

THE
LIFE AND SUFFERINGS
OF
LEONARD BLACK,

A FUGITIVE FROM SLAVERY.

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.  
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NEW BEDFORD:
PRESS OF BENJAMIN LINDSEY.
1847.

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NOTICE.

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Doubts having been expressed upon sundry matters connected with the following little narrative, Mr. Black has requested me to say a few words concerning its authorship and claims to belief.

The book was written substantially by Mr. Black himself, but, in consequence of his deficiency of education—growing out of the fact that his childhood and youth were spent in slavery—it needed considerable correction to fit it for the press. This work was kindly performed, gratuitously, by a friend of the author, who was, however, very careful to preserve the narrative as nearly unchanged as possible—confining himself mostly to punctuating, correcting the orthography, striking out unnecessary words and sentences, &c. &c.

I am well acquainted with Mr. Black, and have the fullest confidence in the truth of his narrative, as has the friend who assisted him in preparing it for the press, and, indeed, every one who knows him.

A. M. MACY.

Nantucket, October 30th, 1847.

INTRODUCTION.

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In putting this little volume before the public, it is well, perhaps, that I should speak of my motive.

Born and reared in slavery, I was, of course, deprived of education; and believing that I can be of service to the public in the ministry, I have published this account of my life and sufferings, with the hope that I might realize a sufficient sum from its sale, to enable me to procure a greater degree of education, thereby increasing my usefulness as a preacher.

With this simple statement I present myself to the humane, in the hope that I may not appeal in vain.

LEONARD BLACK.

April, 1847.

LIFE AND SUFFERINGS

OF

LEONARD BLACK.

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CHAPTER I.

It is my object to give to the reader a plain, simple narrative of the more interesting portion of my life, while in slavery.

I was born in Annarundel County, State of Maryland, about sixty miles below Baltimore, and lived a slave more than twenty years. My old master was a physician, but I think it prudent to withhold his name. No one, who has always enjoyed the right of liberty, can realize the horrors of slavery. To be at the will of another, to be *owned* like a cow or horse, and liable at any moment to be sold to the highest bidder, to be transported to a distant part of the country, leaving the dearest relatives behind; to be, in fine, ground down mentally and physically by the untold curses of slavery, may be a very pretty thing to the masters of the “peculiar institution,” but it is death to the slaves.

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After more than twenty years of bondage, God delivered me from it, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, as he did Israel of old.

As near as I can remember, my mother and sister were sold and taken to New Orleans, leaving four brothers and myself behind. We were all placed out. At six years of age I was placed with a Mr. Bradford, separated from my father, mother and family. But the eye of God was upon me, and blessed me. My master was a carpenter, and much from home—Mrs. Bradford beat me so much that her husband sent me to his father’s. Mrs. Bradford ordered me one day to take a bushel of corn up stairs; but I was unable to do it, upon which she knocked me down with the johnny-cake board, cutting my head so badly that it bled more than a quart. It was then that I thought of my mother. My little friends—who have your liberty, and the protecting hand of parents—these are some of the fruits of

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slavery; let your hearts warm with gratitude to the great Giver of all good, for the blessings you enjoy. Mrs. Bradford had a son about ten years old; she used to make him beat me and spit in my face. Here I was, a poor slave boy, without father or mother to take my part.

At the end of two years, Mrs. Bradford beat me so much, that her husband, fearing she would kill me, placed me at his father's, where I remained until the death of the old gentleman. But old Mr. Bradford was worse than Mrs. Bradford! He had been a professor of religion, a class leader in the Methodist Church, but at this time he was a backslider; yea, a wanderer from God, and as cold as though he had never been warmed by the vivifying power of the religion of Jesus Christ. [Pg 8]

I lived in this family seven and a half years, and when I left I was thirteen years old. During this time I had no hat, no pantaloons, but one pair of shoes, and wore a lindsy slip only. I was not allowed to sit down while I ate my meals. For my breakfast I had a pint of pot liquor, half a herring, and a little piece of bread. Whether this would stay the cravings of a young appetite or not, there was no more to be had. For my dinner I had a pint of pot liquor, and the skin off of the pork. I must say as the colored people say at the south, when singing to cheer their hearts while under the burning sun, and the crack of the whip, remembering what is placed before them every day for food—"My old master is a hard-hearted man; he eats the meat, and gives poor nigger bones." At night I had a bit of bread for my supper, and a piece of carpet for my bed, spread down on the hearth, winter and summer. In the winter, when the fire got low, I used to burn my feet by getting them into the embers. [Pg 9]

My work, in the winter time, was to fetch wood from the swamp up to the house. Being without shoes or hat, and thinly clad, I used to go into the house to warm myself. When in the house for this purpose, at one time, old Mr. Bradford followed me in, and said: "If you want to be warmed, I'll warm you." He took the tongs, heated them in the fire, and branded my legs; and the scars are there to this day. I could not sit down in consequence of the wound. He whipped me also, and used to put my head under the fence.

Christians! I beseech you, do not become backsliders; especially slave-holding Christians! for the terrible effects of backsliding, slave-holding Christianity are awfully developed in my history!

