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gradation, because a part are degraded? it to be the duty of the Free, to elevate in every manner possible; as the redemption of the freeman; and upon the elevation of the people of America, anywhere upon this redemption of the slaves. We shall hope to see the necessity of the free remain the oppressed. Let us apply, first, the lever that elevates us to the position of manhood's at the manacle of every slave in the land. Let us—for want of a better sphere—of men let Douglass, Frederick A. Hinton,⁸ and a few others, were permitted to expire in a barber-shop, be found in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, New York City, Charleston, (S. C.) New Orleans, St. Louis, Pittsburg, Buffalo, Rochester, Milwaukee, Chicago, Columbus, Zanesville, and other places, confining themselves to Barbarism, certainly the necessity of such a course as is daily acknowledged; appreciated by every one, and not rejected as heretofore, as though it were a crime. These minds must become "unfettered," and not be in their present positions. A continuation of what is termed "Second Nature;" it begets an inferiority of mind to such condition. It changes the system, and adapts man and woman to a new mode of life. The offsprings of slaves and free, characteristics of their parents; and nothing but education, will change the character. Let the slave learn to forgive his master, and learn to forgive him for his sin and abuse; just as the Spaniel would not kick him; because he has been taught to do so. He becomes adapted in body and mind to his new position, becomes a very-loving Canary, and lofty-soaring Eagle, and learn to love it from habit of confinement. It is a position among our oppressors; we have been so long that we have learned to love them. When reflecting upon us, all absorbing subject; we feel in the agony of a heart, though we could cry out in the language of a prophet, "head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, and night for the" degradation "of my people, and a lodging place of way-faring men; that I do not come from them!"⁹

Men in the United States, are very different persons from those in Ireland and Germany, the countries of their birth. They were depressed and downcast; but the instant they were set free, free to act and untrammelled to do as they pleased, they undergoes a change, which in time becomes permanent. They are committed to the offspring, who when born under

such circumstances, is a decidedly different being to what it would have been, had it been born under different circumstances.

A child born under oppression, has all the elements of servility in its constitution; who when born under favorable circumstances, has to the contrary, all the elements of freedom and independence of feeling. Our children then, may not be expected, to maintain that position and manly bearing; born under the unfavorable circumstances with which we are surrounded in this country; that we so much desire. To use the language of the talented Mr. Whipper,¹ "they cannot be raised in this country, without being stoop shouldered." Heaven's pathway stands unobstructed, which will lead us into a Paradise of bliss. Let us go on and possess the land,² and the God of Israel will be our God.

The lessons of every school book, the pages of every history, and columns of every newspaper, are so replete with stimuli to nerve us on to manly aspirations, that those of our young people, who will now refuse to enter upon this great theatre of Polynesian adventure, and take their position on the stage of Central and South America, where a brilliant engagement, of certain and most triumphant success, in the drama of human equality awaits them; then, with the blood of *slaves*, write upon the lintel of every door in sterling Capitals, to be gazed and hissed at by every passer by—

Doomed by the Creator
To servility and degradation;
The SERVANT of the *white man*,
And despised of every nation!

1852

1. William Whipper (1804?–1876), African American businessman, editor, and abolitionist.

2. See Deuteronomy 8:1: "Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers."

HARRIET JACOBS

ca. 1813–1897

Harriet Jacobs was the first woman to author a slave narrative in the United States. Before the publication of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), several free-born African American women, such as Jarena Lee and Zilpha Elaw, had proudly portrayed their spiritual journeys and social struggles in autobiographies that featured the trials and triumphs of true Christian womanhood. Jacobs's successful struggle for freedom, not only for herself but for her two children, represented no less profoundly a black woman's indomitable spirit. Yet nowhere in her autobiography, not even on its title page, did Jacobs disclose her own identity as the subject and author of her story. Instead, she called herself "Linda Brent" and masked the important places and persons in her story in the manner of a novelist. "I had no motive for secrecy on my own account," Jacobs insisted in the preface to her autobiography, but given the harrowing and sensational story she had to tell, the one-time fugitive slave felt she had little alternative but to shield herself from a readership whose understanding and empathy she could not take for granted.

Jacobs's task in writing her narrative was considerably more complicated than that of Lee or Elaw because Jacobs felt obliged to disclose through her firsthand example the special injustices that women suffered under what sentimental defenders of slavery often referred to as the "patriarchal institution." Famous male fugitive slave narrators like Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown had called attention to the sexual victimization of slave women by white men. But these men had said little about how slave women resisted such exploitation and tried to exercise a measure of freedom within the restrictions of their oppression. Though she knew that she risked losing her reader's respect by speaking out, Jacobs refused to suppress the truth about her sexual exploitation in slavery or her use of her own sexuality as a weapon against such exploitation. Writing an unprecedented mixture of confession, self-justification, and societal exposé, Jacobs turned her autobiography into a unique analysis of the myths and the realities that defined the situation of the African American woman and her relationship to the nineteenth century's "cult of true womanhood." As a result, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* occupies a crucial place in the history of both African American and American women's literature.

Harriet Jacobs was born a slave in Edenton, North Carolina, around 1813. Orphaned as a child, she grew up under the tutelage of her grandmother and her white mistress, who taught her to read and sew. The death of her mistress when Jacobs was eleven conveyed her into the hands of Dr. James Norcom, the licentious and abusive master called Dr. Flint in *Incidents*. During her early teenage years, Jacobs was subjected to relentless sexual harassment from Norcom. In desperation she formed a clandestine liaison with Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, a white attorney (Mr. Sands in *Incidents*), by whom Jacobs had two children by the time she was twenty years old. Hoping that by seeming to run away she could induce Norcom to sell her children to their father, Jacobs hid in a crawl space above a storeroom in her grandmother's house in the summer of 1835. In that "little dismal hole" she remained for the next seven years, sewing, reading the Bible, keeping watch over her children as best she could, and writing occasional letters to Norcom designed to confuse him as to her actual whereabouts. In 1842 Jacobs escaped to the North, determined to reclaim her daughter, Louisa, from Sawyer, who had purchased the child and sent her to Brooklyn, New York, without emancipating her. In New York, Jacobs was reunited with Louisa; secured a place for her son, Joseph, to live in Boston; and went to work as a nursemaid to the baby daughter of Mary Stace Willis, wife of the popular editor, poet, and magazine writer Nathaniel Parker Willis.

For ten years after her escape from North Carolina, Harriet Jacobs lived the tense and uncertain life of a fugitive slave. Norcom made several attempts to locate her in New York, which forced Jacobs to keep on the move and enlist the aid of antislavery activists in Rochester, New York, where she took up an eighteen-month residence in 1849. Working in an antislavery reading room and bookstore above the offices of Frederick Douglass's newspaper, *The North Star*, Jacobs met and began to confide in Amy Post, an abolitionist and pioneering feminist who gently urged her to consider making her story public. After the tremendous response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), Jacobs thought of enlisting the aid of the novel's author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, in getting Jacobs's story published. But Stowe had little interest in any sort of creative partnership with Jacobs. After receiving, early in 1852, the gift of her freedom from Cornelia Grinnell Willis, the second wife of her employer, Jacobs decided to write her autobiography herself.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is the only nineteenth-century slave narrative whose genesis can be traced, through a series of letters from Jacobs to various friends and advisers, including Post and the eventual editor of *Incidents*, Lydia Maria Child. Discovered and published by Jean Fagan Yellin in her admirable edition of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1987), Jacobs's correspondence with Child helps lay to rest the persistent charge against *Incidents* that it is at worst a fiction and at best the product of Child's pen, not Jacobs's. Child's letters to Jacobs and others make clear that her role as editor was no more than she acknowledged in her introduction to *Incidents*: to ensure the orderly arrangement and directness of the narrative,

without adding anything to the text or altering in her of recounting her story.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl appeared in abolitionist press, but with the onset of the Civil War devoted herself to relief efforts in and around slaves who had become refugees of the war. In 1862 she went to Savannah, Georgia, to engage in further and freedwomen. Returning to Boston with a boardinghouse in Cambridge, Massachusetts. By 1867 she had returned to Washington, D.C., where she worked as a housekeeper until 1870. When she died on March 7, 1897, her pastor, the Rev. Dr. James H. Smith, eulogized her as "the very soul of generosity," "a woman who was never in danger of overlooking her, or of mi-

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Two excerpts from a letter, ca. 1852, from Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post (1802–1899), in which Jacobs reflects on writing her autobiography. A larger selection of the letter is on page 223.

your proposal to me has been thought over and over again and some of the most painful remembrances dear Amy if it was a burden associated with it far better to have been a slave whose bones had to bleach on the highways than to be a free woman whose curse of slavery stamped upon yourself and Child kindly sympathies won me at one time to speak out that has passed my lips since I left my Mother's door I think as they pleased but my lips should be sealed for this reason when I first came North I tried to say as much as possible because I felt that I could not

was considerably more complicated than that obliged to disclose through her firsthand experience suffered under what sentimental defenders of the patriarchal institution." Famous male fugitive and William Wells Brown had called attention to the exploitation of women by white men. But these men had not exposed such exploitation and tried to exercise a measure of control over their oppression. Though she knew the realities of their oppression, Jacobs refused to suspect by speaking out, Jacobs refused to supplantation in slavery or her use of her own sexualization. Writing an unprecedented mixture of sentimental exposé, Jacobs turned her autobiography into the realities that defined the situation of the relationship to the nineteenth century's "cult of domesticity" in the *Life of a Slave Girl* occupies a crucial place in American and American women's literature.

Jacobs was born in Edenton, North Carolina, around 1813. Under the tutelage of her grandmother and her mother, she learned to read and sew. The death of her mistress when she was a child placed her in the hands of Dr. James Norcom, the licentious owner of the plantation. During her early teenage years, Jacobs suffered sexual harassment from Norcom. In desperation, she fled with Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, a white attorney, and her two children by the time she was twenty. Jacobs had two children by the time she was twenty, coming to run away she could induce Norcom to let her and her children hide in a crawl space above a storeroom in her father's house. In that "little dismal hole" she remained until 1835. In that "little dismal hole" she remained reading the Bible, keeping watch over her children, and writing occasional letters to Norcom designed to confuse him. In 1842 Jacobs escaped to the North, determined to find a home with Sawyer, who had purchased the child and sent her to New York, Jacobs was determined to emancipate her. In New York, Jacobs was placed for her son, Joseph, to live in Boston; and went to live with the daughter of Mary Stace Willis, wife of the popular abolitionist Nathaniel Parker Willis.

From North Carolina, Harriet Jacobs lived the tense life. Norcom made several attempts to locate her in New York. She kept on the move and enlist the aid of antislavery friends, where she took up an eighteen-month residence in New York City, where she took up an eighteen-month residence in a reading room and bookstore above the offices of *The North Star*, Jacobs met and began to confide in the pioneering feminist who gently urged her to contribute to the tremendous response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Under the aid of the novel's author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jacobs published the book. But Stowe had little interest in any sort of abolition. After receiving, early in 1852, the gift of her freedom from Willis, the second wife of her employer, Jacobs decided to return to the North.

rough a series of letters from Jacobs to various friends and the eventual editor of *Incidents*, Lydia Maria Child. In Fagan Yellin in her admirable edition of *Incidents* (1977), Jacobs's correspondence with Child helps lay to rest *Incidents* that it is at worst a fiction and at best Jacobs's. Child's letters to Jacobs and others make it no more than she acknowledged in her introduction: orderly arrangement and directness of the narrative.

without adding anything to the text or altering in any significant way Jacobs's manner of recounting her story.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl appeared inauspiciously in early 1861, its publication underwritten by its author. The narrative was favorably reviewed in the abolitionist press, but with the onset of the Civil War in April of that year, Jacobs' book claimed little attention beyond antislavery circles. From 1862 to 1866 Jacobs devoted herself to relief efforts in and around Washington, D.C., among former slaves who had become refugees of the war. In the war's immediate aftermath she went to Savannah, Georgia, to engage in further relief work among the freedmen and freedwomen. Returning to Boston with Louisa in 1868, Jacobs opened a boardinghouse in Cambridge, Massachusetts. By the mid-1880s mother and daughter had returned to Washington, D.C., where except for a short-lived boardinghouse venture Harriet worked as a housekeeper until she was almost eighty years old. When she died on March 7, 1897, her pastor, the Reverend Francis Grimké, eulogized her as "the very soul of generosity," "a woman of marked individuality. There was never any danger of overlooking her, or of mistaking her for anybody else."

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Two excerpts from a letter, ca. 1852, from Harriet Jacobs to her friend and confidant Amy Kirby Post (1802–1899), in which Jacobs reflects on Post's "proposal" that Jacobs write her autobiography. A larger selection of the letter is transcribed here:

your proposal to me has been thought over and over again but not with out some most painful remembrances dear Amy if it was the life of a Heroine with no degradation associated with it far better to have been one of the starving poor of Ireland whose bones had to bleach on the highways than to have been a slave with the curse of slavery stamped upon yourself and Children your purity of heart and kindly sympathies won me at one time to speak of my children it is the only words that has passed my lips since I left my Mothers door I had determined to let others think as they pleased but my lips should be sealed and no one had a right to question me for this reason when I first came North I avoided the Antislavery people as much as possible because I felt that I could not be honest and tell the whole

Brother with my grieved [grieved] and mortified
 with mine while he would advise me to do
 roved it but my stubborn pride would not yield
 ears to conquer it and I felt that God has helped
 my past life to any one for I would not do it with
 could help save another from my fate it would be
 ep it back. . . .

in the Life of a Slave Girl

Preface

BY THE AUTHOR

There is no fiction. I am aware that some of my
 but they are, nevertheless, strictly true. I have
 icted by Slavery; on the contrary, my descrip-
 have concealed the names of places, and given
 no motive for secrecy on my own account, but
 ce towards others to pursue this course.
 ent to the task I have undertaken. But I trust
 ncies in consideration of circumstances. I was
 and I remained in a Slave State twenty-seven
 e North, it has been necessary for me to work
 t, and the education of my children. This has
 make up for the loss of early opportunities to
 compelled me to write these pages at irregular
 snatch an hour from household duties.
 adelpia, Bishop Paine¹ advised me to publish a
 him I was altogether incompetent to such an
 improved my mind somewhat since that time; I
 on; but I trust my motives will excuse what might
 as. I have not written my experiences in order to
 n the contrary, it would have been more pleasant
 out my own history. Neither do I care to excite
 ings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women
 ense of the condition of two millions of women at
 suffering what I suffered, and most of them far
 imony to that of abler pens to convince the people
 very really is. Only by experience can any one real-
 d foul is that pit of abominations. May the blessing
 ct effort in behalf of my persecuted people!

LINDA BRENT.

I. Childhood

never knew it till six years of happy childhood had
 was a carpenter, and considered so intelligent and

bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Jacobs met him in

skillful in his trade, that, when buildings out of the common line were to be
 erected, he was sent for from long distances, to be head workman. On condi-
 tion of paying his mistress two hundred dollars a year, and supporting himself,
 he was allowed to work at his trade, and manage his own affairs. His strongest
 wish was to purchase his children; but, though he several times offered his
 hard earnings for that purpose, he never succeeded. In complexion my parents
 were a light shade of brownish yellow, and were termed mulattoes. They lived
 together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so
 fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to
 them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment. I
 had one brother, William, who was two years younger than myself—a bright,
 affectionate child. I had also a great treasure in my maternal grandmother,
 who was a remarkable woman in many respects. She was the daughter of a
 planter in South Carolina, who, at his death, left her mother and his three
 children free, with money to go to St. Augustine, where they had relatives. It
 was during the Revolutionary War; and they were captured on their passage,
 carried back, and sold to different purchasers. Such was the story my grand-
 mother used to tell me; but I do not remember all the particulars. She was a
 little girl when she was captured and sold to the keeper of a large hotel. I have
 often heard her tell how hard she fared during childhood. But as she grew
 older she evinced so much intelligence, and was so faithful, that her master
 and mistress could not help seeing it was for their interest to take care of such
 a valuable piece of property. She became an indispensable personage in the
 household, officiating in all capacities, from cook and wet nurse to seam-
 stress. She was much praised for her cooking; and her nice crackers became
 so famous in the neighborhood that many people were desirous of obtaining
 them. In consequence of numerous requests of this kind, she asked permis-
 sion of her mistress to bake crackers at night, after all the household work was
 done; and she obtained leave to do it, provided she would clothe herself and
 her children from the profits. Upon these terms, after working hard all day for
 her mistress, she began her midnight bakings, assisted by her two oldest chil-
 dren. The business proved profitable; and each year she laid by a little, which
 was saved for a fund to purchase her children. Her master died, and the prop-
 erty was divided among his heirs. The widow had her dower in the hotel,
 which she continued to keep open. My grandmother remained in her service
 as a slave; but her children were divided among her master's children. As she
 had five, Benjamin, the youngest one, was sold, in order that each heir might
 have an equal portion of dollars and cents. There was so little difference in
 our ages that he seemed more like my brother than my uncle. He was a bright,
 handsome lad, nearly white; for he inherited the complexion my grandmother
 had derived from Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Though only ten years old, seven
 hundred and twenty dollars were paid for him. His sale was a terrible blow to
 my grandmother; but she was naturally hopeful, and she went to work with
 renewed energy, trusting in time to be able to purchase some of her children.
 She had laid up three hundred dollars, which her mistress one day begged as
 a loan, promising to pay her soon. The reader probably knows that no promise
 or writing given to a slave is legally binding; for, according to Southern laws, a
 slave, being property, can hold no property. When my grandmother lent her
 hard earnings to her mistress, she trusted solely to her honor. The honor of a
 slaveholder to a slave!

