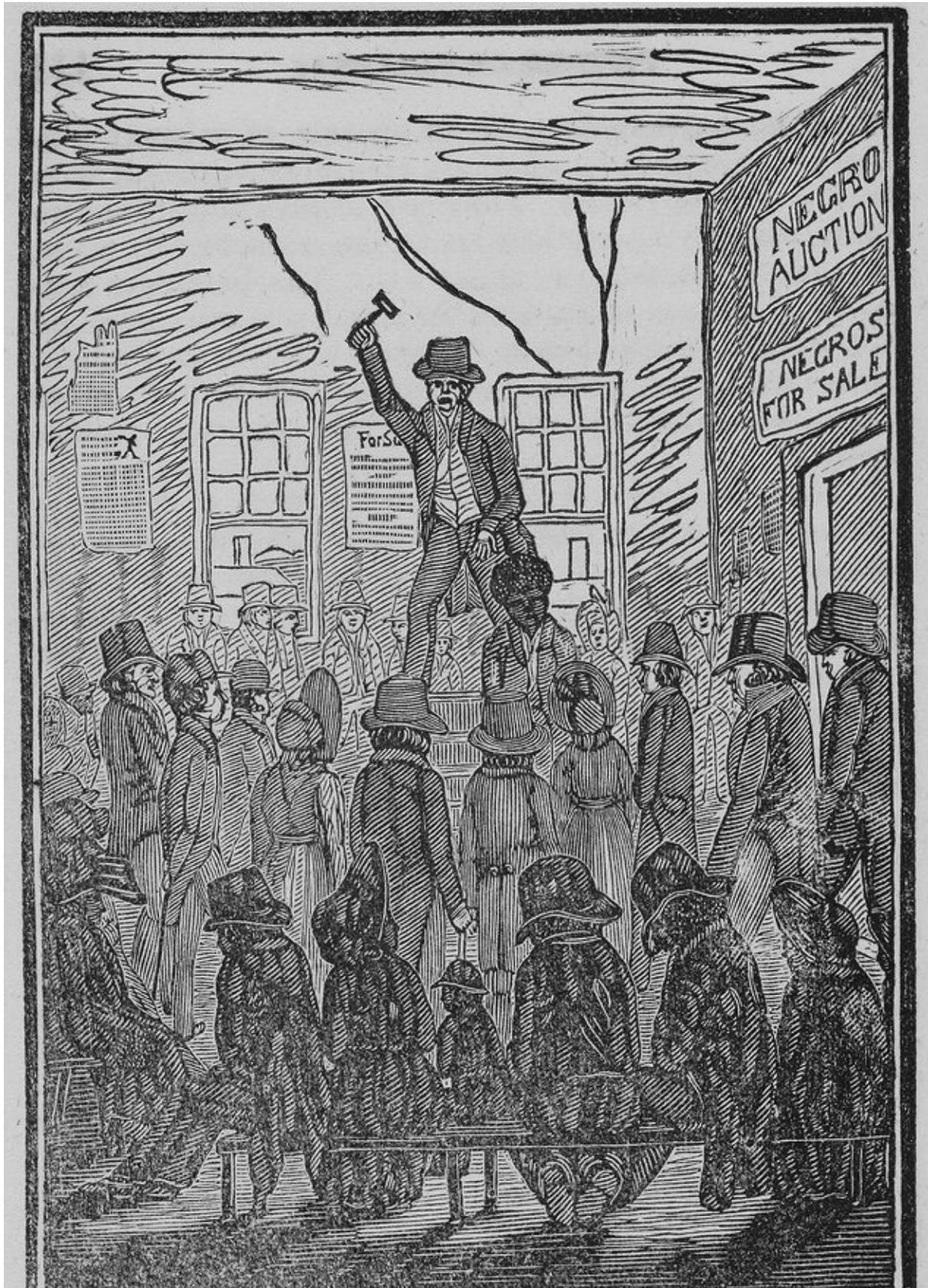
5. Broadside for 1817 annual celebration in Boston of the abolition of the foreign slave trade.<sup>5</sup>



6. America's domestic slave trade flourishes within sight of the U.S. Capitol building.<sup>6</sup>



7. *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks* (1792) by Samuel Jennings.<sup>7</sup>





8. "Auction at Richmond" from *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (1838) by George Bourne.<sup>8</sup>



9. First created by British antislavery advocates, these images were widely employed by American abolitionists.<sup>9</sup>



10. First created by British antislavery advocates, these images were widely employed by American abolitionists.[10](#)



11. Typical image used on reward posters for runaway slaves.[11](#)



12. The slave trade sunders another family, in this illustration from *The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840*.<sup>12</sup>



# CAUTION!!

## COLORED PEOPLE

**OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,**

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the

**Watchmen and Police Officers  
of Boston,**

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as

### **KIDNAPPERS**

AND

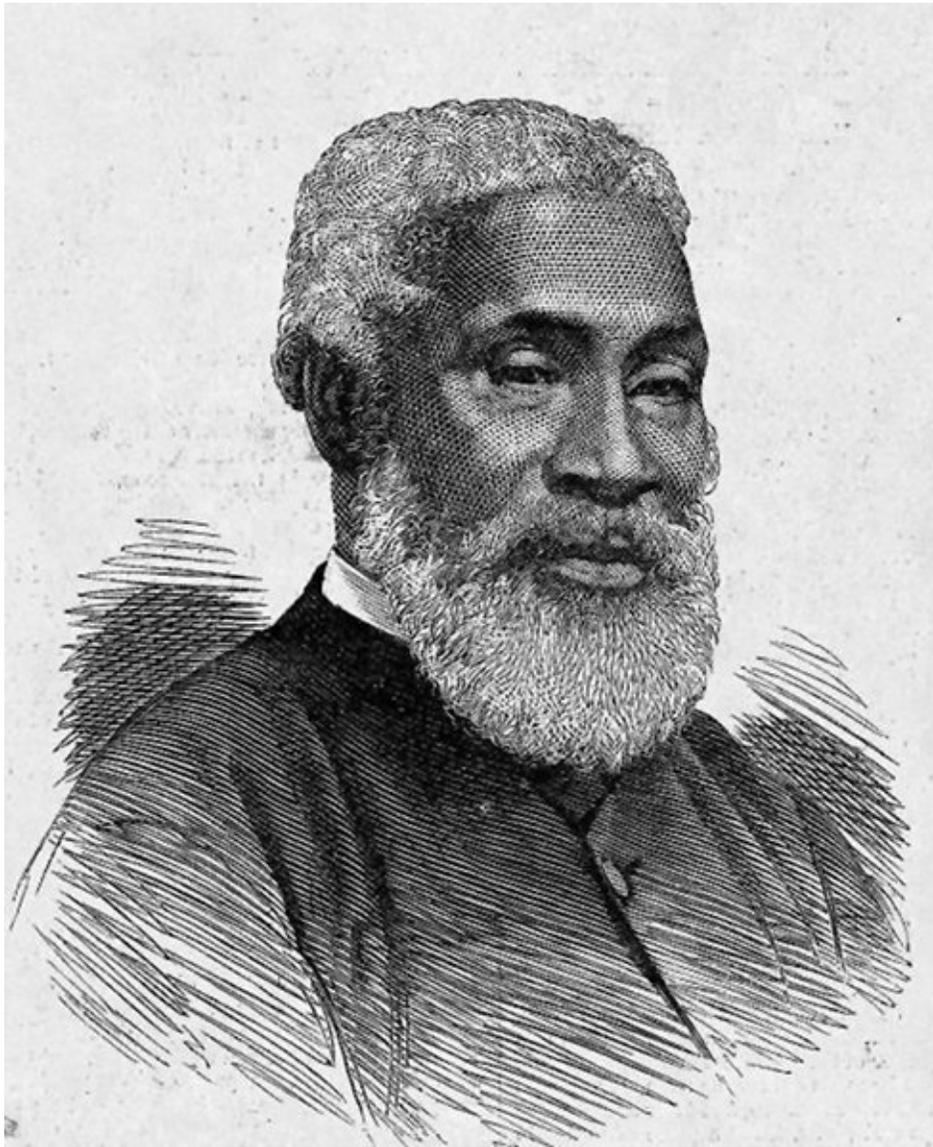
### **Slave Catchers,**

And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES**. Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY**, and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for  
KIDNAPPERS, and have  
TOP EYE open.**

**APRIL 24, 1851.**

13. Warning posted by Theodore Parker in Boston in 1851 after the arrest of fugitive slave Thomas Sims. [13](#)

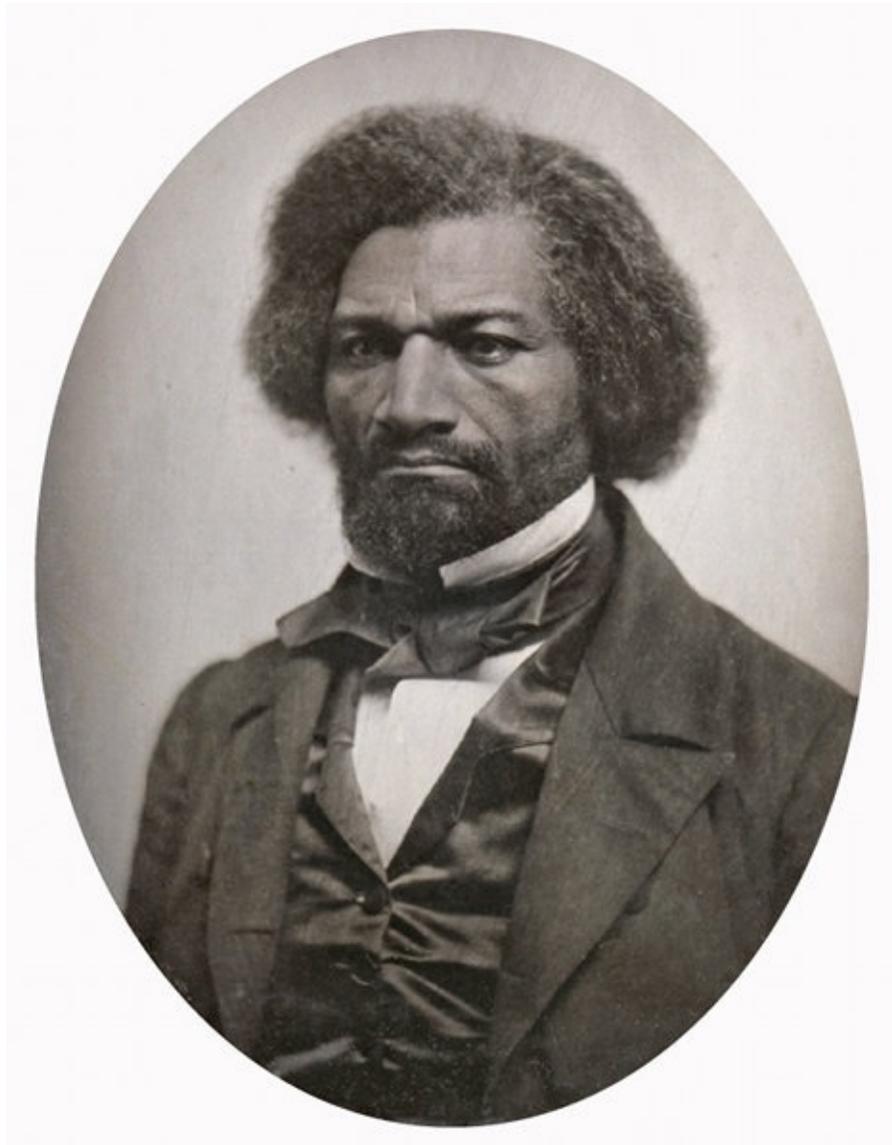


14. Reverend Josiah Henson. [14](#)

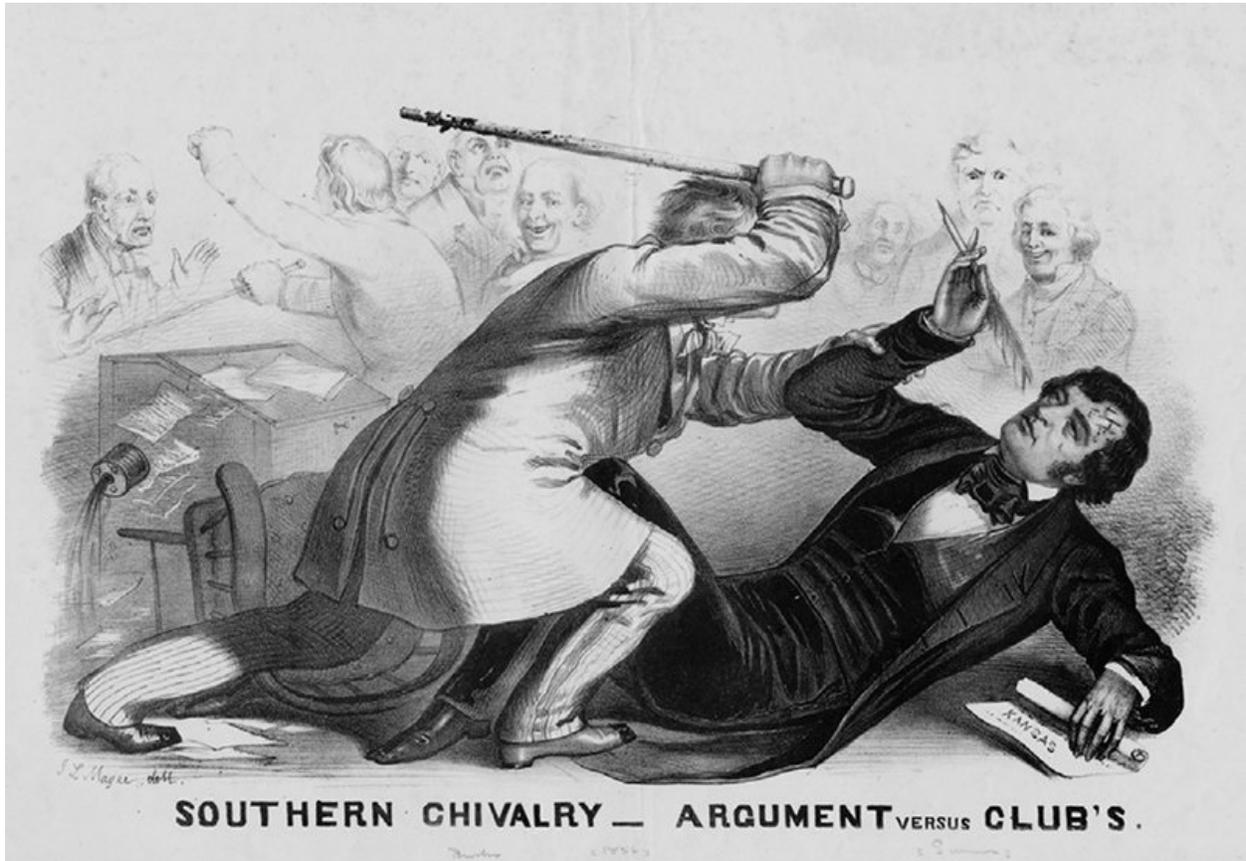


SCENE IN THE SLAVE PEN AT WASHINGTON.

