From Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, transl. by Mary Howitt (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853)

A good deal of Howitt's reputation must rest on her translations, especially of the Danish Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1865) and the Swedish Frederika Bremer (1801–1865). For a history of their strong but sometimes rocky professional relationship, see Woodring (esp. 90–3 and 154–6). Like Howitt, Bremer advocated for women's rights, abolition of slavery and political reform, although in this selection, we can see at least an openness to considering the moral legitimacy of slavery. Bremer's two years (1849–51) spent travelling throughout the United States provided the material for Homes of the New World.

We were conducted to our room, refreshed and dressed ourselves; then came breakfast and all the neighbors, and I had to shake from sixty to seventy kindly-extended hands, which would not have been a difficult task if a deal of small talk had not followed, which, through the repetition of the same word and thing; became wearisome, and made me feel like a parrot. The assembly was beautiful and gay, and the breakfast, which was magnificent, was closed by a dance. It was a pleasure to me to see so many lovely and lively young girls – delicate figures, though deficient in strength. The ladies dress with taste; have small hands and feet, and remind one of the French, but are more lovely than they. Something, however, is wanting in their countenances, but what I do not rightly know – I fancy it is *expression*. I was not quite in spirits, and felt to-day somewhat fatigued. When, however, in the evening, I came forth into the open air, and, accompanied by the silent Mr. Downing, wandered quietly beside the glorious, calm river, and contemplated the masses of light and soft velvet-like shadow which lay on the majestic Catskill Mountains, behind which the sun sank in cloudless splendor; then did the heart expand itself, and breathe freely in that sublime and glorious landscape; then did I drink from the mountain springs; then did I live for the first time that day.

In the evening I enjoyed an unusual pleasure. Mrs. D. played on the harp and piano, and sang remarkably well, with extraordinary power, like a real musician, which I believe is a rare thing in this country. There were both words and expression in her singing, and so there is also in her demeanor; hers is a noble figure, with a free and independent carriage; "she sustains herself," as you would say. She neither sings nor talks by rote. She sings and talks out of her own independent, feeling, and thinking soul. Her eldest son, a boy of thirteen, has, it appears to me, a real genius for music, even though he broke off and was not able to sing to the end – and I believe that he really could not – a little fantastic song, the first notes of which, however, were sufficient to foretell a something beyond talent in the boy. He was not in the mood, and in that state he could not sing. Mrs. D. told me, during our conversation at table, that her son was to learn a handicraft trade, because, although they were now wealthy, the time might come when

they would be so no longer, but when it might be necessary for him to earn his bread as a common workman – so uncertain is the stability of wealth in America; why so, I could not rightly understand. …

He [William Lloyd Garrison] expressed himself mildly regarding the Southern slaveholders, said that he valued many of them personally, but that he hated slavery, and would continue to combat with it as with the greatest enemy of America. And a man who had endured the maltreatment of a mob – who had borne the halter and disgrace, and has still stood firmly as before, combating fearlessly as before; the resolution and character of such a man deserve esteem. This gentleman brought to us two lately escaped slaves, William and Ellen Craft.[1] She was almost white; her countenance, which was rather sallow, had the features of the white, and though not handsome, a very intelligent expression. They had escaped by means of her being dressed as a man; he acting as her servant. In order to avoid the necessity of signing her name in the travelers' books, for she could not write, she carried her right arm in a sling, under the plea of having injured it. Thus they had succeeded in traveling by rail-way from the South to the Free States of the North. They appeared to be sincerely happy.

"Why did you escape from your masters?" I asked; "did they treat you with severity?"

"No," replied she; "they always treated me well; but I fled from them because they would not give me my rights as a human being. I could never learn any thing, neither to read nor to write."

I remarked in her the desire for learning peculiar to the white race.

"How is it," said some one in company to the negro, "that the assertions of the anti-slavery party regarding the treatment of the slaves, that they are often flogged and severely beaten, are declared to be false? Travelers come to the North who have long resided among the plantations of the South, and have never seen any thing of the kind."

William smiled, and said, with a keen expression, "Nor are children whipped in the presence of strangers; this is done when they do not see."