To this good grandmother I was indebted for many comforts. My brother
 Willie and I often received portions of the crackers, cakes, and preserves,

she made to sell; and after we ceased to be children we were indebted to her for many more important services.

Such were the unusually fortunate circumstances of my early childhood. When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave. My mother's mistress was the daughter of my grandmother's mistress. She was the foster sister of my mother; they were both nourished at my grandmother's breast. In fact, my mother had been weaned at three months old, that the babe of the mistress might obtain sufficient food. They played together as children; and, when they became women, my mother was a most faithful servant to her whiter foster sister. On her death-bed her mistress promised that her children should never suffer for any thing; and during her lifetime she kept her word. They all spoke kindly of my dead mother, who had been a slave merely in name, but in nature was noble and womanly. I grieved for her, and my young mind was troubled with the thought who would now take care of me and my little brother. I was told that my home was now to be with her mistress; and I found it a happy one. No toilsome or disagreeable duties were imposed upon me. My mistress was so kind to me that I was always glad to do her bidding, and proud to labor for her as much as my young years would permit. I would sit by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child. When she thought I was tired, she would send me out to run and jump; and away I bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days—too happy to last. The slave child had no thought for the morrow; but there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel.

When I was nearly twelve years old, my kind mistress sickened and died. As I saw the cheek grow paler, and the eye more glassy, how earnestly I prayed in my heart that she might live! I loved her; for she had been almost like a mother to me. My prayers were not answered. She died, and they buried her in the little churchyard, where, day after day, my tears fell upon her grave.

I was sent to spend a week with my grandmother. I was now old enough to begin to think of the future; and again and again I asked myself what they would do with me. I felt sure I should never find another mistress so kind as the one who was gone. She had promised my dying mother that her children should never suffer for any thing; and when I remembered that, and recalled her many proofs of attachment to me, I could not help having some hopes that she had left me free. My friends were almost certain it would be so. They thought she would be sure to do it, on account of my mother's love and faithful service. But, alas! we all know that the memory of a faithful slave does not avail much to save her children from the auction block.

After a brief period of suspense, the will of my mistress was read, and we learned that she had bequeathed me to her sister's daughter, a child of five years old. So vanished our hopes. My mistress had taught me the precepts of God's Word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."² "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."³ But I was her slave, and I suppose she did not recognize me as her neighbor. I would give much to blot out from my memory that one great wrong. As a child, I loved my mistress; and, looking back on the happy days I spent with her, I try to think with less bitterness of this act of injustice. While I was with her, she

taught me to read and spell; and for this privilege, I bless her memory.

She possessed but few slaves; and at her death she shared the same milk that nourished her mother, among her relatives. Five of them were my grandfather's long and faithful service children escaped the auction block. These Go more, in the sight of their masters, than the children they tend.

II. The New Master and

Dr. Flint, a physician in the neighborhood, had bought me, and I was now the property of their little family. My father, by his nature, as well as by his training, was the fact that my brother William, a skillful mechanic, had more of the common among slaves. My brother was a spirit under such influences, he early detested the same time, he hesitated between the two; but he had the strongest claim upon his obedience. his mistress. When my father reproved him for me, and I didn't know which I ought to go to

"You are my child," replied our father, "and come immediately, if you have to pass through

Poor Willie! He was now to learn his first lesson. Grandmother tried to cheer us with hopeful words in the credulous hearts of youth.

When we entered our new home we encountered cold treatment. We were glad when the mother I moaned and wept, I felt so desolate and alone. I had been there nearly a year, when a dear friend died. I heard her mother sob, as the clouds fell, and I turned away from the grave, feeling that I had left to love. I met my grandmother, who said from her tone I knew that something sad had happened from the people, and then said, "My child, you could I believe it? He had died so suddenly I was sick. I went home with my grandmother. My mother, who had taken from me mother, father, and grandmother tried to comfort me. "Who knew? Perhaps they have been kindly taken from afterwards I often thought of this. She promised her grandchildren, so far as she might be permitted by her love, I returned to my master's. I thought my father's house the next morning; but I was in my mistress's house might be decorated for the day gathering flowers and weaving them into my father was lying within a mile of me."

2. Mark 12:31.

3. Matthew 7:12.

he was merely a piece of property. Moreover, they thought he had spoiled his children, by teaching them to feel that they were human beings. This was blasphemous doctrine for a slave to teach; presumptuous in him, and dangerous to the masters.

The next day I followed his remains to a humble grave beside that of my dear mother. There were those who knew my father's worth, and respected his memory.

My home now seemed more dreary than ever. The laugh of the little slave-children sounded harsh and cruel. It was selfish to feel so about the joy of others. My brother moved about with a very grave face. I tried to comfort him, by saying, "Take courage, Willie; brighter days will come by and by."

"You don't know any thing about it, Linda," he replied. "We shall have to stay here all our days; we shall never be free."

I argued that we were growing older and stronger, and that perhaps we might, before long, be allowed to hire our own time, and then we could earn money to buy our freedom. William declared this was much easier to say than to do; moreover, he did not intend to *buy* his freedom. We held daily controversies upon this subject.

Little attention was paid to the slaves' meals in Dr. Flint's house. If they could catch a bit of food while it was going, well and good. I gave myself no trouble on that score, for on my various errands I passed my grandmother's house, where there was always something to spare for me. I was frequently threatened with punishment if I stopped there; and my grandmother, to avoid detaining me, often stood at the gate with something for my breakfast or dinner. I was indebted to *her* for all my comforts, spiritual or temporal. It was *her* labor that supplied my scanty wardrobe. I have a vivid recollection of the linsey-woolsey⁴ dress given me every winter by Mrs. Flint. How I hated it! It was one of the badges of slavery.

While my grandmother was thus helping to support me from her hard earnings, the three hundred dollars she had lent her mistress were never repaid. When her mistress died, her son-in-law, Dr. Flint, was appointed executor. When grandmother applied to him for payment, he said the estate was insolvent, and the law prohibited payment. It did not, however, prohibit him from retaining the silver candelabra, which had been purchased with that money. I presume they will be handed down in the family, from generation to generation.

My grandmother's mistress had always promised her that, at her death, she should be free; and it was said that in her will she made good the promise. But when the estate was settled, Dr. Flint told the faithful old servant that, under existing circumstances, it was necessary she should be sold.

On the appointed day, the customary advertisement was posted up, proclaiming that there would be a "public sale of negroes, horses, etc." Dr. Flint called to tell my grandmother that he was unwilling to wound her feelings by putting her up at auction, and that he would prefer to dispose of her at private sale. My grandmother saw through his hypocrisy; she understood very well that he was ashamed of the job. She was a very spirited woman, and if he was base enough to sell her, when her mistress intended she should be free, she was determined the public should know it. She had for a long time supplied many families with crackers and preserves; consequently,

"Aunt Marthy," as she was called, was generally known. Her respected her intelligence and good careful service in the family was also well known, and she was determined to leave her free. When the day of sale came, she sprang up to the chattels, and at the first call she sprang up, and her voice called out, "Shame! Shame! Who is going to stand there! That is no place for *you*." With her eyes fixed on her fate. No one bid for her. At last she was sold for seventy dollars." It came from a maiden lady, seventy dollars. It was the grandmother's deceased mistress. She had lived with my grandmother; she knew how free she was, and how cruelly she had been defrauded. She was resolved to protect her. The auctioneer waited for her, and she was respected; no one bid above her. She could not wait when the bill of sale was made out, she signed the bill. The sequence was that, when she had a big heart, she was free. She gave the old servant her freedom.

At that time, my grandmother was just fifty years old. She had passed since then; and now my brother and I had defrauded her of her money, and tried to keep her. One of my mother's sisters, called Aunt Nancy, she was a kind, good aunt to me; and supplied me with food and waiting maid to her mistress. She was, in fact, the mistress of every thing.

Mrs. Flint, like many southern women, was very strong. She had not strength to superintend her household. She were so strong, that she could sit in her easy chair, and till the blood trickled from every stroke of the church; but partaking of the Lord's supper, she had a Christian frame of mind. If dinner was not served on a particular Sunday, she would station herself in the kitchen, and was dished, and then spit in all the kettles and pans. She did this to prevent the cook and her meagre fare with the remains of the good slaves could get nothing to eat except what she weighed out by the pound and ounce, till you she gave them no chance to eat wheat bread. She knew how many biscuits a quart of flour would make, and she knew they ought to be.

Dr. Flint was an epicure.⁵ The cook never showed fear and trembling; for if there happened to be a fault, he would either order her to be whipped, or call her foolish of it in his presence. The poor, hungry creature would eat it; but she did object to having her nose choked.

They had a pet dog, that was a nuisance. He was ordered to make some Indian mush⁶ for him. When his head was held over it, the froth flowed from his mouth. He died a few minutes after. When Dr. Flint

4. A cheap fabric made of linen and wool.

5. One who has discriminating taste in food and drink.

6. A mush drink.

Moreover, they thought he had spoiled his feel that they were human beings. This was to teach; presumptuous in him, and dan-

remains to a humble grave beside that of my who knew my father's worth, and respected

dreary than ever. The laugh of the little slave-rueful. It was selfish to feel so about the joy out with a very grave face. I tried to comfort Willie; brighter days will come by and by." "About it, Linda," he replied. "We shall have to never be free."

ing older and stronger, and that perhaps we to hire our own time, and then we could earn William declared this was much easier to say not intend to buy his freedom. We held daily

ct. the slaves' meals in Dr. Flint's house. If they e it was going, well and good. I gave myself no my various errands I passed my grandmother's ys something to spare for me. I was frequently f I stopped there; and my grandmother, to avoid he gate with something for my breakfast or din-all my comforts, spiritual or temporal. It was her ty wardrobe. I have a vivid recollection of the ne every winter by Mrs. Flint. How I hated it! It ery.

was thus helping to support me from her hard d dollars she had lent her mistress were never died, her son-in-law, Dr. Flint, was appointed er applied to him for payment, he said the estate prohibited payment. It did not, however, prohibi ver candelabra, which had been purchased with will be handed down in the family, from genera-ress had always promised her that, at her death, it was said that in her will she made good the state was settled, Dr. Flint told the faithful old ng circumstances, it was necessary she should be

the customary advertisement was posted up, pro-be a "public sale of negroes, horses, etc." Dr. Flint other that he was unwilling to wound her feeling-ion, and that he would prefer to dispose of her at other saw through his hypocrisy; she understood named of the job. She was a very spirited woman, h to sell her, when her mistress intended she should ined the public should know it. She had for a long nilies with crackers and preserves; consequently,

and wool.

"Aunt Marthy," as she was called, was generally known, and every body who knew her respected her intelligence and good character. Her long and faithful service in the family was also well known, and the intention of her mistress to leave her free. When the day of sale came, she took her place among the chattels, and at the first call she sprang upon the auction-block. Many voices called out, "Shame! Shame! Who is going to sell you, aunt Marthy? Don't stand there! That is no place for you." Without saying a word, she quietly awaited her fate. No one bid for her. At last, a feeble voice said, "Fifty dollars." It came from a maiden lady, seventy years old, the sister of my grandmother's deceased mistress. She had lived forty years under the same roof with my grandmother; she knew how faithfully she had served her owners, and how cruelly she had been defrauded of her rights; and she resolved to protect her. The auctioneer waited for a higher bid; but her wishes were respected; no one bid above her. She could neither read nor write; and when the bill of sale was made out, she signed it with a cross. But what consequence was that, when she had a big heart overflowing with human kindness? She gave the old servant her freedom.

At that time, my grandmother was just fifty years old. Laborious years had passed since then; and now my brother and I were slaves to the man who had defrauded her of her money, and tried to defraud her of her freedom. One of my mother's sisters, called Aunt Nancy, was also a slave in his family. She was a kind, good aunt to me; and supplied the place of both housekeeper and waiting maid to her mistress. She was, in fact, at the beginning and end of every thing.

Mrs. Flint, like many southern women, was totally deficient in energy. She had not strength to superintend her household affairs; but her nerves were so strong, that she could sit in her easy chair and see a woman whipped, till the blood trickled from every stroke of the lash. She was a member of the church; but partaking of the Lord's supper did not seem to put her in a Christian frame of mind. If dinner was not served at the exact time on that particular Sunday, she would station herself in the kitchen, and wait till it was dished, and then spit in all the kettles and pans that had been used for cooking. She did this to prevent the cook and her children from eking out their meagre fare with the remains of the gravy and other scrapings. The slaves could get nothing to eat except what she chose to give them. Provisions were weighed out by the pound and ounce, three times a day. I can assure you she gave them no chance to eat wheat bread from her flour barrel. She knew how many biscuits a quart of flour would make, and exactly what size they ought to be.

Dr. Flint was an epicure.⁵ The cook never sent a dinner to his table without fear and trembling; for if there happened to be a dish not to his liking, he would either order her to be whipped, or compel her to eat every mouthful of it in his presence. The poor, hungry creature might not have objected to eating it; but she did object to having her master cram it down her throat till she choked.

They had a pet dog, that was a nuisance in the house. The cook was ordered to make some Indian mush⁶ for him. He refused to eat, and when his head was held over it, the froth flowed from his mouth into the basin. He died a few minutes after. When Dr. Flint came in, he said the mush had

⁵ One who has discriminating taste in food and drink.

⁶ A mush made of corn, or maize.

not been well cooked, and that was the reason the animal would not eat it. He sent for the cook, and compelled her to eat it. He thought that the woman's stomach was stronger than the dog's; but her sufferings afterwards proved that he was mistaken. This poor woman endured many cruelties from her master and mistress; sometimes she was locked up, away from her nursing baby, for a whole day and night.

When I had been in the family a few weeks, one of the plantation slaves was brought to town, by order of his master. It was near night when he arrived, and Dr. Flint ordered him to be taken to the work house, and tied up to the joist, so that his feet would just escape the ground. In that situation he was to wait till the doctor had taken his tea. I shall never forget that night. Never before, in my life, had I heard hundreds of blows fall, in succession, on a human being. His piteous groans, and his "O, pray don't, massa," rang in my ear for months afterwards. There were many conjectures as to the cause of this terrible punishment. Some said master accused him of stealing corn; others said the slave had quarrelled with his wife, in presence of the overseer, and had accused his master of being the father of her child. They were both black, and the child was very fair.

I went into the work house next morning, and saw the cowhide still wet with blood, and the boards all covered with gore. The poor man lived, and continued to quarrel with his wife. A few months afterwards Dr. Flint handed them both over to a slavetrader. The guilty man put their value into his pocket, and had the satisfaction of knowing that they were out of sight and hearing. When the mother was delivered into the trader's hands, she said, "You *promised* to treat me well." To which he replied, "You have let your tongue run too far; damn you!" She had forgotten that it was a crime for a slave to tell who was the father of her child.

From others than the master persecution also comes in such cases. I once saw a young slave girl dying soon after the birth of a child nearly white. In her agony she cried out, "O Lord, come and take me!" Her mistress stood by, and mocked at her like an incarnate fiend. "You suffer, do you?" she exclaimed, "I am glad of it. You deserve it all, and more too."

The girl's mother said, "The baby is dead, thank God; and I hope my poor child will soon be in heaven, too."

"Heaven!" retorted the mistress. "There is no such place for the like of her and her bastard."

The poor mother turned away, sobbing. Her dying daughter called her, feebly, and as she bent over her, I heard her say, "Don't grieve so, mother; God knows all about it; and HE will have mercy upon me."

Her sufferings, afterwards, became so intense, that her mistress felt unable to stay; but when she left the room, the scornful smile was still on her lips. Seven children called her mother. The poor black woman had but the one child, whose eyes she saw closing in death, while she thanked God for taking her away from the greater bitterness of life.

ness by the faithful discharge of my duties. My
teenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave,
whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was,
their import. I tried to treat them with indiffer-
ence, but my extreme youth, and the fear that
my grandmother, made him bear this tre-
atment was a crafty man, and resorted to many means.
Sometimes he had stormy, terrific ways, then
sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he told
me the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although
he tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles
of religion. He peopled my young mind with unclean
images that no master could think of. I turned from him with
horror. I was compelled to live under the
rule of a man forty years my senior daily viola-
tions of nature. He told me I was his property
in all things. My soul revolted against
him. Could I turn for protection? No matter whether
she was as fair as her mistress. In either case
to protect her from insult, from violence, or from
injury inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men,
to protect the helpless victim, has no other feeling
but jealousy and rage. The degradation, the wrongs
of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are
unbelievable. Surely, if you credited one half
concerning the helpless millions suffering in
the north would not help to tighten the yoke. Yet
the master, on your own soil, the mean and cruel
hounds and the lowest class of whites do for

Every where the years bring to all enough
ery the very dawn of life is darkened by these
who is accustomed to wait on her mistress
before she is twelve years old, why it is that but
a one among the slaves. Perhaps the child
hated ones. She listens to violent outbreaks
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If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will
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slavery to feel the humiliation of their position
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fered in the presence of these wrongs, nor I
respect. My master met me at every turn, I
him, and swearing by heaven and earth that
to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh a
his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my
fell on me even there. The light heart which
heavy with sad forebodings. The other slave
the change. Many of them pitied me; but no
had no need to inquire. They knew too well

the reason the animal would not eat it. He thought that the dog's; but her sufferings afterwards poor woman endured many cruelties. Sometimes she was locked up, away from her night.

