

MY AMERICA STORY BOOK

Book Eight: Lincoln / Slavery

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

MY AMERICA STORY BOOK

Lincoln / Slavery

A Compilation of Historical
Biographies for the Young Reader

Compiled by Marlene Peterson

Libraries of Hope

My America Story Book
Book Eight: Lincoln / Slavery

Copyright © 2021 by Libraries of Hope, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher. International rights and foreign translations available only through permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: The Underground Railroad, by Charles T. Webber (1893). In public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website: www.librariesofhope.com
Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Abraham Lincoln 1
The Story of the Gettysburg Address 7
Lincoln and the Sleeping Sentinel 9
The Man with the Big Heart 13
The Faith of Abraham Lincoln 20
Out of Africa 24
Lucretia Mott 29
Sojourner Truth, the Suffragist 33
John Brown 39
Elijah P. Lovejoy – Part 1 42
Elijah P. Lovejoy – Part 2 47
William Lloyd Garrison 52
Harriet Beecher Stowe 56
Frederick Douglass 63
Harriet Tubman 69
Colonel Robert Gould Shaw 77
Lessons from the Song of the Slaves 80
Joel Chandler Harris 85
Booker T. Washington – Part 1 89
Booker T. Washington – Part 2 94
Lessons from the Life of Mary McLeod Bethune – Part 1 97
Lessons from the Life of Mary McLeod Bethune – Part 2 103
A Mere Matter of the Feelings 112
References 115

Chapter 1

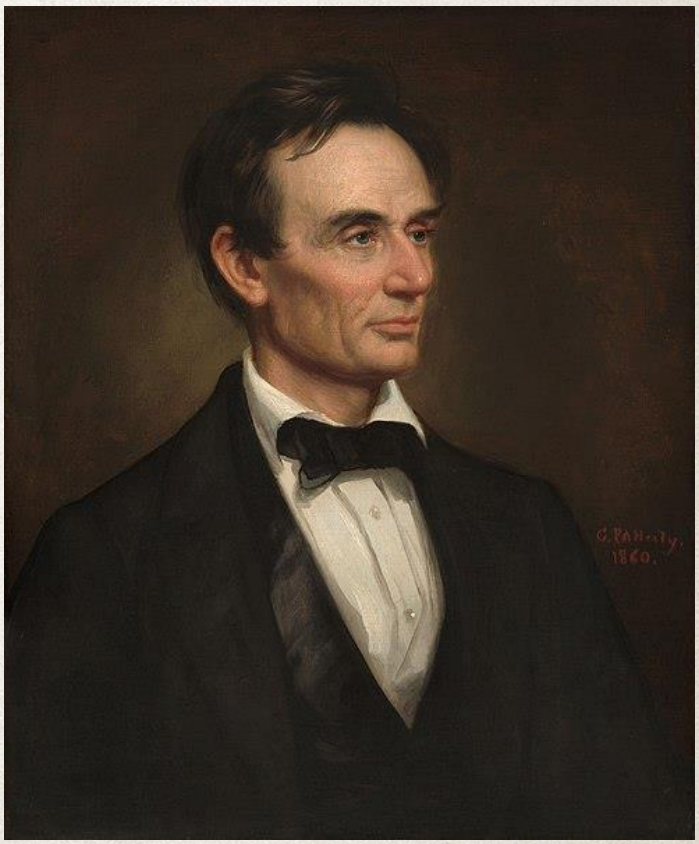
Abraham Lincoln

1809-1865

The more you find out about Abraham Lincoln, the more you will love him.

Abraham was born in Kentucky and lived in that State with his parents and his one sister until he was eight years old.

The Lincolns were very, very poor. They lived in a small log cabin on the banks of a winding creek. They need not have been quite so poor, but the truth of the matter is that Mr. Thomas Lincoln, Abraham's father, was lazy. To be sure he fastened a few logs together for shelter, cut a little wood, and dug up some ground for a garden. But after the corn and potatoes were planted, they never received any care, and there is no doubt the family would have gone hungry many a day if Abraham had not hurried home with fish which he caught in a near-by stream, or if Mrs. Lincoln had not taken her rifle into the woods and shot a deer or a bear. The meat from these would last for weeks, and the skins of animals Mrs. Lincoln always saved to make into clothes for the children.



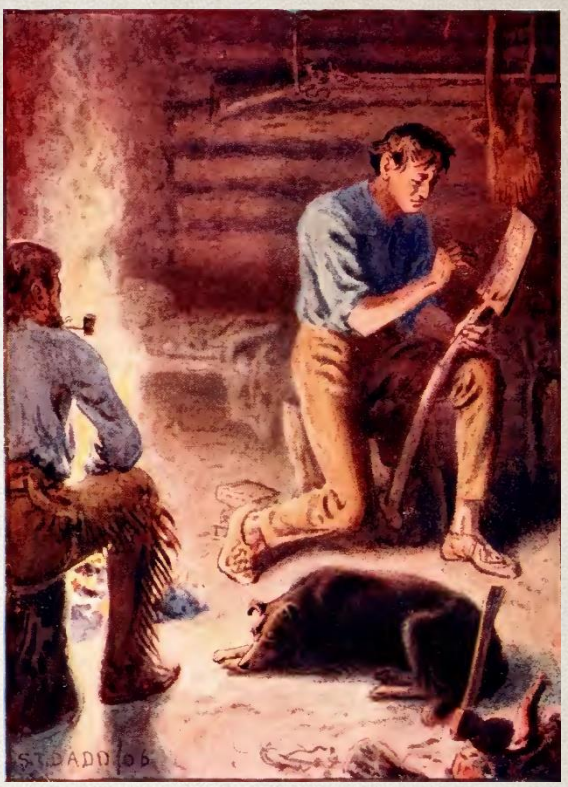
Abraham Lincoln, George Peter Alexander Healy

Thomas Lincoln could not read or spell, and as near as I can find out, was not a bit ashamed of it, either. But his wife, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was a fair scholar and taught Abraham and his sister, Sarah, to read and spell.

There was no floor to the Lincoln's log cabin and no furnishings but a few three-legged stools and a bed made of wooden slats fastened together with pegs. Abraham and Sarah slept on piles of leaves or brush.

Slates and pencils were scarce, and Abraham used to lie before the fire when he was seven or

eight years old, with a flat slab of wood and a stick which he burned at one end till it was charred; then he formed letters with it on the wood. In that way he taught himself to write. His mother had three books, a Bible, a catechism, and a spelling-book. He had never had any boy playmate and was greatly excited when an aunt and uncle of his mother's, Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow, with a nephew, named Dennis Hanks, arrived at the creek and lived in a half-faced camp near by. Dennis and Abraham became fast friends.



Sometimes he did sums on the wooden shovel, Illustration from *The story of Abraham Lincoln,* Mary Agnes Hamilton, 1906

A fever swept the country, and Abraham's mother died. Three years later his father married a new wife. The second Mrs. Lincoln had been married before and had three children, a boy and two girls. So there were five children to play together. Mr. Lincoln had built a better cabin, and she brought such furniture as the Lincoln children had never seen. Their eyes opened wide at the sight of real chairs and tables. She made Abraham and Sarah pretty new clothes. They had neat, comfortable beds, and the two sets of children were very happy. Mrs. Lincoln loved Abraham and saw that there was the making of a smart man in him. She helped him study, and when there was school for a short time in a distant log hut, she sent Abraham every day. When the school ended, there were four years when there was no school anywhere near their settlement, so she read with Abraham and kept him at his lessons in reading and arithmetic all that time.



The Young Abraham Lincoln, William Morton Jackson Rice

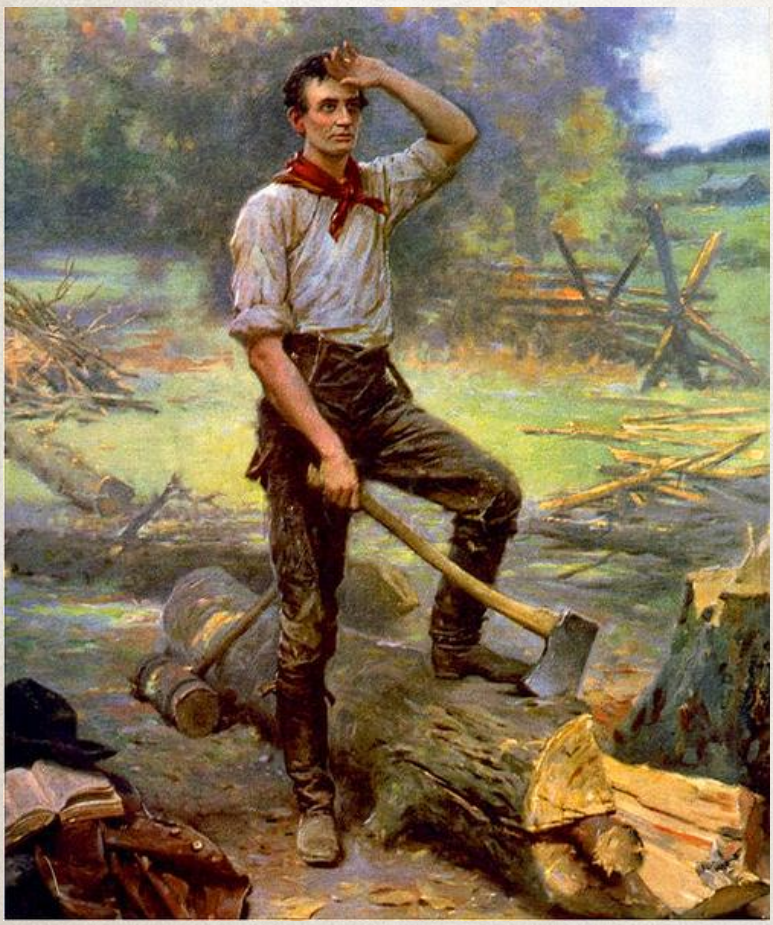
Hunters and traders rode that way sometimes, and if a traveler had a book about him, Abraham was sure to get a look at it.

A new settler had a *Life of Washington.* Abraham looked at the book hungrily for weeks and finally worked up courage to ask the loan of it. He promised to take good care of it. He was then earning money to give his parents by chopping down trees in the forests, and he had no time to read but in the evenings. One night the

rain soaked through the cracks of the cabin, and the precious book that he had promised to take good care of was stained on every page. What was he to do? He had no money to pay for the book, but he hurried to the settler's cabin and told him what had happened. He offered to work in the cornfield for three days to pay Mr. Crawford for the loss of the book. It was heavy work, but he did it and, in the end, owned the stained *Life of Washington*, himself.

Abraham had a fine memory. He could repeat almost the whole of a sermon, a speech, or a story that he had happened to hear. He had a funny way of telling stories, too, so when the farmers or woodchoppers were taking their noon rest, they always asked him to amuse them.

When Abraham was sixteen years old, he was six feet tall and so strong that all the neighbors hired him whenever he was not working for his father. He joked and laughed at his work, and every one liked him. He did any kind of work to earn an honest penny. Once he had a fine time working for a man that ran a ferry-boat, because this man owned a history of the United States and took a newspaper, and Abraham had more to read than ever before in his life. But he had to take the time he should have slept to read, because when the boat wasn't running there was farm work, housework (for he helped this man's wife, even to tending the baby), and rail splitting. Then he kept store for a man. It was here that he won a nickname that he kept all his life — "Honest Abe." A woman's bill came to two dollars and six cents. Later in the day Abraham found he had charged her six cents too much. After he closed the store that night, he walked three miles to pay her back those six cents. Another time when he weighed tea for a woman, there was a weight on the scales so that she did not get as much tea as she paid for. That meant another long tramp. But he was liked for his honesty and good nature.



The Railsplitter, Jean Leon Gerome Ferris

Abraham was so well informed that the people sent him to legislature. They made him postmaster. They hired him to lay out roads and towns. It became the fashion, if there was need of some honest, skilful work, for people to say: "Why not get Abraham Lincoln to do it? Then you'll know it's done right."

He studied law, went to legislature again, and became a circuit judge. This meant that he had to ride all round the country to attend different courts. He would start off

on horseback to be away three months, with saddle-bags holding clean linen, an old green umbrella, and a few books to read as he rode along. When he came to woodchoppers, as he rode through forests, he liked to dismount, ask for an axe, and chop a log so quickly that the men would stare.

Abraham Lincoln settled, with his wife and children, in Springfield, Illinois. He was a lawyer but would not take a case if he thought his client was guilty. He was still "Honest Abe." He loved children and usually when he went to his office in the morning, the baby was perched on his shoulder, while the others held on to his coat tails and followed behind. All the children in Springfield felt he was their friend. No wonder, for he was never too busy to help them. One morning as he was hurrying to his law office, he saw a little girl, very much dressed up, crying as if her heart would break. Her sobs almost shook her off the doorstep where she sat. Mr. Lincoln unlatched the gate and went up the walk, singing out: "Well, well, now what does all this mean?"



"How big is your trunk?"
Illustration from *The child's book of American biography,* Mary Stoyell Stimpson, 1915.

"Oh, Mr. Lincoln, I was going to Chicago to visit my aunt. I have my ticket in my purse and," here the sobs came faster than ever, "the expressman can't get here in time for my trunk."

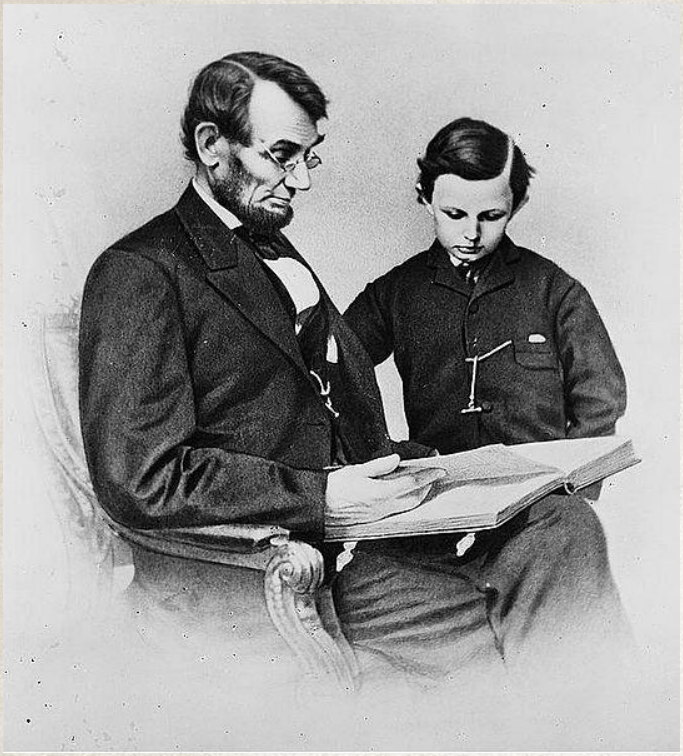
"How big is your trunk?"

"This size," stretching her hands apart.

"Pooh, I'll carry that trunk to the station for you, myself. Where is it?"

The little girl pointed to the hall, and in a minute Mr. Lincoln, with his tall silk hat on his head, his long coat tails flying out behind, the trunk on his shoulder, was striding to the railroad station, as the now happy little girl skipped beside him. He was not going to have the child disappointed.

Mr. Lincoln had a big heart. It never bothered him to stop long enough to do a kindness. One bitterly cold day he saw an old man chopping wood. He was feeble and was shaking with the cold. Mr. Lincoln watched him for a few minutes and then asked him how much he was to be paid for



Photograph of President Abraham Lincoln and Tad Lincoln, 1864

the whole lot. "One dollar," he answered, "and I need it to buy shoes." "I should think you did," said the lawyer, noticing that the poor old man's toes showed through the holes of those he was wearing. Then he gently took the axe from the man's hands and said: "You go in by the fire and keep warm, and I'll do the wood." Mr. Lincoln made the chips fly. He chopped so fast that the passers-by never stopped talking about it.

Abraham Lincoln was known to be honest, unselfish, and clear-headed. He had grown very wise by much reading and study. Finally the people of the United States paid him the greatest honor that can come to an American. They made him President. Yes, this man who had taught himself to write in the Kentucky log cabin was President of the United States!

As President, Mr. Lincoln lived in style at the White House. But he was just the same quiet, modest man that he had always been. He was busier, that was all.

When President Lincoln spoke to the people, or sent letters (messages, they are called) to Congress, every one said: "What a brain that man has!" But he used very short, simple words. Once he gave a reason for this. He said it used to make him angry, when he was a child, to hear the neighbors talk to his father in a way that he could not understand. He would lie awake, sometimes, half the night, trying to think what they meant. When he thought he had at last got the idea, he would put it into the simplest words he knew, so that any boy would know what was meant. This got to be a habit, and even in his great talk at Gettysburg the beautiful words are short and plain.



Lincoln at the Slave Market in New Orleans, Illustration from *The story-life of Lincoln,* Wayne Whipple, 1908

One day when Lincoln was

running the ferry-boat for the men I have spoken of before, he saw at one of the river landings some slaves getting a terrible beating by their master. He was only a boy, but he never forgot the sight, and one of the things he brought about when he became President of the United States was the freedom of the black people.

There are a great many lives and stories about Lincoln which you will read and enjoy, and it is certain that the more you know of this great man, Dear "Honest Abe," the better you will love him.



Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln, Edward Percy Moran

Chapter 2

The Story of the Gettysburg Address

In a spirit of thanksgiving as well as of devotion to the dead, a national cemetery was dedicated on the field of Gettysburg, where so many thousands had laid down their lives.

A multitude met on a gray November day to witness the dedication exercises. A large chorus of trained voices furnished the music; and Edward Everett, a brilliant New England orator, had been chosen as the speaker of the occasion. The President was expected to attend and would deliver "a few appropriate remarks." Though pressed with official duties, Lincoln set out for Gettysburg at the appointed time, and, it is said, scribbled the few words of his "appropriate remarks" on a scrap of paper.

For two hours the polished Everett held the attention of the audience, pouring forth all the eloquence and fire for which he was famous. It was a great address. The crowd applauded. The choir sang another song. And then the tall form of Lincoln arose, with his familiar "stovepipe" hat, and a long scarf around his shoulders, such as he often wore.

In a voice trembling with emotion and yet gaining in clearness after the first words, he began to speak. Then after only two or three minutes, when the crowd had just begun to get keyed up to his message — he sat down again!

The crowd was disappointed. "Is that all?" they asked each other.



Photograph of Pres. Abraham Lincoln Giving Gettysburg Address

Secretary Seward was no less disappointed. He leaned over and whispered to Everett, "He has made a failure, and I am sorry for it. He is tired out. His speech does not do him justice."

Lincoln himself, when he looked over that silent throng, felt that he had failed. He had not had time to prepare any special message, but he had tried to give them a few sentences straight from his heart and soul.

And that was precisely what he had done.

As soon as his "Gettysburg Address" was flashed to the world, people read it, and reread it. They have been reading and reciting it ever since, for it has been

acclaimed a masterpiece, a model of terse English and trenchant thought.

Edward Everett himself recognized this, as soon as he saw the speech in type. He sat down and wrote Lincoln the following generous and graceful tribute:

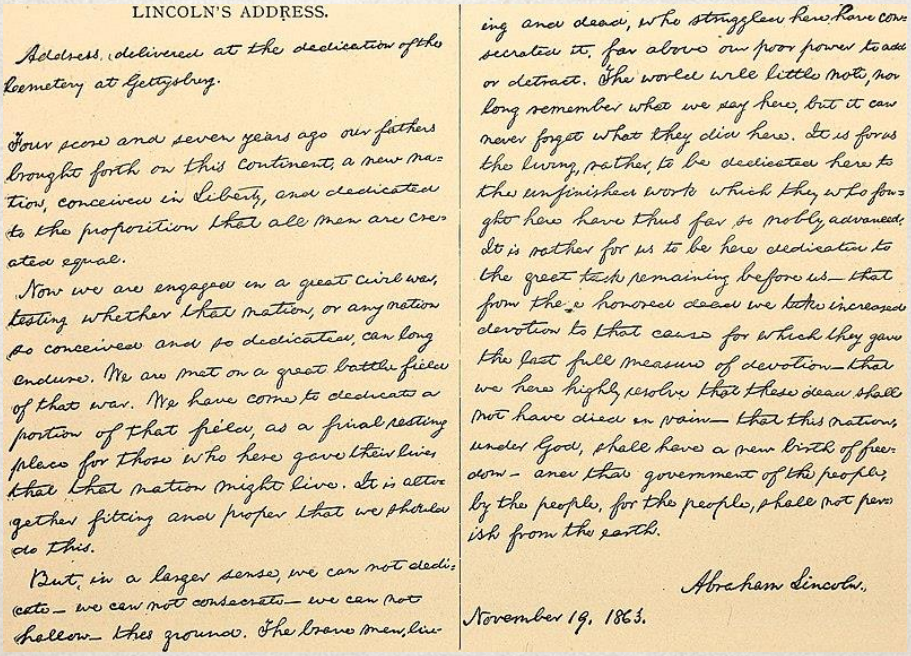
"I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

This is what Lincoln said on that day:

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."



LINCOLN'S ADDRESS.

Address, delivered at the dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

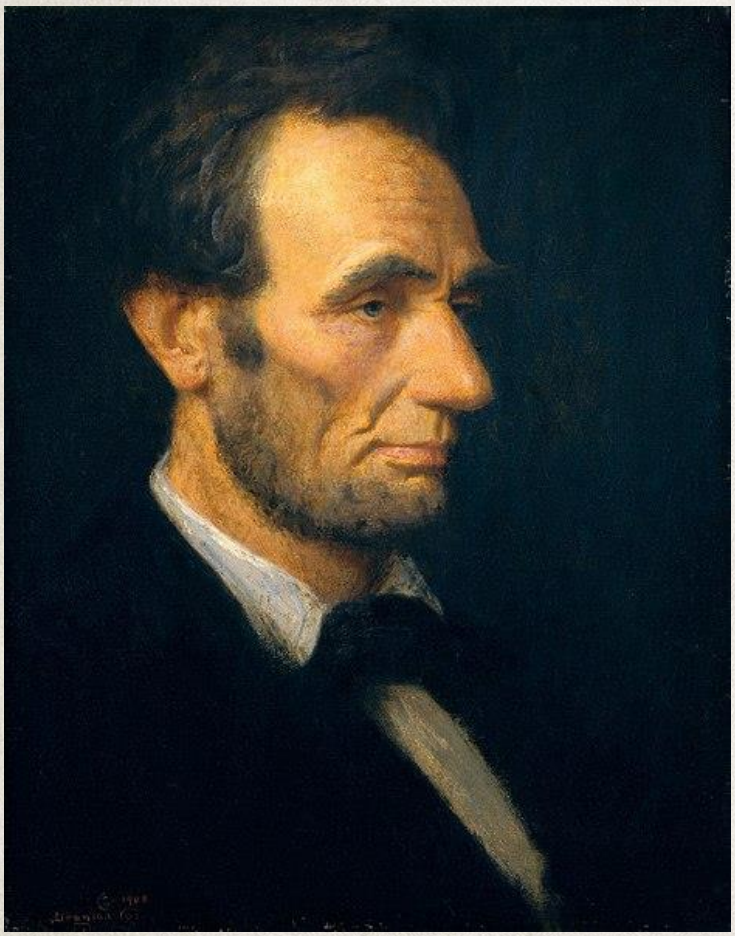
Abraham Lincoln.

November 19, 1863.

Illustration from *The blue and the gray, or, The Civil War as seen by a boy*, Annie Randall White, 1898

Chapter 3

Lincoln and the Sleeping Sentinel



Abraham Lincoln, Douglas Volk

It was a rainy morning in September, 1861, the first year of the Civil War. Judge Chittenden, the register of the Treasury, found a party of soldiers waiting for him when he reached his office in the Treasury Building, near the White House. The bluecoats were much excited, and all talking at the same time. One of them wore the bars of a captain.

"Boys," said Mr. Chittenden, "what are you talking about? I cannot understand you. Let your captain speak. Tell me what you want. What can I do for you?"

These soldiers belonged to the 3rd Vermont regiment, made up mostly of farm boys from the Green Mountains. Since their arrival in Washington they had been stationed at Chain Bridge, some three miles above Georgetown. At this time Chain Bridge across the Potomac was of vital importance; for on it depended the safety of the capital.

The Confederates occupied the southern approach to the bridge. The Union troops commanded the hills of Maryland on the opposite side. There had been no fighting. Indeed, the opposing forces had grown friendly. They used to tell each other stories and exchange tobacco, daily papers, and other things until they seemed like friends rather than enemies.

It was getting to be too much for General Smith, the commander of the bluecoats. This man, commonly known as Baldy Smith, was a stern soldier. He now gave out some strict orders. Among them was one to the effect that a sentinel caught sleeping at his post was to be shot within twenty-four hours.

According to the story told to Judge Chittenden by the captain, a boy named William Scott had enlisted in Company K. Brought up on a farm and used to hard work, he needed a goodly amount of sleep. Although not used to camp life, he had taken the place of a sick comrade, and passed the night on guard. As it happened, he was himself detailed for picket duty the very next night. The young fellow could not keep awake for two nights in succession. When the relief guard came round, he was found asleep. He was arrested, tried by court-martial, and found guilty. He was to be shot within twenty-four hours.

"I promised his mother," continued the captain, "that I would look after him as if he were my own son. I was stupid not to listen to the boy when he told me that he had fallen asleep during the day, and said he could not keep awake the second night. I ought to have sent somebody else, but I let him go to his death. If anybody is to be shot, I am the fellow. You will help me, Judge, won't you?" he pleaded, with tears in his eyes.

"There is only one man on earth who can save your comrade. It is well for you that he is the best man in the whole country. Come with me. We will go to President Lincoln."

Out of the Treasury Building and over to the White House they went, with the stately judge at their head; then up the stairway to a little office, where they found the president busily writing. Lincoln was the first to speak.

"What is this? Do you want a furlough to go home and vote? You cannot have it. I could not get a furlough for myself if I asked for it."

"Mr. President," said Judge Chittenden, "these men want nothing for themselves. They are Green Mountain boys of the 3rd Vermont; they are good soldiers. They want something which you alone can give them. They want the life of a comrade."

"What has he done?"

"Tell him," whispered the judge to the captain.

"I cannot; I cannot do it. You can do it so much better."

"No, no," said Chittenden, pushing the officer to a place in front of Lincoln's desk; "the life of Scott depends on you; tell your story."

The young captain began to stammer when he met the gaze of the great man before him. Overcoming his diffidence, he told the story in a plain, simple manner. The eager words bursting from the lips of the young officer stirred the blood of his hearers. He finished by asking for his comrade's life.

"William Scott, sir, is as brave a boy as there is in your army; he is no coward. The mountains of Vermont are the home of thirty thousand men who voted for Abraham Lincoln. They will not say the best thing to do is to shoot this young fellow like a traitor, and bury him like a dog. Can you say it, Mr. President?"

"No, I cannot."

The face of the great president was a study. It took on a soft, sad, and touching look. There seemed to be a mist in the depths of his eyes. It was only for a moment; then he broke out into a hearty laugh.

"Do you Green Mountain boys fight as well as you talk? If you do, I do not wonder at the stories I used to read about Colonel Ethan Allen.

"Captain," went on Mr. Lincoln, "I do not believe a brave, honest soldier, knowing no crime

save sleeping when he was overtired, ought to be shot. The country has better uses for him. No, your boy shall not be shot; that is, not to-morrow, and not till I know more about his case. I will attend to this matter myself. I have wanted to go out to Chain Bridge for some time. I will do so to-day. Good day, gentlemen."

Later in the day President Lincoln was seen riding from the White House out to Georgetown, and in the direction of Chain Bridge.

Within a day or so the newspapers reported that a soldier sentenced to death for sleeping at his post had been pardoned by the president, and had returned to his regiment.

It was a long time before Scott would speak of his interview with President Lincoln. One day he told a comrade the whole story.

"I knew the president at once," he said, "by a Lincoln medal I had long worn. I was scared at first, for I had never talked with a great man before. He asked me all about the folks at home, my brothers and sisters, and where I went to school, and how I liked it. Then he asked me about my mother. I showed him her picture. He said that if he were in my place he would try to make a fond mother happy, and never cause her a sorrow or a tear."

"My boy," he said, "you are not going to be shot. You are going back to your regiment. I have been put to a good deal of trouble on your account. Now what I want to know is how you are going to pay me back. My bill is a large one; there is only one man in all the world who can pay it; his name is William Scott. If from this day you will promise to do your whole duty as a soldier, then the debt will be paid. Will you make that promise, and try to keep it?"

Gladly the young Vermont soldier made the promise, and well did he keep it. From that day William Scott, the boy soldier, became the model man of his regiment. He was never absent from roll call. He was always on hand if there was any hard work to be done. He worked nights in the hospital, nursing the sick and wounded, because it trained him to keep awake. He made a record for himself on picket duty. As a scout, he became well known in the army. He



He carried a wounded captain
across the river to a place of safety,
Illustration from *The child's book of American history,*
Albert F Blaisdell, 1913

refused all offers of promotion, saying that he had done nothing to deserve it.

Some time after this the 3rd Vermont went into one of its many hard battles. The men were ordered to dash across a small stream, charge up the bank, and clean out the rifle pits of the enemy.

The Vermonters were finally forced to retreat, leaving nearly half their number dead or wounded, in the river or on the opposite shore. William Scott of Company K was the first to reach the bank of the river, the first to jump into the rifle pits, and the last to retreat. He carried a wounded captain across the river to a place of safety. He was carrying a wounded soldier across when he fell, shot to pieces. His comrades carried him out of the line of fire, and laid him on the grass to die. He lived long enough to be put on a cot in the field hospital.

"Boys, I shall never see another battle. I thought this would be my last. Tell President Lincoln I have tried to be a good soldier and be true to the flag. Thank him again because he gave me a chance to die like a soldier in battle, and not like a coward by the hands of my comrades."

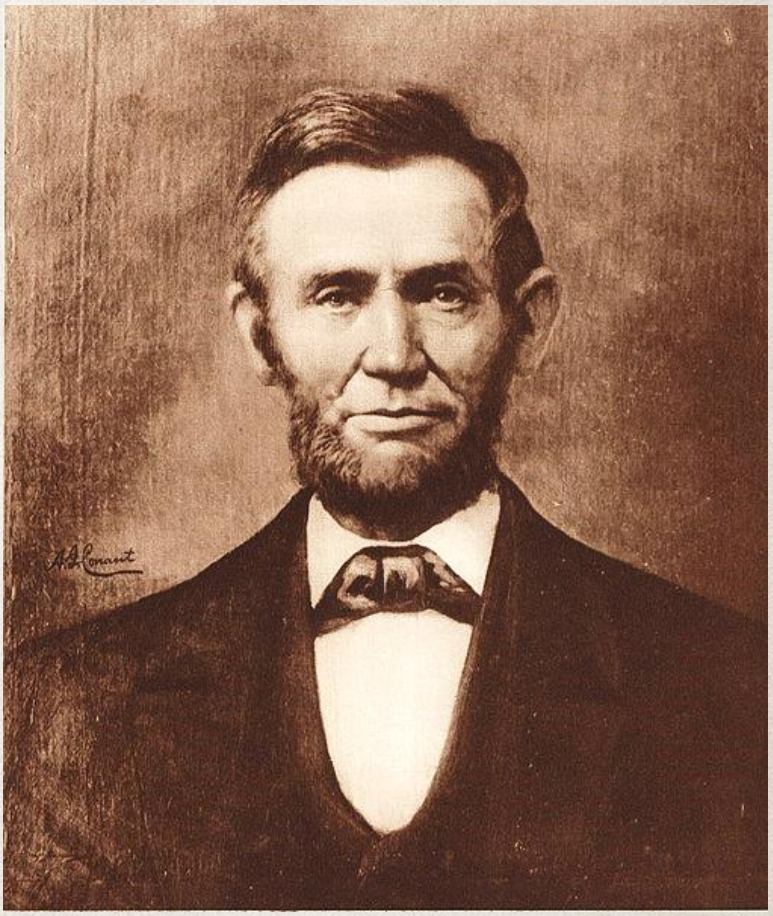
Company K buried William Scott in a grove just in the rear of the camp, at the foot of a big oak tree. Deep into the oak they cut the initials "W. S." and under it the words "A brave soldier."

A few weeks afterward Judge Chittenden told President Lincoln of the death of young Scott.

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Lincoln, with a look of tenderness. "And so he is dead, and he sent me a word. I am truly sorry he is dead, for he was a good boy. Too good a boy to be shot for falling asleep when he could not help it."