Neither of these escaped slaves complained of their masters. And though, like every other thinking Christian, I must condemn slavery as a system and institution, I wait to pass judgment on American slaveholders and slavery in America until I have seen it nearer. l am, from experience, suspicious of party spirit and its blindness, and whenever I see this in activity I can not accede to it, but,

[1] William and Ellen Craft tell their own story in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*. Readers may also want to consult McCaskill's analysis of the Crafts' lives and work.

on the contrary, feel myself inclined to opposition. I will, at all events, see and hear for and against the question before I join either party. Justice and moderation before every thing! …

Since I last wrote, I have spent an amusing evening at an anti-slavery meeting in Faneuil Hall (a large hall for public assemblies), which was very animated. Mr. Charles Sumner, who wished me to see one of the popular assemblies here, accompanied me. Some runaway slaves were to be introduced to the public, and the talking was about them. The hall and the galleries were quite full. One of the best, and certainly most original, speaker of the evening, was a great negro, who had lately succeeded in escaping from slavery with his wife and child, and who related the history of his escape. There was a freshness, a life, an individuality in this man's eloquence and gestures which, together with the great interest of the narrative, were infinitely delightful. Sometimes he made use of such extraordinary similes and expressions, that the whole assembly burst into peals of laughter; but John Brown, that was his name, did not join in it; he did not allow himself to be moved, but went on only the more earnestly with his story. …

The assembly clapped their hands in tumultuous applause. After this speaker a group came forward, which was also saluted with much clapping of hands; a young fair lady, in a simple white dress, and hair without any ornament, stepped forward, leading a dark mulatto woman by the hand. She had been a slave, and had lately escaped from slavery on board a vessel, where she had been concealed. Her owners, who suspected her place of concealment, obtained a warrant for searching the vessel, which they did thoroughly, burning brimstone in order to compel her to come forth. But she endured it all, and succeeded in making her escape. It was a beautiful sight, when the young white woman, Miss Lucy S., one of the ladies whom I had seen at my little doctress's, placed her hand upon the head of the black woman, calling her sister, and introducing her as such to the assembled crowd. It looked well and beautiful, and it was certainly felt by all that the white woman stood here as the friend and protector of the black. Miss Lucy performed her part very well, in a perfectly womanly, quiet, and beautiful manner. She then related the history of the late slave, and talked about slavery for a full hour with perfect self-possession, perspicuity, and propriety of tone and gesture. But instead of speaking, as she might and ought to have done, from her own womanly feeling of life – instead of awakening sympathy for those wrongs which woman especially suffers in slavery, inasmuch as her very children do not belong to her; that the beings whom she brings forth in sorrow are the property of her master, and may be taken from her and sold whenever he will – instead of laying stress upon this and many other circumstances repulsive to the heart and to every sense of justice, and which especially befall the female slave – Miss Lucy struck into the common track of so-much hackneyed abuse of the pro-slavery men of the North, and against Daniel Webster and his warm zeal for Hungarian freedom, while he saw with indifference three millions of native Americans held in slavery. She repeated merely what the men had already said, and said better and

more powerfully than she had done; she entirely mistook her own mission as a female speaker. When will women perceive that, if they would worthily take a place in the forum, they must come forth with the dignity and power of the being who has new and mighty truths to enunciate and represent? They must feel and speak from the centre of the sphere of woman. Not all the good nature and courtesy of man will enable them to maintain their place on the public platform, if they do not take possession of it on their own positive ground. There is no want of this in itself; it lies near to the heart of woman; it is within her, around her, if she will but see it. But she must yet obtain a more profound knowledge both of herself and of life. …

The gentlemen who followed her brought with them more life and interest. But they offended me by their want of moderation and justice; by their style of declamation; by their endeavoring to point out, even in the galleries of the hall, individuals who did not agree with them in their anti-slavery labors; it offended me to hear family life desecrated by making known dissensions; for example, between the father and the daughter on these questions; thus overlooking the divine moral law of "Judge not!" These tirades were carried to an extreme, and with much personality. But all was animated and amusing, and the best understanding seemed to exist between the speaker and his audience. Wendell Phillips, the young lawyer, seemed to possess the greatest share of public favor; and he is really an unusually gifted and agreeable speaker, carrying the public along with him, and seeming to know his own power of moving and electrifying them. A Mr. Quincy, a young man, of one of the highest families in Boston, spoke violently against anti-slavery people, and among others against his own eldest brother, now mayor of Boston. But the public did not like his outbreak, especially against the mayor, and hissed and clamored terrifically. Mr. Quincy proceeded with still more violence, walking up and down the platform, his hands in the pockets of his coat skirts, which he fluttered about as if he enjoyed himself, and was fanned by the most agreeable of zephyrs.

At length the tumult and the cry of "Phillips!" "Wen-dell Phillips!" was so overpowering, that Mr. Quincy could not be beard. He paused, and beckoned with a smile to Wendell Phillips that he should take his place. …

I was glad to have been at a popular assembly where so much license prevailed, but which was yet under the control of order and good temper.