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Douglass, by Frederick Douglass

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NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS

AN AMERICAN SLAVE. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

BOSTON

PUBLISHED AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY OFFICE, NO. 25 CORNHILL 1845

ENTERED, ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS, IN THE YEAR 1845 BY FREDERICK

DOUGLASS, IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS.

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A PARODY

PREFACE

In the month of August, 1841, I attended an anti-slavery convention

in Nantucket, at which it was my happiness to become acquainted with

\_Frederick Douglass\_, the writer of the following Narrative. He was a

stranger to nearly every member of that body; but, having recently made

his escape from the southern prison-house of bondage, and feeling

his curiosity excited to ascertain the principles and measures of the

abolitionists,--of whom he had heard a somewhat vague description while

he was a slave,--he was induced to give his attendance, on the occasion

alluded to, though at that time a resident in New Bedford.

Fortunate, most fortunate occurrence!--fortunate for the millions of

his manacled brethren, yet panting for deliverance from their awful

thraldom!--fortunate for the cause of negro emancipation, and of

universal liberty!--fortunate for the land of his birth, which he has

already done so much to save and bless!--fortunate for a large circle of

friends and acquaintances, whose sympathy and affection he has strongly

secured by the many sufferings he has endured, by his virtuous traits of

character, by his ever-abiding remembrance of those who are in bonds, as

being bound with them!--fortunate for the multitudes, in various parts of

our republic, whose minds he has enlightened on the subject of slavery,

and who have been melted to tears by his pathos, or roused to virtuous

indignation by his stirring eloquence against the enslavers of

men!--fortunate for himself, as it at once brought him into the field of

public usefulness, "gave the world assurance of a MAN," quickened the

slumbering energies of his soul, and consecrated him to the great work

of breaking the rod of the oppressor, and letting the oppressed go free!

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--the

applause which followed from the beginning to the end of his felicitous

remarks. 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 proportion and stature

commanding and exact--in intellect richly endowed--in natural eloquence

a prodigy--in soul manifestly "created but a little lower than the

angels"--yet a slave, ay, a fugitive slave,--trembling for his safety,

hardly daring to believe that on the American soil, a single white

person could be found who would befriend him at all hazards, for the

love of God and humanity! Capable of high attainments as an intellectual

and moral being--needing nothing but a comparatively small amount of

cultivation to make him an ornament to society and a blessing to his

race--by the law of the land, by the voice of the people, by the terms

of the slave code, he was only a piece of property, a beast of burden, a

chattel personal, nevertheless!

A beloved friend from New Bedford prevailed on \_Mr. Douglass\_ to address

the convention: He came forward to the platform with a hesitancy and

embarrassment, necessarily the attendants of a sensitive mind in such a

novel position. After apologizing for his ignorance, and reminding the

audience that slavery was a poor school for the human intellect and

heart, he proceeded to narrate some of the facts in his own history as

a slave, and in the course of his speech gave utterance to many noble

thoughts and thrilling reflections. As soon as he had taken his seat,

filled with hope and admiration, I rose, and declared that \_Patrick

Henry\_, of revolutionary fame, never made a speech more eloquent in the

cause of liberty, than the one we had just listened to from the lips of

that hunted fugitive. So I believed at that time--such is my belief

now. I reminded the audience of the peril which surrounded this

self-emancipated young man at the North,--even in Massachusetts, on the

soil of the Pilgrim Fathers, among the descendants of revolutionary

sires; and I appealed to them, whether they would ever allow him to

be carried back into slavery,--law or no law, constitution or no

constitution. The response was unanimous and in thunder-tones--"NO!"

"Will you succor and protect him as a brother-man--a resident of the old

Bay State?" "YES!" shouted the whole mass, with an energy so startling,

that the ruthless tyrants south of Mason and Dixon's line might almost

have heard the mighty burst of feeling, and recognized it as the pledge

of an invincible determination, on the part of those who gave it, never

to betray him that wanders, but to hide the outcast, and firmly to abide

the consequences.

It was at once deeply impressed upon my mind, that, if \_Mr. Douglass\_

could be persuaded to consecrate his time and talents to the promotion

of the anti-slavery enterprise, a powerful impetus would be given to

it, and a stunning blow at the same time inflicted on northern prejudice

against a colored complexion. I therefore endeavored to instil hope

and courage into his mind, in order that he might dare to engage in a

vocation so anomalous and responsible for a person in his situation; and

I was seconded in this effort by warm-hearted friends, especially by the

late General Agent of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, \_Mr. John

A. Collins\_, whose judgment in this instance entirely coincided with

my own. At first, he could give no encouragement; with unfeigned

diffidence, he expressed his conviction that he was not adequate to

the performance of so great a task; the path marked out was wholly an

untrodden one; he was sincerely apprehensive that he should do more

harm than good. After much deliberation, however, he consented to make

a trial; and ever since that period, he has acted as a lecturing

agent, under the auspices either of the American or the Massachusetts

Anti-Slavery Society. In labors he has been most abundant; and his

success in combating prejudice, in gaining proselytes, in agitating the

public mind, has far surpassed the most sanguine expectations that were

raised at the commencement of his brilliant career. He has borne himself

with gentleness and meekness, yet with true manliness of character. As

a public speaker, he excels in pathos, wit, comparison, imitation,

strength of reasoning, and fluency of language. There is in him that

union of head and heart, which is indispensable to an enlightenment

of the heads and a winning of the hearts of others. May his strength

continue to be equal to his day! May he continue to "grow in grace, and

in the knowledge of God," that he may be increasingly serviceable in the

cause of bleeding humanity, whether at home or abroad!

It is certainly a very remarkable fact, that one of the most efficient

advocates of the slave population, now before the public, is a fugitive

slave, in the person of \_Frederick Douglass\_; and that the free colored

population of the United States are as ably represented by one of their

own number, in the person of \_Charles Lenox Remond\_, whose eloquent

appeals have extorted the highest applause of multitudes on both sides

of the Atlantic. Let the calumniators of the colored race despise

themselves for their baseness and illiberality of spirit, and henceforth

cease to talk of the natural inferiority of those who require nothing

but time and opportunity to attain to the highest point of human

excellence.

It may, perhaps, be fairly questioned, whether any other portion of the

population of the earth could have endured the privations, sufferings

and horrors of slavery, without having become more degraded in the scale

of humanity than the slaves of African descent. Nothing has been left

undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their

moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind;

and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most

frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries! To

illustrate the effect of slavery on the white man,--to show that he has

no powers of endurance, in such a condition, superior to those of

his black brother,--\_Daniel O'connell\_, the distinguished advocate of

universal emancipation, and the mightiest champion of prostrate but not

conquered Ireland, relates the following anecdote in a speech delivered

by him in the Conciliation Hall, Dublin, before the Loyal National

Repeal Association, March 31, 1845. "No matter," said \_Mr. O'connell\_,

"under what specious term it may disguise itself, slavery is still

hideous. \_It has a natural, an inevitable tendency to brutalize every

noble faculty of man.\_ An American sailor, who was cast away on the

shore of Africa, where he was kept in slavery for three years, was, at

the expiration of that period, found to be imbruted and stultified--he

had lost all reasoning power; and having forgotten his native language,

could only utter some savage gibberish between Arabic and English, which

nobody could understand, and which even he himself found difficulty

in pronouncing. So much for the humanizing influence of \_The Domestic

Institution\_!" Admitting this to have been an extraordinary case of

mental deterioration, it proves at least that the white slave can sink

as low in the scale of humanity as the black one.

\_Mr. Douglass\_ has very properly chosen to write his own Narrative, in

his own style, and according to the best of his ability, rather than

to employ some one else. It is, therefore, entirely his own production;

and, considering how long and dark was the career he had to run as a

slave,--how few have been his opportunities to improve his mind since he

broke his iron fetters,--it is, in my judgment, highly creditable to his

head and heart. He who can peruse it without a tearful eye, a heaving

breast, an afflicted spirit,--without being filled with an unutterable

abhorrence of slavery and all its abettors, and animated with a

determination to seek the immediate overthrow of that execrable

system,--without trembling for the fate of this country in the hands of

a righteous God, who is ever on the side of the oppressed, and whose arm

is not shortened that it cannot save,--must have a flinty heart, and be

qualified to act the part of a trafficker "in slaves and the souls of

men." I am confident that it is essentially true in all its statements;

that nothing has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated, nothing

drawn from the imagination; that it comes short of the reality, rather

than overstates a single fact in regard to \_slavery as it is\_. The

experience of \_Frederick Douglass\_, as a slave, was not a peculiar one;

his lot was not especially a hard one; his case may be regarded as a

very fair specimen of the treatment of slaves in Maryland, in which

State it is conceded that they are better fed and less cruelly treated

than in Georgia, Alabama, or Louisiana. Many have suffered incomparably

more, while very few on the plantations have suffered less, than

himself. Yet how deplorable was his situation! what terrible

chastisements were inflicted upon his person! what still more shocking

outrages were perpetrated upon his mind! with all his noble powers and

sublime aspirations, how like a brute was he treated, even by those

professing to have the same mind in them that was in Christ Jesus! to

what dreadful liabilities was he continually subjected! how destitute

of friendly counsel and aid, even in his greatest extremities! how heavy

was the midnight of woe which shrouded in blackness the last ray of

hope, and filled the future with terror and gloom! what longings after

freedom took possession of his breast, and how his misery augmented,

in proportion as he grew reflective and intelligent,--thus demonstrating

that a happy slave is an extinct man! how he thought, reasoned, felt,

under the lash of the driver, with the chains upon his limbs! what

perils he encountered in his endeavors to escape from his horrible doom!

and how signal have been his deliverance and preservation in the midst

of a nation of pitiless enemies!

This Narrative contains many affecting incidents, many passages of great

eloquence and power; but I think the most thrilling one of them all

is the description \_Douglass\_ gives of his feelings, as he stood

soliloquizing respecting his fate, and the chances of his one day being

a freeman, on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay--viewing the receding

vessels as they flew with their white wings before the breeze, and

apostrophizing them as animated by the living spirit of freedom. Who

can read that passage, and be insensible to its pathos and sublimity?

Compressed into it is a whole Alexandrian library of thought, feeling,

and sentiment--all that can, all that need be urged, in the form of

expostulation, entreaty, rebuke, against that crime of crimes,--making

man the property of his fellow-man! O, how accursed is that system,

which entombs the godlike mind of man, defaces the divine image, reduces

those who by creation were crowned with glory and honor to a level with

four-footed beasts, and exalts the dealer in human flesh above all that

is called God! Why should its existence be prolonged one hour? Is it not

evil, only evil, and that continually? What does its presence imply but

the absence of all fear of God, all regard for man, on the part of the

people of the United States? Heaven speed its eternal overthrow!

So profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery are many persons, that

they are stubbornly incredulous whenever they read or listen to any

recital of the cruelties which are daily inflicted on its victims. They

do not deny that the slaves are held as property; but that terrible

fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure

to outrage, or savage barbarity. Tell them of cruel scourgings, of

mutilations and brandings, of scenes of pollution and blood, of the

banishment of all light and knowledge, and they affect to be greatly

indignant at such enormous exaggerations, such wholesale misstatements,

such abominable libels on the character of the southern planters! As if

all these direful outrages were not the natural results of slavery!

As if it were less cruel to reduce a human being to the condition of

a thing, than to give him a severe flagellation, or to deprive him of

necessary food and clothing! As if whips, chains, thumb-screws, paddles,

blood-hounds, overseers, drivers, patrols, were not all indispensable

to keep the slaves down, and to give protection to their ruthless

oppressors! As if, when the marriage institution is abolished,

concubinage, adultery, and incest, must not necessarily abound; when all

the rights of humanity are annihilated, any barrier remains to protect

the victim from the fury of the spoiler; when absolute power is assumed

over life and liberty, it will not be wielded with destructive sway!

Skeptics of this character abound in society. In some few instances,

their incredulity arises from a want of reflection; but, generally, it

indicates a hatred of the light, a desire to shield slavery from the

assaults of its foes, a contempt of the colored race, whether bond or

free. Such will try to discredit the shocking tales of slaveholding

cruelty which are recorded in this truthful Narrative; but they will

labor in vain. \_Mr. Douglass\_ has frankly disclosed the place of his

birth, the names of those who claimed ownership in his body and soul,

and the names also of those who committed the crimes which he has

alleged against them. His statements, therefore, may easily be

disproved, if they are untrue.

In the course of his Narrative, he relates two instances of murderous

cruelty,--in one of which a planter deliberately shot a slave belonging

to a neighboring plantation, who had unintentionally gotten within his

lordly domain in quest of fish; and in the other, an overseer blew out

the brains of a slave who had fled to a stream of water to escape

a bloody scourging. \_Mr. Douglass\_ states that in neither of these

instances was any thing done by way of legal arrest or judicial

investigation. The Baltimore American, of March 17, 1845, relates

a similar case of atrocity, perpetrated with similar impunity--as

follows:--"\_Shooting a slave.\_--We learn, upon the authority of a letter

from Charles county, Maryland, received by a gentleman of this city,

that a young man, named Matthews, a nephew of General Matthews, and

whose father, it is believed, holds an office at Washington, killed one

of the slaves upon his father's farm by shooting him. The letter states

that young Matthews had been left in charge of the farm; that he gave

an order to the servant, which was disobeyed, when he proceeded to

the house, \_obtained a gun, and, returning, shot the servant.\_ He

immediately, the letter continues, fled to his father's residence,

where he still remains unmolested."--Let it never be forgotten, that no

slaveholder or overseer can be convicted of any outrage perpetrated on

the person of a slave, however diabolical it may be, on the testimony

of colored witnesses, whether bond or free. By the slave code, they are

adjudged to be as incompetent to testify against a white man, as though

they were indeed a part of the brute creation. Hence, there is no

legal protection in fact, whatever there may be in form, for the slave

population; and any amount of cruelty may be inflicted on them with

impunity. Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of a more

horrible state of society?

The effect of a religious profession on the conduct of southern masters

is vividly described in the following Narrative, and shown to be any

thing but salutary. In the nature of the case, it must be in the highest

degree pernicious. The testimony of \_Mr. Douglass\_, on this point, is

sustained by a cloud of witnesses, whose veracity is unimpeachable. "A

slaveholder's profession of Christianity is a palpable imposture. He

is a felon of the highest grade. He is a man-stealer. It is of no

importance what you put in the other scale."

Reader! are you with the man-stealers in sympathy and purpose, or on the

side of their down-trodden victims? If with the former, then are you the

foe of God and man. If with the latter, what are you prepared to do

and dare in their behalf? Be faithful, be vigilant, be untiring in your

efforts to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free. Come what

may--cost what it may--inscribe on the banner which you unfurl to the

breeze, as your religious and political motto--"NO COMPROMISE WITH

SLAVERY! NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS!"

WM. LLOYD GARRISON BOSTON, \_May\_ 1, 1845.

LETTER FROM WENDELL PHILLIPS, ESQ.

BOSTON, APRIL 22, 1845.

My Dear Friend:

You remember the old fable of "The Man and the Lion," where the lion

complained that he should not be so misrepresented "when the lions wrote

history."

I am glad the time has come when the "lions write history." We have been

left long enough to gather the character of slavery from the involuntary

evidence of the masters. One might, indeed, rest sufficiently satisfied

with what, it is evident, must be, in general, the results of such a

relation, without seeking farther to find whether they have followed in

every instance. Indeed, those who stare at the half-peck of corn a week,

and love to count the lashes on the slave's back, are seldom the "stuff"

out of which reformers and abolitionists are to be made. I remember

that, in 1838, many were waiting for the results of the West India

experiment, before they could come into our ranks. Those "results" have

come long ago; but, alas! few of that number have come with them, as

converts. A man must be disposed to judge of emancipation by other tests

than whether it has increased the produce of sugar,--and to hate slavery

for other reasons than because it starves men and whips women,--before he

is ready to lay the first stone of his anti-slavery life.

I was glad to learn, in your story, how early the most neglected of

God's children waken to a sense of their rights, and of the injustice

done them. Experience is a keen teacher; and long before you had

mastered your A B C, or knew where the "white sails" of the Chesapeake

were bound, you began, I see, to gauge the wretchedness of the slave,

not by his hunger and want, not by his lashes and toil, but by the cruel

and blighting death which gathers over his soul.

In connection with this, there is one circumstance which makes your

recollections peculiarly valuable, and renders your early insight the

more remarkable. You come from that part of the country where we are

told slavery appears with its fairest features. Let us hear, then, what

it is at its best estate--gaze on its bright side, if it has one; and

then imagination may task her powers to add dark lines to the picture,

as she travels southward to that (for the colored man) Valley of the

Shadow of Death, where the Mississippi sweeps along.

Again, we have known you long, and can put the most entire confidence in

your truth, candor, and sincerity. Every one who has heard you speak

has felt, and, I am confident, every one who reads your book will feel,

persuaded that you give them a fair specimen of the whole truth. No

one-sided portrait,--no wholesale complaints,--but strict justice done,

whenever individual kindliness has neutralized, for a moment, the deadly

system with which it was strangely allied. You have been with us, too,

some years, and can fairly compare the twilight of rights, which your

race enjoy at the North, with that "noon of night" under which they

labor south of Mason and Dixon's line. Tell us whether, after all, the

half-free colored man of Massachusetts is worse off than the pampered

slave of the rice swamps!

In reading your life, no one can say that we have unfairly picked out

some rare specimens of cruelty. We know that the bitter drops, which

even you have drained from the cup, are no incidental aggravations, no

individual ills, but such as must mingle always and necessarily in

the lot of every slave. They are the essential ingredients, not the

occasional results, of the system.

After all, I shall read your book with trembling for you. Some years

ago, when you were beginning to tell me your real name and birthplace,

you may remember I stopped you, and preferred to remain ignorant of

all. With the exception of a vague description, so I continued, till the

other day, when you read me your memoirs. I hardly knew, at the time,

whether to thank you or not for the sight of them, when I reflected that

it was still dangerous, in Massachusetts, for honest men to tell

their names! They say the fathers, in 1776, signed the Declaration of

Independence with the halter about their necks. You, too, publish your

declaration of freedom with danger compassing you around. In all the

broad lands which the Constitution of the United States overshadows,

there is no single spot,--however narrow or desolate,--where a fugitive

slave can plant himself and say, "I am safe." The whole armory of

Northern Law has no shield for you. I am free to say that, in your

place, I should throw the MS. into the fire.

You, perhaps, may tell your story in safety, endeared as you are to so

many warm hearts by rare gifts, and a still rarer devotion of them to

the service of others. But it will be owing only to your labors, and the

fearless efforts of those who, trampling the laws and Constitution of

the country under their feet, are determined that they will "hide the

outcast," and that their hearths shall be, spite of the law, an asylum

for the oppressed, if, some time or other, the humblest may stand in our

streets, and bear witness in safety against the cruelties of which he

has been the victim.

Yet it is sad to think, that these very throbbing hearts which welcome

your story, and form your best safeguard in telling it, are all beating

contrary to the "statute in such case made and provided." Go on, my dear

friend, till you, and those who, like you, have been saved, so as by

fire, from the dark prison-house, shall stereotype these free,

illegal pulses into statutes; and New England, cutting loose from a

blood-stained Union, shall glory in being the house of refuge for the

oppressed,--till we no longer merely "\_hide\_ the outcast," or make

a merit of standing idly by while he is hunted in our midst; but,

consecrating anew the soil of the Pilgrims as an asylum for the

oppressed, proclaim our \_welcome\_ to the slave so loudly, that the tones

shall reach every hut in the Carolinas, and make the broken-hearted

bondman leap up at the thought of old Massachusetts.