Shortly after this, the death of this man delivered me from his hands. I rejoiced. God only knows whether he went to perdition. With all my heart I have forgiven him. I expect to meet him at the bar of God with the scars and the tongs. Farewell, Mr. Bradford! But this is not all. He left all his property to his daughter Elizabeth; and her brother Nathan, a tax-gatherer, was overseer of the farm for her. One year after her father's death, Elizabeth got married to Wm. Gardener, a gentleman from Baltimore, a member of the Methodist Church. I then thought I should have a good master. But oh, my soul! it was worse and worse! All is not gold that shines, nor silver that glitters. He had not been married a great while before my heart beat and my feet burned. He was a collier, engaged in burning charcoal, and used to draw it to the village landing, and sometimes to Baltimore. [Pg 10]

One day he left me twenty-five bushels of coal to draw. By being broken of my rest the night previous, engaged in watching the coal pit, I was tired and sleepy. When I had drawn all the coal out, supposing I had put the fire out, I laid down to rest my weary limbs. The coal burned up. Mr. Gardner came into the woods where I lay asleep, halloed and scared me up; he struck me with the shovel, and cut my head so that I knew nothing [Pg 11]

for two days. I was so weak from the loss of blood, that he was compelled to carry me home on his shoulders, covering himself with blood. His wife was very much alarmed. We were about a mile from home, and he told me not to speak of it.

At another time, he cut my head with a hoe handle, so that altogether I was sick for a long time. Mr. Gardner had a very quick temper, and would strike me with anything he happened to have in his hand, reckless of consequences.

One day, Eliza (a slave girl of his,) and myself, went into the water-melon patch, [Pg 12] procured a melon and ate it. We were compelled to this by the promptings of hunger, for the living had not altered since the death of Mr. Bradford. Eliza was about eighteen years of age. For that offence, our cruel master stripped us and tied us both up together, and whipped us till the blood ran down on the ground in a puddle.

When I was sick, he used to send me into the place where they smoked meat, for fear I should vomit on the floor. On Wednesdays, there were meetings in the meeting-house, and Mr. Gardner used to make me stay away from the house, for the minister would come home with him, and he was fearful I should tell him of his cruel treatment. He did not say as Hagar of old—"Thou, God, seest me."

One day he sent me to drive the horse from the peach tree. The horse kicked me in the head, and I was laid up six months. My head was sewed up; and I also received a great [Pg 13] many knocks in the side, from the effects of which I have not yet recovered! On one occasion, he struck me in the mouth with an iron-toothed rake, which knocked out one of my front teeth. All this time, my more fortunate reader, I was a poor slave boy, with no one to pity me, with no parents to take my part. I had no father; no mother! But God pitied me. The eye of the all-merciful God, without whose notice not a sparrow falls to the ground, was upon me. He it was that bore my feeble spirit up, when my lacerated and quivering frame was writhing under the God-defying curse of slavery.

CHAPTER II.

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In the midst of all this trouble and gloom, my heart was made glad by learning that my old master had come to take me home, at the expiration of thirteen years. Mr. Gardner and my old master had a long talk about me, for I was a miserable looking object with burnt feet. I bade Mr. Gardner good bye, and expect to meet him at the judgment seat, when slave and master appear before the great Judge of all, with equal rights.

My old master took me to Baltimore, where we arrived in two days. He asked me if I wanted a hat. I had never had one, and received one which cost twenty-five cents as joyfully as though it had cost eight dollars. We were then twenty-two miles from home. The old man asked me if I ever drank brandy. I said no. He said it was a good thing, and when I saw him drunk, I might get so too. But I could not get spirit if I wanted it ever so [Pg 15] much, though I saw him drink many glasses, and have known him to have a barrel of whiskey at one time.

We left Baltimore, and arrived at our home. When I saw my four brothers, who had been so long separated from me, I felt as I think Joseph felt when he saw his brethren, though I knew nothing of the history of Joseph at that time. Surely I was glad to see my brothers,

but yet I was a slave—being with them did not make me a free man. I was yet bowed down and crushed by the cruel spirit of slavery.

They were about to run away at the time of my arrival; but I knew nothing of it. Six months, or about that time after, I joined them. Three of my oldest brothers went away, leaving one of my brothers and myself behind. This brother is still a slave. I heard from him in 1846. We were left behind because we were not able to travel. They left ten years before I did, but in relation to those ten years I will remain silent. I was the youngest of the five brothers. My old master had a very bad wife, and she made him much worse than he would have been without her. She made him beat me without cause, and when it answered no purpose. During those awful ten years we had not enough to eat, and were beaten shamefully. Most of the time we had bean soup for breakfast, dinner and supper—a pint at each meal. When we had potatoes, we were without bread. Such was our fare; and whether hungry or satisfied, we had no addition to it. We were poor slaves; and the great object in feeding slaves is doubtless the same as it is with cattle and horses, to keep them in good working order, or saleable condition. Of course, if the health of the slave is not permanently injured, the nearer to the starvation point the master can keep the slave, the more it is for his interest; and who, that casts his eye back through the dark, bloody track of slavery, does not perceive that the masters have acted up to their interest? We sometimes had cider; occasionally some meat and milk, as it might happen. [Pg 16]

We remembered what our brothers told us—when we were able to run away, to try it on some favorable Sunday. The old man would let us go to meeting on Sunday at the village, but if we were not at home by sundown, the cowhide paid the debt. We were slaves yet, and the old man grew poorer and poorer the older he grew, and withal cross, much to our discomfort. He had a wife like king Herod, and like Ahab, for we read that Beelzebub stirred up Ahab to work evil in the sight of the Lord. [Pg 17]