A few weeks, one of the plantation slaves his master. It was near night when he was to be taken to the work house, and tied up to escape the ground. In that situation I took his tea. I shall never forget that I heard hundreds of blows fall, in successive groans, and his "O, pray don't, massa," words. There were many conjectures as to the cause. Some said master accused him of having quarrelled with his wife, in presence of his master of being the father of her child. The child was very fair.

Next morning, and saw the cowhide still wet with gore. The poor man lived, and his wife. A few months afterwards Dr. Flint the trader. The guilty man put their value into the hands of knowing that they were out of sight. She was delivered into the trader's hands, she said, "You have let your wife go." To which he replied, "You have let your wife go." She had forgotten that it was a crime for a man to sell his child.

Persecution also comes in such cases. I once saw a woman after the birth of a child nearly white. In the morning, come and take me!" Her mistress stood before her, an incarnate fiend. "You suffer, do you?" she said, "You deserve it all, and more too." The woman's baby is dead, thank God; and I hope my poor mother is dead.

My mother said, "There is no such place for the like of me."

One day, sobbing. Her dying daughter called her, and said, "I heard her say, 'Don't grieve so, mother; I will have mercy upon me.'"

My mother became so intense, that her mistress felt it necessary to leave the room, the scornful smile was still on her face. The poor black woman had but a few days to live, while she thanked God for the greater bitterness of life.

* * *

The Trials of Girlhood

In service in Dr. Flint's family, I was accustomed to be treated like the children of my mistress. Though this seemed to me grateful for it, and tried to merit the kind-

ness by the faithful discharge of my duties. But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt. The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my grandmother, made him bear this treatment for many months. He was a crafty man, and resorted to many means to accomplish his purposes. Sometimes he had stormy, terrific ways, that made his victims tremble; sometimes he assumed a gentleness that he thought must surely subdue. Of the two, I preferred his stormy moods, although they left me trembling. He tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred. But he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him—where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. The degradation, the wrongs, the vices, that grow out of slavery, are more than I can describe. They are greater than you would willingly believe. Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke. You surely would refuse to do for the master, on your own soil, the mean and cruel work which trained bloodhounds and the lowest class of whites do for him at the south.

Every where the years bring to all enough of sin and sorrow; but in slavery the very dawn of life is darkened by these shadows. Even the little child, who is accustomed to wait on her mistress and her children, will learn, before she is twelve years old, why it is that her mistress hates such and such a one among the slaves. Perhaps the child's own mother is among those hated ones. She listens to violent outbreaks of jealous passion, and cannot help understanding what is the cause. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child. If God has bestowed beauty upon her, it will prove her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave. I know that some are too much brutalized by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position; but many slaves feel it most acutely, and shrink from the memory of it. I cannot tell how much I suffered in the presence of these wrongs, nor how I am still pained by the retrospect. My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him. If I went out for a breath of fresh air, after a day of unwearied toil, his footsteps dogged me. If I knelt by my mother's grave, his dark shadow fell on me even there. The light heart which nature had given me became heavy with sad forebodings. The other slaves in my master's house noticed the change. Many of them pitied me; but none dared to ask the cause. They had no need to inquire. They knew too well the guilty practices under that

roof; and they were aware that to speak of them was an offence that never went unpunished.

I longed for some one to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave. Then, although my grandmother was all in all to me, I feared her as well as loved her. I had been accustomed to look up to her with a respect bordering upon awe. I was very young, and felt shamefaced about telling her such impure things, especially as I knew her to be very strict on such subjects. Moreover, she was a woman of a high spirit. She was usually very quiet in her demeanor; but if her indignation was once roused, it was not very easily quelled. I had been told that she once chased a white gentleman with a loaded pistol, because he insulted one of her daughters. I dreaded the consequences of a violent outbreak; and both pride and fear kept me silent. But though I did not confide in my grandmother, and even evaded her vigilant watchfulness and inquiry, her presence in the neighborhood was some protection to me. Though she had been a slave, Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He dreaded her scorching rebukes. Moreover, she was known and patronized by many people; and he did not wish to have his villainy made public. It was lucky for me that I did not live on a distant plantation, but in a town not so large that the inhabitants were ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the laws and customs in a slaveholding community, the doctor, as a professional man, deemed it prudent to keep up some outward show of decency.

O, what days and nights of fear and sorrow that man caused me! Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered.

I once saw two beautiful children playing together. One was a fair white child; the other was her slave, and also her sister. When I saw them embracing each other, and heard their joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from the lovely sight. I foresaw the inevitable blight that would fall on the little slave's heart. I knew how soon her laughter would be changed to sighs. The fair child grew up to be a still fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her pathway was blooming with flowers, and overarched by a sunny sky. Scarcely one day of her life had been clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal morning.

How had those years dealt with her slave sister, the little playmate of her childhood? She, also, was very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine of love were not for her. She drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are compelled to drink.

In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north? Why do your tongues falter in maintenance of the right? Would that I had more ability! But my heart is so full, and my pen is so weak! There are noble men and women who plead for us, striving to help those who cannot help themselves. God bless them! God give them strength and courage to go on! God bless those, every where, who are laboring to advance the cause of humanity!

[After appealing futilely to Dr. Flint's jealous wife for protection, Brent receives a marriage proposal from a free black carpenter, but Dr. Flint refuses to let her purchase her freedom.]

X. A Perilous Passage in the Sl

After my lover went away, Dr. Flint contrived to have an idea that my fear of my mistress was the blindest tones, he told me that he was going to a secluded place, four miles away from the plantation, constrained to listen, while he talked of his in my own, and to make a lady of me. Hitherto my fate, by being in the midst of people. My grandmother, words with my master about me. She had told me of his character, and there was considerable thought about our affairs, to which the open-mindedness contributed not a little. When my master said for me, and that he could do it with little trouble, something would happen to frustrate his scheme. The house was actually begun. I vowed before I entered it. I had rather toil on the plantation from live and die in jail, than drag on, from day to day, death. I was determined that the master, who had blighted the prospects of my youth, and not, after my long struggle with him, succeed under his feet. I would do any thing, every thing for him. What *could* I do? I thought and thought, and made a plunge into the abyss.

And now, reader, I come to a period in my life, gladly forget if I could. The remembrance fills my mind with pains to tell you of it; but I have promised to do it honestly, let it cost me what it may. I will not plead the plea of compulsion from a master; for it is ignorance or thoughtlessness. For years, my mind was polluted with foul images, and to be dictated by my grandmother, and the good mistresses of slavery had had the same effect on the girls; they had made me prematurely know the world. I knew what I did, and I did it with a will.

But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been protected by law, do not judge the poor creature, if slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have had a home shielded by law, spared the painful task of confessing what my prospects had been blighted by slavery and, under the most adverse circumstances, respect; but I was struggling alone in the poverty; and the monster proved too strong for God and man; as if all my efforts must be fruitless in my despair.

I have told you that Dr. Flint's persecution given rise to some gossip in the neighborhood that a white unmarried gentleman had obtained circumstances in which I was placed. He had spoken to me in the street. He became inter-

X. A Perilous Passage in the Slave Girl's Life

After my lover went away, Dr. Flint contrived a new plan. He seemed to have an idea that my fear of my mistress was his greatest obstacle. In the blandest tones, he told me that he was going to build a small house for me, in a secluded place, four miles away from the town. I shuddered; but I was constrained to listen, while he talked of his intention to give me a home of my own, and to make a lady of me. Hitherto, I had escaped my dreaded fate, by being in the midst of people. My grandmother had already had high words with my master about me. She had told him pretty plainly what she thought of his character, and there was considerable gossip in the neighborhood about our affairs, to which the open-mouthed jealousy of Mrs. Flint contributed not a little. When my master said he was going to build a house for me, and that he could do it with little trouble and expense, I was in hopes something would happen to frustrate his scheme; but I soon heard that the house was actually begun. I vowed before my Maker that I would never enter it. I had rather toil on the plantation from dawn till dark; I had rather live and die in jail, than drag on, from day to day, through such a living death. I was determined that the master, whom I so hated and loathed, who had blighted the prospects of my youth, and made my life a desert, should not, after my long struggle with him, succeed at last in trampling his victim under his feet. I would do any thing, every thing, for the sake of defeating him. What *could* I do? I thought and thought, till I became desperate, and made a plunge into the abyss.

And now, reader, I come to a period in my unhappy life, which I would gladly forget if I could. The remembrance fills me with sorrow and shame. It pains me to tell you of it; but I have promised to tell you the truth, and I will do it honestly, let it cost me what it may. I will not try to screen myself behind the plea of compulsion from a master; for it was not so. Neither can I plead ignorance or thoughtlessness. For years, my master had done his utmost to pollute my mind with foul images, and to destroy the pure principles inculcated by my grandmother, and the good mistress of my childhood. The influences of slavery had had the same effect on me that they had on other young girls; they had made me prematurely knowing, concerning the evil ways of the world. I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation.

But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; and I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to relate; but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery. I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair.

I have told you that Dr. Flint's persecutions and his wife's jealousy had given rise to some gossip in the neighborhood. Among others, it chanced that a white unmarried gentleman had obtained some knowledge of the circumstances in which I was placed. He knew my grandmother, and often spoke to me in the street. He became interested for me, and asked questions

peak of them was an offence that never

in. I would have given the world to have faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles, if I was not as silent as the grave. I was all in all to me, I feared her as well as to look up to her with a respect bordering on love. I felt shamefaced about telling her such things, and she was very strict on such subjects. I was of a high spirit. She was usually very quiet in conversation. When she was once roused, it was not very easily calmed. She once chased a white gentleman with a stick, and one of her daughters. I dreaded the consequences, and both pride and fear kept me silent. But my grandmother, and even evaded her vigilant presence in the neighborhood was some protection. Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He had been a slave, Dr. Flint was afraid of her. He was known and patronized. She wished to have his villainy made public. It was on a distant plantation, but in a town not so ignorant of each other's affairs. Bad as are the feelings of the holding community, the doctor, as a professional man, to keep up some outward show of decency, feared and sorrow that man caused me! Reader, I tell myself that I am telling you truthfully what I have suffered. I kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts, I have suffered, suffering as I once suffered.

One was a fair white child, and also her sister. When I saw them embracing and joyous laughter, I turned sadly away from them. A blight that would fall on the little slave's face, her laughter would be changed to sighs. The fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her face was lowered, and overarched by a sunny sky. Scarcely clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal

with her slave sister, the little playmate of her youth, very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine were drunk the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, and we are compelled to drink.

Why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the North? Would that your hearts falter in maintenance of the right? Would that your heart is so full, and my pen is so weak! There are many who plead for us, striving to help those who cannot help themselves! God give them strength and courage to go on where, who are laboring to advance the cause of

Dr. Flint's jealous wife for protection, Brent receives a letter from the black carpenter, but Dr. Flint refuses to let her pursue

about my master, which I answered in part. He expressed a great deal of sympathy, and a wish to aid me. He constantly sought opportunities to see me, and wrote to me frequently. I was a poor slave girl, only fifteen years old.

So much attention from a superior person was, of course, flattering; for human nature is the same in all. I also felt grateful for his sympathy, and encouraged by his kind words. It seemed to me a great thing to have such a friend. By degrees, a more tender feeling crept into my heart. He was an educated and eloquent gentleman; too eloquent, alas, for the poor slave girl who trusted in him. Of course I saw whither all this was tending. I knew the impassable gulf between us; but to be an object of interest to a man who is not married, and who is not her master, is agreeable to the pride and feelings of a slave, if her miserable situation has left her any pride or sentiment. It seems less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion. There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment. A master may treat you as rudely as he pleases, and you dare not speak; moreover, the wrong does not seem so great with an unmarried man, as with one who has a wife to be made unhappy. There may be sophistry in all this; but the condition of a slave confuses all principles of morality, and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible.

When I found that my master had actually begun to build the lonely cottage, other feelings mixed with those I have described. Revenge, and calculations of interest, were added to flattered vanity and sincere gratitude for kindness. I knew nothing would enrage Dr. Flint so much as to know that I favored another; and it was something to triumph over my tyrant even in that small way. I thought he would revenge himself by selling me, and I was sure my friend, Mr. Sands, would buy me. He was a man of more generosity and feeling than my master, and I thought my freedom could be easily obtained from him. The crisis of my fate now came so near that I was desperate. I shuddered to think of being the mother of children that should be owned by my old tyrant. I knew that as soon as a new fancy took him, his victims were sold far off to get rid of them; especially if they had children. I had seen several women sold, with his babies at the breast. He never allowed his offspring by slaves to remain long in sight of himself and his wife. Of a man who was not my master I could ask to have my children well supported; and in this case, I felt confident I should obtain the boon.⁷ I also felt quite sure that they would be made free. With all these thoughts revolving in my mind, and seeing no other way of escaping the doom I so much dreaded, I made a headlong plunge. Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another. You never exhausted your ingenuity in avoiding the snares, and eluding the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuddered at the sound of his footsteps, and trembled within hearing of his voice. I know I did wrong. No one can feel it more sensibly than I do. The painful and humiliating memory will haunt me to my dying day. Still, in looking back, calmly, on the events of my life, I feel that the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others.

The months passed on. I had many unhappy hours. I secretly mourned over the sorrow I was bringing on my grandmother, who had so tried to

shield me from harm. I knew that I was the greatest source of pride to her that I had most of the slaves. I wanted to confess to her that I loved her; but I could not utter the dreaded word.

As for Dr. Flint, I had a feeling of satisfaction of telling him. From time to time he told me of his love, and I was silent. At last, he came and told me and ordered me to go to it. I told him I would not, and heard enough of such talk as that. You shall go, and you shall remain there."

I replied, "I will never go there. In a few months I shall be free." He stood and looked at me in dumb amazement. I thought I should be happy in that that the truth was out, and my relatives would be as were their circumstances, they had now. Now, how could I look them in the face? My resolved that I would be virtuous, though I was storm beat! I will brave it till I die." And now,

I went to my grandmother. My lips moved, but words stuck in my throat. I sat down in the seat began to sew. I think she saw something unusual. The mother of slaves is very watchful. She knew her children. After they have entered their teens, she is in trouble. This leads to many questions. If the girl keeps her from answering truthfully, and has a tendency to drive her from maternal counsel, she is a tress, like a mad woman, and accused me. My grandmother, whose suspicions had been aroused, what she said. She exclaimed, "O Linda! has you dead than to see you as you now are. You mother." She tore from my fingers my mother's thimble. "Go away!" she exclaimed, "and never come back." Her reproaches fell so hot and heavy, that I sobbed. Bitter tears, such as the eyes never shed before, rose from my seat, but fell back again, sobbing. The tears were running down her furrowed face like fire. She had always been so kind to me, and now she was at my feet, and tell her all the truth and never to come there again. After a few days and started to obey her. With what feeling! which I used to open with such an eager heart upon me with a sound I never heard before.

Where could I go? I was afraid to return home, less, not caring where I went, or what was gone four or five miles, fatigue compelled me to sit under the shade of an old tree. The stars were shining through the branches, they mocked me, with their bright, calm light. I sat there alone a chilliness and deadly stillness on the ground. My mind was full of horrid thoughts. My prayer was not answered. At last, with great effort I walked some distance further, to the home of my friend of my mother. When I told her why

7. Favor.

in part. He expressed a great deal of constantly sought opportunities to see a poor slave girl, only fifteen years old. No person was, of course, flattering; for I also felt grateful for his sympathy, and seemed to me a great thing to have such a feeling crept into my heart. He was an eloquent, alas, for the poor slave girl, whither all this was tending. I knew the only way to be an object of interest to a man who is a master, is agreeable to the pride and feelings of the master. He has left her any pride or sentiment. It is better to submit to compulsion. There is no pleasure in having a lover who has no control over you, and no pleasure in business and attachment. A master may treat you as he pleases; you dare not speak; moreover, the wrong of a married man, as with one who has a wife, is a sophistry in all this; but the condition of a slave, and, in fact, renders the practice of such things had actually begun to build the lonely cottage. Those I have described. Revenge, and calculation, to flattered vanity and sincere gratitude for the kindness of Dr. Flint so much as to know that I might triumph over my tyrant even in something to revenge himself by selling me, and I was glad to buy me. He was a man of more generosity than I thought my freedom could be easily sold. My fate now came so near that I was desirous of being the mother of children that should be free from that as soon as a new fancy took him, his children, especially if they had children. I was with his babies at the breast. He never allowed me to be long in sight of himself and his wife. Of a child I could ask to have my children well supported; but I should obtain the boon.⁷ I also felt quite free. With all these thoughts revolving in my mind, I was of escaping the doom I so much dreaded, I was free, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You are a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom, you are to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuddered at the power of a hated tyrant; you never trembled within hearing of his voice. I know I feel it more sensibly than I do. The painful and humiliating me to my dying day. Still, in looking back on my life, I feel that the slave woman ought not to be as others.