God speed the day!

\_Till then, and ever,\_ Yours truly, WENDELL PHILLIPS

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington

Bailey near Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He was not sure of the

exact year of his birth, but he knew that it was 1817 or 1818. As a

young boy he was sent to Baltimore, to be a house servant, where he

learned to read and write, with the assistance of his master's wife. In

1838 he escaped from slavery and went to New York City, where he married

Anna Murray, a free colored woman whom he had met in Baltimore. Soon

thereafter he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. In 1841 he

addressed a convention of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in

Nantucket and so greatly impressed the group that they immediately

employed him as an agent. He was such an impressive orator that numerous

persons doubted if he had ever been a slave, so he wrote \_Narrative Of

The Life Of Frederick Douglass\_. During the Civil War he assisted in the

recruiting of colored men for the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments

and consistently argued for the emancipation of slaves. After the war he

was active in securing and protecting the rights of the freemen. In his

later years, at different times, he was secretary of the Santo Domingo

Commission, marshall and recorder of deeds of the District of Columbia,

and United States Minister to Haiti. His other autobiographical works

are \_My Bondage And My Freedom\_ and \_Life And Times Of Frederick

Douglass\_, published in 1855 and 1881 respectively. He died in 1895.

CHAPTER I

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from

Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my

age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the

larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of

theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep

their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave

who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than

planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A

want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me

even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could

not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not

allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed

all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and

evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me

now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this,

from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen

years old.

My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and

Betsey Bailey, both colored, and quite dark. My mother was of a darker

complexion than either my grandmother or grandfather.

My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever

heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my

master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know

nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. My mother and I were

separated when I was but an infant--before I knew her as my mother. It is

a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part

children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the

child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and

hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is

placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For

what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the

development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and

destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the

inevitable result.

I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times

in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at

night. She was hired by a Mr. Stewart, who lived about twelve miles from

my home. She made her journeys to see me in the night, travelling the

whole distance on foot, after the performance of her day's work. She was

a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at

sunrise, unless a slave has special permission from his or her master to

the contrary--a permission which they seldom get, and one that gives

to him that gives it the proud name of being a kind master. I do not

recollect of ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me

in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long

before I waked she was gone. Very little communication ever took place

between us. Death soon ended what little we could have while she lived,

and with it her hardships and suffering. She died when I was about

seven years old, on one of my master's farms, near Lee's Mill. I was not

allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial. She

was gone long before I knew any thing about it. Never having enjoyed, to

any considerable extent, her soothing presence, her tender and watchful

care, I received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I

should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.

Called thus suddenly away, she left me without the slightest intimation

of who my father was. The whisper that my master was my father, may or

may not be true; and, true or false, it is of but little consequence to

my purpose whilst the fact remains, in all its glaring odiousness, that

slaveholders have ordained, and by law established, that the children

of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers;

and this is done too obviously to administer to their own lusts, and

make a gratification of their wicked desires profitable as well as

pleasurable; for by this cunning arrangement, the slaveholder, in cases

not a few, sustains to his slaves the double relation of master and

father.

I know of such cases; and it is worthy of remark that such slaves

invariably suffer greater hardships, and have more to contend with,

than others. They are, in the first place, a constant offence to their

mistress. She is ever disposed to find fault with them; they can seldom

do any thing to please her; she is never better pleased than when she

sees them under the lash, especially when she suspects her husband of

showing to his mulatto children favors which he withholds from his black

slaves. The master is frequently compelled to sell this class of his

slaves, out of deference to the feelings of his white wife; and, cruel

as the deed may strike any one to be, for a man to sell his own children

to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to

do so; for, unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself,

but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few

shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his

naked back; and if he lisp one word of disapproval, it is set down to

his parental partiality, and only makes a bad matter worse, both for

himself and the slave whom he would protect and defend.

Every year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves. It was

doubtless in consequence of a knowledge of this fact, that one great

statesman of the south predicted the downfall of slavery by the

inevitable laws of population. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled

or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of

people are springing up at the south, and are now held in slavery,

from those originally brought to this country from Africa; and if their

increase do no other good, it will do away the force of the argument,

that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the

lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is

certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for

thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe

their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently

their own masters.

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not

remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony--a title

which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay.

He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms,

and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an

overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable

drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed

with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash

the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be enraged at

his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself.

Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary

barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man,

hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take

great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the

dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine,

whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she

was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from

his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose.

The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran

fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream,

and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would

he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I

ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well

remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was

the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be

a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the

blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which

I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could

commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it.

This occurrence took place very soon after I went to live with my old

master, and under the following circumstances. Aunt Hester went out one

night,--where or for what I do not know,--and happened to be absent

when my master desired her presence. He had ordered her not to go

out evenings, and warned her that she must never let him catch her in

company with a young man, who was paying attention to her belonging to

Colonel Lloyd. The young man's name was Ned Roberts, generally called

Lloyd's Ned. Why master was so careful of her, may be safely left to

conjecture. She was a woman of noble form, and of graceful proportions,

having very few equals, and fewer superiors, in personal appearance,

among the colored or white women of our neighborhood.

Aunt Hester had not only disobeyed his orders in going out, but had been

found in company with Lloyd's Ned; which circumstance, I found, from

what he said while whipping her, was the chief offence. Had he been a

man of pure morals himself, he might have been thought interested in

protecting the innocence of my aunt; but those who knew him will not

suspect him of any such virtue. Before he commenced whipping Aunt

Hester, he took her into the kitchen, and stripped her from neck to

waist, leaving her neck, shoulders, and back, entirely naked. He then

told her to cross her hands, calling her at the same time a d----d b---h.

After crossing her hands, he tied them with a strong rope, and led her

to a stool under a large hook in the joist, put in for the purpose. He

made her get upon the stool, and tied her hands to the hook. She now

stood fair for his infernal purpose. Her arms were stretched up at their

full length, so that she stood upon the ends of her toes. He then said

to her, "Now, you d----d b---h, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!"

and after rolling up his sleeves, he commenced to lay on the heavy

cowskin, and soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from

her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor. I was so

terrified and horror-stricken at the sight, that I hid myself in a

closet, and dared not venture out till long after the bloody transaction

was over. I expected it would be my turn next. It was all new to me.

I had never seen any thing like it before. I had always lived with my

grandmother on the outskirts of the plantation, where she was put to

raise the children of the younger women. I had therefore been, until

now, out of the way of the bloody scenes that often occurred on the

plantation.

CHAPTER II

My master's family consisted of two sons, Andrew and Richard; one

daughter, Lucretia, and her husband, Captain Thomas Auld. They lived in

one house, upon the home plantation of Colonel Edward Lloyd. My master

was Colonel Lloyd's clerk and superintendent. He was what might be

called the overseer of the overseers. I spent two years of childhood on

this plantation in my old master's family. It was here that I witnessed

the bloody transaction recorded in the first chapter; and as I received

my first impressions of slavery on this plantation, I will give some

description of it, and of slavery as it there existed. The plantation is

about twelve miles north of Easton, in Talbot county, and is situated

on the border of Miles River. The principal products raised upon it were

tobacco, corn, and wheat. These were raised in great abundance; so that,

with the products of this and the other farms belonging to him, he was

able to keep in almost constant employment a large sloop, in carrying

them to market at Baltimore. This sloop was named Sally Lloyd, in honor

of one of the colonel's daughters. My master's son-in-law, Captain Auld,

was master of the vessel; she was otherwise manned by the colonel's

own slaves. Their names were Peter, Isaac, Rich, and Jake. These

were esteemed very highly by the other slaves, and looked upon as the

privileged ones of the plantation; for it was no small affair, in the

eyes of the slaves, to be allowed to see Baltimore.

Colonel Lloyd kept from three to four hundred slaves on his home

plantation, and owned a large number more on the neighboring farms

belonging to him. The names of the farms nearest to the home plantation

were Wye Town and New Design. "Wye Town" was under the overseership of

a man named Noah Willis. New Design was under the overseership of a

Mr. Townsend. The overseers of these, and all the rest of the farms,

numbering over twenty, received advice and direction from the managers

of the home plantation. This was the great business place. It was the

seat of government for the whole twenty farms. All disputes among

the overseers were settled here. If a slave was convicted of any high

misdemeanor, became unmanageable, or evinced a determination to run

away, he was brought immediately here, severely whipped, put on board

the sloop, carried to Baltimore, and sold to Austin Woolfolk, or some

other slave-trader, as a warning to the slaves remaining.

Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms received their monthly

allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves

received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork,

or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal. Their yearly

clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen

trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter,

made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of

shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars.

The allowance of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the

old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the

field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to

them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year.

When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day.

Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might

be seen at all seasons of the year.

There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be

considered such, and none but the men and women had these. This,

however, is not considered a very great privation. They find less

difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep;

for when their day's work in the field is done, the most of them having

their washing, mending, and cooking to do, and having few or none of

the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of their

sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day;

and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and

single, drop down side by side, on one common bed,--the cold, damp

floor,--each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets;

and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver's

horn. At the sound of this, all must rise, and be off to the field.

There must be no halting; every one must be at his or her post; and woe

betides them who hear not this morning summons to the field; for if

they are not awakened by the sense of hearing, they are by the sense of

feeling: no age nor sex finds any favor. Mr. Severe, the overseer, used

to stand by the door of the quarter, armed with a large hickory stick

and heavy cowskin, ready to whip any one who was so unfortunate as not

to hear, or, from any other cause, was prevented from being ready to

start for the field at the sound of the horn.

Mr. Severe was rightly named: he was a cruel man. I have seen him whip a

woman, causing the blood to run half an hour at the time; and this,

too, in the midst of her crying children, pleading for their mother's

release. He seemed to take pleasure in manifesting his fiendish

barbarity. Added to his cruelty, he was a profane swearer. It was enough

to chill the blood and stiffen the hair of an ordinary man to hear him

talk. Scarce a sentence escaped him but that was commenced or concluded

by some horrid oath. The field was the place to witness his cruelty

and profanity. His presence made it both the field of blood and of

blasphemy. From the rising till the going down of the sun, he was

cursing, raving, cutting, and slashing among the slaves of the field, in

the most frightful manner. His career was short. He died very soon after

I went to Colonel Lloyd's; and he died as he lived, uttering, with his

dying groans, bitter curses and horrid oaths. His death was regarded by

the slaves as the result of a merciful providence.

Mr. Severe's place was filled by a Mr. Hopkins. He was a very different

man. He was less cruel, less profane, and made less noise, than Mr.

Severe. His course was characterized by no extraordinary demonstrations

of cruelty. He whipped, but seemed to take no pleasure in it. He was

called by the slaves a good overseer.

The home plantation of Colonel Lloyd wore the appearance of a country

village. All the mechanical operations for all the farms were performed

here. The shoemaking and mending, the blacksmithing, cartwrighting,

coopering, weaving, and grain-grinding, were all performed by the slaves

on the home plantation. The whole place wore a business-like aspect very

unlike the neighboring farms. The number of houses, too, conspired

to give it advantage over the neighboring farms. It was called by the

slaves the \_Great House Farm.\_ Few privileges were esteemed higher, by

the slaves of the out-farms, than that of being selected to do

errands at the Great House Farm. It was associated in their minds with

greatness. A representative could not be prouder of his election to

a seat in the American Congress, than a slave on one of the out-farms

would be of his election to do errands at the Great House Farm. They

regarded it as evidence of great confidence reposed in them by their

overseers; and it was on this account, as well as a constant desire to

be out of the field from under the driver's lash, that they esteemed

it a high privilege, one worth careful living for. He was called the

smartest and most trusty fellow, who had this honor conferred upon

him the most frequently. The competitors for this office sought as

diligently to please their overseers, as the office-seekers in the

political parties seek to please and deceive the people. The same traits

of character might be seen in Colonel Lloyd's slaves, as are seen in the

slaves of the political parties.

The slaves selected to go to the Great House Farm, for the monthly

allowance for themselves and their fellow-slaves, were peculiarly

enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense old woods,

for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once

the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as

they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. The thought that came

up, came out--if not in the word, in the sound;--and as frequently in

the one as in the other. They would sometimes sing the most pathetic

sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment

in the most pathetic tone. Into all of their songs they would manage to

weave something of the Great House Farm. Especially would they do this,

when leaving home. They would then sing most exultingly the following

words:--

"I am going away to the Great House Farm!

O, yea! O, yea! O!"

This they would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many would seem

unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to

themselves. I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those

songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of

slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject

could do.

I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and

apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I

neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a

tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension;

they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and

complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone

was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance

from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit,

and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in

tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even

now, afflicts me; and while I am writing these lines, an expression of

feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace

my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery.

I can never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to

deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren

in bonds. If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing

effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd's plantation, and, on

allowance-day, place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him,

in silence, analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers

of his soul,--and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because

"there is no flesh in his obdurate heart."

I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find

persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of

their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a

greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs

of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by

them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such

is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to

express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike

uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast

away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately considered as

evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the

songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.

CHAPTER III

Colonel Lloyd kept a large and finely cultivated garden, which afforded

almost constant employment for four men, besides the chief gardener,

(Mr. M'Durmond.) This garden was probably the greatest attraction of

the place. During the summer months, people came from far and near--from

Baltimore, Easton, and Annapolis--to see it. It abounded in fruits of

almost every description, from the hardy apple of the north to the

delicate orange of the south. This garden was not the least source of

trouble on the plantation. Its excellent fruit was quite a temptation to

the hungry swarms of boys, as well as the older slaves, belonging to the

colonel, few of whom had the virtue or the vice to resist it. Scarcely a

day passed, during the summer, but that some slave had to take the lash

for stealing fruit. The colonel had to resort to all kinds of stratagems

to keep his slaves out of the garden. The last and most successful one

was that of tarring his fence all around; after which, if a slave was

caught with any tar upon his person, it was deemed sufficient proof that

he had either been into the garden, or had tried to get in. In either

case, he was severely whipped by the chief gardener. This plan worked

well; the slaves became as fearful of tar as of the lash. They seemed to

realize the impossibility of touching \_tar\_ without being defiled.

The colonel also kept a splendid riding equipage. His stable and

carriage-house presented the appearance of some of our large city livery

establishments. His horses were of the finest form and noblest blood.

His carriage-house contained three splendid coaches, three or four gigs,

besides dearborns and barouches of the most fashionable style.

This establishment was under the care of two slaves--old Barney and young

Barney--father and son. To attend to this establishment was their sole

work. But it was by no means an easy employment; for in nothing was

Colonel Lloyd more particular than in the management of his horses. The

slightest inattention to these was unpardonable, and was visited upon

those, under whose care they were placed, with the severest punishment;

no excuse could shield them, if the colonel only suspected any want of

attention to his horses--a supposition which he frequently indulged, and

one which, of course, made the office of old and young Barney a very

trying one. They never knew when they were safe from punishment. They

were frequently whipped when least deserving, and escaped whipping when

most deserving it. Every thing depended upon the looks of the horses,

and the state of Colonel Lloyd's own mind when his horses were brought

to him for use. If a horse did not move fast enough, or hold his head

high enough, it was owing to some fault of his keepers. It was painful

to stand near the stable-door, and hear the various complaints against

the keepers when a horse was taken out for use. "This horse has not had

proper attention. He has not been sufficiently rubbed and curried, or

he has not been properly fed; his food was too wet or too dry; he got it

too soon or too late; he was too hot or too cold; he had too much hay,

and not enough of grain; or he had too much grain, and not enough

of hay; instead of old Barney's attending to the horse, he had very

improperly left it to his son." To all these complaints, no matter how

unjust, the slave must answer never a word. Colonel Lloyd could not

brook any contradiction from a slave. When he spoke, a slave must

stand, listen, and tremble; and such was literally the case. I have seen

Colonel Lloyd make old Barney, a man between fifty and sixty years of

age, uncover his bald head, kneel down upon the cold, damp ground, and

receive upon his naked and toil-worn shoulders more than thirty

lashes at the time. Colonel Lloyd had three sons--Edward, Murray, and

Daniel,--and three sons-in-law, Mr. Winder, Mr. Nicholson, and Mr.

Lowndes. All of these lived at the Great House Farm, and enjoyed the

luxury of whipping the servants when they pleased, from old Barney down

to William Wilkes, the coach-driver. I have seen Winder make one of the

house-servants stand off from him a suitable distance to be touched with

the end of his whip, and at every stroke raise great ridges upon his

back.

To describe the wealth of Colonel Lloyd would be almost equal

to describing the riches of Job. He kept from ten to fifteen

house-servants. He was said to own a thousand slaves, and I think this

estimate quite within the truth. Colonel Lloyd owned so many that he did

not know them when he saw them; nor did all the slaves of the out-farms

know him. It is reported of him, that, while riding along the road one

day, he met a colored man, and addressed him in the usual manner of

speaking to colored people on the public highways of the south: "Well,

boy, whom do you belong to?" "To Colonel Lloyd," replied the slave.

"Well, does the colonel treat you well?" "No, sir," was the ready reply.

"What, does he work you too hard?" "Yes, sir." "Well, don't he give you

enough to eat?" "Yes, sir, he gives me enough, such as it is."

The colonel, after ascertaining where the slave belonged, rode on;

the man also went on about his business, not dreaming that he had been

conversing with his master. He thought, said, and heard nothing more of

the matter, until two or three weeks afterwards. The poor man was then

informed by his overseer that, for having found fault with his master,

he was now to be sold to a Georgia trader. He was immediately chained

and handcuffed; and thus, without a moment's warning, he was snatched

away, and forever sundered, from his family and friends, by a hand more

unrelenting than death. This is the penalty of telling the truth, of

telling the simple truth, in answer to a series of plain questions.

It is partly in consequence of such facts, that slaves, when inquired

of as to their condition and the character of their masters, almost

universally say they are contented, and that their masters are kind.

The slaveholders have been known to send in spies among their slaves,

to ascertain their views and feelings in regard to their condition. The

frequency of this has had the effect to establish among the slaves the

maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head. They suppress the truth

rather than take the consequences of telling it, and in so doing prove

themselves a part of the human family. If they have any thing to say of

their masters, it is generally in their masters' favor, especially when

speaking to an untried man. I have been frequently asked, when a

slave, if I had a kind master, and do not remember ever to have given a

negative answer; nor did I, in pursuing this course, consider myself as

uttering what was absolutely false; for I always measured the kindness

of my master by the standard of kindness set up among slaveholders

around us. Moreover, slaves are like other people, and imbibe prejudices

quite common to others. They think their own better than that of others.

Many, under the influence of this prejudice, think their own masters are

better than the masters of other slaves; and this, too, in some cases,

when the very reverse is true. Indeed, it is not uncommon for slaves

even to fall out and quarrel among themselves about the relative

goodness of their masters, each contending for the superior goodness of

his own over that of the others. At the very same time, they mutually

execrate their masters when viewed separately. It was so on our

plantation. When Colonel Lloyd's slaves met the slaves of Jacob Jepson,

they seldom parted without a quarrel about their masters; Colonel

Lloyd's slaves contending that he was the richest, and Mr. Jepson's

slaves that he was the smartest, and most of a man. Colonel Lloyd's

slaves would boast his ability to buy and sell Jacob Jepson. Mr.