Finally the old lady teased her husband to put my brother Nick out; and he let him out for ten dollars a month. I was at home with two women and a boy to carry on the farm, and we saw hard times. The old man had a son, a preacher. At times he came home, but he could not help our case. I was anxious to learn to read. My master had two sons who went to school, and four unmarried daughters. One Sunday a gentleman came to our house; I held his horse, and he gave me a sixpenny bit, with which I bought a book, and tried to learn to read. I had it but a week, when the old man saw it in my bosom, and made inquiry as to what it was. He said, “You son of a b—h, if I ever know you to have a book again, I will whip you half to death.” He took the book from me, and burnt it! What could I do? I was a slave; and the mind which God had given me, in common with my brethren with white skins to be enlightened, must be kept darkened, and remain in ignorance, to suit the policy of the “peculiar institution.” [Pg 18]

I omitted to mention that Mr. Buk came to see Miss Jane, one of the unmarried daughters, at the time he gave me the piece of money. The same attraction drew him there again, and he then gave me eleven pence, with which I purchased a larger book, thirsting for that knowledge which was denied me; but I had not had this book over a week before my master found it out; and he then made me sick of books by beating me like a dog. He whipped me so very severely that he overcame my thirst for knowledge, and I relinquished its pursuit until after I absconded. He took my book from me, and gave it to his son—so it seems the white man’s son must have the means of education, even if stolen from the slave. I could do nothing; but the all-merciful Father, who regards MAN as MAN, whatever may be the injustice and oppression to which he is subjected, watched over and guided me with his parental eye through all the soul-sickening, heart-rending [Pg 19]

trials of a gloomy bondage. I can prove by the scriptures that slave-holders are worse than the devil, for it is written in St. James, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;” but if you undertake to resist the slave-holder, he will hold you the tighter. [Pg 20]

I knew a man who thought it too cruel to whip his slaves, but he stripped them naked, tied them to a board, (one end of which was on the fence, the other on the ground,) and then drew a cat by her tail down their backs. Of course the claws of the cat sunk deeply into the flesh, for at such a time a cat will resist this retrograde movement to the extent of her strength. Then he would ask the poor slave if it hurt. The reply was, “Oh! pray, master, oh! pray, master, don’t.”

When in slavery I experienced a hope in Christ, from the 8th verse of the 23d chapter of Matthew,^[A] “Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out.” It was one year before I had evidence that my heart was changed. This was in the year 1836. I was awakened by the Holy Spirit of God, by its divine influence operating on my mind, and the words, “Give me of your oil,” rang in my ears continually; but I strove hard against the spirit, to shake off these feelings, yet at the end of this year I was brought to submit to the will of God. I beheld myself a justly condemned sinner before God. I felt bound to give myself up to Him; and obtained a pardon for my sins—and to-day I am struggling to make my peace, my calling and election sure. The word of that poor unreleased slave has proved unto me the power and wisdom of God, and to-day I am trying to preach Christ to the inhabitants of Nantucket. [Pg 21]

FOOTNOTE:

^[A] I experienced a hope under a slave man.

CHAPTER III.

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My brother Nicholas said, that our brothers recommended to him and myself to run away when we were old enough. We used to talk this over. When God had opened my eyes, I grew very uneasy reflecting upon the condition of my brothers, who were enjoying their liberty in a land of freedom. I wanted also to be free. I resolved to be free. I made up my mind to run away in the year 1837. When I ran away, my brother Nicholas was not at home; but I was determined to go. I was so intimate with a man named Henry, one of my acquaintances, that I told him I was about to run away. He said he would run with me—but he proved a Judas, and betrayed me. We were to start on Monday night. At this time we lived at the village. The pasture in which our horses were kept was half a mile from the village. Henry told me he would meet me there at half past seven. I tied up all my clothes in a bundle, expecting to start. I waited till after eight o’clock for Henry, but he did not come. I started to go back after him, when, behold! I saw my old master, his two sons, and many other people looking for me. The moon shone very bright—the old man was bare-headed; his head was very white; his spectacles were put back upon his head, and I could see them glisten by the light of the moon. The only reason the old man did not see me was because he was near-sighted, and forgot to pull his spectacles down over his eyes. His two sons were standing in the road where I was to run, and five or six other persons on the watch for me; and my heart was in my mouth. Said I, “Oh! Lord, what [Pg 23]

