

Mr. CRAFT then presented himself, and was warmly cheered. He said he felt himself that evening placed in a very curious position indeed, when he looked back and saw that it was only two years since his wife and himself were slaves in the state of Georgia; held in bondage by the laws of that country, and recognised by the constitution of the United States as nothing more than mere chattels—like the beasts of the field, subject to be bought and sold, and separated from each other at any time, and at the mere will of their master; and then when he looked at their position at the present time, and found they were as free as the freest, and that they were in the midst of friends, amongst whom there was not one who could think of returning them to the bondage they had fled from, when he thought of this great change in their position, the meeting would not wonder that he should feel strange and embarrassed. It was only two years since they had escaped from slavery. They did not know, when in bondage, how to read or write, and it would not be expected that he should know properly how to address that large, intelligent, and educated audience. But when he reflected upon what his relations, and his friends and fellow-men were still suffering in the United States, he could not help saying a few words on their behalf, even though those words be ungrammatical (cheers). He knew it had been said in this country that the slaves in America were happy—that he denied. He was in slavery for four-and-twenty years, during which time he came in contact with hundreds and thousands of slaves, and he never met one that was contented and happy. God forbid that there should exist any in man's form so base, or low, so wretched, & degraded as to be content to drag out a miserable life in bondage for any tyrant on the face of the earth (cheers). There was, it was true, a difference in the condition of the slaves; there was a difference between slaves in the country and slaves in the cities, and some were better fed and better clothed than others, and were not ill-used and flogged so much—but they were slaves still (hear). God created man for higher purposes than the mere regard of what he should eat and drink. He saw a higher destiny and should have nobler aspirations. If the masters in the slave states wished to treat their slaves well, the laws would not admit of their doing so. No slave's word was allowed to be taken against a white man. A slave

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might be walking in the state, and any white ruffian might attack him, and strike him, and knock his eye out, or otherwise maim him, and if no white man witnessed the outrage he had no redress. He or she might go and tell his or her master, who, perhaps, might question the offender, and ask him if he struck his slave, or knocked his eye out? His reply might be, "Yes, because he insulted my wife and children;" and the master not believing him, might sue him for damages. If no one saw it but the slave, his oath would not be taken against a white man, and his master could not succeed (hear); and even if he did recover, he got damages just as he would for an injury as to his horse or his ass, put the money into his pocket, and the poor slave had to go off with his wounds and bruises. The laws of the slave states prohibited any one from teaching a slave to read. He knew that there were some good masters who did try to instruct their slaves, who chose to take the risk and did so; but by so doing they offended against the law, exposed themselves to be frowned down by society, and lessened the value of their slaves. Yes, strange as it might seem, if a slave was known to read, he would not yield so much money when sold as if he were in ignorance. Society in the slave states frowned down the man who dared to instruct his slaves, because it felt he was putting a weapon into the slave's hand which, by and bye, would produce its effects, and which would inoculate with the love and liberty all whom he came in contact with (cheers). "The man," continued Mr Craft, "with whom I was living when a boy, was not one of the worst of slaveholders, but yet he sold my father and my mother at different times and to different persons. The reason he gave for selling them was that they were getting old, and he said he was resolved to sell off his old slaves and buy young ones, or else by and bye the old ones would become useless, and he would find them burdensome. He kept me and the younger slaves, but by and bye he wanted money, and he sold my brother and sister, and put me out to earn the trade of a cabinet-maker. While he was doing this he mortgaged me and my sister to a bank, in order to raise money to buy cotton. Soon after he failed, and then he brought me and my sister to the auction-stand and sold us, in order to repay the bank

