

GIBBS MIFFLIN WISTAR

SHADOW AND LIGHT

Mifflin Gibbs
Shadow and Light

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*Shadow and Light An Autobiography with Reminiscences of the Last and
Present Century:*

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Mifflin Wistar Gibbs Shadow and Light An Autobiography with Reminiscences of the Last and Present Century

PREFACE

During the late years abroad, while reading the biographies of distinguished men who had been benefactors, the thought occurred that I had had a varied career, though not as fruitful or as deserving of renown as these characters, and differing as to status and aim. Yet the portrayal might be of benefit to those who, eager for advancement, are willing to be laborious students to attain worthy ends.

I have aimed to give an added interest to the narrative by embellishing its pages with portraits of men who have gained distinction in various fields, who need only to be seen to present the career of those now living as worthy models, and the record of the dead, who left the world the better for having lived. To enjoy a life prominent and prolonged is a desire as natural as

worthy, and there have been those who sought to extend its duration by nostrums and drinking-waters said to bestow the virtue of "perpetual life." But if "to live in hearts we leave behind is not to die," to be worthy of such memorial we must have done or said something that blessed the living or benefited coming generations. Hence autobiography is the record, for "books are as tombstones made by the living, but destined soon to remind us of the dead."

Trusting that any absence of literary merit will not impair the author's cherished design to "impart a moral," should he fail to "adorn a tale."

Little Rock, Ark., January, 1902.

INTRODUCTION

By **BOOKER T. WASHINGTON**

It is seldom that one man, even if he has lived as long as Judge M. W. Gibbs is able to record his impressions of so many widely separated parts of the earth's surface as Judge Gibbs can, or to recall personal experiences in so many important occurrences.

Born in Philadelphia, and living there when that city – almost on the border line between slavery and freedom – was the scene of some of the most stirring incidents in the abolition agitation, he was able as a free colored youth, going to Maryland to work, to see and judge of the condition of the slaves in that State. Some of the most dramatic operations of the famous "Underground Railroad" came under his personal observation. He enjoyed the rare privilege of being associated in labor for the race with that man of sainted memory, the Hon. Frederick Douglass. He met and heard many of the most notable men and women who labored to secure the freedom of the Negro. As a resident of California in the exciting years which immediately followed the discovery of gold, he watched the development of lawlessness there and its results. A few years later he went to British Columbia to live, when that colony was practically

an unknown country. Returning to the United States, he was a witness to the exciting events connected with the years of Reconstruction in Florida, and an active participant in the events of that period in the State of Arkansas. At one time and another he has met many of the men who have been prominent in the direction of the affairs of both the great political parties of the country. In more recent years he has been able to see something of life in Europe, and in his official capacity as United States Consul to Tamatave, Madagascar, adjoining Africa, has resided for some time in that far-off and strange land.

It would be difficult for any man who has had all these experiences not to be entertaining when he tells of them. Judge Gibbs has written an interesting book.

Interspersed with the author's recollections and descriptions are various conclusions, as when he says: "Labor to make yourself as indispensable as possible in all your relations with the dominant race, and color will cut less figure in your upward grade."

"Vice is ever destructive; ignorance ever a victim, and poverty ever defenseless."

"Only as we increase in property will our political barometer rise."

It is significant to find one who has seen so much of the world as Judge Gibbs has, saying, as he does: "With travel somewhat extensive and diversified, and with residence in tropical latitudes of Negro origin, I have a decided conviction, despite the crucial

test to which he has been subjected in the past, and the present disadvantages under which he labors, that nowhere is the promise along all the lines of opportunity brighter for the American Negro than here in the land of his nativity."

I bespeak for the book a careful reading by those who are interested in the history of the Negro in America, and in his present and future.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

CHAPTER I

In the old family Bible I see it recorded that I was born April 17, 1823, in Philadelphia, Pa., the son of Jonathan C. Gibbs and Maria, his wife. My father was a minister in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, my mother a "hard-shell" Baptist. But no difference of religious views interrupted the even tenor of their domestic life. At seven years of age I was sent to what was known as the Free School, those schools at that time invaluable for colored youth, had not graded studies, systematized, and with such accessories for a fruitful development of the youthful mind as now exist. The teacher of the school, Mr. Kennedy, was an Irishman by birth, and herculean in proportions; erudite and severely positive in enunciation. The motto "Spare the rod and spoil the child" had no place in his curriculum. Alike with the tutors of the deaf and the blind, he was earnest in the belief that learning could be impressively imparted through the sense of feeling. That his manner and means were impressive you may well believe, when I say that I yet have a vivid recollection of a bucket with an inch or two of water in it near his desk. In it stood an assortment of rattan rods, their size when selected for use ranging in the ratio of the enormity, of the offence or the age of the offender.