shall I do!" I dropped down on my hands and feet, and ran half a mile through the grass. I left my bundle of clothing and three dollars in money which I had been working for, for some time. All the money I had with me was 75 cents; that a Quaker gentleman gave me that afternoon. I had told this gentleman that I was going to run away that night, and he told me which way to start to get clear. I started for Boston. I travelled all that night. The next morning I came out in a road opposite a tavern, where two roads crossed, and I knew not which to take. I took the east. I was 35 miles from home. The tavern keeper was standing at the door. It was about sunrise. He told me I had the wrong road. I came back to him, supposing I had met with a friend. Said he, "Do you want some breakfast?" "Yes, sir, if you please," I replied. "Come in, and sit down, and you shall have some," he continued. "No, sir," said I, "I thank you; I will sit upon the steps." "No," said the Georgia man, "come in; we will have breakfast pretty soon, and we will all sit down together." "No, sir, I thank you, I would as soon sit here;" for I thought he was most too kind to be honest; the Quaker man having told me to avoid Georgia men. When he found I would not come in, he took hold of my collar, but I threw him down, for I was resolved to whip the devil out of the way, if possible. After he was down, I ran for my life. There was a colored man bringing a pail of water. He cried out to him to stop me; but I told the colored man if he attempted to trouble me I would knock him down. I jumped over a fence, and the Georgia man after me; but I saw no more of the colored man. The white man struck me in the side with a stone, and run me about a mile. I recovered from the blow of the stone, so that I could run a little faster. God gave me strength to fight for my life. The white man fought me, and I fought him with any thing that came handy, with fists and with stones. I told him he might kill me or I would kill him. Finally, I whipped him. There was a Dutchman and his two sons sawing plank in a grist mill. He said, "Glory in your spunk, my man;" and when I had whipped the man he started back after dogs and hounds. Said the Dutchman, "Run for your life, for there are two Georgia men in my house." I knew them well; they were acquaintances of my master's. Their names were Joshua and Nathan Retlidge, traders. [Pg 24] [Pg 25] [Pg 26]

When I heard the dogs and hounds coming after me, I said, "My God! what shall I do!" for I knew they would put them on my track. I was about to give up, and wished I had never started. However, I climbed up a tree, and in the providence of God, the hounds scared up a rabbit. At the howling of the dogs, I trembled like a leaf, and knew not what to do. The hounds drew nearer and nearer; the rabbit came under the tree where I was, and, through the will of an over-ruling Providence, they all passed by, and I was safely delivered out of their hands. It was about eight o'clock in the morning when I climbed the tree. I was hungry and wet with dew. I staid in the tree till about five o'clock in the afternoon. They hunted the woods pretty well, but they did not find me. My words are inadequate to express my joyful feelings at my deliverance. God alone could know my feelings. [Pg 27]

I then started for Boston. Then, as now, God alone was my only hope. I travelled a number of days without eating any thing, under great anxiety to see Boston. One morning I met a colored man named George. He was running away, and had got lost. He was from Richmond, Virginia. He asked my name. I told him; and we travelled a number of days together. We called into a shop where we thought no one would harm us, and got something to eat. Thus, under the guidance of Providence, we proceeded along. We came to a farmer's house, and we let ourselves out each to a farmer for \$13 a month, our object being to get money to defray our expenses. [Pg 28]

George grew uneasy. He staid only two weeks—was fearful his master would overtake

him. He started for New York, but reached only as far as Brunswick, 16 miles from where he started, and, as I heard, was taken up, put in jail, and carried back.

I began to grow uneasy. One morning I asked the farmer for whom I worked for \$4. He gave me that sum. We went to breakfast. I ate quickly, and cleared. I have not seen him since. I crossed the fields, missed the bridge, and came to a creek, over which I had to swim. I came out into the road. A man in a gig overtook me and inquired who I was, and where I was going. I told him to New Brunswick. He inquired who I knew. I named the individual I had lived with. He went to his house, and I took to the woods, and did not come out again until I reached New Brunswick. I got there about dusk—saw a colored man with a pail, and inquired of him the way to New York. “Stand here,” said he, “until I come back.” But it is a hard thing to catch a weasel asleep. So when he was out of sight, I vanished also. I went to the car bridge; the man would not let me go across. I went under the bridge and staid there till the cars arrived; and when the gate opened I passed, and bade New Brunswick good bye. [Pg 29]

I then proceeded on to New York. I travelled until one o’clock in the morning, though it was cold and frosty. While lying asleep, there came a drove of hogs. In hunting for acorns, they turned me over. I was alarmed, supposing my pursuers had overtaken me. I jumped up and started again, chilled with cold, travelled two hours, and lay down by the side of a hay-stack.

I arose about day-break. The next place I reached was Elizabethtown. In going through this town, a man accosted me, saying, “I think I know your countenance.” “No,” said I, “I know nothing about you.” He inquired whence I came, and whither I was going; and I told him I was from home and for New York. I left him, and made my way for Newark. When I got there I was very hungry, for I had eaten nothing since I left the farm-house. I went into a bake-shop, and bought eleven pence worth of bread. The loaf was a pretty large one, and I commenced eating, but soon felt sick, laid down in the swamp, rested, and started again. [Pg 30]

I met some Irishmen who were working on the rail road, and I thought every moment I should be killed. One of them asked me where I was going, for what purpose, and when I should return. I told him I was going to New York to buy some things, and should return the same afternoon or next morning. He inquired whether I should return by the same route, and I replied “Yes.” He said “Very well,” to which I responded. I looked so bad I suppose he thought strange, for I had on the same clothes I started with. I proceeded on, came to the ferry, and crossed over to New York. Near the ferry there was a stable, and a man sitting by it. We bade each other good morning, and I inquired the road to Canada. He told me I must go to New York in order to get to Canada. “Why do you wish to go to Canada?” said he. I told him I had relations there. I did not then know whether my brother who ran away before me was in Boston or Canada. Discovering he had a disposition to question me, I said, “I guessed I would go to New York, get some clothes, and go back home.” He wished me to come into the stable, and sit down while he went to the house to get a coat, which he offered to sell me. I declined his offer, and told him I would as soon stand. He started off, whether in pursuit of the coat or somebody to detain me, I do not know, for I left immediately. I paid the ferryman a five-penny bit, and crossed to New York. No questions were put to me on board the ferry-boat. [Pg 31]