Jepson's slaves would boast his ability to whip Colonel Lloyd. These

quarrels would almost always end in a fight between the parties, and

those that whipped were supposed to have gained the point at issue. They

seemed to think that the greatness of their masters was transferable to

themselves. It was considered as being bad enough to be a slave; but to

be a poor man's slave was deemed a disgrace indeed!

CHAPTER IV

Mr. Hopkins remained but a short time in the office of overseer. Why his

career was so short, I do not know, but suppose he lacked the necessary

severity to suit Colonel Lloyd. Mr. Hopkins was succeeded by Mr. Austin

Gore, a man possessing, in an eminent degree, all those traits of

character indispensable to what is called a first-rate overseer. Mr.

Gore had served Colonel Lloyd, in the capacity of overseer, upon one

of the out-farms, and had shown himself worthy of the high station of

overseer upon the home or Great House Farm.

Mr. Gore was proud, ambitious, and persevering. He was artful, cruel,

and obdurate. He was just the man for such a place, and it was just the

place for such a man. It afforded scope for the full exercise of all his

powers, and he seemed to be perfectly at home in it. He was one of those

who could torture the slightest look, word, or gesture, on the part of

the slave, into impudence, and would treat it accordingly. There must

be no answering back to him; no explanation was allowed a slave, showing

himself to have been wrongfully accused. Mr. Gore acted fully up to

the maxim laid down by slaveholders,--"It is better that a dozen

slaves should suffer under the lash, than that the overseer should be

convicted, in the presence of the slaves, of having been at fault."

No matter how innocent a slave might be--it availed him nothing,

when accused by Mr. Gore of any misdemeanor. To be accused was to

be convicted, and to be convicted was to be punished; the one always

following the other with immutable certainty. To escape punishment was

to escape accusation; and few slaves had the fortune to do either, under

the overseership of Mr. Gore. He was just proud enough to demand the

most debasing homage of the slave, and quite servile enough to crouch,

himself, at the feet of the master. He was ambitious enough to be

contented with nothing short of the highest rank of overseers, and

persevering enough to reach the height of his ambition. He was cruel

enough to inflict the severest punishment, artful enough to descend to

the lowest trickery, and obdurate enough to be insensible to the voice

of a reproving conscience. He was, of all the overseers, the most

dreaded by the slaves. His presence was painful; his eye flashed

confusion; and seldom was his sharp, shrill voice heard, without

producing horror and trembling in their ranks.

Mr. Gore was a grave man, and, though a young man, he indulged in no

jokes, said no funny words, seldom smiled. His words were in perfect

keeping with his looks, and his looks were in perfect keeping with his

words. Overseers will sometimes indulge in a witty word, even with the

slaves; not so with Mr. Gore. He spoke but to command, and commanded but

to be obeyed; he dealt sparingly with his words, and bountifully with

his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well.

When he whipped, he seemed to do so from a sense of duty, and feared no

consequences. He did nothing reluctantly, no matter how disagreeable;

always at his post, never inconsistent. He never promised but to fulfil.

He was, in a word, a man of the most inflexible firmness and stone-like

coolness.

His savage barbarity was equalled only by the consummate coolness with

which he committed the grossest and most savage deeds upon the slaves

under his charge. Mr. Gore once undertook to whip one of Colonel Lloyd's

slaves, by the name of Demby. He had given Demby but few stripes, when,

to get rid of the scourging, he ran and plunged himself into a creek,

and stood there at the depth of his shoulders, refusing to come out. Mr.

Gore told him that he would give him three calls, and that, if he did

not come out at the third call, he would shoot him. The first call was

given. Demby made no response, but stood his ground. The second and

third calls were given with the same result. Mr. Gore then, without

consultation or deliberation with any one, not even giving Demby an

additional call, raised his musket to his face, taking deadly aim at his

standing victim, and in an instant poor Demby was no more. His mangled

body sank out of sight, and blood and brains marked the water where he

had stood.

A thrill of horror flashed through every soul upon the plantation,

excepting Mr. Gore. He alone seemed cool and collected. He was asked by

Colonel Lloyd and my old master, why he resorted to this extraordinary

expedient. His reply was, (as well as I can remember,) that Demby had

become unmanageable. He was setting a dangerous example to the other

slaves,--one which, if suffered to pass without some such demonstration

on his part, would finally lead to the total subversion of all rule and

order upon the plantation. He argued that if one slave refused to be

corrected, and escaped with his life, the other slaves would soon copy

the example; the result of which would be, the freedom of the slaves,

and the enslavement of the whites. Mr. Gore's defence was satisfactory.

He was continued in his station as overseer upon the home plantation.

His fame as an overseer went abroad. His horrid crime was not even

submitted to judicial investigation. It was committed in the presence of

slaves, and they of course could neither institute a suit, nor testify

against him; and thus the guilty perpetrator of one of the bloodiest

and most foul murders goes unwhipped of justice, and uncensured by the

community in which he lives. Mr. Gore lived in St. Michael's, Talbot

county, Maryland, when I left there; and if he is still alive, he very

probably lives there now; and if so, he is now, as he was then, as

highly esteemed and as much respected as though his guilty soul had not

been stained with his brother's blood.

I speak advisedly when I say this,--that killing a slave, or any colored

person, in Talbot county, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by

the courts or the community. Mr. Thomas Lanman, of St. Michael's, killed

two slaves, one of whom he killed with a hatchet, by knocking his brains

out. He used to boast of the commission of the awful and bloody deed. I

have heard him do so laughingly, saying, among other things, that he was

the only benefactor of his country in the company, and that when others

would do as much as he had done, we should be relieved of "the d----d

niggers."

The wife of Mr. Giles Hicks, living but a short distance from where I

used to live, murdered my wife's cousin, a young girl between fifteen

and sixteen years of age, mangling her person in the most horrible

manner, breaking her nose and breastbone with a stick, so that the poor

girl expired in a few hours afterward. She was immediately buried, but

had not been in her untimely grave but a few hours before she was taken

up and examined by the coroner, who decided that she had come to her

death by severe beating. The offence for which this girl was thus

murdered was this:--She had been set that night to mind Mrs. Hicks's

baby, and during the night she fell asleep, and the baby cried. She,

having lost her rest for several nights previous, did not hear the

crying. They were both in the room with Mrs. Hicks. Mrs. Hicks, finding

the girl slow to move, jumped from her bed, seized an oak stick of wood

by the fireplace, and with it broke the girl's nose and breastbone,

and thus ended her life. I will not say that this most horrid murder

produced no sensation in the community. It did produce sensation, but

not enough to bring the murderess to punishment. There was a warrant

issued for her arrest, but it was never served. Thus she escaped not

only punishment, but even the pain of being arraigned before a court for

her horrid crime.

Whilst I am detailing bloody deeds which took place during my stay

on Colonel Lloyd's plantation, I will briefly narrate another, which

occurred about the same time as the murder of Demby by Mr. Gore.

Colonel Lloyd's slaves were in the habit of spending a part of their

nights and Sundays in fishing for oysters, and in this way made up the

deficiency of their scanty allowance. An old man belonging to Colonel

Lloyd, while thus engaged, happened to get beyond the limits of Colonel

Lloyd's, and on the premises of Mr. Beal Bondly. At this trespass, Mr.

Bondly took offence, and with his musket came down to the shore, and

blew its deadly contents into the poor old man.

Mr. Bondly came over to see Colonel Lloyd the next day, whether to pay

him for his property, or to justify himself in what he had done, I know

not. At any rate, this whole fiendish transaction was soon hushed up.

There was very little said about it at all, and nothing done. It was

a common saying, even among little white boys, that it was worth a

half-cent to kill a "nigger," and a half-cent to bury one.

CHAPTER V

As to my own treatment while I lived on Colonel Lloyd's plantation,

it was very similar to that of the other slave children. I was not old

enough to work in the field, and there being little else than field work

to do, I had a great deal of leisure time. The most I had to do was to

drive up the cows at evening, keep the fowls out of the garden, keep the

front yard clean, and run of errands for my old master's daughter, Mrs.

Lucretia Auld. The most of my leisure time I spent in helping Master

Daniel Lloyd in finding his birds, after he had shot them. My connection

with Master Daniel was of some advantage to me. He became quite attached

to me, and was a sort of protector of me. He would not allow the older

boys to impose upon me, and would divide his cakes with me.

I was seldom whipped by my old master, and suffered little from any

thing else than hunger and cold. I suffered much from hunger, but much

more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost

naked--no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a

coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must

have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal

a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into

this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in

and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen

with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes.

We were not regularly allowanced. Our food was coarse corn meal boiled.

This was called \_mush\_. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough,

and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so

many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush;

some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked

hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most; he that was

strongest secured the best place; and few left the trough satisfied.

I was probably between seven and eight years old when I left Colonel

Lloyd's plantation. I left it with joy. I shall never forget the ecstasy

with which I received the intelligence that my old master (Anthony)

had determined to let me go to Baltimore, to live with Mr. Hugh Auld,

brother to my old master's son-in-law, Captain Thomas Auld. I received

this information about three days before my departure. They were three

of the happiest days I ever enjoyed. I spent the most part of all these

three days in the creek, washing off the plantation scurf, and preparing

myself for my departure.

The pride of appearance which this would indicate was not my own. I

spent the time in washing, not so much because I wished to, but because

Mrs. Lucretia had told me I must get all the dead skin off my feet and

knees before I could go to Baltimore; for the people in Baltimore were

very cleanly, and would laugh at me if I looked dirty. Besides, she was

going to give me a pair of trousers, which I should not put on unless

I got all the dirt off me. The thought of owning a pair of trousers was

great indeed! It was almost a sufficient motive, not only to make me

take off what would be called by pig-drovers the mange, but the skin

itself. I went at it in good earnest, working for the first time with

the hope of reward.

The ties that ordinarily bind children to their homes were all suspended

in my case. I found no severe trial in my departure. My home was

charmless; it was not home to me; on parting from it, I could not feel

that I was leaving any thing which I could have enjoyed by staying. My

mother was dead, my grandmother lived far off, so that I seldom saw her.

I had two sisters and one brother, that lived in the same house with me;

but the early separation of us from our mother had well nigh blotted the

fact of our relationship from our memories. I looked for home elsewhere,

and was confident of finding none which I should relish less than the

one which I was leaving. If, however, I found in my new home hardship,

hunger, whipping, and nakedness, I had the consolation that I should not

have escaped any one of them by staying. Having already had more than

a taste of them in the house of my old master, and having endured them

there, I very naturally inferred my ability to endure them elsewhere,

and especially at Baltimore; for I had something of the feeling about

Baltimore that is expressed in the proverb, that "being hanged in

England is preferable to dying a natural death in Ireland." I had the

strongest desire to see Baltimore. Cousin Tom, though not fluent in

speech, had inspired me with that desire by his eloquent description

of the place. I could never point out any thing at the Great House,

no matter how beautiful or powerful, but that he had seen something at

Baltimore far exceeding, both in beauty and strength, the object which I

pointed out to him. Even the Great House itself, with all its pictures,

was far inferior to many buildings in Baltimore. So strong was my

desire, that I thought a gratification of it would fully compensate

for whatever loss of comforts I should sustain by the exchange. I left

without a regret, and with the highest hopes of future happiness.

We sailed out of Miles River for Baltimore on a Saturday morning. I

remember only the day of the week, for at that time I had no knowledge

of the days of the month, nor the months of the year. On setting sail, I

walked aft, and gave to Colonel Lloyd's plantation what I hoped would be

the last look. I then placed myself in the bows of the sloop, and there

spent the remainder of the day in looking ahead, interesting myself in

what was in the distance rather than in things near by or behind.

In the afternoon of that day, we reached Annapolis, the capital of the

State. We stopped but a few moments, so that I had no time to go on

shore. It was the first large town that I had ever seen, and though it

would look small compared with some of our New England factory villages,

I thought it a wonderful place for its size--more imposing even than the

Great House Farm!

We arrived at Baltimore early on Sunday morning, landing at Smith's

Wharf, not far from Bowley's Wharf. We had on board the sloop a large

flock of sheep; and after aiding in driving them to the slaughterhouse

of Mr. Curtis on Louden Slater's Hill, I was conducted by Rich, one of

the hands belonging on board of the sloop, to my new home in Alliciana

Street, near Mr. Gardner's ship-yard, on Fells Point.

Mr. and Mrs. Auld were both at home, and met me at the door with their

little son Thomas, to take care of whom I had been given. And here I saw

what I had never seen before; it was a white face beaming with the most

kindly emotions; it was the face of my new mistress, Sophia Auld. I wish

I could describe the rapture that flashed through my soul as I beheld

it. It was a new and strange sight to me, brightening up my pathway

with the light of happiness. Little Thomas was told, there was his

Freddy,--and I was told to take care of little Thomas; and thus I entered

upon the duties of my new home with the most cheering prospect ahead.

I look upon my departure from Colonel Lloyd's plantation as one of

the most interesting events of my life. It is possible, and even quite

probable, that but for the mere circumstance of being removed from that

plantation to Baltimore, I should have to-day, instead of being here

seated by my own table, in the enjoyment of freedom and the happiness

of home, writing this Narrative, been confined in the galling chains of

slavery. Going to live at Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the

gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity. I have ever regarded it as the

first plain manifestation of that kind providence which has ever since

attended me, and marked my life with so many favors. I regarded the

selection of myself as being somewhat remarkable. There were a number

of slave children that might have been sent from the plantation to

Baltimore. There were those younger, those older, and those of the same

age. I was chosen from among them all, and was the first, last, and only

choice.

I may be deemed superstitious, and even egotistical, in regarding this

event as a special interposition of divine Providence in my favor. But

I should be false to the earliest sentiments of my soul, if I suppressed

the opinion. I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of

incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my

own abhorrence. From my earliest recollection, I date the entertainment

of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold

me within its foul embrace; and in the darkest hours of my career in

slavery, this living word of faith and spirit of hope departed not from

me, but remained like ministering angels to cheer me through the gloom.

This good spirit was from God, and to him I offer thanksgiving and

praise.

CHAPTER VI

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at

the door,--a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had

never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to

her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living.

She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business,

she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and

dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her

goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely

unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her

as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction

was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a

quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor

was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not

deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face.

The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none

left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of

heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The

fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon

commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence

of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet

accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic

face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly

commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she

assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at

this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at

once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other

things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to

read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an

inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his

master--to do as he is told to do. Learning would \_spoil\_ the best nigger

in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of

myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever

unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no

value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great

deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These

words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay

slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought.

It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious

things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but

struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most

perplexing difficulty--to wit, the white man's power to enslave the

black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that

moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just

what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it.

Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind

mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the

merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the

difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and

a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The

very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife

with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince

me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me

the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the

results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he

most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most

hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was

to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he

so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire

me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe

almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly

aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked

difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed

in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a

slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys

privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is

a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and

check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the

plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity

of his non-slaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave.

Few are willing to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being

a cruel master; and above all things, they would not be known as not

giving a slave enough to eat. Every city slaveholder is anxious to have

it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them

to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat. There are,

however, some painful exceptions to this rule. Directly opposite to us,

on Philpot Street, lived Mr. Thomas Hamilton. He owned two slaves. Their

names were Henrietta and Mary. Henrietta was about twenty-two years

of age, Mary was about fourteen; and of all the mangled and emaciated

creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so. His heart

must be harder than stone, that could look upon these unmoved. The

head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have

frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering

sores, caused by the lash of her cruel mistress. I do not know that her

master ever whipped her, but I have been an eye-witness to the cruelty

of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to be in Mr. Hamilton's house nearly every day.

Mrs. Hamilton used to sit in a large chair in the middle of the room,

with a heavy cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed

during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves. The

girls seldom passed her without her saying, "Move faster, you \_black

gip!\_" at the same time giving them a blow with the cowskin over the

head or shoulders, often drawing the blood. She would then say, "Take

that, you \_black gip!\_" continuing, "If you don't move faster, I'll move

you!" Added to the cruel lashings to which these slaves were subjected,

they were kept nearly half-starved. They seldom knew what it was to eat

a full meal. I have seen Mary contending with the pigs for the offal

thrown into the street. So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that

she was oftener called "\_pecked\_" than by her name.

CHAPTER VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I

succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was

compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My

mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance

with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to

instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one

else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did

not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the

depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was

at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of

irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as

though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in

the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with

her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another.

In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to

perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and

that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but

dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When

I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was

no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for

the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that

came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of

these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became

stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like

fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to

instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She

finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband

himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had

commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her

more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that

here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up

of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed

her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon

demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were

incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room

any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having

a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this,

however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in

teaching me the alphabet, had given me the \_inch,\_ and no precaution

could prevent me from taking the \_ell.\_

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful,

was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in

the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With

their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places,

I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I

always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly,

I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry

bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I

was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many

of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to

bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me

that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give

the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the

gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;--not that

it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an

unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country.

It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on

Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk

this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I

wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You

will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, \_but I am a slave for life!\_

Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used

to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and

console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be

free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being \_a slave for

life\_ began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got

hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I

got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter,

I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was

represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue

represented the conversation which took place between them, when the

slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument

in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was

disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as

well as impressive things in reply to his master--things which had the

desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the

voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and

in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me.

I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue

to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed

through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I

gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of

even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation

of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading

of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the

arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved

me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than

the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led

to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light

than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to

Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced

us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most

wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very

discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning

to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable

anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to

read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view

of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the

horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of

agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often

wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile

to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was

this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was

no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within

sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom

had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to

disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in

every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my

wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing

without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from

every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved

in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself

dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I

should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have

been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one

speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could

hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found

what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make

it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in

getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or

did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of

as the fruit of \_abolition.\_ Hearing the word in this connection very

often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me

little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I

did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not

dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was

something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient

waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the

number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery

in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States.

From this time I understood the words \_abolition\_ and \_abolitionist,\_

and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear

something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in

upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters;

and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and

helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked

me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for

life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply

affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so

fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it

was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north;

that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended

not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not

understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have

been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward,

catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these

seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their

advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to

a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to

think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write,

as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with

the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would

learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by

being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship

carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use,

write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was

intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it

would be marked thus--"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it

would be marked thus--"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would

be marked thus--"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward,

it would be marked thus--"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked

thus--"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus--"S. A." I soon

learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when

placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced

copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters

named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I

would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I

don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters

which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that.

In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite

possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time,

my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and

ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I

then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling

Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this

time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to

write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been

brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid

aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street

meetinghouse every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the

house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the

spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I

continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of

Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally

succeeded in learning how to write.

CHAPTER VIII

In a very short time after I went to live at Baltimore, my old master's

youngest son Richard died; and in about three years and six months after

his death, my old master, Captain Anthony, died, leaving only his son,

Andrew, and daughter, Lucretia, to share his estate. He died while on a

visit to see his daughter at Hillsborough. Cut off thus unexpectedly,

he left no will as to the disposal of his property. It was therefore

necessary to have a valuation of the property, that it might be equally

divided between Mrs. Lucretia and Master Andrew. I was immediately sent

for, to be valued with the other property. Here again my feelings rose

up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded

condition. Prior to this, I had become, if not insensible to my lot,

at least partly so. I left Baltimore with a young heart overborne with

sadness, and a soul full of apprehension. I took passage with Captain

Rowe, in the schooner Wild Cat, and, after a sail of about twenty-four

hours, I found myself near the place of my birth. I had now been absent

from it almost, if not quite, five years. I, however, remembered the

place very well. I was only about five years old when I left it, to go

and live with my old master on Colonel Lloyd's plantation; so that I was

now between ten and eleven years old.