Chapter 4

The Man with the Big Heart



Abraham Lincoln, Alban Jasper Conant

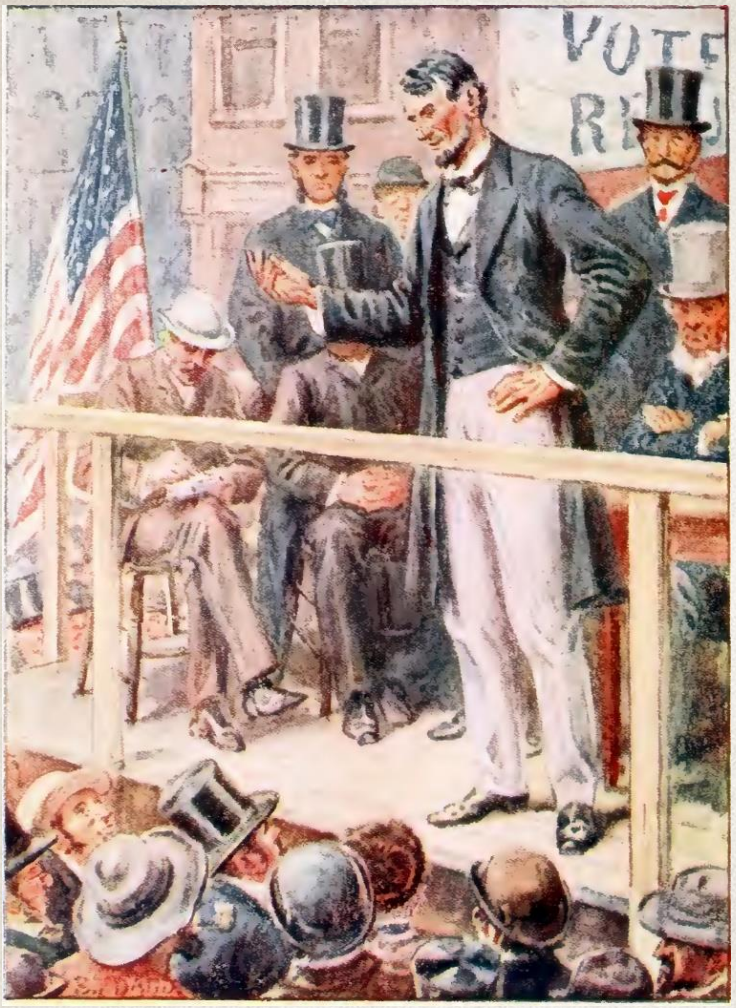
The American people were burdened with a heavy problem. The custom of black slavery, that had existed since the first settlement of America, was falling into ill repute. Slowly it had been driven out of the North into the South, where cotton-fields and climate made it more profitable, and now a strong moral sentiment had been created against it. The country was aroused.

It was in the fall of 1858. A great throng had gathered in a little village in Illinois. Country folk had come the night before in wagons, on horseback and afoot, and their log-fires lit up the prairie as if it were an army in camp. Trains were bringing the crowds from Chicago and from the large eastern cities, as far as New York. The great problem of negro slavery was to be fought out in debate. The conflict was in the open air, the vast throng waiting in expectation. Before the crowd, on a raised platform, stood a little man, hardly five feet four inches tall, but with broad shoulders, a massive head, and a voice that deepened into a roar.

"I don't care whether slavery is to be voted up or voted down," shouted the little man, "I don't believe the negro is any kin of mine."

His voice rang with denunciation of the attitude of the abolitionist. Half the crowd cheered wildly as he sat down after one of the greatest speeches ever delivered in the defense of slavery and state-rights.

A tall, lank man arose, and came to the front of the platform. He was six feet four inches tall,



Springing to his feet, he poured out what was in his mind,
Illustration from *The story of Abraham Lincoln,*
Mary Agnes Hamilton, 1906

his shoulders stooped, his clothing hung loosely on his awkward frame, and a long bony finger pointed at the crowd.

"Is slavery wrong?" he said, speaking solemnly. "That is the real issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles — right and wrong — throughout the world. Slavery is wrong, and should be abolished. To this cause I pledge myself until the sun shall shine, the rain shall fall, and the wind shall blow upon no man who goes forth to unrequited toil."

A roar of applause greeted the plain, vigorous words. The country was thrilled by the shafts of oratory. A new leader had come to carry the banner of freedom. As the months passed, the agitation reached fever-heat. Then a great campaign came — and at its close, the long, lank man of six feet four was raised to the leadership of the American people and elected to the Presidency — the "boy-baby" from the Kentucky cabin, the ungainly youth of the wilderness, the son of poverty who had left his home but a few years before to "make his own living," was now President of the United States of America, the greatest nation on the face of the earth.

It was the eleventh of February, in 1861. He stood on the rear platform of the train that was to bear him from the little Illinois town in which for some years he had lived and practiced law, to the nation's capital at Washington. The neighbors gathered about his car to bid him farewell. The morning was chill and dreary, but they bared their heads in the falling snowflakes. He gazed at them for a moment. Then he removed his hat, and raised his hand for silence. His lips quivered and there was a tear on his cheek. His face was thin and sad.

"My friends," he said, the words choked with emotion, "no one not in my situation, can appreciate my feelings of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here have I lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young man to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether I may ever return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington.

Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

It was under an angry sky and with a heavy heart that the tall, lank man of the wilderness entered the White House. It was in the nation's hour of trial. The clouds of war had begun to gather, and, with the showers of April, broke in fury over the nation, threatening the destruction of the great republic of the western world.

"They have fired on Fort Sumter!"

The words rang across the continent. The echo was heard around the world. The most heart-rending struggle that ever engaged men of the same blood was now on; brother fighting brother; father fighting son; mothers praying for their boys — one in the uniform of the blue and the other wearing the gray; churches of the same faith appealing to God, each for the other's overthrow. Men speaking the same language and living for eighty-four years under the same flag now stood as deadly foes. America, a peace-loving nation, now aroused, became the greatest fighting force on the face of the globe.

"Capture the national capital! Burn the city! Seize the President!" These were the wild words that lay on the lips of sons of the founders of the republic, whose fathers had fought for American independence.

The awful hours in the White House can never be known. The tender heart of the tall, lank man upon whose shoulders had fallen the duty of fulfilling a nation's destiny, overflowed with love for all humanity and bled with anguish at the bloodshed of his people.

The battle-line crossed, as it were, the threshold of the White House, for the President was a Kentuckian by birth and many of his dearest friends were fighting under the flag of the Confederacy. As duty called his wife to lead a ball in honor of the Federal victory at Shiloh, one of her brothers, the darling of her heart, lay dead on that battlefield in the uniform of the gray, and another brother was dying at Vicksburg, as she listened to the shouts of rejoicing over the victory of the Federal arms. The sad man in the leadership of his people was often found in bitter tears over the brave death of



Lincoln Reading the Emancipation Proclamation to His Cabinet,
Illustration from *The story of Abraham Lincoln,*
Mary Agnes Hamilton, 1906



Lincoln and the Contrabands, Jean Leon Gerome Ferris

some beloved friend in the uniform of gray as well as in the uniform of blue.

Duty lay heavily upon the great chieftain. He himself, must bring the blow of the crisis upon his nation. It was a New Year's Day, in 1863. The tall, lank man sat in his cabinet-room with a legal document before him. As he took up his pen his hand trembled.

"I fear," he said, "as he started to inscribe his name, "that posterity will look at this signature and say, 'He hesitated.'"

He rested his arm a moment and then wrote his name at the bottom of the document with much care. Then, examining his penmanship, he said, with a smile; "That will do. If my name ever gets into history at all, it will be for this act."

The news of the Emancipation Proclamation swept the country. By a stroke of the pen more than three million slaves were declared to be free. The nations of the earth were astounded.

The republic was now in the worst convulsions of war, nearly four million Americans — boys of an average age of but nineteen years — wearing the blue and the gray, were throwing their lives into the cannon's mouth for the sake of whichever cause was dear to them.

The stroke of war is quick and sharp, but its issue is variable. Now it was the day of defeat, and now the day of victory. The American people upheld the tall, lank chieftain in the White House, and, in the midst of their dismay, re-elected him to the highest honor within their gift. The day of the second inaugural was rainy and gloomy, but as the beloved son of the Kentucky log-cabin stood

with head bared to take the oath of allegiance to his nation, the sun burst through the clouds.

"Fellow-countrymen," began the inaugural address, "On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thought was anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it; all sought to avert it… But the war came… Let us judge not, that we be not judged… Fondly do we hope, feverishly do we pray, that this scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God will that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn from the lash shall be paid by another drawn from the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

There were a few brief days. The news that rang through the country threw a nation into rejoicing.

"The war is over! The nation is saved! The great Lee has surrendered at Appomattox!"

Bells were pealing the glad tidings. The North was wild with joy. The people arose in triumph as the wave of exultation swelled the hearts of a continent. Then, like a flash of lightning from a clear sky, came the news that engulfed a nation in a tidal wave of grief.

"The President has been assassinated!"



Lincoln Borne by Loving Hands, Carl Bersch



The Last Hours of Abraham Lincoln, Alonzo Chappel

All were stunned by these words, which were almost beyond belief. In the longed-for hour of triumph, its beloved leader had fallen by the hand of an assassin. Rage mingled with the sobs of a great people. The tall, lank youth from the Kentucky cabin, grown old with sorrows and burdens such as the world seldom brings to man, lay breathing his last precious moments away in Washington — struck down at the dawn of the age of peace and good-will which had so long been the one great desire of his heart.

Statesmen watched at his bedside as the giant strength of the man born in the woods met his last great battle — with death. Great generals, fresh from the carnage of the battle-ground, wept like children. The night was dismal. There was a raw, drizzling rain. Hour by hour the pulse of the dying man became weaker. It was Saturday morning — the fifteenth of April, in 1865. The hands of the clock pointed to twenty-two minutes after seven. The physician, arising from the bedside, remarked hoarsely:

"The President is dead."

A statesman rising and looking into the sad face of the great chieftain whispered:

"Now he belongs to the ages."

And so he does — this man from the Kentucky cabin who had led his nation through its years of trial and brought it to its triumph. Grief stricken multitudes of more than a million people, bared their heads, their faces streaming with tears, as he was borne through the thoroughfares of the great metropolis, and carried to his home in Springfield, Illinois, where he had first gone after leaving his father's house to pass out into the world to try and make a living for himself. There, beside his old neighbors, was laid to rest the most beloved man in America, and with a heart big enough to hold the whole world — Abraham Lincoln.

"Thy task is done; the bond are free:
We bear thee to an honored grave,
Whose proudest monument shall be
The broken fetters of the slave.

"Pure was thy life; its bloody close
Hath placed thee with the sons of light,
Among the noble host of those
Who perished in the cause of Right."

Chapter 5

The Faith of Abraham Lincoln

After the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed he said to some men who had called to congratulate him on the success of the Union arms:

"On many a defeated field there was a voice louder than the thundering of cannon. It was the voice of God crying, 'Let my people go.' We were all very slow in realizing that it was God's voice, but after many humiliating defeats the nation came to believe it as a great and solemn command. Great multitudes begged and prayed that I might answer God's voice by signing the Emancipation Proclamation, and I did it, believing that we should never be successful in the great struggle unless we obeyed the Lord's command. Since that the God of battles has been on our side."

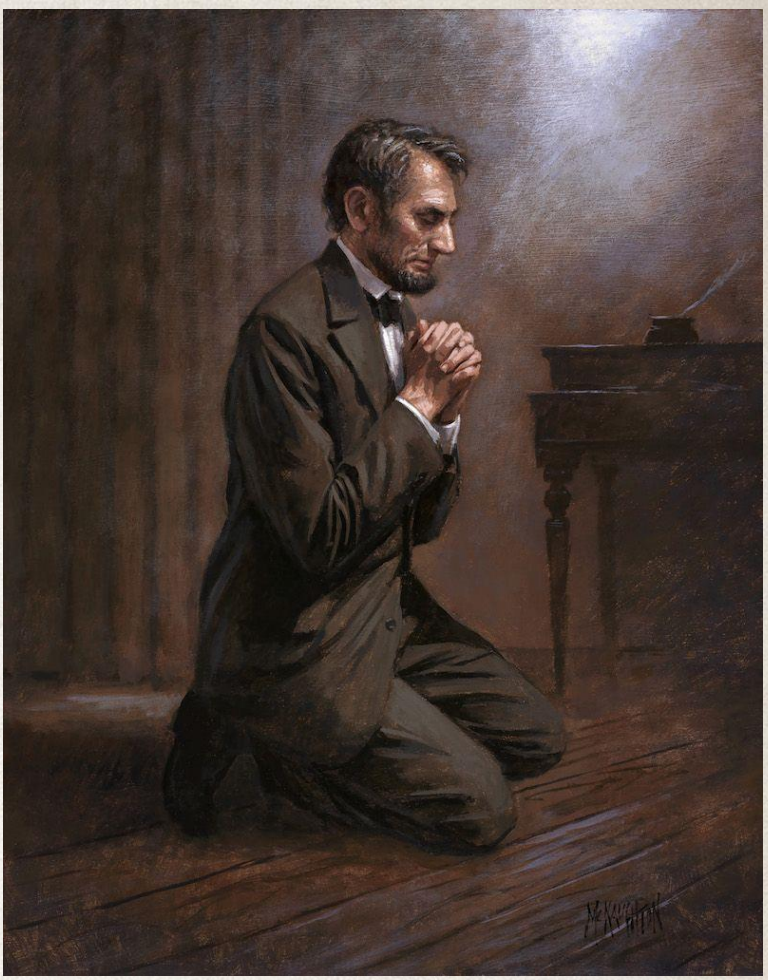
Just before the Battle of Gettysburg all of the members of the Cabinet were in a state of terrible anxiety. General Lee with a powerful army had swept up into Pennsylvania. On the eve of the battle General Meade, almost an untried general, had been placed in command. A defeat meant the loss of the Capital and perhaps the occupation of Philadelphia and even New York. Everywhere was



First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln, Francis Bicknell Carpenter

panic. Only Lincoln remained unmoved and unafraid. After the battle he told General Sickles the reason of his confidence:

"In the pinch of your campaign up there, when everybody seemed panic-stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, I went to my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God, and prayed for victory at Gettysburg. I told him that this was His war, and our cause His cause, but that we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. Then I made a vow to Almighty God that if He would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by Him, and he did stand by you boys and I will stand by Him. And after that, I don't know how it was and I can't explain it, but soon a sweet comfort swept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole business into His own hands, and that is why I have no fears about you."



Lincoln's Prayer, Jon McNaughton

To Chittenden, the Register of the Treasury, Lincoln said: "That the Almighty does make use of human agencies, and directly intervenes in human affairs, is one of the plainest statements in the Bible. I have had so many evidences of His direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have not sufficient facts upon which to found it. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it."

It was this deep and achieved faith in God that made John Hay, who had been one of his private secretaries, say of him:

"Abraham Lincoln, one of the mightiest masters of statecraft that history has known, was also one of the most devoted and faithful servants of Almighty God who have ever sat in the high places of the world."

Time went on. The war was drawing to its close. On the day of the receipt of the news of Lee's surrender the President held a meeting of the Cabinet. Neither Lincoln nor any member was able for a time to speak. Finally, at the suggestion of the President, all dropped on their knees and

thanked God in silence and in tears for the victory that he had granted to the Union. It is doubtful whether there is any other recorded instance where the meeting of the Cabinet of a great country ended in prayer.

The victories of the Union arms re-elected Lincoln as President. In his Second Inaugural Address he reached heights not achieved before, when looking back over four years of war, hatred, and calumny he was yet able to say: "The Almighty has his own purposes. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'



Lincoln at Independence Hall,
Jean Leon Gerome Ferris

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are now in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve

and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

In his last public speech of April 11, 1865, Lincoln again testified to his faith and trust in God. He said in part:

"We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give the hope of a just and speedy peace, the joyous expression of which cannot be restrained. In all this joy, however, He from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten."

Chapter 6

Out of Africa

About the year 1735 a fierce battle was waged between two strong tribes on the west coast of Africa. The chief of one of these tribes was counted among the most powerful of his time. This chief overpowered his rival and slaughtered and captured a great number of his band. Some of the captives escaped, others died, others still committed suicide, till but few were left. The victorious chief delivered to his son about a dozen of this forlorn remnant, and he, with an escort, took them away to be sold into slavery. The young African pushed his way through the jungle with his bodyguard until he reached the coast. Arrived there, he sold his captives to the captain of an American slave ship and received his pay in trinkets of various kinds, common to the custom of the trade. Then he was asked to row out in a boat and inspect the wonderful ship. He went, and with the captain and the crew saw every part of the vessel. When it was all over they offered him food and he ate it heartily. After that he remembered no more till he woke to find himself in the hold of the ship chained to one of the miserable creatures whom he himself had so recently sold as a slave, and the vessel itself was far beyond the sight of land.

After many days the ship arrived at the shores of America; the human cargo was brought to Richmond and this African slave merchant was sold along with his captives at public auction in the slave markets of the city. He was bought by a tobacco planter and carried to Amelia County, Virginia, where he lived to be a very old man. This man was my grandmother's great-grandfather.

According to the story as he told it to my grandmother, he brought more at auction than any other member of the party. He was a very fine specimen of physical manhood, weighing somewhere around two hundred pounds, and standing about six feet two inches in height. My grandmother said of him that he learned very little of the English language and used that little always with a pronounced foreign accent. He never grew to like America or Americans, white or black; and certain days, after the passing of so many moons, he observed religiously throughout his life. These were feast days with certain ceremonies of their own, in which, when possible, two other members of that same party though not of his tribe would join him. Each understood the tribal language of the others. These days, so my grandmother said, which occurred about three times a year, his owner permitted him to take off, leaving him undisturbed, for at other times he was entirely faithful and conscientious in his work. His great-granddaughter—my mother's mother—was not, I should judge, very unlike this great-great-great grandfather of mine, for in her youth she was a magnificent type of womanhood, both physically and mentally; and even to her death, at ninety-six years of age, she was possessed of remarkable physical and mental vigour. She "carried the keys" on her owner's, Doctor Craddock's, plantation, and stood next on the female side of the household to his wife, superintending the making of the clothes, caring for the children on the plantation, and in later



Illustration of Brer Rabbit from London Charivari

years conducting what would in the present day be called a Day Nursery; that is, caring for the children of the mothers who were in the field, seeing to their food and dress, and to their conduct, of course. Frequently these old mothers were very clever in story telling, so that "Uncle Remus," "Brer Fox," and "Brer Rabbit" were familiar to the children of the South, both white and black, many years before they got into print.

My father's mother, who lived to be 108 years old, was also brought directly from Africa, and was finally sold to a planter who lived in Charlotte County, Virginia. It was there my father was born. He was owned by Doctor Alexander of that county, and when he died, about 1850, and the estate was divided, my father was sold to John Crowder of Prince Edward County, and, I think, presented to his wife as a Christmas present. I have many times heard my father tell of his experiences as a slave; of the many hardships through which he passed, and of the many good times he had even as a slave, for one of the fortunate traits of the Negro is his jovial nature, his ability to see humour even in adversity, and to laugh and sing under almost any circumstances. I have often thought that most other races, had they gone through the difficulties which the Negro faced, would have produced much more insanity than has been found in the past among Negroes; unfortunately, however, insanity is increasing very much indeed among my people, an indication in all probability that they are taking life much more seriously than they have done in the past.

There were many kind masters during slavery days; and there must have been such a thing as kindness even between master and slave. The overseers who were generally of the poorer class of white people were, as a rule, the cause of much of the contention and usually made most of the trouble; at least the Negroes thought so. They were night patrollers, or, as the Negroes called them, "patterrollers," and were paid by the hour in many places to catch and whip any slave found off his master's plantation after nightfall without a pass. Not infrequently these people received from the master class less consideration even than the slave, and in most cases the bitterest animosity and hatred existed between the overseers and the slaves. It was not unusual that Negroes considered themselves superior in every respect to the overseer class, whose members were generally referred to among them as "po'h white trash." This expression was "the last word" in degradation, infamy, and general contempt that Negroes could command. Even to-day, when Negroes refer to people as "poor white trash," it has a meaning all its own, and I am of the opinion that much of the ill feeling between the races in our country today had its origin in these unpleasant relations between overseer and slaves before Emancipation.

On the Crowder plantation there was an overseer who had a particular dislike for my father, probably because he thought that my father received entirely too much consideration from his master and mistress; in short, there was a kind of jealous rivalry between them. It is unnecessary to say that the dislike on the part of the overseer was generously reciprocated by my father. If there was any difference, it was that the hatred on my father's part was the stronger—if that were possible; and without doubt, being in the confidence of his master, he used his opportunity to the



Union Soldiers Accepting a Drink, Eastman Johnson

disadvantage of the overseer. It was the rule of the plantation that no slaves except such as the master designated should be whipped by the overseer. My father, of course, was thus exempted. On one occasion the overseer, unfortunately, and against the order of his employer, insisted upon whipping my father. The scene took place in a tobacco barn where my father was engaged with perhaps fifty other slaves in sorting and stripping tobacco. In the scuffle, in which several other slaves helped the overseer in response to his call, my father easily got the upper hand, for he was a man of unusual strength. He not only overpowered the overseer but the men who undertook to assist him, maiming the overseer and one of the men very seriously. This was in the midst of a severe snow storm. My father took the only course, as it seemed, that was open to "obstreperous" slaves—he took to the woods. This was in early December. Here he remained, picking up what food he could at nights in cabins and elsewhere, until March, when, for want of food and sufficient clothing, his feet having been frost bitten, he was obliged to give in. He returned one snowy afternoon, slipped into the stable, and hid himself in the loft under the hay. His hat was discovered by his master's two sons whose conversation, which he overheard, showed that they were afraid of him. They ran to the house and told their father of his return, and he came out to the barn and urged him to come to the house and be looked after, for the entire family was really very fond of him. He was taken back to the house where his mistress, the mother of the two boys, treated him most kindly. Indeed, he said, they all wept over his pitiable condition. His feet were finally, but only after careful nursing for

several months, in shape to permit him to resume his usual duties. He promised that he would not commit the same offence again, provided, however, no "po'h white trash" attempted again to whip him. He apologized to the overseer, and the two agreed that there would be no further trouble. But a few weeks afterward he went to his master and told him he was very sorry it was not possible for him to get along with that overseer and asked that his master sell him to a near-by planter, who had agreed to give him better treatment. This time it would appear that he and the master came very near the "parting of the ways." This seems strange, I know, but it was not infrequent that slaves of the more intelligent type would make definite arrangements with some near or distant planter to buy them; thus slaves very often picked their own masters. But in this case Mr. Crowder made it plain to him that they could get along; that he was unwilling to sell him; that he belonged especially to his mistress and that she depended on him. My father insisted, however, that the overseer be discharged. Whether his attitude in this case produced the desired result my father did not know, but in any case within a few weeks the objectionable overseer left and a new overseer took his place, who established better relations, not only as between himself and my father, but with the other slaves as well, in consequence of which the master got better and more efficient service with very much less friction.

From that time forward my father lived pleasantly on the Crowder plantation, neither he nor the master nor the overseer breaking their mutual promise—my father's being that he would not fight again unless someone attempted to whip him; and the overseer's, that he would not attempt to whip him. My father used to say that one man could not chastise another, although two men might fight and one might get the better of the other. That idea was very strong in his mind.

When the Civil War broke out my father went with Mrs. Crowder's brother—Captain Womack of Cumberland County, Virginia, who was afterward Colonel Womack—into the fray as his "body



The Sanctuary, Edwin Forbes

servant." I think they would say "valet" to-day. He was with him during the first three years of that bitter struggle, suffering all the privations and hardships so familiar to those who know what the Southern Army endured.

One experience he used often to relate was that near Petersburg he accidentally got within the Union lines and was told that he might remain with the Yankees if he so desired; but he told them that he could not do so at the time because he had given his definite promise that he would stand by Colonel Womack until the war was over. He could not break his promise. He had also sworn to see to it, so far as he could, that no harm came to his master and he felt that he would remain true to that pledge so long as Colonel Womack was equally true to his promises to him. I am told that the friendship between the two men, one black, one white, was very strong; that nothing ever separated them save Colonel Womack's death which, as I recall my father's account of it, occurred in one of the famous charges near Petersburg.

When the war was over my father "hired himself" to the Crowders, where he remained until Christmas of 1866 when he married my mother, Emily Brown. They were married in the old plantation house of the Hillmans of Amelia County. The Hillmans, as I recall, were Scottish Presbyterians and like many other Southerners, had lost everything during the war except their name and honour and the pride of aristocratic ancestry.

My mother, like her own mother, was a woman of very strong character in many ways, very much like my father. Among my early recollections is the fact that my mother frequently, after working in the field all day, would hurry us through the evening meal in order to get the cabin ready for the night school which met regularly in our simple home. I recall now the eagerness with which some twenty-five or thirty men and women struggled with their lessons, trying to learn to read and write while I was supposed to be asleep in my trundle bed, to which I had been hurried to make room for this little band of anxious, aspiring ex-slaves, some of whom came as far as six miles in order to take advantage of this rare opportunity which but a few years before had been denied them. The teacher of this night school was my mother's brother, who, in spite of the penalties attached, had learned to read and write from his young master, picking up here and there snatches of information while they played and worked together, ofttimes without the young master's realizing the gravity of his actions. All this took place but a few years after the close of the war and before any schools had been established for coloured or white children in that section. My mother was one of the most enthusiastic of the students, while my father, who was much older than my mother, although giving his unqualified approval and encouragement to the school, sat by and listened and once in a while in a mischievous mood threw in an ejaculation which upset the order and dignity of the school, much to the embarrassment and annoyance of the teacher and, I fear, sometimes to the indignation of the more serious-minded students, especially my mother.

Thinking of the experiences through which my ancestors passed, along with thousands of other slaves, in their contact with the white people of America, I have often felt that somehow in spite of the hardships and oppression which they suffered—that in the providence of God, the Negro, when all is summed up dispassionately, has come through the ordeal with much to his credit, and with a great many advantages over his condition when he entered the relationship. The white man, on the other hand, has reaped certain disadvantages from which the whole country still suffers and from which it will probably take several generations to recover completely.

Chapter 7

Lucretia Mott

The Tale of the Saintly Friend Who Loved Humanity
1793–1880



Lucretia Coffin Mott, Joseph Kyle

This is the tale of a Friend whose heroic kindness and implicit faith in humanity led her through dangers that threatened her life. It is the tale of a people who count truth greater than riches and whose creed is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

It was when America had just become a nation. The struggles of the Revolution were over. Tens of thousands of lives had been placed on the altar of liberty, and men were now settling down to the great struggle — the struggle of everyday life, with its hourly demands upon courage. The new nation had shown to the world that it was the land of patriots in war; and now it was calling to duty its patriots of peace. The year was that of 1793. In a pious family on the Nantucket coast in Massachusetts, was a little girl. Her parents were Quakers — children of God — and from their lips there never fell an unkind word or complaint. Their people had been the first whalers of the Atlantic. They built the first lighthouse that cast its radiance out upon the seas, as a shining beacon to ships in distress, or to point their way through shoals of rocks to safety. They had become the first friends of the red man and had taken him to their hearts as a poor brother, teaching him to plough, to sow the land, and to reap the riches of nature.

It was in such a home as this that little Lucretia Coffin formed her first impressions of life; and,

when twelve years of age, she was taken to the city of Boston, the center, then as now, of New England's learning and culture.

"It is against the principles of Christ to shed blood," she had heard her mother say many times. So the stories of Bunker Hill and Lexington, which were dear to patriotic Boston, caused her to shudder.

"Quakers are cowards," was the children's retort.

"We are not," she would answer, bravely. "We will go to war and care for the wounded, but we will not take our brother's life."

As Lucretia grew to girlhood, she became impressed with the thought that honor was the world's greatest possession. One day she was knitting. In the conversation of those about her, she heard some slighting word spoken of womanhood. Quick as a flash, she arose and closed the lips of the speaker, who sank away in shame, while the girl went on with her knitting.

"Happiness is but the outcome of right and duty," she would tell her young friends, when they complained of being discontented. "The greatest wealth is peace of mind."

The second war with Great Britain broke out. Again the American flag waved triumphant, and the Stars and Stripes were carried on to the seas.

But Lucretia grieved that the price of progress should be paid in human lives. When she was twenty-five years of age, she decided to consecrate her life to humanity, and entered the ministry of the Friends in historic old Philadelphia, under the very shadow of the hall where American independence had been born.

Within the heart of this birthplace of liberty were men and women whose bodies and lives were bought and sold like chattel.

"This must not be," she exclaimed, "in Christian America!"

With her friends, she held meetings and organized societies to help and encourage the slave. Public opinion was strongly against her. The negro had been the white man's property since the foundation of America. Slavery was an established system of trade.

"What right has this woman to interfere?" This was the protest that passed from the coast of New England to the farthest borders of the frontier. "The negro was born for servitude. It was God's intent."

The peaceful woman, whose only interest was humanity, went calmly on her way, as her sense of duty led her. She was refused a hall in which to hold her meetings, and so — she built one, and dedicated it to freedom. A storm of public opinion was directed against the new hall. Not since the days of the struggle for independence had the people been aroused to greater excitement. Shortly after Lucretia Coffin had consecrated her life to humanity, she had married and had become Mrs. Mott. Her name was now heralded through the states, for her theories threatened the "property interests" of the nation.

It was three days after the dedication of the hall of freedom, which she called "Pennsylvania Hall." A crowd of excited men were gathered in the streets. The agitation increased as the evening wore on. The mayor was notified, but did not respond. Larger and more menacing grew the crowd, until it became a mighty mob. A stone was hurled through the street. There was the crash of breaking glass. The entrance door to the hall creaked and groaned. Then it gave way, and the mob rushed into the auditorium.

"Fire! Fire!" they shouted, and the anti-slavery hall was in flames. Even the firemen, who

answered the alarm, stood by while it burned, and protected only the surrounding buildings.

As the flames were leaping into the night-sky from the new anti-slavery hall, the crowd howled with glee.

"Come on! Come on!" was the shout. "Let us do the job right, now it is begun!"

Expecting that their home might be attacked, the Motts had removed their children to a neighbor's house, but Lucretia Mott and her husband refused to flee, and sat in the parlor of the little home as though awaiting the arrival of guests.

The mob rushed down Arch Street to Ninth, where stood the modest dwelling. Just as they were approaching the house, a cry was heard.

"On to Mott's! On to Mott's!"

A youth took up the leadership directly in front of the house, and fled down the street, the mob following at his heels, yelling wildly. The loyal lad was a Quaker and knew the Motts; his quick wit had saved their home, the mob burning another building farther along the street, under the belief that it was the Mott home.

Several years later, Lucretia Mott was attending the annual meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society in New York. It had no sooner assembled than a mob gathered, and, crowding about the edifice, it threw stones, hooting and yelling at the people within, and even attempting to throw vitriol upon them. The company was calm and unafraid, but had to abandon its business and adjourn. On opening the door, a terrible scene — a fearful bedlam — was presented. The speaker and members of the society were buffeted and roughly handled by the mob, and it looked as if a tragedy were at



The Underground Railroad, Charles T. Webber

hand. Lucretia Mott, unmoved in that awful ordeal, stood calm and serene; not a word, expression, or gesture betraying that she knew the emotion of fear.

"Here, Joseph," she said to her escort, "will you care for these two women friends? They seem worried."

"But who will care for thee, Lucretia?" he asked.

Readiness is often the characteristic of great souls. It was of Lucretia Mott. Calmly she looked about her; nearby stood a beetle-browed ruffian, apparently some sort of a leader or hero of his followers — certainly one of the roughest of them all.

Going up to him, Lucretia Mott said in her ordinary tones:

"My friend, will thee kindly give me thy arm through the crowd?"

The fellow's manhood was touched, and he helped the good Quaker woman through the mob.

Lucretia Mott's life had been saved by her heroic calmness and her implicit faith in humanity, which alone should be a lesson to generations to come.

It was largely through the calm and determined bearing of the Quakers that public opinion was sufficiently aroused against slavery to effect its final downfall; and among the names of all of that noble band, none shines more brightly on the page of history than that of Lucretia Mott.

"The peace of God was on her face,
Her eyes were sweet and calm,
And when you heard her earnest voice
It sounded like a psalm.

"In all the land they loved her well;
From country and from town
Came many a heart for counsel.
And many a soul cast down.

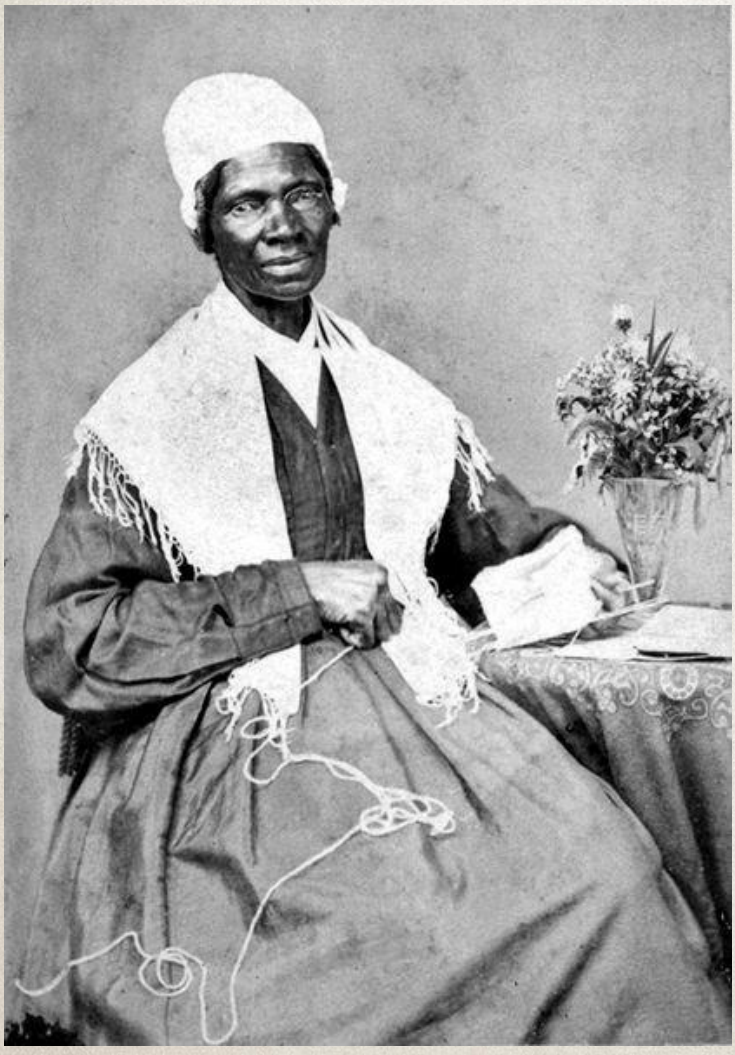
"Her hands had fed the hungry poor
With blessing and with bread;
Her face was like a comforting
From out the Gospel read."