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When I landed, I inquired of a boy whether there was any boat that run to the State of Boston. I was so ignorant I knew not whether Boston was a State or city. In fact, I scarcely knew there was such a place. Slavery is as ill adapted for obtaining this kind of knowledge as all other kinds. He informed me the boat went to Providence, and showed me the way to the boat. I purchased a bosom and dickey, went on board of the boat, and stowed myself away among the bales of cotton, where I remained until we were a considerable distance from New York. I then felt like a FREE MAN, and walked the deck with the rest of the passengers. I had but little money, and wanted to save it; so I inquired of the engineer if I could work my passage to Providence. He said "Yes," and set me to work. I worked out the first watch of the night, and he then told me I might go to sleep. I laid down on the cotton. The man came round and demanded my ticket. I told him I had none, that I had been working half of the night. Said he, "That I know nothing about. You must go to the office and settle your fare." He said the fare was \$3, and he could give me no ticket. I thought hard of it, but it was of no use to have any further conversation.

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I got to Providence on Sunday morning. My money was all gone. There I was, without friends, victuals or money. I inquired of a man if there was such a place as Boston, and how far it was. He said 40 miles. I started, and took the rail road. I walked all day Sunday, and about nine o'clock came to a farmer's house. I knocked at the door; a lady came, and inquired what I wanted. I asked her if she would please give me something to eat, for I was very hungry. She invited me in; she went to the pump, got a cup of water, and gave me a crust of brown bread, from which the inside had been taken. As she gave it to me in the name of a disciple, she shall receive a disciple's reward. By this time, the old gentleman came in. "How do you do, my man?" said he. "How do you do, sir?" said I. He inquired of me where I was from, when I left, and where I was going; and I gave him the information. After sitting awhile, he inquired if I would like to lie down. I told him I was very tired, and he took me to the barn and gave me liberty to rest there for the night. I said nothing, but went in. I was afraid of him; for he had on a blue frock, and, never having seen any one with such a frock on, I supposed he was a Turk. About 3 o'clock next morning I got up and started for Boston, being afraid to stay there any longer.

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I reached Boston at noon on Monday, and inquired for my brothers; but nobody knew anything about them. Finally, I met with a colored lady by the name of Sarah Taylor, the wife of John R. Taylor. I asked her if she knew any thing about my brothers. She said a George Black had passed through Boston, and lived in Portland. She said, "Come home with me, for I perceive you have been a slave." I went and boarded with her for \$3 a week. I got a gentleman to write to Portland to Mr. George Black, the man I thought was my brother. He supposed I was one of his brothers, he having three brothers in the West Indies. He invited me to come to Portland, and offered to pay my fare. I was very ragged and dirty. Mrs. Taylor wrapped me up in Mr. Taylor's cloak, and sent me to Portland. Mr. Black sent down his man to the steamboat to get my trunk; but instead of having a trunk, I had scarcely any clothes to my back. When I saw Mr. Black, and found he was not my brother, I was very sad; and he was disappointed. He said he knew nothing of my brothers—had never seen them. He talked with me much about slavery, and I unfolded to him my history, and that of others. Mr. Black was very kind to me, indeed, and did all in his power to render me happy. Mrs. Black, his wife, was more than a mother to me, and the whole family were very kind to me. I married Mr. Black's daughter. I could not go to church the first Sunday after my arrival, for I was ragged and dirty. The following week,

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[Pg 37]

Mrs. Black and her daughter made me some clothes. I had been there but a short time when Mr. Black sent me to school. I went to school that winter, and learned very fast. Mr. Black charged me nothing for my board that winter. When near spring, Mr. Black sent me up to Bridgetown, 34 miles from Portland, to live with Major Purley, a farmer. Mr. Purley gave me \$10 a month, and was anxious for me to go to school; but I told him no. I owed Mr. Black, and wanted to get some clothes, and could not spare the time. [Pg 38]

At length George Ropes wrote me from Portland, to come and live with him. I went there, and boarded with Mr. Black. I was engineer for Mr. Ropes in the steam factory, and lived with him one season; and when the Rev. Mr. Black removed to Boston to be settled over the Belknap-street Church, I accompanied him. The reason why I removed to Boston with Mr. Black, was because I had fallen in love with his daughter. I trust this reason will be deemed ample by all those who have experienced the tender workings of this mysterious passion. Only a few months after my return to Boston, I married Mr. Black's daughter, though young and poor; and I am still poor. I had four children, one of whom is deceased. I lived at service in Boston. Sometimes I worked on the wharves. But I was in an unsettled state, being under the impression that I should preach the Gospel. I firstly derived these impressions in Boston, and they have not left me. I was baptized before I left Portland, by the Rev. Mr. Burroughs, who is now in his grave. I joined the Belknap street Church while Mr. Black was pastor. I lived there five years: then I found Boston was not the place for me, for its vanities and maxims were not suited to my disposition. I prepared to live in the country, for I had a desire to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. I began to think of perishing souls, and the cause of God laid near my heart. I felt that God had a claim upon me, that I was not my own master; but I struggled against these impressions, for I was inadequate, unlearned and unprepared. I could say as said Jeremiah, "Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child; but the Lord said unto me, Say not thou art a child, for thou shalt go to all to whom I shall send thee, and whatever I command thee, thou shalt do;" Jer. i:6-7. And I said as Moses did, "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue;" Exod. iv:10. My call was now unto the sons of men. The time had arrived for me to leave Boston. [Pg 39]

CHAPTER V.