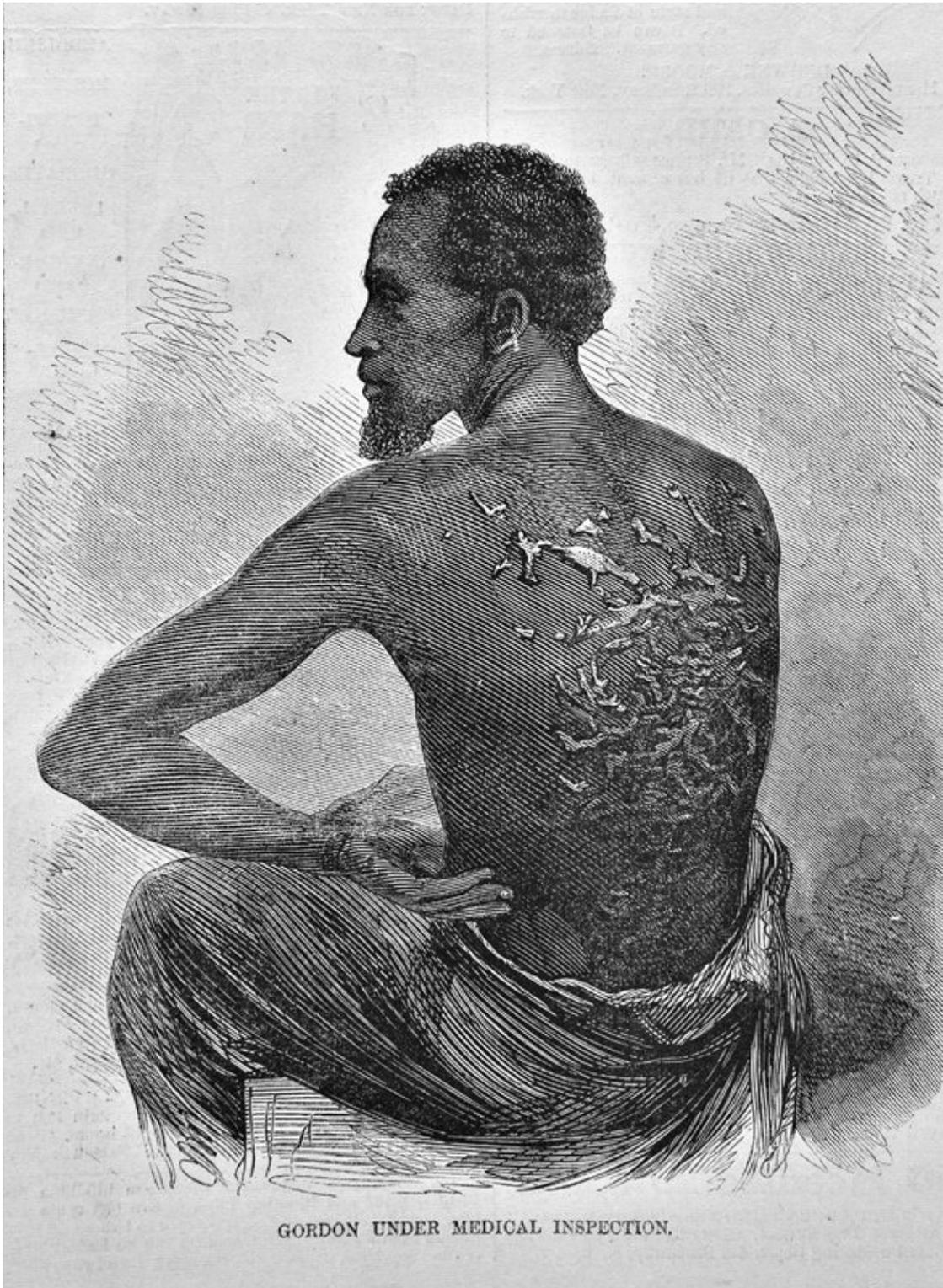
15. From *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of Solomon Northup* (1853).[15](#)



16. Frederick Douglass in 1856. [16](#)



17. Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina assaults Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner on the Senate floor, May 22, 1856.[17](#)



GORDON UNDER MEDICAL INSPECTION.

18. A slave who escaped to Union lines during the Civil War. [18](#)

# ANTI-SLAVERY MASS MEETING!

Agreeably to a call, signed by about 50 persons, and published in the Lawrence Republican, a Mass Meeting of the friends of Freedom will be held at Miller's Hall, at 2 o'clock P. M., on Friday, Dec. 2d, the day on which

**CAPT. JOHN BROWN IS TO BE EXECUTED,**

To testify against the iniquitous **SLAVE POWER** that rules this Nation, and take steps to

**Organize the Anti-Slavery Sentiment**

of the community. Arrangements have been made with prominent speakers to be present and address the meeting.

PER ORDER OF COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS.

Lawrence, Nov. 26, 1859.

19. Advertisement for an antislavery meeting held in Lawrence, Kansas, on the day of John Brown's execution.<sup>19</sup>



20. Allegorical image of John Brown circulated during the Civil War.<sup>20</sup>



21. *President Lincoln, writing the Proclamation of Freedom. January 1st, 1863*, lithograph after a painting by David Gilmour Blythe.[21](#)



22. Print by Thomas Nast celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation.[21](#)

## *Note on the Illustrations*

1. Samuel Sewall, shown here shortly before his death, was the author of the first antislavery tract published in New England, *The Selling of Joseph* (1700). John Smibert, *Judge Samuel Sewall* (1729). Copyright Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
2. This portrait of Benjamin Lay, commissioned by Benjamin Franklin, shows the diminutive Quaker holding a copy of *The Way to Health, Long Life and Happiness* (1691) by English merchant and author Thomas Tryon (1634–1703). William Williams Sr., *Benjamin Lay* (c. 1750). National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY.
3. There are no portraits of abolitionist Anthony Benezet from his lifetime; he once declined to sit for a portrait by saying, “O! no, no, my ugly face shall not go down to posterity.” “Benezet instructing colored children,” in John W. Barber, *Historical, Poetical, and Pictorial American Scenes* (New Haven: For J. H. Bradley, 1850), 56. General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.
4. Though dressed as a servant, Wheatley is represented with the tools of a writer before her. Frontispiece engraving, Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (London: A. Bell, 1773). The Gilder-Lehrman Collection, on deposit at the New-York Historical Society.
5. Hand-colored advertisement for an 1817 parade in Boston celebrating the anniversary of the abolition of the foreign slave trade on January 1, 1808. “Grand Celebration! The Abolition of the Slave Trade” (Boston: African Society of Boston, 1817). The Bridgeman Art Library, Collection of the New-York Historical Society, USA.

[6](#). Though the foreign slave trade was abolished in 1808, this anonymous print laments the flourishing internal slave trade among the states. “United States slave trade. 1830” (Philadelphia: 1830). Library of Congress.

[7](#). Having offered to contribute a new painting as a gift for the Library Company of Philadelphia’s new Fifth Street building, Samuel Jennings was requested by the library’s directors to portray “Liberty (with her cap and proper insignia) displaying the arts . . . and in the distant background a Groupe of Negroes sitting on the Earth, or in some attitude expressive of Ease & Joy.” Samuel Jennings, *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks* (1792). The Library Company of Philadelphia.

[8](#). Engraving from the expanded edition of Bourne’s *The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable* (1816; see page [216](#) in this volume). H. A. Munson and G. W. Flagg, “Auction at Richmond,” in George Bourne, *Picture of Slavery in the United States of America* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838). Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, Columbia University.

[9](#). Based on a medallion designed by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787 in England, this image was soon circulated by American abolitionists. Benjamin Franklin wrote, “I am persuaded it may have an Effect equal to that of the best written Pamphlet in procuring favour to those oppressed People.” “Am I not a man and a brother?” in John Greenleaf Whittier, *Our Countrymen in Chains* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1837). Library of Congress.

[10](#). Elizabeth Margaret Chandler introduced the image of the kneeling female slave, adapted from the Wedgwood design, to America in the May 1830 issue of Benjamin Lundy’s *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, for which she served as editor of the “Ladies’ Repository” section. The image soon appeared

frequently in William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*. "Am I not a woman and a sister?" frontispiece in George Bourne, *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects Upon Woman and Domestic Society* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837).

[11](#). This illustration was typical of the easily recognizable images used on broadsides for the capture of runaway slaves. "The Runaway," *The Anti-Slavery Record*, vol. 3, no. 7 (1837). The Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[12](#). The text printed underneath this cartoon read, "'Do you *often* buy the wife without the husband?' 'Yes, *very often*; and *frequently*, too, they sell me the mother while they keep her children. I have often known them to take away the infant from its mother's breast, and keep it, while they sold her.'—*Prof. Andrews, late of the University*." "Selling a Mother from Her Child," *American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840* (New York: 1840). The Schomburg Center, Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

[13](#). Posted by abolitionist Theodore Parker after fugitive slave Thomas Sims was arrested in Boston in accordance with the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. "Caution!! Colored people of Boston" (Boston: 1851). Library of Congress.

[14](#). Henson's autobiography, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (1849), is widely believed to have been a key source for Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. "The Rev. Josiah Henson—The Original of 'Uncle Tom'," *Harper's Weekly*, April 21, 1877, 305.

[15](#). This illustration from the autobiography of Solomon Northup depicts the brutality of slave traders in Washington, D.C. "Scene in the Slave Pen at Washington," in Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York* (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853). Collection of the New-York Historical Society.

[16.](#) Frederick Douglass in 1856, anonymous photographer. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY.

[17.](#) On the afternoon of May 22, 1856, as he sat composing letters at his desk in the Senate chamber, a startled Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts was beaten with a cane by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina, and knocked unconscious. Sumner's speech "The Crime Against Kansas," delivered three days earlier, had included a tirade against Brooks's cousin, Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina. Lithograph by J. L. Magee, "Southern Chivalry—Argument versus Club's" (Philadelphia: John L. Magee, 1856). Collection of the New-York Historical Society.

[18.](#) This image was published alongside two others: one of Gordon as he appeared after his escape to Union lines during the Civil War, and another of Gordon in the uniform of a Union soldier. "Gordon under Medical Inspection" *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1863. Courtesy Cliff Sahlin and William Reese.

[19.](#) Advertisement for an antislavery meeting held in Lawrence, Kansas, on the day of John Brown's execution, December 2, 1859. Broadside, "Anti-Slavery Mass Meeting" (November 26, 1859). The Library of Virginia.

[20.](#) Depiction of an apocryphal incident in which John Brown kissed a slave child on his way to execution, based on a painting by Louis L. Ransom. An anonymous broadside published in 1886, and likely prepared with assistance from Ransom, identifies the foremost figure as a slaveholder wearing the uniform of a Virginia militia "whose gorgeous trappings fitly symbolize 'pride which cometh before destruction.'" To the left of Brown are a slave-driver and a personification of 1776, who looks on with disdain, and to Brown's right are the jailor and his companion. "John Brown. Meeting the slave-mother and her child on the steps of the Charlestown jail on his way to execution" (New York: Currier & Ives, c. 1863). Library of Congress.

[21](#). With a Bible and a copy of the Constitution in his lap, Abraham Lincoln drafts the Emancipation Proclamation in this colorful allegorical print. A copy of the presidential oath of office hangs on the wall behind him and a bust of Unionist president Andrew Jackson sits on the mantle while that of James Buchanan, who failed to stop secession, is suspended by a noose. Lithograph after painting by David Gilmour Blythe, *President Lincoln, writing the Proclamation of Freedom. January 1st, 1863* (Cincinnati: Ehrgott, Forbriger & Co., 1863). Library of Congress.

[22](#). Scenes of slave auctions and brutal punishments on the left contrast with those of public education and free labor on the right, framing a portrait of a liberated family in this print celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation. Thomas Nast, “The Emancipation of the Negroes, January, 1863—The Past and the Future” *Harper’s Weekly*, January 24, 1863. Courtesy Cliff Sahlin and William Reese.