We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and

young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine.

There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all

holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to

the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth,

maids and matrons, had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At

this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of

slavery upon both slave and slaveholder.

After the valuation, then came the division. I have no language to

express the high excitement and deep anxiety which were felt among us

poor slaves during this time. Our fate for life was now to be decided.

we had no more voice in that decision than the brutes among whom we

were ranked. A single word from the white men was enough--against all our

wishes, prayers, and entreaties--to sunder forever the dearest friends,

dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings. In addition

to the pain of separation, there was the horrid dread of falling into

the hands of Master Andrew. He was known to us all as being a most cruel

wretch,--a common drunkard, who had, by his reckless mismanagement and

profligate dissipation, already wasted a large portion of his father's

property. We all felt that we might as well be sold at once to the

Georgia traders, as to pass into his hands; for we knew that that would

be our inevitable condition,--a condition held by us all in the utmost

horror and dread.

I suffered more anxiety than most of my fellow-slaves. I had known what

it was to be kindly treated; they had known nothing of the kind. They

had seen little or nothing of the world. They were in very deed men and

women of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. Their backs had been made

familiar with the bloody lash, so that they had become callous; mine was

yet tender; for while at Baltimore I got few whippings, and few slaves

could boast of a kinder master and mistress than myself; and the thought

of passing out of their hands into those of Master Andrew--a man who, but

a few days before, to give me a sample of his bloody disposition, took

my little brother by the throat, threw him on the ground, and with the

heel of his boot stamped upon his head till the blood gushed from his

nose and ears--was well calculated to make me anxious as to my fate.

After he had committed this savage outrage upon my brother, he turned

to me, and said that was the way he meant to serve me one of these

days,--meaning, I suppose, when I came into his possession.

Thanks to a kind Providence, I fell to the portion of Mrs. Lucretia, and

was sent immediately back to Baltimore, to live again in the family

of Master Hugh. Their joy at my return equalled their sorrow at my

departure. It was a glad day to me. I had escaped a worse than lion's

jaws. I was absent from Baltimore, for the purpose of valuation and

division, just about one month, and it seemed to have been six.

Very soon after my return to Baltimore, my mistress, Lucretia, died,

leaving her husband and one child, Amanda; and in a very short time

after her death, Master Andrew died. Now all the property of my old

master, slaves included, was in the hands of strangers,--strangers who

had had nothing to do with accumulating it. Not a slave was left free.

All remained slaves, from the youngest to the oldest. If any one thing

in my experience, more than another, served to deepen my conviction

of the infernal character of slavery, and to fill me with unutterable

loathing of slaveholders, it was their base ingratitude to my poor old

grandmother. She had served my old master faithfully from youth to old

age. She had been the source of all his wealth; she had peopled his

plantation with slaves; she had become a great grandmother in his

service. She had rocked him in infancy, attended him in childhood,

served him through life, and at his death wiped from his icy brow the

cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever. She was nevertheless left

a slave--a slave for life--a slave in the hands of strangers; and in

their hands she saw her children, her grandchildren, and her

great-grandchildren, divided, like so many sheep, without being

gratified with the small privilege of a single word, as to their or

her own destiny. And, to cap the climax of their base ingratitude

and fiendish barbarity, my grandmother, who was now very old, having

outlived my old master and all his children, having seen the beginning

and end of all of them, and her present owners finding she was of but

little value, her frame already racked with the pains of old age, and

complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs,

they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little

mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting

herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to

die! If my poor old grandmother now lives, she lives to suffer in utter

loneliness; she lives to remember and mourn over the loss of children,

the loss of grandchildren, and the loss of great-grandchildren. They

are, in the language of the slave's poet, Whittier,--

"Gone, gone, sold and gone

To the rice swamp dank and lone,

Where the slave-whip ceaseless swings,

Where the noisome insect stings,

Where the fever-demon strews

Poison with the falling dews,

Where the sickly sunbeams glare

Through the hot and misty air:&mdash;

Gone, gone, sold and gone

To the rice swamp dank and lone,

From Virginia hills and waters&mdash;

Woe is me, my stolen daughters!"

The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once

sang and danced in her presence, are gone. She gropes her way, in the

darkness of age, for a drink of water. Instead of the voices of her

children, she hears by day the moans of the dove, and by night the

screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom. The grave is at the door. And

now, when weighed down by the pains and aches of old age, when the head

inclines to the feet, when the beginning and ending of human existence

meet, and helpless infancy and painful old age combine together--at

this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that

tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a

declining parent--my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve

children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim

embers. She stands--she sits--she staggers--she falls--she groans--she

dies--and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to

wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death, or to place beneath

the sod her fallen remains. Will not a righteous God visit for these

things?

In about two years after the death of Mrs. Lucretia, Master Thomas

married his second wife. Her name was Rowena Hamilton. She was the

eldest daughter of Mr. William Hamilton. Master now lived in St.

Michael's. Not long after his marriage, a misunderstanding took place

between himself and Master Hugh; and as a means of punishing his

brother, he took me from him to live with himself at St. Michael's. Here

I underwent another most painful separation. It, however, was not so

severe as the one I dreaded at the division of property; for, during

this interval, a great change had taken place in Master Hugh and his

once kind and affectionate wife. The influence of brandy upon him, and

of slavery upon her, had effected a disastrous change in the characters

of both; so that, as far as they were concerned, I thought I had little

to lose by the change. But it was not to them that I was attached. It

was to those little Baltimore boys that I felt the strongest attachment.

I had received many good lessons from them, and was still receiving

them, and the thought of leaving them was painful indeed. I was leaving,

too, without the hope of ever being allowed to return. Master Thomas had

said he would never let me return again. The barrier betwixt himself and

brother he considered impassable.

I then had to regret that I did not at least make the attempt to carry

out my resolution to run away; for the chances of success are tenfold

greater from the city than from the country.

I sailed from Baltimore for St. Michael's in the sloop Amanda, Captain

Edward Dodson. On my passage, I paid particular attention to the

direction which the steamboats took to go to Philadelphia. I found,

instead of going down, on reaching North Point they went up the bay,

in a north-easterly direction. I deemed this knowledge of the utmost

importance. My determination to run away was again revived. I resolved

to wait only so long as the offering of a favorable opportunity. When

that came, I was determined to be off.

CHAPTER IX

I have now reached a period of my life when I can give dates. I left

Baltimore, and went to live with Master Thomas Auld, at St. Michael's,

in March, 1832. It was now more than seven years since I lived with him

in the family of my old master, on Colonel Lloyd's plantation. We of

course were now almost entire strangers to each other. He was to me a

new master, and I to him a new slave. I was ignorant of his temper and

disposition; he was equally so of mine. A very short time, however,

brought us into full acquaintance with each other. I was made acquainted

with his wife not less than with himself. They were well matched, being

equally mean and cruel. I was now, for the first time during a space

of more than seven years, made to feel the painful gnawings of hunger--a

something which I had not experienced before since I left Colonel

Lloyd's plantation. It went hard enough with me then, when I could look

back to no period at which I had enjoyed a sufficiency. It was tenfold

harder after living in Master Hugh's family, where I had always had

enough to eat, and of that which was good. I have said Master Thomas was

a mean man. He was so. Not to give a slave enough to eat, is regarded as

the most aggravated development of meanness even among slaveholders. The

rule is, no matter how coarse the food, only let there be enough of it.

This is the theory; and in the part of Maryland from which I came, it

is the general practice,--though there are many exceptions. Master Thomas

gave us enough of neither coarse nor fine food. There were four slaves

of us in the kitchen--my sister Eliza, my aunt Priscilla, Henny, and

myself; and we were allowed less than a half of a bushel of corn-meal

per week, and very little else, either in the shape of meat or

vegetables. It was not enough for us to subsist upon. We were therefore

reduced to the wretched necessity of living at the expense of our

neighbors. This we did by begging and stealing, whichever came handy in

the time of need, the one being considered as legitimate as the other.

A great many times have we poor creatures been nearly perishing

with hunger, when food in abundance lay mouldering in the safe and

smoke-house, and our pious mistress was aware of the fact; and yet that

mistress and her husband would kneel every morning, and pray that God

would bless them in basket and store!

Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every

element of character commanding respect. My master was one of this rare

sort. I do not know of one single noble act ever performed by him. The

leading trait in his character was meanness; and if there were any other

element in his nature, it was made subject to this. He was mean; and,

like most other mean men, he lacked the ability to conceal his meanness.

Captain Auld was not born a slaveholder. He had been a poor man, master

only of a Bay craft. He came into possession of all his slaves by

marriage; and of all men, adopted slaveholders are the worst. He was

cruel, but cowardly. He commanded without firmness. In the enforcement

of his rules, he was at times rigid, and at times lax. At times, he

spoke to his slaves with the firmness of Napoleon and the fury of a

demon; at other times, he might well be mistaken for an inquirer who

had lost his way. He did nothing of himself. He might have passed for a

lion, but for his ears. In all things noble which he attempted, his own

meanness shone most conspicuous. His airs, words, and actions, were the

airs, words, and actions of born slaveholders, and, being assumed, were

awkward enough. He was not even a good imitator. He possessed all the

disposition to deceive, but wanted the power. Having no resources within

himself, he was compelled to be the copyist of many, and being such, he

was forever the victim of inconsistency; and of consequence he was an

object of contempt, and was held as such even by his slaves. The luxury

of having slaves of his own to wait upon him was something new and

unprepared for. He was a slaveholder without the ability to hold slaves.

He found himself incapable of managing his slaves either by force,

fear, or fraud. We seldom called him "master;" we generally called him

"Captain Auld," and were hardly disposed to title him at all. I doubt

not that our conduct had much to do with making him appear awkward,

and of consequence fretful. Our want of reverence for him must have

perplexed him greatly. He wished to have us call him master, but lacked

the firmness necessary to command us to do so. His wife used to insist

upon our calling him so, but to no purpose. In August, 1832, my master

attended a Methodist camp-meeting held in the Bay-side, Talbot county,

and there experienced religion. I indulged a faint hope that his

conversion would lead him to emancipate his slaves, and that, if he did

not do this, it would, at any rate, make him more kind and humane. I was

disappointed in both these respects. It neither made him to be humane

to his slaves, nor to emancipate them. If it had any effect on his

character, it made him more cruel and hateful in all his ways; for I

believe him to have been a much worse man after his conversion than

before. Prior to his conversion, he relied upon his own depravity

to shield and sustain him in his savage barbarity; but after his

conversion, he found religious sanction and support for his slaveholding

cruelty. He made the greatest pretensions to piety. His house was

the house of prayer. He prayed morning, noon, and night. He very

soon distinguished himself among his brethren, and was soon made a

class-leader and exhorter. His activity in revivals was great, and he

proved himself an instrument in the hands of the church in converting

many souls. His house was the preachers' home. They used to take great

pleasure in coming there to put up; for while he starved us, he stuffed

them. We have had three or four preachers there at a time. The names

of those who used to come most frequently while I lived there, were Mr.

Storks, Mr. Ewery, Mr. Humphry, and Mr. Hickey. I have also seen Mr.

George Cookman at our house. We slaves loved Mr. Cookman. We believed

him to be a good man. We thought him instrumental in getting Mr. Samuel

Harrison, a very rich slaveholder, to emancipate his slaves; and by some

means got the impression that he was laboring to effect the emancipation

of all the slaves. When he was at our house, we were sure to be called

in to prayers. When the others were there, we were sometimes called in

and sometimes not. Mr. Cookman took more notice of us than either of

the other ministers. He could not come among us without betraying his

sympathy for us, and, stupid as we were, we had the sagacity to see it.

While I lived with my master in St. Michael's, there was a white

young man, a Mr. Wilson, who proposed to keep a Sabbath school for the

instruction of such slaves as might be disposed to learn to read the New

Testament. We met but three times, when Mr. West and Mr. Fairbanks,

both class-leaders, with many others, came upon us with sticks and other

missiles, drove us off, and forbade us to meet again. Thus ended our

little Sabbath school in the pious town of St. Michael's.

I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an

example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge.

I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy

cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip;

and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of

Scripture--"He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be

beaten with many stripes."

Master would keep this lacerated young woman tied up in this horrid

situation four or five hours at a time. I have known him to tie her up

early in the morning, and whip her before breakfast; leave her, go to

his store, return at dinner, and whip her again, cutting her in the

places already made raw with his cruel lash. The secret of master's

cruelty toward "Henny" is found in the fact of her being almost

helpless. When quite a child, she fell into the fire, and burned herself

horribly. Her hands were so burnt that she never got the use of them.

She could do very little but bear heavy burdens. She was to master a

bill of expense; and as he was a mean man, she was a constant offence

to him. He seemed desirous of getting the poor girl out of existence.

He gave her away once to his sister; but, being a poor gift, she was

not disposed to keep her. Finally, my benevolent master, to use his

own words, "set her adrift to take care of herself." Here was a

recently-converted man, holding on upon the mother, and at the same time

turning out her helpless child, to starve and die! Master Thomas was one

of the many pious slaveholders who hold slaves for the very charitable

purpose of taking care of them.

My master and myself had quite a number of differences. He found

me unsuitable to his purpose. My city life, he said, had had a very

pernicious effect upon me. It had almost ruined me for every good

purpose, and fitted me for every thing which was bad. One of my greatest

faults was that of letting his horse run away, and go down to his

father-inlaw's farm, which was about five miles from St. Michael's. I

would then have to go after it. My reason for this kind of carelessness,

or carefulness, was, that I could always get something to eat when I

went there. Master William Hamilton, my master's father-in-law, always

gave his slaves enough to eat. I never left there hungry, no matter

how great the need of my speedy return. Master Thomas at length said he

would stand it no longer. I had lived with him nine months, during

which time he had given me a number of severe whippings, all to no good

purpose. He resolved to put me out, as he said, to be broken; and, for

this purpose, he let me for one year to a man named Edward Covey. Mr.

Covey was a poor man, a farm-renter. He rented the place upon which he

lived, as also the hands with which he tilled it. Mr. Covey had acquired

a very high reputation for breaking young slaves, and this reputation

was of immense value to him. It enabled him to get his farm tilled with

much less expense to himself than he could have had it done without such

a reputation. Some slaveholders thought it not much loss to allow Mr.

Covey to have their slaves one year, for the sake of the training to

which they were subjected, without any other compensation. He could hire

young help with great ease, in consequence of this reputation. Added

to the natural good qualities of Mr. Covey, he was a professor of

religion--a pious soul--a member and a class-leader in the

Methodist church. All of this added weight to his reputation as a

"nigger-breaker." I was aware of all the facts, having been made

acquainted with them by a young man who had lived there. I nevertheless

made the change gladly; for I was sure of getting enough to eat, which

is not the smallest consideration to a hungry man.

CHAPTER X

I had left Master Thomas's house, and went to live with Mr. Covey, on

the 1st of January, 1833. I was now, for the first time in my life, a

field hand. In my new employment, I found myself even more awkward than

a country boy appeared to be in a large city. I had been at my new home

but one week before Mr. Covey gave me a very severe whipping, cutting my

back, causing the blood to run, and raising ridges on my flesh as large

as my little finger. The details of this affair are as follows: Mr.

Covey sent me, very early in the morning of one of our coldest days in

the month of January, to the woods, to get a load of wood. He gave me

a team of unbroken oxen. He told me which was the in-hand ox, and which

the off-hand one. He then tied the end of a large rope around the horns

of the in-hand ox, and gave me the other end of it, and told me, if

the oxen started to run, that I must hold on upon the rope. I had

never driven oxen before, and of course I was very awkward. I, however,

succeeded in getting to the edge of the woods with little difficulty;

but I had got a very few rods into the woods, when the oxen took fright,

and started full tilt, carrying the cart against trees, and over stumps,

in the most frightful manner. I expected every moment that my brains

would be dashed out against the trees. After running thus for a

considerable distance, they finally upset the cart, dashing it with

great force against a tree, and threw themselves into a dense thicket.

How I escaped death, I do not know. There I was, entirely alone, in a

thick wood, in a place new to me. My cart was upset and shattered, my

oxen were entangled among the young trees, and there was none to

help me. After a long spell of effort, I succeeded in getting my cart

righted, my oxen disentangled, and again yoked to the cart. I now

proceeded with my team to the place where I had, the day before, been

chopping wood, and loaded my cart pretty heavily, thinking in this way

to tame my oxen. I then proceeded on my way home. I had now consumed

one half of the day. I got out of the woods safely, and now felt out of

danger. I stopped my oxen to open the woods gate; and just as I did so,

before I could get hold of my ox-rope, the oxen again started, rushed

through the gate, catching it between the wheel and the body of the

cart, tearing it to pieces, and coming within a few inches of crushing

me against the gate-post. Thus twice, in one short day, I escaped death

by the merest chance. On my return, I told Mr. Covey what had happened,

and how it happened. He ordered me to return to the woods again

immediately. I did so, and he followed on after me. Just as I got into

the woods, he came up and told me to stop my cart, and that he would

teach me how to trifle away my time, and break gates. He then went to

a large gum-tree, and with his axe cut three large switches, and, after

trimming them up neatly with his pocketknife, he ordered me to take

off my clothes. I made him no answer, but stood with my clothes on. He

repeated his order. I still made him no answer, nor did I move to strip

myself. Upon this he rushed at me with the fierceness of a tiger, tore

off my clothes, and lashed me till he had worn out his switches, cutting

me so savagely as to leave the marks visible for a long time after.

This whipping was the first of a number just like it, and for similar

offences.

I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months, of that

year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free

from a sore back. My awkwardness was almost always his excuse for

whipping me. We were worked fully up to the point of endurance. Long

before day we were up, our horses fed, and by the first approach of day

we were off to the field with our hoes and ploughing teams. Mr. Covey

gave us enough to eat, but scarce time to eat it. We were often less

than five minutes taking our meals. We were often in the field from the

first approach of day till its last lingering ray had left us; and

at saving-fodder time, midnight often caught us in the field binding

blades.

Covey would be out with us. The way he used to stand it, was this. He

would spend the most of his afternoons in bed. He would then come out

fresh in the evening, ready to urge us on with his words, example, and

frequently with the whip. Mr. Covey was one of the few slaveholders who

could and did work with his hands. He was a hard-working man. He knew by

himself just what a man or a boy could do. There was no deceiving him.

His work went on in his absence almost as well as in his presence; and

he had the faculty of making us feel that he was ever present with us.

This he did by surprising us. He seldom approached the spot where we

were at work openly, if he could do it secretly. He always aimed at

taking us by surprise. Such was his cunning, that we used to call him,

among ourselves, "the snake." When we were at work in the cornfield, he

would sometimes crawl on his hands and knees to avoid detection, and

all at once he would rise nearly in our midst, and scream out, "Ha, ha!

Come, come! Dash on, dash on!" This being his mode of attack, it was

never safe to stop a single minute. His comings were like a thief in the

night. He appeared to us as being ever at hand. He was under every

tree, behind every stump, in every bush, and at every window, on the

plantation. He would sometimes mount his horse, as if bound to St.