Among the many sterling traits of character possessed by Mr. Kennedy was economy; the frequent use of the rods as he

raised himself on tiptoe to make his protest the more emphatic – split and frizzled them – the immersion of the tips in water would prevent this, and add to the severity of the castigation, while diminishing the expense. A policy wiser and less drastic has taken the place of corporal punishment in schools. But Mr. Kennedy was competent, faithful and impartial. I was not destined to remain long at school. At eight years of age two events occurred which gave direction to my after life. On a Sunday in April, 1831, my father desired that the family attend his church; we did so and heard him preach, taking as his text the 16th verse of Chapter 37 in Genesis: "I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks."

On the following Sunday he lay before the pulpit from whence he had preached, cold in death, leaving my mother, who had poor health, with four small children, and little laid by "for a rainy day." Unable to remain long at school, I was "put out" to hold and drive a doctor's horse at three dollars a month, and was engaged in similar employment until I reached sixteen years of age. Of the loving devotion and self-sacrifice of an invalid mother I have not words to express, but certain it is, that should it ever appear that I have done anything to revere, or ought to emulate, it should be laid on the altar of her Christian character, her ardent love of liberty and intense aspiration for the upbuilding of the race. For her voice and example was an educator along all the lines of racial progress.

Needing our assistance in her enfeebled condition, she

nevertheless insisted that my brother and myself should learn the carpenter trade. At this period in the career of youth, the financial condition of whose parents or sponsors is unequal to their further pursuit of scholastic studies, it is not without an anxious solicitude they depart from the parental roof. For the correct example and prudent advice may not be invulnerable to the temptation for illicit pleasures or ruinous conduct. Happy will he be who listens to the admonitions of age. Unfortunately by the action of response, sad in its humor, too often is: I like the advice but prefer the experience.

The foundation of the mechanical knowledge possessed by the Negro was laid in the Southern States. During slavery the master selecting those with natural ability, the most apt, with white foremen, had them taught carpentering, blacksmithing, painting, boot and shoe making, coopering, and other trades to utilize on the plantations, or add to their value as property. Many of these would hire themselves by the year from their owners, contract on their own account, and by thrift purchase their freedom, emigrate and teach colored youths of Northern States, where prejudice continues to exclude them from the workshops, while at the South the substantial warehouse and palatial dwelling from base to dome, is often the creation of his brain and the product of his handiwork.

James Gibbons, of the class above referred to, and to whom we were apprenticed, was fat, and that is to say, he was jolly. He had ever a word of kind encouragement, wise counsel or

assistance to give his employees. Harshness, want of sympathy or interest is often the precursor and stimulator to the many troubles with organized labor that continue to paralyze so many of our great industrial concerns at the present time, resulting in distress to the one and great material loss to the other. Mr. Gibbons had but a limited education, but he possessed that aptitude, energy, and efficiency which accomplishes great objects, that men call genius, and which is oftentimes nothing more than untiring mental activity harnessed to intensity of purpose. These constituted his grasp of much of the intricacies of mechanical knowledge. His example was ever in evidence, by word and action, that only by assiduous effort could young men hope to succeed in the battle of life.

Mr. Gibbons was competent and had large patronage. We remained with him until we reached our majority. During a religious revival we both became converted and joined the Presbyterian Church. My brother entered Dartmouth College, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Assembly, graduated and ministered in the church at Philadelphia. After a brief period as a journeyman, I became a contractor and builder on my own account. It is ever a source of strength for a young person to have faith in his or her possibilities, and as soon as may be, assume mastership.

While remaining subject to orders, the stimulus is lacking for that aggressive energy, indispensable to bring to the front. Temporary failure you may have, for failure lies in wait for

all human effort, but sneaks from a wise and unconquerable determination. We read of the military prisoner, alone, dejected, and despairing, looking to the walls of his cell; he watches a score of attempts and failure of a spider to scale the wall, only to renew an attempt crowned with success. The lesson was fruitful for the prisoner.

Mr. Gibbons built several of the colored churches in Philadelphia, and in the early forties, during my apprenticeship, he was a bidder for the contract to build the first African Methodist Episcopal brick church of the connection on the present site at Sixth and Lombard streets in Philadelphia. A wooden structure which had been transformed from a blacksmith shop to a meeting house was torn down to give place to the new structure. When a boy I had often been in the old shop, and have heard the founder, Bishop Allen, preach in the wooden building. He was much revered. I remember his appearance, and his feeble, shambling gait as he approached the close of an illustrious life.

The A. M. E. Church was distinctively the pioneer in the career of colored churches; its founders the first to typify and unflinchingly assert the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. Dragged from their knees in the white churches of their faith, they met exclusion by cohesion; ignorance by effort for culture, and poverty by unflinching self-denial; justice and right harnessed to such a movement, who shall declare its ultimatum.