## *Note on the Texts*

This volume collects 216 selections of antislavery writing, composed from 1688 to 1865, including fiction and poetry, essays and autobiographies, sermons, pamphlets, speeches, hymns, plays, and children's literature. They are presented roughly in the order of composition, though many are grouped by author. In cases where there is only one printed source for a document, the text offered here comes from that source. Where there is more than one printed source for a document, the text printed in this volume is taken from the first published source, or else the source that appears to contain the fewest editorial alterations in the spelling, capitalization, paragraphing, and punctuation of the original.

This volume prints texts as they appear in the sources listed below, but with a few alterations in editorial procedure. The bracketed conjectural readings of editors, in cases where original manuscripts or printed texts were damaged or difficult to read, are printed without brackets in this volume when those readings seem to be the only possible ones. In some cases, obvious errors were retained by earlier editors and then followed by a bracketed correction; in these instances, this volume accepts the editorial emendation. Bracketed editorial insertions used in the source texts to identify biblical allusions have been deleted in this volume.

Arthur Lee's letter to the *Virginia Gazette* was originally published in the March 19, 1767, issue of that paper; no copy of that issue is known to be extant. The essay was reprinted widely, including by Anthony Benezet in *Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies* (second edition, 1767), but with considerable omissions. The text presented in this volume is taken from Richard K. MacMaster, "Arthur Lee's 'Address on Slavery': An Aspect of Virginia's Struggle to End the Slave Trade, 1765–1774" in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, which returned to Lee's manuscript copy, housed in the Slavery Collection of the Earl Gregg Swem Library of the College of William

and Mary. MacMaster printed material omitted by Benezet in square brackets; this volume omits the square brackets and includes the omitted material.

No known copy exists of the original printing of Patrick Henry's letter to John Alsop in the *Auburn Union*. The source for this volume, from the *Friends' Intelligencer*, reads "my conformity"; however, other contemporary reprintings of the letter read "my want of conformity" and that reading has been adopted in this volume.

The text of the letter from Phillis Wheatley to the Reverend Samson Occom was presented as quoted material in the source used in this volume, with quotation marks placed at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the text; this volume omits the quotation marks.

Theodore Dwight's "Help! oh, help! thou God of Christians!" originally appeared in *The New-Haven Gazette, and the Connecticut Magazine* on February 21, 1788. It was then reprinted in *American Poems, Selected and Original*, volume I (1793), the text chosen for inclusion in this volume, with an authorial footnote stating that the poem was originally printed "in rather an incorrect manner. It is now offered to the public, with the amendment of errors reprehensible at its first appearance."

No manuscript appears to be extant for the text of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Anniversary of West Indian Emancipation" speech. Two accounts of his speech were published immediately after it was given: one in the *New-York Daily Tribune*, August 7, 1845, and one in *The Liberator*, August 8, 1845. *The Liberator's* account is shorter but includes a paragraph not present in the *Tribune* text. The text presented in this volume is taken from *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, ed. Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson (1995), which reprints the *Tribune* text with the addition of the missing paragraph from *The Liberator*. The text of Emerson's "Lecture on Slavery" from January 25, 1855, presented in this volume is also taken from the Gougeon and Myerson volume, where it was printed for the first time, from the manuscript.

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*and My Freedom* included a page number reference to a quotation from Douglass's autobiography. Because *My Bondage and My Freedom* is not reproduced in this volume, that reference has been deleted.

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This volume presents the texts of the printings chosen as sources here but does

not attempt to reproduce features of their typographic design or physical layout. The texts are printed without alteration except for the changes described above and for the correction of typographical errors and the modernization of the use of quotation marks in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts (only beginning and ending quotation marks are provided here, instead of placing a quotation mark at the beginning of every line of a quoted passage). This volume does not attempt to reproduce features of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century typography such as the long “s” and the use of “u” for “v” (for example, “haue” for “have”), “v” for “u” (for example, “vnder” for “under”), or “i” for “j” (for example, “ioy” for “joy”). Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are often expressive features, and they are not otherwise altered, even when inconsistent or irregular. The following is a list of typographical errors corrected, cited by page and line number: 3.8, was is; 4.19, Seing; 5.6, them, and; 6.31, Master, should; 7.6, Pull; 7.6, Jivan,; 16.22, and hs; 16.25, thoughts; 17.25, which; 18.16, whith; 19.14, *Eight.*; 24.28, Wickedness Tyrany,; 29.30, thy; 30.9, Cheif; 30.25, Contry-Men; 31.33, were; 32.16, locks; 32.29, protects,;; 47.24, disintered; 48.5, things?; 52.27, uuderstood; 61.15, AMERICANS.; 62.18, same; 62.33, pactice.; 64.31, [missing numeral] The great; 65.21, setiments; 69.31–32, fairto; 70.35, knowlege; 71.10, is no; 72.9, it’s; 79.17, prinpcial; 83.31, here how; 84.32, appeared. they; 84.37, remain; 88.11, takes; 89.17, send the; 90.1, [missing speech prefix]; 94.23, dady?; 99.1, Children. and; 101.13,—Here,; 102.34, in in; 105.22, inanimated,; 114.16, crue; 114.21, vour; 117.28, in in; 135.31, it hath; 147.4, preceived; 153.13, Men; 153.14, are; 154.4–5, cruel vindictive; 156.23, it’s; 159.2, babit; 159.6, ignorence; 171.16, Christians; 171.22, nation’s; 184.20, hour.; 186.16, fore—; 188.33, brightest; 197.28, the say,; 201.29, buiscuit,; 202.16, too,; 207.4, blacken; 208.23, sat; 221.4, year’s services; 226.20, chage; 228.18, county; 233.37, Rode; 235.26, summons; 235.26, probbles,; 235.35, then; 236.21, abolished,; 236.22, Missouri,; 243.10, spoil; 244.16, gererosity,; 257.30, him.); 259.12, here; 260.1, carlessly; 261.8,

(jocosly; 261.18, goaler); 263.13, dark; 263.27, Antideluvians; 263.33, taken of; 265.22, peace?; 271.26, villany; 274.35, freemen; 286.1, Gaudaloupe; 294.10, as to; 294.15, Mr. A.; 295.14, 'BENEZETT; 296.33, arbitrary; 297.28, savage; 300.34, renmant; 301.34, as nation; 301.35, disposition; 306.12, said I Lucy.; 307.15, opportunity.; 311.24, and hadr; 323.30, life of; 331.24, a a; 334.1, revists; 337.19, though; 346.12, 1830; 350.24, rosolve; 351.33, This; 352.10, South.”; 365.13, others; 374.24, service;; 380.16, millions; 382.35, Russias; 389.24, tkirteen; 389.25, prepossesing; 390.4, Patriarchs.—; 398.23, “selfish; 401.8, died; 403.29, itself.; 406.8–9, intelligible; 407.23, rmains; 407.27, massage; 420.10–11, him him; 425.1, band; 448.4, respector; 463.34, “All; 463.34, equal.”; 465.13, arn’t; 502.7, run; 505.38, capitol; 506.4, agony. Such; 506.34, whatsoever.”; 528.36, were; 560.17, Cesar.; 560.21, usuages; 563.2–3, not impracticable; 580.38, Washington.; 582.20, “Grace’s; 583.12, its; 585.7, tea-table.”; 585.15, room, said; 586.29, small,”; 586.29, guess, said; 590.36, you!”; 595.8, opp; 626.13, friend. Here; 626.17, was mutual; 633.33, “Mr. Listwell; 636.3, Williams, that; 638.20, mean’t; 638.29, Williams,”; 639.22, fact; 640.35, You murderous villain.; 641.24, shouted, *Stay*; 641.24, *men*,—; 657.5–6, ask monuments; 660.14, he done; 667.35, married Jerry; 669.33, myself, he; 669.33, said, Mr.; 672.11, June; 672.12, June; 677.14, Greely; 678.8, loosing; 678.20, acurate; 679.6, sems; 680.2, whethed; 680.3, fathers where; 680.9, frinds; 680.12, your; 680.19, considerhtion; 680.34, balad—; 681.1, Disscussion; 684.36, Milwaukie; 696.4, Simm’s; 722.25, ‘in; 722.27, promote.’; 737.37, words, on page 155; 743.21, collored; 750.34–35, as among; 751.40, freedom? Had; 778.15, aunty, and; 778.22, could’nt; 781.24, its; 782.33, couldn’t.; 783.17, already.; 786.13, cabin. I; 789.11, diobolical; 790.12, Now; 795.22, Sorrington; 804.10, that that; 805.39, threatenening; 822.17, precions; 826.21, pharisees; 828.9, millions; 833.23, spirts; 849.21, ‘declare; 849.21, God!’; 851.1, its; 851.14, ‘the; 851.14, substance,’; 852.2, others; 852.25, learned were; 855.14, Berrah; 857.15, of land; 858.25, principal.

## Notes

In the notes below, the reference numbers denote page and line of this volume (the line count includes chapter headings). No note is made for material included in standard desk references. Quotations from the Bible are keyed to the King James Version; references to Shakespeare are keyed to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). For further historical background, see David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Andrew Delbanco, *The Abolitionist Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012). The editor is grateful to the following people for their assistance and support: Richard Gilder, Lewis Lehrman, Sid Lapidus, David Brion Davis, David Blight, Patricia Bonomi, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Kevin Van Anglen, Sandra Trenholm, Diogenes Rodriguez, Jason E. Tomberlin, Ariel Merrick, Adrian Merrick, Alexandra Loizzo, Abigail Marcus, Kathryn Hathaway, Stephen Wu, Mary Borovicka, Alyssa Granacki, and above all Nicole Seary.

[10.30](#) Auro pretiosior Omni] Latin: More precious than all gold.

[11.10](#) extravasat Blood] An archaic medical term for blood forced out of its vessels; or a bruise.

[11.37–38](#) *Posterity of Cham . . . Curse of Slavery.*] See Genesis 9:25, where Noah curses his grandson Canaan, the son of Ham: “a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren.” Ham had seen the drunken and naked Noah asleep in his tent. An influential line of interpretation adopted by slave traders and slaveholders maintained that this “curse of Ham” justified the enslavement of

blacks, because African peoples were listed among Ham's descendants in Genesis 10:6–20 or because, according to a view first put forth in the fifteenth century, the descendants of Canaan were black while those of his uncles Shem and Japheth (Noah's other sons) were white.

[12.15](#) Servitude of the *Gibeonites*] In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into thinking they were representatives of a distant people in order to obtain a peace treaty with Israel. When the trick became known, they were condemned to perpetual servitude.

[12.15](#) *Vide Pareum*] Latin: See Pareus. David Pareus (1548–1622), German Reformed theologian and author of biblical commentaries.

[12.24–25](#) *Sanguine tum . . . colorem.*] Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, bk. 2, ll. 235–36. “And that was when, or so men think, the people / Of Africa turned black, since the blood was driven / By that fierce heat to the surface of their bodies” (tr. Rolfe Humphries).

[14.3–11](#) *Servitus perfecta . . . solet.*] From bk. 5, ch. 23, theses 2–3 of *De Conscientia et ejus jure, vel casibus* (1632) by William Ames (1576–1633). Ames's English translation, published posthumously in 1639 as *Conscience*, reads: “Perfect servitude, so it be voluntary, is on the patients part often lawfull betweene Christian and Christian, because indeed it is necessary: but on the Masters part who is the agent, in procuring and exercising the authority, it is scarce lawfull; in respect, it thwarts that generall Canon, What you would have men doe unto you, even so doe unto them; Matt. 7.12. Perfect servitude, by way of punishment, can have no place by right, unlesse for some hainous offence, which might deserve the severest punishment, to wit, death: because our liberty in the natural account, is the very next thing to life it selfe, yea by many is preferred before it.”

[20.20](#) Mark set upon *Cain*] A tradition of biblical interpretation held that black skin was the “mark” God placed on Cain after he killed his brother and was condemned to nomadic wandering. Cf. Genesis 4:15.

[20.22–23](#) *Canaan . . . Servants*] See note [11.37–38](#).

[20.33–34](#) Sun shineth . . . Good] Cf. Matthew 5:45.

[20.35–21.1](#) Christ forbids . . . Wheat] See the Parable of the Tares, Matthew 13:24–30.

[21.7–9](#) Son should not . . . die] Cf. Ezekiel 18:20.

[21.10–13](#) *Peter saith . . . of him*] Acts 10:34–35.

[29.35](#) William Bosman] Willem Bosman (b. 1672), an agent for the Dutch West India Company, spent fourteen years on the Gold Coast, and wrote *Nauwkeurige Beschrijving van de Guinese Goud, Tand-en Slavenkust* (Amsterdam: 1704), translated as *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London: 1705).

[30.21](#) his Acc. printed 1732] *A Description of the Coasts of North and South-Guinea* (London: 1732) by John [Jean] Barbot (1655–1712).

[30.37–31.2](#) A Person of Candour . . . following Manner] Benezet’s source is the unpublished journal of the ship’s surgeon.

[31.22–23](#) *Brue . . . Collection of Voyages*] *Voyages and Travels along the Western Coasts of Africa* (1728) by André Brüe (c. 1654–1738), director-general of the Senegal Company; translated excerpts were included in Thomas Astley, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London: 1745–47).

[31.40](#) *Joseph Randal*, in his *Book of Geography*] Joseph Randall, *A System of*

*Geography; Or, a Dissertation on the Creation and Various Phenomena of the Terraqueous Globe* (London: 1744).

[32.19–20](#) English are obliged by the Assiento Contract] Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Spanish crown awarded an *asiento* (Spanish: contract) granting exclusive rights to transport African slaves to its New World colonies. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), the British crown secured the last such arrangement, a thirty-year contract that it then transferred to the South Sea Company.