I had many unhappy hours. I secretly mourned on my grandmother, who had so tried to

shield me from harm. I knew that I was the greatest comfort of her old age, and that it was a source of pride to her that I had not degraded myself, like most of the slaves. I wanted to confess to her that I was no longer worthy of her love; but I could not utter the dreaded words.

As for Dr. Flint, I had a feeling of satisfaction and triumph in the thought of telling him. From time to time he told me of his intended arrangements, and I was silent. At last, he came and told me the cottage was completed, and ordered me to go to it. I told him I would never enter it. He said, "I have heard enough of such talk as that. You shall go, if you are carried by force; and you shall remain there."

I replied, "I will never go there. In a few months I shall be a mother."

He stood and looked at me in dumb amazement, and left the house without a word. I thought I should be happy in my triumph over him. But now that the truth was out, and my relatives would hear of it, I felt wretched. Humble as were their circumstances, they had pride in my good character. Now, how could I look them in the face? My self-respect was gone! I had resolved that I would be virtuous, though I was a slave. I had said, "Let the storm beat! I will brave it till I die." And now, how humiliated I felt!

I went to my grandmother. My lips moved to make confession, but the words stuck in my throat. I sat down in the shade of a tree at her door and began to sew. I think she saw something unusual was the matter with me. The mother of slaves is very watchful. She knows there is no security for her children. After they have entered their teens she lives in daily expectation of trouble. This leads to many questions. If the girl is of a sensitive nature, timidity keeps her from answering truthfully, and this well-meant course has a tendency to drive her from maternal counsels. Presently, in came my mistress, like a mad woman, and accused me concerning her husband. My grandmother, whose suspicions had been previously awakened, believed what she said. She exclaimed, "O Linda! has it come to this? I had rather see you dead than to see you as you now are. You are a disgrace to your dead mother." She tore from my fingers my mother's wedding ring and her silver thimble. "Go away!" she exclaimed, "and never come to my house, again." Her reproaches fell so hot and heavy, that they left me no chance to answer. Bitter tears, such as the eyes never shed but once, were my only answer. I rose from my seat, but fell back again, sobbing. She did not speak to me; but the tears were running down her furrowed cheeks, and they scorched me like fire. She had always been so kind to me! So kind! How I longed to throw myself at her feet, and tell her all the truth! But she had ordered me to go, and never to come there again. After a few minutes, I mustered strength, and started to obey her. With what feelings did I now close that little gate, which I used to open with such an eager hand in my childhood! It closed upon me with a sound I never heard before.

Where could I go? I was afraid to return to my master's. I walked on recklessly, not caring where I went, or what would become of me. When I had gone four or five miles, fatigue compelled me to stop. I sat down on the stump of an old tree. The stars were shining through the boughs above me. How they mocked me, with their bright, calm light! The hours passed by, and as I sat there alone a chilliness and deadly sickness came over me. I sank on the ground. My mind was full of horrid thoughts. I prayed to die; but the prayer was not answered. At last, with great effort I roused myself, and walked some distance further, to the house of a woman who had been a friend of my mother. When I told her why I was there, she spoke soothingly

to me; but I could not be comforted. I thought I could bear my shame if I could only be reconciled to my grandmother. I longed to open my heart to her. I thought if she could know the real state of the case, and all I had been bearing for years, she would perhaps judge me less harshly. My friend advised me to send for her. I did so; but days of agonizing suspense passed before she came. Had she utterly forsaken me? No. She came at last. I knelt before her, and told her the things that had poisoned my life; how long I had been persecuted; that I saw no way of escape; and in an hour of extremity I had become desperate. She listened in silence. I told her I would bear any thing and do any thing, if in time I had hopes of obtaining her forgiveness. I begged of her to pity me, for my dead mother's sake. And she did pity me. She did not say, "I forgive you;" but she looked at me lovingly, with her eyes full of tears. She laid her old hand gently on my head, and murmured, "Poor child! Poor child!"

[Outraged when he learns that Brent is pregnant, Dr. Flint threatens her but fails to coerce Brent into revealing the identity of her lover. Brent gives birth to a son, Benjamin, and goes to live with Aunt Martha.]

XII. *Fear of Insurrection*

Not far from this time Nat Turner's insurrection broke out;⁸ and the news threw our town into great commotion. Strange that they should be alarmed, when their slaves were so "contented and happy"! But so it was.

It was always the custom to have a muster every year. On that occasion every white man shouldered his musket. The citizens and the so-called country gentlemen wore military uniforms. The poor whites took their places in the ranks in every-day dress, some without shoes, some without hats. This grand occasion had already passed; and when the slaves were told there was to be another muster, they were surprised and rejoiced. Poor creatures! They thought it was going to be a holiday. I was informed of the true state of affairs, and imparted it to the few I could trust. Most gladly would I have proclaimed it to every slave; but I dared not. All could not be relied on. Mighty is the power of the torturing lash.

By sunrise, people were pouring in from every quarter within twenty miles of the town. I knew the houses were to be searched; and I expected it would be done by country bullies and the poor whites. I knew nothing annoyed them so much as to see colored people living in comfort and respectability; so I made arrangements for them with especial care. I arranged every thing in my grandmother's house as neatly as possible. I put white quilts on the beds, and decorated some of the rooms with flowers. When all was arranged, I sat down at the window to watch. Far as my eye could reach, it rested on a motley crowd of soldiers. Drums and fifes were discoursing martial music. The men were divided into companies of sixteen, each headed by a captain. Orders were given, and the wild scouts rushed in every direction, wherever a colored face was to be found.

It was a grand opportunity for the low whites, who had no negroes of their own to scourge. They exulted in such a chance to exercise a little brief authority, and show their subserviency to the slaveholders; not reflecting

that the power which trampled on the colored people, poverty, ignorance, and moral degradation. Those scenes can hardly believe what I know was inflicted on men, women, and children, against whom there was no suspicion. Colored people and slaves who were in the town suffered in an especial manner. In some cases they were powder and shot among their clothes, and then they were brought forward as proof that they were guilty. Every where men, women, and children were in puddles at their feet. Some received five hundred blows on their hands and feet, and tortured with a bucking post. The dwellings of the colored people, if not protected by some influential white person, were robbed of clothing and every thing else the master could lay his hands on. All day long these unfeeling wretches were being driven into patrol bands, and went wherever they were sent, people, acting out their brutal will. Many were driven into swamps; to keep out of their way. If any one of these outrages, they were tied up to the public whipping post. No two people that had the slightest tinge of color were seen talking together.

I entertained no positive fears about our household in the midst of white families who would protect us from the soldiers whenever they came. It was not long before the door was of feet and the sound of voices. The door was broken down, they tumbled, like a pack of hungry wolves, into the house, within their reach. Every box, trunk, closet, and chest were a rough examination. A box in one of the drawers was eagerly pounced upon. When I saw the soldiers, one of the soldiers turned and said to me, "D'ye s'pose white folks is come to steal?"

I replied, "You have come to search; but you will take it, if you please."

At that moment I saw a white gentleman called to him, and asked him to have the search was over. He readily complied. He brought in the captain of the company, who stood outside of the house, and see that none of them was Mr. Litch,⁹ the wealthy slaveholder who was of neighboring planters, as being notorious for soiling his hands with the search. He merely saying was discovered, it was carried to him by him, and he was unable to read.

My grandmother had a large trunk of books that was opened, there was a great shout and a cry. "Where'd the damned niggers git all dis she books?"

My grandmother, emboldened by the presence of the soldiers, said, "You may be sure we didn't pilfer 'em!"

8. A bloody slave revolt led by Turner in Southampton County, Virginia (August 21–22, 1831). White fear and paranoia led to reprisals, such as those Jacobs recounts, in many Southern communities in the aftermath of the insurrection and the execution of Turner and twenty of his followers.

9. Mentioned in Chapter IX.

ed. I thought I could bear my shame if I and mother. I longed to open my heart to the real state of the case, and all I had been perhaps judge me less harshly. My friend so; but days of agonizing suspense passed so forsaken me? No. She came at last. I knelt to that had poisoned my life; how long I had day of escape; and in an hour of extremity I ended in silence. I told her I would bear any I had hopes of obtaining her forgiveness. I lead mother's sake. And she did pity me. She he looked at me lovingly, with her eyes full of ly on my head, and murmured, "Poor child!

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Fear of Insurrection

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followers.

that the power which trampled on the colored people also kept themselves in poverty, ignorance, and moral degradation. Those who never witnessed such scenes can hardly believe what I know was inflicted at this time on innocent men, women, and children, against whom there was not the slightest ground for suspicion. Colored people and slaves who lived in remote parts of the town suffered in an especial manner. In some cases the searchers scattered powder and shot among their clothes, and then sent other parties to find them, and bring them forward as proof that they were plotting insurrection. Every where men, women, and children were whipped till the blood stood in puddles at their feet. Some received five hundred lashes; others were tied hands and feet, and tortured with a bucking paddle, which blisters the skin terribly. The dwellings of the colored people, unless they happened to be protected by some influential white person, who was nigh at hand, were robbed of clothing and every thing else the marauders thought worth carrying away. All day long these unfeeling wretches went round, like a troop of demons, terrifying and tormenting the helpless. At night, they formed themselves into patrol bands, and went wherever they chose among the colored people, acting out their brutal will. Many women hid themselves in woods and swamps, to keep out of their way. If any of the husbands or fathers told of these outrages, they were tied up to the public whipping post, and cruelly scourged for telling lies about white men. The consternation was universal. No two people that had the slightest tinge of color in their faces dared to be seen talking together.

I entertained no positive fears about our household, because we were in the midst of white families who would protect us. We were ready to receive the soldiers whenever they came. It was not long before we heard the tramp of feet and the sound of voices. The door was rudely pushed open; and in they tumbled, like a pack of hungry wolves. They snatched at every thing within their reach. Every box, trunk, closet, and corner underwent a thorough examination. A box in one of the drawers containing some silver change was eagerly pounced upon. When I stepped forward to take it from them, one of the soldiers turned and said angrily, "What d'ye foller us fur? Dye s'pose white folks is come to steal?"

I replied, "You have come to search; but you have searched that box, and I will take it, if you please."

At that moment I saw a white gentleman who was friendly to us; and I called to him, and asked him to have the goodness to come in and stay till the search was over. He readily complied. His entrance into the house brought in the captain of the company, whose business it was to guard the outside of the house, and see that none of the inmates left it. This officer was Mr. Litch,⁹ the wealthy slaveholder whom I mentioned, in the account of neighboring planters, as being notorious for his cruelty. He felt above soiling his hands with the search. He merely gave orders; and, if a bit of writing was discovered, it was carried to him by his ignorant followers, who were unable to read.

My grandmother had a large trunk of bedding and table cloths. When that was opened, there was a great shout of surprise; and one exclaimed, "Where'd the damned niggers git all dis sheet an' table clarf?"

My grandmother, emboldened by the presence of our white protector, said, "You may be sure we didn't pilfer 'em from *your* houses."

⁸ Mentioned in Chapter IX.

looking fellow without any coat, "you
got all them 'ere fixens. White folks

a chorus of voices shouting, "We's got
s got letters!"

supposed letter, which, upon examina-
ten to me by a friend. In packing away
When their captain informed them of
disappointed. He inquired of me who
of my friends. "Can you read them?" he
swore, and raved, and tore the paper into
id he, in a commanding tone. I told him I
continued, in an insinuating way. "Bring
you any harm." Seeing I did not move to
ged to oaths and threats. "Who writes to
me. I replied, "O, no; most of my letters are
me to burn them after they are read, and

om some of the company put a stop to our
s which ornamented an old-fashioned buf-
y grandmother was in the habit of preserv-
town, and of preparing suppers for parties;
s of preserves. The closet that contained
contents tasted. One of them, who was help-
ighbor on the shoulder, and said, "Wal done!
to kill all de white folks, when dey live on
tretched out my hand to take the jar, saying,
ch for sweetmeats."
said the captain, bristling up to me. I evaded

s completed, and nothing found to condemn
e garden, and knocked about every bush and
he captain called his men together, and, after
to march was given. As they passed out of the
and pronounced a malediction on the house,
to the ground, and each of its inmates receive
ut of this affair very fortunately; not losing any
parel.

ulence increased. The soldiers, stimulated by
r cruelties. Shrieks and shouts continually rent
he door, I peeped under the window curtain. I
number of colored people, each white man, with
ening instant death if they did not stop their
rs was a respectable old colored minister. They
shot in his house, which his wife had for years
For this they were going to shoot him on Court
stacle was that for a civilized country! A rabble,
on, assuming to be the administrators of justice!
community exerted their influence to save the
le; and in several instances they succeeded, by
il till the excitement abated. At last the white citi-
property was not safe from the lawless rabble they

had summoned to protect them. They rallied the drunken swarm, drove
them back into the country, and set a guard over the town.

The next day, the town patrols were commissioned to search colored
people that lived out of the city; and the most shocking outrages were com-
mitted with perfect impunity. Every day for a fortnight, if I looked out, I saw
horsemen with some poor panting negro tied to their saddles, and compelled
by the lash to keep up with their speed, till they arrived at the jail yard.
Those who had been whipped too unmercifully to walk were washed with
brine, tossed into a cart, and carried to jail. One black man, who had not
fortitude to endure scourging, promised to give information about the con-
spiracy. But it turned out that he knew nothing at all. He had not even heard
the name of Nat Turner. The poor fellow had, however, made up a story,
which augmented his own sufferings and those of the colored people.

The day patrol continued for some weeks, and at sundown a night guard
was substituted. Nothing at all was proved against the colored people, bond
or free. The wrath of the slaveholders was somewhat appeased by the cap-
ture of Nat Turner. The imprisoned were released. The slaves were sent to
their masters, and the free were permitted to return to their ravaged homes.
Visiting was strictly forbidden on the plantations. The slaves begged the
privilege of again meeting at their little church in the woods, with their
burying ground around it. It was built by the colored people, and they had
no higher happiness than to meet there and sing hymns together, and pour
out their hearts in spontaneous prayer. Their request was denied, and the
church was demolished. They were permitted to attend the white churches,
a certain portion of the galleries being appropriated to their use. There,
when every body else had partaken of the communion, and the benediction
had been pronounced, the minister said, "Come down, now, my colored
friends." They obeyed the summons, and partook of the bread and wine, in
commemoration of the meek and lowly Jesus, who said, "God is your Father,
and all ye are brethren."¹

XIV. Another Link to Life

I had not returned to my master's house since the birth of my child. The old
man raved to have me thus removed from his immediate power; but his wife
vowed, by all that was good and great, she would kill me if I came back; and
he did not doubt her word. Sometimes he would stay away for a season. Then
he would come and renew the old threadbare discourse about his forbear-
ance and my ingratitude. He labored, most unnecessarily, to convince me
that I had lowered myself. The venomous old reprobate² had no need of des-
canting on that theme. I felt humiliated enough. My unconscious babe was
the ever-present witness of my shame. I listened with silent contempt when
he talked about my having forfeited *his* good opinion; but I shed bitter tears
that I was no longer worthy of being respected by the good and pure. Alas!
slavery still held me in its poisonous grasp. There was no chance for me to be
respectable. There was no prospect of being able to lead a better life.

Sometimes, when my master found that I still refused to accept what he
called his kind offers, he would threaten to sell my child. "Perhaps that will
humble you," said he.

1. Cf. Matthew 23:8: "For one is your Master,
even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

2. A depraved, vicious person.

the dust? But his threat lacerated my heart to fulfill it; for slaveholders have been told that child shall follow the condition of the slave. No care that licentiousness shall not be made me clasp my innocent babe all my visions passed through my mind when I was to the slave trader's hands. I wept over them as they will leave you in some cold cabin, as if you were a dog."

As again to be a mother, he was exasperated from the house, and returned with a pair of irons; and he often railed about my pride of being close to my head, storming and swearing of his abuse, and he struck me. Some days he came down stairs in a fit of passion; and the next day I was unable to turn myself in bed for I swear by God I will never raise my hand again, that he would forget his promise.

When he was like a restless spirit from the pit, he was subjected to such insults as no pen can describe. If I could; they were too low, too revolting to my grandmother's knowledge as much as I could sadden her life, without having my troubles added to treat me with violence, and heard him utter a man's tongue, she could not always be so motherlike that she should try to defend herself.

My first-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more so for women. The burden common to all, they have no fortifications peculiarly their own.