Chapter 8

Sojourner Truth, the Suffragist

1800–1883

Among Isabella's earliest recollections was a picture of her father and mother sitting night after night in their damp cellar, lighted by a blazing pine-knot, talking over their experiences of bygone days. Occasionally they would refer to one snowy morning when an old-fashioned sleigh drove up to their door and took away their unsuspecting little boy, Michael, and their little girl, Nancy, locked in the sleigh-box.



Photograph of Sojourner Truth, 1864

Whenever this story was mentioned, Isabella seemed to fall into a deep study. However, she was left to remain in Ulster County, New York, her birthplace, until her mother and father died. She was then sold to a man whose wife scolded and frowned at her creeping gait, her dull understanding and slovenly ways. In spite of his wife's impatience, the man insisted that Isabella could do as much work as half a dozen common people and do it well.

Isabella, therefore, fond of trying to please her new master, often worked several nights in succession, taking only short naps as she sat in her chair. Some nights, fearing that if she sat down she would sleep too long, she took only catnaps while she rested against the kitchen wall.

One morning the potatoes which Isabella had cooked for breakfast seemed unusually dingy and dirty. "Look!" said Isabella's mistress to her husband, "a fine specimen of Bell's

work! It is the way all her work is done!" Isabella's master scolded her and bade her be more careful in the future. The two white servant-girls in the family also abused Isabella for preparing such food.

Isabella moped around apparently wondering why the potatoes looked so dingy and dirty. As she stood wondering how to avoid this the next time, Gertrude, her mistress's little daughter, stole quietly up behind her. Said she, catching Isabella by the arm, "Bell, if you will wake me early tomorrow morning, I will get up and attend to your potatoes while you go out to milk the cows. Then Father and Mother and all of them will not be scolding you." Isabella bowed, thanked her and promised to wake her early; then off Gertrude ran.

The next morning, just as the potatoes began to boil and milking time came, little Gertrude walked into the kitchen and seated herself in the Corner by the fire. She opened her little sewing basket and busied herself with making something for her doll. As she sat there, one of the maids came in with the broom in her hand and ordered her out, but Gertrude refused to go. The maid began to sweep hurriedly. When she reached the fireplace, she pretended to be in such a hurry, she caught up a handful of ashes and quickly dashed them into the potatoes. Gertrude ran out of the kitchen, saying, "Oh, Poppee! oh, Poppee! the girl has been putting ashes into Bell's potatoes! I saw her do it! Look at those that fell on the outside of the kettle!" She ran about the house and yard telling her story to every one. Her father listened to her story, called the maid in and, brandishing his fist at her, gave her orders to let Bell alone.

For many years, Isabella tried harder each year to please her master. Even after she had married and become the mother of five children, she obeyed him to such an extent that she would not steal even a crust of bread for her hungry children. When her household duties were done, she went to the field to work. After placing her baby child in a basket, she tied a rope to each handle and suspended the basket to the branches of a tree. She then set one of the larger children to swing the basket "in order to make the baby happy and keep the snakes away," she said.

Isabella's master promised that if she would continue to be faithful he would set her free one year before all the slaves in New York State were to be free. As the time drew near, her master claimed that because of her sore hand that year, she had been of less value and would therefore have to remain longer. However, Isabella decided to remain only until she had spun all his wool.

One fine morning, a little before daybreak, she stepped away from the rear of her master's house with her baby boy on one arm and her clothes and provisions tied in a cotton handkerchief on the other. Fortunately, she landed in the home of a man who made no practice of buying and selling people. Nevertheless, he gave Isabella's master, who came in search of her, twenty-five dollars for her freedom.

Just before Isabella left her master, he had sold her five-year-old boy to a man who was on his way to England. The man, finding the boy too small for his services, sent him back to his brother, who in turn sold the boy to his brother-in-law in another state. When Isabella heard that her boy had been sold and sent away, she started out to find the guilty party and, if possible, to make him return her boy.

She went to her former mistress and others concerned in the sale, saying, "I'll have my child again." Finally she went to her former master, who told her to go to the Quakers and they would assist her. Straightway she went to the home of a Quaker family. They welcomed her and placed her in a room where there was a high, clean, white bed. In all of her twenty-seven years she had

never slept in a bed. She sat for a long time looking at the bed and getting ready to crawl under it. However, she finally crawled gently up into the bed and soon fell asleep. The next morning, her Quaker friends took her nearly to town and gave her directions for reaching the courthouse, where she made complaint to the grand jury.



Photograph of Sojourner Truth, 1870

On reaching the courthouse, she entered. Thinking that the first fine-looking man she saw was the grand jury, she began to complain to him about her boy. He listened for a few moments and then told her that there was no grand jury there; she must go upstairs. When she had made her way upstairs through the crowd, she again went to the grandest-looking man she saw. Immediately she began to tell him that she came to make her complaint to the grand jury. Greatly he asked what her complaint was. As soon as she began in her impressive way to tell her story, he said, pointing to a certain door. "This is no place to enter a complaint go in there."

She went in, and finding the grand jurors sitting; began to tell her story. One of the jurors asked if she could swear that was her boy.

"Yes," she answered, "I swear it's my son."

"Stop, stop," said the lawyer, "you must swear by this Bible." Taking the Bible, she placed it to her lips and began to swear it was her child. The clerks in the office burst into an uproar of laughter. None of this seemed to disturb Isabella. After understanding that she was simply to make a pledge of her truthfulness with her hand upon the Bible, she did: and hurried away. With a piece of paper, called a writ, in her hand for the arrest of the man who had sent her boy away, she trotted to the constable eight miles off. Although the constable by mistake served the writ on the wrong brother, it had its effect. The brother who had sold the boy went in hiding until he could dip away to get the boy.

The distance was great and travel in those days was slow. Autumn days came and went and then winter, and finally spring came before the man arrived with the boy. During all these months Isabella kept going about seeing this friend and that one, until she said she was afraid that she had worried all of her friends, even God himself, nearly to death.

The news finally reached her that her boy had come, but that he denied having any mother. When she reached the place where her boy Peter was, he cried aloud against this tall, dark, bony woman with a white turban on her head. He knelt down and begged with tears not to be taken from his kind master. When some one asked him about the bad scar on his forehead, he said, "Master's horse hove me there." And then some one else asked about the scar on his cheek. He said, "That was done by running against Master's carriage." As he answered both of these questions, he looked wistfully at his master, as much as to say, "If they are falsehoods, you bade me say them: may they be satisfactory to you, at least."

Kind words and candies at last quieted Peter and he said, looking at his mother, "Well, you do look like my mother used to look." They embraced each other and went their way.

While living in New York, Isabella joined Zion's Church, in Church Street, New York City, where she worshiped for some time. One Sunday morning, after services, a tall, well-dressed woman came up and made herself known to Isabella as her sister Sophia who had just moved to New York City. She also brought to meet Isabella her brother Michael, whom Isabella had never seen. The brother Michael told Isabella that her sister Nancy, who had been for many years a member of Zion Church, had just passed away. As he described his sister Nancy's features, her manner, her dress, and named her class leader, Isabella stood shaking as though she would fall to the floor. She caught hold of the back of a bench, exclaiming, "I knelt at the altar with her. I took the Lord's Supper with her. I shook hands with her! Was that my sister who was taken away one snowy morning in the sleigh? Are you my brother Michael who was taken away in the sleigh-box?" The three of them stood there mingling their tears each with the other.

Finally she decided to leave New York City and travel east and lecture. With the secret locked in her own bosom, she made ready for leaving by placing a few articles of clothing in a pillow-case. About an hour before starting out, she went to the woman at whose house she was staying and said, "My name is no longer Isabella, but 'Sojourner.' I am going east. The spirit calls me there, and I must go."

On the morning of June 1, 1843, Sojourner, now forty-three years old, set out from New York City with her pillow-case in one hand, a little basket of provisions in the other and two York shillings in her purse. As she crossed over to Brooklyn, she says she thought of Lot's wife, and, wishing to avoid her fate, was determined not to look back until New York City was far in the distance. When night came on she sought for a lodging place wherever she could find one.

It was her plan, as she explained, when she became weary of travel and needed rest, to stop at some home for a few days. The very first time she felt the need of rest badly, as she walked along the road, a man addressed her, asking if she were looking for work. "Sir," she said in her queenly way, "that's not the object of my travels, but if you need me I can help you out for a few days." She went in and worked so faithfully that the man offered her at the time of her departure what seemed to her a large sum of money. Refusing all except two or three York shillings which she considered sufficient to take her on her mission, she went her way.

In her search for lodging places, Sojourner Truth occasionally went into dance-halls and hovels of the lowest kind. Nevertheless, she traveled on foot lecturing in many New York and Connecticut towns. Then led, as she claimed, by the spirit, she continued her journey to Northampton, Massachusetts.

One night, while she was living at Northampton, she attended a camp-meeting which was being held in the open air. Those attending the meeting slept in tents. A company of boys present said they were going to set fire to all the tents. Those in charge of the meeting sent for the sheriff to arrest the ring-leaders. Sojourner Truth rushed to hide in one corner of a tent. She said, "Shall I run away and hide from the devil? Me a servant of the Living God? Have I not faith enough to go out and quell that mob when I know it is written one shall chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight?" She walked out from her hiding-place, under the moonlight, to the top of a small rise of ground and began to sing:

It was early in the morning—it was early in the morning,
Just at the break of day
When He rose—when He rose—when He rose
And went to heaven on a cloud.

The boys with their sticks and clubs made a rush towards her and crowded around her. She stopped singing and after a few minutes asked in a gentle but firm tone, "Why do you come about me with clubs and sticks? I am not doing harm to any one."

Many of them said, "We are not going to hurt you, old woman. We came to hear you sing."

"Sing to us," another cried.

"Tell us your experience," said another.

At their suggestion and with their help, she climbed upon a wagon nearby and spoke and sang for nearly an hour. Upon asking the third time if they would go away and act like men, all yelled out, "Yes, yes!"

She traveled a great deal, holding many meetings for the sake of the freedom of her people. Imagine this big, bony, black woman, six feet tall, walking along the highway or riding along with a small clay pipe in her mouth from which rolled columns of smoke.

Even before the Civil War, she held meetings in many states. At the close of a meeting in Ohio one evening, a man came up to her and said, "Old woman, do you think that your talk about slavery does any good? Do you suppose people care what you say? I don't care any more for your talk than I do for the bite of a flea."

"Perhaps not," she answered, "but the Lord willing, I'll keep you a-scratching."

She could neither read nor write. She seemed to know, however, something about many of the big subjects of the day, such as "Suffrage," "Temperance" and "Abolition." She even attended the first big woman's suffrage convention, held in Ohio. This convention was held in a church. Sojourner Truth marched in like a queen and sat on the pulpit steps. In those days men thought women should not vote. The men and even the boys were laughing at the women and teasing them for holding such a meeting.

Old "Sojourner Truth" rose and walked out in front of the speakers' table. She took off her sunbonnet and laid it at her feet. Many of the women said, "Don't let that old woman speak. She will do us harm."

But the presiding officer rapped on the table for order and "Sojourner Truth" began by saying, "Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter." She had something sharp to say in reply to every minister who had spoken. One minister had said that

women should not vote because Eve had acted so badly. To him she said, "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, all alone, these together [glancing around over all the women] ought to be able to turn it right side up again."

She took her seat in the midst of great applause. Many women rushed to her, shook her hand and said, "You have saved the day."

One day while Lincoln was President of the United States, Sojourner, old and bent, walked into the marble room of the Senate Chamber. It was an hour not soon to be forgotten. Senators rose and shook her hand. They asked her to speak. As she spoke, some sat with tears in their eyes. When she had finished they shook her hand again, gave her a purse and bade her good-bye. A Washington Sunday paper had a long article about Sojourner Truth's speaking to the United States Senators. This article said: "Sojourner Truth has had a marvelously strange life. The leaven of love must be working in the hearts of all people."

In her old age and suffering, Sojourner Truth was supported by a friend. The end came at Battle Creek, Michigan, November 26, 1883.



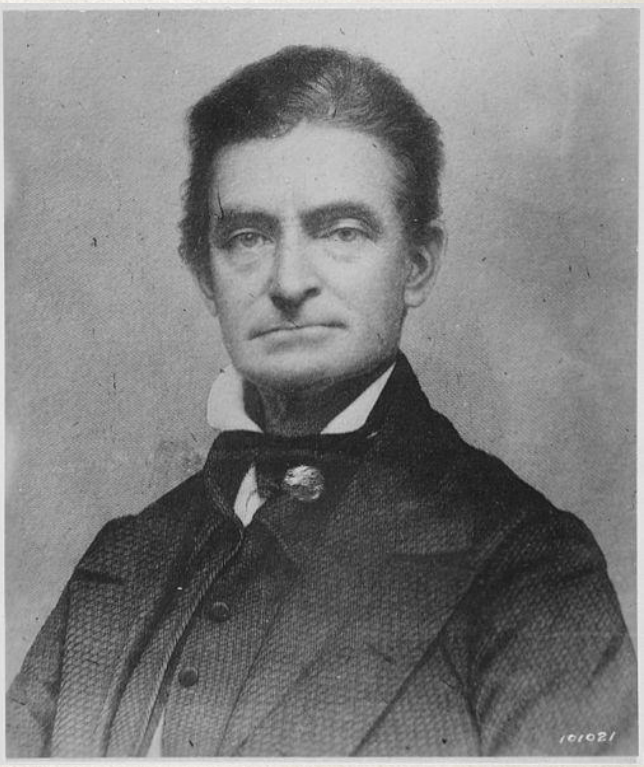
Picture of Abraham Lincoln and Sojourner Truth,
courtesy of Library of Congress

Chapter 9

John Brown

The Tale of the Gallows and the Father of Twenty Children
1800–1859

This is the tale of the father who undertook to take the law in his own hands to dethrone a fixed custom of his people, to overthrow a system that had been enrooted into the politics of his nation, and who gave his life as the first sacrifice to a cause that martyred millions.



Engraving of John Brown, unknown artist

In the early days of our country's history nearly every well-to-do American family in the North, as well as in the South, had its black slaves. In Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and all the historic American cities, long-established custom had made it the right of every white man to own blacks. Washington, Jefferson, and all the first American statesmen had recognized the institution of slavery, and even the Puritan pastors of New England had maintained their negro slaves without compunction of conscience.

As the hearts of the new American nation became imbued with the spirit of liberty, slavery began to meet with opposition, until there was a strong sentiment against it. Those who now opposed the system of the times were closely watched and branded as dangerous to the welfare of society.

Among those who created suspicion by lifting their voices against this firmly established system, was a certain man, who was the father of twenty children. His first protest brought condemnation upon his head, and he was declared to be a "shiftless, irresponsible agitator, who had never made a success of anything in life." He appeared before the public with an Utopian plan to establish colonies for negroes and to educate their children. The movement gained but few sympathizers at first, until a philanthropist offered a hundred thousand acres of land in upper New York State, for the promotion of the new idea. This brought many others to its support, and the name of the agitator began

to be spoken with alternate denunciation and laudation throughout the country.

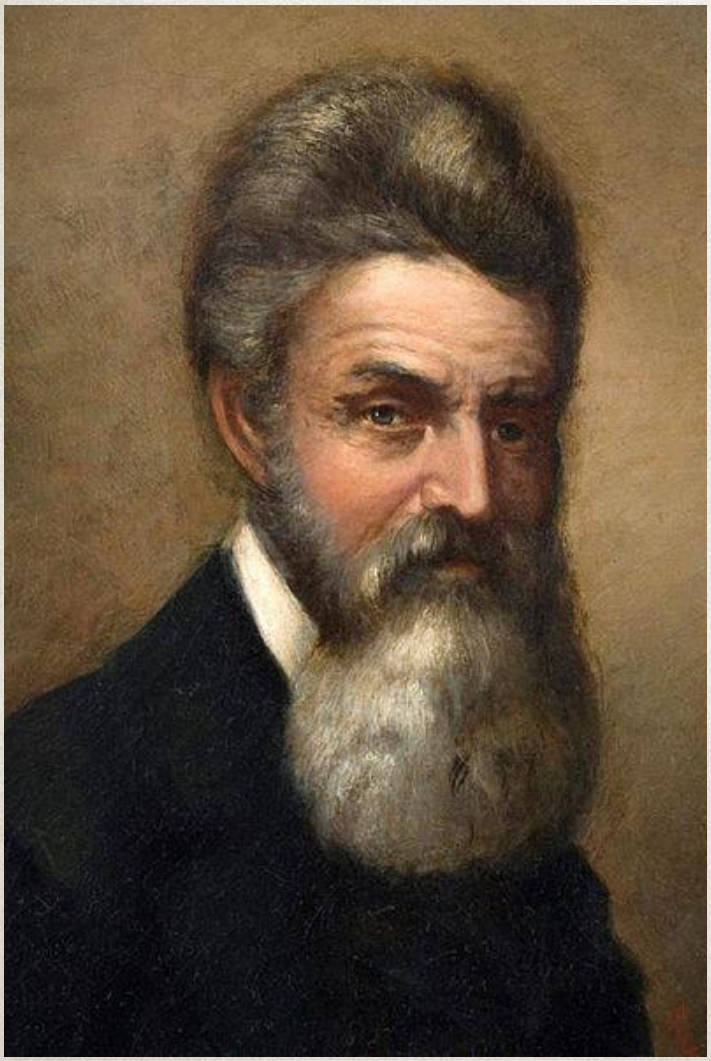
The movement grew slowly through the years, but now and then felt the impulse of some new convert of eminence. The issue became one of political moment in the fifties, in the new territory of Kansas in the middle west. Should it be admitted into the Union as a free, or as a slave state? Orators stood in the United States Senate and argued in favor of the sentiment that was beginning to agitate the nation; while others refuted them, and denounced the "anti-slavery madness."

"The whole world alike, Christian and Turk, is rising up to condemn this wrong, and to make it a hissing to the nations," declared Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, on the floor of the Senate.

"I hold that every state of the Union is a sovereign power, with the right to do as it pleases upon the question of slavery and upon all domestic institutions," exclaimed the "Little Giant" Douglas, of Illinois.

"All men are created free and equal," were the words that rang from the lips of the great Lincoln.

It was in the midst of this excitement, on the sixteenth of October, in 1859, that the man who was the father of twenty children, and who had been a leading agitator of the movement, full of enthusiasm for the great cause, moved into Harper's Ferry, in conservative old Virginia, with twenty-two followers.



John Brown, David Bustill Bowser

"Come on, boys," he cried. "Remember, that a long life is not of so much concern as one well ended."

There was a drizzling rain. The little band marched to the United States arsenal, and proclaimed freedom to the slaves.

"We have come," cried their leader, "by the authority of God Almighty."

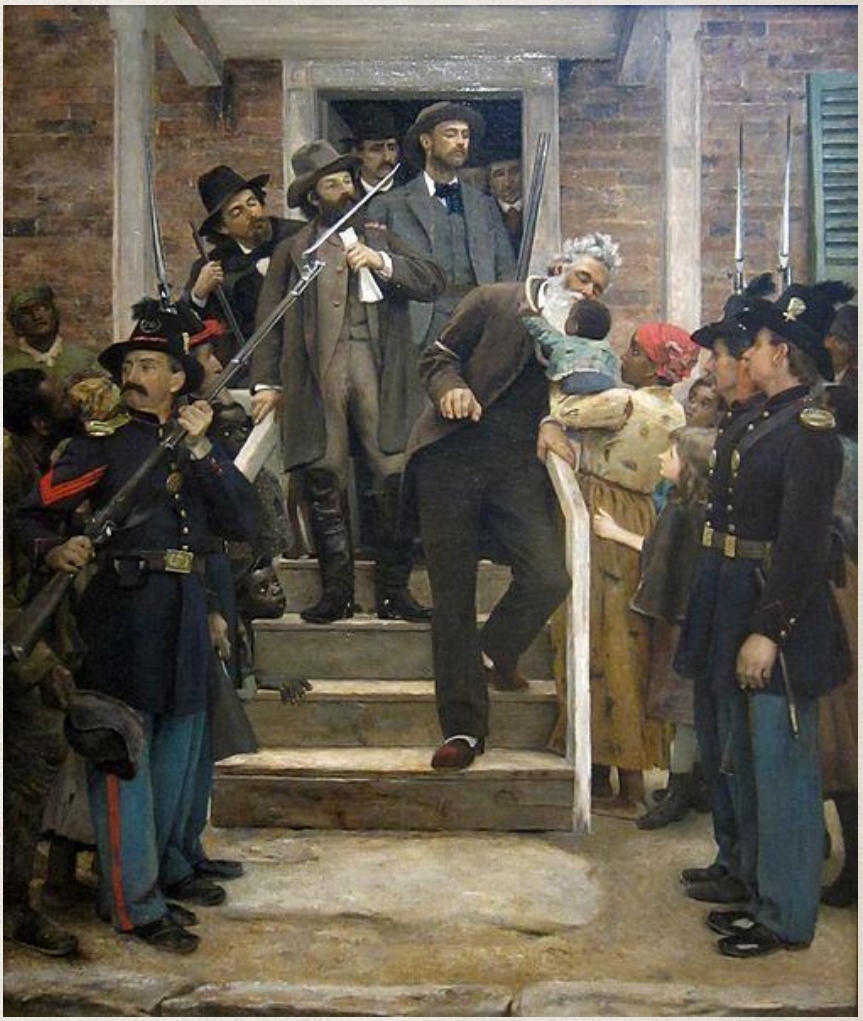
The citizens were forced to take up arms in self-protection. The leader of the insurrection took quarters in the engine-house and refused to be dislodged. United States troops were called from Washington, but he, with but six men remaining, fought desperately. Two of his sons had lost their lives, and he was badly wounded, before he would surrender.

Charged with treason, he was given trial and condemned to death. As he stood before the court, he looked like a man of eighty, though he was but fifty-nine. His tall figure was bent, and his hair

was whitened by the storms and tempests through which he had passed, in his aggressive determination to obtain freedom for the slaves.

"Have you any reason to give why the sentence of this court should not be imposed?" asked the trial judge.

"This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God," answered the old man. "I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be a Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them. I endeavored to act up to those instructions. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done — as I have always freely admitted I have done — in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it be deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life, and shed more of my blood to mingle with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions of slaves whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments — I submit; so let it be."



The Last Moments of John Brown, Thomas Hovenden

The day of December second, in 1859, dawned. The figure of the old man, in chains, was led from the courthouse steps to the gallows. As he passed the crowd, he stooped to kiss a little child in its mother's arms.

"Have you any last word that you wish to say?" asked the executioner.

The old man straightened; his white face was tense with emotion.

"God sees," he exclaimed fervently, "that I am of more use to hang than for any other purpose!"

Thus it was that John Brown, the "fanatic," who was the first man to give his life to the doctrine of abolition, but as he himself foretold, in the same spirit that Ridley showed in a similar martyrdom, though his body perished, his soul went marching on.

Chapter 10

Elijah P. Lovejoy – Part 1

The Fate of Lovejoy's Printing Press
1802-1838



Elijah P. Lovejoy, Jacques Reich

Ever since the thirteen colonies that lay along the Atlantic coast had become a nation, ambitious men had heard the call, "Go West, young man, go West!" There was plenty of fertile land in the country beyond the Alleghany Mountains, and it was free to any who would settle on it. Adventure beckoned men to come and help in founding new states, and many, who thought the villages of New England already overcrowded, betook themselves to the inviting West. One such youth was Elijah Parrish Lovejoy, who came from the little town of Albion, in Maine, and who, after graduating at Waterville College, had become a school-teacher. This did not satisfy him; he wanted to see more of the world than lay in the village of his birth, and when he was twenty-five years old, in May, 1827, he set out westward.

The young man was a true son of the Puritans, brought up to believe in many ideas that were already often in conflict with the views of men of the South and West. He reached the small city of St. Louis, in the pioneer country of Missouri, and there he found a chance to teach school. He wrote for several newspapers that were being started, and in the course of the next year edited a political paper that was urging the election of Henry Clay as President. His interest in politics grew, and he might have sought some public office himself had he not suddenly become convinced that he was meant to be a minister, and determined to prepare for that work at Princeton Seminary. When he returned to St. Louis in 1833 his friends helped him to found a weekly religious paper called the *St. Louis Observer.*

The editor found time from his newspaper work to ride into the country and preach at the small churches that were springing up at every crossroads. Missouri was more southern than northern, and he saw much of slave-owning people. It was not long before he decided that negro slavery was

wrong, and that the only way to right the wrong was to do away with it altogether. He began to attack slavery in his newspaper and in his sermons, and soon slavery men in that part of Missouri came to consider him as one of their most bitter foes.

Lovejoy had married, and expected to make St. Louis his permanent home. But neither all the men who were interested in the *Observer*, nor all the members of his church, approved of his arguments against slaveholding, and when he was away at a religious meeting the proprietors of his paper issued a statement promising that the editor would deal more gently with the question of slavery in the future. When Lovejoy returned and read this statement he was indignant; he was not a man to fear public opinion, and he attacked his enemies more ardently than ever.

The law of the land permitted slavery, and many of the chief citizens in the frontier country approved of it. They hated the Abolitionists, as those who wanted to do away with slavery were called. When men were suspected of having helped to free slaves, or of sheltering runaway negroes, they were taken into the country and given two hundred lashes with a whip as a lesson. Sometimes Abolitionists were tarred and feathered and ridden out of town; often their houses were burned and their property destroyed. Lovejoy knew that he might have to face all this, but the spirit of the Puritan stock from which he sprang would not let him turn from his course.

He went on printing articles against the evils of slavery, he denounced the right of a white man to separate colored husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, or to send his slaves to the market to be sold to the highest bidder, or to whip or ill-use them as if they had no feelings.

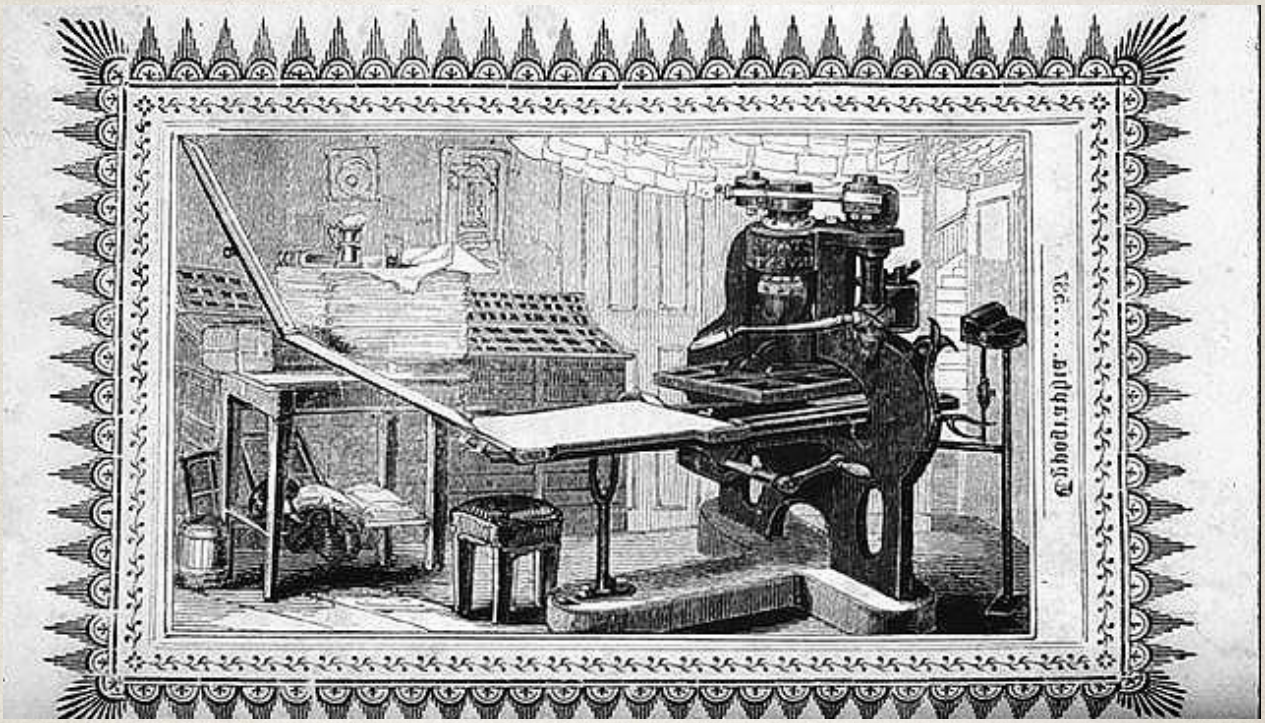
There was danger that the young editor would be mobbed, and the owners of the *Observer* took the paper out of his charge. Friends, however, who believed in a free press, bought it, and gave it back to him. Waves of public opinion, now for Lovejoy, now against him, swept through St. Louis. By the end of 1835 mobs had attacked Abolitionists in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and the news fanned the flames of resentment against them in Missouri.

Lovejoy had good reason to know the danger of his position. One September day he went out to a camp-meeting at the little town of Potosi. He learned that two men had waited half a day in the village, planning to tar and feather him when he arrived, but he was late, and they had left. When he returned to St. Louis he found that handbills had been distributed through the city, calling on the people to tear down the office of the *Observer*. A newspaper named the *Missouri Argus* urged patriotic men to mob the New England editor. Crowds, gathered on street corners, turned dark, lowering looks upon him as he passed, and every mail brought him threatening letters. He would not, however, stop either writing or preaching against slavery.

His work constantly called him on journeys to small towns, sometimes several days ride from his home. Late in 1835 he was at a meeting in Marion when reports came that St. Louis was in an uproar, that men who opposed slavery were being whipped in the streets, and that no one suspected of being an Abolitionist would be allowed to stay there. Lovejoy had left his wife ill in bed. He started to ride back, a friend going some seventy miles with him, half of the journey. The friend urged him not to stay in St. Louis, pointing out that his young and delicate wife would have to suffer as well as he. Travelers they met all warned him that he would not be safe in the city. He rode on to St. Charles, where he had left his wife. He talked with her, and she told him to go on to his newspaper office if he thought duty called him there.

St. Louis was all excitement and alarm. The newspapers had attacked the *Observer* so bitterly that the owners had stopped printing it. A mob had planned to wreck the office, but had postponed the task for a few days. Men went to Lovejoy and told him he would not be safe in the streets by day or night. Even the men of his church would not stand by him, and a religious paper declared "that they would soon free the church of the rotten sheep in it," by which they meant Elijah Lovejoy and others who opposed slavery.

This Yankee, however, like many others who had gone to that border country in the days when bitterness ran high, had a heroic sense of duty. He wrote and printed a letter to the people, stating that men had no right to own their brothers, no matter what the law might say. The letter caused more excitement than ever.



Stanhope Press, John J. Johnson

The owners of the *Observer* went to Lovejoy and requested him to retire as its editor. For two days it was a question what the angry mobs would do to him. Then a little better feeling set in. Men came to him, and told him that he must go on printing his paper or there would be no voice of freedom in all that part of the country. A friend bought the newspaper from its owners, and urged Lovejoy to write as boldly as before. This friend, however, suggested that he should move the newspaper across the state line to Alton, Illinois, where feeling was not so intense. Lovejoy agreed, and set out for Alton; but while he was preparing to issue the paper there the same friend and others wrote him that his pen was so much needed in St. Louis that he must come back. He did so, and the *Observer* continued its existence in St. Louis until June, 1836.

There was so much strife and ill feeling, however, in Missouri that the editor decided his newspaper would be better supported, and would exert more in fluence, in Illinois. Accordingly he

arranged to move his printing-press to the town of Alton in July. Just before he left St. Louis he published severe criticisms of a judge of that city who had sided with slave-owners, and these articles roused even greater resentment among the rabble who hated Lovejoy's freedom of speech.

If some of the people of Alton were glad to have this fearless editor come to their town, many were not. Slavery was too sore a subject for them to wish it talked about publicly. Many people all through that part of the country looked upon an Abolitionist as a man who delighted in stirring up ill feeling. Lovejoy sent his printing-press to Alton by steamboat, and it was delivered at the wharf on a Sunday morning, about daybreak. The steamboat company had agreed to land the press on Monday, and Lovejoy refused to move it from the dock on the Sabbath. Early Monday morning five or six men went down to the river bank and destroyed the printing press.

This was the young editor's welcome by the lawless element, but next day the better class of citizens, thoroughly ashamed of the outrage, met and pledged themselves to repay Lovejoy for the loss of his press. These people denounced the act of the mob, but at the same time they expressed their disapproval of Abolitionists. They wanted order and quiet, and hoped that Lovejoy would not stir up more trouble.

The editor bought a new press and issued his first paper in Alton on September 8, 1836. Many people subscribed to it, and it appeared regularly until the following August. Lovejoy, however, would speak his mind, and again and again declared that he was absolutely opposed to slavery, and that the evil custom must come to an end. This led to murmurs from the slavery party, and slanders were spread concerning the editor's character. All freedom-loving men had to weather such storms in those days, and Lovejoy, like a great many others, stuck to his principles at a heavy cost.

The murmurs and slanders grew. On July 8, 1837, posters announced that a meeting would be held at the Market House to protest against the articles in the *Alton Observer.* The meeting condemned Lovejoy's writings and speeches, and voted that Abolitionism must be suppressed in the town. This was the early thunder that heralded the approach of a gathering storm.

The Yankee editor showed no intention of giving up his stand against slavery, but preached and wrote against it at every opportunity. As a result threats of destroying the press of the *Observer* were heard on the streets of Alton, and newspapers in neighboring cities encouraged ill feeling against the editor. The *Missouri Republic*, a paper printed in St. Louis, tried to convince the people of Alton that it was a public danger to have such men as Lovejoy in their midst, and condemned the Anti-Slavery Societies that were being formed in that part of the country. Two attempts were made to break into his printing-office during the early part of the summer, but each time the attackers were driven off by Lovejoy's friends.