[34.15–16](#) *Pulchrum est bene facere . . . absurdum.*] Misattributed by Lee to Tacitus, this is from Sallust, *De Coniuratione Catilinae*, ch. 3: To act well for the republic is beautiful; indeed, to speak well for it is not at all without merit.

[39.19](#) Lord-Mayor] William Beckford (1709–1770) was born in Jamaica.

[40.2](#) *Granville Sharpe's Book*] *A Representation of the Injustices and Dangerous Tendencies of Tolerating Slavery* (London: 1769) by the abolitionist Granville Sharp (1735–1813).

[45.33](#) St. G——e's F——ds.] St. George's Fields, where supporters of the imprisoned John Wilkes gathered on May 10, 1768; several people were killed when troops fired upon the crowd.

[61.33–34](#) Dr. Ames . . . Gloucester] Puritan divines William Ames (see note 14.3–11), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), and James Durham (1622–1658); Scottish philosophers John Locke (1632–1704), Gershom Carmichael (1672–1729), and Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746); French political philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755); jurists William Blackstone (1723–1780) and George Wallace (d. 1805); and churchman William Warburton (1698–1779), the Bishop of Gloucester.

[62.37–38](#) Mr. Baxter declared] Richard Baxter, in *A Christian Directory* (1673).

[81.20–21](#) made by a sensible Author] John Wesley (1703–1791), in *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774).

[85.31–32](#) some EXTRACTS . . . RAYNAL] Benezet translated portions of the ten-volume *Political and Philosophical History of the Commerce and Establishments of Europeans in the Two Indies* (1770) by French philosopher and historian Abbé Guillaume Thomas Raynal (1713–1796).

[86.2–3](#) the declaration of the 6th of July 1775] The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms, issued by the Second Continental Congress.

[96.2](#) *Robert Morris*] A signer of the Declaration of Independence and principal financier of the American war effort, Robert Morris (1734–1806) had served from 1781 to 1784 as Congress’s superintendent of finance.

[96.24](#) law-suit . . . slave] Philip Dalby of Alexandria, Virginia, had traveled to Philadelphia in February 1785 with his servant, a young slave named Frank. According to Dalby, a committee of Quakers approached Frank, persuaded him to seek his freedom, and brought a writ of habeas corpus on his behalf. Dalby won the case and returned to Virginia with Frank, who then ran away early in 1787.

[98.17](#) Slaves which I hold] In the summer of 1799, Washington drew up a detailed census of the Mount Vernon slaves, a document he titled “Negroes Belonging to George Washington in his own right and by Marriage.” The census listed 317 slaves on the five Mount Vernon farms. Washington owned 124 of these people, forty were leased from another owner, and the remaining 153 “Dower” slaves were the property of the Custis estate. The Custis slaves could not be freed by Washington or his wife; they were to be inherited by Martha

Washington's grandchildren after her death. At the time of Washington's death, there were 314 slaves at Mount Vernon; 122 were freed by the terms of his will. The executors of Washington's estate continued to support the freed people who chose to remain as pensioners at Mount Vernon after the death of Martha Washington. The last pensioner died in 1833.

[99.14](#) William Lee] Washington had purchased his personal servant Billy, or William Lee, in 1768 from Mary Lee, widow of Col. John Lee of Westmoreland County, Virginia, for £68 15s. He served Washington throughout the Revolutionary War, during which time he took as his wife "one of his own colour a free woman" from Philadelphia, named Margaret Thomas, who was, Washington wrote, "also of my family." By 1799 William Lee, who had broken both of his knees, was crippled and employed as a shoemaker at Mansion House farm. He died at Mount Vernon in 1810.

[100.17](#) Mr. Clarkson's ingenious and pathetic essay] *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation* (London: 1786), by English antislavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846).

[109.20–23](#) little state of Rhode-Island . . . culpable] The only state not to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Rhode Island became the last to ratify the U.S. Constitution on May 29, 1790, and by the narrowest of margins. This stubborn antifederalism can be traced to several factors, among them the state's influential Quaker community, which was critical of the Constitution's tacit assent to slavery.

[119.29](#) pomkins] Pumpkins.

[122.15–16](#) the speech of Mr. Jackson in Congress] A response to Franklin's petition for abolition submitted to Congress on behalf of the Pennsylvania

Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, of which Franklin was president.

[125.12](#) Mr. Brown] Andrew Brown (c. 1744–1797), publisher of *The Federal Gazette*.

[127.21](#) SHARP] See note [40.2](#).

[127.21](#) RAYNAL] See note [85.31–32](#).

[127.21](#) DE WARVILLE] French writer and revolutionary Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754–1793) founded the antislavery group Société des Amis des Noirs in 1788 and served as its president during 1790 and 1791.

[127.21](#) WILBERFORCE] English abolitionist William Wilberforce (1759–1833) introduced a bill in Parliament in 1789 to abolish the slave trade; his antislavery campaign would achieve fruition with the passage of “An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade” on March 25, 1807.

[127.22](#) CLARKSON] See note [100.17](#).

[127.23](#) NECKAR] Jacques Necker (1732–1804), the Swiss-born banker and finance minister under Louis XVI of France, voiced opposition to slavery in his 1784 *Treatise on the Administration of the Finances of France* (tr. 1787).

[127.23](#) PINKNEY] William Pinkney (1767–1822), lawyer, diplomat, U.S. senator from Maryland, and U.S. attorney general. Early in his political career, as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, he sponsored an unsuccessful antislavery bill and delivered impassioned speeches in favor of abolition, arguing in 1789 that “by the eternal principles of natural justice, no master in the state has a right to hold his slave in bondage a single hour.”

[127.23](#) MIFFLIN] Warner Mifflin (1745–1798), a Quaker who manumitted his

own slaves in 1774–75 and in 1788 helped to found Delaware’s first abolition society. See also pages [220.31–221.8](#) in this volume.

[127.23](#) PORTEUS] Beilby Porteus (1731–1809), Anglican clergyman and prominent abolitionist, successively bishop of Chester and of London.

[127.24](#) MADISON] James Madison (1751–1836), who, despite owning slaves himself, argued for the abolition of the slave trade.

[127.25](#) LA FAYETTE] Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette (1757–1834), French aristocrat, military officer and general in the American Revolutionary War, was a member of the Société des Amis des Noirs.

[127.25](#) MARSILLAC] Jean de Marsillac le Cointe (c. 1750–post-1830), French Quaker, author of *Le More-Lack* (1789), an antislavery appeal that concludes with a chapter summarizing the opinions of illustrious men on the subject of slavery.

[127.25](#) BOUDINOT] Elias Boudinot (1740–1821), lawyer, statesman, and delegate to the Continental Congress, 1777, 1778, 1781–84, was a cofounder of the New Jersey Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

[149.27](#) PAOLI’s time-enduring praise] Filippo Antonio Pasquale di Paoli (1725–1807), Corsican patriot.

[152.37–39](#) In liberos . . . Justin Inst. Lib. 1 tit. 9.] The greatest authority of the fathers shall be upon the children; they shall be permitted to sell, to kill. From the *Leges Regiae* (“royal laws”) attributed to Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, which exist only in fragment. *The Institutes of Justinian*, the legal code established by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (527–565). Book I, title 9 affirms this authority that Roman citizens possessed over their children.

[152.40](#) Justin. Inst. Lib. I. tit. 8.] *The Institutes of Justinian*, book I, title 8 states that the absolute authority of masters over slaves is derived from the “Law of Nations,” but also prescribes severe punishments for masters who treat their slaves with unusual cruelty.

[155.14](#) Bourg. travels vol. 1] *Travels in Spain: Containing a New, Accurate, and Comprehensive View of the Present State of That Country* (1789), by the Chevalier de Bourgoanne.

[157.16](#) HOME seek . . . vales] Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782), Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, author of *Sketches of the History of Man* (1776).

[157.17](#) MONBODDO] James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714–1799), Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, philologist, and judge in the Edinburgh Court of Session.

[165.31](#) Hyblean honey] Hybla, an ancient town in Sicily, was renowned for its honey.

[171.20](#) Painims] Pagans.

[173.15–16](#) Milo acquired strength enough to carry an ox] Milo of Croton (fl. sixth century B.C.E.), Greek athlete, the most renowned wrestler in antiquity. According to legend, he trained by carrying a calf daily from its birth until it became a full-sized ox.

[175.16](#) In vain Montgomery, Warren, Mercer fell] Patriot leaders killed during the American Revolution: Richard Montgomery (1738–1775), slain during a failed attempt to capture Quebec; Joseph Warren (1741–1775), killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill; and Hugh Mercer (1726–1777), who died as a result of wounds received at the Battle of Princeton.

[182.10](#) TUNE—‘*Ellen O’Moore*’] Popular song first published in the *Republican Harmonist: Being a Select Collection of Republican, Patriotic, and Sentimental Songs* (Boston: 1801).

[191.34](#) Greece had her Helots, Gibeonites the Jew] The ancient city-state of Sparta owned slaves called Helots, who were a population drawn from peoples on the Peloponnesian peninsula it had conquered and their descendents. Gibeonites, see note [12.15](#).

[194.32–38](#) Clouds and darkness . . . salvation of God.] Cf. Psalms 97:2 and 98:1, 3–4.

[196.34–38](#) Glory to God . . . works] Cf. Luke 2:14, Psalms 105:1–2.

[207.27](#) our noble brother Hamilton] William Hamilton (1773–1836), African American writer and activist based in New York City. The quote cited is from his 1809 speech “Mutual Interest, Mutual Benefit, and Mutual Relief.”

[211.26–30](#) O Liberty! . . . ADDISON] From *A Letter from Italy, to the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Halifax* (1701), poem by Joseph Addison (1672–1719).

[220.14–15](#) the candid and upright Sandiford] English-born Ralph Sandiford (1693–1733), a Philadelphia Quaker merchant and author of *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times* (1729), was one of the earliest public advocates for the emancipation of enslaved Africans.

[221.8](#) Pemberton, Wistar, and Rush] Three presidents of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society: James Pemberton (1723–1809), Caspar Wistar (1761–1818), and Benjamin Rush (1746–1813).

[232.13–17](#) Homer says . . . deprived of their freedom”] Cf. *Odyssey*, bk. 17, ll.

254–56, in Robert Fagles’s 1997 translation; for Longinus’s gloss see *On the Sublime*, sec. 44. The quotation from Tacitus is taken from *Histories*, bk. 4, 64.

[232.17–21](#) judge Tucker . . . Africa.”] From *A Dissertation on Slavery: With a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It, in the State of Virginia* (1796) by St. George Tucker (see headnote, p. [172](#) in this volume).

[232.21–23](#) And says Mr. Jefferson . . . forever’] From *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781–85), query 18.

[233.26–27](#) Ralph Stanford] Ralph Sandiford (see note [220.14–15](#)).

[235.31–34](#) Dr. Beatty . . . conscience,”] Cf. James Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: 1793), p. 24. This passage by Beattie is also the source for the quote attributed to “an eminent author” at 235.34.

[239.2](#) *The African Chief*] “The story of the African chief, related in this ballad, may be found in the *African Repository* for April, 1825. The subject of it was a warrior of majestic stature, the brother of Yarradee, king of the Solima nation. He had been taken in battle, and was brought in chains for sale to the Rio Pongas, where he was exhibited in the market-place, his ankles still adorned with the massy rings of gold which he wore when captured. The refusal of his captor to listen to his offers of ransom drove him mad, and he died a maniac” [Bryant’s note].

[262.23–26](#) Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken . . . house tops] Luke 12:3.

[267.33](#) Genius of Universal Emancipation] An abolitionist newspaper published by Benjamin Lundy (1789–1839) from 1821 to 1835.

[273.31](#) Noah’s curse] See note [11.37–38](#).

[280.21](#) Southron] Southerner.

[287.26](#) Shechinah] Or Shekinah, a Hebrew word meaning “dwelling” or “settling,” used to signify the presence of God, particularly in the Temple in Jerusalem.

[287.30](#) Moloch] An ancient Ammonite god whose worship, involving child sacrifice, was denounced in the Bible as idolatry.

[288.26–27](#) like the Bruce’s heart of yore] Robert I of Scotland (1274–1329), known as Robert the Bruce, who fought for Scottish independence.

[289.9–10](#) Time obliterates . . . DR. JOHNSON] “Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturae judicia Confirmat.” Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, bk. 2, sec. 5, used by Johnson as an epigram to *The Rambler*, no. 106 (on the vanity of an author’s expectations, published March 23, 1751).

[296.11–12](#) I tremble for my country . . . JEFFERSON] See note [232.21–23](#).

[303.10](#) *Mr Hayne of S.C.*] Robert Young Hayne (1791–1839), U.S. senator from South Carolina, 1823–32.

[304.26–28](#) “Slaves cannot breathe . . . shackles fall.”] Cf. “The Time-Piece” (1785) by William Cowper (1731–1800).

[305.16](#) Miss Edgeworth] Maria Edgeworth, English-born novelist and children’s writer (1767–1849), author of *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796) and *Rosamond* (1821).

[312.11](#) Kamschatkadale dogs] I.e., sled dogs. The Kamchatka Peninsula is in eastern Russia, north of Japan.

[316.3–6](#) Thy treasures of gold . . . footsteps of fear] “The Yankee Girl” (1835) by John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892). Cf. p. 280 in this volume.

[331.34–35](#) Gov. M’Duffie’s message . . . slavery] In the annual governor’s message to the South Carolina legislature in November 1835, Democrat George McDuffie (1790–1851) attacked abolitionists and defended slavery as a positive good.

[335.21–22](#) said by Thomas Jefferson, . . . such oppression’] “The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest.” *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781–85), query 18.