He would make me suffer, to my last day, for this he called it; and as long as he had me in his power, he would not let me go. On the fourth day after the birth of my babe, he entered my room and commanded me to rise and bring my baby to him. I had gone out of the room to prepare some food. There was no alternative. I rose, took up my baby, and went where he sat. "Now stand there," said he, "till I see you." He bore a strong resemblance to her father, and I felt her grandmother. He noticed this; and while I was with weakness, he heaped upon me and my baby all he could think of. Even the grandmother in her old days. In the midst of his vituperations³ I fainted. He took the baby from my arms, and poured cold water in my face, took me up, and shook me till I was conscious before any one entered the room. Just then he came in, and he hurried out of the house. I suffered in silence; but I begged my friends to let me die, rather than live there was nothing I dreaded so much as his presence. And I was glad for the sake of my little ones. Had

it not been for these ties to life, I should have been glad to be released by death, though I had lived only nineteen years.

Always it gave me a pang that my children had no lawful claim to a name. Their father offered his; but, if I had wished to accept the offer, I dared not while my master lived. Moreover, I knew it would not be accepted at their baptism. A Christian name they were at least entitled to; and we resolved to call my boy for our dear good Benjamin, who had gone far away from us.

My grandmother belonged to the church; and she was very desirous of having the children christened. I knew Dr. Flint would forbid it, and I did not venture to attempt it. But chance favored me. He was called to visit a patient out of town, and was obliged to be absent during Sunday. "Now is the time," said my grandmother; "we will take the children to church, and have them christened."

When I entered the church, recollections of my mother came over me, and I felt subdued in spirit. There she had presented me for baptism, without any reason to feel ashamed. She had been married, and had such legal rights as slavery allows to a slave. The vows had at least been sacred to *her*, and she had never violated them. I was glad she was not alive, to know under what different circumstances her grandchildren were presented for baptism. Why had my lot been so different from my mother's? *Her* master had died when she was a child; and she remained with her mistress till she married. She was never in the power of any master; and thus she escaped one class of the evils that generally fall upon slaves.

When my baby was about to be christened, the former mistress of my father stepped up to me, and proposed to give it her Christian name. To this I added the surname of my father, who had himself no legal right to it; for my grandfather on the paternal side was a white gentleman. What tangled skeins are the genealogies of slavery! I loved my father; but it mortified me to be obliged to bestow his name on my children.

When we left the church, my father's old mistress invited me to go home with her. She clasped a gold chain around my baby's neck. I thanked her for this kindness; but I did not like the emblem. I wanted no chain to be fastened on my daughter, not even if its links were of gold. How earnestly I prayed that she might never feel the weight of slavery's chain, whose iron entereth into the soul!

[To remind her of his power over her, Dr. Flint compels Brent to work at his son's nearby plantation. She forms a plan to get her freedom by hiding in the house of a local friend until such time as Flint will give up hope of finding her. Brent hopes that Flint will eventually sell her along with her children to their father, Mr. Sands.]

XVII. *The Flight*

Mr. Flint⁴ was hard pushed for house servants, and rather than lose me he had restrained his malice. I did my work faithfully, though not, of course, with a willing mind. They were evidently afraid I should leave them. Mr. Flint wished that I should sleep in the great house instead of the servants' quarters. His wife agreed to the proposition, but said I mustn't bring my bed into the house, because it would scatter feathers on her carpet. I knew when I went there that they would never think of such a thing as furnishing a bed of any kind for me and my little one. I therefore carried my own bed,

⁴ Dr. Flint's son.

and now I was forbidden to use it. I did as I was ordered. But now that I was certain my children were to be put in their power, in order to give them a stronger hold on me, I resolved to leave them that night. I remembered the grief this step would bring upon my dear old grandmother; and nothing less than the freedom of my children would have induced me to disregard her advice. I went about my evening work with trembling steps. Mr. Flint twice called from his chamber door to inquire why the house was not locked up. I replied that I had not done my work. "You have had time enough to do it," said he. "Take care how you answer me!"

I shut all the windows, locked all the doors, and went up to the third story, to wait till midnight. How long those hours seemed, and how fervently I prayed that God would not forsake me in this hour of utmost need! I was about to risk every thing on the throw of a die; and if I failed, O what would become of me and my poor children? They would be made to suffer for my fault.

At half past twelve I stole softly down stairs. I stopped on the second floor, thinking I heard a noise. I felt my way down into the parlor, and looked out of the window. The night was so intensely dark that I could see nothing. I raised the window very softly and jumped out. Large drops of rain were falling, and the darkness bewildered me. I dropped on my knees, and breathed a short prayer to God for guidance and protection. I groped my way to the road, and rushed towards the town with almost lightning speed. I arrived at my grandmother's house, but dared not see her. She would say, "Linda, you are killing me;" and I knew that would unnerve me. I tapped softly at the window of a room, occupied by a woman, who had lived in the house several years. I knew she was a faithful friend, and could be trusted with my secret. I tapped several times before she heard me. At last she raised the window, and I whispered, "Sally, I have run away. Let me in, quick." She opened the door softly, and said in low tones, "For God's sake, don't. Your grandmother is trying to buy you and de chillern. Mr. Sands was here last week. He told her he was going away on business, but he wanted her to go ahead about buying you and de chillern, and he would help her all he could. Don't run away, Linda. Your grandmother is all bowed down wid trouble now."

I replied, "Sally, they are going to carry my children to the plantation tomorrow; and they will never sell them to any body so long as they have me in their power. Now, would you advise me to go back?"

"No, chile, no," answered she. "When dey finds you is gone, dey won't want de plague ob de chillern; but where is you going to hide? Dey knows ebry inch ob dis house."

I told her I had a hiding-place, and that was all it was best for her to know. I asked her to go into my room as soon as it was light, and take all my clothes out of my trunk, and pack them in hers; for I knew Mr. Flint and the constable would be there early to search my room. I feared the sight of my children would be too much for my full heart; but I could not go out into the uncertain future without one last look. I bent over the bed where lay my little Benny and baby Ellen. Poor little ones! fatherless and motherless! Memories of their father came over me. He wanted to be kind to them; but they were not all to him, as they were to my womanly heart. I knelt and prayed for the innocent little sleepers. I kissed them lightly, and turned away.

As I was about to open the street door, Sally laid her hand on my shoulder, and said, "Linda, is you gwine all alone? Let me call your uncle."

"No, Sally," I replied, "I want no one to be an account."

I went forth into the darkness and rain. I left the friend who was to conceal me.

Early the next morning Mr. Flint was at my door. She told him she had not seen me, and said, "He watched her face narrowly, and said, 'Did she run off?'" She assured him that she did not. "Night she ran off without the least provocation. My wife liked her. She will soon be for sale. Children with you?" When told that they were not, he said, "If they are here, she cannot be far off. Niggers have had any thing to do with this damned business. As he started to go to his room, he added, persuasively, 'Let her be brought back to live with her.'"

The tidings made the old doctor rave and angry. It was a busy day for them. My grandmother's house was full. As my trunk was empty, they concluded to sell me. Before ten o'clock every vessel northward bound, and the law against harboring fugitives, a watch was set over the town. Know your mother would be, I wanted to send her a message. Every one who went in or out of her house was stopped. He would take my children, unless she would, which of course she willingly did. The next day, before night, the following advertisement appeared in every public place for miles round:—

"\$300 REWARD! Ran away from the slaveholder a mulatto girl, named Linda, 21 years of age. Dark eyes, and black hair inclined to curl. Has a decayed spot on a front tooth. She is a probability will try to get to the Free State. Under penalty of the law, to harbor or give to whoever takes her in the state and delivered to me, or lodged in

[A handful of sympathetic black and white women. Mr. Flint retaliates by selling Brent's children and he is unaware that the trader represents Mr. Sands. This is in Brent's grandmother's house.]

XXI. The Loophole

A small shed had been added to my grand house. The boards were laid across the joists at the top of the roof was a very small garret, never occupied. It was a pent roof, covered with no the southern custom for such buildings. The roof was seven feet wide. The highest part was the

abruptly to the loose board floor. There was no admission for either light or air. My uncle Phillip, who was a carpenter, had very skillfully made a concealed trap-door, which communicated with the storeroom. He had been doing this while I was waiting in the swamp. The storeroom opened upon a piazza.⁵ To this hole I was conveyed as soon as I entered the house. The air was stifling; the darkness total. A bed had been spread on the floor. I could sleep quite comfortably on one side; but the slope was so sudden that I could not turn on the other without hitting the roof. The rats and mice ran over my bed; but I was weary, and I slept such sleep as the wretched may, when a tempest has passed over them. Morning came. I knew it only by the noises I heard; for in my small den day and night were all the same. I suffered for air even more than for light. But I was not comfortless. I heard the voices of my children. There was joy and there was sadness in the sound. It made my tears flow. How I longed to speak to them! I was eager to look on their faces; but there was no hole, no crack, through which I could peep. This continued darkness was oppressive. It seemed horrible to sit or lie in a cramped position day after day, without one gleam of light. Yet I would have chosen this, rather than my lot as a slave, though white people considered it an easy one; and it was so compared with the fate of others. I was never cruelly over-worked; I was never lacerated with the whip from head to foot; I was never so beaten and bruised that I could not turn from one side to the other; I never had my heel-strings cut to prevent my running away; I was never chained to a log and forced to drag it about, while I toiled in the fields from morning till night; I was never branded with hot iron, or torn by bloodhounds. On the contrary, I had always been kindly treated, and tenderly cared for, until I came into the hands of Dr. Flint. I had never wished for freedom till then. But though my life in slavery was comparatively devoid of hardships, God pity the woman who is compelled to lead such a life!

My food was passed up to me through the trap-door my uncle had contrived; and my grandmother, my uncle Phillip, and aunt Nancy would seize such opportunities as they could, to mount up there and chat with me at the opening. But of course this was not safe in the daytime. It must all be done in darkness. It was impossible for me to move in an erect position, but I crawled about my den for exercise. One day I hit my head against something, and found it was a gimlet. My uncle had left it sticking there when he made the trap-door. I was as rejoiced as Robinson Crusoe⁶ could have been at finding such a treasure. It put a lucky thought into my head. I said to myself, "Now I will have some light. Now I will see my children." I did not dare to begin my work during the daytime, for fear of attracting attention. But I groped round; and having found the side next the street, where I could frequently see my children, I stuck the gimlet in and waited for evening. I bored three rows of holes, one above another; then I bored out the interstices between. I thus succeeded in making one hole about an inch long and an inch broad. I sat by it till late into the night, to enjoy the little whiff of air that floated in. In the morning I watched for my children. The first person I saw in the street was Dr. Flint. I had a shuddering, superstitious feeling that it was a bad omen. Several familiar faces passed by. At last I heard the merry laugh of children, and presently two sweet little faces

were looking up at me, as though they knew conscious of the joy they imparted. How I longed

My condition was now a little improved. But hundreds of little red insects, fine as a needle, my skin, and produced an intolerable burning; me herb teas and cooling medicines, and finally of my den was intense, for nothing but thin scorching summer's sun. But I had my consolation. I could watch the children, and when I hear their talk. Aunt Nancy brought me all the Flint's. From her I learned that the doctor had a married woman, who had been born and raised in the same atmosphere. He could find out any thing about me. I know I reply; but he soon after started for New York, that he had business of importance to transact on his way to the steamboat. It was a satisfaction to know that he believed me to be in a less dreary than it had done. He returned on his journey to New York, without obtaining any news. He passed our house next morning, Benny was heard them say that he had gone to find me. I did you bring my mother home? I want to see him at foot at him in a rage, and exclaimed, "Get on, rascal! If you don't, I'll cut off your head."

Benny ran terrified into the house, saying "I don't belong to you now." It was well that I was from the doctor's ear. I told my grandmother of the conference at the trap-door; and begged of her to be impertinent to the irascible old man.

Autumn came, with a pleasant abatement of the dim light, and by holding my position near the aperture I contrived to find relief to the tedious monotony of my life. I penetrated through the thin shingle roof, and in winters there are not so long, or so severe, and houses are not built to shelter from cold, and comfortless. The kind grandmother brought me drinks. Often I was obliged to lie in bed, with all my precautions, my shoulders aching long, gloomy days, with no object for my eyes to occupy my mind, except the dreary past. I was thankful when there came a day sufficient to sit at the loophole to watch the passing of stopping and talking in the streets, and intended to meet my ears. I heard slave voices, some poor fugitive. Several times I heard of the history of my children, who, perhaps, would say, "I wouldn't move my little finger." Another would say, "I'll catch any nigger to have what belongs to him, if he is a c

5. A large covered porch.

6. The shipwrecked hero of Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

There was no admission for either light or air. The carpenter, had very skillfully made a concealed passage with the storeroom. He had been in the swamp. The storeroom opened upon a passage as soon as I entered the house. The air had been spread on the floor. I could not breathe; but the slope was so sudden that I could not hit the roof. The rats and mice ran over me. I slept such sleep as the wretched may, but I knew it only by the name. Morning came. I knew it only by the name. Day and night were all the same. I suffered. But I was not comfortless. I heard the joy and there was sadness in the sound. It seemed to speak to them! I was eager to look on them, but no crack, through which I could peep. It seemed horrible to sit or lie in the darkness, without one gleam of light. Yet I would not, for I was a lot as a slave, though white people consider me so compared with the fate of others. I was never lacerated with the whip from head to foot, but I was bruised that I could not turn from one side to the other. I was forced to drag it about, while I toiled in the sun. I was never branded with hot iron, or torn with a red-hot iron. I had always been kindly treated, and I was never in the hands of Dr. Flint. I had never been into the hands of Dr. Flint. I had never been into the hands of Dr. Flint. But though my life in slavery was comparatively good, I pity the woman who is compelled to lead

me through the trap-door my uncle had concealed. My uncle Phillip, and aunt Nancy would seize me, and would, to mount up there and chat with me at night. This was not safe in the daytime. It must all be done in the night. It was possible for me to move in an erect position, but I could not exercise. One day I hit my head against some object. My uncle had left it sticking there when he was out. I rejoiced as Robinson Crusoe⁶ could have been. It put a lucky thought into my head. I said to myself, "Now I will see my children." I did not go out in the daytime, for fear of attracting attention. Having found the side next the street, where I could go, I stuck the gimlet in and waited for evening. I succeeded in making one hole about an inch in diameter. I sat by it till late into the night, to enjoy the little light. In the morning I watched for my children. The first I saw was Dr. Flint. I had a shuddering, superstitious feeling. Several familiar faces passed by. At last I saw my children, and presently two sweet little faces

Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

were looking up at me, as though they knew I was there, and were conscious of the joy they imparted. How I longed to tell them I was there!

My condition was now a little improved. But for weeks I was tormented by hundreds of little red insects, fine as a needle's point, that pierced through my skin, and produced an intolerable burning. The good grandmother gave me herb teas and cooling medicines, and finally I got rid of them. The heat of my den was intense, for nothing but thin shingles protected me from the scorching summer's sun. But I had my consolations. Through my peephole I could watch the children, and when they were near enough, I could hear their talk. Aunt Nancy brought me all the news she could hear at Dr. Flint's. From her I learned that the doctor had written to New York to a colored woman, who had been born and raised in our neighborhood, and had breathed his contaminating atmosphere. He offered her a reward if she could find out any thing about me. I know not what was the nature of her reply; but he soon after started for New York in haste, saying to his family that he had business of importance to transact. I peeped at him as he passed on his way to the steamboat. It was a satisfaction to have miles of land and water between us, even for a little while; and it was a still greater satisfaction to know that he believed me to be in the Free States. My little den seemed less dreary than it had done. He returned, as he did from his former journey to New York, without obtaining any satisfactory information. When he passed our house next morning, Benny was standing at the gate. He had heard them say that he had gone to find me, and he called out, "Dr. Flint, did you bring my mother home? I want to see her." The doctor stamped his foot at him in a rage, and exclaimed, "Get out of the way, you little damned rascal! If you don't, I'll cut off your head."

Benny ran terrified into the house, saying, "You can't put me in jail again. I don't belong to you now." It was well that the wind carried the words away from the doctor's ear. I told my grandmother of it, when we had our next conference at the trap-door; and begged of her not to allow the children to be impertinent to the irascible old man.

Autumn came, with a pleasant abatement of heat. My eyes had become accustomed to the dim light, and by holding my book or work in a certain position near the aperture I contrived to read and sew. That was a great relief to the tedious monotony of my life. But when winter came, the cold penetrated through the thin shingle roof, and I was dreadfully chilled. The winters there are not so long, or so severe, as in northern latitudes; but the houses are not built to shelter from cold, and my little den was peculiarly comfortless. The kind grandmother brought me bed-clothes and warm drinks. Often I was obliged to lie in bed all day to keep comfortable; but with all my precautions, my shoulders and feet were frostbitten. O, those long, gloomy days, with no object for my eye to rest upon, and no thoughts to occupy my mind, except the dreary past and the uncertain future! I was thankful when there came a day sufficiently mild for me to wrap myself up and sit at the loophole to watch the passers by. Southerners have the habit of stopping and talking in the streets, and I heard many conversations not intended to meet my ears. I heard slave-hunters planning how to catch some poor fugitive. Several times I heard allusions to Dr. Flint, myself, and the history of my children; who, perhaps, were playing near the gate. One would say, "I wouldn't move my little finger to catch her, as old Flint's property." Another would say, "I'll catch any nigger for the reward. A man ought to have what belongs to him, if he is a damned brute." The opinion was

States. Very rarely did any one suggest the least suspicion rested on my grandmother to the ground. But it was the last place, where slavery existed, that place of concealment.