I left my family in Boston, and went to Providence, R. I., to live with President Wayland. While living with Dr. Wayland, I tried to improve my mind, and it gives me pleasure to state, that that gentleman did all in his power to assist me. I connected myself with the Rev. Mr. Ashur's Church in Providence, and had a bible class, being as active as possible in the Sabbath School. After being connected with Brother Ashur's Church a short time, he invited me to officiate for him one Sunday morning, as he knew I was accustomed to exhort when in Boston. [Pg 41]

I left Dr. Wayland and went to work with Mr. Andrew, a stone mason, and continued to work for him while he had employment for me. In this time, I had moved my family from Boston to Providence. Finally, I told the brethren and pastor of the church that God had called me to the work of the ministry. They agreed to give me a hearing. They did so, and appointed a committee to see me; and the result was, the brethren thought I was not called to preach—"that Brother Black had better wait awhile longer." Dr. Wayland thought I had not learning enough to preach. [Pg 42]

I know that I am of a slow tongue, and unlearned; but what says the prophet Zachariah? “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it;” iv:6, 7.

At length I got discouraged, let myself out to Mr. Foster in Providence, and run in his canal boat from Providence to Woonsocket. The few books I had I carried to auction, and almost gave up in despair; for some of the brethren were looking upon me with a frown and dark looks. I knew I was a poor unlearned fugitive. I had given up the idea of preaching, nor did I wish to hear about it, and was sorry I mentioned it to the brethren or any one else. So I went to the canal boat, working for \$12 a month, having a family to support. But oh! Lord! my trouble had not come. Mr. Foster was a kind man. I had worked on the canal about three weeks, when I met with a sad accident. We arrived at Woonsocket one night with a load of coal; it began to rain, and rained all the next day. The captain said we must get up at 2 o’clock the next morning, and carry the boat up through the lock, for the current ran so hard when the factory started, it was difficult getting up. The coal was going to Waterford, one mile from Woonsocket. When I mounted the horse to return, it being very dark, and raining very hard, the horse started before I was fairly upon his back; his hind legs gave way, he fell backwards on me, and broke my leg. While I was struggling with the horse upon me, words came unto me like these—“This is for your disobedience.” My companions were a little way behind, and they heard me haloo. The horse in struggling to get clear, cut my face with his foot. I was hurt so badly that my wife had to feed me with a tea-spoon. The men came up and got the horse off of me, and I was not aware my leg was broken until I started to run. It was about four o’clock in the morning. They laid me on the horse, and carried me back to the tavern; but oh! the pain, the misery I was in. It rained hard, and they were all asleep at the tavern; so that I remained exposed to the rain some time. They sent for the doctor immediately, but he did not arrive until nine o’clock, and then set my leg. The owner of the tavern sent me home in a carriage, a distance of nineteen miles, where we arrived at sundown. [Pg 43] [Pg 44] [Pg 45]

My folks thought I was dead. The moment the carriage drew up to the door, they took me out, carried me into the house, and laid me on a bed.

My distress of body was very great, and the anguish of my mind was extreme—for I had but little victuals in the house, was without money, and there was about to be an increase in my family. My wife was unwell, and I was laid prostrate on the bed. Then the saying of the apostle Paul came fresh to my mind—“In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you;” Thes. v:18. At first, I could see no place where I could give thanks. The streams of livelihood were dried up, and the hand of Providence was closed, it seemed to me. I had no income save my daily labor. I was a stranger in that community, but in reflecting on Him whose kindness tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, I had reason to be thankful; first, that both legs were not broken; second, that my arms were whole; and last and greatest, that God had spared my life to see my family once more. [Pg 46]

Not many days after, the hand of Providence was directed to my house. Unexpected stores were opened to my relief. President Wayland and other benevolent individuals, ladies and gentlemen, remembered me in their kindness. While I was confined to my couch, the scenes of by-gone ages passed in review. I remembered the vow I had made to God. My eyes gushed out with tears. I could say then as did David of old—“I found trouble and sorrow; then called I upon the name of the Lord.” I found the Lord my refuge

and strength, a present help in trouble. I said it was better to have a broken leg in a land of freedom, than to have sound limbs under the curse of slavery. While I was musing one night, and meditating upon God and his providence, I closed my eyes, and whether asleep or awake I know not, but I viewed a rod at the foot of my bed, about four feet high. It was wrapped in black and red, and a smaller rod was lying in the bed with me. The large rod reflected on the small rod, and the words of John (iii:14,) came to me—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, the son of man must be lifted up.” Then I remembered the words of the Lord, and promised Him at that hour if he would raise me up again, I would obey His call. In the course of a few months God raised me up, and I was willing to obey Him, took my life in my hand, and went out into the wide world as a lamb in the midst of the wilderness. I trusted that God would be with me; His rod and His staff would encompass me. [Pg 47]