[336.33–34](#) Jehovah is calling . . . whirlwind] See Job 38:1–40:2.

[337.34–36](#) “Wo unto you, . . . greater damnation.”] Matthew 23:14.

[338.6–7](#) “so we fasted . . . entreated for us.”] Cf. Ezra 8:23.

[338.20–22](#) “This is the condemnation . . . evil.”] John 3:19.

[338.27–28](#) “to undo the heavy burdens . . . free.”] Cf. Isaiah 58:6.

[339.1–2](#) Dr. Breckenridge] John Breckinridge (1797–1841), minister of congregations in Lexington, Kentucky, and Baltimore, Maryland, before serving as secretary of the Presbyterian Church’s Board of Education, 1831–37.

[339.21–24](#) “Behold the hire . . . Lord of Sabaoth.”] Cf. James 5:4.

[339.28–32](#) “The Lord said I . . . their sorrows.”] Cf. Exodus 3:7–8.

[343.25](#) narrative of James Williams] See headnote, p. [367](#) in this volume.

[350.16–23](#) “Go back . . . freedom with thee.”] Stanzas from Whittier’s “The Yankee Girl”; see p. [280](#) in this volume.

[351.20](#) We copy the following description] From *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, A Black Man* (see

headnote, p. [325](#) in this volume).

[355.25–26](#) ‘The ox . . . muzzle.’] Cf. Deuteronomy 25:4, 1 Corinthians 9:9.

[355.29](#) ‘gives the grazing ox his meat,’] From the version of Psalm 148 in *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament* (1719) by English hymnist Isaac Watts (1674–1748).

[356.3–5](#) Soultan . . . Atmeidan] On the night of June 14, 1826, the Ottoman janissary corps rose up in revolt against the military reforms of Sultan Mahmud II (1785–1839), gathering in At Meydanı, site of the ancient Hippodrome in Constantinople. The following day, forces loyal to the sultan bombarded the janissaries’ nearby barracks with cannon fire after the rebels assembled there in retreat. When its gates were breached the men in the drill-yard were massacred and the barracks set on fire. Thousands were killed in the fighting, the barracks’ incineration, and the summary executions that followed. Mahmud abolished the janissary corps on June 17.

[356.29](#) his Seven Towers] Constantinople’s Yedikule Hisarı (Fortress of the Seven Towers), which was used as a prison by the Ottomans.

[358.2–4](#) ‘If the pulpit . . . WEBSTER] From *A Discourse Delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1820, in Commemoration of the First Settlement of New-England* (1821) by Daniel Webster (1782–1852).

[358.33](#) heights of Alton] Alton, Illinois, where the abolitionist Elijah Lovejoy (1802–1837) was killed by a proslavery mob while defending his printing press on November 7, 1837.

[360.35](#) great-hearted, broken-hearted Osceola] Osceola (1804–1838), also known as Billy Powell, leader of the Seminole resistance in Florida during the Second Seminole War, 1835–42.

[375.8](#) Arria] A Roman woman (d. 43 B.C.E.) whose husband, the consul Caecins Paetus, was condemned to death by the emperor Claudius for taking part in an unsuccessful rebellion. According to Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 3.16), he chose to commit suicide rather than be executed, but then hesitated before stabbing himself with a dagger. Arria took the weapon and stabbed herself, saying that it did not hurt (“Non dolet, Paete!”).

[375.8](#) Cornelia] Cornelia Africana (c. 187–c. 115 B.C.E.), mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (the Gracchi), known in ancient Rome for her wisdom and virtue.

[377.4](#) Thomas Jefferson Randolph] Virginia planter and politician (1792–1875), the oldest grandson of Thomas Jefferson.

[387.18](#) the good ship Eli Whitney] Named for Eli Whitney (1765–1825), inventor of the cotton gin.

[389.30–31](#) Onesimus and Philemon] A reference to Paul’s Epistle to Philemon in the New Testament. Philemon, a wealthy Christian in Colossae, owned a slave named Onesimus. Shortly after Paul had left Colossae, Onesimus ran away to Rome, where he met Paul and converted to Christianity. Eventually, Paul sent him back to his master, urging Philemon to treat him as a brother.

[408.17](#) Cinque and Grabeau] Sengbe Pieh (1814–c. 1879), later known as Joseph Cinqué, was the leader of the insurrection aboard the *Amistad*. Grabeau (dates unknown) was Cinqué’s second in command.

[408.20](#) Ruiz and Montes] José Ruiz and Pedro Montes, Spanish planters who purchased African slaves in Havana and transported them on the *Amistad*.

[408.21–22](#) Harmodius and Aristogiton . . . Athens] Harmodius and Aristogeiton (both d. 514 B.C.E.), known as the Tyrannicides for killing the despot Hipparchus,

were celebrated in ancient Athens as foundational heroes of its democracy.

[431.17](#) Caffre] Variant of Kaffir, a derogatory term.

[433.3](#) curse of Cain] God cursed Cain for killing his brother: “When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (Genesis 4:12). See note [20.20](#) above.

[433.16–19](#) Songs of triumph . . . host] See Exodus 15:1–19.

[433.24–27](#) Paul and Silas . . . dungeon-gates] See Acts 16:19–34.

[435.3](#) kirtle] A type of tunic; a loose-fitting gown.

[436.16](#) gyves] Shackles or fetters.

[440.11–13](#) The happy results . . . prove this] Mexico abolished slavery in 1829. After declaring independence from Spain in 1821, Peru abolished the slave trade and enacted a “free womb” law, establishing that a child born thereafter of slave parents was to be granted freedom upon turning twenty-one (in 1839, the age was raised to fifty). Haiti abolished slavery when it won independence from France in 1804. The British Parliament abolished slavery in 1833, emancipating all slaves in the British West Indies by 1838.

[445.23](#) “ferried o’er the wave,”] See William Cowper, *The Task* (1785), book 2, lines 37–39: “We have no slaves at home:—Then why abroad? / And they themselves, once ferried o’er the wave / That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.”

[448.17](#) New York Evangelist] Antislavery newspaper cofounded in 1830 by the Tappan brothers, Arthur (1785–1865) and Lewis (1788–1873).

[449.14–15](#) ‘rather, *die freemen, than live to be slaves.*] Cf. the 1775 Continental

Congress's Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and John Dickinson: "for the preservation of our liberties, being with one mind resolved we die freemen rather than live slaves."

[449.23–24](#) the Rev. Robert Hall] English Baptist minister (1764–1831) and renowned orator.

[450.7](#) Denmark Vesay] Denmark Vesey (1767?–1822), born in Africa or St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, was a personal servant to slave trader Joseph Vesey before winning a lottery in 1800 that allowed him to buy his freedom. In 1821–22 he planned a slave uprising in South Carolina set for July 14, 1822. Charleston authorities learned of the plot and Vesey was arrested on June 22, tried, and executed on July 2, 1822.

[450.14](#) Hampden] John Hampden (1594–1643) was a leader of the parliamentary opposition to Charles I. He was killed in battle during the English Civil War.

[450.14](#) Tell] William Tell, a legendary Swiss hero and expert marksman who led the resistance against Hapsburg (Austrian) rule in the fourteenth century.

[450.14](#) Bruce, and Wallace] Sir William Wallace (1272?–1305) drove the English out of Scotland in 1297, but was defeated the following year and ultimately executed. His compatriot, the eighth Robert de Bruce (1274–1329), was crowned king at Scone in 1306. Bruce's defeat of a larger English force at Bannockburn in 1314 completed the liberation of Scotland. Papal recognition followed in 1323 and a peace treaty with England in 1328.

[450.14](#) Toussaint L'Ouverture] Toussaint Louverture (c. 1743–1803), leader of the Haitian Revolution.

[450.25](#) Nathaniel Turner] Nat Turner (1800–1831) led a slave insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831 during which fifty-seven white people

were killed. More than one hundred African Americans were killed without trial during and after the uprising, and Turner and nineteen of his followers were hanged.

[450.29](#) Joseph Cinque] See note [408.17](#).

[450.35](#) Madison Washington] Madison Washington led the revolt on board the *Creole* on November 7, 1841. After the ship reached Nassau on November 9, the British imprisoned Washington and eighteen other rebels while freeing the remaining slaves. Washington and the sixteen other surviving mutineers (two had died in prison) were released in April 1842 after the British government ruled that the seizure of the ship was not an act of piracy. His subsequent fate is unknown. Frederick Douglass named the lead character of “The Heroic Slave” (1853) after Washington and based the story on this episode. See p. [623](#) in this volume.

[464.1–2](#) Dr. Channing’s name] William Ellery Channing, see headnote, p. 322 in this volume. The quote is from chapter 8 of Channing’s *Slavery* (1835).

[464.8](#) ‘I will be heard!’] From Garrison’s “To the Public,” see p. [269](#) in this volume.

[464.18](#) Dr. Bowditch] Henry Ingersoll Bowditch (1808–1892), a Boston-based physician and abolitionist who assisted fugitive slaves.

[464.24](#) Mr. Pierpont] John Pierpont, see headnote, p. [354](#) in this volume.

[464.24](#) Mr. Allen] Probably William G. Allen (1820–post-1860), the African American writer and lecturer who in 1850 would be appointed professor of Greek and Belles Lettres at New York Central College in McGrawville, New York.

[464.32](#) Mr. James Lowell] James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), see headnote, p. [474](#) in this volume.

[464.37](#) Mr. Stetson] Caleb Stetson (1790–1870), Unitarian minister and abolitionist.

[464.40](#) a poem called The Christian Slave] By John Greenleaf Whittier, published in 1843.

[465.26](#) Old Hundred] Hymn beginning “All people that on Earth do dwell,” a version of Psalm 100 sung to a tune attributed to Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510–1560) and first published in the 1551 Geneva Psalter.

[465.32–33](#) old tune: . . . Luther was there] “Old Hundred” was often attributed to Luther.

[470.33–34](#) Fitchburg stock] Stock of the Fitchburg Railroad in northern Massachusetts, in which Emerson was a shareholder.

[471.13](#) sing Jim Crow and jump Jim Crow] “Jump Jim Crow,” popular song (1828) by comedian Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice, said to be inspired by the song and dance of a crippled slave named Jim Crow.

[477.30](#) get up upon Mount Ebal . . . curse] In Deuteronomy 27:11–13, Moses commanded the Israelites to pronounce a blessing on Mount Gerizim and a curse on Mount Ebal.

[487.9](#) Xerxes] Xerxes I (519–465 B.C.E.), king of Persia who invaded Greece in 480 B.C.E.

[497.10–33](#) O, master, . . . I’ll go] From “The Slave and Her Babe,” by the English writer Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846), known as Charlotte

Elizabeth. In the version of the *Narrative* published in London in 1849, Brown replaced this quotation with two paragraphs attacking the slave trade within the United States.

[498.8–31](#) “See these poor . . . jubilee!”] “The Plantation Song,” first printed in 1844 in *The Liberator*. “The Plantation Song” was also recorded by Henry Bibb in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* (August 8, 1844) as a song sung by slaves being sent to the deep South.

[501.35](#) ‘Slavery as it is’] *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (1839), by Theodore Dwight Weld (1803–1895), an excerpt from which is included in this volume. See p. [379](#).

[505.37](#) The Alexandria Gazette] A newspaper founded in 1784 by George Richard as the *Virginia Journal*.

[506.10–13](#) Why stands she . . . weeping there?] The first stanza of “The Slave-Auction—A Fact,” first published in *The Anti-Slavery Harp: A Collection of Songs for Anti-Slavery Meetings* (Boston: 1848), pp. 24–25, compiled by William Wells Brown himself.

[506.19](#) The late Henry Clay] Henry Clay (1777–1852) of Kentucky, three-time Speaker of the House of Representatives, secretary of state under John Quincy Adams, long-serving U.S. senator. Clay was an architect of the Compromises of 1820 and 1850.

[506.21](#) John Randolph, . . . prominent statesman] John Randolph (1773–1833), U.S. congressman and senator from Virginia, a fervent states’ rights advocate.

[513.9](#) O God! . . . and thee!] From the anonymous poem “The Slave-Auction—A Fact” (1848).

[517.9](#) “Come, ye disconsolate,”] Hymn with words by Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779–1852) first published in Moore’s *Sacred Songs, Duets and Trios* (1824), then heavily revised by Thomas Hastings (1784–1872) in Hastings and Lowell Mason’s *Spiritual Songs for Social Worship* (1831).

[548.2](#) Wilmot Proviso] A proviso attached to an appropriations bill in the U.S. House of Representatives on August 8, 1846, by Pennsylvania congressman David Wilmot (1814–1868), which sought to prohibit slavery in lands gained in the Mexican-American War. The bill passed in the House but failed in the Senate in 1846 and early in 1847, before the passage into law of a similar bill without the proviso.

[548.7](#) Even General Taylor] Zachary Taylor (1784–1850), hero of the Mexican-American War who owned slaves while in office as the twelfth president of the United States, 1849–50.

[548.15–16](#) symbolic suits . . . public institutions] Until 1850, inmates at the Massachusetts State Prison wore pants that were half red and half blue.

[548.32–34](#) “Trent shall not wind . . . doth,”] Cf. *1 Henry IV*, III.i.101–5.

[551.21–23](#) Spartacus . . . Nat Turners] Spartacus (c. 109–71 B.C.E.), Thracian slave who led a slave revolt against the Romans; Nat Turner, see note [450.25](#).

[551.35–36](#) Not Macbeth, . . . “murder sleep.”] Cf. *Macbeth*, II.ii.33.

[551.39](#) “*Furor arma ministrat.*” Rage will supply their weapons] Virgil, *Aeneid*, book 1, line 177.