My mother tried to coax and bribe my children to leave about me. One day the doctor took them to show them bright little silver pieces and gay handkerchiefs. Their mother was. Ellen shrank away from them. She spoke up, and said, "Dr. Flint, I don't like you. You're in New York; and when you go there, you'll see her; but if you put her head off, I'll tell her to go right back."

Dr. Flint, suffering from exposure, lack of exercise, and the fact that Mr. Sands is elected to Congress. Risking discovery of his children. He does not live up to his promises to his children, Ellen, to some of his relatives in Brooklyn, and continues to search for Brent both locally and in the States.

Preparations for Escape

Dr. Flint will credit me, when I affirm that I lived in a room deprived of light and air, and with no space to move. Years. But it is a fact; and to me a sad one, the years from the effects of that long imprisonment. Members of my family, now living in New York, the truth of what I say.

That I sat late at the little loophole scarcely the size of one twinkling star. There, I heard the hunters stirring together about the capture of runaways, and my only hope would be to catch me.

Year after year, I peeped at my children's faces, and saw a heart yearning all the while to say, "Your mother has appeared to me as if ages had rolled away since we last met in our monotonous existence. At times, I was stupefied by the monotony, and became very impatient to know when these dark days would again be allowed to feel the sunshine, and the freedom of the open air."

My feeling increased. Mr. Sands had agreed that whenever his uncle Phillip could go with him, he would also, to watch over my children, and protect them. Moreover, I was likely to be drowned out of my mind; for the slight roof was getting badly out of repair; and was afraid to remove the shingles, lest some one would see it. When storms occurred in the night, they spread over the roof in the morning appeared to have been laid out in the daytime might have attracted attention. The shingles and bedding were often drenched; a process which in my cramped and stiffened limbs were a constant reminder of various plans of escape in my mind, which I often discussed with my grandmother, when she came to whisper with me

at the trap-door. The kind-hearted old woman had an intense sympathy for runaways. She had known too much of the cruelties inflicted on those who were captured. Her memory always flew back at once to the sufferings of her bright and handsome son, Benjamin, the youngest and dearest of her flock. So, whenever I alluded to the subject, she would groan out, "Oh, don't think of it, child. You'll break my heart." I had no good old aunt Nancy now to encourage me; but my brother William and my children were continually beckoning me to the north.

And now I must go back a few months in my story. I have stated that the first of January was the time for selling slaves, or leasing them out to new masters. If time were counted by heart-throbs, the poor slaves might reckon years of suffering during that festival so joyous to the free. On the New Year's day preceding my aunt's death, one of my friends, named Fanny, was to be sold at auction, to pay her master's debts. My thoughts were with her during all the day, and at night I anxiously inquired what had been her fate. I was told that she had been sold to one master, and her four little girls to another master, far distant; that she had escaped from her purchaser, and was not to be found. Her mother was the old Aggie I have spoken of. She lived in a small tenement belonging to my grandmother, and built on the same lot with her own house. Her dwelling was searched and watched, and that brought the patrols so near me that I was obliged to keep very close in my den. The hunters were somehow eluded; and not long afterwards Benny accidentally caught sight of Fanny in her mother's hut. He told his grandmother, who charged him never to speak of it, explaining to him the frightful consequences; and he never betrayed the trust. Aggie little dreamed that my grandmother knew where her daughter was concealed, and that the stooping form of her old neighbor was bending under a similar burden of anxiety and fear; but these dangerous secrets deepened the sympathy between the two old persecuted mothers.

My friend Fanny and I remained many weeks hidden within call of each other; but she was unconscious of the fact. I longed to have her share my den, which seemed a more secure retreat than her own; but I had brought so much trouble on my grandmother, that it seemed wrong to ask her to incur greater risks. My restlessness increased. I had lived too long in bodily pain and anguish of spirit. Always I was in dread that by some accident, or some contrivance, slavery would succeed in snatching my children from me. This thought drove me nearly frantic, and I determined to steer for the North Star at all hazards. At this crisis, Providence opened an unexpected way for me to escape. My friend Peter came one evening, and asked to speak with me. "Your day has come, Linda," said he. "I have found a chance for you to go to the Free States. You have a fortnight to decide." The news seemed too good to be true; but Peter explained his arrangements, and told me all that was necessary was for me to say I would go. I was going to answer him with a joyful yes, when the thought of Benny came to my mind. I told him the temptation was exceedingly strong, but I was terribly afraid of Dr. Flint's alleged power over my child, and that I could not go and leave him behind. Peter remonstrated earnestly. He said such a good chance might never occur again; that Benny was free, and could be sent to me; and that for the sake of my children's welfare I ought not to hesitate a moment. I told him I would consult with uncle Phillip. My uncle rejoiced in the plan, and bade me go by all means. He promised, if his life was spared, that he would either bring or send my son to me as soon as I reached a place of safety. I resolved to go, but

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I was to escape in a vessel; but I forbear to mention any further particulars. I was in readiness, but the vessel was unexpectedly detained several days. Meantime, news came to town of a most horrible murder committed on a fugitive slave, named James. Charity, the mother of this unfortunate young man, had been an old acquaintance of ours. I have told the shocking particulars of his death,⁷ in my description of some of the neighboring slaveholders. My grandmother, always nervously sensitive about runaways, was terribly frightened. She felt sure that a similar fate awaited me, if I did not desist from my enterprise. She sobbed, and groaned, and entreated me not to go. Her excessive fear was somewhat contagious, and my heart was not proof against her extreme agony. I was grievously disappointed, but I promised to relinquish my project.

When my friend Peter was apprised of this, he was both disappointed and vexed. He said, that judging from our past experience, it would be a long time before I had such another chance to throw away. I told him it need not be thrown away; that I had a friend concealed near by, who would be glad enough to take the place that had been provided for me. I told him about poor Fanny, and the kind-hearted, noble fellow, who never turned his back upon any body in distress, white or black, expressed his readiness to help her. Aggie was much surprised when she found that we knew her secret. She was rejoiced to hear of such a chance for Fanny, and arrangements were made for her to go on board the vessel the next night. They both supposed

The next morning I peeped through my dark and cloudy. At night I received news the vessel had not sailed. I was exceedingly anxious who was running a tremendous risk at my side and weather remained the same. Poor Fanny when they carried her on board, and I could be suffering now. Grandmother came often she was I did not go. On the third morning she to the storeroom. The poor old sufferer was full of trouble. She was easily flurried now. I felt state, but I was not aware that she had forgotten as usual. She was exceedingly worried about was afraid all would be discovered, and then all be tortured to death, and Phillip would be would be torn down. Poor Peter! If he should poor slave James had lately done, and all for me, how dreadful it would be for us all! Alas me, and had sent many a sharp pang through my own anxiety, and speak soothingly to her to aunt Nancy, the dear daughter she had retained all control of herself. As she stood there, from the piazza called out, "What is you, a startled, and in her agitation opened the door stepped Jenny, the mischievous housemaid, when I was concealed in the house of my wretched whar for you, aunt Marthy," said she, "some crackers." I had slunk down behind a me, but I imagined that Jenny was looking at me beat violently. My grandmother immediately went out quickly with Jenny to count the children. She returned to me, in a few minutes, the child!" she exclaimed, "my carelessness has yet. Get ready immediately, and go with Fanny say against it now; for there's no telling what

Uncle Phillip was sent for, and he agreed Jenny would inform Dr. Flint in less than getting me on board the boat, if possible; in my den, where they could not find me. He said it would not do for him to move, would be immediately excited; but he pronounced I felt reluctant to apply to him again, already; but there seemed to be no alternation in decision, he was true to his generous nature, to do his best to help me, trusting I should do this time.

7. To illustrate the cruelty of slaveholders, Jacobs recalled, earlier in her narrative, the sadistic tortures suffered by a local slave named James.

to my grandmother till very near the time she would feel it more keenly if I left her," said he, "and convince her how necessary for hers also. You cannot be blind to the burdens." I was not blind to it. I knew that the source of anxiety, and that the older she was of discovery. My uncle talked persuading her that it was absolutely necessary so unexpectedly offered.

The woman proved almost too much for my uncles. They were bewildered and flustered by my plans for my journey, and for my son to follow with him before I went, that I might give him how anxiously I should be waiting for him. He came up to me as often as possible to whisper upon my writing to Dr. Flint, as soon as asking him to sell me to her. She said she had in the world, for the sake of having a part of the world. If she could only live to see. I promised the dear old faithful friend as I arrived, and put the letter in a safe way and I resolved that not another cent of her money should go to pay rapacious slaveholders for what they had done. If I had not been unwilling to buy what I had bought, human nature would have prevented me from the expense of turning my aged relative out of the house, and she was trembling on the brink of the grave.

But I forbore to mention any further particulars. The vessel was unexpectedly detained several days in a town of a most horrible murder committed. Charity, the mother of this unfortunate acquaintance of ours. I have told the shocking description of some of the neighboring slaveholders. Always nervously sensitive about runaways, was sure that a similar fate awaited me, if I did not go. She sobbed, and groaned, and entreated me not to go. I was somewhat contagious, and my heart was not proof against her. I was grievously disappointed, but I promised to go.

When apprised of this, he was both disappointed and angry. From our past experience, it would be a long time before he had a chance to throw away. I told him it need not be so. A friend concealed near by, who would be glad to have me, had been provided for me. I told him about the hearted, noble fellow, who never turned his back on a white or black, expressed his readiness to help me. When she found that we knew her secret. She was so much a chance for Fanny, and arrangements were made for the vessel the next night. They both supposed

that I had long been at the north, therefore my name was not mentioned in the transaction. Fanny was carried on board at the appointed time, and stowed away in a very small cabin. This accommodation had been purchased at a price that would pay for a voyage to England. But when one proposes to go to fine old England, they stop to calculate whether they can afford the cost of the pleasure; while in making a bargain to escape from slavery, the trembling victim is ready to say, "Take all I have, only don't betray me!"

The next morning I peeped through my loophole, and saw that it was dark and cloudy. At night I received news that the wind was ahead, and the vessel had not sailed. I was exceedingly anxious about Fanny, and Peter too, who was running a tremendous risk at my instigation. Next day the wind and weather remained the same. Poor Fanny had been half dead with fright when they carried her on board, and I could readily imagine how she must be suffering now. Grandmother came often to my den, to say how thankful she was I did not go. On the third morning she rapped for me to come down to the storeroom. The poor old sufferer was breaking down under her weight of trouble. She was easily flurried now. I found her in a nervous, excited state, but I was not aware that she had forgotten to lock the door behind her, as usual. She was exceedingly worried about the detention of the vessel. She was afraid all would be discovered, and then Fanny, and Peter, and I, would all be tortured to death, and Phillip would be utterly ruined, and her house would be torn down. Poor Peter! If he should die such a horrible death as the poor slave James had lately done, and all for his kindness in trying to help me, how dreadful it would be for us all! Alas, the thought was familiar to me, and had sent many a sharp pang through my heart. I tried to suppress my own anxiety, and speak soothingly to her. She brought in some allusion to aunt Nancy, the dear daughter she had recently buried, and then she lost all control of herself. As she stood there, trembling and sobbing, a voice from the piazza called out, "Whar is you, aunt Marthy?" Grandmother was startled, and in her agitation opened the door, without thinking of me. In stepped Jenny, the mischievous housemaid, who had tried to enter my room, when I was concealed in the house of my white benefactress. "It's big huntin' eb'ry whar for you, aunt Marthy," said she. "My missis wants you to send her some crackers." I had slunk down behind a barrel, which entirely screened me, but I imagined that Jenny was looking directly at the spot, and my heart beat violently. My grandmother immediately thought what she had done, and went out quickly with Jenny to count the crackers locking the door after her. She returned to me, in a few minutes, the perfect picture of despair. "Poor child!" she exclaimed, "my carelessness has ruined you. The boat ain't gone yet. Get ready immediately, and go with Fanny. I ain't got another word to say against it now; for there's no telling what may happen this day."

Uncle Phillip was sent for, and he agreed with his mother in thinking that Jenny would inform Dr. Flint in less than twenty-four hours. He advised getting me on board the boat, if possible; if not, I had better keep very still in my den, where they could not find me without tearing the house down. He said it would not do for him to move in the matter, because suspicion would be immediately excited; but he promised to communicate with Peter. I felt reluctant to apply to him again, having implicated him too much already; but there seemed to be no alternative. Vexed as Peter had been by my indecision, he was true to his generous nature, and said at once that he would do his best to help me, trusting I should show myself a stronger woman this time.

He immediately proceeded to the wharf, and found that the wind had shifted, and the vessel was slowly beating down stream. On some pretext of urgent necessity, he offered two boatmen a dollar apiece to catch up with her. He was of lighter complexion than the boatmen he hired, and when the captain saw them coming so rapidly, he thought officers were pursuing his vessel in search of the runaway slave he had on board. They hoisted sails, but the boat gained upon them, and the indefatigable Peter sprang on board.

The captain at once recognized him. Peter asked him to go below, to speak about a bad bill he had given him. When he told his errand, the captain replied, "Why, the woman's here already; and I've put her where you or the devil would have a tough job to find her."

"But it is another woman I want to bring," said Peter. "*She* is in great distress, too, and you shall be paid any thing within reason, if you'll stop and take her."

"What's her name?" inquired the captain.

"Linda," he replied.

"That's the name of the woman already here," rejoined the captain. "By George! I believe you mean to betray me."

"O!" exclaimed Peter, "God knows I wouldn't harm a hair of your head. I am too grateful to you. But there really *is* another woman in great danger. Do have the humanity to stop and take her!"

After a while they came to an understanding. Fanny, not dreaming I was any where about in that region, had assumed my name, though she had called herself Johnson. "Linda is a common name," said Peter, "and the woman I want to bring is Linda Brent."

The captain agreed to wait at a certain place till evening, being handsomely paid for his detention.

Of course, the day was an anxious one for us all. But we concluded that if Jenny had seen me, she would be too wise to let her mistress know of it; and that she probably would not get a chance to see Dr. Flint's family till evening, for I knew very well what were the rules in that household. I afterwards believed that she did not see me; for nothing ever came of it, and she was one of those base characters that would have jumped to betray a suffering fellow being for the sake of thirty pieces of silver.

I made all my arrangements to go on board as soon as it was dusk. The intervening time I resolved to spend with my son. I had not spoken to him for seven years, though I had been under the same roof, and seen him every day, when I was well enough to sit at the loophole. I did not dare to venture beyond the storeroom; so they brought him there, and locked us up together, in a place concealed from the piazza door. It was an agitating interview for both of us. After we had talked and wept together for a little while, he said, "Mother, I'm glad you're going away. I wish I could go with you. I knew you was here; and I have been *so* afraid they would come and catch you!"

I was greatly surprised, and asked him how he had found it out.

He replied, "I was standing under the eaves, one day, before Ellen went away, and I heard somebody cough up over the wood shed. I don't know what made me think it was you, but I did think so. I missed Ellen, the night before she went away; and grandmother brought her back into the room in the night; and I thought maybe she'd been to see *you*, before she went, for I heard grandmother whisper to her, 'Now go to sleep; and remember never to tell.'"

I asked him if he ever mentioned his suspicions to his sister. He said he never did; but after he heard the cough, if he saw her playing with other

children on that side of the house, he always on the other side, for fear they would hear me cough. I kept a close lookout for Dr. Flint, and if he saw him, he always told grandmother. I now readily perceived a manifest uneasiness, when people were on that side of the house, at the time I had been puzzled to conjecture a motive for the conduct. It may seem extraordinary in a boy of ten, but I was surrounded by mysteries, deceptions, and dangers. I was cautious and watchful, and prematurely cautious. I never asked a question of grandmother, or uncle I never asked him to chime in with other children, when they were on that side of the house.

I told him I was now really going to the Free School. He was an honest boy, and a loving child to his dear old mother. I blessed him, and bring him to me, and we and began to tell me that grandmother had not even been speaking, the door was unlocked, and she had taken the money, which she wanted me to take. I begged her to let me at least, to pay for Benny's being sent to the north. Her tears were falling fast, that I should take the place of my strangers," she said, "and they would send you to the north that good grandmother!"

For the last time I went up to my nook. Its coldness chilled me, for the light of hope had risen. The blessed prospect of freedom before me, I felt old homestead, where I had been sheltered from the storm; where I had dreamed my first young life; that had faded away, my children came to twine around my desolate heart. As the hour approached for me to go to the storeroom. My grandmother and Ben came to the hand, and said, "Linda, let us pray." We knelt down, and my child pressed to my heart, and my other dear friend I was about to leave forever. On no other occasion had I listened to so fervent a supplication for me, and it went through my heart, and inspired me with true faith.

Peter was waiting for me in the street. I was not a bit but strong of purpose. I did not look back upon the past, that I should never see it again.

[Brent escapes to Philadelphia by boat. She goes to the Free School, who is being trained to become a lady's personal attendant, and her freedom. Brent finds employment in the Free School, Mary, the infant daughter of Mrs. Bruce, "a true friend." Bruce's death heightens Brent's insecurity. Fearful of the future, she flees to Boston, where she is able to support her children.]

