

Mr. CRAFT (whose appearance upon the platform was hailed with loud applause) expressed his extreme obligation to the Meeting for the very warm reception they had given his wife, child, and himself. The Chairman had expressed a hope that he would give some account of the manner of their escape; but to give anything like an account of the matter would take an hour and a half. He hoped at some future opportunity to be enabled to do so, but at that late hour of the night he would not attempt it. He would simply state that they were both slaves in the State of Georgia for upwards of twenty-one years. It was true that their condition in that capacity was by no means of the worst, but still it was bondage after all; and the thought that they had no legal rights; that they could not call the flesh and blood which God had given them their own; and, above all, the fact that at any time their owner, as he was called, had power to plunder their cradle, tear from it their infant, and sell it in the shambles like a brute; that that child, if not sold, could thereafter be cruelly scourged, and that its parents would not dare to lift a finger to save it from its fate; those, and similar reflections, haunted his wife and himself for years, until it roused them to make an effort to escape from such a condition; and in the winter of 1844, by the assistance of God, to whom all the praise and honour were due, they rose, as it were, in their night, cast off the galling chains which they had worn for twenty-one years, and escaped, like Lot from Sodom, to a place of refuge in the free States, from whence they were again driven by the operation of the new Fugitive Slave Law in 1851, when they finally left America, and came to this free and glorious country, where no tyrant, let his power be ever so absolute at home, dare lay violent hands upon them, or upon the child then before the audience, or the two other boys with which God had blessed himself and wife, and reduce them legally to the level of the beasts that perish. (Loud applause.)

“O, Sir,” (said Mr. Craft,) “may God ever bless and prosper England, for the glorious protection which she gives to down-trodden humanity—to exiles of every colour and of every clime!” It was not his intention, by any means, at that late hour of the evening, to make a speech. He was happy to see amongst them his reverend and esteemed friend, who had so long been the friend of humanity—Mr. May. He (Mr. Craft) was rejoiced at the warm reception which the Meeting had given to that gentleman. (Cheers). He joined in the wish that he might again cross the Atlantic in safety, and there, in good health[,] meet his kind-hearted and noble friends, the advocates of emancipation. He hoped that God would spare his life to live and labour there until no slave was to be found upon the soil of America, and when every bondman’s chain would be [swept] from the

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face of the globe. The question was sometimes asked, What could the English people do to hasten the abolition of Slavery? There was no time to go into that subject in detail then; but he would say, generally, that if every religious denomination in this kingdom would remonstrate with its co-religionists in the United States, great good might be done to the cause of Slavery emancipation. (Hear, hear.) He did not ask the British Ministry to interfere with the American Government in the matter, nor had he any desire that the people of this empire should wage war with those of the United States for the abolition of Slavery: he merely asked the Christian churches here to use their influence with corresponding bodies there. Let them endeavour to impress on the descendants of the Puritan fathers the necessity of their doing their duty as Christians, and freeing their churches from the cankerworm of Slavery, which was destroying them. He also felt that British Christians ought to be more careful in receiving as Christians, Americans of eminence, who might present themselves among them for fellowship, and to ascertain how they stood upon the question of Slavery. He did not mean, of course, to cast any reflections upon Mr. May in that respect. They were all satisfied, from his life of labour, that he was thoroughly sound upon that point; but there were a large number of American ministers and gentlemen who came to this country every year, who stood in a very different position to that which was occupied by that reverend gentleman. (Hear, hear.) They came here for the purpose, not of enlightening, but of corrupting English sentiment in regard to Slavery. He hoped that such visitors would not be received implicitly as Christians, either in English drawing-rooms or churches; but that Christians would first inquire into the anti-slavery or pro-slavery characters of these visitors, and whenever they found them either defenders of, or apologists for, the great sin of their country, have nothing to do with them. Such a moral protest against Slavery would do here, as it had done in the United States, a great work. Another point of importance was, that every person who emigrated to America, or travelled there, either for business or pleasure, should go out with right views upon the subject of Slavery, and not only so, but fearlessly maintain them whilst remaining there. It was a lamentable fact, which he did not state from his own experience merely, but from higher authority, that nine-tenths of the persons who went from these shores to the United States took sides with the oppressors of the African race, both slave and free. (Shame.) After they had been there a little while, had visited the slaveholders, and feasted, as it were, upon the price of innocent blood, they would begin to apologize for the system, and say that the slaves were very kindly treated; that they were better off than the poor of this country, and therefore there was no need for people here to disturb themselves about their bondage. He (Mr. Craft) never met with a poor person in Great Britain, be he the most indigent in the land, who did not resent it as an insult to be placed upon a level with the

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American slave. (Hear, hear.) He knew that there were poor people in that and other parts of the world who were in a miserable condition; but from what he had seen of both classes, he could say that he did not believe there was one so degraded and trampled under foot as was the American slave. In this country, let a man be ever so poor, he was free. His cottage was his castle, and no man in the realm—no, not even the proudest lord within it, dare with impunity—cross the threshold of the tenant of the humblest dwelling, or trample on the sacred honour of its female occupants, as the American slaveholders, to their everlasting disgrace, were constantly in the habit of doing. The apologists of Slavery were also in the habit of asserting that the scenes in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were over-drawn and exaggerated. He had read that book, and others upon the subject of American Slavery, and he solemnly declared that he had never seen a description in print which could, in the remotest degree, approach to the reality of the thing itself. It was said that the slaves were happy and contented, and therefore did not wish to be free. He knew that some of them appeared, or affected to be[,] satisfied with their state. Many of them did seek to make the best of circumstances. It was a principle with many of them, that as it was impossible to escape from their bad condition, it was prudent to make the best of it. But he had never seen a slave, who was worth calling a man, who would be content to remain in Slavery five minutes if there was the slightest chance of his escape. But suppose they were happy, and perfectly willing to remain where they were [in] that very fact would, in his opinion, furnish the strongest argument against his system. How was it possible to make a human being who was not denuded of his manhood, happy in a state of bondage? In order to ensure happiness within him under such circumstances, he must of necessity be unmanned. (Hear, hear.) His spirit must be broken, and he must be made to feel that he was not a human being, but a mere thing. God forbid that any one should be happy whilst his neck was placed under the galling yoke of oppression. He (Mr. Craft) sincerely hoped that the people of this country would investigate the question of American Slavery, and use their whole moral influence to release their unhappy fellow-creatures from the horrible condition in which the bondmen of the United States were placed. With many thanks for their kind attention he would bid them farewell. (Cheers.)

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