The editor went to a friend's house to perform a marriage ceremony on the evening of August 21, 1837. His wife and little boy were ill at home, and on his return he stopped at an apothecary's to get some medicine for them. His house was about a half mile out of town. As he left the main street he met a crowd of men and boys. They did not recognize him at once, and he hurried past them; but soon some began to suspect who he was, and shouted his name to the rest. Those in the rear urged the leaders to attack him, but those in front held back; some began to throw sticks and stones at him, and one, armed with a club, pushed up to him, denouncing him for being an Abolitionist. At last a number linked arms and pushed past him, and then turning about in the road stopped him. There were cries of "Tar and feather him," "Ride him on a rail," and other threats.

Lovejoy told them they might do as they pleased with him, but he had a request to make; his wife was ill, and he wanted some one to take the medicine to her without alarming her. One of the men volunteered to do this. Then the editor, standing at bay, argued with them. "You had better let me go home," he said; "you have no right to detain me; I have never injured you." There was more denouncing, jostling and shoving, but the leaders, after a short talk, allowed Lovejoy to go on toward his house.

Meantime, however, another band had gone to the newspaper office between ten and eleven o'clock, and, seeing by the lights in the building that men were still at work there, had begun to throw stones at the windows. A crowd gathered to watch the attack. The mayor and some of the leading citizens hurried to the building, and argued with the ringleaders. A prominent merchant told them that if they would wait until the next morning he would break into the newspaper office with them, and help them take out the press and the other articles, stow them on a boat, put the editor on top, and send them all down the Mississippi River together. But the crowd did not want to wait. The stones began to strike some of Lovejoy's assistants inside the building, and they ran out by a rear door. As soon as the office was empty the leaders rushed in and broke the printing-press, type, and everything else in the building. Next morning the slavery men in Alton said that the Abolitionist had been silenced for the time, at least. They looked upon Lovejoy, and men of his kind, as a thorn in the flesh of their peaceful community.

There were still a small number of "freedom-loving" people in Alton, however, and these stood back of Elijah Lovejoy. Although two printing-presses had now been destroyed, these men called a meeting and decided that the *Observer* must continue to be printed. Money was promised, and the editor prepared to set up his press for the third time. He issued a short note to the public, in which he said: "I now appeal to you, and all the friends of law and order, to come to the rescue. If you will sustain me, by the help of God, the press shall be again established at this place, and shall be sustained, come what will. Let the experiment be fairly tried, whether the liberty of speech and of the press is to be enjoyed in Illinois or not." The money was raised, and the dauntless spokesman for freedom sent to Cincinnati for supplies for his new office.

That autumn enemies scattered pamphlets accusing Lovejoy and other Abolitionists of various crimes against the country. Although few people believed them, the circulars increased the hostile feelings, and disturbed many of the editor's friends. Some of the latter began to doubt whether the *Observer* ought to continue its stirring articles. Some thought it should be only a religious paper. But Lovejoy answered that he felt it was his duty to speak out in protest against the great evil of slavery. He finally offered to resign, if the supporters of the paper thought it best for him to do so. They could not come to any decision, and so let him continue his course.

Chapter 11

Elijah P. Lovejoy – Part 2

The Fate of Lovejoy's Printing Press
1802-1838

The third printing-press arrived at Alton on September 21st, while Lovejoy was away attending a church meeting. The press was landed from the steamboat a little after sunset, and was protected by a number of friends of the *Observer*. It was carted to a large warehouse to be stored. As it passed through the street some men cried, "There goes the Abolition press; stop it, stop it!" but no one tried to injure it. The mayor of Alton declared that the press should be protected, and placed a constable at the door of the warehouse, with orders to remain till a certain hour. As soon as this man left, ten or twelve others, with handkerchiefs tied over their faces as disguise, broke into the warehouse, rolled the press across the street to the river, broke it into pieces, and threw it into the Mississippi. The mayor arrived and protested, but the men paid no attention to him.

Lovejoy's business had called him to the town of St. Charles, near St. Louis, and he preached there while his third press was being attacked. After his sermon in the evening he was sitting chatting with a clergyman and another friend when a young man came in, and slipped a note into his hand. The note read:

"MR. LOVEJOY:
"Be watchful as you come from church to night.
A FRIEND."

Lovejoy showed the note to the two other men, and the clergyman invited him to stay at his house. The editor declined, however, and walked to his mother-in-law's residence with his two friends. No one stopped them, and when they came to the house Lovejoy and the clergyman went in, and sat down to chat in a room on the second floor. About ten o'clock they heard a knock on the door at the foot of the stairs. Mrs. Lovejoy's mother went to the door, and asked what was wanted. Voices answered, "We want to see Mr. Lovejoy; is he in?" The editor called down, "Yes, I am here." As soon as the door was opened, two men rushed up-stairs, and into the sitting-room. They ordered Lovejoy to go down-stairs, and when he resisted, struck him with their fists. Mrs. Lovejoy heard the noise, and came running from her room. A crowd now filled the hall, and she had to fight her way through them. Several men tried to drag the editor out of the house, but his wife clung to him, and aided by her mother and sister finally persuaded the assailants to leave.

Exhausted by the struggle, Mrs. Lovejoy fainted. While her husband was trying to help her, the mob came back, and, paying no attention to the sick woman, insisted that they were going to ride Lovejoy out of town. By this time a few respectable citizens had heard the noise, and came to his

aid. A second time the rabble was driven away; but they stayed in the yard, and made the night hideous with their threats to the Abolitionist. Presently some of the men went up to Lovejoy's room the third time, and one of them gave him a note, which demanded that he leave St. Charles by ten o'clock the next morning. Lovejoy's friends begged him to send out an answer promising that he would leave. Although he at first declined to do this, he finally yielded to their urging. He wrote, "I have already taken my passage in the stage, to leave to-morrow morning, at least by nine o'clock." This note was carried out to the crowd on the lawn, and read to them. His friends thought the mob would scatter after that, and they did for a time; but after listening to violent speeches returned again. The noise was now so threatening that Lovejoy's friends begged him to fly from the house. His wife added her pleadings to theirs, and at last he stole out unnoticed by a door at the rear. He hated to leave his wife in such a dangerous situation, however, and so, after waiting a short time, he went back. His friends reproached him for returning, and their reproaches were justified, for, like hounds scenting the fox, the mob menaced the house more noisily than ever. Lovejoy saw that he must leave again in order to protect his wife and friends. This he succeeded in doing, and walked about a mile to the residence of a Major Sibley. This friend lent him a horse, and he rode out of town to the house of another friend four miles away. Next day Mrs. Lovejoy joined him, and they went on together to Alton.

One of the very first people they met in Alton was a man from St. Charles who had been among those who had broken into their house the night before. Mrs. Lovejoy was alarmed at seeing him in Illinois, because the mob in St. Charles had declared that they were going to drive Lovejoy out of that part of the country. In order to quiet her fears her husband asked some friends to come to his house, and ten men, well armed, spent the next night guarding it, while he himself kept a loaded musket at his side. The storm-clouds were gathering about his devoted head.

Even the leading citizens of this Illinois town now felt that it was Lovejoy's own fault if his newspaper was attacked. They hated mobs, but most of them hated Abolitionists even more. If he would stop attacking slavery, the crowds would stop attacking him. It was evident that the lawless element did not intend to let him continue to print his newspaper, and it was almost as clear that the mayor and authorities were not going to protect him. Three times now his press had been destroyed.

This son of the Puritans was not to be driven from his purpose by threats or blows, but he was forced to see that it was a great waste of money to have one press after another thrown into the Mississippi River. His friends in the town of Quincy urged him to set up his press there, and he felt much inclined to do so. He decided to wait, however, until the next meeting of the Presbyterian Synod, when he would learn whether the men of his church sided with him or not. This meeting ended in discussion, breaking up along the old lines of those who were friends and those who were enemies of slavery. Some of the members had already joined Anti-Slavery Societies, while others, although they were opposed to mob-violence, did not approve of the newspaper's attack on slave-holding citizens. In a stirring speech Lovejoy said that they were to decide whether the press should be free in that part of the United States. He ended with an appeal for justice. "I have no personal fears," he declared. "Not that I feel able to contest the matter with the whole community. I know perfectly well I am not. I know, sir, that you can tar and feather me, hang me up, or put me into the Mississippi, without the least difficulty. But what then? Where shall I go? I have been made to feel that if I am not safe at Alton, I shall not be safe anywhere. I recently visited St. Charles to bring

home my family, and was torn from their frantic embrace by a mob. I have been beset night and day at Alton. And now if I leave here and go elsewhere, violence may overtake me in my retreat, and I have no more claim upon the protection of any other community than I have upon this; and I have concluded, after consultation with my friends, and earnestly seeking counsel of God, to remain at Alton, and here to insist on protection in the exercise of my rights."

This speech made a great impression upon its hearers. The words were those of a man who had thought long upon his subject, and had made up his mind as to what he should do. He expressed no enmity toward the men who had treated him so ill, and he did not complain of the members of his own church who were lukewarm in their support. A man who was present said that Lovejoy's speech reminded him of the words of St. Paul when brought before Festus, or of Martin Luther speaking to the council at Worms.

Having decided to stay, Lovejoy ordered his fourth printing-press. This was due to arrive early in November, and as the time drew near there was no little excitement and anxiety among the friends of peace in the town. Whenever the puff of a steam boat was heard men hurried to the banks of the Mississippi. Some meant to defend the press from attack; others meant to hurl it into the river as they had already done with its predecessors. The press had an eventful journey. The first plan was to land it at a place called Chippewa, about five miles down the river, and then carry it secretly into Alton. But the roads grew bad, and this plan was abandoned. The press reached St. Louis on Sunday night, November 5th, and it was arranged that the steamer should land it at Alton about three o'clock Tuesday morning. As soon as this was known, Lovejoy and his friend Oilman went to the mayor and told him of the threat that had been made to destroy the press, asking him to appoint special constables to protect it. The town council voted that Lovejoy and his friends be requested not to persist in setting up an Abolition press in Alton, but the mayor refused to sign this request.

Monday night forty or fifty citizens, intent on seeing that the press was protected, gathered at the warehouse of Godfrey, Oilman and Company where the press was to be stored. Some thirty of them formed a volunteer company, with one of the city constables in command. They were armed with rifles and muskets loaded with buckshot or small balls. The editor of the *Observer* was not there. Only a night or two before his house had been attacked, and his sister had narrowly escaped serious injury. So he arranged with a brother, who was staying with him, to take turns standing guard at his house and at the office.

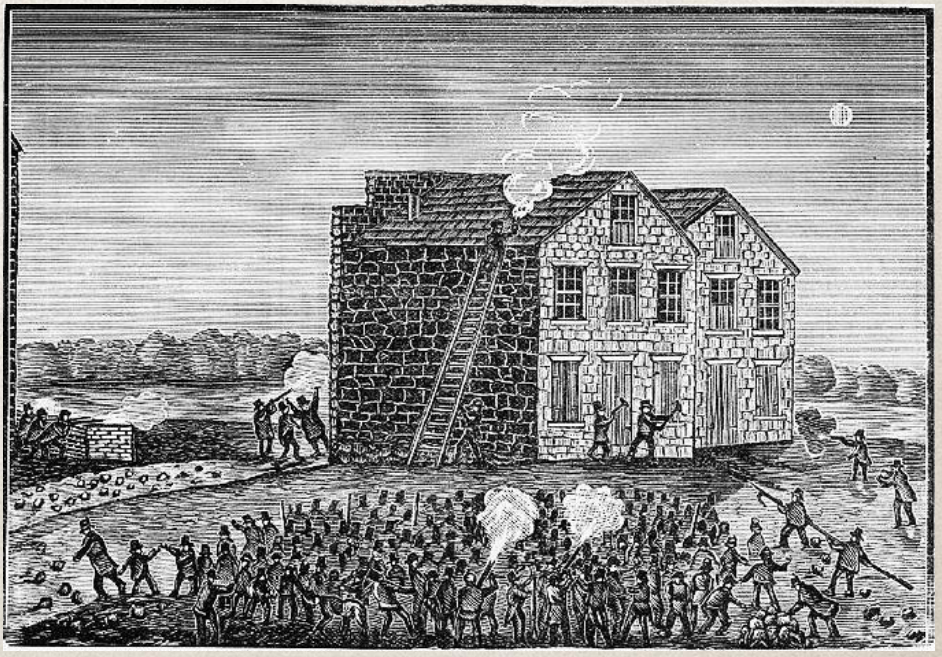
At three o'clock the steamboat arrived at the dock. Lovejoy's enemies had stationed sentinels along the river, and as the boat passed they gave the alarm by blowing horns, so that when the dock was reached a large crowd had gathered. Someone called the mayor, and he came down to the warehouse. He begged the volunteer company to keep quiet, and said he himself would see to the safe storing of the press. No serious trouble followed. The crowd watched the stevedores carry the press to the warehouse, but did not attack it, except to throw a few stones. It was stood in the garret of the stone warehouse, safe from the enemy.

On Tuesday every one knew that the "Abolition press" had arrived, and Tuesday night the same volunteers went down to the warehouse again. Everything was quiet, and by nine o'clock all but about a dozen left the place. Lovejoy stayed by the press, it being his brother's turn to guard his house. The warehouse stood high above the river, apart from other buildings, with considerable

open space on the sides to the river and to the north.

About ten o'clock that night loafers and stragglers began to come from saloons and restaurants, and gather in the streets that led to the warehouse. Some thirty, armed with muskets, pistols, and stones, marched to the door, and demanded admittance. Mr. Oilman, one of the owners of the warehouse, standing at the garret door, asked what they wanted. The leader answered, "The press." Mr. Oilman said that he would not give up the press. "We have no ill feelings toward any of you," he added, "and should regret to harm you; but we are authorized by the mayor to defend our property, and do so with our lives." The mob leader answered that they meant to have the press at any cost, and leveled a pistol at Mr. Oilman, who drew back from the door. The crowd began to throw stones, and broke a number of windows. Then they fired through the windows. The men inside returned the shots. One or two of the mob were wounded; and this checked them for a time. Soon, however, others came with ladders, and materials for setting fire to the roof of the building. They kept on the side of the warehouse where there were no windows, and where they could not be driven away by the defenders. It was a moonlight night, and the small company inside the building did not dare go out into the open space in front. At this point the mayor appeared and carried a flag of truce through the mob to Lovejoy's friends, asking that the press be given up, and the men in the ware house depart peacefully without other property being destroyed. He told them that unless they surrendered the mob would set fire to the warehouse. They answered that they had gathered to defend their property, and intended to do it. He admitted that they had a perfect right to do this, and went back to report the result of his mission to the leaders. Outside a shout went up, "Fire the building, drive out the Abolitionists, burn them out!" A great crowd had gathered, but there were no officers of the law ready to defend the press.

Ladders were placed against the building, and the roof was set on fire. Five men volunteered to go out and try to prevent the firing. They left the building by the riverside, fired at the men on the ladder, and drove them away. The crowd drew back, while the five returned to the store. The mob did not venture to put up their ladder again, and presently Lovejoy and two or three others opened a door and looked out. There appeared to be no one on this side, and Lovejoy stepped forward to reconnoiter. Some of his enemies, however, were hidden behind a pile of lumber, and one of them fired a



Woodcutting of the Pro-Slavery Riot on November 7, 1837, unknown artist



Lovejoy Monument, Alton, Illinois

double-barreled gun. The editor was hit by five balls. He turned around, ran up a flight of stairs in the warehouse, and into the counting-room. There he fell, dying a few minutes later.

With their leader killed some of the company wanted to give up the battle, while others insisted on fighting it out. They finally resolved to yield. A clergyman went to one of the upper windows and called out that Elijah Lovejoy had been killed and that they would give up the press if they might be allowed to go unmolested. The crowd answered that they would shoot them all where they were. One of the defenders determined to go out at any risk and make terms. As soon as he opened the door, he was fired upon and wounded. The roof was now blazing, and one of their friends reached a door and begged them to escape by the rear. All but two or three laid down their arms, running out at the southern door, and fled down the bank of the river. The mob fired at them, but only one was wounded. The crowd rushed into the warehouse, threw the press out the window, breaking it into pieces, and scattered the pieces in the Mississippi. At two o'clock they had disappeared, having accomplished their evil purpose of preventing a "free press" in Alton.

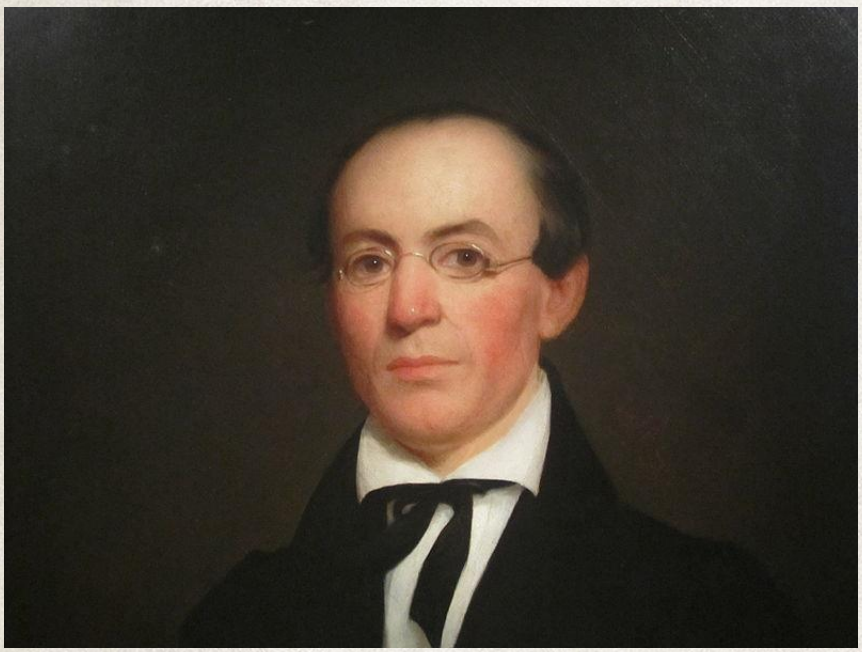
Elijah Lovejoy was only thirty-five years old when he met his martyr's death. His life in Missouri and Illinois had been one constant fight against slavery, and for liberty of speech. His Puritan ancestry made it impossible for him to give up the battle he knew to be right. The story of his heroic struggle and death aroused lovers of liberty all over the country, and newspapers everywhere denounced the acts of the mob at Alton. Such acts meant that men could not speak their minds on public questions, and a "free press" had been one of the dearest rights of American citizens. Men in the North at that time had by no means agreed that slavery must be abolished, but they did all believe in the freedom of the press. For that cause Lovejoy had been a martyr.

More than two decades were to pass before the question of slavery was to be settled forever, and in the years between 1837 and 1860 many men of the same stock and stripe as Elijah Lovejoy were to give up their lives in heroic defense of their belief in freedom. He was one of the first of a long line of heroes. His voice sounded a call that was to echo through the border states for years to come, inspiring others to take up his cause. A freedom-loving country should place among its noblest sons this dauntless editor and preacher.

Chapter 12

William Lloyd Garrison

1805-1879



William Lloyd Garrison, National Portrait Gallery

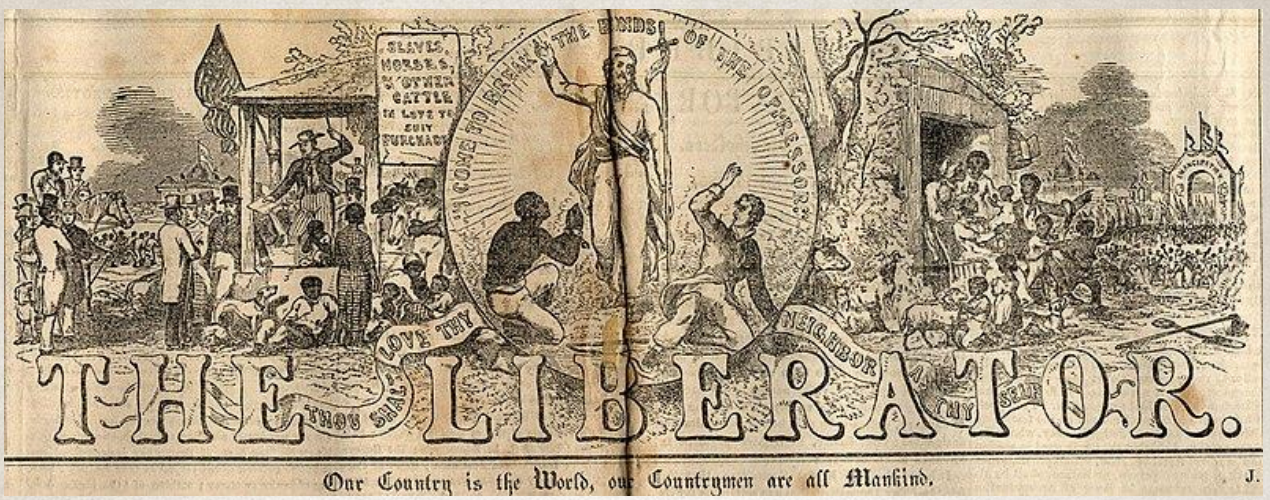
Just as not all the colonists wanted to break away from England, not all of the Northeners were against slavery and not all the Southerners were for it. So while you'd think a group of abolitionists who wanted to get rid of slavery all together would get support from their Northern neighbors, it just wasn't the case. Many Northern businessmen benefited from slave labor. Even those who agreed that slavery was wrong couldn't see the way for the slaves to be assimilated into society if they were suddenly freed. So they, too, did not support the Abolitionist cause.

One Northerner who lived in Massachusetts took the unpopular stand as an abolitionist against slavery and demanded its immediate end. His name was William Lloyd Garrison. In 1830 he started an abolitionist newspaper—*The Liberator*—to promote his views. For 35 years he did not miss publishing a single issue—1,820 in all! He never gave up until the task was done. Once the slaves were freed, he closed his newspaper and went home.

His life was in constant danger because of his views. He was a Northerner who believed the Union should be dissolved because he viewed the Constitution as pro-slavery. Yet, when Abraham Lincoln who was fighting to save the Union issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he praised the effort, even though he had been at odds with President Lincoln.

Here is a scene from his life that illustrates his courage and calm, even in the face of death:

The time appointed for the meeting was three o'clock in the afternoon, and a little before that time Garrison went to Congress Hall and joined the little band of devoted women, mostly white, but including some negroes and mulattoes, who were undaunted by the presence of a group of



The front page of *The Liberator* (15 December 1854)

howling, swearing, outrageous enemies of human freedom. Garrison appealed to the chivalrous feelings of this disorderly crew, but the effect of his words speedily wore off. As Garrison was the only male Abolitionist in the meeting, it was thought that his withdrawal would prevent the gentlemanly mob of auditors from attempting any violence. Acting upon the advice and suggestion of Miss Parker, he retired into the adjoining anti-slavery office. It was impossible to leave the building, for the staircase was now filled by an angry crowd, and below the streets were also filled. Thousands of voices were demanding, "Thompson, Thompson!" The mayor assured the yelling mob that George Thompson was not in Boston, and that Garrison had left the building. If the men had escaped, there were still thirty women to be annoyed by the mob of five thousand respectable gentlemen. Miss Parker opened the meeting with a fervent and untremulous prayer, apparently not concerned by the attitude of the threatening mob around her. The mayor ordered them to go home, but they at first declined. Then a letter was read inviting them to meet at the house of Mr. Francis Jackson.

"Ladies," exclaimed the mayor, "do you wish to see a scene of bloodshed and confusion? If you do not, go home."

"Mr. Lyman," retorted Mrs. M. W. Chapman, "your personal friends are the instigators of this mob; have you ever used your personal influence with them?"

"I know no personal friends," he replied. "I am merely an official. Indeed, ladies, you must retire. It is dangerous to remain."

"If this is the last bulwark of freedom," Mrs. Chapman answered, "we may as well die here as anywhere." Finally, it was decided to adjourn. They filed out, two and two, each white lady, where necessary, having with her a colored friend. This heroic band walked through the howling mob, in solemn procession, to Mr. Jackson's house, and finding that he was ill, walked from there to Mrs. Chapman's home. When the ladies had left the hall, there were cries of, "Garrison is there. We must have Garrison. Lynch him." The antislavery sign-board excited their indignation, and it was, with the mayor's connivance, if not by his orders, torn off its hooks and thrown into the street, where it was promptly broken to pieces, some of the bits being secured as precious relics by the friends of the slaveholders.

Garrison continued calmly writing in the anti-slavery office until the partition was broken down. There was no hope that the mob would disperse whilst he was in the building. It was impossible for him to leave by the front door, as all the avenues were in possession of the mob. The mayor begged that he would escape from the back of the building. One of the Abolitionists, righteously angry at the baseness with which the civil authorities truckled to the lawlessness of the mob, said:—"I must henceforth repudiate the principle of nonresistance. When the civil arm is powerless, my own rights are trodden in the dust, and the lives of my friends are put in imminent peril by ruffians, I will hereafter prepare to defend myself and them at all hazards."

Garrison, putting a hand affectionately on his shoulder, said: "Hold, my dear brother! you know not what spirit you are of. This is the trial of our faith, and, the test of our endurance. Of what value or utility are the principles of peace and forgiveness, if we may repudiate them in the hour of peril and suffering? Do you wish to become like one of these violent, bloodthirsty men, who are seeking my life? Shall we give blow for blow, and array sword against sword? God forbid! I will perish sooner than raise my hand against any man, even in self-defense, and let none of my friends resort to violence for my protection. If my life be taken, the cause of emancipation will not suffer. God reigns, His throne is undisturbed by this storm; He will make the wrath of man to praise Him, of the remainder He will restrain; His omnipotence will at length be victorious."

Garrison's friends now joined their entreaties to those of the mayor. At length he consented, and made his way by a window on to a shed, and thence into a carpenter's shop, which opened into Wilson's Lane. He was accompanied by Mr. J. R. Campbell, but they found that their retreat was cut off by the mob. Garrison wanted to face them, but Campbell thought it was his duty to avoid capture as long as possible. He was put into a corner of the room, and loose timber put in front to hide him. In a moment the room was entered and Campbell was seized. "This is not Garrison," the captors shouted to the mob outside, "but Garrison's and Thompson's friend, and he says he knows where Garrison is, but won't tell." A moment later and then Garrison was discovered and dragged to the window.

"Don't let us kill him outright," one of them cried; then they tied a rope round his body, and he descended a ladder, placed for the purpose, into the street. He now extricated himself from the rope, and was seized by Daniel and Aaron Cooley, who, although opponents of the Abolitionists, were no friends of mob violence. They led him along, bareheaded, and cried aloud to the immense crowd, "He shan't be hurt; he is an American." The cry excited some sympathy, and the bearing of Garrison was one to increase it. As an eyewitness testifies, he walked erect, with a calm countenance and flashing eyes, like a martyr going to the stake full of faith and manly hope. Mr. Josiah Quincy, Jr., the president of the common council, had from his window seen the action of the mob and at once hastened to his side. The news of the capture had also reached the mayor, and an appeal was made to him to save the life of Garrison.

There was a tremendous struggle between the lynchers and those who were attempting to rescue their victim. The human tide set towards the Old State House, and for a moment it was doubtful which side would be successful; the appeal of the mayor to the mob was little heeded, but the fierce rush to prevent Garrison from being taken into the hall was unsuccessful, and he was carried into the mayor's room. Here the authorities decided to commit him to jail as a rioter. He had been supplied with fresh clothing to take the place of the garments torn to pieces by the mob. Whilst a

carriage, placed at the south door with a double line of guards, was attracting attention there, Garrison was hurried into a hackney coach at the north door. Notwithstanding what he had experienced he kept saying, "Oh, if they would only hear me for five minutes, I am sure I could bring them to reason." His perfect courage and self possession never deserted him throughout the trying ordeal. No sooner was he in the carriage than the mob recognized that he was being spirited away from their vengeance. They clung to the wheels, forced open the doors, and tried to overturn the vehicle. The driver used his whip freely to both horses and men, and drove at a furious pace and by a circuitous route to the city jail. All the way there was danger, and even at the prison door there was another ineffectual effort made to seize him. Finally, he found the "refuge of liberty" in a prison cell, where he was visited that same evening by Whittier, Bronson Alcott, and other friends.

Garrison had made no objection to his removal to the jail, and it was not until next morning that he learned that he had been committed as a rioter. Next morning he was brought before Judge Whitman and discharged. The examination was held in the jail, as the mayor and sheriff were afraid to have the trial in the court-house. The city authorities anticipated further trouble, and earnestly solicited Garrison to leave Boston for a few days, until a more tranquil spirit prevailed. This he consented to do, all the more readily that the condition of Mrs. Garrison was one that demanded his anxious attention.

The "rioter" Garrison placed on the walls of his cell this inscription: —

"Wm. Lloyd Garrison was put into this cell on Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 21, 1835, to save him from the violence of a 'respectable and influential' mob, who sought to destroy him for preaching the abominable and dangerous doctrine, 'that all men are created equal,' and that all oppression is odious in the sight of God. 'Hail, Columbia!' Cheers for the Autocrat of Russia and the Sultan of Turkey!

"Reader, let this inscription remain till the last slave in this despotic land be loosed from his fetters.

> When peace within the bosom reigns,
> And conscience gives th' approving voice;
> Though bound the human form in chains, Yet can the soul aloud rejoice.
> 'Tis true, my footsteps are confined— I cannot range beyond this cell;—
> But what can circumscribe my mind?
> To chain the winds attempt as well!
> Confine me as prisoner — but bind me not as a slave.
> Punish me as a criminal — but hold me not as a chattel.
> Torture me as a man — but drive me not like a beast.
> Doubt my sanity— but acknowledge my immortality.

Chapter 13

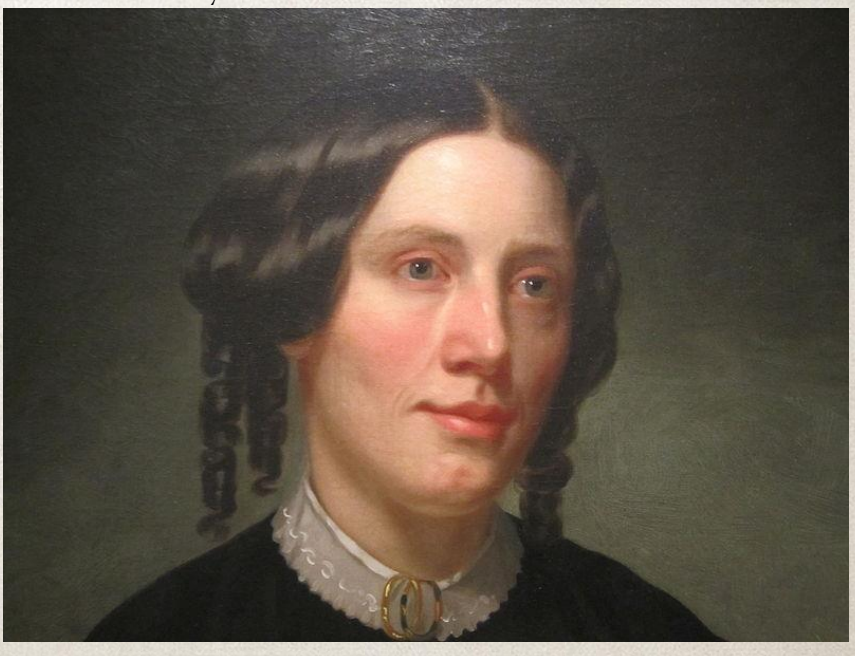
Harriet Beecher Stowe

1811-1896

In 1836, Harriet Beecher married Calvin Stowe, a professor in the seminary. They were far from wealthy, at times even poor, for Professor Stowe, rich in Greek and Latin and Hebrew and Arabic, was rich in nothing else. Though she had a household of little children, and often a few boarders, Harriet continued writing from time to time. Her first check was used to buy a feather bed. When a new mattress or carpet was needed, or the years accounts wouldn't balance, she would send off a story, literally to keep the pot boiling.

Outwardly their life in Ohio was orderly and quiet, but every month occurred something stirring, even spectacular. There were fierce debates on the slavery question among the seminary students. Doctor Bailey, a Cincinnati editor who started a discussion of the subject in his paper, twice had his presses broken and thrown into the river. Mrs. Stowe's brother went about his newspaper work armed. Houses of colored people were burned and attacked; the shop of an abolitionist was riddled; free negroes were kidnapped. The Beecher family slept with weapons at hand, ready to defend the seminary. Many slaves escaping from Kentucky sought refuge in the town, where the Underground Railroad helped them to reach Canada and safety.

It was impossible to live in Cincinnati and not be personally affected. Servants were hard to secure, especially for a household with slender means, though colored maids were available. The Stowes had a young negress from Kentucky who had been brought to Cincinnati by her mistress and left there. When a man came across the river hunting for her, meaning to take her back to slavery again, Mr. Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher drove the poor girl at night, in a severe storm, twelve miles into the country, where they



Harriet Beecher Stowe, National Portrait Gallery

left her with a friend until search for her was given over.

Colored boys and girls came to the classes Mrs. Stowe had for her own children. One little fellow was claimed by his former master, arrested and put up at auction. The distracted mother begged and pleaded for help. Harriet Beecher Stowe went out and raised the money to buy the child and give him back to his mother.

Pathetic incidents such as these were continually coming to the attention of the professor's family. In Cincinnati this New England woman had a real acquaintance with negroes, and was quick to note their peculiar characteristics. Unconsciously she was absorbing and assimilating pictures of slavery which later served a great purpose.