XXXIX. THE CONCLUSION

For two years my daughter and I supported our family. At the end of that time, my brother William went to boarding school. It required a great effort to get her, for I had few near ties, and it was her first departure from home. My rooms seem home-like. But my judgment prevailed. I made preparations for her departure. Dr.

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children on that side of the house, he always tried to coax her round to the
 other side, for fear they would hear me cough, too. He said he had kept
 a close lookout for Dr. Flint, and if he saw him speak to a constable, or a
 patrol, he always told grandmother. I now recollected that I had seen him
 manifest uneasiness, when people were on that side of the house, and I had
 at the time been puzzled to conjecture a motive for his actions. Such pru-
 dence may seem extraordinary in a boy of twelve years, but slaves, being
 surrounded by mysteries, deceptions, and dangers, early learn to be suspi-
 cious and watchful, and prematurely cautious and cunning. He had never
 asked a question of grandmother, or uncle Phillip, and I had often heard
 him chime in with other children, when they spoke of my being at the north.

I told him I was now really going to the Free States, and if he was a good,
 honest boy, and a loving child to his dear old grandmother, the Lord would
 bless him, and bring him to me, and we and Ellen would live together. He
 began to tell me that grandmother had not eaten any thing all day. While he
 was speaking, the door was unlocked, and she came in with a small bag of
 money, which she wanted me to take. I begged her to keep a part of it, at
 least, to pay for Benny's being sent to the north; but she insisted, while her
 tears were falling fast, that I should take the whole. "You may be sick among
 strangers," she said, "and they would send you to the poorhouse to die." Ah,
 that good grandmother!

For the last time I went up to my nook. Its desolate appearance no longer
 chilled me, for the light of hope had risen in my soul. Yet, even with the
 blessed prospect of freedom before me, I felt very sad at leaving forever that
 old homestead, where I had been sheltered so long by the dear old grand-
 mother; where I had dreamed my first young dream of love; and where, after
 that had faded away, my children came to twine themselves so closely round
 my desolate heart. As the hour approached for me to leave, I again descended
 to the storeroom. My grandmother and Benny were there. She took me by
 the hand, and said, "Linda, let us pray." We knelt down together, with my
 child pressed to my heart, and my other arm round the faithful, loving old
 friend I was about to leave forever. On no other occasion has it ever been my
 lot to listen to so fervent a supplication for mercy and protection. It thrilled
 through my heart, and inspired me with trust in God.

Peter was waiting for me in the street. I was soon by his side, faint in body,
 but strong of purpose. I did not look back upon the old place, though I felt
 that I should never see it again.

[Brent escapes to Philadelphia by boat. She goes to New York and visits her daughter,
 who is being trained to become a lady's personal servant instead of receiving school-
 ing and her freedom. Brent finds employment in New York providing child care for
 Mary, the infant daughter of Mrs. Bruce, "a true and sympathizing friend." Mrs.
 Bruce's death heightens Brent's insecurity. Fearful of slave catchers, she is forced to
 flee to Boston, where she is able to support her children by working as a seamstress.]

XXXIX. The Confession

For two years my daughter and I supported ourselves comfortably in Bos-
 ton. At the end of that time, my brother William offered to send Ellen to a
 boarding school. It required a great effort for me to consent to part with
 her, for I had few near ties, and it was her presence that made my two little
 rooms seem home-like. But my judgment prevailed over my selfish feelings.
 I made preparations for her departure. During the two years we had lived

together I had often resolved to tell her something about her father; but I had never been able to muster sufficient courage. I had a shrinking dread of diminishing my child's love. I knew she must have curiosity on the subject, but she had never asked a question. She was always very careful not to say anything to remind me of my troubles. Now that she was going from me, I thought if I should die before she returned, she might hear my story from some one who did not understand the palliating circumstances; and that if she were entirely ignorant on the subject, her sensitive nature might receive a rude shock.

When we retired for the night, she said, "Mother, it is very hard to leave you alone. I am almost sorry I am going, though I do want to improve myself. But you will write to me often; won't you, mother?"

I did not throw my arms round her. I did not answer her. But in a calm, solemn way, for it cost me great effort, I said, "Listen to me, Ellen; I have something to tell you!" I recounted my early sufferings in slavery, and told her how nearly they had crushed me. I began to tell her how they had driven me into a great sin, when she clasped me in her arms, and exclaimed, "Oh, don't, mother! Please don't tell me any more."

I said, "But, my child, I want you to know about your father."

"I know all about it, mother," she replied; "I am nothing to my father, and he is nothing to me. All my love is for you. I was with him five months in Washington, and he never cared for me. He never spoke to me as he did to his little Fanny. I knew all the time he was my father, for Fanny's nurse told me so; but she said I must never tell any body, and I never did. I used to wish he would take me in his arms and kiss me, as he did Fanny; or that he would sometimes smile at me, as he did at her. I thought if he was my own father, he ought to love me. I was a little girl then, and didn't know any better. But now I never think any thing about my father. All my love is for you." She hugged me closer as she spoke, and I thanked God that the knowledge I had so much dreaded to impart had not diminished the affection of my child. I had not the slightest idea she knew that portion of my history. If I had, I should have spoken to her long before; for my pent-up feelings had often longed to pour themselves out to some one I could trust. But I loved the dear girl better for the delicacy she had manifested towards her unfortunate mother.

The next morning, she and her uncle started on their journey to the village in New York, where she was to be placed at school. It seemed as if all the sunshine had gone away. My little room was dreadfully lonely. I was thankful when a message came from a lady, accustomed to employ me, requesting me to come and sew in her family for several weeks. On my return, I found a letter from brother William. He thought of opening an anti-slavery reading room in Rochester, and combining with it the sale of some books and stationery; and he wanted me to unite with him. We tried it, but it was not successful. We found warm anti-slavery friends there, but the feeling was not general enough to support such an establishment. I passed nearly a year in the family of Isaac and Amy Post,⁸ practical believers in the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood. They measured a man's worth by his character, not by his complexion. The memory of those beloved and honored friends will remain with me to my latest hour.

XL. *The Fugitive Slave*

My brother, being disappointed in his project, and it was agreed that Benjamin should go with him, and was a great favorite there. They did not tell it, because she had no desire to make any more friends. But when it was accidentally discovered that her every method was used to increase her advantage.

I was alone again. It was necessary for me to find a new home. I preferred that it should be among those who were kind to me. In Rochester, I called at the house of Mr. Bruce, a Quaker, who had thawed my heart, when it was frozen by the distrust of all my fellow-beings. She was growing old, but she was always kind. Mr. Bruce had married again, and had become nurse to a new infant. I had but one feeling of insecurity in New York, now great from the Fugitive Slave Law. However, I resolved to try my fortune in my employer. The new Mrs. Bruce was under aristocratic influences, and still living, but she had no prejudice against color, I was never in a system of slavery, she had a most hearty dislike to slaveholders could blind her to its enormity. She was a true and sympathizing friend. Blessings be upon her!

About the time that I reentered the city, a disastrous import to the colored people. The Fugitive Slave Law, which came under the new law, was given to the bloodhounds of the south. It was a terror to the colored population. The great excitement, taking no note of the "short and snoring snore" while fashionables were listening to the thrills of the Metropolitan Hall, the thrilling voices of people, up, in an agony of supplication, to the Lord, who had lived in the city for twenty years, a washerwoman, who, by hard labor, had made her fortune, was obliged to sacrifice her furniture, bid adieu to her fortune among strangers in Canada, and secret she had never known before—that she must leave her to insure his own safety. We were told that his wife had fled from slavery years ago, and the condition of its mother, the children of the Fugitive Slave Law, and carried into slavery. Every where, in consternation and anguish. But what care for the blood they were crushing out.

When my brother William spent his last day in California, we talked nearly all the time of the oppressed people by the passage of this law. It manifested such bitterness of spirit, such

9. The most controversial feature of the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law made any action that aided a runaway slave a federal crime.

8. Quaker abolitionists living in Rochester, New York. Amy Post was a participant in the first Woman's Rights Convention held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848.

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XL. *The Fugitive Slave Law*⁹

My brother, being disappointed in his project, concluded to go to California; and it was agreed that Benjamin should go with him. Ellen liked her school, and was a great favorite there. They did not know her history, and she did not tell it, because she had no desire to make capital out of their sympathy. But when it was accidentally discovered that her mother was a fugitive slave, every method was used to increase her advantages and diminish her expenses.

I was alone again. It was necessary for me to be earning money, and I preferred that it should be among those who knew me. On my return from Rochester, I called at the house of Mr. Bruce, to see Mary, the darling little babe that had thawed my heart, when it was freezing into a cheerless distrust of all my fellow-beings. She was growing a tall girl now, but I loved her always. Mr. Bruce had married again, and it was proposed that I should become nurse to a new infant. I had but one hesitation, and that was my feeling of insecurity in New York, now greatly increased by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. However, I resolved to try the experiment. I was again fortunate in my employer. The new Mrs. Bruce was an American, brought up under aristocratic influences, and still living in the midst of them; but if she had any prejudice against color, I was never made aware of it; and as for the system of slavery, she had a most hearty dislike of it. No sophistry of Southerners could blind her to its enormity. She was a person of excellent principles and a noble heart. To me, from that hour to the present, she has been a true and sympathizing friend. Blessings be with her and hers!

About the time that I reentered the Bruce family, an event occurred of disastrous import to the colored people. The slave Hamlin, the first fugitive that came under the new law, was given up by the bloodhounds of the north to the bloodhounds of the south. It was the beginning of a reign of terror to the colored population. The great city rushed on in its whirl of excitement, taking no note of the "short and simple annals of the poor."¹ But while fashionables were listening to the thrilling voice of Jenny Lind² in Metropolitan Hall, the thrilling voices of poor hunted colored people went up, in an agony of supplication, to the Lord, from Zion's church. Many families, who had lived in the city for twenty years, fled from it now. Many a poor washerwoman, who, by hard labor, had made herself a comfortable home, was obliged to sacrifice her furniture, bid a hurried farewell to friends, and seek her fortune among strangers in Canada. Many a wife discovered a secret she had never known before—that her husband was a fugitive, and must leave her to insure his own safety. Worse still, many a husband discovered that his wife had fled from slavery years ago, and as "the child follows the condition of its mother," the children of his love were liable to be seized and carried into slavery. Every where, in those humble homes, there was consternation and anguish. But what cared the legislators of the "dominant race" for the blood they were crushing out of trampled hearts?

When my brother William spent his last evening with me, before he went to California, we talked nearly all the time of the distress brought on our oppressed people by the passage of this iniquitous law; and never had I seen him manifest such bitterness of spirit, such stern hostility to our oppressors.

⁹ The most controversial feature of the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law made any action that aided a runaway slave a federal crime.

1. From Thomas Gray's famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), line 32.

2. Internationally popular Swedish singer.

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ht into the Free States by his master.³
hundreds of intelligent and industrious
ured into the streets; and when it was
Bruce, or any of the family, I went as
ts and by-ways. What a disgrace to a city
guiltless of offence, and seeking to per-
should be condemned to live in such
turn for protection! This state of things,
nptu vigilance committees. Every colored
ersecuted race, kept their eyes wide open.
papers carefully, to see what Southerners
for my own sake, thinking my young mis-
mong the list; I wished also to give infor-
or if many were "running to and fro," I
be increased."⁴

ern reminiscences, which I will here briefly
d with a slave named Luke, who belonged
His master died, leaving a son and daugh-
In the division of the slaves, Luke was
his young man became a prey to the vices
nstitution," and when he went to the north,
arried his vices with him. He was brought
is limbs, by excessive dissipation. Luke was
-ridden master, whose despotic habits were
on at his own helplessness. He kept a cow-
most trivial occurrence, he would order his
d kneel beside the couch, while he whipped
asted. Some days he was not allowed to wear
to be in readiness to be flogged. A day sel-
ving more or less blows. If the slightest resis-
stable was sent for to execute the punishment,
ience how much more the constable's strong
he comparatively feeble one of his master. The
er, and was finally palsied; and then the con-
stant requisition. The fact that he was entirely
d was obliged to be tended like an infant, instead
compassion towards his poor slave, seemed only
nd cruelty. As he lay there on his bed, a mere
l, he took into his head the strangest freaks of
tated to submit to his orders, the constable was
of these freaks were of a nature too filthy to be
n the house of bondage, I left poor Luke still
his cruel and disgusting wretch.

een requested to do an errand for Mrs. Bruce.
ack streets, as usual, when I saw a young man
was familiar to me. As he came nearer, I recog-
ced to see or hear of any one who had escaped
membering this poor fellow's extreme hardships,

I was peculiarly glad to see him on Northern soil, though I no longer called it *free* soil. I well remembered what a desolate feeling it was to be alone among strangers, and I went up to him and greeted him cordially. At first, he did not know me; but when I mentioned my name, he remembered all about me. I told him of the Fugitive Slave Law, and asked him if he did not know that New York was a city of kidnappers.

He replied, "De risk ain't so bad for me, as 'tis fur you. 'Cause I runned away from de speculator, and you runned away from de massa. Dem speculators vont spen dar money to come here fur a runaway, if dey ain't sartin sure to put dar hans right on him. An I tell you I's tuk good car 'bout dat. I had too hard times down dar, to let 'em ketch dis nigger."

He then told me of the advice he had received, and the plans he had laid. I asked if he had money enough to take him to Canada. "'Pend upon it, I hab," he replied. "I tuk car fur dat. I'd bin workin all my days fur dem cussed whites, an got no pay but kicks and cuffs. So I tought dis nigger had a right to money nuff to bring him to de Free States. Massa Henry he lib till ebery body vish him dead; an ven he did die, I knowed de debbil would hab him, an vouldn't vant him to bring his money 'long too. So I tuk some of his bills, and put 'em in de pocket of his old trousers. An ven he was buried, dis nigger ask fur dem ole trousers, an dey gub 'em to me." With a low, chuckling laugh, he added, "You see I didn't *steal* it; dey *gub* it to me. I tell you, I had mighty hard time to keep de speculator from findin it; but he didn't git it."

This is a fair specimen of how the moral sense is educated by slavery. When a man has his wages stolen from him, year after year, and the laws sanction and enforce the theft, how can he be expected to have more regard to honesty than has the man who robs him? I have become somewhat enlightened, but I confess that I agree with poor, ignorant, much-abused Luke, in thinking he had a *right* to that money, as a portion of his unpaid wages. He went to Canada forthwith, and I have not since heard from him.

All that winter I lived in a state of anxiety. When I took the children out to breathe the air, I closely observed the countenances of all I met. I dreaded the approach of summer, when snakes and slaveholders make their appearance. I was, in fact, a slave in New York, as subject to slave laws as I had been in a Slave State. Strange incongruity in a State called free!

Spring returned, and I received warning from the south that Dr. Flint knew of my return to my old place, and was making preparations to have me caught. I learned afterwards that my dress, and that of Mrs. Bruce's children, had been described to him by some of the Northern tools, which slaveholders employ for their base purposes, and then indulge in sneers at their cupidity and mean servility.

I immediately informed Mrs. Bruce of my danger, and she took prompt measures for my safety. My place as nurse could not be supplied immediately, and this generous, sympathizing lady proposed that I should carry her baby away. It was a comfort to me to have the child with me; for the heart is reluctant to be torn away from every object it loves. But how few mothers would have consented to have one of their own babes become a fugitive, for the sake of a poor, hunted nurse, on whom the legislators of the country had let loose the bloodhounds! When I spoke of the sacrifice she was making, in depriving herself of her dear baby, she replied, "It is better for you to have baby with you, Linda; for if they get on your track, they will be obliged to bring the child to me; and then, if there is a possibility of saving you, you shall be saved."

ive, a benevolent gentleman in many
ery. He remonstrated with her for har-
was violating the laws of her country;
e penalty. She replied, "I am very well
ne thousand dollars fine. Shame on my
neur the penalty. I will go to the state's
ctim torn from my house, to be carried

! The tears are in my eyes while I write
ss reward her for her sympathy with my

ere I was sheltered by the wife of a sena-
grateful remembrance. This honorable
or the Fugitive Slave Law, as did the sena-
e contrary, he was strongly opposed to it;
nce to be afraid of having me remain in his
nto the country, where I remained a month
sed that Dr. Flint's emissaries had lost track
or the present, I returned to New York.

I. Free at Last

of her family, were exceedingly kind to me.
gs of my lot, yet I could not always wear a
ing harm to no one; on the contrary, I was
my small way; yet I could never go out to
trepidation at my heart. This seemed hard;
right state of things in any civilized country.
d news from my good old grandmother. She
oyed others to write for her. The following is
t letters:—

not hope to see you again on earth; but I pray
where pain will no more rack this feeble body
nd parting from my children will be no more.
things if we are faithful unto the end. My age
e me of going to church now; but God is with
k your brother for his kindness. Give much love
remember the Creator in the days of his youth.
n the Father's kingdom. Love to Ellen and Ben-
m. Tell him for me, to be a good boy. Strive, my
God's children. May he protect and provide for
ur loving old mother."

red and saddened me. I was always glad to have
ful old friend of my unhappy youth; but her mes-
rt yearn to see her before she died, and I mourned
npossible. Some months after I returned from my
eceived a letter from her, in which she wrote, "Dr.
a distressed family. Poor old man! I hope he made

I remembered how he had defrauded my grandmother of the hard earn-
ings she had loaned; how he had tried to cheat her out of the freedom her
mistress had promised her, and how he had persecuted her children; and I
thought to myself that she was a better Christian than I was, if she could
entirely forgive him. I cannot say, with truth, that the news of my old mas-
ter's death softened my feelings towards him. There are wrongs which even
the grave does not bury. The man was odious to me while he lived, and his
memory is odious now.