When I started, I left a wife and two children. I left them in the care of God. I went a little ways down east, and was gone seven weeks. Wherever I went, the brethren received me gladly. I returned, but remained at home but little while, and as I had never seen New Bedford, I left what little means I had with my family, and started for that town. When I got there I knew not where to go, for I was a stranger. I inquired for the Rev. Mr. Allen, the Baptist minister, and also for the Rev. Mr. Jackson. I stayed at New Bedford a few days; and as I had heard much said of Nantucket, I wanted to go there. I told Mr. Jackson I wanted to go to Nantucket, but had no money. He said, “You should not have left home without money.” “No, sir,” said I, “but I had none to fetch.” But two wrongs will not make one right. Mr. Jackson gave me half a dollar, and I obtained some more money among the brethren and sisters, and took the steamboat for Nantucket. I had yet no license to preach. I had a letter of recommendation from the pastor of the church to which I belonged, not only as a brother, but as a beloved brother. [Pg 48]

When I arrived at Nantucket, I inquired for Deacon Berry, of the York street, Baptist Church, and handed him my letter of recommendation. They had no preacher. When I went to the church on Sabbath morning, the house was open for preaching. The fame went abroad that a strange minister from Providence had arrived. I preached for them that Sabbath to the best of my ability. I was but a child in the Gospel. [Pg 49]

It was my intention to leave for Providence on the following Tuesday; but the brethren prevailed on me to stay longer, and I remained several weeks. The brethren gave me a call, and being young, I accepted it. I went out to beg money to repair their house of worship, and afterwards left for Providence.

CHAPTER VI.

I will now say something of slavery. I shall say nothing but what I know to be true. Slavery is a cruel system. The effects of it are scattered abroad throughout the land. It is the reigning evil of the country; yea, the mother of all evil. Why is it the mother of all evil? I answer in the language of Holy Writ, which saith, “Do unto all men as you would have them do unto you.” It is not done. Again: “Love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the law and the prophets.” It is not done. Reader,—where is the slaveholder who would wish his slaves to do to him as he does to them? There are none. Hence, then, the enormity of the evil. [Pg 50]

Dear reader: understand one thing. The slaves are taught ignorance as we teach our children knowledge. They are kept in darkness, and are borne down under a cruel, cruel oppression! All human rights are denied them as citizens! They are not recognized as men! My old master frequently said, “he did not believe a d— —d nigger had any soul!” They are made to undergo everything as a beast. Having a full, perfect, undeniable right to stand out before God as MEN, the cruel, God-defying white man, without semblance of right, with no pretence but might, has prostituted them to the base purpose of his cupidity, and his baser beastly passions, reducing them to mere things, mere chattels, to be bought and sold like hogs and sheep! Born, like the white man, to an individual responsibility to the Father of mercies, the treatment of the white man to the poor African, unmixed with mercy, has curtailed his mind to all knowledge, aye, even to the knowledge of the God of heaven and earth, and thus removed from him the accountability! But, where does this terrible accountability rest? Let the hardened slave-tyrant, when he stands quivering before the Almighty bar of retribution, answer this question! Well might Thomas Jefferson remark, when his deep, penetrating mind was reflecting upon the stupendous wrongs of slavery, “I tremble for my country, when I remember that God is just, and that his justice cannot slumber forever?” I appeal, then, to every rational, intelligent mind, if slavery be not an abomination in the sight of the Lord. [Pg 51]

It has been said that slaves have no intellect. I deny it. God has given them minds capable of cultivation. Uncultivated ground will not bring forth fruit. All the slave requires is cultivation, for he is possessed of all the qualities of the white man. [Pg 52]

Reader: we have heard of the wisdom of King Solomon, son of David, the grandson of ancient Jesse. The Queen of Basheba has declared that half had never been told her. History informs us that Solomon was as black as black satin, with handsome features and smooth skin. [Pg 53]

I could refer to many of the colored race whose mental endowments are superior to many of those arrogant white men who abhor a colored man and pretend to be his superior in knowledge.

The language of Jesus Christ to his apostles should teach us not to despise the workmanship of God. “He that despiseth you, despiseth me.” Do men, I ask, realize the awful evil of slavery? Are they aware of its terrible calamities? Has it not become so familiar, from its long existence, as almost to reconcile the tender conscience to its infamous enormities? It must be so. There is no other mode of accounting for the fact, that men, good christians in other respects, quietly hold slaves at the south, while their equally guilty brethren of the north assent to it, and participate in its profits. [Pg 54]

Should we not remember them that are in bondage as bound with them? Say not only slaves be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, but also say, masters, render unto your servants that which is right; and if that principle were carried out, slavery would be abolished.

How do the masters teach the slaves ignorance? Having been a slave, I answer the question. When the master asks the slave, Tom, Harry, Dick or Bill, “Do you love your master?” he answers, “Yes, massa, I lub you.” “Come here and get a dram; drink us a treat, you son of a b ...h.” Why does the slave say “Yes, sir?” Because he is afraid to say any thing else. He is crushed under the iron heel of the slave-tyrant!