"What is there here to satisfy one whose mind is awakened on the subject?" she asked. "No one can have it brought before him without an irrepressible desire to do something, but what is there to be done?"

To find this something-to-do gradually became one of her chief thoughts, even though her domestic cares were almost overwhelming and her health suffered from the strain. The resources of the family did not increase. One year she was ill six months out of the twelve, yet she put up the stiffest kind of fight against the most disheartening odds. Whenever the household was in a comparative calm she would seize her pen and write some story or sketch. A delicate, highly strung, little woman, with seven children on her hands, she wrote in the tumult of the living-room, with babies tumbling about her, with tables being set and cleared away, with children being washed and dressed, and everything imaginable in a household going on.

Doctor Stowe received a call to Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine. Perhaps the family was glad to leave the excited atmosphere of Cincinnati where feeling on the slavery question was so inflamed, and live once more in the calm of New England. Yet for Mrs. Stowe it was not to remain



The Fugitive Slave, John Adam Plimmer

for long a calm background.

On the journey north she stopped in Boston at the home of her brother Edward. The fugitive slave bill was being debated in Congress just at this time and everywhere the hearts of thinking men were stirred. Her visit came at the height of the fierce and fiery discussion of the proposed law which not only gave southern owners the right to pursue their slaves into free states, but forced the North to assist in the business. Her brother had received and forwarded fugitives many a time. She heard heartrending accounts of slaves recaptured and dragged back in irons, of children torn from their mothers and sold south; this breaking up of families offended her most of all.

Soon after the Stowes were settled in their Maine home a letter came from her sister-in-law in Boston.

"Hattie, if I could use a pen as you can, I would write something to make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is."

Reading this letter aloud to the family, when she came to that sentence Harriet Beecher Stowe rose, crushed the paper in her hand, and with a look on her face that her children never forgot, she exclaimed, "I will write something if I live, I will!"

She was forty years old, in delicate health, overladen with responsibilities; a devoted mother, with small children, one still a baby; with untrained servants requiring supervision; with her pupils to be taught daily; and boarders to eke out the limited salary her hands were full to overflowing. It seemed unlikely that she would ever do anything but this ceaseless labor. But her heart burned within her for those in bondage. The law passed and the fugitives were hunted out and sent back into servitude and death. The people of the North looked on indifferently. Could she, a woman with no reputation, waken them by anything she might write?

While at a communion service in the little church at Brunswick, like a vision the death of Uncle Tom on Legree's plantation came before her. Scarcely able to control her sobbing, she hurried home, locked herself in her room, and wrote it out, exactly as it stands now, in a white heat of passionate enthusiasm. She read it to her two little boys, ten and twelve years old. Through his sobs one of them said, "Oh, mamma, slavery is the most cursed thing in the world!"

Then she wrote the opening chapters and offered the manuscript to Doctor Bailey who had moved his paper from Cincinnati to Washington. He accepted it and arranged that it should be printed in weekly installments, a dangerous method unless the story is completed before publication begins. With only fragments of her time to write, she sent off the necessary chapters each week, composed sometimes in pain and weariness, under almost insurmountable difficulties, seldom revised, sometimes not even punctuated. But the story was to her so much more intense a reality than any other earthly thing that the required pages never failed.

The subject possessed her. Her whole being was saturated with her theme. Her hot indignation was welling up, her deep pity was a part of her inmost soul. Day and night it was there in her mind, waiting to be written, needing but a few hours to bring it into sentences and paragraphs. She had been a guest at the Shelby plantation soon after her arrival in Cincinnati. Now, nearly twenty years later, she described the details of that visit with minutest fidelity the humble cot of the negro, the planter's mansion, the funny pranks and songs of the slaves. Eliza's escape was suggested by the story of one of her own servants. Uncle Tom's simple honor and loyalty were characteristics impressed on her by the husband of a former slave woman for whom she wrote letters, a man who remained

in bondage rather than break his promise to his master and so win his freedom. Topsy was a child in Mrs. Stowe's mission Sunday-school class, who only grinned in bewilderment when asked, "Have you ever heard anything about God?" When the teacher asked again, "Do you know who made you?" the answer was, "Nobody as I knows on," the eyes twinkling as she added, "I 'spect I growed." And Legree's plantation was pictured to her in a letter from her brother Charles, who went on a business trip up the Red River to an estate where the slaves were treated with a brutality almost indescribable. Her own experiences thus gave the personal touch that fires knowledge into passion.

"My heart was bursting with the anguish excited by the cruelty and injustice our nation was showing to the slave, and praying God to let me do a little, and to cause my cry for them to be heard. Weeping many a time as I thought of the slave mothers whose babes were torn from them, I put my lifeblood, my prayers, my tears, into the book," was her own graphic description of its making.

The story was not so much composed by her as imposed upon her. Scenes and conversations and incidents rushed on her with a vividness and importunity admitting of no denial. She had no choice in the matter, the book insisted on getting itself into shape and could not be withstood.

Years afterward an old sea captain asked to shake hands with the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin.

"I did not write it," said the white-haired lady gently.

"You didn't?" he ejaculated in great surprise. "Why, who did, then?"

"God wrote it," she replied simply, "I merely did His dictation."

"Amen," said the captain reverently, and walked thoughtfully away.

The serial ran in the New Era from June of 1851 to the following April. When it was nearing completion a firm in Boston offered to print it in book form, but feared failure if it was much longer.

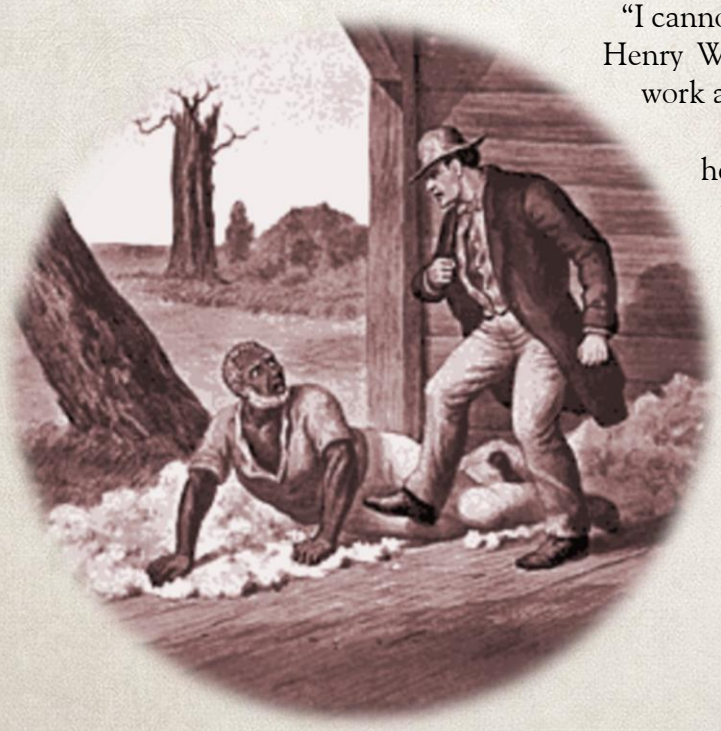
"I cannot stop," was her answer, "until it is done."

Henry Ward Beecher told his sister his plans to work against slavery in Plymouth church.

"I too have begun to do something," was her reply; "I have begun a story trying to set forth the sufferings and wrongs of the slaves."

"That's right, Hattie. Finish it and I'll scatter it thick as the leaves of Vallombrosa."

But there was small need for his endorsement. It was soon published as a book. Would anybody read it, she asked herself doubtfully; the subject was so unpopular. She would help it make its way, if possible, and sent a copy to Queen Victoria, knowing how deeply she was interested in the abolition of slavery. Then this busy woman waited in the quiet Maine home to see what the world would say.



Simon Legree and Uncle Tom:
A scene from the abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*



Uncle Tom and Little Eva, Robert S. Duncanson

The first day three thousand copies were sold, ten thousand in ten days, over three hundred thousand the first year. The magazine had paid her three hundred dollars for the manuscript; the check for her first month's royalty was ten thousand dollars, when Professor Stowe had hoped the proceeds would buy her a new silk dress. There were translations into twenty different languages, forty editions in England, while the publishers lost count of the number in America. How restful for the tired overworked woman to have more than enough for her daily needs, to be free from the anxieties of poverty!

"Having been poor all my life," she said, "and expecting to be poor for the rest of it, the idea of making money by a book which I wrote just because I couldn't help it, never occurred to me."

Written with a purpose, a great underlying principle, Uncle Tom's Cabin is distinctly the work of a woman's heart, not of her head. And this explains the book's merits as well as its literary defects.

"But if critics find unskilful treatment," wrote George Sand, "look well at them and see if their eyes are dry when they are reading this or that chapter. The life and death of a little child and of a negro slave that is the whole book. The affection that unites them is the only love story."

Yet this book met with a success that reads like a fairy tale. It was dramatized immediately, six London theaters playing it at the same time.

Learned reviews printed long notices of it, leading writers in America and England added their critical appreciation. Even those rating it low as a work of art called it a true picture of slavery. The common people accepted it eagerly, making it the most widely read book of modern times. It was one of the greatest triumphs in literary history, to say nothing of the higher moral triumph.

Its effect on the public was electric. The air, already charged with feeling, was ready to become impassioned. After its reading the Missouri Compromise was felt to be monstrous and impossible, enforcing the fugitive slave law absolutely out of the question. Throughout the North the book was received with acclamations. All classes, rich and poor, young and old, religious and irreligious, read it. No one who began it could remain unchanged. Echoes of sympathy came to the author from all parts of the land; the indignation, pity and distress which had long weighed on her soul seemed to pass from her to the readers of the book.

Some of the slaveholders Mrs. Stowe pictured as amiable, generous, just, with beautiful traits of character. She admitted fully their temptations, their perplexities, their difficulties. She thought the abolitionists would say, "Too mild altogether!" But the entire South rose against the book, in a hurricane of denial and abuse. The daily papers featured column after column of minute criticism which seemed to leave the book in tatters; its facts were false, its art contemptible, its moral tone slanderous and anti-Christian. Thousands of angry and abusive letters poured in on the author.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin met with such a universal praising," she said to one of her brothers, "that I began to think, 'Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!' But I have been relieved of my fears on that score. If there is any blessing in all manner of evil said falsely against one, I am likely to have it."

In the North a large element condemned the book no less severely; those who thought slavery just, who feared civil strife, who opposed abolition. But it was encouraging at least in this respect: The subject of slavery was now fairly up for inquiry before the public mind. The systematic efforts which had been made for years to prevent its being discussed were proving ineffectual. And on the whole the North accepted the story as a fair indictment of the national sin and as a sermon to them on their part in it.

For the moral sense of the people was awakened. The men who had viewed the subject with indifference became haters of the system. The sleepy church which had lagged behind in the rear of progress was stirred as if by a blast from the last trumpet. Politicians in Congress trembled, statesmen scented danger near. The unpopular reformers who had taken their lives in their hands, found their ranks reinforced by sturdy enthusiastic recruits. The story told the same appalling facts they had been stating in their meetings and printing in their papers, but the people would neither listen nor read. But Uncle Tom spoke with authority, and not as the scribes.

The marvel of its time, the wonder of succeeding generations of readers, this book was the beginning of the end of slavery. No other individual contributed so much to its downfall; Whittier's fiery lyrics, Sumner's speeches, Phillips' eloquence, the sermons of Parker and the Beechers, all fell short of the accomplishment of Harriet Beecher Stowe. She now found herself the most famous woman in the world. When she went to Washington, after the Civil War had begun, Abraham Lincoln on being introduced to her asked, "What! are you the little woman that caused this great war?" and then took her off to a deep window-seat for an hour's talk.

"It was God's will," she said, "that this land, north as well as south, should deeply and terribly suffer for the sin of consenting to and encouraging the great oppressions of the south; that the ill-gotten wealth which had arisen from striking hands with oppression and robbery should be paid back in the taxes of war; that the blood of the poor slave, that had cried so many years from the ground in vain, should be answered by the blood of the sons from the best hearthstones through all



Uncle Tom and Little Eva, Edwin Longsden Long

the free states; that the slave mothers whose tears nobody regarded should have with them a great company of weepers, north and south, Rachels weeping for their children and refusing to be comforted; that the free states who refused to listen when they were told of lingering starvation, cold, privation, and barbarous cruelty as perpetrated on the slave, should have lingering starvation, cold, hunger, and cruelty doing its work among their own sons, at the hands of these slave masters with whose sins our nation had connived."

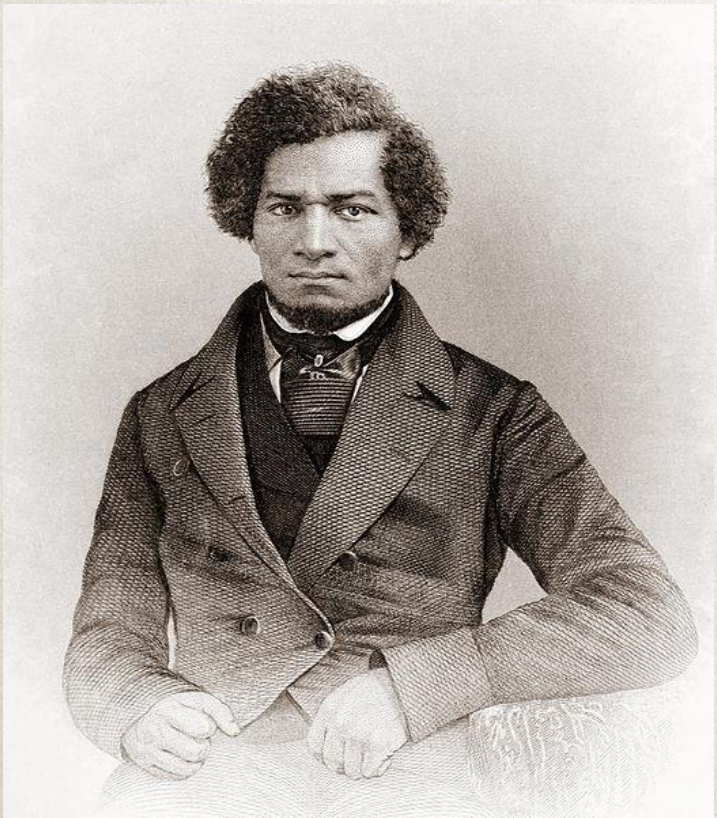
She still wrote well for many years, though she never achieved another exceptional success. But had Uncle Tom been her only hero, still would she live in the history of our country as foremost in the movement against slavery.

Chapter 14

Frederick Douglass

Learning to Read
1818–1895

Established in my new home in Baltimore, I was not very long in perceiving that in picturing to myself what was to be my life there, my imagination had painted only the bright side; and that the reality had its dark shades as well as its light ones. The open country, which had been so much to me, was all shut out. Walled in on every side by towering brick buildings, the heat of the summer was intolerable to me, and the hard brick pavements almost blistered my feet. If I ventured out to the streets, new and strange objects glared upon me at every step, and startling sounds greeted my ears from all directions. My country eyes and ears were confused and bewildered. Troops of hostile boys pounced upon me at every corner. They chased me, and called me "Eastern-Shore man," till really I almost wished myself back on the Eastern Shore.



Frederick Douglass as a younger man,
Illustration from *My Bondage and My Freedom,* 1855

My new mistress happily proved to be all she had seemed, and in her presence I easily forgot all the outside annoyances. Mrs. Sophia was naturally of an excellent disposition — kind, gentle, and cheerful. The supercilious contempt for the rights and feelings of others, and the petulance and bad humour which generally characterized slave-holding ladies, were all quite absent from her manner and bearing toward me. She had never been a slave-holder — a thing then quite unusual at the South — but had depended almost entirely upon her own industry for a living. To this fact the dear lady no doubt owed the excellent preservation of her natural goodness of heart, for slavery could change a saint into a sinner, and an angel into a demon.

I hardly knew how to behave towards

"Miss Sophia," as I used to call Mrs. Hugh Auld. I could not approach her even, as I had formerly approached Mrs. Thomas Auld. Why should I hang down my head, and speak with bated breath, when there was no pride to scorn me, no coldness to repel me, and no hatred to inspire me with fear? I therefore soon came to regard her as something more akin to a mother than a slaveholding mistress. So far from deeming it impudent in a slave to look her straight in the face, she seemed ever to say, "look up, child; don't be afraid."

If little Thomas was her son, and her most dearly loved child, she made me something like his half-brother in her affections. If dear Tommy was exalted to a place on his mother's knee, "Feddy" was honoured by a place at the mother's side. Nor did the slave-boy lack the caressing strokes of her gentle hand, soothing him into the consciousness that, though motherless, he was not friendless. Mrs. Auld was not only kindhearted, but remarkably pious; frequent in her attendance at public worship, much given to reading the Bible, and to chanting hymns of praise when alone.

Mr. Hugh was altogether a different character. He cared very little about religion; knew more of the world, and was more a part of the world, than his wife. He set out doubtless to be, as the world goes, a respectable man, and to get on by becoming a successful ship-builder, in that city of ship-building. This was his ambition, and it fully occupied him. I was of course of very little consequence to him, and when he smiled upon me, as he sometimes did, the smile was borrowed from his lovely wife, and like all borrowed light, was transient, and vanished with the source whence it was derived. Though I must, in truth, characterize Master Hugh as a sour man of forbidding appearance, it is due to him to acknowledge that he was never cruel to me, according to the notion of cruelty in Maryland.

During the first year or two, he left me almost exclusively to the management of his wife. She was my law-giver. In hands so tender as hers, and in the absence of the cruelties of the plantation, I became both physically and mentally much more sensitive, and a frown from my mistress caused me far more suffering than Aunt Katy's hardest cuffs. Instead of the cold, damp floor of my old master's kitchen, I was on carpets; for the corn bag in winter, I had a good straw bed, well furnished with covers; for the coarse corn meal in the morning, I had good bread and mush occasionally; for my old tow-linen shirt, I had good clean clothes. I was really well off. My employment was to run errands, and to take care of Tommy; to prevent his getting in the way of carriages, and to keep him out of harm's way generally. So for a time everything went well. I say for a time, because the fatal poison of irresponsible power, and the natural influence of slave customs, were not very long in making their impression on the gentle and loving disposition of my excellent mistress. She regarded me at first as a child, like any other. This was the natural and spontaneous thought; afterwards, when she came to consider me as property, our relations to each other were changed, but a nature so noble as hers could not instantly become perverted, and it took several years before the sweetness of her temper was wholly lost.

The frequent hearing of my mistress reading the Bible aloud, for she often read aloud when her husband was absent, awakened my curiosity in respect to this mystery of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn. Up to this time I had known nothing whatever of this wonderful art, and my ignorance and inexperience of what it could do for me, as well as my confidence in my mistress, emboldened me to ask her to teach me to read. "With an unconsciousness and inexperience equal to my own, she readily consented, and in an incredibly short time, by her kind assistance, I had

mastered the alphabet and could spell words of three or four letters. My mistress seemed almost as proud of my progress as if I had been her own child, and supposing that her husband would be as well pleased, she made no secret of what she was doing for me. Indeed, she exultingly told him of the aptness of her pupil, and of her intention to persevere in teaching me, as she felt it her duty to do, at least to read the Bible.

And here arose the first dark cloud over my Baltimore prospects, the precursor of chilling blasts and drenching storms. Master Hugh was astounded beyond measure, and probably for the first time, proceeded to unfold to his wife the true philosophy of the slave system, and the peculiar rules necessary in the nature of the case to be observed in the management of human chattels. Of course he forbade her to give me any further instruction, telling her in the first place that to do so was unlawful, as it was also unsafe. "If he learns to read the Bible it will for ever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it. As to himself, learning will do him no good, but a great deal of harm, making him disconsolate and unhappy. If you teach him how to read, he'll want to know how to write, and this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself."

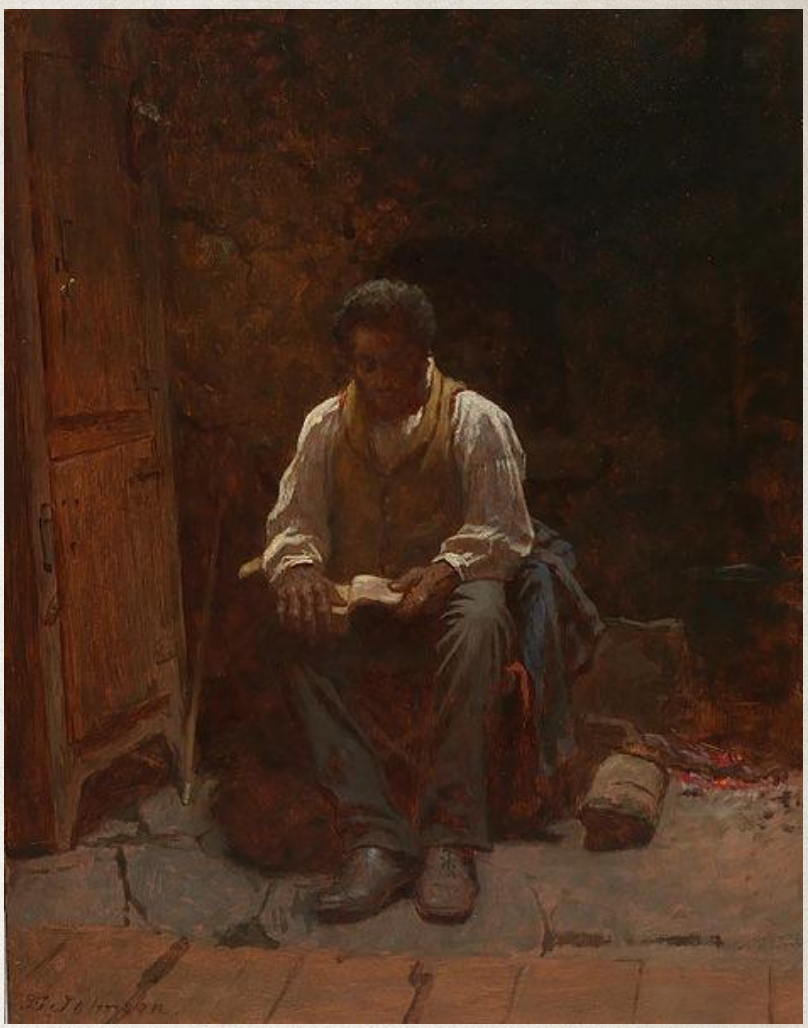
Such was the tenor of Master Hugh's oracular exposition; and it must be confessed that he very clearly comprehended the nature and the requirements of the relation of master and slave. His discourse was the first decidedly antislavery lecture to which it had been my lot to listen. Mrs. Auld evidently felt the force of what he said, and like an obedient wife, began to shape her course in the direction indicated by him. The effect of his words on me was neither slight nor transitory. His iron sentences, cold and harsh, sunk like heavy weights deep into my heart, and stirred up within me a rebellion not soon to be allayed. This was a new and special revelation, dispelling a painful mystery against which my youthful understanding had struggled, and struggled in vain, to wit, the white man's power to perpetuate the enslavement of the black man.

"Very well," thought I. "Knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." I instinctively assented to the proposition, and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I needed, and it came to me at a time and from a source whence I least expected it. Of course I was greatly saddened at the thought of losing the assistance of my kind mistress, but the information so instantly derived, to some extent compensated me for the loss I had sustained in this direction. Wise as Mr. Auld was, he underrated my comprehension, and had little idea of the use to which I was capable of putting the impressive lesson he was giving to his wife. He wanted me to be a slave; I had already voted against that on the home plantation of Col. Lloyd. That which he most loved I most hated; and the very determination which he expressed to keep me in ignorance, only rendered me the more resolute to seek intelligence. In learning to read, therefore, I am not sure that I do not owe quite as much to the opposition of my master as to the kindly assistance of my amiable mistress. I acknowledge the benefit rendered me by the one, and by the other, believing that but for my mistress I might have grown up in ignorance.

Growing in Knowledge

I lived in the family of Mr. Auld, at Baltimore, seven years, during which time, as the almanac makers say of the weather, my condition was variable. The most interesting feature of my history

here, was my learning to read and write under somewhat marked disadvantages. In attaining this knowledge I was compelled to resort to indirections by no means congenial to my nature, and which were really humiliating to my sense of candour and uprightness. My mistress, checked in her benevolent designs toward me, not only ceased instructing me herself, but set her face as a flint against my learning to read by any means. It is due to her to say, however, that she did not adopt this course in all its stringency at first. She either thought it unnecessary, or she lacked the depravity needed to make herself forget at once my human nature. She was, as I have said, naturally a kind and tender-hearted woman, and in the humanity of her heart and the simplicity of her mind, she set out, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another.



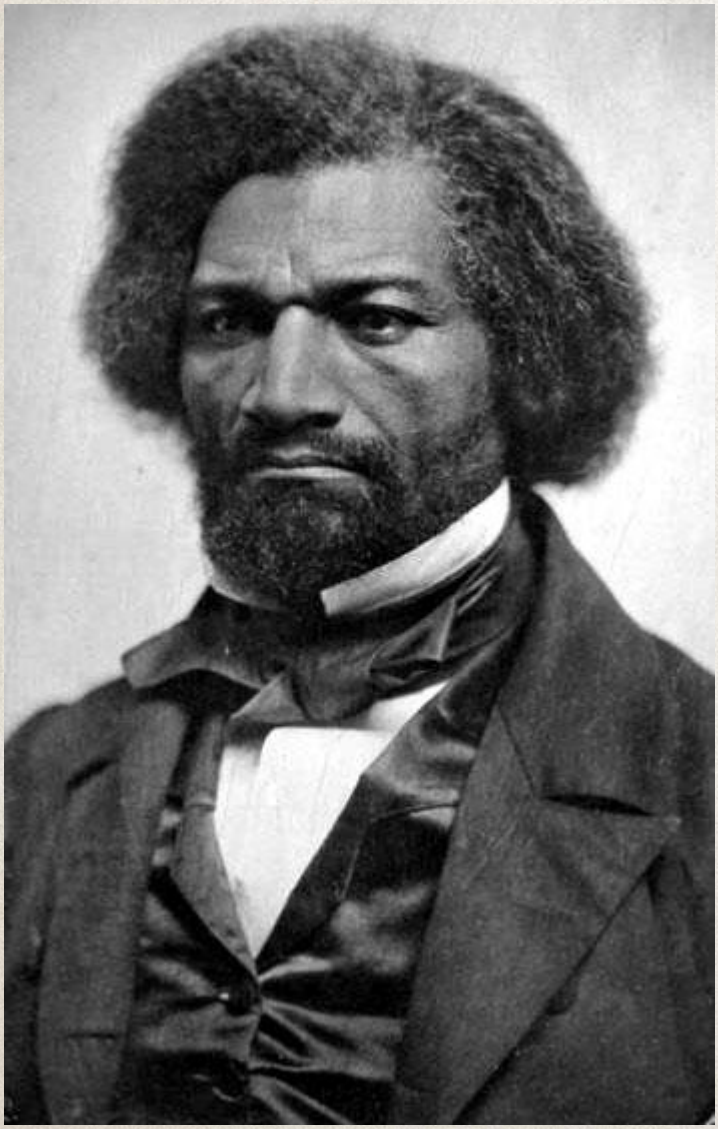
The Lord is My Shepherd, Eastman Johnson

Nature never intended that men and women should be either slaves or slaveholders, and nothing but rigid training, long persisted in, can perfect the character of the one or the other. Mrs. Auld was singularly deficient in the qualities of a slave-holder. It was no easy matter for her to think or to feel that the curly-headed boy, who stood by her side, and even leaned on her lap, who was loved by little Tommy, and who loved little Tommy in turn, sustained to her only the relation of a chattel. I was more than that; she felt me to be more than that. I could talk and sing; I could laugh and weep; I could reason and remember; I could love and hate. I was human, and she, dear lady, knew and felt me to be so. How could she then treat me as a brute, without a mighty struggle with all the noblest powers of her soul?

That struggle came, and the will and power of the husband was victorious. Her noble soul was overcome, and he who wrought the wrong was injured in the fall, no less than the rest of the household. When I went into that household, it was the abode of happiness and contentment. The wife and mistress there was a model of affection and tenderness. Her fervent piety and watchful uprightness made it impossible to see her without thinking and feeling, "that woman is a Christian." There

was no sorrow nor suffering for which she had not a tear, and there was no innocent joy for which she had not a smile. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner who came within her reach.

But slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these excellent qualities, and her home of its early happiness. Conscience cannot stand much violence. Once thoroughly injured, who is he who can repair the damage? If it be broken toward the slave on Sunday, it will be toward the master on Monday. It cannot long endure such shocks. It must stand unharmed, or it does not stand at all. As my condition in the family waxed bad, that of the family waxed no better. The first step in the wrong direction was the violence done to nature and to conscience, in arresting the benevolence that would have enlightened my young mind. In ceasing to instruct me, my mistress had to seek to justify herself to herself; and once consenting to take sides in such a debate, she was compelled to hold her position. One needs little knowledge of moral philosophy to see where she inevitably landed. She finally became even more violent in her opposition to my learning to read, than was Mr. Auld himself. Nothing now appeared to make her more angry than seeing me, seated in some nook or corner, quietly reading a book or newspaper. She would rush at me with the utmost fury, and snatch the book or paper from my hand, with something of the wrath and consternation which a traitor might be supposed to feel on being discovered in a plot by some dangerous spy. The conviction once thoroughly established in her mind, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other, I was most narrowly watched in all my movements. If I remained in a separate room from the family for any considerable time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. But this was too late: the first and never-to-be-retraced step had been taken. Teaching me the alphabet had been the "inch" given, I was now waiting only for the opportunity to "take the ell."



Ambrotype of Frederick Douglass, 1856

Filled with the determination to learn to read at any cost, I hit upon many expedients to accomplish that much desired

end. The plan which I mainly adopted, and the one which was most successful, was that of using my young white playmates, whom I met in the streets, as teachers. I used to carry almost constantly a copy of Webster's spelling-book in my pocket, and when sent on errands, or when play-time was allowed me, I would step aside with my young friends and take a lesson in spelling. I am greatly indebted to these boys — Gustavus Dorgan, Joseph Bailey, Charles Farity, and William Cosdry.

Although slavery was a delicate subject, and very cautiously talked about among grown-up people in Maryland, I frequently talked about it, and that very freely, with the white boys. I would sometimes say to them, while seated on a curbstone or a cellar door, "I wish I could be free, as you will be when you get to be men. You will be free, you know, as soon as you are twenty-one, and can go where you like, but I am a slave for life. Have I not as good a right to be free as you have?"

Words like these, I observed, always troubled them; and I had no small satisfaction in drawing out from them, as I occasionally did, that fresh and bitter condemnation of slavery which ever springs from natures unseared and unperverted. Of all consciences, let me have those to deal with, which have not been seared and bewildered with the cares and perplexities of life.

I do not remember ever to have met with a boy while I was in slavery, who defended the system, but I do remember many times, when I was consoled by them, and by them encouraged to hope that something would yet occur by which I would be made free. Over and over again, they have told me that "they believed I had as good a right to be free as they had," and that "they did not believe God ever made anyone to be a slave."

On Monday, the third day of September, 1838, in accordance with my resolution, I bade farewell to the city of Baltimore, and to slavery.

Chapter 15

Harriet Tubman

The Moses of Her People
1820–1913



Photograph of Harriet Tubman

About one hundred years ago, people in every civilized country were talking about the "underground railroad" in the United States. The "underground railroad" was not really a railroad under the ground, but a secret way by means of which slaves escaped from their masters in the South and reached free territory. Reaching free territory sometimes meant escape from this country into Canada. Passengers, those seeking to escape to free territory, on the "underground railroad" were led by very brave and daring conductors. Among these conductors there was a woman whose name was Harriet Tubman.

When Harriet was born in Dorchester County, Maryland, in 1820, she was named Araminta Ross. After she grew up, she called herself Harriet. When she became a woman she was married to John Tubman and was called Harriet Tubman.

Harriet almost died with the measles when she was six years old. Soon after she recovered from this, her master threw a heavy weight at her and injured her skull. For years she suffered from pressure on her brain which caused her to fall asleep at any time, wherever she was, whether she was seated on a rail fence or in a chair. It also caused her to stagger sometimes as she walked. No one except her African mother seemed to care for her or to pay any attention to her.

Early one morning a lady came driving up to the home of Harriet's master, who met her at the gate and inquired what he could do for her. She asked for a slave-girl to care for her baby, but offered very low wages. The master shook his head, saying, "I cannot furnish you a girl for that." As the lady pleaded with him, he stood looking on the ground and knitting his brow. Suddenly he lifted his head and said, "Yes, I have just one girl whom you may take; keep your eye on her because she may not have all that is coming to her." Harriet was called, placed in a wagon and driven away to the



Photograph of Harriet Tubman

lady's home.

The first thing the lady gave her to do was to sweep and dust the parlor. Harriet cautiously tiptoed into this wonderfully fine room, amazed at everything she saw. She finally began to sweep in much the same way as she had swept her mother's cabin. As soon as she had finished sweeping, she took the dusting cloth and wiped off the chairs, the table and the mantelpiece. The particles of dust, still flying here and there over the room, soon settled on the furniture again.

About this time, Harriet's new mistress stepped in and began to look around. The dust lay on the table, the chairs and the mantel in such a thick coating that she spoke very harshly to Harriet and ordered her to do the work all over. Harriet swept and dusted just as she had done before. The dust, having no other place to go, settled again on the furniture. The mistress entered the parlor again, bringing with her this time a whip. With this she lashed Harriet with a heavy hand. Five times before breakfast that morning Harriet swept and dusted the parlor.