[552.24–25](#) Was not Major Dade’s . . . slave?] On December 28, 1835, in the first battle of the Second Seminole War, Seminole Indians ambushed troops commanded by Major Francis L. Dade (c. 1792–1835) near present-day

Bushnell, Florida, and killed all but three of the 108 soldiers. One of the survivors was a slave named Luis Pacheco (Fatio), a Seminole speaker traveling with Dade as an interpreter and guide. He was widely believed to have betrayed Dade's men by giving information to the Seminoles, a charge he denied.

[552.29–30](#) the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler] The strong protuberances of a shield; cf. Job 15:26.

[553.16–18, 22–23](#) For this cause . . . asunder] Matthew 19:5–6; Mark 10:7–9.

[554.2](#) *Honi soit qui mal y pense*] French: Shame on him who thinks evil [of something].

[555.21–22](#) Juan Fernandes, on his desolate island] In 1574, João Fernandes (c. 1536–1604), a Portuguese explorer sailing for the Spanish crown, discovered the archipelago of islands west of Valparaiso, Chile, that were named for him, the Juan Fernández Islands. Sojourner Truth is conflating his story with that of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk (1676–1721), who was stranded there at his own request, 1704–9, an experience believed to have inspired Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

[556.24](#) the famous cellar] All the slaves of Charles Ardinburgh, who sold Isabella at age nine but retained ownership of her parents, lived in the damp cellar beneath his house.

[559.18](#) 'above all that is called God,'] 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

[559.38](#) in the image of God] Genesis 1:27 and 9:6.

[560.15–19](#) 'He casteth out devils . . . this place.'] Luke 11:15; 23:2; and 23:5.

[560.27–29](#) 'Lord, Lord, . . . wonderful works?'] Matthew 7:22.

[560.36](#) ‘fear of man which bringeth a snare’] Proverbs 29:25.

[561.15](#) with a rod of iron] Psalms 2:9; Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15.

[562.23](#) fiery trials] 1 Peter 4:12.

[570.14–15](#) “Jesus can make . . . pillows are.”] From “Christ’s Presence Makes Death Easy,” hymn (1707) by Isaac Watts.

[574.11](#) He is not ashamed to call them brethren.] Hebrews 2:11.

[574.31](#) Priest and Levite passed him by.] In the Parable of the Good Samaritan; see Luke 10:31–32.

[588.40](#) muslin-de-laine] Or mousseline-de-laine, a multicolored, multi-patterned woolen cloth. From French *de laine* (“of wool”); also a breed of Merino sheep producing high-quality wool for women’s dresses.

[594.1](#) R. H. D.] Right Hand Door.

[594.28, 33](#) L. 1 E.] Left first Entrance.

[594.32](#) R. H.] Right Hand.

[595.7](#) L. H.] Left Hand.

[600.17–18](#) a more modern . . . euphonious term] Possibly an allusion to “Hunker,” the name for the conservative faction in the New York Democratic Party opposed to the antislavery “Barnburners.”

[603.34–37](#) “Trust no future. . . . overhead.”] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “A Psalm of Life” (1838).

[604.10](#) Sydney Smith] Smith (1771–1845), an Anglican clergyman, was an

English essayist, lecturer, and social reformer.

[604.15–16](#) “Abraham to our father,”) Luke 3:8.

[604.22–23](#) Washington could not . . . his slaves.] In July 1799, five months before his death, Washington drew up a will that resulted in the emancipation of 122 slaves; see p. [97](#) in this volume.

[604.27–28](#) “The evil . . . their bones.”] *Julius Caesar*, III.ii.75–76.

[605.8–9](#) “lame man . . . hart.”] Isaiah 35:6.

[605.29–37](#) “By the rivers . . . mouth.”] Psalms 137:1–6.

[606.24](#) “I will not . . . excuse;”) From Garrison’s “To the Public”; see p. [267](#) in this volume.

[609.16](#) Ex-Senator Benton] Thomas Hart Benton (1782–1858), Democratic U.S. senator from Missouri, 1821–1851, defeated for reelection after opposing the Compromise of 1850 as too favorable to proslavery interests, and a Democratic congressman, 1853–55, defeated for reelection because of his opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

[612.1–4](#) “Is this . . . slumber in?”) Cf. John Greenleaf Whittier, “Stanzas for the Times” (1835).

[612.22](#) your Secretary of State] Daniel Webster served as secretary of state in the Fillmore administration from July 22, 1850, until his death on October 24, 1852.

[613.28–29](#) *mint, anise and cummin*] See Matthew 23:23.

[613.37–614.3](#) stern old Covenanters . . . of Scotland] A reference to the fervid opposition of Scotland’s first Protestants, especially the great reformer John

Knox (c. 1514–1572), to their Catholic Queen Mary (1542–1567). Knox preached venomous sermons against the Queen, admonished her directly in a series of audiences, and after she abdicated he called for her execution.

[614.36](#) Bolingbroke] Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), English statesman, political theorist, and deist, author of *Reflections Concerning Innate Moral Principles* (1752).

[615.5](#) “*pure and undefiled religion*”] Cf. James 1:27.

[615.6–8](#) “*first pure, . . . without hypocrisy.*”] Cf. James 3:17.

[615.20–29](#) “Bring no more . . . for the widow.”] Cf. Isaiah 11:13–17.

[615.37–39](#) There is no power . . . sustained in it] From *An Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery* (1846) by the Presbyterian minister and theologian Albert Barnes (1798–1870).

[616.18](#) the LORDS of Buffalo] John Case Lord (1805–1877), Presbyterian minister in Buffalo who delivered a sermon supporting the Fugitive Slave Law on December 12, 1850, published in 1851.

[616.18](#) the SPRINGS of New York] Gardiner Spring (1785–1873), proslavery pastor of Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City.

[616.18–19](#) the LATHROPS of Auburn] Leonard Elijah Lathrop (1796–1857), pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Auburn, New York, about whose sermon *A Discourse, delivered at Auburn, on the Day of the Annual Thanksgiving, Dec. 12, 1850* (1850) Douglass wrote in a letter: “Lathrop, of Auburn, has signalized himself by devoting ‘Thanksgiving day’ to rebuking disobedience to the fugitive slave law, and exhorting his brother Christians to a faithful discharge of their slave-catching duties.”

[616.19](#) the COXES and SPENCERS of Brooklyn] Samuel Hanson Cox (1790–1830), pastor of Brooklyn’s First Presbyterian Church, 1837–54, who had denounced Douglass in an 1846 letter to the *New York Evangelist* after the two men clashed at the World Temperance Conference in London; Ichabod Smith Spencer (1798–1854), pastor of Brooklyn’s Second Presbyterian Church, whose sermon *Fugitive Slave Law: The Religious Duty of Obedience to Law*, preached on November 24, 1850, and soon published, supported the law.

[616.19–20](#) the GANNETS and SHARPS of Boston] Ezra Stiles Gannett (1801–1871), Unitarian minister and assistant pastor to William Ellery Channing at Boston’s Federal Street Church, who expressed support for the Fugitive Slave Law in his *Thanksgiving for the Union* (1850); English-born Daniel Sharp (1783–1853), minister of Boston’s Charles Street Church, who also supported the law from the pulpit.

[616.20](#) The DEWEYS of Washington] Orville Dewey (1794–1882), Unitarian clergyman who, in an address in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on December 27, 1850, spoke in favor of the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Law.

[616.33](#) Henry Ward Beecher] See headnote, p. [489](#) in this volume.

[616.34](#) Samuel J. May of Syracuse] May (1797–1871) was a Unitarian pastor, women’s rights and temperance advocate, and abolitionist who assisted slaves fleeing to Canada. He was indicted, but not convicted, for taking part in the “Jerry rescue” of a fugitive slave from a Syracuse police station on October 1, 1851.

[616.39](#) R. R. Raymond] Robert R. Raymond (b. 1818), pastor of the First Baptist Church in Syracuse, 1847–52.

[617.13](#) Buxtons . . . Knibbs] English abolitionists Thomas Fowell Buxton

(1786–1846), Thomas Burchell (1799–1846), and William Knibb (1803–1845).

[618.1](#) fallen Hungary] The Hungarian Revolution of 1848 was repressed in 1849 by Austrian and Russian troops.

[618.15–16](#) “that, of one . . . the earth,”] Cf. Acts 17:26.

[618.25–26](#) Jefferson, “*is worse . . . to oppose*] Cf. Jefferson, letter of June 26, 1786, to French writer and politician Jean Nicolas D meunier (1751–1814), whose essay on the United States for the *Encyclop die m thodique* (a revised version of Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclop die*) was prepared with Jefferson’s assistance in 1786.

[619.13–15](#) “To palter . . . the heart.”] Cf. *Macbeth*, V.viii.20–23.

[619.24–26](#) Lysander Spooner . . . Gerritt Smith] Spooner (1808–1887), author of *The Unconstitutionality of Slavery* (1845); William Goodell (1792–1878), lawyer and author of *Views of American Constitutional Law, Its Bearing upon American Slavery* (1844) and a founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society; Samuel E. Sewall, (1799–1888), lawyer, member of the Liberty Party, and author of *Remarks on Slavery in the United States* (1827); Gerrit Smith, see headnote, p. [376](#) in this volume.

[620.19](#) Ex-Vice-President Dallas] George Miffin Dallas (1792–1864) was a senator from Pennsylvania, 1831–33, and vice president under President James K. Polk, 1845–49.

[620.24](#) Senator Berrien] John MacPherson Berrien (1781–1856), Whig U.S. senator from Georgia, 1825–29 and 1841–52.

[620.28](#) Senator Breese] Sidney Breese (1800–1878), Democratic U.S. senator from Illinois, 1843–49.

[620.28](#) Lewis Cass] Soldier, diplomat, and statesman (1782–1866), Democratic U.S. senator from Michigan, 1845–48 and 1849–57. He was the Democratic presidential candidate in 1848 and later served as secretary of state, 1857–60, in the Buchanan administration. Cass was a leading proponent of the doctrine of popular sovereignty, which held that the electoral will of a territory’s citizens should determine whether to permit or proscribe slavery in that territory.

[621.2–3](#) “*The arm of the Lord is not shortened,*”] Cf. Isaiah 59:1.

[621.33](#) “*Ethiopia . . . unto God.*”] Cf. Psalms 68:31.

[621.36–622.31](#) God speed . . . driven.] From William Lloyd Garrison, “The Triumph of Freedom” (1845).

[623.3–4](#) ‘—His head was . . . far away!’] Cf. canto 4, stanza 141 of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1818) by George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824): “He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes / Were with his heart, and that was far away.”

[624.26](#) guides of Dryburgh Abbey] A ruined monastery in Scotland. Founded in 1150 and damaged by English raids in 1322 and 1385, it was again sacked by the English in 1544, and never rebuilt.

[627.34](#) *rencontres* ] French: encounters, clashes.

[628.1–2](#) rolled, as “a sweet morsel,” under these corrupt tongues] Variant of the expression “to roll sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue,” derived from Job 20:12–13.

[628.31–32](#) “without compromise and without concealment,”] Cf. the motto of the American Anti-Slavery Society’s official publication, *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*: “Without concealment—without compromise.”

[630.32](#) foreheads “*villainously low*”] See Caliban’s lines in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, IV.i.247–49: “We shall lose our time / And all be turn’d to barnacles, or to apes / With foreheads villainous low.”

[635.2–6](#) ‘Oh, where’s the slave . . . slowly?’] From the song “Oh! Where’s the Slave!” by Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779–1852), included in his *Irish Melodies* (1808–34).

[635.9](#) Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.] From canto 2 (1812), stanza 76 of Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*.

[636.3–4](#) that whole affair on board of the Creole] See note [450.35](#).

[646.36–37](#) GARRISON’s original declaration] “To the Public,” see p. [267](#) in this volume.

[648.19–20](#) from Mr. EMERSON] From Emerson’s first speech commemorating emancipation in the British West Indies, delivered in Concord, August 1, 1844.

[648.39](#) DANIEL O’CONNELL] Irish lawyer and member of parliament (1775–1847), the “Irish Liberator” whose abolitionist activities included reproaching Irish Americans involved in slavery. He is the “great Celtic monarch of invective” invoked at 649.1–2.

[649.35](#) LORD DERBY and his friends] Members of Britain’s Conservative Party, which Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby (1799–1869), led from 1846 to 1868.

[649.38](#) Parliamentary Reform] The Reform Bill passed by Parliament in 1832 introduced major changes to the electoral system of the United Kingdom, increasing the size of the electorate dramatically.

[649.38–40](#) Abolition of the Test Acts, . . . Corn Laws] The Corporation and Test

Acts, laws passed under Charles II that required civil and military officeholders in England and Wales, including members of the House of Commons, to take Anglican communion and renounce the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, were repealed in 1828; an act of Parliament in 1839 significantly reduced the cost of sending letters domestically, from sixpence to a penny; passage of the 1829 Catholic Relief Act permitted Catholics to serve as members of Parliament and to hold other offices of state from which they had been barred; slavery was abolished in all British colonies in 1833; the Corn Laws, which imposed duties on grain imported into Great Britain, were repealed in 1846.

[650.2](#) made PEEL their tool] Sir Robert Peel (1788–1850), Tory leader who served as prime minister, 1835–36 and 1841–46, advocated for numerous reforms, such as the abolition of discriminatory laws against Catholics and Jews and the repeal of the Corn Laws.

[650.2–3](#) conquered the DUKE OF WELLINGTON] As Tory leader, the Duke of Wellington was brought over to supporting liberalizing measures such as the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 and the Reform Bill of 1832.

