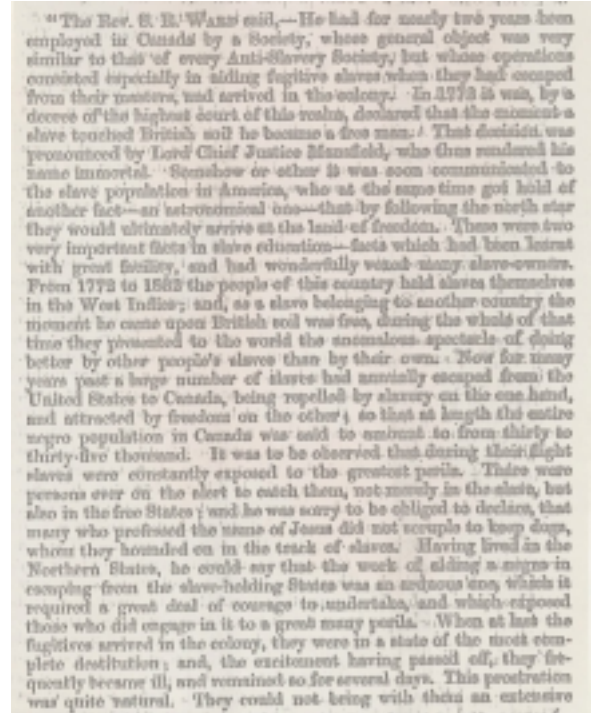


“The Rev. S. R. WARD said,—He had for nearly two years been employed in Canada by a Society, whose general object was very similar to that of every Anti-Slavery Society, but whose operations consisted especially in hiding fugitive slaves when they had escaped from their masters, and arrived in the colony. In 177[2] it was, by a decree of the highest court of this realm, declared that the moment a slave touched British soil he became a free man. That decision was pronounced by Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, who thus rendered his name immortal. Somehow or other it was soon communicated to the slave population in America, who at the same time got hold of another fact—an astronomical one—that by following the north star they would ultimately arrive at the land of freedom. These were two very important facts in slave education—facts which have been learnt with great facility, and had wonderfully vexed many slave-owners. From 1772 to 18[8]2 the people of this country held slaves themselves in the West Indies; and, as a slave belonging to another country the moment he came upon British soil was free, during the whole of that time they presented to the world the anomalous spectacle of doing better by other people’s slaves than by their own. Now for many years past a large number of slaves had annually escaped from the United States to Canada, being repelled by slavery on the one hand, and attracted by freedom on the other; so that at length the entire negro population in Canada was said to amount to from thirty to thirty-five thousand. It was to be observed that during their flight slaves were constantly exposed to the greatest perils. There were persons ever on the alert to catch them, not merely in the slave, but also in the free States; and he was sorry to be obliged to declare, that many who professed the name of Jesus did not scruple to keep dogs, whom they hounded on in the track of slaves. Having lived in the Northern States, he could say that the work of aiding a negro in escaping from the slave-holding States was an arduous one, which it required a great deal of courage to undertake, and which exposed those who did engage in it to a great many perils. When at last the fugitives arrived in the colony, they were in a state of the most complete destitution; and, in the excitement having passed off, they frequently became ill, and remained so for several days. This prostration was quite natural. They could not bring with them an extensive



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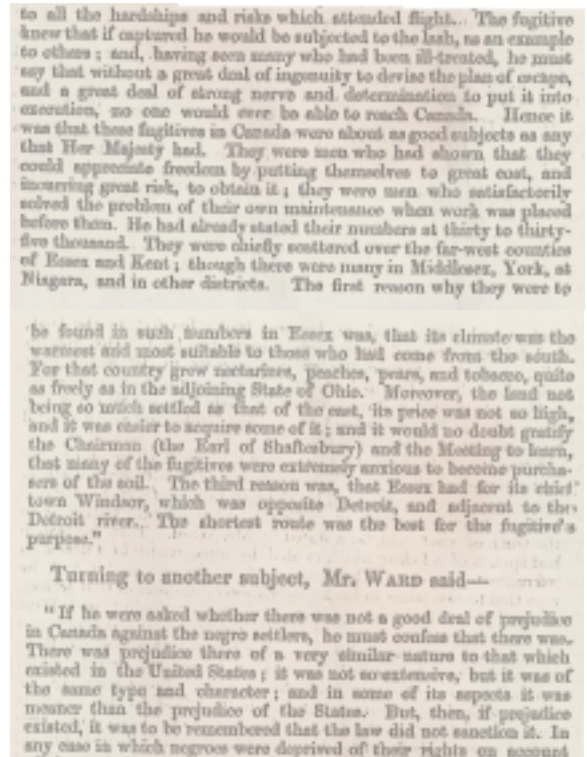
wardrobe; they could not have a large amount of money in their pockets to spend as they went along; for hundreds of miles they were obliged to lie in the woods during the day, and to travel at night, because if they were seen even in any part of the free States, especially since the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law, they might be captured, brought before a magistrate, and, after a summary decision, delivered over to their captors, for restoration to their masters. And here he might observe, in passing, that when a fugitive slave had been brought before a court, the Judge received five dollars, if he declared him free, and ten if he pronounced him a slave—a direct bribe in favour of slavery. Added to this, there was all through the Northern State a feeling that, should the negro be properly treated, he would be troublesome—that he would propose marriage to the daughters of whites, and much more of the same kind. Thus was the poor fugitive in ‘perils by the way’ ‘from his own countrymen.’ The Society which he represented did not go across the frontier line to bring fugitives into Canada; it did not trouble the United States; but the moment he had put his foot on British soil, and by that act had become a free man, it took him by the hand, and did what it could for him. Arriving as he did under circumstances of extreme destitution—a destitution greatly increased by his having had to run the gauntlet, as it were, along the whole of his route—they put their hands into their pockets—and many colonial pockets were very poorly furnished—and endeavoured to aid him. He had frequently known men put themselves to the greatest straits in order to afford relief. After three or four days, after a few supplies of necessaries, after recovering from the illness attendant on the circumstances of the escape, the fugitives generally were able to obtain plenty of work and good wages. They had not been put to expense for any one for more than from three to six days; and in some cases it had been his happiness to obtain work for a party within two hours after his arrival. The fact was, it required quite a man to escape from slavery. When it came to skulking along by day, and running along by night, when one had to place oneself in circumstances of the extremest peril, then it was necessary that there should be a great deal of the bone and sinew of mankind: without that, no one could expose himself