The time is coming when the wrongs of the slave will be redressed. Yes, the time is coming when their blood will cry unto the Lord for deliverance. [Pg 55]

It is very customary to magnify the evils of emancipation. It is said by very many persons that the slaves, if liberated, would become an idle, vagabond set. This remark, doubtless, is sometimes made in sincerity; but no doubt it is frequently used as a sort of salve to quiet the conscience for inaction. It is most unquestionably true that here and there a case would exist of improvidence, just as they exist among the white population; but such cases would form the exception, not the rule. Persons who indulge in such remarks seem entirely unacquainted with the views and feelings of slaves, and to suppose that they are utterly incapable of appreciating, even to a small extent, the blessings and enjoyments of freedom. But this is a mistake, and operates powerfully on some minds to prevent wholesome action in favor of the liberation of the slave. It is to be hoped that all true men and women who are held back from engaging in the cause of the slave by this consideration, will take pains to examine the subject with care, ere they yield to this pernicious opinion. As to those who have better knowledge, and make use of this assumed fact as a scape-goat for their lethargy, not having independence enough to confess the truth, I commend them, together with their meanness, to such particles of conscience as are yet left unscathed by the searing iron of hypocrisy. [Pg 56]

It is further averred, both honestly and for selfish purposes, as in the case just stated, that the slaves, if liberated, would rush for the north, overwhelming the workingmen in this region with misery and despair. This I know to be untrue, both from observation and my own experience. The climate of the balmy south is much better adapted to the nature of the colored man, than the more rigorous one of greater northern latitude. It is not the *south* we abhor. It is *slavery* we abhor. God has made the south and blessed it. Man, in his selfishness, has cursed it. Remove slavery, and we join hearts and hands with the south. Give us equal rights. Give us justice. Make us MEN. Give us pay for our toil, and we will work at the south. [Pg 57]

It is a matter of astonishment that slavery has so long existed, and yet that its enormities have taken so little hold on a people professing to be Christians. In a country whose inhabitants dipped their hands in blood to establish FREEDOM, there are over *two and a half millions* of human beings, entitled to all the rights of white men, held in absolute bondage. Are the people of this nation aware of this fact? Thousands of times has this awful truth been reiterated in the ears of American Christians, and yet from the profound indifference which yet generally exists on the subject, we are led to ask, Do the people of this nation realize the fact? More than any other nation on earth we boast of our liberty, our refinement, our advancement in the arts and sciences, our railroads, our various facilities for intercommunication, and all the outward appliances to render life comfortable. We have seized upon the very lightning of Heaven, and commanded it to bear our messages from one distant point to another without the intervention of time, literally annihilating all space: and we not only boast of these things, but we aver in the face of the abhorrent fact of slavery, that we are the most virtuous nation on earth! To the enormity of slavery we are, indeed, spiritually dead. Were slavery about to commence, were we to summon the voters of this nation to the polls to decide whether two and a half millions of human beings should be subjected to this bondage, what think you, reader, would be the result? Can there be a man found who would vote for the measure, unless indeed the love of money had so blunted all humanity as to render his better feelings entirely inactive? [Pg 58]

It is in vain for apologists of slavery to defend it by such arguments as this: They will tell you that the slaves of the south are better fed and clothed than the colored people of the north. The fact is not admitted. But, suppose it were a fact. Is man to be considered as a [Pg 59]

mere ox, to be bowed up and stall fed? Is he a mere victuals grinder and clothes horse? Or, has he a higher nature? Has he not a mind capable of rising higher and higher in all that is expansive, pure and holy? Has he not within him a spark of pure Divinity, which, when he is surrounded with high and ennobling influences, is fanned into a light so bright as to lead us to respond to the glorious truth, Man is indeed made in the image of his God?

Do you talk of *selling a man*? You might as well talk of selling immortality or sunshine! [Pg 60]
You might as well talk of your right to monopolise the atmosphere, to determine how much air a man should breathe, and to retail it out to him by the jaw-full!

Again, it is said the slave has a maintenance guaranteed to him in old age, and is thus rendered free from those corroding cares in reference to his support which wear upon the poor free man. Is this provision of so high a consequence that men voluntarily submit to slavery? Are the masters willing to exchange the advantages derived from the unrequited labor of the slave for a freedom from this guarantee? The slave-holders of the south cannot make us believe they are so verdant as thus to have mistaken their interest. Away, then, with the argument that a God-created MAN should be made a man-created thing!

American fathers, let me ask *you*, are the *advantages* of slavery sufficient to induce *you* to submit to the terrible wrong of being separated from *your* wives and children, and sold to a distant owner? American mothers, do *you* desire that *your* husbands should be torn from the hearth-stone, and sold from your presence forever? Do you wish your children snatched from your cradles, knocked off at auction to the highest bidder, to go away from you forever? If not, then let your apologies for slavery cease. [Pg 61]

Reader, I take my leave of you, with the fond hope, that the recuperative moral energies both of the north and the south will soon herald the dawn of that glorious day when the sweat and blood of the unfortunate African shall no longer be struck into coin for the use of the cruel, unrelenting white man.

ERRATA.—On page 13, second line from the bottom, for “writing” read writhing.

THE TRAVELLING PILGRIM.

[Pg 63]

I have no friends, no helper nigh,
But He who heard the raven's cry;
My father's house I've bid adieu,
And on my journey I pursue.

My sister wonders where I am,
But I shall not return again;
My sisters, brothers, think it strange
That I should leave my nearest friends.

But my kind friends I now must leave,
And on my journey I proceed,
To attend an appointment I have made,
To find a place to lay my head.

And if poor sinners did but know
How much for them I undergo,
They would not treat me with contempt,
Nor curse me when I say "repent."

But O! the trials of my heart,
Through rain, through snow, I have to go,
And when I'm called to leave this flesh,
I trust with Jesus Christ to rest.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE LIFE AND SUFFERINGS
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