Just as she had gotten her third whipping, her mistress's sister, who had been awakened from her morning slumber, opened the parlor door. "Why do you whip the child, sister, for not doing what she has never been taught to do?" she asked. "Leave Harriet to me for a few minutes and you will see that she will soon learn how to sweep and dust a room."

The sister ordered Harriet to open the windows first, to sweep the room and leave it a while until the dust settled, and to return then and wipe the dust from the furniture.

Harriet looked strangely at the big window, went to it and raised it inch by inch until it was high enough to fasten by a latch. She set in again and swept, and while the dust was settling, she went out and set the table for breakfast. Then she returned and dusted the parlor.

That night she was ordered to sit up and rock the baby. The baby's cradle and Harriet's chair were placed near her mistress's bed. Occasionally Harriet's eyelids dropped and her head bobbed this way and that way. The cradle kept on rocking because her foot was on the rockers. Once in a great while, the cradle would stop and the baby would begin to cry. The mistress would pick up her

whip and give Harriet a cut across the head and shoulders which would make her jump and almost knock the cradle over.

Under such treatment, Harriet became so worn and thin that the lady sent her back to her master saying that she wasn't worth a six-pence. Harriet was turned over to her mother, who nursed her until she was again strong enough to work.

She was then hired out to a man who made her plow, drive oxen, lift a barrel of flour, and sometimes cut a half cord of wood a day. Soon she became ill again. She lay on her sick-bed from Christmas until March. Day after day she prayed, saying, "Oh, Lord, convert old Master; change that man's heart and make him a Christian." When someone told her that as soon as she was able to work, she would be sent away, she changed her prayer, saying: "Lord, if you are never going to change that man's heart, kill him, Lord, and take him out of the way, so he will do no more mischief." Harriet's master finally died but she continued ill for a long time.

Even after she became stronger she still prayed at every turn. When she went to the horse-trough to wash her face and hands, she said, "Lord, wash me and make me clean." When she took the towel to wipe them, she cried, "O Lord, for Jesus' sake, wipe away all my sins." When she took up the broom to sweep, she groaned, "O Lord, whatever sin there is in my heart, sweep it out, Lord, clear and clean."

Early one morning many of the slaves in the "quarters" hurried about with a scared look on their faces, whispering something to each other as they passed. The news had leaked out that Harriet and two of her brothers were to be sold and sent the next day to the far South. As soon as the news reached Harriet, she held a hurried consultation with her brothers, telling them of the terrible things that would befall them if they did not run away to the North. As they stood for a while looking about anxiously and ready to move on, they agreed to start for the North that night.

Harriet began to scratch her head and wonder how she might tell her friends that she was going away. She thought and thought, and finally hit upon the plan of telling them in an old familiar song. As she was passing the next cabin door she sang out:

> When that old chariot comes,
> I'm going to leave you;
> I'm bound for the promised land.
> Friends, I'm going to leave you.
>
> I'm sorry, friends, to leave you, Farewell! Oh, farewell!
> But I'll meet you in the morning! Farewell! Oh, farewell!

She looked forward and backward and all around several times. No overseer was in sight. She continued to sing, casting a meaning glance at first one and then another as she passed along:

> I'll meet you in the morning,
> When you reach the promised land,
> On the other side of Jordan,
> For I'm bound for the promised land.

That night Harriet and her brothers spoke for a while in a whisper to their father and kissed him



A Ride for Liberty – The Fugitive Slaves, Eastman Johnson

goodbye. Without disturbing their dear old mother, each started out quietly in slightly different directions, but all towards the same place. Soon the three came together. The brothers began to say to Harriet in very low tones that they were afraid that old master would send men out for them and capture them. They stood trembling with excitement. All at once, one of them and then the other broke away and ran towards home as fast as they could, falling now and then over a log or a stump. Harriet stood watching them as long as she could see their shadows in the starlight.

Fixing her eye on the North Star, she turned her face in that direction and went forward. All night long she walked until the peep of day, then she lay down in the tall grass in a swamp. She lay there all day. The next night she started out again. Night after night she traveled, occasionally stopping to beg bread. She crouched behind trees or lay concealed in a swamp during the day until she reached Philadelphia.

On her arrival in Philadelphia she stared at the people as they passed. She stood gazing at the fine houses and the streets. She looked at her hands, believing that they, too, looked new. After finding a place to stay, she walked out among the better looking houses and began to ask from door to door if anyone was needed for work. Finally a woman came to the door, opened it just a little way and peeped out as though she were afraid. As Harriet was asking for work, the lady told her to wait a moment while she ran back and pushed her frying-pan further back on the stove. She appeared again at the door, questioned Harriet and then told her to come in.

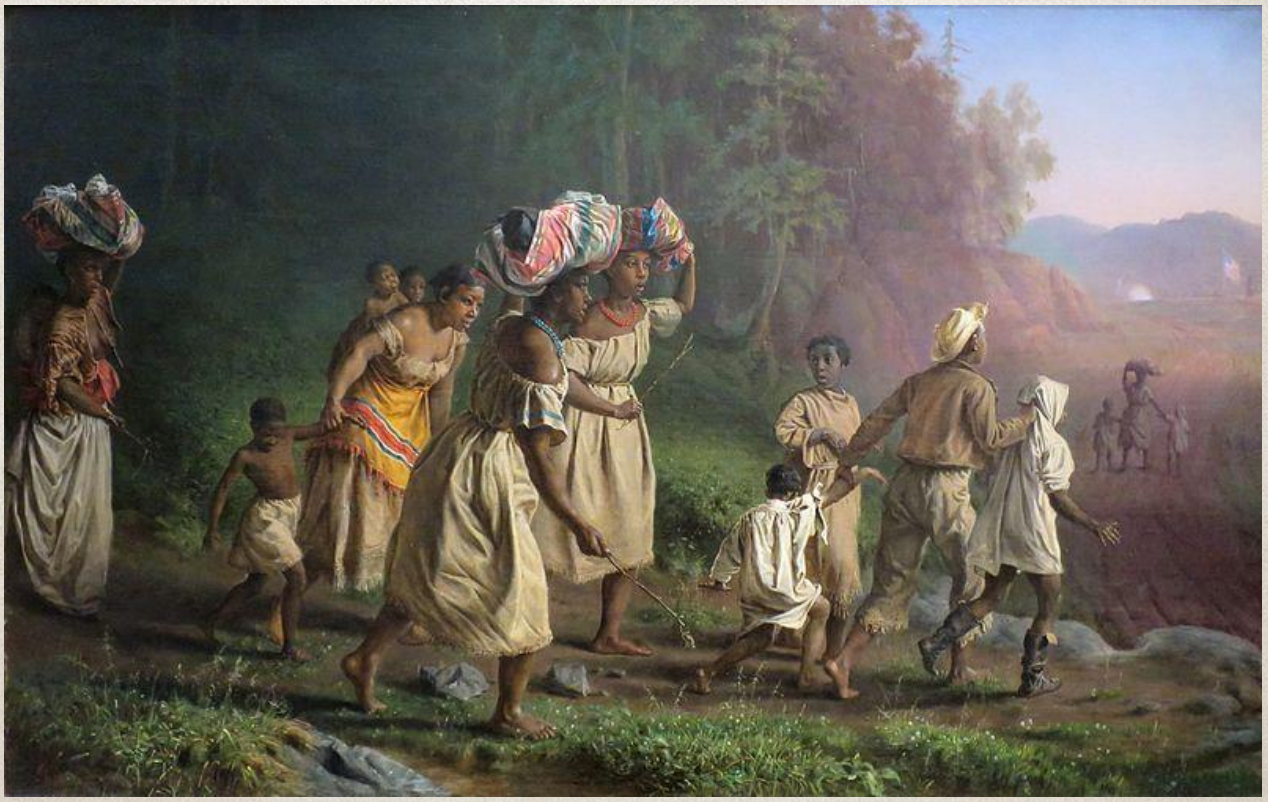
Harriet walked in and stood listening to the lady's instructions about cleaning. Then she raised the windows and began to sweep. She swept and dusted and cleaned all day. She worked hard the next day and every day until pay-day, when she received her first money. She hid it away with great care and continued her work. The following pay-days she went to the same spot and hid away every penny of her money until she felt that she had enough to go back South.

She gave up her work and traveled night after night until she was again back on the plantation. She hid around among the slaves in their cabins. She whispered to them thrilling stories of the free country, until even women with babies were getting ready to follow her back to the North. After drugging their babies with paregoric and placing them in baskets which they carried on their arms, they set out with "Moses," as they called her, for the free country.

They forded rivers, climbed mountains, went through the swamps, threaded the forests with their feet sore and often bleeding. They traveled during the night and kept in hiding during the day.

As soon as Harriet had landed this party, she began working again and making preparations to go back on her next trip. One night she went back to the plantation, secured a horse and a two-wheel cart and drove away with her aged mother and father. After placing them on the train, she traveled in the cart night after night until she made her way through Maryland to Wilmington, Delaware, where she had sent her parents.

As soon as the three of them met in Wilmington, Harriet took her parents to a well-known underground railroad station. This was simply the home of a Quaker friend. He gave them food and shelter and each a new pair of shoes. He furnished Harriet with money to take her parents on to



On to Liberty, Theodor Kaufmann

Canada, and kept the horse and cart for sale. Harriet and her parents went on, making their way with difficulty, until they reached Canada.

Harriet remained in Canada for a short time only, then slipped back among the plantation cabins in Maryland. Again and again she went back—nineteen times—leading away in the darkness, in all, over three hundred slaves. The slave masters of that region in Maryland, whence so many were being stolen away, after trying hard to catch Harriet, offered a reward of $40,000 for her, dead or alive. They posted such a notice in all public places.

After fifteen years of such adventure, Harriet bought a little home place near Auburn, N.Y., and settled on it with her dear old parents. Frequently responding to a knock at the door, she arose and found that someone had brought to her a poor, old, homeless person. Without hesitating to ask many questions, she took in every one of them until she had twenty old people, for whom she worked and sought support.

William H. Seward, Governor of New York, once said to her when she went to him for aid, "Harriet, you have worked for others long enough. If you would ever ask anything for yourself, I would gladly give it to you but I will not help you to rob yourself for others any longer."

Many years after that, Governor Seward died, and a large number of persons gathered at his funeral. Many very beautiful flowers were received by his family on that sad occasion. On the day of the funeral, just before the coffin was closed, a woman as black as night stole quietly in and laid a wreath of field flowers at his feet and as quietly glided out again. Friends of the family whispered, "It's the Governor's friend, Harriet."

Harriet continued to work and take in homeless old people until the outbreak of the Civil War. At that time, Governor Andrew of Massachusetts sent for her. He asked if she would go South as a spy and a scout, and if need be, a hospital nurse for the Union soldiers. She stood thinking for a moment, then said that she would go. He bade her return home and be ready at a moment's notice. Harriet left his office and returned to Auburn. She went about asking friends to look out for the old people in her home while she was away.

Soon after she reached home, a messenger arrived with orders for her to report immediately. She hastily grabbed a few necessary things, kissed her parents, saying good-bye to them and to the inmates of the home, and hurried away to join the company of soldiers on its way south. They traveled several days. As soon as they arrived, Harriet was ordered to act as a scout and a spy for the soldiers. She took charge and led them through the jungle and the swamp. She approached the frightened slaves, often gaining valuable information from them. She stood in the battle-line when the shots were falling like hail and the bodies of dead and wounded men were dropping like leaves in autumn.

Being called upon to nurse the soldiers in the hospitals, she extracted from roots and herbs what she called a healing substance. As she went to a sick soldier and felt his burning forehead, she often poured out a spoonful of her medicine and placed it in his mouth. After a few days of such treatment frequently a soldier smiled at her and thanked her.

She often bathed the wounds of soldiers from early morning until late at night. She nursed many with smallpox. Occasionally, after a long day's toil, she went to her little cabin and made fifty pies, several pans of ginger-bread and two casks of root-beer. One of the men went through the camps selling these things for her. Almost as soon as she obtained the money from the sale of them she



Photograph of Harriet Tubman with rescued slaves, *New York Times*

mailed it on to her old parents for the support of their home.

When Harriet returned to her little home place, it was about to be sold to pay off a mortgage. A friend, the daughter of a professor of Auburn Theological Seminary, hearing of Harriet's trouble, came to see her. Harriet greeted her friend as usual and invited her to sit down; she too sat down and began to tell about the war. Her friend listened for a long, long time but finally interrupted her to ask about the home and the mortgage. Harriet, concealing nothing from her, told her the exact conditions of the mortgage.

The friend suggested the idea of having her life story written as a means of getting money to pay off the mortgage. Harriet nodded her head in full agreement with what her friend was proposing and asked if she would write the story. The friend counted aloud the days before the mortgage had to be paid off and, realizing that they were not many, set herself at once to the task of writing the story of Harriet's life.

Harriet sat with her friend day after day, each time telling of some incident in her life which she had not told before. The story was finally finished and published, and from the proceeds of it the mortgage was paid off.

Harriet worked hard, saying all the time that she wished to free the home of debt so that she might give it to her race to be used as an Old Folks' Home. When the property was almost free of debt and there were twenty aged women in the home, she went among them with a smile dividing the little she had, until she was stricken with pneumonia and died.

Following her death, the Harriet Tubman Club of New York City, together with the whole Empire State Federation of Negro Women's Clubs, erected to her memory a handsome monument.

This monument is in the form of a shaft. One of the principal designs on this shaft is in the form of three oak logs out of which flowers are growing.

The citizens of Auburn held a memorial meeting for her at the Auditorium Theatre. Booker T. Washington, the mayor and the ex-mayor of Auburn were the speakers on that occasion. The lower floor of the theatre was filled and every box was occupied.

In the presence of this audience, Harriet Tubman's grand-niece unveiled a large bronze tablet, the gift of the citizens of Auburn to the memory of Harriet Tubman. In accepting this tablet, the mayor of the city said, "In recognition of Harriet Tubman's unselfish devotion to the cause of humanity, the city of Auburn accepts this tablet dedicated to her memory."

The tablet was placed in the county court-house with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
HARRIET TUBMAN
Born a slave in Maryland about 1821
Died in Auburn, N. Y., March 10, 1913

Called the "Moses" of her people during the Civil War. With rare courage, she led over 300 Negroes up from slavery to freedom, and rendered invaluable service as nurse and spy.

With implicit trust in God, she braved every danger and overcame every obstacle; withal she possessed extraordinary foresight and judgment, so that she truthfully said, "On my underground railroad I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger."

Chapter 16

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw

The Tale of the Philanthropist Who Gave His Life
1837-1863

This is the tale of a rich man who became imbued with a great principle and offered his fortune to uphold it. It is a tale of philanthropy that cannot be computed in money, for the gift of this man was beyond the power of gold and silver; he gave his courage, his valor, and his life.

It was late in the afternoon of the eighteenth of July, in 1861, that a regiment of men marched across Folly and Morris Islands from Port Royal, South Carolina, bent on an attack on the Confederates at Fort Wagner. In the lead was a handsome, soldierly man, fair and serene of countenance. Following, in perfect military formation, was the 54th Infantry Regiment, the first company of negroes sent forth to battle against their former masters of the South — as brave a body of men as any that participated in the fierce struggle of the Civil War. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a man of breeding, wealth, and education, had organized this regiment of blacks in Massachusetts, in face of abuse and ridicule, and despite all adverse criticism, had drilled them to the point of perfection. The feeling against the negroes in the North at that time, though not as intense as in the South, was still very bitter.



Albumen silver print of Robert Gould Shaw by Whipple Studio

This hated regiment had been selected because of its high military discipline, for the post of honor in the attack on Fort Wagner; and with brave hearts they marched against the enemy to fight for the liberation of their race from slavery. Shaw had proven that the black man could be made into a good tactician, and now was his opportunity to demonstrate that he was also a good fighter. If such he was proven, no man could say that the men who fought bravely for their cause were not entitled to their freedom.

At about seven o'clock the regiment

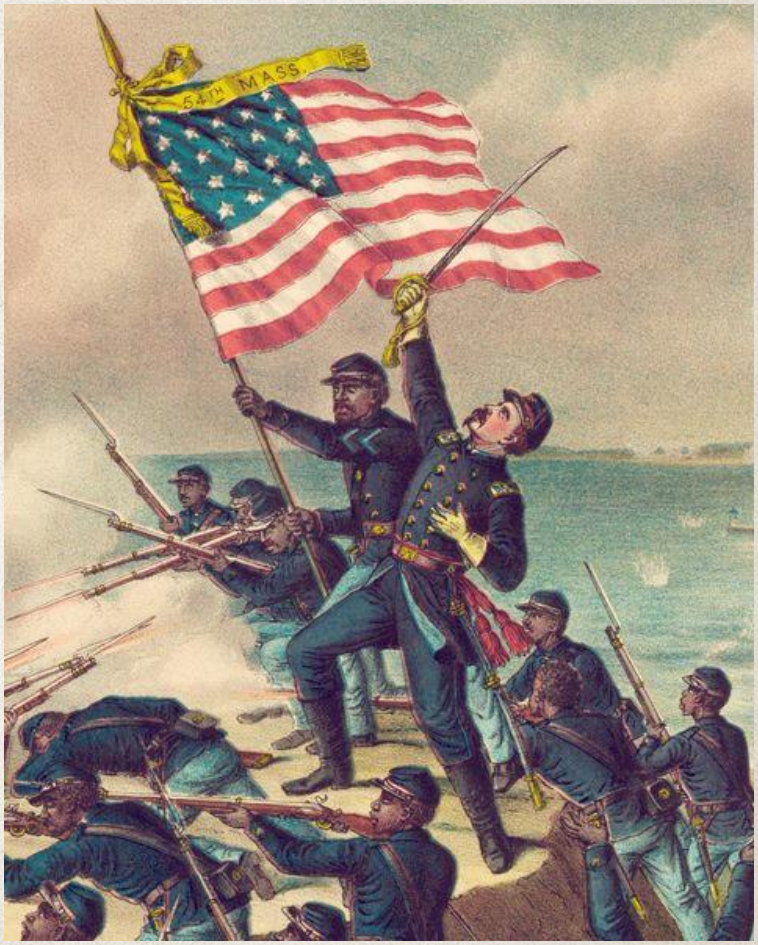
was within six hundred yards of the guns of Fort Wagner. Behind the guns were the men who had been their masters for years, and felt nothing but contempt for them, and far greater contempt for the white man that led them. The regiment of black men, in their uniforms of blue, rested quietly; perhaps their hearts were filled with trepidation, all the more because they were fighting against the men whose slightest command they had been accustomed to obey.

At last the order was given them to advance. In the lead was the brave colonel, and the troops were encouraged by his serene confidence. Four hundred yards; three hundred; two hundred — and still not a shot from the fort. The silence was unnerving, but still they marched on toward the frowning cannon, led by their daring commander.

They were now within one hundred yards of the fort. Suddenly, a sheet of flame flashed from its guns. The roar and shriek of shot and shell broke the silence. The enemy's aim had been deadly, and the black men fell by the score, mortally wounded. This was the baptism of the regiment in battle — their first fight — and it is no wonder that the front battalion wavered and seemed about to break and run.

Unharmed, himself, the gallant commander turned and saw the indecision of his men. Sword in hand, he smiled encouragingly upon them.

"Forward, 54th!" he shouted, and with cheers the black regiment followed him through the ditch and were on the parapet of the fort on the right before the enemy had realized that they had weathered the hail of shot and shell.



Storming Fort Wagner, courtesy of Library of Congress

The first man on the wall was the brave Colonel Shaw himself.

Alone, he stood erect, a noble figure, in sharp relief against the distant horizon.

"Forward, 54th!" again rang out his cry.

The negro soldiers were now swarming over the walls, about to capture the fierce defenders of the fort.

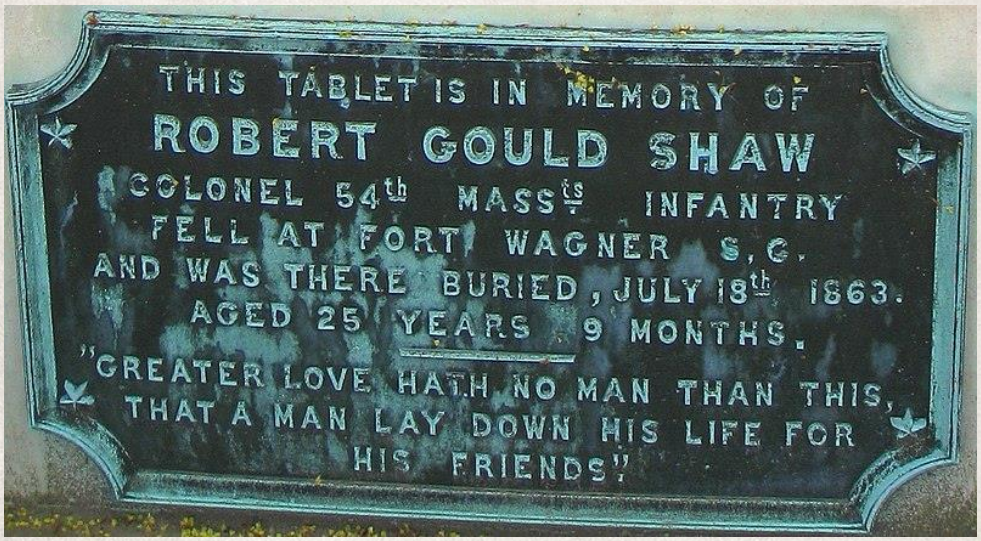
The brave figure in the van was suddenly seen to waver and then sink to the wall, mortally wounded. The men of the regiment were now without their leader, the sole inspiration of their attack. They wavered, broke, and tumbled off the walls, in complete rout, leaving the fort still in

the possession of the Confederates.

After the battle, the commanding general of the fort said to a Union prisoner: "Had Colonel Shaw been in command of white troops, I should give him an honorable burial. As it is, I shall bury him in the common trench with the negroes that fell with him."

The ruthless words showed that slavery had been wounded to the death. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's work had not been in vain. The Confederate general little knew that he was really giving to the brave colonel the most honorable burial that he could have devised.

In Boston there stands a monument to his memory because of his peculiar fortune to live and die for a great principle of humanity when the onward march of civilization was at stake.



Robert Gould Shaw memorial, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Chapter 17

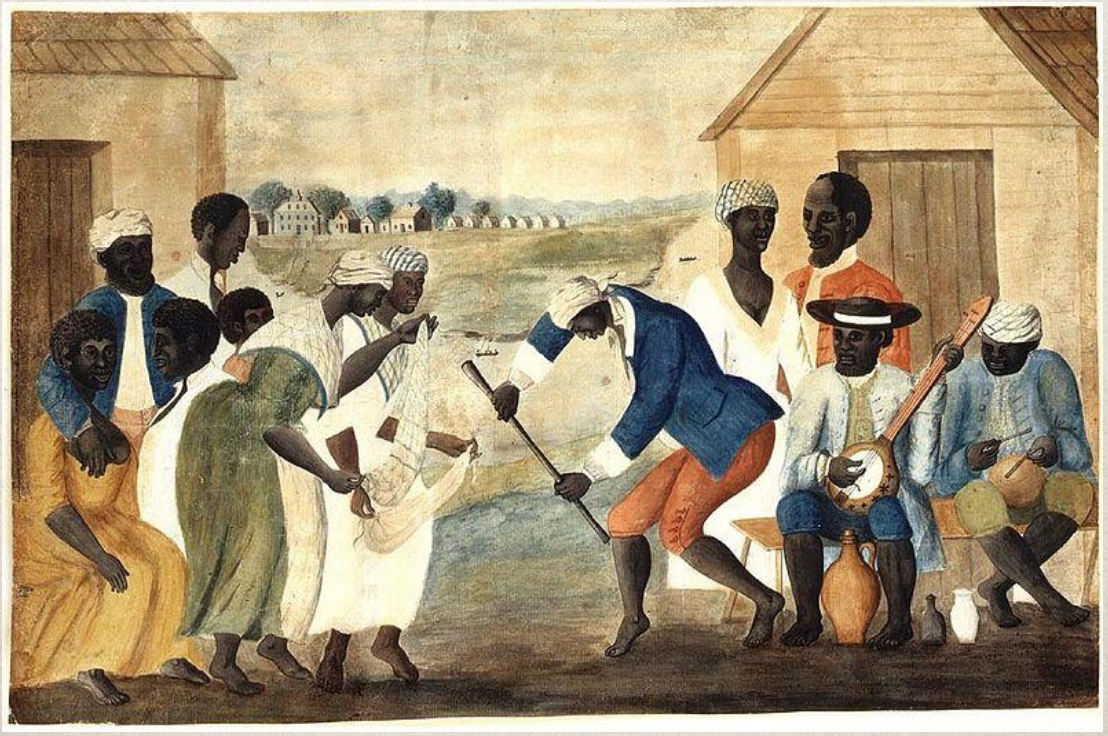
Lessons from the Song of the Slaves

The following stories come from a book written in 1915, *The Folk Song of the American Negro* by John Wesley Work. This man spent ten years hunting in out-of-the way places, following trails from state to state to learn the story from the songs themselves and from the makers of the songs. The history and description came to him first hand from those who have been a part of them.

Folk song is the unguarded, spontaneous expression of a people's soul. It is their natural means of communication, which they understand among themselves. We know for a fact that it was never intended that the world should understand the slave music. It was a kind of secret password into their lives. … [T]he only reliable source of truth in regard to the fundamentals of his character, is his songs.

When the Africans were snatched away to the new world to fell the forest and cultivate the fields, they left their all save their song. This they brought, because the All-wise knew the New World had great need of it.

His soul is a song. He expresses his every experience, his whole life, in terms of melody and he



The Old Plantation, anonymous artist



Fiddling His Way, Eastman Johnson

passes through the Valley of the Shadow of Death with a song upon his lips.

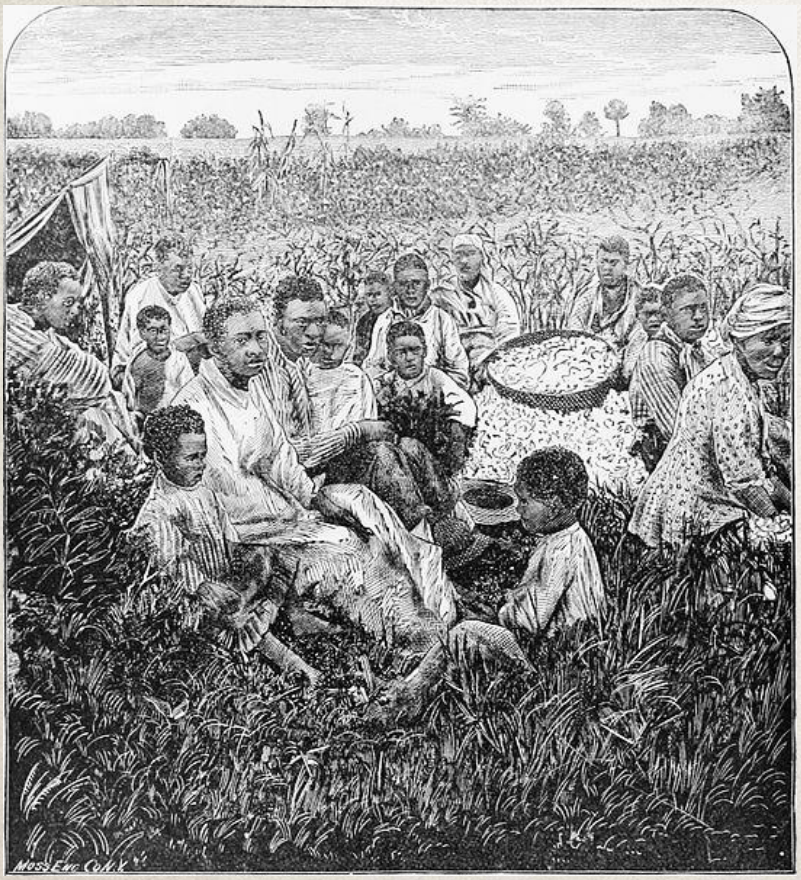
Mark Twain tells the story of an old negro servant of his, who seemed always to be happy. Her face was ever lighted with a smile and she shed a brightness where ever she went. "She was sixty years old, but her eye was undimmed and her strength unimpaired. It was no more trouble for her to laugh than for a bird to sing." "Aunt Rachel, how is it that you've lived sixty years and have no trouble?" She told the story of her life. Of course, she had been a slave. She once had as happy a family as a slave could have. She had seen her husband and six children sold from her in one day. She saw them carried away into different directions, some away down South; and only one of whom, a boy, she had ever seen or heard of since. And yet, as Mark Twain says, "It was no more trouble for her to laugh than for a bird to sing." Aunt Rachel is an epitome of her race. She lives at the mountain top.

The human heart cannot perceive righteousness in being torn from those it loves, from the memories and attachments that make up the happiness of life, to be forced to labor hard and long that another may eat, rest and be comfortable—yea, to suffer and die at the whim of a master. This is surely beyond a mortal's comprehension of justice. Still through all these crushing experiences, the Negro slave trusted God. What faith!

Great souls are souls of great faith. Great faith is a mighty weapon for fighting battles and winning victories. No faithless, doubting soul has been a positive blessing to mankind… Judged by his own soul-thoughts, his supreme virtue is faith; for every one of his songs is a song of faith. Faith is

the all-pervading power of all the Negro's music. Someone has stated that if the Bible should be lost, it could be recovered and reconstructed from the mind of the Negro.

Some masters who did not believe in the slave's God or in his religion had some extraordinary experiences. In Southern Kentucky, a slave, John by name, was known for his piety, religion and seasons of prayer and praise. Like Daniel in Babylon, nothing could prevent him from turning his face toward Jerusalem in prayer. The time came when John had to be sold. The master who was about to buy him said, "John, they tell me that you are one of these great praying negroes. Now, I want to tell you that when I buy you, all that stuff must stop." John answered, "Massa, if that's the case, you better not buy me, for I'se bound to pray, and I'se goin to pray." "All right, we'll see about that," said the master and John was bought. It was not long before this master missed John, and upon learning from the slave's own lips that he had been praying, his wrath blazed in angry flame, and with curses he tore John's flesh with the cruel lash. He did his best to kill him. That night, the master lay down in complacency, while John lay down in torture. But peace and complacency soon flew away on the dark wings of the night, and the master was troubled in mind. His soul was like a stormy sea. He left his bed and walked the floor. The love of a wife could not comfort him, and the physician he refused to see. The God of John and of John's religion had convicted the master of his sinfulness. When no help came to his tempestuous soul, in his extremity he said, "Send for John."

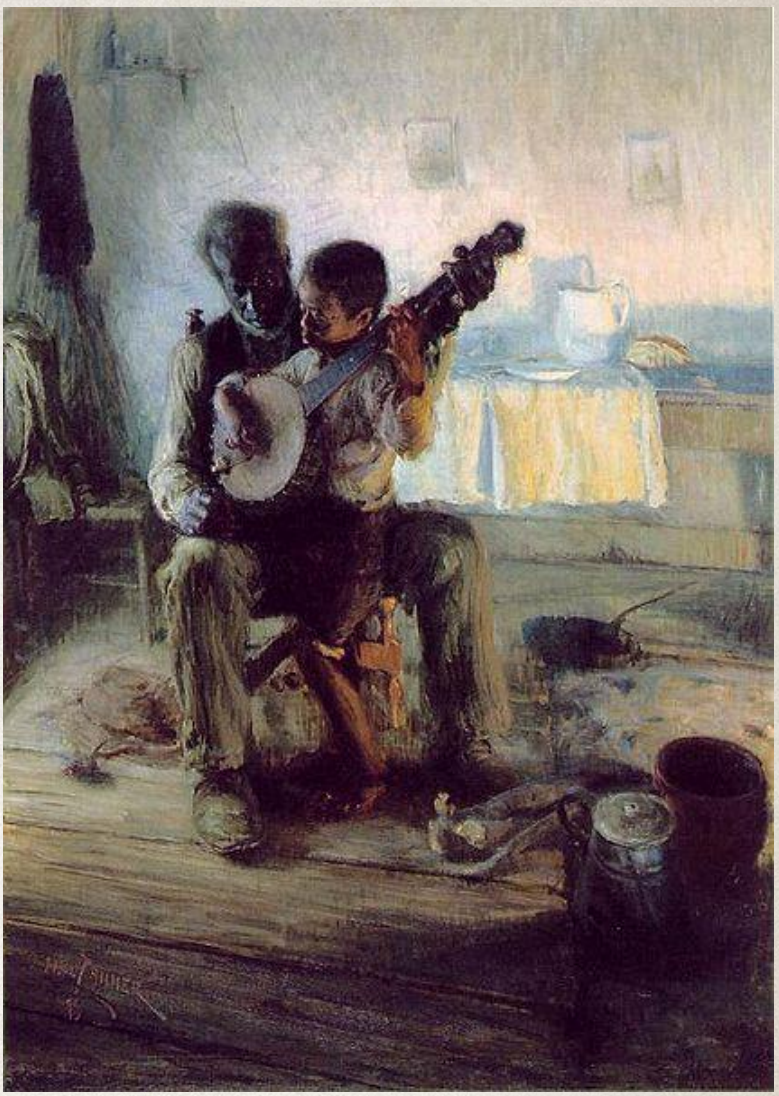


Picking Cotton in the South, Illustration from *Around the world with Philip Phillips,* Philip Phillips and John Heyl Vincent, 1887

With labored step, John struggled to the big house with a prayer on his lips, and when the master saw him, he cried, "John, pray for me." In bloody pain, John sank down upon his knees and prayed for his weeping master. God heard that prayer, and the light a new life broke in upon the master's vision. He expressed, "The best investment I ever made, the best money I ever spent, was when I bought John."