His departure from this world did not diminish my danger. He had threat-
ened my grandmother that his heirs should hold me in slavery after he was
gone; that I never should be free so long as a child of his survived. As for
Mrs. Flint, I had seen her in deeper afflictions than I supposed the loss of
her husband would be, for she had buried several children; yet I never saw
any signs of softening in her heart. The doctor had died in embarrassed
circumstances, and had little to will to his heirs, except such property as he
was unable to grasp. I was well aware what I had to expect from the family
of Flints; and my fears were confirmed by a letter from the south, warning
me to be on my guard, because Mrs. Flint openly declared that her daugh-
ter could not afford to lose so valuable a slave as I was.

I kept close watch of the newspapers for arrivals; but one Saturday night,
being much occupied, I forgot to examine the Evening Express as usual.
I went down into the parlor for it, early in the morning, and found the boy
about to kindle a fire with it. I took it from him and examined the list of
arrivals. Reader, if you have never been a slave, you cannot imagine the
acute sensation of suffering at my heart, when I read the names of Mr. and
Mrs. Dodge, at a hotel in Courtland Street. It was a third-rate hotel, and
that circumstance convinced me of the truth of what I had heard, that they
were short of funds and had need of my value, as *they* valued me; and that
was by dollars and cents. I hastened with the paper to Mrs. Bruce. Her heart
and hand were always open to every one in distress, and she always warmly
sympathized with mine. It was impossible to tell how near the enemy was.
He might have passed and repassed the house while we were sleeping. He
might at that moment be waiting to pounce upon me if I ventured out of
doors. I had never seen the husband of my young mistress, and therefore I
could not distinguish him from any other stranger. A carriage was hastily
ordered; and, closely veiled, I followed Mrs. Bruce, taking the baby again
with me into exile. After various turnings and crossings, and returnings, the
carriage stopped at the house of one of Mrs. Bruce's friends, where I was
kindly received. Mrs. Bruce returned immediately, to instruct the domestics
what to say if any one came to inquire for me.

It was lucky for me that the evening paper was not burned up before I had a
chance to examine the list of arrivals. It was not long after Mrs. Bruce's return
to her house, before several people came to inquire for me. One inquired for
me, another asked for my daughter Ellen, and another said he had a letter
from my grandmother, which he was requested to deliver in person.

They were told, "She *has* lived here, but she has left."

"How long ago?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Do you know where she went?"

"I do not, sir." And the door was closed.

This Mr. Dodge, who claimed me as his property, was originally a Yankee
pedler in the south; then he became a merchant, and finally a slaveholder.

He managed to get introduced into what was called the first society, and married Miss Emily Flint. A quarrel arose between him and her brother, and the brother cowhided him. This led to a family feud, and he proposed to remove to Virginia. Dr. Flint left him no property, and his own means had become circumscribed, while a wife and children depended upon him for support. Under these circumstances, it was very natural that he should make an effort to put me into his pocket.

I had a colored friend, a man from my native place, in whom I had the most implicit confidence. I sent for him, and told him that Mr. and Mrs. Dodge had arrived in New York. I proposed that he should call upon them to make inquiries about his friends at the south, with whom Dr. Flint's family were well acquainted. He thought there was no impropriety in his doing so, and he consented. He went to the hotel, and knocked at the door of Mr. Dodge's room, which was opened by the gentleman himself, who gruffly inquired, "What brought you here? How came you to know I was in the city?"

"Your arrival was published in the evening papers, sir; and I called to ask Mrs. Dodge about my friends at home. I didn't suppose it would give any offence."

"Where's that negro girl, that belongs to my wife?"

"What girl, sir?"

"You know well enough. I mean Linda, that ran away from Dr. Flint's plantation, some years ago. I dare say you've seen her, and know where she is."

"Yes, sir, I've seen her, and know where she is. She is out of your reach, sir."

"Tell me where she is, or bring her to me, and I will give her a chance to buy her freedom."

"I don't think it would be of any use, sir. I have heard her say she would go to the ends of the earth, rather than pay any man or woman for her freedom; because she thinks she has a right to it. Besides, she couldn't do it, if she would, for she has spent her earnings to educate her children."

This made Mr. Dodge very angry, and some high words passed between them. My friend was afraid to come where I was; but in the course of the day I received a note from him. I supposed they had not come from the south, in the winter, for a pleasure excursion; and now the nature of their business was very plain.

Mrs. Bruce came to me and entreated me to leave the city the next morning. She said her house was watched, and it was possible that some clew to me might be obtained. I refused to take her advice. She pleaded with an earnest tenderness, that ought to have moved me; but I was in a bitter, disheartened mood. I was weary of flying from pillar to post. I had been chased during half my life, and it seemed as if the chase was never to end. There I sat, in that great city, guiltless of crime, yet not daring to worship God in any of the churches. I heard the bells ringing for afternoon service, and, with contemptuous sarcasm, I said, "Will the preachers take for their text, 'Proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of prison doors to them that are bound'?⁶ or will they preach from the text, 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you'?"⁷ Oppressed Poles and Hungarians could find a safe refuge in that city; John Mitchell⁸ was free to proclaim in the City Hall his desire for "a plantation well stocked with slaves"; but there I sat, an oppressed American, not daring to show my face. God forgive the

black and bitter thoughts I indulged on that day," says, "Oppression makes even a wise man mad."

I had been told that Mr. Dodge said his wish was to have the right to my children, and if he could not get it was, more than any thing else, that roused Benjamin was with his uncle William in California, and his daughter had come to spend a vacation with him. I suffered in slavery at her age, and my heart was torn to pieces to try to seize her young.

Dear Mrs. Bruce! I seem to see the expressive face of Ellen, away discouraged by my obstinate mood. Finding, she sent Ellen to entreat me. When ten o'clock and Ellen had not returned, this watchful and anxious. She came to us in a carriage, bringing her journey—trusting that by this time I would listen as I ought to have done before.

The next day, baby and I set out in a heavy England again. I received letters from the City under an assumed name. In a few days one came to me that my new master was still searching to put an end to this persecution by buying me the kindness that prompted this offer, but that he was not as might have been expected. The more I reflected, the more difficult it was for me to consent; and to pay money to those who had so greatly wronged me, like taking from my sufferings the glory of triumphing over them, like thanking her, but saying that being sold from her was too much like slavery; that such a great obligation was placed on me; and that I preferred to go to my brother.

Without my knowledge, Mrs. Bruce employed to enter into negotiations with Mr. Dodge. I dred dollars down, if Mr. Dodge would sell or relinquish all claim to me or my children for myself my master said he scorned so small an offer. The gentleman replied, "You can do as you offer you will never get any thing; for the way her and her children out of the country."

Mr. Dodge concluded that "half a loaf was agreed to under the proffered terms. By the next from Mrs. Bruce: "I am rejoiced to tell you it has been paid to Mr. Dodge. Come home to my sweet babe."

My brain reeled as I read these lines. A true; I have seen the bill of sale." "The bill like a blow. So I was sold at last! A human being! The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will know it. It is a disgraceful history of the Christian religion. It may hereafter be used by antiquaries,² who are seeking to measure t

6. Isaiah 61, 1.

7. Cf. Matthew 7.12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye

even so to them."¹⁰

8. Irish nationalist and advocate of slavery.

9. Ecclesiastes 7.7.

1. Earnest reasoning designed to change some-

one'
2. '1

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 el arose between him and her brother,
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things what-
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black and bitter thoughts I indulged on that Sabbath day! The Scripture
 says, "Oppression makes even a wise man mad";⁹ and I was not wise.

I had been told that Mr. Dodge said his wife had never signed away her
 right to my children, and if he could not get me, he would take them. This
 it was, more than any thing else, that roused such a tempest in my soul.
 Benjamin was with his uncle William in California, but my innocent young
 daughter had come to spend a vacation with me. I thought of what I had
 suffered in slavery at her age, and my heart was like a tiger's when a hunter
 tries to seize her young.

Dear Mrs. Bruce! I seem to see the expression of her face, as she turned
 away discouraged by my obstinate mood. Finding her expostulations¹ unavail-
 ing, she sent Ellen to entreat me. When ten o'clock in the evening arrived
 and Ellen had not returned, this watchful and unwearied friend became
 anxious. She came to us in a carriage, bringing a well-filled trunk for my
 journey—trusting that by this time I would listen to reason. I yielded to her,
 as I ought to have done before.

The next day, baby and I set out in a heavy snow storm, bound for New
 England again. I received letters from the City of Iniquity, addressed to me
 under an assumed name. In a few days one came from Mrs. Bruce, inform-
 ing me that my new master was still searching for me, and that she intended
 to put an end to this persecution by buying my freedom. I felt grateful for
 the kindness that prompted this offer, but the idea was not so pleasant to
 me as might have been expected. The more my mind had become enlight-
 ened, the more difficult it was for me to consider myself an article of prop-
 erty; and to pay money to those who had so grievously oppressed me seemed
 like taking from my sufferings the glory of triumph. I wrote to Mrs. Bruce,
 thanking her, but saying that being sold from one owner to another seemed
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Without my knowledge, Mrs. Bruce employed a gentleman in New York
 to enter into negotiations with Mr. Dodge. He proposed to pay three hun-
 dred dollars down, if Mr. Dodge would sell me, and enter into obligations to
 relinquish all claim to me or my children forever after. He who called him-
 self my master said he scorned so small an offer for such a valuable servant.
 The gentleman replied, "You can do as you choose, sir. If you reject this
 offer you will never get any thing; for the woman has friends who will con-
 vey her and her children out of the country."

Mr. Dodge concluded that "half a loaf was better than no bread," and he
 agreed to the proffered terms. By the next mail I received this brief letter
 from Mrs. Bruce: "I am rejoiced to tell you that the money for your freedom
 has been paid to Mr. Dodge. Come home to-morrow. I long to see you and
 my sweet babe."

My brain reeled as I read these lines. A gentleman near me said, "It's
 true; I have seen the bill of sale." "The bill of sale!" Those words struck me
 like a blow. So I was *sold* at last! A human being *sold* in the free city of New
 York! The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will learn from it
 that women were articles of traffic in New York, late in the nineteenth cen-
 tury of the Christian religion. It may hereafter prove a useful document to
 antiquaries,² who are seeking to measure the progress of civilization in the

⁹ Ecclesiastes 7:7.

¹ Earnest reasoning designed to change some-

one's conduct.

² Those who study rare, old things.

United States. I well know the value of that bit of paper; but much as I love freedom, I do not like to look upon it. I am deeply grateful to the generous friend who procured it, but I despise the miscreant who demanded payment for what never rightfully belonged to him or his.

I had objected to having my freedom bought, yet I must confess that when it was done I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted from my weary shoulders. When I rode home in the cars I was no longer afraid to unveil my face and look at people as they passed. I should have been glad to have met Daniel Dodge himself; to have had him seen me and known me, that he might have mourned over the untoward circumstances which compelled him to sell me for three hundred dollars.

When I reached home, the arms of my benefactress were thrown round me, and our tears mingled. As soon as she could speak, she said, "O Linda, I'm so glad it's all over! You wrote to me as if you thought you were going to be transferred from one owner to another. But I did not buy you for your services. I should have done just the same, if you had been going to sail for California tomorrow. I should, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that you left me a free woman."

My heart was exceedingly full. I remembered how my poor father had tried to buy me, when I was a small child, and how he had been disappointed. I hoped his spirit was rejoicing over me now. I remembered how my good old grandmother had laid up her earnings to purchase me in later years, and how often her plans had been frustrated. How that faithful, loving old heart would leap for joy, if she could look on me and my children now that we were free! My relatives had been foiled in all their efforts, but God had raised me up a friend among strangers, who had bestowed on me the precious, long-desired boon. Friend! It is a common word, often lightly used. Like other good and beautiful things, it may be tarnished by careless handling; but when I speak of Mrs. Bruce as my friend, the word is sacred.

My grandmother lived to rejoice in my freedom; but not long after, a letter came with a black seal. She had gone "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."³

Time passed on, and a paper came to me from the south, containing an obituary notice of my uncle Phillip. It was the only case I ever knew of such an honor conferred upon a colored person. It was written by one of his friends, and contained these words: "Now that death has laid him low, they call him a good man and a useful citizen; but what are eulogies to the black man, when the world has faded from his vision? It does not require man's praise to obtain rest in God's kingdom." So they called a colored man a *citizen*! Strange words to be uttered in that region!

Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage. I and my children are now free! We are as free from the power of slaveholders as are the white people of the north; and though that, according to my ideas, is not saying a great deal, it is a vast improvement in my condition. The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own. I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own. But God so orders circumstances as to keep me with my friend Mrs. Bruce. Love, duty, gratitude, also bind me to her side. It is a privilege to serve her who pities my oppressed

3. Job 3.17.

people; and who has bestowed the inestimable my children.

It has been painful to me, in many ways, to r in bondage. I would gladly forget them if I cou altogether without solace; for with those gloo memories of my good old grandmother, like li a dark and troubled sea.

WILLIAM WELLS

1814?-1884

William Wells Brown is generally regarded achieve distinction in what the nineteen "fine letters." A number of black Americans conte Frederick Douglass, enjoyed popular success as joi these forms of expression, however, Brown tried b prestigiously "literary," authoring the first novel, ter (1853) and the first drama, *The Escape; or, A L* American literature. Less well known but still re include *Three Years in Europe* (1852), the first tre two volumes of history, *The Black Man: His Achievements* (1863) and *The Negro in the Amer* which is the first African American history of the ery lecturer and an activist long before he bec lettres as a fresh and potent way to dramatize his ing a sympathetic image of African American England. Brown's critics have sometimes judg dened by abolitionist propaganda and sentimer nated some of the most persistent and provocati African American narrative tradition.

William Wells Brown was born on a plantation the son of a white man who never acknowledged whose only name was Elizabeth. Light comple spent his boyhood in Marthasville on the Miss mainly in St. Louis and its vicinity, working as ernkeeper's assistant, a printer's helper, an assist handyman for James Walker—a Missouri slav three trips up and down the Mississippi Rive Orleans slave market. After a year's service to V ter in January 1832, only to learn that he was t cipitated the slave's first escape attempt, wh determined to take his mother with him. Willia trying to run away—beatings, hard labor as a fi he fell into the hands of owners who were so excursion to Cincinnati in the last weeks of t

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people, and who has bestowed the inestimable boon of freedom on me and my children.

It has been painful to me, in many ways, to recall the dreary years I passed in bondage. I would gladly forget them if I could. Yet the retrospection is not altogether without solace; for with those gloomy recollections come tender memories of my good old grandmother, like light, fleecy clouds floating over a dark and troubled sea.

1861

WILLIAM WELLS BROWN

1814?–1884

William Wells Brown is generally regarded as the first African American to achieve distinction in what the nineteenth century called *belles lettres*, or "fine letters." A number of black Americans contemporary with Brown, most notably Frederick Douglass, enjoyed popular success as journalists and orators. In addition to these forms of expression, however, Brown tried his hand at genres considered more prestigiously "literary," authoring the first novel, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853) and the first drama, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858), in African American literature. Less well known but still remarkable works from Brown's pen include *Three Years in Europe* (1852), the first travel book by a black American, and two volumes of history, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863) and *The Negro in the American Rebellion* (1867), the latter of which is the first African American history of the Civil War. Brown was an antislavery lecturer and an activist long before he became a literary man. He saw *belles lettres* as a fresh and potent way to dramatize his case against slavery while promoting a sympathetic image of African Americans in both the United States and England. Brown's critics have sometimes judged his fiction and poetry overburdened by abolitionist propaganda and sentimentality, but few deny that he originated some of the most persistent and provocative character types and motifs in the African American narrative tradition.

William Wells Brown was born on a plantation in Montgomery County, Kentucky, the son of a white man who never acknowledged his fatherhood and a slave woman whose only name was Elizabeth. Light complexioned and quick witted, William spent his boyhood in Marthasville on the Missouri frontier and his teenage years mainly in St. Louis and its vicinity, working as a house servant, a field hand, a tavernkeeper's assistant, a printer's helper, an assistant in a medical office, and finally a handyman for James Walker—a Missouri slave trader with whom William made three trips up and down the Mississippi River between St. Louis and the New Orleans slave market. After a year's service to Walker, William returned to his master in January 1832, only to learn that he was to be put up for sale. This news precipitated the slave's first escape attempt, which failed in part because he was determined to take his mother with him. William suffered the usual punishment for trying to run away—beatings, hard labor as a field hand, and sale. In the fall of 1833 he fell into the hands of owners who were so unwary as to take him on a family excursion to Cincinnati in the last weeks of the year. On New Year's Day, 1834,