Michael's, a distance of seven miles, and in half an hour afterwards you

would see him coiled up in the corner of the wood-fence, watching every

motion of the slaves. He would, for this purpose, leave his horse tied

up in the woods. Again, he would sometimes walk up to us, and give us

orders as though he was upon the point of starting on a long journey,

turn his back upon us, and make as though he was going to the house

to get ready; and, before he would get half way thither, he would turn

short and crawl into a fence-corner, or behind some tree, and there

watch us till the going down of the sun.

Mr. Covey's \_forte\_ consisted in his power to deceive. His life was

devoted to planning and perpetrating the grossest deceptions. Every

thing he possessed in the shape of learning or religion, he made conform

to his disposition to deceive. He seemed to think himself equal to

deceiving the Almighty. He would make a short prayer in the morning, and

a long prayer at night; and, strange as it may seem, few men would

at times appear more devotional than he. The exercises of his family

devotions were always commenced with singing; and, as he was a very poor

singer himself, the duty of raising the hymn generally came upon me. He

would read his hymn, and nod at me to commence. I would at times do so;

at others, I would not. My non-compliance would almost always produce

much confusion. To show himself independent of me, he would start and

stagger through with his hymn in the most discordant manner. In this

state of mind, he prayed with more than ordinary spirit. Poor man! such

was his disposition, and success at deceiving, I do verily believe that

he sometimes deceived himself into the solemn belief, that he was a

sincere worshipper of the most high God; and this, too, at a time when

he may be said to have been guilty of compelling his woman slave to

commit the sin of adultery. The facts in the case are these: Mr. Covey

was a poor man; he was just commencing in life; he was only able to buy

one slave; and, shocking as is the fact, he bought her, as he said, for

\_a breeder\_. This woman was named Caroline. Mr. Covey bought her from

Mr. Thomas Lowe, about six miles from St. Michael's. She was a large,

able-bodied woman, about twenty years old. She had already given birth

to one child, which proved her to be just what he wanted. After buying

her, he hired a married man of Mr. Samuel Harrison, to live with him one

year; and him he used to fasten up with her every night! The result was,

that, at the end of the year, the miserable woman gave birth to twins.

At this result Mr. Covey seemed to be highly pleased, both with the man

and the wretched woman. Such was his joy, and that of his wife, that

nothing they could do for Caroline during her confinement was too good,

or too hard, to be done. The children were regarded as being quite an

addition to his wealth.

If at any one time of my life more than another, I was made to drink the

bitterest dregs of slavery, that time was during the first six months of

my stay with Mr. Covey. We were worked in all weathers. It was never too

hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow, too hard for

us to work in the field. Work, work, work, was scarcely more the order

of the day than of the night. The longest days were too short for him,

and the shortest nights too long for him. I was somewhat unmanageable

when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me.

Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and

spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the

disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my

eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man

transformed into a brute!

Sunday was my only leisure time. I spent this in a sort of beast-like

stupor, between sleep and wake, under some large tree. At times I

would rise up, a flash of energetic freedom would dart through my soul,

accompanied with a faint beam of hope, that flickered for a moment, and

then vanished. I sank down again, mourning over my wretched condition.

I was sometimes prompted to take my life, and that of Covey, but was

prevented by a combination of hope and fear. My sufferings on this

plantation seem now like a dream rather than a stern reality.

Our house stood within a few rods of the Chesapeake Bay, whose broad

bosom was ever white with sails from every quarter of the habitable

globe. Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to

the eye of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and

torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition. I have often, in the

deep stillness of a summer's Sabbath, stood all alone upon the lofty

banks of that noble bay, and traced, with saddened heart and tearful

eye, the countless number of sails moving off to the mighty ocean. The

sight of these always affected me powerfully. My thoughts would compel

utterance; and there, with no audience but the Almighty, I would pour

out my soul's complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the

moving multitude of ships:--

"You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my

chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and

I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom's swift-winged angels,

that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of iron! O that I

were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your

protecting wing! Alas! betwixt me and you, the turbid waters roll. Go

on, go on. O that I could also go! Could I but swim! If I could fly! O,

why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute! The glad ship is gone;

she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending

slavery. O God, save me! God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any

God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it. Get caught,

or get clear, I'll try it. I had as well die with ague as the fever.

I have only one life to lose. I had as well be killed running as die

standing. Only think of it; one hundred miles straight north, and I am

free! Try it? Yes! God helping me, I will. It cannot be that I shall

live and die a slave. I will take to the water. This very bay shall yet

bear me into freedom. The steamboats steered in a north-east course from

North Point. I will do the same; and when I get to the head of the bay,

I will turn my canoe adrift, and walk straight through Delaware into

Pennsylvania. When I get there, I shall not be required to have a pass;

I can travel without being disturbed. Let but the first opportunity

offer, and, come what will, I am off. Meanwhile, I will try to bear up

under the yoke. I am not the only slave in the world. Why should I fret?

I can bear as much as any of them. Besides, I am but a boy, and all boys

are bound to some one. It may be that my misery in slavery will only

increase my happiness when I get free. There is a better day coming."

Thus I used to think, and thus I used to speak to myself; goaded almost

to madness at one moment, and at the next reconciling myself to my

wretched lot.

I have already intimated that my condition was much worse, during the

first six months of my stay at Mr. Covey's, than in the last six. The

circumstances leading to the change in Mr. Covey's course toward me form

an epoch in my humble history. You have seen how a man was made a slave;

you shall see how a slave was made a man. On one of the hottest days

of the month of August, 1833, Bill Smith, William Hughes, a slave named

Eli, and myself, were engaged in fanning wheat. Hughes was clearing the

fanned wheat from before the fan. Eli was turning, Smith was feeding,

and I was carrying wheat to the fan. The work was simple, requiring

strength rather than intellect; yet, to one entirely unused to such

work, it came very hard. About three o'clock of that day, I broke down;

my strength failed me; I was seized with a violent aching of the head,

attended with extreme dizziness; I trembled in every limb. Finding what

was coming, I nerved myself up, feeling it would never do to stop work.

I stood as long as I could stagger to the hopper with grain. When I

could stand no longer, I fell, and felt as if held down by an immense

weight. The fan of course stopped; every one had his own work to do;

and no one could do the work of the other, and have his own go on at the

same time.

Mr. Covey was at the house, about one hundred yards from the

treading-yard where we were fanning. On hearing the fan stop, he left

immediately, and came to the spot where we were. He hastily inquired

what the matter was. Bill answered that I was sick, and there was no

one to bring wheat to the fan. I had by this time crawled away under the

side of the post and rail-fence by which the yard was enclosed, hoping

to find relief by getting out of the sun. He then asked where I was. He

was told by one of the hands. He came to the spot, and, after looking at

me awhile, asked me what was the matter. I told him as well as I could,

for I scarce had strength to speak. He then gave me a savage kick in

the side, and told me to get up. I tried to do so, but fell back in the

attempt. He gave me another kick, and again told me to rise. I again

tried, and succeeded in gaining my feet; but, stooping to get the tub

with which I was feeding the fan, I again staggered and fell. While down

in this situation, Mr. Covey took up the hickory slat with which Hughes

had been striking off the half-bushel measure, and with it gave me

a heavy blow upon the head, making a large wound, and the blood ran

freely; and with this again told me to get up. I made no effort to

comply, having now made up my mind to let him do his worst. In a short

time after receiving this blow, my head grew better. Mr. Covey had now

left me to my fate. At this moment I resolved, for the first time, to go

to my master, enter a complaint, and ask his protection. In order to

do this, I must that afternoon walk seven miles; and this, under the

circumstances, was truly a severe undertaking. I was exceedingly feeble;

made so as much by the kicks and blows which I received, as by the

severe fit of sickness to which I had been subjected. I, however,

watched my chance, while Covey was looking in an opposite direction,

and started for St. Michael's. I succeeded in getting a considerable

distance on my way to the woods, when Covey discovered me, and called

after me to come back, threatening what he would do if I did not come. I

disregarded both his calls and his threats, and made my way to the

woods as fast as my feeble state would allow; and thinking I might

be overhauled by him if I kept the road, I walked through the woods,

keeping far enough from the road to avoid detection, and near enough

to prevent losing my way. I had not gone far before my little strength

again failed me. I could go no farther. I fell down, and lay for a

considerable time. The blood was yet oozing from the wound on my head.

For a time I thought I should bleed to death; and think now that I

should have done so, but that the blood so matted my hair as to stop

the wound. After lying there about three quarters of an hour, I nerved

myself up again, and started on my way, through bogs and briers,

barefooted and bareheaded, tearing my feet sometimes at nearly every

step; and after a journey of about seven miles, occupying some five

hours to perform it, I arrived at master's store. I then presented an

appearance enough to affect any but a heart of iron. From the crown of

my head to my feet, I was covered with blood. My hair was all clotted

with dust and blood; my shirt was stiff with blood. I suppose I looked

like a man who had escaped a den of wild beasts, and barely escaped

them. In this state I appeared before my master, humbly entreating

him to interpose his authority for my protection. I told him all the

circumstances as well as I could, and it seemed, as I spoke, at times to

affect him. He would then walk the floor, and seek to justify Covey by

saying he expected I deserved it. He asked me what I wanted. I told him,

to let me get a new home; that as sure as I lived with Mr. Covey again,

I should live with but to die with him; that Covey would surely kill me;

he was in a fair way for it. Master Thomas ridiculed the idea that there

was any danger of Mr. Covey's killing me, and said that he knew Mr.

Covey; that he was a good man, and that he could not think of taking me

from him; that, should he do so, he would lose the whole year's wages;

that I belonged to Mr. Covey for one year, and that I must go back to

him, come what might; and that I must not trouble him with any more

stories, or that he would himself \_get hold of me\_. After threatening

me thus, he gave me a very large dose of salts, telling me that I might

remain in St. Michael's that night, (it being quite late,) but that I

must be off back to Mr. Covey's early in the morning; and that if I did

not, he would \_get hold of me,\_ which meant that he would whip me.

I remained all night, and, according to his orders, I started off to

Covey's in the morning, (Saturday morning,) wearied in body and broken

in spirit. I got no supper that night, or breakfast that morning. I

reached Covey's about nine o'clock; and just as I was getting over the

fence that divided Mrs. Kemp's fields from ours, out ran Covey with

his cowskin, to give me another whipping. Before he could reach me, I

succeeded in getting to the cornfield; and as the corn was very high, it

afforded me the means of hiding. He seemed very angry, and searched for

me a long time. My behavior was altogether unaccountable. He finally

gave up the chase, thinking, I suppose, that I must come home for

something to eat; he would give himself no further trouble in looking

for me. I spent that day mostly in the woods, having the alternative

before me,--to go home and be whipped to death, or stay in the woods and

be starved to death. That night, I fell in with Sandy Jenkins, a slave

with whom I was somewhat acquainted. Sandy had a free wife who lived

about four miles from Mr. Covey's; and it being Saturday, he was on his

way to see her. I told him my circumstances, and he very kindly invited

me to go home with him. I went home with him, and talked this whole

matter over, and got his advice as to what course it was best for me to

pursue. I found Sandy an old adviser. He told me, with great solemnity,

I must go back to Covey; but that before I went, I must go with him into

another part of the woods, where there was a certain \_root,\_ which, if

I would take some of it with me, carrying it \_always on my right side,\_

would render it impossible for Mr. Covey, or any other white man, to

whip me. He said he had carried it for years; and since he had done so,

he had never received a blow, and never expected to while he carried it.

I at first rejected the idea, that the simple carrying of a root in my

pocket would have any such effect as he had said, and was not disposed

to take it; but Sandy impressed the necessity with much earnestness,

telling me it could do no harm, if it did no good. To please him, I at

length took the root, and, according to his direction, carried it upon

my right side. This was Sunday morning. I immediately started for

home; and upon entering the yard gate, out came Mr. Covey on his way to

meeting. He spoke to me very kindly, bade me drive the pigs from a lot

near by, and passed on towards the church. Now, this singular conduct of

Mr. Covey really made me begin to think that there was something in the

\_root\_ which Sandy had given me; and had it been on any other day than

Sunday, I could have attributed the conduct to no other cause than the

influence of that root; and as it was, I was half inclined to think the

\_root\_ to be something more than I at first had taken it to be. All went

well till Monday morning. On this morning, the virtue of the \_root\_ was

fully tested. Long before daylight, I was called to go and rub, curry,

and feed, the horses. I obeyed, and was glad to obey. But whilst thus

engaged, whilst in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft,

Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half

out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As

soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did

so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor.

Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased;

but at this moment--from whence came the spirit I don't know--I resolved

to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard

by the throat; and as I did so, I rose. He held on to me, and I to him.

My resistance was so entirely unexpected that Covey seemed taken all

aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him

uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my

fingers. Mr. Covey soon called out to Hughes for help. Hughes came, and,

while Covey held me, attempted to tie my right hand. While he was in the

act of doing so, I watched my chance, and gave him a heavy kick close

under the ribs. This kick fairly sickened Hughes, so that he left me in

the hands of Mr. Covey. This kick had the effect of not only weakening

Hughes, but Covey also. When he saw Hughes bending over with pain, his

courage quailed. He asked me if I meant to persist in my resistance. I

told him I did, come what might; that he had used me like a brute for

six months, and that I was determined to be used so no longer. With

that, he strove to drag me to a stick that was lying just out of the

stable door. He meant to knock me down. But just as he was leaning

over to get the stick, I seized him with both hands by his collar, and

brought him by a sudden snatch to the ground. By this time, Bill came.

Covey called upon him for assistance. Bill wanted to know what he could

do. Covey said, "Take hold of him, take hold of him!" Bill said his

master hired him out to work, and not to help to whip me; so he left

Covey and myself to fight our own battle out. We were at it for nearly

two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great

rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped

me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I

considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for

he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him. The whole six months

afterwards, that I spent with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his

finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say, he didn't want to

get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come

off worse than you did before."

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a

slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived

within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed

self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free.

The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for

whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand

the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by

force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was

a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of

freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance

took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain

a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in

fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man

who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

From this time I was never again what might be called fairly whipped,

though I remained a slave four years afterwards. I had several fights,

but was never whipped.

It was for a long time a matter of surprise to me why Mr. Covey did not

immediately have me taken by the constable to the whipping-post, and

there regularly whipped for the crime of raising my hand against a white

man in defence of myself. And the only explanation I can now think of

does not entirely satisfy me; but such as it is, I will give it. Mr.

Covey enjoyed the most unbounded reputation for being a first-rate

overseer and negro-breaker. It was of considerable importance to him.

That reputation was at stake; and had he sent me--a boy about sixteen

years old--to the public whipping-post, his reputation would have been

lost; so, to save his reputation, he suffered me to go unpunished.

My term of actual service to Mr. Edward Covey ended on Christmas day,

1833. The days between Christmas and New Year's day are allowed as

holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor,

more than to feed and take care of the stock. This time we regarded as

our own, by the grace of our masters; and we therefore used or abused it

nearly as we pleased. Those of us who had families at a distance, were

generally allowed to spend the whole six days in their society. This

time, however, was spent in various ways. The staid, sober, thinking

and industrious ones of our number would employ themselves in making

corn-brooms, mats, horse-collars, and baskets; and another class of us

would spend the time in hunting opossums, hares, and coons. But by far

the larger part engaged in such sports and merriments as playing ball,

wrestling, running foot-races, fiddling, dancing, and drinking whisky;

and this latter mode of spending the time was by far the most agreeable

to the feelings of our masters. A slave who would work during the

holidays was considered by our masters as scarcely deserving them. He

was regarded as one who rejected the favor of his master. It was deemed

a disgrace not to get drunk at Christmas; and he was regarded as lazy

indeed, who had not provided himself with the necessary means, during

the year, to get whisky enough to last him through Christmas.

From what I know of the effect of these holidays upon the slave, I

believe them to be among the most effective means in the hands of

the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection. Were the

slaveholders at once to abandon this practice, I have not the slightest

doubt it would lead to an immediate insurrection among the slaves.

These holidays serve as conductors, or safety-valves, to carry off the

rebellious spirit of enslaved humanity. But for these, the slave would

be forced up to the wildest desperation; and woe betide the slaveholder,

the day he ventures to remove or hinder the operation of those

conductors! I warn him that, in such an event, a spirit will go forth in

their midst, more to be dreaded than the most appalling earthquake.

The holidays are part and parcel of the gross fraud, wrong, and

inhumanity of slavery. They are professedly a custom established by

the benevolence of the slaveholders; but I undertake to say, it is the

result of selfishness, and one of the grossest frauds committed upon the

down-trodden slave. They do not give the slaves this time because they

would not like to have their work during its continuance, but because

they know it would be unsafe to deprive them of it. This will be seen

by the fact, that the slaveholders like to have their slaves spend those

days just in such a manner as to make them as glad of their ending as of

their beginning. Their object seems to be, to disgust their slaves with

freedom, by plunging them into the lowest depths of dissipation. For

instance, the slaveholders not only like to see the slave drink of his

own accord, but will adopt various plans to make him drunk. One plan

is, to make bets on their slaves, as to who can drink the most whisky

without getting drunk; and in this way they succeed in getting whole

multitudes to drink to excess. Thus, when the slave asks for virtuous

freedom, the cunning slaveholder, knowing his ignorance, cheats him

with a dose of vicious dissipation, artfully labelled with the name of

liberty. The most of us used to drink it down, and the result was just

what might be supposed; many of us were led to think that there was

little to choose between liberty and slavery. We felt, and very properly

too, that we had almost as well be slaves to man as to rum. So, when the

holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a

long breath, and marched to the field,--feeling, upon the whole, rather

glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was

freedom, back to the arms of slavery.

I have said that this mode of treatment is a part of the whole system

of fraud and inhumanity of slavery. It is so. The mode here adopted to

disgust the slave with freedom, by allowing him to see only the abuse

of it, is carried out in other things. For instance, a slave loves

molasses; he steals some. His master, in many cases, goes off to town,

and buys a large quantity; he returns, takes his whip, and commands the

slave to eat the molasses, until the poor fellow is made sick at the

very mention of it. The same mode is sometimes adopted to make the

slaves refrain from asking for more food than their regular allowance.

A slave runs through his allowance, and applies for more. His master is

enraged at him; but, not willing to send him off without food, gives him

more than is necessary, and compels him to eat it within a given time.

Then, if he complains that he cannot eat it, he is said to be satisfied

neither full nor fasting, and is whipped for being hard to please! I

have an abundance of such illustrations of the same principle, drawn

from my own observation, but think the cases I have cited sufficient.

The practice is a very common one.

On the first of January, 1834, I left Mr. Covey, and went to live with

Mr. William Freeland, who lived about three miles from St. Michael's. I

soon found Mr. Freeland a very different man from Mr. Covey. Though not

rich, he was what would be called an educated southern gentleman.

Mr. Covey, as I have shown, was a well-trained negro-breaker and

slave-driver. The former (slaveholder though he was) seemed to possess

some regard for honor, some reverence for justice, and some respect for

humanity. The latter seemed totally insensible to all such sentiments.

Mr. Freeland had many of the faults peculiar to slaveholders, such as

being very passionate and fretful; but I must do him the justice to say,

that he was exceedingly free from those degrading vices to which Mr.