A most natural consequence of having faith is having joy, for the soul that believes that all things will eventuate according to the laws of right, and that "God's in his Heaven," has joy in his security. … The believer can smile through tears and shout Hallelujah! The Negro has the habit of being happy.

In all his song there is neither trace nor hint of hatred or revenge.



The Banjo Lesson, Henry Ossawa Tanner

It is most assuredly divine in human nature, that such a stupendous burden as human bondage, with all its inherent sorrows and heart breakings could fail to arouse in the heart of the slave sentiments of hatred and revenge against his master.

"No man can drag me so low as to make me hate him," the slave would say. The world needs to know that love is stronger than hatred.

Uncle Anthony was owned by an August County master, and lived happily with this faithful wife. Their cabin was a realm of melody. It was singing, singing, singing! One day, Heaven sent a child to them, and there was more singing, with a tenderer, more ecstatic note. The glad father worked at odd times upon a rude cradle for his babe, in which she could lie, rock and go to sleep in the comforting lullabies from the full-hearted mother. At last the cradle was finished, and with an overflowing soul he bore it home. His joy grew with every step; anticipations of opening the door of that cabin, seeing the baby in the cradle, and beholding the smile upon that mother's face made his heart swell and his breath come short and fast! The cabin was there; that was all! Mother and babe were gone with the trader, somewhere toward the South. The bud of his happiness was dead! He searched the whole creation for his wife and child. The forest, hills, and fields mocked his cries. Days and days he was a mad-man in his grief. No threats or lashings could quiet him or force him back to his work. His usefulness as a slave was destroyed, and when a man whose heart had been touched and softened by the poor slave's sorrow offered to buy him, his offer was at once accepted. Two thousand dollars was paid. The bargain closed, he immediately made out "free papers" for Anthony and told him to go find his wife and child, promising that if he found them, they, too, should be purchased and freed. The last account of him was that he was still pursuing his quest somewhere in North Carolina, with this song upon his lips:

Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,

Nobody knows the trouble I see;
Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,
Nobody knows like Jesus.

In the darkness of bondage, it was his light; … The songs of the slave were his sweet consolation and his messages to Heaven, bearing sorrow, pain, joy, prayer and adoration. … [H]e could always unburden his heart in these simple songs pregnant with faith, hope and love. The man, though a slave, produced the song, and the song, in turn, produced a better man.

These songs are to us a storehouse of comfort. How can we ever forget those by gone days when our mothers sang them to us as our lullabies? "This old-time religion, makes me love everybody." Think of the great blessing of being sung to sleep by such a lullaby—"Makes Me Love Everybody!" Think of the great favor of being reared in the atmosphere of "Lord, I Want to Be Like Jesus!" In times of sorrow, we have heard our mothers sing "Keep Me From Sinking Down," and often, oh! So often, "March on and You shall Gain the Victory," has run with such meaning through the humble home. Can you blame us for loving these songs which have so much inspired us to be and to do?

Thus we find faith, hope, patience, endurance, prayer, joy, courage and humility and the love of mankind, of home, and of God to be the salient qualities of the Negro's soul. Such is the testimony of the only true expression of his soul, his songs. … And although the story brings tears to our eyes, our hearts swell with pride that we can claim such ancestors…with their sweet inspirations.

The picture is before you: Virtues powerfully blended upon an ample background of love, energized by the spirit of the eternal.

No, these songs cannot die. They are eternal.

Chapter 18

Joel Chandler Harris

The Creation of Uncle Remus
1848–1908

It was in December 1880 that Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox first found themselves in a book, a book the world quickly took to its heart.

Rudyard Kipling says that when he was a schoolboy the sayings of Uncle Remus ran like wildfire through his school.

The creator of these Uncle Remus stories was Joel Chandler Harris, whose beginnings in Georgia were of the humblest kind. His mother ran away from home to marry. Her husband proved a worthless fellow, who deserted her and their little boy; but the mother bravely and uncomplainingly bore the burden that was thus thrown upon her shoulders.



Photograph of Joel Chandler Harris, 1873

She discarded the father's name for the boy, giving him instead her own family name of Harris, and no one heard her mention his father again. She gave herself to the service of the boy, who was undersized and frail-looking, but, like Brer Rabbit, made up for his lack of size by his agility and shrewdness. His mother earned her living by sewing, but nevertheless, hard-worked as she was, she found time for reading and gardening, being passionately fond of flowers.

It was in his mother's garden that Joel acquired his love of growing things, and it was, he says, through hearing his mother read Oliver Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield that his desire to write arose. "I was too young to appreciate the story (he wrote), but there was something in the style and humour of that little book that struck my fancy and I straightaway fell to composing little tales in which the principal characters silenced the others by crying Fudge at every possible opportunity." Poverty is notoriously a grim master. With a minimum of education, it became necessary for Joel to be "up and

doing." One day, when he was in the post-office reading the papers, he came across an advertisement for a boy to learn printing. That, he felt, was his opportunity, and he lost no time in seizing it.

He applied for the post and was engaged. He was not 14, but he was thinking of his hard-working mother.

So it came about that this shy, red-haired, freckle-faced little fellow "put away his tops and marbles, packed his belongings in an old-fashioned trunk, kissed his mother goodbye, and set forth on what turned out to be the most important journey of his life."

His new home was on a plantation nine miles away. He went as typesetter for a paper which was the planter's hobby. The settlement comprised a hat factory, a tannery, and a distillery, besides a printing plant.

Joel soon found a companion, a boy about his own age, who knew the names of every bird and tree, and knew all the bypaths, and where wild strawberries and chestnuts grew. He had a tame buzzard, which sometimes followed him on his rambles. He tamed flying squirrels and handled snakes fearlessly. On the roof of the printing office squirrels scampered about and blue jays hopped and cracked their acorns. Within twenty yards of the office door a partridge was raising her young brood.

There were over a hundred slaves on the plantation, housed in cabins in a grove of oaks behind the planter's house, where Joel lived. In the evenings he and his master's children used to steal to the Negro quarters, where they had many friends. There, from a nook in their chimney corners, they listened to the legends of the black race, the love of animals and birds dear to every plantation Negro, handed down from African ancestors. The boy absorbed their fables and ballads, and became familiar with their curious and somewhat picturesque ways of speech.



General view of row of slave quarters from north, McLeod Plantation, Charleston, SC

There was a fine library in his master's house, and Joel had the run of it. He learned his job of typesetting and soon began to try his hand at writing. He must have taken his new task very seriously for one of his earliest essays was on Death! After some failures he had the joy of seeing a signed article in print, a great day for any young writer.

Then the old plantation days came to an end. The Civil War ruined his master, as it did most of the Southern planters. A day came when Joel found himself workless and penniless.

After some ups and downs he got a post on a paper at Forsyth in Georgia.

I set all the type (he said), pulled the press, kept the books, swept the floor, and wrapped the papers for mailing.

It was discovered that he could write, that he was indeed one of the most sparkling, vivacious, and incisive paragraph writers in the South. He was offered forty dollars a week by one paper, which seemed too good to be true. He had to read the letter twice before he could believe his eyes! For forty dollars was enough to keep him a year in the way he had been living. At the time he described himself as the gawkiest-looking specimen of humanity ever seen.



Illustration from *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings,* Joel Chandler Harris

The world owes the Uncle Remus stories to a happy accident. He no more intended to write a children's classic than did Lewis Carroll when he began to tell to a group of little friends the story of the girl who followed a rabbit wearing a white waistcoat. Harris had accepted a place on the staff of the Atlanta Constitution, and it was in response to the editor's call for a column of anecdotes and sketches of Negro character that the famous stories began. The writer of the humourous column had failed, and the editor asked Harris to try his hand.

He had absorbed the curious myths and stories in his teens on the plantation, and all he had to do was to write them out straight from life, as he had heard them. They were among the most familiar things he knew. He had no idea of their literary value until a magazine published an article on Negro folklore containing rough outlines of some of the stories. That gave him his cue. He realized that there was a literary mine on the plantation where he had spent the days of his youth. The quaint and philosophic character of Uncle Remus was not an invention of his own, but a human syndicate of three or four slaves he had known.

He brought them together into one person and called him Uncle Remus.

Much to his surprise he awoke to find himself famous. His stories very quickly found their way to people's hearts in all quarters of the known world.

So it came about that the shy and lonely and handicapped boy enriched the world with an immortal gift—a children's book, and something more, for every page, it has been said is "laden with the mystery and burden of mortal things and the ways of men in the winds of Fate."

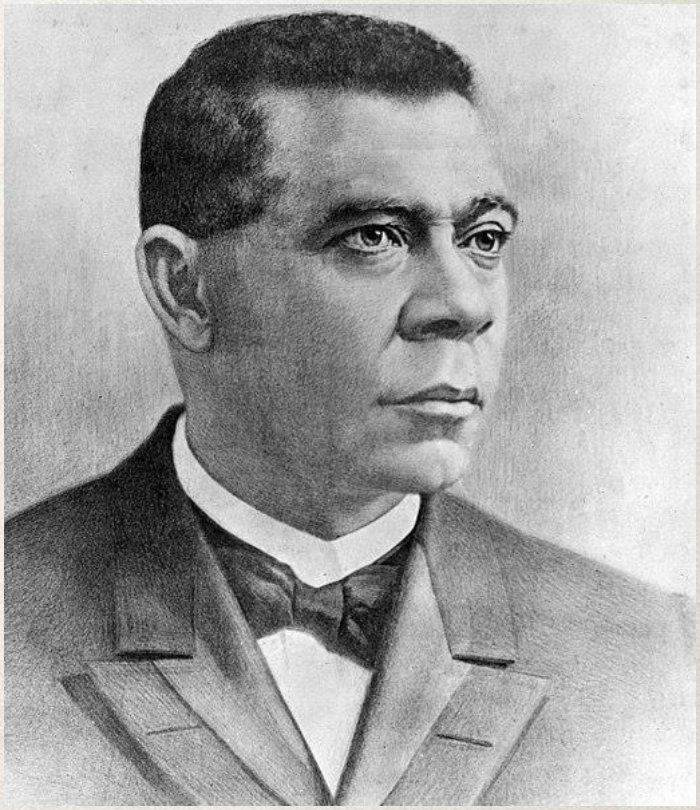


Photograph of Joel Chandler Harris

Chapter 19

Booker T. Washington – Part 1

A Slave Among Slaves
1856–1915



Photograph of Booker T. Washington courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. As nearly as I have been able to learn, I was born near a crossroad's post office called Hale's Ford, and the year was 1858 or 1859.

My life had its beginning in the midst of most desolate and discouraging surroundings. This was not because my owners were especially cruel, for they were not, as compared with many others. I began life in a log cabin about fourteen by sixteen feet square. In this cabin I lived with my brother and sister till after the Civil War, when we were all declared free.

The cabin was not only our living place, but was also used as the kitchen for the plantation. My mother was the plantation cook. The cabin was without glass windows; it had only openings in the side which let in the light, and also the cold, chilly air of winter. There was a door to the cabin — that is, something that was called a door — but the uncertain hinges by which it was hung, and the large cracks in it, to say nothing of the fact that it was too small, made the room a very uncomfortable one. There was no wooden floor in our cabin, the naked earth being used as a floor. In the centre of the earthen floor there was a large, deep opening covered with boards, which was used as a place for storing sweet potatoes during the winter. There was no cooking-stove on our plantation, and all the cooking for the whites and the slaves my mother had to do over an open fireplace, and mostly in pots and skillets.

The early years of my life were not very different from those of thousands of other slaves. My mother snatched a few moments for our care in the early morning before her work began, and at

night after the day's work was done. We three children had a pallet on the dirt floor. I cannot remember having slept in a bed until after our family was declared free by the Emancipation Proclamation.

I have been asked to tell something about the sports I engaged in during my youth. Until that question was asked it had never occurred to me that there was never any time in my life for play; almost every day was occupied with some kind of labor. During my period of slavery I was not large enough to be of much service, still I was kept busy most of the time in cleaning the yards, carrying water to the men in the fields, or going to the mill with corn once a week to be ground. This trip I always dreaded.

The heavy bag of corn would be thrown across the back of the horse, and the corn divided about evenly on each side. But in some way, almost without exception on these trips, the corn would so shift as to become unbalanced and would fall off the horse, and I would fall with it. As I was not strong enough to reload the corn upon the horse I would have to wait sometimes for hours, until a passer-by came along who would help me out of my trouble. I would be late in reaching the mill, and by the time I got my corn ground and reached home it would be far into the night. The road was a lonely one and led through dense forests. I was always frightened. Besides, when I was late in getting home I knew I would always get a severe scolding or a flogging.



Negro Boy, Eastman Johnson

I had no schooling whatever while I was a slave, though I remember going on several occasions as far as the school-house door with one of my young mistresses to carry her books. The picture of several dozen boys and girls in a schoolroom engaged in study made a deep impression on me, and I had the feeling that to get into a school-house and study in this way would be about the same as getting into paradise.

One may get the idea from what I have said that there was bitter feeling toward the white people on the part of my race because of the fact that most of the white population fought in a war which would result in keeping the negro in slavery if the South was successful. In the case of the slaves on our place this was not true, and it was not true of any large portion of the slaves in the South that were treated with any kind of decency. During the Civil War one of my young masters was killed

and two were brought home severely wounded. The sorrow in the slave quarter was only second to that in the "big house." Some of the slaves begged to sit up at night and nurse their wounded masters. The slave who was selected to sleep in the "big house" during the absence of the men was considered to have a place of honor. In order to defend and protect the women and children who were left on the plantation, the slaves would have laid down their lives.

But the slaves wanted freedom. I have never seen one who did not want to be free, or one who would return to slavery. I pity from the bottom of my heart any nation or body of people that is so unfortunate as to get entangled in the net of slavery.

No one section of our country was wholly responsible for its introduction and, besides, it was recognized and protected for years by the General Government. Then, when we rid ourselves of prejudice and race feeling, and look facts in the face, we see that the ten million negroes of this country who themselves or whose ancestors went through slavery, in spite of it, are in a better and more hopeful condition than the black people in any other part of the globe.

Ever since I have been old enough to think for myself, I have thought, in spite of the cruel wrongs inflicted upon us, the black man got nearly as much out of slavery as the white man did.



The Thankful Poor, Henry Ossawa Tanner

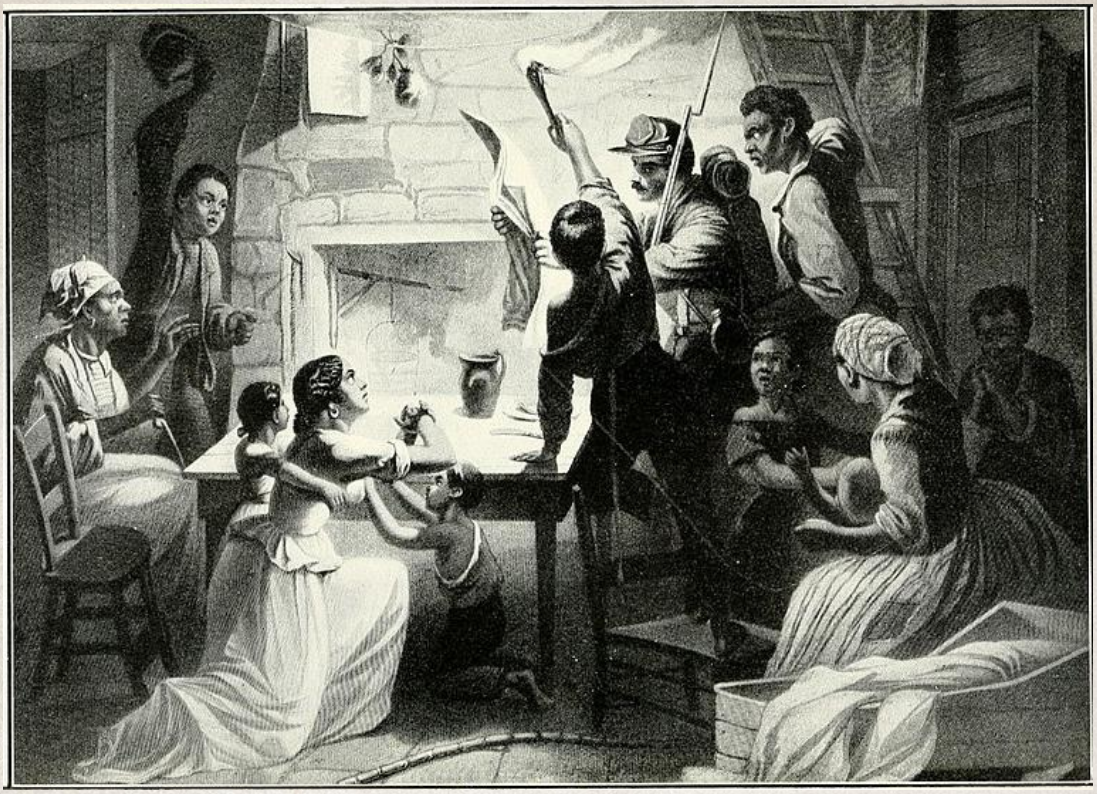


Illustration from *The Negro in American history,* John W. Cromwell, 1914

The slave system, on our place, took the self reliance and self help out of the white people. My old master had many boys and girls but not one, so far as I know, ever learned a single trade. The girls were not taught to cook, sew or to take care of the house. All this was left to the slaves. The slaves, of course, had little interest in the life of the plantation, and they were too ignorant to do things in the most improved and thorough way. So the fences were out of repair and the gates hung half off their hinges, doors creaked, window panes were out, plastering fell and weeds grew in the yard. There was a waste of food and other materials, too, that was sad.

Finally the war closed, and the day of freedom approached. It would be a momentous day to all upon our plantation. We had been expecting it. Freedom was in the air, and had been for months. As the great day grew nearer, there was more singing in the slave quarters than usual. It was bolder, had more ring in it, and lasted far into the night. Most of the verses of the plantation songs had some reference to freedom. True, they had sung these same verses before, but they had felt that the freedom in these songs referred to the next world and not to the freedom of the body here. The night before the eventful day, word was sent to the slave quarters to the effect that something unusual was going to take place in the "big house" the next morning. There was little, if any, sleep that night. All was excitement and expectancy.

Early the next morning word was sent to all the slaves, young and old, to gather at the house. In company with my mother, brother, and sister, and a large company of other slaves I went to our master's house. All of our master's family were either standing or seated on the veranda of the house, where they could see what was to take place and hear what was said. There was a feeling of deep

interest, or perhaps sadness, on their faces but not bitterness. They did not seem to be sad because of the loss of property, but rather at parting with those who they had reared and who were in many ways very close to them.

The most distinct thing that I now recall in connection with the scene was the presence of a United States officer who made a short speech and then read a rather long paper — the Emancipation Proclamation, I think. After the reading we were told that we were free, and could go when and where we pleased. My mother, who was standing by my side, leaned over and kissed her children while tears of joy ran down her cheeks. She explained to us what it all meant, that this was the day for which she had been so long praying, but fearing that she would never live to see.

For some moments there was great rejoicing and thanksgiving, but there was no feeling of bitterness. The wild joy of the emancipated colored people lasted for only a brief period and I noticed that by the time they returned to their cabins there was a change of feeling. The great responsibility of being free, of having charge of themselves, of having to think and plan for themselves and their children took possession of them. It was very much like turning a boy of ten or twelve years out into the world to provide for himself. In a few hours the great question with which the Anglo-Saxon race had been grappling for centuries had been thrown upon these people to solve — how to get a home, a living, how to rear their children, how to provide schools, establish citizenship and support churches.

To some it seemed that, now they were in actual possession of it, freedom was a more serious thing than they had expected to find it.

Some of the slaves were seventy or eighty years old; their best days were gone. They had no strength with which to earn a living in a strange place and among a strange people, even if they had been sure where to find a new place of abode. Besides, deep down in their hearts there was a strange and peculiar attachment to "old Missus," and to their children which they found it hard to think of breaking off. With these they had spent in some cases nearly half a century, and it was no light thing to think of parting.

Gradually, one by one, stealthily at first, the older slaves began to wander from the slave quarters back to the "big house" to have a whispered conversation with their former owners about the future.

Chapter 20

Booker T. Washington – Part 2

Up from Slavery – The Struggle for an Education



Photograph of Booker T. Washington

One day, while at work in the coal-mine, I happened to overhear two miners talking about a great school for colored people somewhere in Virginia. This was the first time that I had ever heard anything about any kind of school or college that was more pretentious than the little colored school in our town.

In the darkness of the mine I noiselessly crept as close as I could to the two men who were talking. I heard one tell the other that not only was the school established for the members of my race, but that opportunities were provided by which poor but worthy students could work out all or a part of the cost of board, and at the same time be taught some trade or industry.

As they went on describing the school, it seemed to me that it must be the greatest place on earth, and not even Heaven presented more attractions for me at that time than did the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, about which these men were talking. I resolved at once to go to that school, although I had no idea where it was, or how many miles away, or how I was going to reach it; I remembered only that I was on fire constantly with one ambition, and that was to go to Hampton. This thought was with me day and night.

After hearing of the Hampton Institute, I continued to work for a few months longer in the coalmine. While at work there, I heard of a vacant position in the household of General Lewis Ruffner, the owner of the salt-furnace and coal-mine. Mrs. Viola Ruffner, the wife of General Ruffner, was a "Yankee" woman from Vermont. Mrs. Ruffner had a reputation all through the

vicinity for being very strict with her servants, and especially with the boys who tried to serve her. Few of them had remained with her more than two or three weeks. They all left with the same excuse: she was too strict. I decided, however, that I would rather try Mrs. Ruffner's house than remain in the coal-mine, and so my mother applied to her for the vacant position. I was hired at a salary of $5 per month.

I had heard so much about Mrs. Ruffner's severity that I was almost afraid to see her, and trembled when I went into her presence. I had not lived with her many weeks, however, before I began to understand her. I soon began to learn that, first of all, she wanted everything kept clean about her, that she wanted things done promptly and systematically, and that at the bottom of everything she wanted absolute honesty and frankness. Nothing must be sloven or slipshod; every door, every fence, must be kept in repair.

I cannot now recall how long I lived with Mrs. Ruffner before going to Hampton, but I think it must have been a year and a half. At any rate, I here repeat what I have said more than once before, that the lessons that I learned in the home of Mrs. Ruffner were as valuable to me as any education I have ever gotten anywhere since. Even to this day I never see bits of paper scattered around a house or in the street that I do not want to pick them up at once. I never see a filthy yard that I do not want to clean it, a paling off of a fence that I do not want to put it on, an unpainted or unwhitewashed house that I do not want to paint or whitewash it, or a button off one's clothes, or a grease-spot on them or on a floor, that I do not want to call attention to it.

From fearing Mrs. Ruffner I soon learned to look upon her as one of my best friends. When she found that she could trust me she did so implicitly. During the one or two winters that I was with her she gave me an opportunity to go to school for an hour in the day during a portion of the winter months, but most of my studying was done at night, sometimes alone, sometimes under someone whom I could hire to teach me. Mrs. Ruffner always encouraged and sympathized with me in all my efforts to get an education. It was while living with her that I began to get together my first library. I secured a dry-goods box, knocked out one side of it, put some shelves in it, and began putting into it every kind of book that I could get my hands upon, and called it "my library."

Without any unusual occurrence I reached Hampton, with a surplus of exactly fifty cents with which to begin my education. To me it had been a long, eventful journey; but the first sight of the large, three-story, brick school building seemed to have rewarded me for all that I had undergone in order to reach the place. If the people who gave the money to provide that building could appreciate the influence the sight of it had upon me, as well as upon thousands of other youths, they would feel all the more encouraged to make such gifts. It seemed to me to be the largest and most beautiful building I had ever seen. The sight of it seemed to give me new life. I felt that a new kind of existence had now begun—that life would now have a new meaning. I felt that I had reached the promised land, and I resolved to let no obstacle prevent me from putting forth the highest effort to fit myself to accomplish the most good in the world.

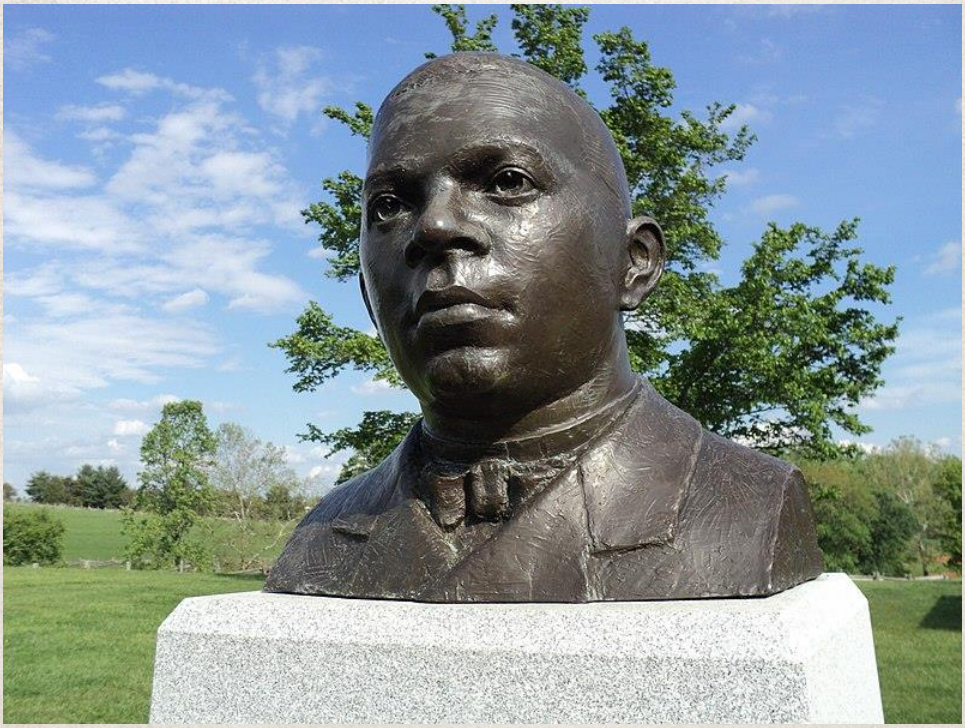
As soon as possible after reaching the grounds of the Hampton Institute, I presented myself before the head teacher for assignment to a class. Having been so long without proper food, a bath, and change of clothing, I did not, of course, make a very favorable impression upon her, and I could see at once that there were doubts in her mind about the wisdom of admitting me as a student. I felt that I could hardly blame her if she got the idea that I was a worthless loafer or tramp. For some

time she did not refuse to admit me, neither did she decide in my favor, and I continued to linger about her, and to impress her in all the ways I could with my worthiness. In the meantime I saw her admitting other students, and that added greatly to my discomfort, for I felt, deep down in my heart, that I could do as well as they, if I could only get a chance to show what was in me.

After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me, "The adjoining recitation room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it."

It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her.

I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and I dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a "Yankee" woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the wood-work about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she remarked quietly, "I guess you will do to enter this institution."



Booker T. Washington National Monument,
Franklin County, Virginia

Chapter 21

Lessons from the Life of Mary McLeod Bethune – Part 1

1875-1955

How does a little girl, born under the poorest of circumstances, grow up to be a friend and advisor of presidents, guest of royalty, founder of a college, and an inspiration to millions of people?

This is the story of Mary McLeod Bethune. All her life she worked with youth. She begged for them and fought for them. Hers was not an easy road. But she said very few of her generation found life easy or wanted it that way. She overcame staggering obstacles. In her own words, "I'm poor and I'm ugly and I'm not very smart. But the Lord has chosen me for an instrument." She shows us how all things are possible when one has faith in God and faith in one's self.

The day Mary McLeod came into the world, July 10, 1875, was a joyous occasion. Although she was the fifteenth of Sam and Patsy McLeod's seventeen children, this was the first child born to them in freedom. The Civil War had just ended and slavery was abolished. That meant there would be no worrying in the middle of the night if this baby, in a few years, would be sold and sent away to another master. This baby was theirs to raise.

Mary was born into a simple log cabin with few material goods. A treasured Bible, even though no one in the household knew how to



Photograph of Mary McLeod Bethune



Photograph of Mary McLeod Bethune's Cabin, Mayesville, South Carolina

read, was kept on the shelf next to a blue china pitcher, a sewing box and an oil lamp. But hers was a home full of love. Both of her parents had been born into slavery. One day, her father was visiting a neighboring plantation where he first saw Patsy and immediately knew he wanted to be with her. She had soft, keen features and spoke with a gentle voice. She carried herself like a queen, which was only natural for one who came from a long line of African royalty. The slave owners had tried to erase any memories of the slaves' former lives in Africa, but Patsy's mother made sure she kept the stories of her family's heritage alive.

Sam needed his master's permission to marry her. He got the permission, but first had to earn enough money to buy her from her current owner. Sam was willing to do anything to be with Patsy. So, for two years, he walked an extra six miles a day after his normal chores were done where he put in long, hard hours hauling lumber, putting aside every penny he could earn. Finally, the wedding day arrived and a wedding dress and a suit were provided to make their day special. They became a well-respected, hardworking couple who were devoted to each other for the rest of their lives.

When Mary was 9 or 10 years old, something happened that hurt her very much, but proved to be a driving force that changed her life. It was not unusual for slaves, after being freed, to continue working for former masters to earn money. Patsy often returned to the Wilsons to cook for them or to help with laundry. When Mary was old enough, she was allowed to go with her. This particular day, Mr. Wilson's golden-haired granddaughters invited Mary out to their playhouse. Mary looked around wide eyed at the dolls with beautiful silk dresses and delicate shoes. There were slates and pencils and magazines and books all around. She walked over to a table and opened a book that was sitting there. Immediately, one of the granddaughters snatched the book away and slammed it shut. "Don't you touch that book with your black hands! Don't you know reading is for white folks? You can't never read…you're black."

It was true that during the years of slavery, many states had put laws into effect forbidding anyone from teaching a black person to read. It wasn't laws that kept them from reading now, just no one willing to teach them. Nevertheless, the words, "You can't read" pierced Mary's heart. She

made up her mind right then and there that somehow, someday, she was going to learn how to read. She had seen the comfortable homes the white boys and girls lived in and the opportunities they had that she didn't, and she sensed, even at her young age, that knowing how to read had something to do with the difference.

As she walked back home past the broken-down shanties of her people, she told her mother of her dream to learn how to read. She said later, "You know, my mother was one of those grand educated persons that did not have letters. She had a great vision, a great understanding of human nature. When I told her, she said to me—child, your time will come. You will learn some day. My mother had a great philosophy of life. She could not be discouraged. No matter what kind of plight we found ourselves in, she always believed there was, through prayer and work, a way out. And it was one of the greatest things she stimulated life with…that determination that there was a way out if we put forth effort ourselves."

And so Mary's prayers began in earnest, "Please, Lord, help me find a way to learn how to read."

You had to be strong and fast to work in the cotton fields, and Mary was both. One day, as she was working her way down the cotton rows, her mother and father not far away, she looked up to see a stranger walking towards them. It was Miss Emma Wilson, a teacher with light, brown skin who had just been given authorization by the Presbyterian church to open a school and she was looking for students. Sam and Patsy could only spare one of their children because there was so much work to be done, but there was no question which of their children it would be. Mary sank to her knees, raised her hands towards heaven and thanked God for hearing her prayers.

The five miles each way to the little school in Mayesville was more like an adventure than a hardship. The school wasn't much to look at—a small, one-room shack with hard wooden benches inside. But Mary remembered her teacher's beautiful smile she always had on her face. And she remembered her patience, and her tenderness and the kindly way she handled the students. They were not afraid of her. They could approach her at any time. Years later, Mary became that kind of teacher.

Mary was an eager learner and was reading in a very short time. Every Sunday afternoon, she would gather the farm children from miles around to teach them whatever she had learned during the week—poetry, reading, songs. In her words, "I would give to them as often as I got. As I got I gave. They gave me a broader capacity for taking in and I feel that up to today, I feel it in all things, and I feel that as I give, I get."

As soon as she could do counting, all the papers—of both the whites and the colored people—were put in her lap. They wanted to make sure they weren't being cheated when they took their cotton in to be weighed. Unfortunately, for the most part they had been cheated. Many of her neighbors started turning a profit for the first time and were able to pay off their mortgages with Mary's help.

She said, "I became useful…I won their respect and admiration. I made my learning, what little it was, just from the beginning, spell service and cooperation, rather than something that would put me above the people around me. When I went off to school and came back, I was accepted and they looked forward to my coming back. They knew that whatever I had, they knew I would adapt to use of the people there."

For the first time, the people of her community saw in Mary something to aspire to. They had

never before seen what their possibilities were. She brought a desire to learn, and an understanding that they just did not have to continue in darkness—that there was a chance.

After four years at the little school in Mayesville, when Mary was just 15, Miss Wilson told Mary there was nothing else she could teach her. So Mary went back to the cotton fields, praying all the time for a way to open up to get more education. It would cost money though, something they didn't have. As if the way didn't already seem impossible, one day her dad came into the house and announced that Old Bush had collapsed and died in the fields. Old Bush was their mule, the single most important possession of their family. Without the mule, there could be no plowing. No plowing meant no crops. No crops, no money. No money, definitely no school. Whatever money they did earn would have to first go towards replacing the mule. Never ones to give into discouragement, Mary's older brother, without a word, went over to the plow and strapped the harness around his own waist. It would be hard and strenuous work, but each member of the family took a turn pulling the plow.

Meanwhile, many hundreds of miles away in Denver, Colorado, a schoolteacher, Mary Crissman had faithfully been setting aside a tenth of her meager earnings for many years. She had supplemented her teaching salary by sewing dresses when school wasn't in session, and was waiting for the right opportunity to use the money to help someone who needed it, when she became aware of the plight of the former slaves and their children who had little opportunity for education. She sent the money to the Presbyterian board to be used as a scholarship by someone who would make good with it. She could have scarcely imagined at the time the good that would come from her modest donation.