[651.38–39](#) “two or three” to meet together] Cf. Jesus’s words at Matthew 18:20: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”

[652.24](#) Prof. STUART] Moses Stuart (1780–1852), proslavery Congregationalist minister and professor of sacred literature at Andover Theological Seminary.

653.26; 654.1 “righteousness . . . to come.”] Acts 24:25.

[653.33–34](#) TALLEYRAND . . . blunder] The phrase, “C’est plus qu’un crime,—c’est une faute,” said to have been uttered about the execution on trumped-up charges of Louis Antoine de Bourbon, Duc d’Enghien (1772–1804) in 1804, has

been attributed to Joseph Fouché (1759–1820), Napoleon’s minister of police, as well as to Talleyrand.

[655.29–31](#) ‘I should suspect . . . galled horse did wince’] From *The Holy State and the Profane State* (1642) by English clergyman Thomas Fuller (1608–1661).

[655.35](#) like Alexander’s butler] According to Diogenes Laërtius (c. third century C.E.), *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Demophon, a servant of Alexander the Great, felt hot in the shade but shivered in the sun.

[656.8–9](#) Mr. HALE, the head of the Free Soil movement] John P. Hale (1806–1873), antislavery U.S. senator from New Hampshire, 1847–53, 1855–65, and the Free Soil Party’s nominee for president in 1852.

[656.13](#) a HOUSTON and a CASS] Texas statesman Samuel Houston (1793–1863), a slave-owner; Lewis Cass, see note [620.28](#).

[657.13](#) HAYNAU on the DANUBE] Austrian general Julius Jacob von Haynau (1786–1853), military governor of Hungary, 1849–50, notorious for his brutality.

[658.9–10](#) that last infirmity of noble minds,"] John Milton, *Lycidas* (1637), line 71.

[658.25–26](#) “the memory of the wicked shall rot.”] Proverbs 10:7.

[661.1–20](#) “And must this body die . . . And sing thy praise above!”] Isaac Watts’s “Triumph over Death in Hope of the Resurrection,” as revised by John Wesley.

[672.11–12](#) 12 April 1851 . . . 12 April 1852] Sims was arrested on April 4, 1851; his trial was held on April 11, and he was taken to a Boston wharf in the early

morning of April 12, to be transported to Georgia. Pierpont originally printed these dates as 12 June 1851 and 12 June 1852; they have been corrected in this volume.

[673.21](#) Her Blue Ridge towers] The Blue Ridge Mountains, part of the Appalachian range.

[675.2](#) *Be Up and Doing*] From Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life."

[676.9–10](#) when it shows its bond and demands its pound of flesh] Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, IV.i.230–33.

[678.10](#) Mr. Geo. D. Prentice] George D. Prentice (1802–1870), Connecticut-born journalist, editor, and humorist who spent most of his life in Kentucky, as editor of the *Louisville Journal*.

[683.4–5](#) Coleridge did not believe in ghosts . . . myself] The English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) wrote that "I once told a Lady, the reason why I did not believe in the existence of Ghosts &c was that I had seen too many of them myself." See *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 2 (1962), ed. Kathleen Coburn, entry 2583.

[683.10](#) George T. Curtis] George Ticknor Curtis (1812–1894), prominent Boston lawyer and politician who, as the federal commissioner in charge of enforcing the return of fugitive slaves, ordered the rendition of Thomas Sims to slavery (see headnote, p. [672](#)).

[684.17](#) as it stands for Kossuth and Mazzini] Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894), Hungarian patriot who led an unsuccessful independence movement in 1848, was imprisoned in Turkey, 1849–51, and lived the remainder of his life in exile. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872), Italian revolutionary, member of the ruling triumvirate of a short-lived republic in Rome, 1848–49; at the time of

Higginson's speech he was living in exile in England.

[684.28](#) the State treated Mr. Hoar] In 1844, Samuel Hoar (1778–1856), a Massachusetts lawyer, judge, and congressman, was sent by the governor of Massachusetts to Charleston to present an official objection to laws permitting the imprisonment of free black sailors arriving in South Carolina's ports and their sale into slavery if their jail fees were not paid. Upon his arrival with his daughter Elizabeth in Charleston, the South Carolina legislature called for the governor to expel Hoar, "the emissary of a Foreign Government, hostile to our domestic institutions." Feeling threatened, the Hoars left Charleston after a one-week stay.

[689.5](#) Pettit] John Pettit (1807–1877) was a Democratic congressman from Indiana, 1843–49, and senator, 1853–55, who argued for the extension of slavery into Kansas.

[689.12](#) Marion's men, Southerners though they were] Revolutionary War general Francis Marion (c. 1732–1795) led a group of guerrilla fighters known as "Marion's Men" against the British in South Carolina in 1780–81.

[689.14–15](#) the men who captured André] John André (1750–1780), a British military officer and spy, was captured disguised in civilian clothes on September 23, 1780, by three American militiamen: John Paulding (1758–1818), Isaac van Wart (1762–1828), and David Williams (1754–1831). André was hanged as a spy on October 2, 1780.

[694.23](#) destiny of Nebraska] In January 1854 Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois introduced legislation for organizing Kansas and Nebraska as federal territories that repealed the prohibition against slavery in federal territory north of 36°30' and allowed the question of whether slavery would be permitted in the new territories to be decided by their elected legislatures. The Kansas-Nebraska

Act was passed by the Senate, 37–14, on March 4 and by the House of Representatives, 113–100, on May 22, then signed into law by President Franklin Pierce on May 30, 1854.

[694.25–27](#) several of the citizens . . . clutches] Anthony Burns (1834–1862), a fugitive from Virginia, was arrested in Boston on May 24, 1854. On May 26 a federal deputy marshal was fatally shot when a crowd led by Thomas Wentworth Higginson stormed the courthouse in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue Burns. With the approval of President Franklin Pierce, several companies of soldiers and marines were sent to guard the courthouse against further assault. On June 2 Burns was taken on board a federal revenue cutter as 1,500 militiamen stood guard. Higginson, Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, and five other men were charged for their role in the May 26 riot, but the indictments were dismissed in 1855 on a technicality.

[694.33–35](#) Our Buttricks, . . . the enemy] In the fighting at Concord’s North Bridge on April 19, 1775, Major John Buttrick (1731–1791) gave the initial order to the Massachusetts militia to open fire after British shots killed Captain Isaac Davis (1745–1775) and Private Abner Hosmer (1754–1775). Militiamen had fought British regulars earlier that day on Lexington Common.

[695.7](#) Fugitive Slave Law] In 1793, Congress adopted a fugitive slave law allowing slaveholders to use the federal courts to regain possession of runaway slaves. As part of the “Compromise of 1850,” Congress passed a new fugitive slave law that gave jurisdiction over fugitive slave cases to federal commissioners appointed by the courts, authorized federal marshals to summon all citizens to assist in enforcing the law, and established criminal penalties for harboring fugitives. Both the 1793 and 1850 laws denied persons accused of being runaway slaves the right to seek a writ of habeas corpus, to be tried by a jury, or to testify on their own behalf.

[695.9–10](#) compromise compact of 1820] In March 1820, Congress voted to admit Missouri as a slave state while prohibiting slavery in the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36°30' N. The prohibition was repealed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

[695.18–20](#) Again it happens . . . SLAVE.] See note [694.25–27](#).

[695.21](#) Mr. Loring's decision] U.S. Commissioner Edward Greely Loring (1802–1890) ruled that Thomas Sims and Anthony Burns be sent back into slavery under the Fugitive Slave Law.

[695.30](#) Governor] Emory Washburn (1800–1877), Whig governor of Massachusetts, 1854–55.

[696.4](#) the Simm's tragedy] I.e., that of Thomas Sims (see headnote, p. [672](#) in this volume).

[696.6](#) Governor of Massachusetts] George Sewall Boutwell (1818–1905), governor in 1851.

[696.22](#) speech to his accomplices] Washburn commended the actions of the militia who secured the courthouse at a dinner a few days after Burns was sent back to Virginia.

[696.24](#) recent law] A Massachusetts state law “further to protect Personal Liberty,” enacted in the wake of the October 1842 arrest of the escaped slave George Latimer (1819–c. 1896), who was claimed by Virginia planter James Gray under the terms of the 1793 federal Fugitive Slave Law. Judge Lemuel Shaw ruled that state courts could not interfere with fugitive slave cases pending in federal court. After petitions were circulated calling for legislation prohibiting state officials from assisting in the capture and incarceration of fugitive slaves, the “Latimer law” was passed in March 1843.

[697.17](#) Mr. Suttle, a slaveholder from Virginia] Charles F. Suttle of Stafford County, Virginia, who inherited Anthony Burns as a slave when Burns was six years old.

[697.31–33](#) Three years ago . . . into slavery] See note [696.4](#).

[698.14–15](#) the 19th of April . . . 12th of April] The dates of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and the arrest of Thomas Sims.

[701.30–31](#) the dog that returns to his vomit] See Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2:22.

[702.10](#) Mitchell's *Citizen*] John Mitchell (1815–1875), an Irish nationalist, was convicted of treason in 1848 and sentenced to fourteen years' penal transportation. In 1853 he escaped from Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) and went to New York, where he began publishing *The Citizen*, a proslavery newspaper, in January 1854.

[702.39–703.3](#) Do what you will . . . whipped to death] Cf. Unitarian clergyman Orville Dewey's speech in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on December 27, 1850: "I would consent that my own brother, my own son, should go [into slavery]—*ten times rather* would I go myself—than that this Union should be sacrificed for me or for us."

[704.17](#) tintamar] Uproar, clamor.

[706.19–20](#) volcanic scorïæ . . . infernal regions] See John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) bk. 1, ll. 230–38.

[706.31](#) Court street] Location of the courthouse where Burns was imprisoned.

[707.34](#) Missouri Compromise] See note [695.9–10](#).

[707.35–36](#) *Nymphœa Douglassii*] A merging of the Latin name for the water-lily

with that of Democratic senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois, architect of the Compromise of 1850.

[707.39](#) Boston Mayor] Jerome V. C. Smith (1800–1879), mayor of Boston, 1854–55.

[711.20–21](#) under the shadow . . . Hoosac] The White Mountains of New Hampshire; Mount Katahdin, the highest peak in Maine; and the Hoosac Mountains, connected to the Berkshire and Green Mountain ranges.

[713.30–31](#) *Nolumus mutari*] Latin: “We do not want to be changed.”

[714.15–16](#) they eat . . . Girard Houses] Famous hotels in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, respectively.

[715.22](#) the Apollo, and the Torso] The Apollo Belvedere and the Torso Belvedere, ancient Greek sculptures in the collection of the Vatican.

[717.10](#) Lord Coke] Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), renowned commentator on English law.

[718.13–14](#) Laws of Menu, the Laws of Lycurgus] *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* or *Manusmṛti*, Hindu legal treatise written between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., first translated into English in 1794. Lycurgus (c. 820–c. 730 B.C.E.) was a Greek lawmaker who gave Sparta its constitution.

[718.17](#) Code of Justinian] See note [152.37–39](#).

[718.17–18](#) famous jurists, Grotius, . . . and Mansfield] Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Dutch philosopher; Emer de Vattel (1714–1767), Swiss scholar; Henri François d’Aguesseau (1668–1751), Chancellor of France; William Blackstone (1723–1780), English jurist; and William Murray, first Earl of Mansfield (1705–

1793), Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

[718.29–30](#) Cicero, Selden . . . justices of England] Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), Roman orator; John Selden (1584–1654), English legal scholar; Richard Hooker (1554–1600), Anglican theologian; Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), chief justice, 1613–16; Sir Henry Hobart, first Baronet (c. 1560–1625), Attorney General for England and Wales, 1606–13; Sir John Holt (1642–1710), chief justice, 1689–1710; and William Murray, first Earl of Mansfield (1705–1793), chief justice, 1756–88.

[720.26–27](#) Lord Wellington's weighing the soldiers proves it] See the recollection of the Duke of Wellington as cited in John Wilson Croker, "Maurel on the Duke of Wellington" (1853): "Within a few days after I joined my first regiment I caused a private soldier to be weighed—first, in full marching order, arms, accoutrements, ammunition, &c., and afterwards without them. I wished to have some measure of the power of the individual man, compared with the weight he was to carry and the work he was expected to do."

[720.35–37](#) "walks into the chamber . . . electors] Cf. "Courts of the Ancient Common Law" (1822), essay by Sir Francis Palgrave (1788–1861), English historian: "Deputies, however freely elected, who walk into the chamber attended only by their own insignificance, can receive but a slender aid from the will and voices of their electors."

[721.6](#) Charles Fourier] François Marie Charles Fourier (1772–1837), French philosopher who advocated a society based on equal work and mutual aid.

[721.40–722.2](#) Montesquieu said . . . freedom] *Spirit of the Laws*, ch. 28, sec. 3.

[722.17–21](#) "To obey orders . . . little orders spring] Cf. Horatio Nelson's March 1799 letter to the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV of England), quoted

in Robert Southey, *Life of Nelson* (1813).

[723.34–35](#) Lowell Institutes . . . Libraries] Free public lecture series in Boston established under the terms of the will of John Lowell (1799–1836), son of cotton manufacturer Francis Cabot Lowell; educational institution founded in 1852 in South Danvers (now Peabody), Massachusetts, birthplace of merchant George Peabody (1795–1869); the financiers Joshua Bates (1788–1864) and John Jacob Astor (1763–1848) were benefactors of public libraries in Boston and New York City, respectively.

[727.25](#) Fletcher] Byron’s valet, William Fletcher, was white. Melville might have been thinking of Edward Trelawny’s black servant who took some journeys with Byron.