Covey was constantly addicted. The one was open and frank, and we always

knew where to find him. The other was a most artful deceiver, and

could be understood only by such as were skilful enough to detect his

cunningly-devised frauds. Another advantage I gained in my new master

was, he made no pretensions to, or profession of, religion; and this, in

my opinion, was truly a great advantage. I assert most unhesitatingly,

that the religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid

crimes,--a justifier of the most appalling barbarity,--a sanctifier of

the most hateful frauds,--and a dark shelter under, which the darkest,

foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the

strongest protection. Were I to be again reduced to the chains of

slavery, next to that enslavement, I should regard being the slave of a

religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all

slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the

worst. I have ever found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and

cowardly, of all others. It was my unhappy lot not only to belong to a

religious slaveholder, but to live in a community of such religionists.

Very near Mr. Freeland lived the Rev. Daniel Weeden, and in the same

neighborhood lived the Rev. Rigby Hopkins. These were members and

ministers in the Reformed Methodist Church. Mr. Weeden owned, among

others, a woman slave, whose name I have forgotten. This woman's

back, for weeks, was kept literally raw, made so by the lash of this

merciless, \_religious\_ wretch. He used to hire hands. His maxim was,

Behave well or behave ill, it is the duty of a master occasionally to

whip a slave, to remind him of his master's authority. Such was his

theory, and such his practice.

Mr. Hopkins was even worse than Mr. Weeden. His chief boast was his

ability to manage slaves. The peculiar feature of his government was

that of whipping slaves in advance of deserving it. He always managed to

have one or more of his slaves to whip every Monday morning. He did this

to alarm their fears, and strike terror into those who escaped. His

plan was to whip for the smallest offences, to prevent the commission

of large ones. Mr. Hopkins could always find some excuse for whipping

a slave. It would astonish one, unaccustomed to a slaveholding life, to

see with what wonderful ease a slaveholder can find things, of which to

make occasion to whip a slave. A mere look, word, or motion,--a mistake,

accident, or want of power,--are all matters for which a slave may be

whipped at any time. Does a slave look dissatisfied? It is said, he has

the devil in him, and it must be whipped out. Does he speak loudly when

spoken to by his master? Then he is getting high-minded, and should be

taken down a button-hole lower. Does he forget to pull off his hat at

the approach of a white person? Then he is wanting in reverence, and

should be whipped for it. Does he ever venture to vindicate his conduct,

when censured for it? Then he is guilty of impudence,--one of the

greatest crimes of which a slave can be guilty. Does he ever venture to

suggest a different mode of doing things from that pointed out by

his master? He is indeed presumptuous, and getting above himself; and

nothing less than a flogging will do for him. Does he, while ploughing,

break a plough,--or, while hoeing, break a hoe? It is owing to his

carelessness, and for it a slave must always be whipped. Mr. Hopkins

could always find something of this sort to justify the use of the lash,

and he seldom failed to embrace such opportunities. There was not a man

in the whole county, with whom the slaves who had the getting their own

home, would not prefer to live, rather than with this Rev. Mr. Hopkins.

And yet there was not a man any where round, who made higher professions

of religion, or was more active in revivals,--more attentive to the

class, love-feast, prayer and preaching meetings, or more devotional in

his family,--that prayed earlier, later, louder, and longer,--than this

same reverend slave-driver, Rigby Hopkins.

But to return to Mr. Freeland, and to my experience while in his

employment. He, like Mr. Covey, gave us enough to eat; but, unlike Mr.

Covey, he also gave us sufficient time to take our meals. He worked us

hard, but always between sunrise and sunset. He required a good deal of

work to be done, but gave us good tools with which to work. His farm was

large, but he employed hands enough to work it, and with ease, compared

with many of his neighbors. My treatment, while in his employment, was

heavenly, compared with what I experienced at the hands of Mr. Edward

Covey.

Mr. Freeland was himself the owner of but two slaves. Their names were

Henry Harris and John Harris. The rest of his hands he hired. These

consisted of myself, Sandy Jenkins,\* and Handy Caldwell.

\*This is the same man who gave me the roots to prevent my

being whipped by Mr. Covey. He was "a clever soul." We used

frequently to talk about the fight with Covey, and as often

as we did so, he would claim my success as the result of the

roots which he gave me. This superstition is very common

among the more ignorant slaves. A slave seldom dies but that

his death is attributed to trickery.

Henry and John were quite intelligent, and in a very little while after

I went there, I succeeded in creating in them a strong desire to learn

how to read. This desire soon sprang up in the others also. They very

soon mustered up some old spelling-books, and nothing would do but that

I must keep a Sabbath school. I agreed to do so, and accordingly devoted

my Sundays to teaching these my loved fellow-slaves how to read. Neither

of them knew his letters when I went there. Some of the slaves of the

neighboring farms found what was going on, and also availed themselves

of this little opportunity to learn to read. It was understood, among

all who came, that there must be as little display about it as possible.

It was necessary to keep our religious masters at St. Michael's

unacquainted with the fact, that, instead of spending the Sabbath in

wrestling, boxing, and drinking whisky, we were trying to learn how to

read the will of God; for they had much rather see us engaged in those

degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and

accountable beings. My blood boils as I think of the bloody manner in

which Messrs. Wright Fairbanks and Garrison West, both class-leaders, in

connection with many others, rushed in upon us with sticks and stones,

and broke up our virtuous little Sabbath school, at St. Michael's--all

calling themselves Christians! humble followers of the Lord Jesus

Christ! But I am again digressing.

I held my Sabbath school at the house of a free colored man, whose

name I deem it imprudent to mention; for should it be known, it might

embarrass him greatly, though the crime of holding the school was

committed ten years ago. I had at one time over forty scholars, and

those of the right sort, ardently desiring to learn. They were of all

ages, though mostly men and women. I look back to those Sundays with an

amount of pleasure not to be expressed. They were great days to my

soul. The work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest

engagement with which I was ever blessed. We loved each other, and to

leave them at the close of the Sabbath was a severe cross indeed. When

I think that these precious souls are to-day shut up in the prison-house

of slavery, my feelings overcome me, and I am almost ready to ask,

"Does a righteous God govern the universe? and for what does he hold the

thunders in his right hand, if not to smite the oppressor, and deliver

the spoiled out of the hand of the spoiler?" These dear souls came not

to Sabbath school because it was popular to do so, nor did I teach them

because it was reputable to be thus engaged. Every moment they spent

in that school, they were liable to be taken up, and given thirty-nine

lashes. They came because they wished to learn. Their minds had

been starved by their cruel masters. They had been shut up in mental

darkness. I taught them, because it was the delight of my soul to be

doing something that looked like bettering the condition of my race. I

kept up my school nearly the whole year I lived with Mr. Freeland; and,

beside my Sabbath school, I devoted three evenings in the week, during

the winter, to teaching the slaves at home. And I have the happiness to

know, that several of those who came to Sabbath school learned how to

read; and that one, at least, is now free through my agency.

The year passed off smoothly. It seemed only about half as long as the

year which preceded it. I went through it without receiving a single

blow. I will give Mr. Freeland the credit of being the best master

I ever had, \_till I became my own master.\_ For the ease with which I

passed the year, I was, however, somewhat indebted to the society of

my fellow-slaves. They were noble souls; they not only possessed loving

hearts, but brave ones. We were linked and interlinked with each other.

I loved them with a love stronger than any thing I have experienced

since. It is sometimes said that we slaves do not love and confide in

each other. In answer to this assertion, I can say, I never loved any or

confided in any people more than my fellow-slaves, and especially those

with whom I lived at Mr. Freeland's. I believe we would have died for

each other. We never undertook to do any thing, of any importance,

without a mutual consultation. We never moved separately. We were

one; and as much so by our tempers and dispositions, as by the mutual

hardships to which we were necessarily subjected by our condition as

slaves.

At the close of the year 1834, Mr. Freeland again hired me of my master,

for the year 1835. But, by this time, I began to want to live \_upon

free land\_ as well as \_with Freeland;\_ and I was no longer content,

therefore, to live with him or any other slaveholder. I began, with the

commencement of the year, to prepare myself for a final struggle, which

should decide my fate one way or the other. My tendency was upward. I

was fast approaching manhood, and year after year had passed, and I was

still a slave. These thoughts roused me--I must do something. I therefore

resolved that 1835 should not pass without witnessing an attempt, on

my part, to secure my liberty. But I was not willing to cherish this

determination alone. My fellow-slaves were dear to me. I was anxious to

have them participate with me in this, my life-giving determination.

I therefore, though with great prudence, commenced early to ascertain

their views and feelings in regard to their condition, and to imbue

their minds with thoughts of freedom. I bent myself to devising ways and

means for our escape, and meanwhile strove, on all fitting occasions,

to impress them with the gross fraud and inhumanity of slavery. I went

first to Henry, next to John, then to the others. I found, in them all,

warm hearts and noble spirits. They were ready to hear, and ready to

act when a feasible plan should be proposed. This was what I wanted.

I talked to them of our want of manhood, if we submitted to our

enslavement without at least one noble effort to be free. We met often,

and consulted frequently, and told our hopes and fears, recounted the

difficulties, real and imagined, which we should be called on to

meet. At times we were almost disposed to give up, and try to content

ourselves with our wretched lot; at others, we were firm and unbending

in our determination to go. Whenever we suggested any plan, there was

shrinking--the odds were fearful. Our path was beset with the greatest

obstacles; and if we succeeded in gaining the end of it, our right to be

free was yet questionable--we were yet liable to be returned to bondage.

We could see no spot, this side of the ocean, where we could be free.

We knew nothing about Canada. Our knowledge of the north did not extend

farther than New York; and to go there, and be forever harassed with the

frightful liability of being returned to slavery--with the certainty of

being treated tenfold worse than before--the thought was truly a horrible

one, and one which it was not easy to overcome. The case sometimes stood

thus: At every gate through which we were to pass, we saw a watchman--at

every ferry a guard--on every bridge a sentinel--and in every wood a

patrol. We were hemmed in upon every side. Here were the difficulties,

real or imagined--the good to be sought, and the evil to be shunned. On

the one hand, there stood slavery, a stern reality, glaring frightfully

upon us,--its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and

even now feasting itself greedily upon our own flesh. On the other hand,

away back in the dim distance, under the flickering light of the north

star, behind some craggy hill or snow-covered mountain, stood a doubtful

freedom--half frozen--beckoning us to come and share its hospitality.

This in itself was sometimes enough to stagger us; but when we permitted

ourselves to survey the road, we were frequently appalled. Upon either

side we saw grim death, assuming the most horrid shapes. Now it was

starvation, causing us to eat our own flesh;--now we were contending with

the waves, and were drowned;--now we were overtaken, and torn to pieces

by the fangs of the terrible bloodhound. We were stung by scorpions,

chased by wild beasts, bitten by snakes, and finally, after having

nearly reached the desired spot,--after swimming rivers, encountering

wild beasts, sleeping in the woods, suffering hunger and nakedness,--we

were overtaken by our pursuers, and, in our resistance, we were shot

dead upon the spot! I say, this picture sometimes appalled us, and made

us

"rather bear those ills we had,

Than fly to others, that we knew not of."

In coming to a fixed determination to run away, we did more than Patrick

Henry, when he resolved upon liberty or death. With us it was a doubtful

liberty at most, and almost certain death if we failed. For my part, I

should prefer death to hopeless bondage.

Sandy, one of our number, gave up the notion, but still encouraged us.

Our company then consisted of Henry Harris, John Harris, Henry Bailey,

Charles Roberts, and myself. Henry Bailey was my uncle, and belonged

to my master. Charles married my aunt: he belonged to my master's

father-in-law, Mr. William Hamilton.

The plan we finally concluded upon was, to get a large canoe belonging

to Mr. Hamilton, and upon the Saturday night previous to Easter

holidays, paddle directly up the Chesapeake Bay. On our arrival at the

head of the bay, a distance of seventy or eighty miles from where we

lived, it was our purpose to turn our canoe adrift, and follow the

guidance of the north star till we got beyond the limits of Maryland.

Our reason for taking the water route was, that we were less liable to

be suspected as runaways; we hoped to be regarded as fishermen;

whereas, if we should take the land route, we should be subjected to

interruptions of almost every kind. Any one having a white face, and

being so disposed, could stop us, and subject us to examination.

The week before our intended start, I wrote several protections, one for

each of us. As well as I can remember, they were in the following words,

to wit:--

"This is to certify that I, the undersigned, have given the bearer, my

servant, full liberty to go to Baltimore, and spend the Easter holidays.

Written with mine own hand, &amp;c., 1835.

"WILLIAM HAMILTON,

"Near St. Michael's, in Talbot county, Maryland."

We were not going to Baltimore; but, in going up the bay, we went toward

Baltimore, and these protections were only intended to protect us while

on the bay.

As the time drew near for our departure, our anxiety became more and

more intense. It was truly a matter of life and death with us. The

strength of our determination was about to be fully tested. At this

time, I was very active in explaining every difficulty, removing every

doubt, dispelling every fear, and inspiring all with the firmness

indispensable to success in our undertaking; assuring them that half was

gained the instant we made the move; we had talked long enough; we were

now ready to move; if not now, we never should be; and if we did

not intend to move now, we had as well fold our arms, sit down, and

acknowledge ourselves fit only to be slaves. This, none of us were

prepared to acknowledge. Every man stood firm; and at our last meeting,

we pledged ourselves afresh, in the most solemn manner, that, at the

time appointed, we would certainly start in pursuit of freedom. This

was in the middle of the week, at the end of which we were to be off. We

went, as usual, to our several fields of labor, but with bosoms highly

agitated with thoughts of our truly hazardous undertaking. We tried to

conceal our feelings as much as possible; and I think we succeeded very

well.

After a painful waiting, the Saturday morning, whose night was to

witness our departure, came. I hailed it with joy, bring what of sadness

it might. Friday night was a sleepless one for me. I probably felt more

anxious than the rest, because I was, by common consent, at the head of

the whole affair. The responsibility of success or failure lay heavily

upon me. The glory of the one, and the confusion of the other, were

alike mine. The first two hours of that morning were such as I never

experienced before, and hope never to again. Early in the morning, we

went, as usual, to the field. We were spreading manure; and all at once,

while thus engaged, I was overwhelmed with an indescribable feeling, in

the fulness of which I turned to Sandy, who was near by, and said, "We

are betrayed!" "Well," said he, "that thought has this moment struck

me." We said no more. I was never more certain of any thing.

The horn was blown as usual, and we went up from the field to the house

for breakfast. I went for the form, more than for want of any thing to

eat that morning. Just as I got to the house, in looking out at the lane

gate, I saw four white men, with two colored men. The white men were

on horseback, and the colored ones were walking behind, as if tied. I

watched them a few moments till they got up to our lane gate. Here they

halted, and tied the colored men to the gate-post. I was not yet certain

as to what the matter was. In a few moments, in rode Mr. Hamilton, with

a speed betokening great excitement. He came to the door, and inquired

if Master William was in. He was told he was at the barn. Mr. Hamilton,

without dismounting, rode up to the barn with extraordinary speed. In

a few moments, he and Mr. Freeland returned to the house. By this time,

the three constables rode up, and in great haste dismounted, tied their

horses, and met Master William and Mr. Hamilton returning from the barn;

and after talking awhile, they all walked up to the kitchen door. There

was no one in the kitchen but myself and John. Henry and Sandy were up

at the barn. Mr. Freeland put his head in at the door, and called me by

name, saying, there were some gentlemen at the door who wished to see

me. I stepped to the door, and inquired what they wanted. They at once

seized me, and, without giving me any satisfaction, tied me--lashing my

hands closely together. I insisted upon knowing what the matter was.

They at length said, that they had learned I had been in a "scrape,"

and that I was to be examined before my master; and if their information

proved false, I should not be hurt.

In a few moments, they succeeded in tying John. They then turned to

Henry, who had by this time returned, and commanded him to cross his

hands. "I won't!" said Henry, in a firm tone, indicating his readiness

to meet the consequences of his refusal. "Won't you?" said Tom Graham,

the constable. "No, I won't!" said Henry, in a still stronger tone. With

this, two of the constables pulled out their shining pistols, and swore,

by their Creator, that they would make him cross his hands or kill him.

Each cocked his pistol, and, with fingers on the trigger, walked up to

Henry, saying, at the same time, if he did not cross his hands, they

would blow his damned heart out. "Shoot me, shoot me!" said Henry; "you

can't kill me but once. Shoot, shoot,--and be damned! \_I won't be tied!\_"

This he said in a tone of loud defiance; and at the same time, with

a motion as quick as lightning, he with one single stroke dashed the

pistols from the hand of each constable. As he did this, all hands fell

upon him, and, after beating him some time, they finally overpowered

him, and got him tied.

During the scuffle, I managed, I know not how, to get my pass out, and,

without being discovered, put it into the fire. We were all now tied;

and just as we were to leave for Easton jail, Betsy Freeland, mother of

William Freeland, came to the door with her hands full of biscuits, and

divided them between Henry and John. She then delivered herself of a

speech, to the following effect:--addressing herself to me, she said,

"\_You devil! You yellow devil!\_ it was you that put it into the heads of

Henry and John to run away. But for you, you long-legged mulatto devil!

Henry nor John would never have thought of such a thing." I made no

reply, and was immediately hurried off towards St. Michael's. Just a

moment previous to the scuffle with Henry, Mr. Hamilton suggested the

propriety of making a search for the protections which he had understood

Frederick had written for himself and the rest. But, just at the moment

he was about carrying his proposal into effect, his aid was needed in

helping to tie Henry; and the excitement attending the scuffle caused

them either to forget, or to deem it unsafe, under the circumstances, to

search. So we were not yet convicted of the intention to run away.

When we got about half way to St. Michael's, while the constables having

us in charge were looking ahead, Henry inquired of me what he should do

with his pass. I told him to eat it with his biscuit, and own nothing;

and we passed the word around, "\_Own nothing;\_" and "\_Own nothing!\_"

said we all. Our confidence in each other was unshaken. We were resolved

to succeed or fail together, after the calamity had befallen us as much

as before. We were now prepared for any thing. We were to be dragged

that morning fifteen miles behind horses, and then to be placed in

the Easton jail. When we reached St. Michael's, we underwent a sort of

examination. We all denied that we ever intended to run away. We did

this more to bring out the evidence against us, than from any hope of

getting clear of being sold; for, as I have said, we were ready for

that. The fact was, we cared but little where we went, so we went

together. Our greatest concern was about separation. We dreaded that

more than any thing this side of death. We found the evidence against us

to be the testimony of one person; our master would not tell who it

was; but we came to a unanimous decision among ourselves as to who

their informant was. We were sent off to the jail at Easton. When we got

there, we were delivered up to the sheriff, Mr. Joseph Graham, and by

him placed in jail. Henry, John, and myself, were placed in one

room together--Charles, and Henry Bailey, in another. Their object in

separating us was to hinder concert.

We had been in jail scarcely twenty minutes, when a swarm of slave

traders, and agents for slave traders, flocked into jail to look at us,

and to ascertain if we were for sale. Such a set of beings I never saw

before! I felt myself surrounded by so many fiends from perdition. A

band of pirates never looked more like their father, the devil. They

laughed and grinned over us, saying, "Ah, my boys! we have got you,

haven't we?" And after taunting us in various ways, they one by one

went into an examination of us, with intent to ascertain our value.

They would impudently ask us if we would not like to have them for our

masters. We would make them no answer, and leave them to find out as

best they could. Then they would curse and swear at us, telling us that

they could take the devil out of us in a very little while, if we were

only in their hands.