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again. He sold my sister first, and while I was standing upon the auction-block I saw a man putting her into a little cart, in order to drive her away, and so I sent a man and asked him if he would wait a few minutes, so as to allow me to see my sister, and speak to her before she went; but he said he had a long way to go, and he could not find time to wait, or he should not get home by dark. Then I asked the auctioneer if he would wait a few minutes, so that I might speak to my sister and bid her a good-bye; but he said he could not delay the sale. The man in the cart then drove off my sister, and as she went I could see, as she looked round, the tears running down her cheeks, and she was driven off to some rice or cotton plantation, for where she is gone I could never learn. I have never heard of or seen her since. (The recital of this narrative, which was told with simplicity and feeling, but without any attempt at display, produced quite a thrilling effect on the audience). The speaker continued—There were many other ways in which the slaves suffered deeply in person and feeling, but perhaps it would be more interesting to the audience if he gave some account of the manner in which his wife and himself effected their escape from bondage. They were born slaves in the state of Georgia, but were not so in love with the degraded state of slavery as not to desire release from it. They thought of and canvassed many plans of escape before they moved, but the difficulties were so many and the distance so great, that they could not think of any mode by which to travel undetected for a thousand miles, until they hit upon that which they finally adopted. It occurred to him that his wife might pass for a sick young gentleman, and that he might assume to be his slave, appointed to wait upon and take care of him, in an attack of inflammatory rheumatism. He suggested the plan to her, and at first she thought that she would not be able to travel a thousand miles; but when she looked around her, and thought of the misery and degradation of slavery it made the very blood in her veins run cold, and then, when she reflected on the happiness of freedom, when she thought that she might go where she would be free and happy, and where she might stand erect as a woman, or humble herself before God and worship him according to the dictates of her conscience,

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she resolved to brave the danger, and she would try. When he was, as he had said, learning the trade of a cabinet-maker, all the money which he earned in a day went to his master; but the man who taught him used to give him over work, and by working very hard late at night, and at early morn, he managed to save up enough money to purchase the necessary disguise, and to pay the expenses of their travel to Philadelphia. He purchased the disguise at different times, in order to avoid detection; and as he bought it he used to take it to the house where his wife lived, where she was allowed a little room to herself, in which she used to lock it up. After they had got the clothes, and the means of travel, they could not think of any mode by which to get off; for there was no chance of their doing so unless they told their masters a very curious story. Whenever he had to relate this portion of his story, it always embarrassed him very much to think of the deception which they were compelled to practise in order to escape. He must relate it however, if only to show the evils which slavery entailed. His wife told her mistress that she had an aunt living at twelve miles distant, from whom she had just heard, and who was very sick and likely to die, and who wished her to come and see her, and she asked to leave to go and stay for three or four days. Her mistress, at first, said she could not let her go, as she did know how to spare her; but his wife then pretended to cry, which produced an effect on her mistress, who then consented, and gave her a ticket of leave. He then told his master that his wife had an aunt sick, whom she was going to see, and that he wished to go for three or four days to take her to her. His master, at first demurred, saying he could not spare him, but he begged hard for leave, and he at length yielded, but enjoined him to make haste back. He promised to return as soon as possible; but somehow he had not managed to get back since—(applause). Having got on thus far, he purchased a pair of green spectacles for his wife, for she thought that, as she would have to meet gentlemen, it would be better for her to have something over her eyes. At four o'clock in the morning he got her up, and she dressed in her gentlemen's clothes, and he thought that she looked very well. They then went to the railway-station, where his

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“master” procured the tickets, saying that he wanted them for himself and his slave. The reason why he (Craft) did not get the tickets was this—no slave was allowed to ride on any railway in America unless he had a pass from his owner authorizing him to ride on such road (because if a slave escaped by a railway the master could recover from the company his money value), but any whiteman could travel as he pleased. They procured the tickets, took their respective places, and reached Savannah at eight o’clock in the evening, from which they took steam-boat back to South Carolina. Mr. Craft then gave a circumstantial narrative of his escape, detailing the difficulties they met with, and the subterfuges to which they were compelled to resort in order to avoid detection. For instance—it is a law of the United States’ railways that where a master and a slave travel by rail, the former is compelled to subscribe his name beneath that of the slave, in order to avoid which Mrs. Craft, who was unable to write, was obliged to keep her right-hand poulticed and in a sling, feigning that it was so disabled as to be unable to hold a pen. At once they were detained because the supposed gentleman had no pass for his slave. He (or rather she) explained that he was the nephew of Dr Johnson, of Boston, and on his way to consult his uncle upon his health, and that he did not know that the pass was required so far to the north, and it was only as the train was about to start that the railway official resolved to take the risk and allow the “sick young gentleman” to proceed. At length they reached Philadelphia, where they threw off disguise, made themselves known, and consulted with Mr Brown and other abolitionists, who advised them to go to Boston. They went to Boston, settled down, and were gaining a respectable livelihood, he as a cabinet-maker and she as a sempstress, when the fugitive bill passed. It was at Boston they became acquainted with Mr Brown, and, after enduring many hardships at the hands of the slave hunters, protected, however, by the abolitionists, they escaped together, and made their way to England, landing at Liverpool. Thanking the audience for the attention with which his statement had been listened to, Mr Craft sat down amid hearty and prolonged cheering.

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