Can you imagine the excitement Miss Wilson had the day she once again found Mary in the cotton fields, and was able to deliver the good news. Mary was astonished. Why, this woman didn't even know who she was. "Oh, the joy of that glorious morning! I can never forget it," is the way she herself told the story. "To this day my heart thrills with gratitude at the memory of that day. I was but a little girl, groping for the light, dreaming dreams and seeing visions in the cotton and rice fields, and away off in Denver, Colorado, a poor dressmaker, sewing for her daily bread, heard my call and came to my assistance. Out of her scanty earnings, she invested in a life—my life!—and while God gives me strength, I shall strive to pass on to others the opportunities that this noble woman toiled and sacrificed to give me."

For a second time, she pulled off her cotton sack, got down on her knees, clasped her hands and turned her eyes upward to thank God for the chance that had come. The whole community was excited about Mary's selection to go to Scotia Seminary. Some neighbors knitted her a little linsey dress and socks and provided other clothes she would need. Her father bought her a trunk to pack her belongings. All the neighbors stopped work that October afternoon to see their Mary take her very first train ride.

Her arrival at the new school was full of so many firsts. It was the first brick building she had ever seen, she climbed her first stairs, slept in her very own bed with crisp linens for the very first time, ate with a fork, and saw people with black skin and people with white skin eating at the same table as equals.

Mary quickly made friends with everyone there. It would seem her greatest gift was the ability to love absolutely everyone. Homesick girls always found her. Girls came with their problems,

difficulties, and disappointments for her advice.

The scholarship didn't cover all of Mary's expenses, so she worked any way she could find; doing laundry, cooking, scrubbing. She said, "Nothing was too menial or too hard for me to find joy in doing, for the appreciation of having a chance."

Mary was starved for learning and couldn't get enough. She never considered herself an exceptional student, but took advantage of everything offered during her seven years at Scotia. She learned public speaking and debate and discovered she had a beautiful contralto voice. She had so many questions and soon learned she could find answers in books at the library. It was in books she learned such principles as inalienable rights and the history of her people. Why had there been slavery? It must have hurt her heart as she read how her ancestors were kidnapped by traders, dragged away in chains from their homes and families in Africa and placed in stinking, rat-infested holds of ships, many dying along the way. Once in America, they were sold as property.

Reading such things reawakened in her heart desires that had been placed there years earlier as she listened to a Reverend Bowen tell the stories of the people in darkest Africa. She had decided long before that her life's work was to travel to Africa as a missionary and bring light to the people there.

She shared these ambitions with her principal, who helped her make application to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago where she could be trained as a missionary. Her two years at Moody included much time on the streets, learning how to reach out and help the less fortunate. One time her missionary group had traveled to the Dakotas where they spent the night at the home of a minister and his wife. They had a five-year-old daughter who had never seen someone with black skin before, but immediately fell in love with Mary. When it came time for dinner, the little girl, not understanding, said, "Mother, tell the lady to wash her face and hands. She's all dirty." The parents were embarrassed and started to apologize, but Mary simply smiled and said, "I am not at all ashamed of my color. I'm proud of my black skin." Then she lifted the girl up on her lap and let her touch her skin so she could see that the color would not rub off. "Look; my skin is just like your skin. It stays the way God made it." Then she took a vase of flowers from a nearby stand and held it in front of her. "Look at all the different colors of these flowers. God made men just the way he made flowers, some one color, some another, so that when they are gathered together they make a beautiful bouquet." A grateful mother thanked her for her graciousness and this most important lesson that had been taught to her daughter.

As soon as graduation day was over, Mary traveled to New York, anxious and excited to receive her missionary appointment to Africa. However, the members of the board explained there was simply no opening for her at that time. Her whole life Mary regretted that she was not able to go to Africa and described that that was the greatest disappointment of her life.

It was with a heavy heart she accepted, instead, an assignment to teach school at Haines Normal Institute in Augusta, Georgia. It was there she met Lucy Lainey who taught her that there was much work to be done right here in America for her people.

Other teaching assignments followed. One day a tall handsome young man appeared at choir practice—his name, Albertus Bethune. The two fell in love and were married a short time later. Their only son, Albert, (Sam and Patsy's 90th grandchild!) came quickly. She adored her new little baby, but a new dream had taken hold of Mary. She dreamed of opening a school for little girls so

they could be given all the same advantages and opportunities that had been given to her. Even though Albertus was a teacher, he didn't share his wife's passion for education, and although they were friendly towards each other, most of their nineteen years of marriage were spent apart. He died long before seeing Mary achieve the great successes of her life.

Mary carefully considered where to open this new school. She wanted it to be in a place that was hard; she wanted it to be somewhere where no one else was reaching out to help the children. She found out that a railroad was being built down the eastern coast of Florida and that many of the workers had their families with them. So she took the three day trip down to Daytona, arriving with just $1.50 and her dreams.

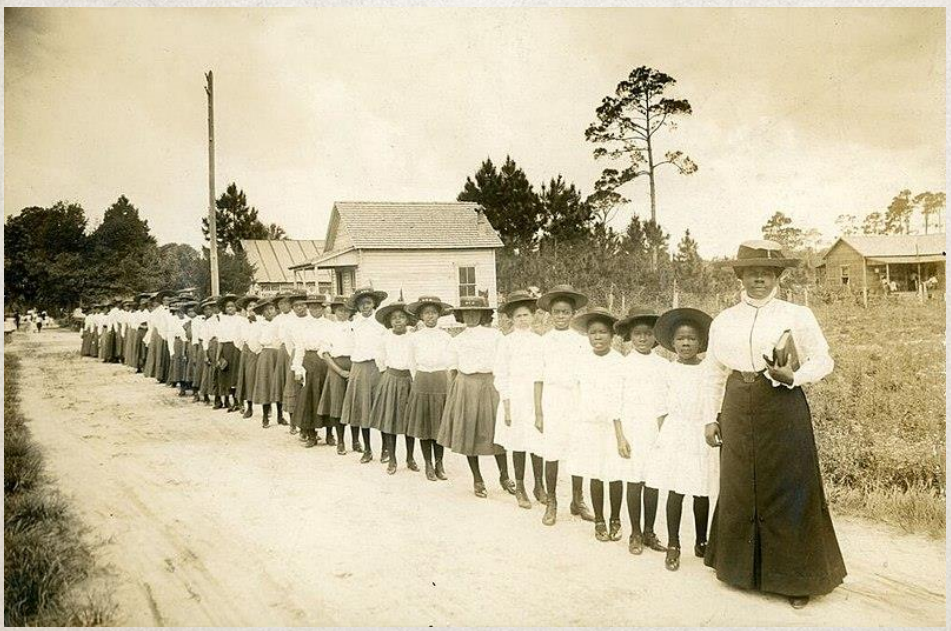
Chapter 22

Lessons from the Life of Mary McLeod Bethune – Part 2

1875-1955

As she walked down the dusty streets, she saw broken down shacks and dirty children running wild everywhere. This would be the perfect place. The first order of business: find a building to hold class. At the end of a peninsula with the ocean in view, she saw an old empty shack, nothing beyond it but an old dump heap. Most of the paint had peeled off and the windows were broken or cracked. She held onto a rickety stair rail as she climbed the wobbly stairs and looked inside. It was filled with cobwebs and had a leaky roof. But it would do just fine. She located the owner who wanted $11.00 a month rent. Problem was she didn't have anything, but there was something about Mary that made the owner trust that she would find the money somehow.

She quickly found her first five students—five little girls who helped scrub and clean the old shack to get it ready. The neighbors pitched in, too, clearing the weeds away and nailing boards back in place. Mary started scouring the junk piles for anything usable. Cracked dishes, old lamps, even clothes thrown out behind hotels, were brought back to be cleaned up and mended. Old crates and barrels were used for desks and chairs. She didn't have any pencils, so she used charcoal slivers from burned logs. Elderberry juice was used for ink. She made sure the few supplies she was able to buy from the store



Mary McLeod Bethune with girls from the Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Daytona

were wrapped individually in paper. The paper was brought back to the school and smoothed out and flattened so the girls would have something to write on.

October 3, 1904, was the big opening day of the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls. Over the door was written the words, "Enter to Learn – Depart to Serve." Mary knew just what to teach. She said, "This is a new kind of school. I am going to teach my girls crafts and home-making. I am going to teach them to earn a living. They will be trained in head, hand, and heart: their heads to think, their hands to work, and their hearts to have faith."

The burden of having to raise money was to be Mary's constant companion. She was able to acquire an old used bicycle, and once a week she could be seen riding up and down the streets, knocking on doors, begging for money. Many were kind to her and even grew to look forward to her visits. But others were downright rude. "I had learned already that one of my most important jobs was to be a good beggar! I rang doorbells and tackled cold prospects without a lead. I wrote articles for whoever would print them, distributed leaflets, rode interminable miles of dusty roads on my old bicycle, invaded churches, clubs, lodges, chambers of commerce. If a prospect refused to make a contribution, I'd say, 'Thank you for your time.' No matter how deep my hurt, I always smiled. I refused to be discouraged, for neither God nor man can use a discouraged person."

One day she had an idea. Sweet potatoes down there in Florida were plentiful and dirt cheap, and she knew how to cook up the tastiest sweet potato pie. She had her girls get up early in the morning with her and they'd boil and peel the sweet potatoes. By the time the railroad workers got off work, she was right there with her delicious, fresh pieces of pie which they eagerly bought.

Daytona Beach had become the winter retreat for many of the wealthy white Northerners. She taught her girls how to sing the beautiful spiritual hymns of the south and would take them to perform at the fine hotels nearby. They caught the attention of many prominent people who looked forward to their performances and rewarded them handsomely with donations.

She believed, like Gandhi, that no good cause suffers from the want of money and added trustfully, "God will shake money out of the trees." One Saturday night she went to the grocer's and pled with him to carry just four more dollars on her account until the next week. There was no food at home for her girls and she couldn't bear for them to go hungry.

He firmly refused. As she approached her school, trusting that God would somehow provide, there were four scruffy looking men on her porch. At first she was alarmed, but then she recognized them as students who attended some of her classes as adults. They said they had just been paid and wanted to thank her for what she had taught them. Each held out $1.00, which Mary thankfully took and rushed back to the store for the groceries.

She had learned from Lucy Lainey that a school had to be properly organized with a Board of Trustees who could advise and help her. She perused the society pages of the newspaper and decided on the name of James N. Gamble, of Proctor & Gamble. She sat down and wrote him a letter, to which a prompt reply came back, inviting her to his home at noon the next day. She pedaled her old bicycle, arriving at his house fifteen minutes early. Wanting to impress him with promptness, she had borrowed a watch and waited for the exact strike of noon before she strode up to the front door.

Mr. Gamble looked surprised at the woman who was ushered into his study. "Are you the woman trying to build the school here? Why, I thought you were a white woman!" The jet-black Mary

Bethune burst out laughing. "Well, you see how white I am."

She didn't want to waste his time, so she quickly told him how desperately the school was needed and invited him to serve as one of its trustees. He appeared interested, but seemed to hesitate just a bit, so Mary quickly invited him to take a look at the school. He agreed to a visit the next day.

Mary hurried home and quickly enlisted the help of her girls to scrub and clean and straighten so that everything would be in order for their distinguished guest.

A tall, slim white-haired Mr. Gamble showed up the next day in his chauffeured car. He looked around in amazement, staring at the wooden crates used as desks and the students lined up in their altered, mended and patched dresses.

"Just where is this school that you want me to take a look at?"

Mary had always looked at her school through the eyes of her dreams, and having this visitor must have been a harsh reality check. But she straightened herself and with great confidence replied, "In my mind, and in my spirit. I'm asking you to be a trustee of a glorious dream, trustee of the hope I have in my heart for my people."

Mr. Gamble was a kindly and a gracious man and must have been quite taken in by this courageous woman who had done so much with so little. He instantly agreed and handed her a check for $150, the first of a lifetime of generous donations by this good man.

With Mr. Gamble on board, it wasn't as hard to attract others who willingly became friends and partners of Mary Bethune's dream.

The school was growing and new buildings needed to go up. True to her nature, she moved forward, not quite knowing how it was going to come about, but trusting a way would be provided. She doubled and redoubled her begging efforts. "I hung on to contractors' coattails, begging for loads of sand and secondhand bricks. I went to all the carpenters, mechanics, and plasterers in town, pleading with them to contribute a few hours' work in the evening in exchange for sandwiches and tuition for their children or themselves." As soon as the roof went up, she moved her students in, even though the building was far from finished. Often the construction would have to stop altogether until more funds were found.

It was at one of her choir's performances at the Palmetto Hotel that her path first crossed with a gentleman who would become a great benefactor of her school. He placed a twenty-dollar bill in the collection plate, such a generous donation! Not too many days later, Mary was on her usual cycling rounds when a huge automobile drove up to her side and stopped.

"Aren't you the one I saw with the children at the Palmetto Hotel?" Without another word, he had his chauffeur put Mary's bike in the back of the car and they drove back to her school. He looked around at the unfinished construction, at the unplastered walls, at the homemade mattresses made from boiled, dried Spanish moss from the trees that were then stuffed in corn sacks. He noticed a bag of meal standing in the corner and asked what else there was to eat. Mary replied that was all they had at the moment. He walked over to where a young girl struggled to sew on an old broken-down Singer sewing machine. He turned back to Mary and said, "I believe you are on the right track. This is the most promising thing I've seen in Florida," and handed her a check for $200.

The visitor was Mr. Thomas H. White, manufacturer of White sewing machines. "I wept, called the children in for a special meeting. We knelt and thanked God. He came back the next day with a new sewing machine and with an architect and carpenter, and they brought materials and plaster

to put on the walls. And he said, 'I will have bathrooms put in.' He brought pillow slips, and sheets."

Often he would drop by with a few pairs of shoes or blankets or whatever he thought they might need. Tears of gratitude would fill Mary's eyes whenever he came by, but his simple reply to her was, "I've never invested a dollar that has brought greater returns than the dollars I've given you."

That building was named Faith Hall and officially opened in 1907, "prayed up, sung up and talked up" in two years. Mary now had 250 girls who looked up to her as a mother. The field across the street had been cleared and they were taught to plant and grow vegetables and strawberries. They were of such quality, that well-to-do people traveled from all around to buy their produce there.



Dr. Bethune saying goodbye to a group of students after resigning as president of the college.

There needed to be more buildings built which meant more land needed to be purchased. She found the owner of the old dump next door. He wanted an outrageous $1,000 for that piece of property. Mary had grown confident in her bargaining power and asserted herself. "I don't suppose you know this, Sir, but people around here call this land of yours, 'Hell's Hole.' It's full of mosquitos, weeds and snakes. The way it is, I'm not sure it's good for anything." The man lowered the price down to $200, $5.00 down and $5.00 a month until it was paid off. He didn't know it at the time, but Mary didn't even have the $5.00 down payment. But she knew she could get it.

Once again neighbors pitched in and drained the swamp, clearing out the weeds and debris along the way. Bushes and shrubs, flowers and trees were planted in place of it and it became a beautiful piece of property.

One Sunday Mary took her girls for a picnic out by the Piney Woods. She had heard about the turpentine camps. These were horrible places. The riff-raff around town had been hired to drain the sap out of the pine trees to make turpentine in exchange for all the rum they could drink on the weekends. Sadly, some of them had brought their families with them and the conditions they lived in would make anyone shudder. Drunks were sprawled out on the ground everywhere and she saw ragged, unkempt women hiding timidly in the trees. Sickness was all around. They looked more like animals than human beings.

At first her girls were reluctant to be there, but Mary encouraged them to have faith. She invited as many as would to gather together into a meeting. At first, they laughed, they jeered, even told vulgar jokes, rum bottles in hand. But Mary started to sing a hymn in her beautiful contralto voice and soon the girls joined in. Then they sang another hymn followed by another. The laughter started to die down, the rum bottles were lowered to the ground. She now had their attention and she spoke to them with simple, eloquent words, encouraging them to a better life. She said she would return each Sunday and that eventually she would start a school for their children where they could learn to read and write and sew. As she gained their confidence, she was invited to their homes, such as they were, and showed them how to clean and make them pretty. She had always taught her students that neatness, cleanliness and beauty in a home were like another kind of prayer to God. Week after week, Mary and her girls sang and read to them. They encouraged and admonished them. The girls were able to practice their nursing skills. And many of the people of the turpentine camps felt human again; like they were a part of the world again. Five mission schools were set up in the camps over the next five years.

Wherever Mary saw a need, she would say, "I prayed to God to let me do something about that." One of her young girls became deathly ill with acute appendicitis. Mary tried in vain to find a hospital that would treat her. All refused because she had the wrong color of skin.

Finally, she found a doctor who compassionately agreed to perform the surgery. Mary left her in his care, but was outraged when she returned the next day and found the little girl left to herself on a cot on a drafty back porch. This was just not acceptable. Mary stayed up all night writing letters, begging for money to raise the $5,000 she would need to open a small hospital that could treat her people. Within a month, she had the money. And within a short time, McLeod Hospital, named after her father, was dedicated.

The Ku Klux Klan was a dreaded, secret society of those who hated, among other things, people with colored skin. They used fear as a weapon to force people into compliance with what they wanted. They stopped at nothing to exert their power—burning buildings, torturing and even killing innocent victims. It was no secret that Mary had long been teaching her people to courageously stand up for their inalienable rights. The next day was to be another election day and rumor was the Klan was riding out to Mrs. Bethune's school that night to persuade her it would be in her best interest to keep her people away from the voting polls. This was not a time to show cowardice in any way. Mary ordered every light be turned on in the school. She encouraged the choir to continue its practice as usual and fearlessly placed herself in between the two white columns on the steps leading up to the school. What an imposing figure she must have been, her long cape fluttering in the wind. She waited. Maybe they weren't coming after all. But then, out in the darkness, she could see the flicker of flames coming closer; the muffled sound of horse's hoofs making their way toward her. Silently, eighty ghostly figures lined up in front of her, their eyes glaring from behind their hooded masks.

"We hear you're teaching colored folks around here to vote. We've just come to warn you about filling their heads with such ideas." They threatened her that if she didn't stop, they would come back and burn every building until there was nothing left. Mary was more angry than afraid now. She straightened herself and with deliberate words told them, "If you must burn my buildings, go ahead. But let me tell you. Once you've burned them, I'll build them back again. Then if you burn

them a second time, I'll build them again, and again, and again." She must have been startled by her own boldness, but slowly, the masked men turned and walked back out into the dark of night. They left behind the can of kerosene, which the groundskeeper quickly retrieved. The school could use it.

The next morning, Mary led a procession of 100 voters, many of them exercising their rights for the first time. They were kept waiting all day, but they voted. The story of this obscure schoolteacher in Florida who had stood up to the Klan made newspaper headlines all over America.

Mrs. Bethune was becoming a speaker in high demand. She raised awareness of the needs of her people; of the need for equal rights and opportunities. She would be seated on the stands in her plain, shabby clothes next to prominent and fashionably dressed club members. But Henry Winslow observed, "There was a magnificent dignity about her person and carriage that awed her audiences."

People who heard her speak said she was electrifying.

Her natural ability to unite and organize combined with her warmth and dignity soon led to her appointment as the president of the National Association of Colored Women. Her school had grown and was now a fully accredited college, admitting men as well as women, after a merger with Cookman College. Friends convinced her to turn the college over to other capable hands as the level of her influence widened.

She never kept any of the money she raised for herself. But when friends offered to pitch in and pay for her to enjoy a trip to Europe, she excitedly accepted the opportunity. She had long had the desire to know just a little more about the setting of foreign people in their own homes and in their own surroundings.

She thrilled at visiting Westminster Abbey, the Louvre, Christopher Columbus' birthplace. Teas and parties were held in her honor by the Lord Mayor of London, by Lady Astor and Lady McLeod. What a different world Europe was, far from the Jim Crow laws back home that wouldn't allow her to eat in restaurants and forced her to go through certain doors. In Europe, she was treated like royalty. "We were wonderfully received there. My dark skin did not hamper them at all. They were very fond of me and I liked them." When her group got to Vatican City, they were received by the Pope, the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church. They were assembled in a large room and the pope gave his blessing to the body as he always did. Then everyone kissed his ring. But when the pope came to Mary, he stopped and held his hands over her head and said something in Latin. Mary never knew what he said. But when she looked up, the men in her group were weeping, and strangely, the attendant who was with the Pope put his arms about her shoulders and said, "Oh blessed art thou among women."

As she saw first hand much of poverty in the different countries she visited, she observed, "One gets very many different ideas—we are not the only sufferers and burden bearers in the world. I stiffened my back and got new courage to come back to America with greater appreciation for the blessings we did have."

Back home in America, Mary was invited to a special luncheon by the mother of soon-to-be president Franklin D. Roosevelt. There were about 35 guests, but Mary was the only guest with dark skin. Two of the guests were ladies from the South, and as the announcement was made that lunch was to be served, these ladies were waiting for Mrs. Bethune to be escorted out. It was unheard of to sit at the same table. Anyone who allowed it would be socially ostracized. Imagine the startled



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and others at the opening of Midway Hall.

looks on their faces as Mrs. Roosevelt graciously held out her arm to personally escort Mary Bethune to the table where she was seated as the guest of honor. She remembered how the faces of the servants lit up with pride when they saw her seated at the center of that imposing gathering of women leaders from all over the United States. Mrs. Roosevelt introduced her to her daughter-in-law, Eleanor, wife of Franklin, and they became immediate friends.

Her circle of influence grew wider and wider, with appointments to various boards, committees and even advisory roles to the Presidents of the United States. She fought hard to open doors for her people. When asked what they wanted, she would reply without hesitation: "Protection that is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and which we have a right to expect; the opportunity for development equal to that of any other American; to be understood; and finally, to make an appreciable contribution to the growth of a better America and a better world."

As conditions in the country became desperate in the Great Depression, President Roosevelt personally selected Mary to be Director of Minority Affairs of the National Youth Administration, or the NYA. The appointment overwhelmed her and her first inclination was to decline. But then she was reminded this was the first post created at such a high level for a black woman in the United States. Think of what it would mean to her people. She was paving the way for others to follow. She had accomplished so much in her life, overcoming so many insurmountable barriers. With her faith, she surely could do this. And so she went to work.

"Let those who can read go out to teach the children who can't," Mary Bethune directed. Young men and women just out of school themselves, under her inspiration, gathered in the children of the sharecroppers who had no schools and others who had not had an education and set up schools without buildings. In the NYA schools over the next few years, more than a million children got the basics of education. Reading did make a difference. But she didn't stop there. She set up projects in agriculture, shop work and dressmaking. Mothers' clubs were organized, bringing modern standards of health and child care. More than 40,000 young people were able to complete their college work and obtain their degrees.

Her desk was flooded with touching letters: "I am a colored boy 19 years old and am in very bad need of work. Please help me get a place in the National Youth Administration. They say it helps

poor boys and girls like me."

Or, "I've been out of school for five school terms. I have no father and my mother isn't able to work regular on account of a run-down condition. So you see I must have work, so please help me." She criss-crossed the country, looking for ways to help take care of their needs.

For ten years, she worked tirelessly for "her children." President Roosevelt trusted her and depended on her. Once he said to her, "I am always glad to see you, Mrs. Bethune, because you never ask for anything for yourself."

She ignored her doctor's advice to slow down. There were just too many young people who needed her. But she had been distressed with a severe asthmatic condition for years, and announced that she needed to undergo an operation. Now, this woman who was the personal friend of presidents; who held a high rank in the national government; who was beloved by the millions of young people she had given hope to still faced the cruel realities of Jim Crow. Upon entering Johns Hopkins Hospital, she was told there were no private rooms in the medical or surgical divisions, where she should be, for a black woman. A special gesture was made because she was so outstanding, to place her in a room in a completely different part of the hospital. She soon discovered every nurse and every doctor on the staff were white. She persisted in a request to allow two distinguished black physicians in the city to participate in her case. She won and from that time on, doctors of all races have been allowed on the staff at Johns Hopkins hospital.



Photograph of Mary McLeod Bethune

Mrs. Bethune kept a careful diary of her six weeks there, and although she must have had times of severe pain, there were no records of complaints. Years before, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., had given her his personal copy of The Optimists Good Morning, a book of wise sayings and comforting thoughts she had read for years. Her own log always began with a cheery thought, "Thank God for light, or Thanks for life, thanks for morning." "Glorious Day." "All my trust in Thee."

When World War II started, she spent countless hours writing words of encouragement and hope in letters. This 200-pound grandmother in her 60s became the unlikely pin-up girl in lockers of servicemen all over the world. How they loved her. And how she loved them.

The last five years of her life were spent at what was called "The Retreat," a home that was built for her on a corner of the Cookman-Bethune campus. The school now covered 32 acres and had 14 beautiful buildings surrounded by manicured lawns, dazzling flower



Mary McLeod Bethune statue, Lincoln Park, Washington D.C.

beds and tall, shady trees. She watched the students as they hurried from class to class. Did they know how dear a price had been paid for the opportunities they now enjoyed? She remembered how the school had been built on an old dump heap with just $1.50 in her pocket. Gone were the days of the white-dress inspection tour. When she appeared dressed in white, everyone scrambled to their rooms to make sure no clothes had been stuffed under the bed or their rooms left untidy. The walls of her retreat were covered with photos and memories of her life of service. So much progress had been made, but there was still so far to go.

She sat down to write her last will and testament:

Sometimes I ask myself if I have any legacy to leave. My worldly possessions are few. Yet, my experiences have been rich. From them I have distilled principles and policies in which I firmly believe. Perhaps in them there is something of value. So, as my life draws to a close, I will pass them on in the hope that this philosophy may give inspiration. Here, then is my legacy.

I leave you love. "Love thy neighbor" is a precept which could transform the world if it were universally practiced. I leave you hope.

I leave you a thirst for education.

I leave you faith. Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible. Faith in God is the greatest power, but great faith too is faith in oneself.

I leave you racial dignity. We must recognize that we are the custodians as well as the heirs of a great civilization. As a race we have given something to the world, and for this we are proud.

I leave you a desire to live harmoniously with your fellow men.

I leave you finally with a responsibility to our young people. They must not be discouraged from aspiring toward greatness, for they are to be the leaders of tomorrow. One of Mary Bethune's biographers closes her story with these words:

On the afternoon of May 18, 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune was rocking gently on her front porch. She rose and entered the house, and her heart suddenly stilled. She did not need time to make her peace with God; that had been done long ago, and they were companions.

Beside her dearly beloved Retreat, a hill was built and what was left of earth was laid within it. In flowers above her was spelled out MOTHER. And anyone who listened with hope and belief might hear the strong echo of her voice, "Life is wonderful!"

Chapter 23

A Mere Matter of the Feelings

By John Branner

I was born in the South "fo' de wah," and as my parents were slave holders, I grew up among the negroes. To me they seemed vastly more interesting and more human than white folks. During my early childhood negro girls or negro women were my nurses and keepers all day long and it required a lot of parental authority and something else that I decline to name, to keep me away from their cabins at night. I remember most vividly one particular night when I was called in from a negro cabin and brought to judgment in the presence of the assembled family. After a solemn lecture by my mother, and after she evidently thought I must be under conviction of sin, she asked if I thought the negroes were more interesting and better company than the white folks. In my innocence I replied meekly, "Yes, ma'am!" Thereafter my pursuit of happiness was interfered with in various ways, but I still managed to slip through the picket lines occasionally, and to sit for a few blissful minutes in the pile of pine knots at the corner of the fireplace in a negro cabin that was presided over by an old man and or old woman.

The conversation at such times and in such places—at least in so far as it impressed me—was always easily understood, and it was always full of dramatic interest. Even the theological instruction that I received from the negroes was realistic, cleancut, and convincing, thought it must be confessed that it was on the whole rather whimsical and only remotely related to orthodox teachings.

I recall the fact too that my questions on religious subjects were almost always answered without any hesitation, and not infrequently the answers were so clinched that serious doubt was quite impossible.

It was in these negro cabins that I first heard many of the folk-lore stories published later by Joel Chandler Harris, and a lot more besides.

Among the dearest of the old negro friends who met so satisfactorily the requirements of my childish imagination were Aunt Ellen, Uncle Peter, and Aunt Sarah or Aunt Say as we called her. When I got big enough to wield a hoe, the hoe was placed in my hands and I was required to wield it, and to keep up in the corn field with negro boys of my own age; and as we small boys were usually under the immediate supervision of a grown person, I usually managed to get one of these imaginative theological elders for my sponsor. And it was in the long corn rows along the bottoms of the French-broad river that I heard from one of the old negroes these and many other stories that have not partly or entirely escaped my memory.

It is not strange that, under the circumstances, slavery seemed to me a natural and happy state of human existence.

Then came the civil war and after that the former slaves were taken in hand by political organizations and by the fishers in the muddy waters of the times. They were inveigled away from their former homes and friends, and finally left to the waves and winds of fate like so much flotsam and jetsam of the war.

Meanwhile I had been sent to school away from home. It was, I believe, in the summer of 1867 that I returned home for a short visit, and on inquiring about our former slaves I heard that Aunt Ellen lived about eight miles away, and that she had sent word to me to be sure to come to see her when I was home on a visit. And of course I went.



Negro Life at the South, Eastman Johnson

I found Aunt Ellen in a state of poverty and wretchedness that went to my heart. But she had for me a good dinner of corn bread and bacon and greens, and she told me all her domestic troubles, of which she had a choice assortment. She had a drunken loafer for a husband, and a house full of children in various stages of nakedness and dirt, and growing up in shiftlessness with all the accompaniments of such conditions. Her health was not good, but she had to work hard "whedder or no," early and late, to keep the family together and alive. To me it was a sad, sad story. It seemed to me that the contrast between her condition as a slave and her condition as a free woman was an

overwhelming and unanswerable argument in favor of slavery. Besides I had been living in the midst of that sort of arguments ever since the slaves had been freed. And I told her what I thought, or supposed I thought, in some such words as these: "Aunt Ellen, you were better off as a slave than you are now. You had a better house to live in, better food to eat, and better clothes to wear, and no doctor's bills to pay. You never had to worry about providing for your family, because you knew that father and mother would attend to that. If you got sick you had a doctor to look after you, and you had no bills to pay. Don't you think you were better off as a slave?"

And this is what Aunt Ellen replied: "De Lawd bless yo' soul, chile, dat's a fac'; hit's jes lak you ben a sayin'. I knows I had mo' to eat an' mo' to wear, an' a better house to live in, an' all o' dem things, an' you all was mighty good to me; an' I didn have none o' dese here doctah's bills to pay. But Law', honey, after all, dah's de feelin's!"

From that day to this I have had no more to say in favor of human slavery.

References

Chapter 1:
Stimpson, Mary Stoyell. 1915. *The child's book of American biography* (pp. 81-90). Boston; Little, Brown and company.

Chapter 2:
McSpadden, Joseph Walker. circa 1922. *The story of Abraham Lincoln* (pp. 155-158). New York, N.Y., Newark, N.J.; Barse & Hopkins

Chapter 3:
Blaisdell, Albert Franklin; Ball, Francis Kingsley. 1913. *The child's book of American history* (pp. 163-172). Boston; Little, Brown and company.

Chapter 4:
Miller, Francis Trevelyan. circa 1909. *Hero tales from American life* (pp. 1-10). New York; The Christian herald.

Chapter 5:
Scoville, Samuel. circa 1918. *Abraham Lincoln, his story* (pp. 65-73). Philadelphia; American Sunday-School Union.

Chapter 6:
Moton, Robert Russa. 1920. *Finding a Way Out: An Autobiography* (pp. 1-15). Doubleday, Page.

Chapters 7:
Miller, Francis Trevelyan. circa 1909. *Hero tales from American life* (pp. 1-10). New York; The Christian herald.

Chapter 8:
Haynes, Elizabeth Ross. 1921. *Unsung heroes* (pp. 209-226, abridged). New York; DuBois and Dill.

Chapter 9:
Miller, Francis Trevelyan. circa 1909. *Hero tales from American life* (pp. 309-312). New York; The Christian herald.

Chapter 10-11:
Holland, Rupert Sargent. 1913. *Historic adventures; tales from American history* (pp. 113-134). Philadelphia; G.W. Jacobs & Company

Chapter 12:
Tappan, Eva March. 1907. *Adventures & achievements* (pp. 89-94). Houghton, Mifflin & Company.

Chapter 13:
Humphrey, Grace. circa 1919. *Women in American history* (pp. 132-153 abridged). Indianapolis; The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Chapter 14:
Douglass, Frederick; Lobb, John. 1882. *The life and times of Frederick Douglass* (pp. 49-60 abridged). London; Christian Age Office.

Chapter 15:
Haynes, Elizabeth Ross. 1921. *Unsung heroes* (pp. 87-104, abridged). New York; DuBois and Dill.

Chapter 16:
Miller, Francis Trevelyan. circa 1909. *Hero tales from American life* (pp. 281-283). New York; The Christian herald.

Chapter 17:
Work, John Wesley. 1915. *Folk Song of the American Negro* (selections). Nashville; Press of Fisk University.

Chapter 18:
Mee, Arthur. 1935. *Arthur Mee's 1000 Heroes* (pp. 1501-1503). London; Amalgamated Press.

Chapter 19:
Bailey, Carolyn Sherwin. 1919. *Broad stripes and bright stars; stories of American history* (pp. 176-185). Springfield, Mass.; Milton Bradley company.

Chapter 20:
Washington, Booker T. 1901. *Up from Slavery* (selections). Doubleday, Page & Co.

Chapter 21-22:
Story retold by Marlene Peterson.

Chapter 23:
Branner, John Casper. 1921. *How and why stories* (pp. 3-7). New York; H. Holt and company.