While in jail, we found ourselves in much more comfortable quarters than

we expected when we went there. We did not get much to eat, nor that

which was very good; but we had a good clean room, from the windows of

which we could see what was going on in the street, which was very much

better than though we had been placed in one of the dark, damp cells.

Upon the whole, we got along very well, so far as the jail and its

keeper were concerned. Immediately after the holidays were over,

contrary to all our expectations, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Freeland came up

to Easton, and took Charles, the two Henrys, and John, out of jail, and

carried them home, leaving me alone. I regarded this separation as

a final one. It caused me more pain than any thing else in the whole

transaction. I was ready for any thing rather than separation. I

supposed that they had consulted together, and had decided that, as I

was the whole cause of the intention of the others to run away, it was

hard to make the innocent suffer with the guilty; and that they had,

therefore, concluded to take the others home, and sell me, as a warning

to the others that remained. It is due to the noble Henry to say, he

seemed almost as reluctant at leaving the prison as at leaving home

to come to the prison. But we knew we should, in all probability,

be separated, if we were sold; and since he was in their hands, he

concluded to go peaceably home.

I was now left to my fate. I was all alone, and within the walls of a

stone prison. But a few days before, and I was full of hope. I expected

to have been safe in a land of freedom; but now I was covered with

gloom, sunk down to the utmost despair. I thought the possibility of

freedom was gone. I was kept in this way about one week, at the end of

which, Captain Auld, my master, to my surprise and utter astonishment,

came up, and took me out, with the intention of sending me, with a

gentleman of his acquaintance, into Alabama. But, from some cause or

other, he did not send me to Alabama, but concluded to send me back to

Baltimore, to live again with his brother Hugh, and to learn a trade.

Thus, after an absence of three years and one month, I was once more

permitted to return to my old home at Baltimore. My master sent me

away, because there existed against me a very great prejudice in the

community, and he feared I might be killed.

In a few weeks after I went to Baltimore, Master Hugh hired me to Mr.

William Gardner, an extensive ship-builder, on Fell's Point. I was put

there to learn how to calk. It, however, proved a very unfavorable place

for the accomplishment of this object. Mr. Gardner was engaged that

spring in building two large man-of-war brigs, professedly for the

Mexican government. The vessels were to be launched in the July of that

year, and in failure thereof, Mr. Gardner was to lose a considerable

sum; so that when I entered, all was hurry. There was no time to learn

any thing. Every man had to do that which he knew how to do. In entering

the shipyard, my orders from Mr. Gardner were, to do whatever the

carpenters commanded me to do. This was placing me at the beck and call

of about seventy-five men. I was to regard all these as masters. Their

word was to be my law. My situation was a most trying one. At times I

needed a dozen pair of hands. I was called a dozen ways in the space of

a single minute. Three or four voices would strike my ear at the same

moment. It was--"Fred., come help me to cant this timber here."--"Fred.,

come carry this timber yonder."--"Fred., bring that roller here."--"Fred.,

go get a fresh can of water."--"Fred., come help saw off the end of this

timber."--"Fred., go quick, and get the crowbar."--"Fred., hold on the

end of this fall."--"Fred., go to the blacksmith's shop, and get a new

punch."--"Hurra, Fred! run and bring me a cold chisel."--"I say, Fred.,

bear a hand, and get up a fire as quick as lightning under that

steam-box."--"Halloo, nigger! come, turn this grindstone."--"Come, come!

move, move! and \_bowse\_ this timber forward."--"I say, darky, blast

your eyes, why don't you heat up some pitch?"--"Halloo! halloo! halloo!"

(Three voices at the same time.) "Come here!--Go there!--Hold on where you

are! Damn you, if you move, I'll knock your brains out!"

This was my school for eight months; and I might have remained there

longer, but for a most horrid fight I had with four of the white

apprentices, in which my left eye was nearly knocked out, and I was

horribly mangled in other respects. The facts in the case were

these: Until a very little while after I went there, white and black

ship-carpenters worked side by side, and no one seemed to see any

impropriety in it. All hands seemed to be very well satisfied. Many of

the black carpenters were freemen. Things seemed to be going on very

well. All at once, the white carpenters knocked off, and said they would

not work with free colored workmen. Their reason for this, as alleged,

was, that if free colored carpenters were encouraged, they would soon

take the trade into their own hands, and poor white men would be thrown

out of employment. They therefore felt called upon at once to put a stop

to it. And, taking advantage of Mr. Gardner's necessities, they broke

off, swearing they would work no longer, unless he would discharge his

black carpenters. Now, though this did not extend to me in form, it

did reach me in fact. My fellow-apprentices very soon began to feel it

degrading to them to work with me. They began to put on airs, and

talk about the "niggers" taking the country, saying we all ought to be

killed; and, being encouraged by the journeymen, they commenced

making my condition as hard as they could, by hectoring me around, and

sometimes striking me. I, of course, kept the vow I made after the fight

with Mr. Covey, and struck back again, regardless of consequences; and

while I kept them from combining, I succeeded very well; for I could

whip the whole of them, taking them separately. They, however, at

length combined, and came upon me, armed with sticks, stones, and heavy

handspikes. One came in front with a half brick. There was one at each

side of me, and one behind me. While I was attending to those in front,

and on either side, the one behind ran up with the handspike, and struck

me a heavy blow upon the head. It stunned me. I fell, and with this they

all ran upon me, and fell to beating me with their fists. I let them

lay on for a while, gathering strength. In an instant, I gave a sudden

surge, and rose to my hands and knees. Just as I did that, one of their

number gave me, with his heavy boot, a powerful kick in the left eye.

My eyeball seemed to have burst. When they saw my eye closed, and badly

swollen, they left me. With this I seized the handspike, and for a time

pursued them. But here the carpenters interfered, and I thought I might

as well give it up. It was impossible to stand my hand against so

many. All this took place in sight of not less than fifty white

ship-carpenters, and not one interposed a friendly word; but some cried,

"Kill the damned nigger! Kill him! kill him! He struck a white person."

I found my only chance for life was in flight. I succeeded in getting

away without an additional blow, and barely so; for to strike a white

man is death by Lynch law,--and that was the law in Mr. Gardner's

ship-yard; nor is there much of any other out of Mr. Gardner's

ship-yard.

I went directly home, and told the story of my wrongs to Master Hugh;

and I am happy to say of him, irreligious as he was, his conduct

was heavenly, compared with that of his brother Thomas under similar

circumstances. He listened attentively to my narration of the

circumstances leading to the savage outrage, and gave many proofs of

his strong indignation at it. The heart of my once overkind mistress was

again melted into pity. My puffed-out eye and blood-covered face moved

her to tears. She took a chair by me, washed the blood from my face,

and, with a mother's tenderness, bound up my head, covering the wounded

eye with a lean piece of fresh beef. It was almost compensation for my

suffering to witness, once more, a manifestation of kindness from this,

my once affectionate old mistress. Master Hugh was very much enraged. He

gave expression to his feelings by pouring out curses upon the heads

of those who did the deed. As soon as I got a little the better of my

bruises, he took me with him to Esquire Watson's, on Bond Street, to

see what could be done about the matter. Mr. Watson inquired who saw

the assault committed. Master Hugh told him it was done in Mr. Gardner's

ship-yard at midday, where there were a large company of men at work.

"As to that," he said, "the deed was done, and there was no question as

to who did it." His answer was, he could do nothing in the case, unless

some white man would come forward and testify. He could issue no warrant

on my word. If I had been killed in the presence of a thousand colored

people, their testimony combined would have been insufficient to have

arrested one of the murderers. Master Hugh, for once, was compelled to

say this state of things was too bad. Of course, it was impossible to

get any white man to volunteer his testimony in my behalf, and against

the white young men. Even those who may have sympathized with me were

not prepared to do this. It required a degree of courage unknown to them

to do so; for just at that time, the slightest manifestation of humanity

toward a colored person was denounced as abolitionism, and that name

subjected its bearer to frightful liabilities. The watchwords of

the bloody-minded in that region, and in those days, were, "Damn the

abolitionists!" and "Damn the niggers!" There was nothing done, and

probably nothing would have been done if I had been killed. Such

was, and such remains, the state of things in the Christian city of

Baltimore.

Master Hugh, finding he could get no redress, refused to let me go back

again to Mr. Gardner. He kept me himself, and his wife dressed my wound

till I was again restored to health. He then took me into the ship-yard

of which he was foreman, in the employment of Mr. Walter Price. There I

was immediately set to calking, and very soon learned the art of using

my mallet and irons. In the course of one year from the time I left Mr.

Gardner's, I was able to command the highest wages given to the most

experienced calkers. I was now of some importance to my master. I was

bringing him from six to seven dollars per week. I sometimes brought him

nine dollars per week: my wages were a dollar and a half a day. After

learning how to calk, I sought my own employment, made my own contracts,

and collected the money which I earned. My pathway became much more

smooth than before; my condition was now much more comfortable. When I

could get no calking to do, I did nothing. During these leisure times,

those old notions about freedom would steal over me again. When in

Mr. Gardner's employment, I was kept in such a perpetual whirl of

excitement, I could think of nothing, scarcely, but my life; and in

thinking of my life, I almost forgot my liberty. I have observed this

in my experience of slavery,--that whenever my condition was improved,

instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire

to be free, and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom. I

have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a

thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision,

and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be

able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel

that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases

to be a man.

I was now getting, as I have said, one dollar and fifty cents per day. I

contracted for it; I earned it; it was paid to me; it was rightfully my

own; yet, upon each returning Saturday night, I was compelled to deliver

every cent of that money to Master Hugh. And why? Not because he earned

it,--not because he had any hand in earning it,--not because I owed it to

him,--nor because he possessed the slightest shadow of a right to it; but

solely because he had the power to compel me to give it up. The right of

the grim-visaged pirate upon the high seas is exactly the same.

CHAPTER XI

I now come to that part of my life during which I planned, and finally

succeeded in making, my escape from slavery. But before narrating any of

the peculiar circumstances, I deem it proper to make known my intention

not to state all the facts connected with the transaction. My reasons

for pursuing this course may be understood from the following: First,

were I to give a minute statement of all the facts, it is not only

possible, but quite probable, that others would thereby be involved in

the most embarrassing difficulties. Secondly, such a statement would

most undoubtedly induce greater vigilance on the part of slaveholders

than has existed heretofore among them; which would, of course, be the

means of guarding a door whereby some dear brother bondman might escape

his galling chains. I deeply regret the necessity that impels me

to suppress any thing of importance connected with my experience in

slavery. It would afford me great pleasure indeed, as well as materially

add to the interest of my narrative, were I at liberty to gratify a

curiosity, which I know exists in the minds of many, by an accurate

statement of all the facts pertaining to my most fortunate escape. But

I must deprive myself of this pleasure, and the curious of the

gratification which such a statement would afford. I would allow myself

to suffer under the greatest imputations which evil-minded men might

suggest, rather than exculpate myself, and thereby run the hazard

of closing the slightest avenue by which a brother slave might clear

himself of the chains and fetters of slavery.

I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of

our western friends have conducted what they call the \_underground

railroad,\_ but which I think, by their open declarations, has been made

most emphatically the \_upper-ground railroad.\_ I honor those good

men and women for their noble daring, and applaud them for willingly

subjecting themselves to bloody persecution, by openly avowing their

participation in the escape of slaves. I, however, can see very little

good resulting from such a course, either to themselves or the slaves

escaping; while, upon the other hand, I see and feel assured that those

open declarations are a positive evil to the slaves remaining, who

are seeking to escape. They do nothing towards enlightening the slave,

whilst they do much towards enlightening the master. They stimulate him

to greater watchfulness, and enhance his power to capture his slave. We

owe something to the slave south of the line as well as to those north

of it; and in aiding the latter on their way to freedom, we should be

careful to do nothing which would be likely to hinder the former from

escaping from slavery. I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly

ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave. I would leave him

to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors, ever

ready to snatch from his infernal grasp his trembling prey. Let him be

left to feel his way in the dark; let darkness commensurate with his

crime hover over him; and let him feel that at every step he takes,

in pursuit of the flying bondman, he is running the frightful risk of

having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible agency. Let us render

the tyrant no aid; let us not hold the light by which he can trace the

footprints of our flying brother. But enough of this. I will now proceed

to the statement of those facts, connected with my escape, for which

I am alone responsible, and for which no one can be made to suffer but

myself.

In the early part of the year 1838, I became quite restless. I could see

no reason why I should, at the end of each week, pour the reward of my

toil into the purse of my master. When I carried to him my weekly

wages, he would, after counting the money, look me in the face with a

robber-like fierceness, and ask, "Is this all?" He was satisfied with

nothing less than the last cent. He would, however, when I made him

six dollars, sometimes give me six cents, to encourage me. It had the

opposite effect. I regarded it as a sort of admission of my right to the

whole. The fact that he gave me any part of my wages was proof, to my

mind, that he believed me entitled to the whole of them. I always felt

worse for having received any thing; for I feared that the giving me a

few cents would ease his conscience, and make him feel himself to be a

pretty honorable sort of robber. My discontent grew upon me. I was ever

on the look-out for means of escape; and, finding no direct means, I

determined to try to hire my time, with a view of getting money with

which to make my escape. In the spring of 1838, when Master Thomas came

to Baltimore to purchase his spring goods, I got an opportunity, and

applied to him to allow me to hire my time. He unhesitatingly refused my

request, and told me this was another stratagem by which to escape. He

told me I could go nowhere but that he could get me; and that, in the

event of my running away, he should spare no pains in his efforts to

catch me. He exhorted me to content myself, and be obedient. He told me,

if I would be happy, I must lay out no plans for the future. He said, if

I behaved myself properly, he would take care of me. Indeed, he advised

me to complete thoughtlessness of the future, and taught me to depend

solely upon him for happiness. He seemed to see fully the pressing

necessity of setting aside my intellectual nature, in order to

contentment in slavery. But in spite of him, and even in spite of

myself, I continued to think, and to think about the injustice of my

enslavement, and the means of escape.

About two months after this, I applied to Master Hugh for the privilege

of hiring my time. He was not acquainted with the fact that I had

applied to Master Thomas, and had been refused. He too, at first,

seemed disposed to refuse; but, after some reflection, he granted me the

privilege, and proposed the following terms: I was to be allowed all my

time, make all contracts with those for whom I worked, and find my own

employment; and, in return for this liberty, I was to pay him three

dollars at the end of each week; find myself in calking tools, and in

board and clothing. My board was two dollars and a half per week. This,

with the wear and tear of clothing and calking tools, made my regular

expenses about six dollars per week. This amount I was compelled to make

up, or relinquish the privilege of hiring my time. Rain or shine, work

or no work, at the end of each week the money must be forthcoming, or I

must give up my privilege. This arrangement, it will be perceived, was

decidedly in my master's favor. It relieved him of all need of

looking after me. His money was sure. He received all the benefits

of slaveholding without its evils; while I endured all the evils of a

slave, and suffered all the care and anxiety of a freeman. I found it a

hard bargain. But, hard as it was, I thought it better than the old mode

of getting along. It was a step towards freedom to be allowed to bear

the responsibilities of a freeman, and I was determined to hold on upon

it. I bent myself to the work of making money. I was ready to work

at night as well as day, and by the most untiring perseverance and

industry, I made enough to meet my expenses, and lay up a little money

every week. I went on thus from May till August. Master Hugh then

refused to allow me to hire my time longer. The ground for his refusal

was a failure on my part, one Saturday night, to pay him for my week's

time. This failure was occasioned by my attending a camp meeting

about ten miles from Baltimore. During the week, I had entered into an

engagement with a number of young friends to start from Baltimore to the

camp ground early Saturday evening; and being detained by my employer,

I was unable to get down to Master Hugh's without disappointing the

company. I knew that Master Hugh was in no special need of the money

that night. I therefore decided to go to camp meeting, and upon my

return pay him the three dollars. I staid at the camp meeting one day

longer than I intended when I left. But as soon as I returned, I called

upon him to pay him what he considered his due. I found him very angry;

he could scarce restrain his wrath. He said he had a great mind to give

me a severe whipping. He wished to know how I dared go out of the city

without asking his permission. I told him I hired my time and while

I paid him the price which he asked for it, I did not know that I was

bound to ask him when and where I should go. This reply troubled him;

and, after reflecting a few moments, he turned to me, and said I should

hire my time no longer; that the next thing he should know of, I would

be running away. Upon the same plea, he told me to bring my tools and

clothing home forthwith. I did so; but instead of seeking work, as I had

been accustomed to do previously to hiring my time, I spent the whole

week without the performance of a single stroke of work. I did this in

retaliation. Saturday night, he called upon me as usual for my week's

wages. I told him I had no wages; I had done no work that week. Here

we were upon the point of coming to blows. He raved, and swore his

determination to get hold of me. I did not allow myself a single word;

but was resolved, if he laid the weight of his hand upon me, it should

be blow for blow. He did not strike me, but told me that he would find

me in constant employment in future. I thought the matter over during

the next day, Sunday, and finally resolved upon the third day of

September, as the day upon which I would make a second attempt to

secure my freedom. I now had three weeks during which to prepare for my

journey. Early on Monday morning, before Master Hugh had time to make

any engagement for me, I went out and got employment of Mr. Butler, at

his ship-yard near the drawbridge, upon what is called the City Block,

thus making it unnecessary for him to seek employment for me. At the

end of the week, I brought him between eight and nine dollars. He seemed

very well pleased, and asked why I did not do the same the week before.

He little knew what my plans were. My object in working steadily was to

remove any suspicion he might entertain of my intent to run away; and

in this I succeeded admirably. I suppose he thought I was never better

satisfied with my condition than at the very time during which I was

planning my escape. The second week passed, and again I carried him

my full wages; and so well pleased was he, that he gave me twenty-five

cents, (quite a large sum for a slaveholder to give a slave,) and bade

me to make a good use of it. I told him I would.

Things went on without very smoothly indeed, but within there was

trouble. It is impossible for me to describe my feelings as the time of

my contemplated start drew near. I had a number of warmhearted friends

in Baltimore,--friends that I loved almost as I did my life,--and

the thought of being separated from them forever was painful beyond

expression. It is my opinion that thousands would escape from slavery,

who now remain, but for the strong cords of affection that bind them to

their friends. The thought of leaving my friends was decidedly the most

painful thought with which I had to contend. The love of them was my

tender point, and shook my decision more than all things else. Besides

the pain of separation, the dread and apprehension of a failure exceeded

what I had experienced at my first attempt. The appalling defeat I then

sustained returned to torment me. I felt assured that, if I failed in

this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one--it would seal my fate as a

slave forever. I could not hope to get off with any thing less than the

severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It

required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes

through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness

of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me.

It was life and death with me. But I remained firm, and, according to my

resolution, on the third day of September, 1838, I left my chains, and

succeeded in reaching New York without the slightest interruption of any

kind. How I did so,--what means I adopted,--what direction I travelled,

and by what mode of conveyance,--I must leave unexplained, for the

reasons before mentioned.