[735.20–21](#) Ward and Garnett, . . . Loguen] The Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward (1817–c. 1866), a founder of the Liberty Party and the American Missionary Association and author of *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (1855); Henry Highland Garnet, see headnotes, pp. 443 and 877 in this volume; William Wells Brown, see headnote, p. 491 in this volume; James W. C. Pennington, see headnote, p. 558 in this volume; Jermain Wesley Loguen, see headnote, p. [788](#) in this volume.

[735.33](#) autobiography of Hugh Miller] *An Autobiography: My Schools and School-Masters* (1854), a popular work by the Scottish poet, author, journalist, and paleontologist Hugh Miller (1802–1856).

[736.2](#) “first-found Ammonite,”) Cf. Hugh Miller, *An Autobiography*: “In a nodular mass of bluish-gray limestone . . . had laid open my first found ammonite.” An ammonite is a fossil shell.

[737.18](#) Henry Bibb] See headnote, p. [527](#) in this volume.

[737.21](#) Covey—and *whipped him*] Edward Covey, Maryland farmer whom Douglass was hired out to in 1834 and who subjected Douglass to repeated whippings. After fighting back an attack from Covey “for nearly two hours,” he was never whipped again; he called this act of resistance the “turning-point of my career as a slave.”

[738.37–38](#) when the younger Pitt entered the House of Commons] William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806) became a member of Parliament at age twenty-one in January 1781.

[742.6–7](#) the year before Gen. Jackson commenced fighting the Creek Indians] I.e., 1812; the first actions led by Andrew Jackson (1767–1845) against the Creek Indians were fought in the fall of 1813.

[742.31](#) to the Choctaw purchase] Land annexed in the Treaty of Doak’s Stand (1820), which provided for the purchase by the United States of about 5.5 million acres of Choctaw territory in western and central Mississippi.

[754.10](#) field of Marathon] Site of the Greek victory over the invading Persian army in 490 B.C.E.

[754.16](#) fields of Crecy and Agincourt] Two major battles of the Hundred Years War.

[754.24–25](#) great Roman Orator . . . Verres] In 70 B.C.E., Cicero prosecuted Gaius Verres (c. 120–43 B.C.E.), a former governor of Sicily, for corruption. The trial ended when Verres agreed to go into exile.

[756.16–17](#) *sed potius . . . quam bellum*] Second-century C.E. historian Julius Florus, *Epitome of the Histories of Titus Livy*, II.xiii. The quotation can be translated as Sumner’s “but something compounded of all these strifes, and in itself more than war,” or as “but it was rather a war consisting of all of these, or

even something more than a war.”

[756.39–40](#) Machiavel . . . Bacon . . . Hastings] Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), author of *The Prince* (1532); Francis Bacon (1561–1626), lord chancellor of England from 1618 until 1621, was removed from office for accepting bribes. Warren Hastings (1732–1818) was governor of Bengal, 1772–85. His impeachment on charges of corruption and cruelty in 1788 resulted, after prolonged proceedings, in his acquittal in 1795.

[758.19](#) Mr. BUTLER] Andrew Pickens Butler (1796–1857), who helped draft the Kansas-Nebraska Act, served as senator from South Carolina, 1846–57.

[758.20](#) Mr. DOUGLAS] Stephen A. Douglas (1813–1861), who debated Abraham Lincoln in 1858, was a Democratic congressman from Illinois, 1843–47; a senator, 1847–61; and the Northern Democratic candidate for president in 1860.

[760.13–14](#) Hampden . . . ship-money] The “shipmoney” tax levied by King Charles I without parliamentary consent was fiercely resisted by the opposition led by John Hampden (see note 450.14). Part of the opposition was based on the belief that Charles was using the tax revenue for purposes other than the navy.

[760.17](#) Russell and Sidney] William, Lord Russell (1639–1683) and Algernon Sidney (1622–1683), political opponents of Charles II who were executed for allegedly plotting his assassination.

[760.32–34](#) Alva . . . Holland] Don Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, third Duke of Alba (1507–1582), governor of the Spanish Netherlands, 1567–73, whose repressive measures against the Protestant rebellion included mass executions for heresy.

[774.24–25](#) like Esau . . . pottage] See Genesis 25:29–34.

[777.6](#) England's Queen] Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901.

[789.33](#) Mr. Fillmore] Millard Fillmore (1800–1874), thirteenth president of the United States, signed the Fugitive Slave Act into law.

[792.2](#) *Speech to the Court*] Brown spoke after being convicted in a Virginia court of conspiracy, murder, and treason following his failed raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, October 16–18, 1859. He was hanged on December 2, 1859.

[792.3](#) *Mrs. George L. Stearns*] Abolitionist Mary Preston Stearns (1821–1901), of Medford, Massachusetts, the niece of Lydia Maria Child (see headnote, p. 308 in this volume) and the wife of the manufacturer George Luther Stearns (1809–1867), who financially supported John Brown's abolitionist activities from 1857 to 1859.

[797.15–16](#) who, like the Cid, . . . bed] A reference to an episode in the life of Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (c. 1043–1099), the Castilian military commander known as El Cid, as recounted in *Cantar de Mío Cid* ("Song of the Cid," c. 1140).

[797.16–17](#) like the dying Sidney, . . . needs it more] The English poet, courtier, and soldier Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) died from a gunshot wound received during the Battle of Zutphen, September 22, 1586. According to his friend and biographer Fulke Greville, Sidney gave his water bottle to a fellow wounded soldier, saying, "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine."

[826.35–827.5](#) "Bring no more . . . plead for the widow.]" Isaiah 1:13–17.

[827.32](#) Bishop Potter of New York] Horatio Potter (1802–1887), Episcopal bishop for the Diocese of New York.

[828.18](#) Your greatest statesman has said] Wendell Phillips, "Lincoln's Election,"

lecture delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston, November 7, 1860.

[829.2](#) Garibaldi, the hero of this hour] Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882), military leader of the Italian Risorgimento.

[829.13–15](#) Camden, Yorktown, . . . and Ticonderoga] Battles in the American Revolutionary War.

[830.22](#) Bashaw] Variant of “pasha,” the title given to high-ranking Ottoman officials.

[830.23](#) Hobbes] Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), English political philosopher and author of *Leviathan* (1651).

[830.25–27](#) Six thousand skulls . . . Gregory] Anecdote cited in the *Table-Talk of Martin Luther* and *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) by English writer Robert Burton (1577–1640).

[830.28–29](#) “who dream of Freedom in a slave’s embrace,”] Cf. Thomas Moore’s “To Thomas Hume, Esq. M.D. from the City of Washington” (1807): “Where blest he woos some black *Aspasia*’s grace, / And dreams of freedom in his slave’s embrace” (a variant version of the lines reads: “Or woo, perhaps, some black *Aspasia*’s charms / And dreams of freedom in his bondmaid’s arms”). As is clear from a footnote by Moore—“the ‘black *Aspasia*’ of the present P\*\*\*\*\* of the United States, inter Avernales haud ignotissima nymphas [‘not the least known among the nymphs of Avernus,’ from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. 5, l. 541], has given rise to much pleasantry among the antidemocratic wits of America”—the reference is to Thomas Jefferson’s affair with Sally Hemings, which had first come to light in 1802.

[830.33–831.1](#) Giant Despair . . . dungeon was.”] See John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress, Part II* (1684), seventh stage.

[831.8–9](#) chapter of Sir Thomas Browne, . . . *we fear*] Bk. 7, ch. 19 of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), by Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682).

[831.20](#) Life of Patrick Henry by Mr. Wirt] *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (1817), by William Wirt (1772–1834), a biography that remained popular throughout the nineteenth century.

[831.25](#) Mr. Gholson, of Virginia . . . brood mare] James Gholson (1798–1848), U.S. congressman from Virginia, 1833–35, compared his recently purchased slaves to brood mares in remarks to the Virginia legislature, January 18, 1831.

[831.31](#) another Virginian] Thomas Jefferson Randolph (see note [377.4](#)), in an 1832 speech to the Virginia legislature.

[832.14–18](#) the eloquence of Chatham . . . scalping-knife] In a speech delivered to the House of Lords on November 18, 1777, by William Pitt, first Earl of Chatham (1708–1778), prime minister of Great Britain, 1766–68.

[833.1–2](#) Senator from Virginia, [Mr. MASON,] James Murray Mason (1798–1871), senator from Virginia, 1847–61.

[833.7–8](#) Dante . . . “visible speech”] *Purgatorio*, bk. 10, l. 95.

[834.11](#) Mithridates fed on poison] Mithridates VI (134–63 B.C.E.), king of Pontus, regularly took small doses of poison in order to build up an immunity to it.

[839.22](#) “Not my . . . Lord!”] Cf. Luke 22:42.

[839.29–32](#) “Where laughter . . . separate hell.”] Byron, “The Lament of Tasso,” (1817), iv.7–10.

[844.15](#) Young Mr. Flint] James Norcom Jr.

[845.18](#) poor Benjamin's sufferings] Benjamin, the youngest child of Jacobs's grandmother, escaped to the North after a failed attempt had landed him in prison for three months.

[853.35](#) emancipation provisions of the new Confiscation Act.] The Second Confiscation Act, which Lincoln signed into law on July 17, 1862, authorized the seizure of slaves of persons found by federal courts to be supporting the rebellion, and stipulated that escaped slaves in territory controlled by the Union were "forever free of their servitude."

[854.16](#) H. Winter Davis] Henry Winter Davis (1817–1865), U.S. congressman from Maryland, 1855–61, 1863–65, a prominent pro-Union politician who was critical of the Second Confiscation Act.

[854.16](#) Parson Brownlow] William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow (1805–1877), Methodist preacher and editor who was forced in 1861 to stop publishing his newspaper, the *Knoxville Whig*, because of its anti-Confederate stance; he would later serve as governor, 1865–69, and U.S. senator from Tennessee, 1869–75.

[854.17–18](#) Nashville Union] *The Daily Nashville Union*, shortly renamed the *Nashville Daily Union*, pro-Union newspaper whose inaugural issue was published on April 10, 1862.

[854.28](#) Jeff. Davis] Jefferson Davis (1808–1889), U.S. senator from Mississippi, 1847–51, and president of the Confederate States of America, 1861–65.

[855.13–14](#) the rebel raids of John Morgan . . . Magoffin] John Hunt Morgan (1825–1864), Confederate general who led cavalry raids in Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio; Beriah Magoffin (1815–1885), proslavery governor of Kentucky, 1859–62, who declared a short-lived policy of armed neutrality for the state.

[856.7–10](#) Fremont’s Proclamation . . . within his lines] On August 30, 1861, General John C. Frémont (1813–1890) ordered the emancipation of all slaves in Missouri whose masters did not declare their loyalty to the Union. On May 9, 1862, General David Hunter (1802–1886) issued his “General Order No. 1,” proclaiming all slaves in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina free. Both Frémont’s and Hunter’s orders were rescinded by Lincoln. On November 21, 1861, General Henry Wager Halleck (1815–1872) barred fugitive slaves from entering Union army lines in Missouri, ostensibly to prevent Confederate spying.

[862.13–14](#) LUCY STONE, . . . TILTON] Lucy Stone (1818–1893), abolitionist, orator, and leader of the women’s rights movement; Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock Jones (1813–1896), coeditor of the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in Salem, Ohio, 1845–49; Theodore Tilton (1835–1907), antislavery writer and editor.

[862.22–23](#) RALPH SANGERFORD] Ralph Sandiford, see note [220.14–15](#).

[862.24](#) ELIAS HICKS] Quaker religious leader (1748–1830) from Long Island, New York, among the first to urge a boycott of slave-produced goods, in his *Observations on the Slavery of the Africans* (1811).

[862.29](#) our friend FOSTER] Stephen Symonds Foster (1809–1881), leader of the abolitionist movement in New Hampshire and advocate for women’s rights.

[863.17](#) WILLIAM FURNESS] William Henry Furness (1802–1896), abolitionist and minister of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia.

[863.19–20](#) Madame PULSKY] Theresa Pulszky (1815–1866), wife of the Hungarian politician and patriot Ferencz Aurelius Pulszky (1814–1897) and author of *Memoirs of a Hungarian Lady* (1850).

[863.34](#) RAY POTTER] Ray Potter (1798–1858), Baptist minister and antislavery

activist in Rhode Island.

[864.2](#) PHILLIP BROOKS] Episcopal bishop, author, and abolitionist (1835–1893), longtime pastor of Boston’s Trinity Church.

[864.4](#) Freedmen’s Association] Most likely a reference to the recently formed Friends’ Association of Philadelphia and Its Vicinity for the Relief of Colored Freedmen, commonly known as the Friends’ Freedmen’s Association.

[864.16–18](#) “Come, ye blessed . . . thee?”] Matthew 25:34, 44.

[864.32–33](#) when we were mobbed, when Pennsylvania Hall was burned] Built in Philadelphia to be a meeting place primarily for abolitionist and other reformist associations, Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground on May 17, 1838, three days after its opening, by a proslavery mob. Rioters had first attacked the building during a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. See also p. [360](#) in this volume.

[865.2](#) –3 ‘Now lettest thou thy servant . . . seen *of thy salvation*’] Luke 2:29–30.

[875.9–12](#) Miriam . . . gloriously!”] Cf. Exodus 15:21.

[881.14–15](#) let us . . . not judged.] Cf. Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37.

[881.17–19](#) “Woe . . . cometh!”] Matthew 18:7.

[881.32–33](#) “the judgments . . . altogether”] Psalm 19:9.

[883.30](#) Ravallac, who took the life of Henry IV. of France] François Ravallac (1578–1610), a fanatic who perceived Henry IV as an enemy of Catholicism and stabbed him to death on May 14, 1610.

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