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to all the hardships and risks which attended flight. The fugitive knew that if captured he would be subjected to the lash, as an example to others; and, having seen many who had been ill-treated, he must say that without a great deal of ingenuity to devise the plan of escape, and a great deal of strong nerve and determination to put it into execution, no one would ever be able to reach Canada. Hence it was that these fugitives in Canada were about as good subjects as any that Her Majesty had. They were men who had shown that they could appreciate the freedom by putting themselves to great cost, and incurring great risk, to obtain it; they were men who satisfactorily solved the problem of their own maintenance when work was placed before them. He had already stated their numbers at thirty to thirty-five thousand. They were chiefly scattered over the far-west counties of Essex and Kent; though there were many in Middlesex, York, at Niagara, and in other districts. The first reason why they were to be found in such numbers in Essex was, that its climate was the warmest and most suitable to those who had come from the south. For that country grew nectarines, peaches, pears, and tobacco, quite as freely as in the adjoining State of Ohio. Moreover, the land not being so much settled as that of the east, its price was not so high, and it was easier to acquire some of it; and it would not doubt gratify the Chairman (the Earl of Shaftesbury) and the Meeting to learn, that many of the fugitives were extremely anxious to become purchasers of the soil. The third reason was, that Essex had for its chief town Windsor, which was opposite Detroit, and adjacent to the Detroit river. The shortest route was the best for the fugitive's purpose."

Turning to another subject, Mr. WARD said—

"If he were asked whether there was not a good deal of prejudice in Canada against the negro settlers, he must confess that there was. There was prejudice there of a very similar nature to that which existed in the United States; it was not so extensive, but it was of the same type and character; and in some of its aspects it was meaner than the prejudice of the States. But, then, if prejudice existed, it was to be remembered that the law did not sanction it. In any case in which negroes were deprived of their rights on account



of the prejudice against them, they had only to go before a court to obtain a just and equitable decision: he had never known an instance in which the case was otherwise. Again, there was no religious body in Canada that sanctioned this prejudice. He knew no church that had a negro pew, none in which a negro was not treated as well as a white man. All that was wanted at the present time, was that the fugitive slaves should, on arriving in Canada, be taken by the hand; above all, that means should be adopted to enable them to read the great rule of God's word. What was needed was, that those who had particular trades should be assisted in getting employment in them, and that all should be put in the way of earning an honest subsistence. It was important to remember the influence which would be exerted by the colored population upon the United States. Kent and Essex being so near to the States, he was very anxious that the influence should be of the right kind, in order that the opponents of slavery might be able to hold up the colored population before the people of the United States, and say, 'These are the people whom you held in slavery—do you see no difference in them? Did they work and act under you as they do now? Did they rear children in virtue, honour, and piety, as they do now?' Thus would Canada, placed side by side with a country that boasted of a freedom which it did not possess, work out most important results. Miss Harriett Martineau said an American captain had told her that the sublimest sight he ever beheld was the leap of a fugitive slave from the boat to the Canadian shore. The fugitive, he said, exhibited the most breathless anxiety while the boat was approaching the shore; every pull of the oar seemed to increase the intensity of his feelings; and when at length the boat got close to the Canadian side, not content with stepping ashore, he went back a few feet in the boat, and taking a run and jump, leaped upon free land. The Niagara falls, by many esteemed the greatest wonder in the world, were altogether eclipsed by this leap of the slave from the boat to the shore—from chains to freedom. What he wished to see all along the coast was that leap made good by upward tendencies and a general improvement of character."

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