I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a

free State. I have never been able to answer the question with any

satisfaction to myself. It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever

experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to

feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a

pirate. In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New

York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This

state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with

a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be

taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery. This in

itself was enough to damp the ardor of my enthusiasm. But the loneliness

overcame me. There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect

stranger; without home and without friends, in the midst of thousands

of my own brethren--children of a common Father, and yet I dared not to

unfold to any one of them my sad condition. I was afraid to speak to any

one for fear of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the

hands of money-loving kidnappers, whose business it was to lie in wait

for the panting fugitive, as the ferocious beasts of the forest lie

in wait for their prey. The motto which I adopted when I started from

slavery was this--"Trust no man!" I saw in every white man an enemy, and

in almost every colored man cause for distrust. It was a most painful

situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or

imagine himself in similar circumstances. Let him be a fugitive slave

in a strange land--a land given up to be the hunting-ground for

slaveholders--whose inhabitants are legalized kidnappers--where he is

every moment subjected to the terrible liability of being seized upon by

his fellowmen, as the hideous crocodile seizes upon his prey!--I say, let

him place himself in my situation--without home or friends--without money

or credit--wanting shelter, and no one to give it--wanting bread, and no

money to buy it,--and at the same time let him feel that he is pursued by

merciless men-hunters, and in total darkness as to what to do, where to

go, or where to stay,--perfectly helpless both as to the means of defence

and means of escape,--in the midst of plenty, yet suffering the terrible

gnawings of hunger,--in the midst of houses, yet having no home,--among

fellow-men, yet feeling as if in the midst of wild beasts, whose

greediness to swallow up the trembling and half-famished fugitive is

only equalled by that with which the monsters of the deep swallow up the

helpless fish upon which they subsist,--I say, let him be placed in this

most trying situation,--the situation in which I was placed,--then, and

not till then, will he fully appreciate the hardships of, and know how

to sympathize with, the toil-worn and whip-scarred fugitive slave.

Thank Heaven, I remained but a short time in this distressed situation.

I was relieved from it by the humane hand of \_Mr. David Ruggles\_, whose

vigilance, kindness, and perseverance, I shall never forget. I am

glad of an opportunity to express, as far as words can, the love and

gratitude I bear him. Mr. Ruggles is now afflicted with blindness, and

is himself in need of the same kind offices which he was once so forward

in the performance of toward others. I had been in New York but a few

days, when Mr. Ruggles sought me out, and very kindly took me to his

boarding-house at the corner of Church and Lespenard Streets. Mr.

Ruggles was then very deeply engaged in the memorable \_Darg\_ case, as

well as attending to a number of other fugitive slaves, devising ways

and means for their successful escape; and, though watched and hemmed in

on almost every side, he seemed to be more than a match for his enemies.

Very soon after I went to Mr. Ruggles, he wished to know of me where

I wanted to go; as he deemed it unsafe for me to remain in New York. I

told him I was a calker, and should like to go where I could get work.

I thought of going to Canada; but he decided against it, and in favor of

my going to New Bedford, thinking I should be able to get work there at

my trade. At this time, Anna,\* my intended wife, came on; for I wrote

to her immediately after my arrival at New York, (notwithstanding

my homeless, houseless, and helpless condition,) informing her of my

successful flight, and wishing her to come on forthwith. In a few days

after her arrival, Mr. Ruggles called in the Rev. J. W. C. Pennington,

who, in the presence of Mr. Ruggles, Mrs. Michaels, and two or three

others, performed the marriage ceremony, and gave us a certificate, of

which the following is an exact copy:--

"This may certify, that I joined together in holy matrimony Frederick

Johnson\*\* and Anna Murray, as man and wife, in the presence of Mr. David

Ruggles and Mrs. Michaels.

"JAMES W. C. PENNINGTON "\_New York, Sept. 15, 1838\_"

\*She was free.

\*\*I had changed my name from Frederick \_Bailey\_ to that of

\_Johnson\_.

Upon receiving this certificate, and a five-dollar bill from Mr.

Ruggles, I shouldered one part of our baggage, and Anna took up

the other, and we set out forthwith to take passage on board of the

steamboat John W. Richmond for Newport, on our way to New Bedford. Mr.

Ruggles gave me a letter to a Mr. Shaw in Newport, and told me, in case

my money did not serve me to New Bedford, to stop in Newport and obtain

further assistance; but upon our arrival at Newport, we were so anxious

to get to a place of safety, that, notwithstanding we lacked the

necessary money to pay our fare, we decided to take seats in the stage,

and promise to pay when we got to New Bedford. We were encouraged to do

this by two excellent gentlemen, residents of New Bedford, whose names I

afterward ascertained to be Joseph Ricketson and William C. Taber.

They seemed at once to understand our circumstances, and gave us

such assurance of their friendliness as put us fully at ease in their

presence.

It was good indeed to meet with such friends, at such a time. Upon

reaching New Bedford, we were directed to the house of Mr. Nathan

Johnson, by whom we were kindly received, and hospitably provided

for. Both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson took a deep and lively interest in

our welfare. They proved themselves quite worthy of the name of

abolitionists. When the stage-driver found us unable to pay our fare, he

held on upon our baggage as security for the debt. I had but to mention

the fact to Mr. Johnson, and he forthwith advanced the money.

We now began to feel a degree of safety, and to prepare ourselves for

the duties and responsibilities of a life of freedom. On the morning

after our arrival at New Bedford, while at the breakfast-table, the

question arose as to what name I should be called by. The name given me

by my mother was, "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey." I, however,

had dispensed with the two middle names long before I left Maryland so

that I was generally known by the name of "Frederick Bailey." I started

from Baltimore bearing the name of "Stanley." When I got to New York, I

again changed my name to "Frederick Johnson," and thought that would

be the last change. But when I got to New Bedford, I found it necessary

again to change my name. The reason of this necessity was, that there

were so many Johnsons in New Bedford, it was already quite difficult to

distinguish between them. I gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of

choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of

"Frederick." I must hold on to that, to preserve a sense of my identity.

Mr. Johnson had just been reading the "Lady of the Lake," and at once

suggested that my name be "Douglass." From that time until now I have

been called "Frederick Douglass;" and as I am more widely known by that

name than by either of the others, I shall continue to use it as my own.

I was quite disappointed at the general appearance of things in New

Bedford. The impression which I had received respecting the character

and condition of the people of the north, I found to be singularly

erroneous. I had very strangely supposed, while in slavery, that few of

the comforts, and scarcely any of the luxuries, of life were enjoyed at

the north, compared with what were enjoyed by the slaveholders of the

south. I probably came to this conclusion from the fact that northern

people owned no slaves. I supposed that they were about upon a level

with the non-slaveholding population of the south. I knew \_they\_ were

exceedingly poor, and I had been accustomed to regard their poverty as

the necessary consequence of their being non-slaveholders. I had somehow

imbibed the opinion that, in the absence of slaves, there could be no

wealth, and very little refinement. And upon coming to the north, I

expected to meet with a rough, hard-handed, and uncultivated population,

living in the most Spartan-like simplicity, knowing nothing of the

ease, luxury, pomp, and grandeur of southern slaveholders. Such being my

conjectures, any one acquainted with the appearance of New Bedford may

very readily infer how palpably I must have seen my mistake.

In the afternoon of the day when I reached New Bedford, I visited the

wharves, to take a view of the shipping. Here I found myself surrounded

with the strongest proofs of wealth. Lying at the wharves, and riding in

the stream, I saw many ships of the finest model, in the best order, and

of the largest size. Upon the right and left, I was walled in by granite

warehouses of the widest dimensions, stowed to their utmost capacity

with the necessaries and comforts of life. Added to this, almost every

body seemed to be at work, but noiselessly so, compared with what I had

been accustomed to in Baltimore. There were no loud songs heard from

those engaged in loading and unloading ships. I heard no deep oaths or

horrid curses on the laborer. I saw no whipping of men; but all seemed

to go smoothly on. Every man appeared to understand his work, and went

at it with a sober, yet cheerful earnestness, which betokened the deep

interest which he felt in what he was doing, as well as a sense of his

own dignity as a man. To me this looked exceedingly strange. From the

wharves I strolled around and over the town, gazing with wonder

and admiration at the splendid churches, beautiful dwellings, and

finely-cultivated gardens; evincing an amount of wealth, comfort, taste,

and refinement, such as I had never seen in any part of slaveholding

Maryland.

Every thing looked clean, new, and beautiful. I saw few or no

dilapidated houses, with poverty-stricken inmates; no half-naked

children and barefooted women, such as I had been accustomed to see in

Hillsborough, Easton, St. Michael's, and Baltimore. The people looked

more able, stronger, healthier, and happier, than those of Maryland.

I was for once made glad by a view of extreme wealth, without being

saddened by seeing extreme poverty. But the most astonishing as well

as the most interesting thing to me was the condition of the colored

people, a great many of whom, like myself, had escaped thither as a

refuge from the hunters of men. I found many, who had not been seven

years out of their chains, living in finer houses, and evidently

enjoying more of the comforts of life, than the average of slaveholders

in Maryland. I will venture to assert, that my friend Mr. Nathan Johnson

(of whom I can say with a grateful heart, "I was hungry, and he gave me

meat; I was thirsty, and he gave me drink; I was a stranger, and he took

me in") lived in a neater house; dined at a better table; took, paid

for, and read, more newspapers; better understood the moral, religious,

and political character of the nation,--than nine tenths of the

slaveholders in Talbot county Maryland. Yet Mr. Johnson was a working

man. His hands were hardened by toil, and not his alone, but those also

of Mrs. Johnson. I found the colored people much more spirited than

I had supposed they would be. I found among them a determination to

protect each other from the blood-thirsty kidnapper, at all hazards.

Soon after my arrival, I was told of a circumstance which illustrated

their spirit. A colored man and a fugitive slave were on unfriendly

terms. The former was heard to threaten the latter with informing his

master of his whereabouts. Straightway a meeting was called among the

colored people, under the stereotyped notice, "Business of importance!"

The betrayer was invited to attend. The people came at the appointed

hour, and organized the meeting by appointing a very religious old

gentleman as president, who, I believe, made a prayer, after which he

addressed the meeting as follows: "\_Friends, we have got him here, and

I would recommend that you young men just take him outside the door,

and kill him!\_" With this, a number of them bolted at him; but they were

intercepted by some more timid than themselves, and the betrayer escaped

their vengeance, and has not been seen in New Bedford since. I believe

there have been no more such threats, and should there be hereafter, I

doubt not that death would be the consequence.

I found employment, the third day after my arrival, in stowing a sloop

with a load of oil. It was new, dirty, and hard work for me; but I went

at it with a glad heart and a willing hand. I was now my own master. It

was a happy moment, the rapture of which can be understood only by those

who have been slaves. It was the first work, the reward of which was to

be entirely my own. There was no Master Hugh standing ready, the moment

I earned the money, to rob me of it. I worked that day with a pleasure I

had never before experienced. I was at work for myself and newly-married

wife. It was to me the starting-point of a new existence. When I got

through with that job, I went in pursuit of a job of calking; but such

was the strength of prejudice against color, among the white calkers,

that they refused to work with me, and of course I could get no

employment.\*

\* I am told that colored persons can now get employment at

calking in New Bedford&mdash;a result of anti-slavery effort.

Finding my trade of no immediate benefit, I threw off my calking

habiliments, and prepared myself to do any kind of work I could get to

do. Mr. Johnson kindly let me have his wood-horse and saw, and I very

soon found myself a plenty of work. There was no work too hard--none

too dirty. I was ready to saw wood, shovel coal, carry wood, sweep the

chimney, or roll oil casks,--all of which I did for nearly three years in

New Bedford, before I became known to the anti-slavery world.

In about four months after I went to New Bedford, there came a young man

to me, and inquired if I did not wish to take the "Liberator." I told

him I did; but, just having made my escape from slavery, I remarked that

I was unable to pay for it then. I, however, finally became a subscriber

to it. The paper came, and I read it from week to week with such

feelings as it would be quite idle for me to attempt to describe. The

paper became my meat and my drink. My soul was set all on fire.

Its sympathy for my brethren in bonds--its scathing denunciations of

slaveholders--its faithful exposures of slavery--and its powerful attacks

upon the upholders of the institution--sent a thrill of joy through my

soul, such as I had never felt before!

I had not long been a reader of the "Liberator," before I got a pretty

correct idea of the principles, measures and spirit of the anti-slavery

reform. I took right hold of the cause. I could do but little; but what

I could, I did with a joyful heart, and never felt happier than when

in an anti-slavery meeting. I seldom had much to say at the meetings,

because what I wanted to say was said so much better by others. But,

while attending an anti-slavery convention at Nantucket, on the 11th of

August, 1841, I felt strongly moved to speak, and was at the same time

much urged to do so by Mr. William C. Coffin, a gentleman who had heard

me speak in the colored people's meeting at New Bedford. It was a severe

cross, and I took it up reluctantly. The truth was, I felt myself a

slave, and the idea of speaking to white people weighed me down. I spoke

but a few moments, when I felt a degree of freedom, and said what I

desired with considerable ease. From that time until now, I have been

engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren--with what success, and with

what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide.

APPENDIX

I find, since reading over the foregoing Narrative, that I have,

in several instances, spoken in such a tone and manner, respecting

religion, as may possibly lead those unacquainted with my religious

views to suppose me an opponent of all religion. To remove the liability

of such misapprehension, I deem it proper to append the following brief

explanation. What I have said respecting and against religion, I mean

strictly to apply to the \_slaveholding religion\_ of this land, and

with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the

Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize

the widest possible difference--so wide, that to receive the one as good,

pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and

wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy

of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity

of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping,

cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.

Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the

religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all

misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels.

Never was there a clearer case of "stealing the livery of the court of

heaven to serve the devil in." I am filled with unutterable loathing

when I contemplate the religious pomp and show, together with the

horrible inconsistencies, which every where surround me. We have

men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries,

and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the

blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and

claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. The man who robs

me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class-leader on

Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation.

He who sells my sister, for purposes of prostitution, stands forth as

the pious advocate of purity. He who proclaims it a religious duty to

read the Bible denies me the right of learning to read the name of the

God who made me. He who is the religious advocate of marriage robs whole

millions of its sacred influence, and leaves them to the ravages of

wholesale pollution. The warm defender of the sacredness of the family

relation is the same that scatters whole families,--sundering husbands

and wives, parents and children, sisters and brothers,--leaving the hut

vacant, and the hearth desolate. We see the thief preaching against

theft, and the adulterer against adultery. We have men sold to build

churches, women sold to support the gospel, and babes sold to purchase

Bibles for the \_Poor Heathen! All For The Glory Of God And The Good Of

Souls!\_ The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime

in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave

are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. Revivals of

religion and revivals in the slave-trade go hand in hand together.

The slave prison and the church stand near each other. The clanking of

fetters and the rattling of chains in the prison, and the pious psalm

and solemn prayer in the church, may be heard at the same time. The

dealers in the bodies and souls of men erect their stand in the presence

of the pulpit, and they mutually help each other. The dealer gives his

blood-stained gold to support the pulpit, and the pulpit, in return,

covers his infernal business with the garb of Christianity. Here we have

religion and robbery the allies of each other--devils dressed in angels'

robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise.

"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?"

The Christianity of America is a Christianity, of whose votaries it may

be as truly said, as it was of the ancient scribes and Pharisees, "They

bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's

shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their

fingers. All their works they do for to be seen of men.--They love the

uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, . . .

. . . and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.--But woe unto you, scribes

and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against

men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are

entering to go in. Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make

long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Ye

compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye

make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.--Woe unto you,

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise,

and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment,

mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the

other undone. Ye blind guides! which strain at a gnat, and swallow a

camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make

clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but within, they are

full of extortion and excess.--Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear

beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all

uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but

within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Dark and terrible as is this picture, I hold it to be strictly true of

the overwhelming mass of professed Christians in America. They strain

at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Could any thing be more true of our

churches? They would be shocked at the proposition of fellowshipping

a \_sheep\_-stealer; and at the same time they hug to their communion a

\_man\_-stealer, and brand me with being an infidel, if I find fault with

them for it. They attend with Pharisaical strictness to the outward

forms of religion, and at the same time neglect the weightier matters of

the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. They are always ready to sacrifice,

but seldom to show mercy. They are they who are represented as

professing to love God whom they have not seen, whilst they hate their

brother whom they have seen. They love the heathen on the other side of

the globe. They can pray for him, pay money to have the Bible put into

his hand, and missionaries to instruct him; while they despise and

totally neglect the heathen at their own doors.

Such is, very briefly, my view of the religion of this land; and to

avoid any misunderstanding, growing out of the use of general terms, I

mean by the religion of this land, that which is revealed in the words,

deeds, and actions, of those bodies, north and south, calling themselves

Christian churches, and yet in union with slaveholders. It is against

religion, as presented by these bodies, that I have felt it my duty to

testify.

I conclude these remarks by copying the following portrait of the

religion of the south, (which is, by communion and fellowship, the

religion of the north,) which I soberly affirm is "true to the life,"

and without caricature or the slightest exaggeration. It is said to

have been drawn, several years before the present anti-slavery agitation

began, by a northern Methodist preacher, who, while residing at the

south, had an opportunity to see slaveholding morals, manners, and

piety, with his own eyes. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the

Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

<b>A PARODY</b>

"Come, saints and sinners, hear me tell

How pious priests whip Jack and Nell,

And women buy and children sell,

And preach all sinners down to hell,

And sing of heavenly union.

"They'll bleat and baa, dona like goats,

Gorge down black sheep, and strain at motes,

Array their backs in fine black coats,

Then seize their negroes by their throats,

And choke, for heavenly union.

"They'll church you if you sip a dram,

And damn you if you steal a lamb;

Yet rob old Tony, Doll, and Sam,

Of human rights, and bread and ham;

Kidnapper's heavenly union.

"They'll loudly talk of Christ's reward,

And bind his image with a cord,

And scold, and swing the lash abhorred,

And sell their brother in the Lord

To handcuffed heavenly union.

"They'll read and sing a sacred song,

And make a prayer both loud and long,

And teach the right and do the wrong,

Hailing the brother, sister throng,

With words of heavenly union.

"We wonder how such saints can sing,

Or praise the Lord upon the wing,

Who roar, and scold, and whip, and sting,

And to their slaves and mammon cling,

In guilty conscience union.

"They'll raise tobacco, corn, and rye,

And drive, and thieve, and cheat, and lie,

And lay up treasures in the sky,

By making switch and cowskin fly,

In hope of heavenly union.

"They'll crack old Tony on the skull,

And preach and roar like Bashan bull,

Or braying ass, of mischief full,

Then seize old Jacob by the wool,

And pull for heavenly union.

"A roaring, ranting, sleek man-thief,

Who lived on mutton, veal, and beef,

Yet never would afford relief

To needy, sable sons of grief,

Was big with heavenly union.

"'Love not the world,' the preacher said,

And winked his eye, and shook his head;

He seized on Tom, and Dick, and Ned,

Cut short their meat, and clothes, and bread,

Yet still loved heavenly union.

"Another preacher whining spoke

Of One whose heart for sinners broke:

He tied old Nanny to an oak,

And drew the blood at every stroke,

And prayed for heavenly union.

"Two others oped their iron jaws,

And waved their children-stealing paws;

There sat their children in gewgaws;

By stinting negroes' backs and maws,

They kept up heavenly union.

"All good from Jack another takes,

And entertains their flirts and rakes,

Who dress as sleek as glossy snakes,

And cram their mouths with sweetened cakes;

And this goes down for union."

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something

toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening

the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in

bonds--faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for

success in my humble efforts--and solemnly pledging my self anew to the

sacred cause,--I subscribe myself,

FREDERICK DOUGLASS. LYNN, \_Mass., April\_ 28, 1845.

THE END

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