Out from that blacksmith shop went an inspiration lifting its

votaries to a self-reliance founded on God, a harbinger of hope to the enslaved.

From Allen to Payne, and on and on along lines of Christian fame, its missionaries going from triumph to triumph in America, and finally planting its standard on the isles of the sea.

A distinct line is ever observable between civilization and barbarism, in the regard and reverence for the dead, the increase of solicitude is evidence of a people's advancement. Until the year 1848 the colored people of Philadelphia used the grounds, always limited, in the rear of their churches for burial. They necessarily became crowded, with sanitary conditions threatening, without opportunity to fittingly mark and adorn the last resting place of their dead.

In the above year G. W. Gaines, J. P. Humphries, and the writer purchased a tract of land on the north side of Lancaster turnpike, in West Philadelphia, and were incorporated under the following act by the Legislature of the State of Pennsylvania: "An Act to incorporate the Olive Cemetery Company," followed by the usual reservations and conditions in such cases provided. Among reasons inducing me to refer to this are, first, to give an idea of the propriety and progress of the race fifty years ago, and secondly, for the further and greater reasons, as the following will show, that the result of the project was not only a palladium for blessed memory of the dead, but was the nucleus of a benefaction that still blesses the living.

The land was surveyed and laid out in lots and avenues, plans

of gothic design were made for chapel and superintendent's residence, and contract for construction was awarded the writer. The project was not entirely an unselfish one, but profit was not the dominating incentive. After promptly completing the contract with the shareholders as to buildings and improvements of the ground, the directors found themselves in debt, and welcomed the advent of Stephen Smith, a wealthy colored man and lumber merchant, to assist in liquidating liabilities. To him an unoccupied portion of the ground was sold, and in his wife's heart the conception of a bounteous charity was formed. The "Old Folks' Home," so beneficent to the aged poor of Philadelphia, demands more than a passing notice.

"The Harriet Smith Home for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons" is a continuation of a charity organized September, 1864, and the first board of managers (a noble band of humanitarians) elected. The preamble was as follows: "For the relief of that worthy class of colored persons who have endeavored through life to maintain themselves, but who, from various causes, are finally dependent on the charity of others, an association is hereby organized." The work of this home was conducted in a large dwelling house on South Front street until the year 1871, when, through the munificence of Stephen Smith and his wife, the land on the corner of Belmont and Girard avenues, previously purchased from the Olive Cemetery Company, together with a large four-story building, valued at \$40,000, was given to the Board. In 1871 it was opened as

the "Harriet Smith Home," where it still stands as an enduring monument to the original donors, and other blessed friends of the race, who have continued to assist with generous endowments. Edward T. Parker, who died in 1887, gave \$85,000 for an annex to the building. Colored people since its incipency have given \$200,000. The board is composed of white and colored persons. On a recent visit I found the home complete, convenient, and cleanly in all its appurtenances, with an air of comfort and contentment pervading the place. From many with bent and decrepit bodies, from wrinkled and withered faces, the sparkling eye of gratitude could be seen, and prayer of thankfulness read; for this product of a benign clemency that had blessed both the giver and receiver. There can be no one with filial affection happy in the thought that it is in their power to assuage the pain or assist the tottering steps of their own father or mother, but will recognize the humanity, Christian character, and unselfishness of the men and women organized for giving the helping hand to the "unfortunate aged, made dependent by blameless conditions."

During my apprenticeship, aware of my educational deficiencies, having been unable to pursue a consecutive course of study in earlier life, I spent much of the night and odd times in an endeavor to make up the loss. In joining the Philadelphia Library Company, a literary society of colored men, containing men of such mental caliber as Isaiah C. Wear, Frederick Hinton, Robert Purvis, J. C. Bowers, and others, where

questions of moment touching the condition of the race were often discussed with acumen and eloquence, I was both benefited and stimulated. It was a needed help, for man is much the creature of his environments, and what widens his horizon as to the inseparable relations of man to man and the mutuality of obligation, strengthens his manhood in the ratio he embraces opportunity.

Pennsylvania being a border State, and Philadelphia situated so near the line separating the free and slave States, that city was utilized as the most important adjunct or way-station of the "underground railroad," an organization to assist runaway slaves to the English colony of Canada. Say what you will against old England, for, like all human polity, there is much for censure and criticism, but this we know, that when there were but few friends responsive, and but few arms that offered to succor when hunted at home, old England threw open her doors, reached out her hand, and bid the wandering fugitive slave to come in and "be of good cheer."

As one of the railroad company mentioned, many cases came under my observation, and some under my guidance to safety in Canada. One of the most peculiar and interesting ones that came under my notice and attention, was that of William and Ellen Craft, fugitives from the State of Georgia. Summoned one day to a colored boarding house, I was presented to a person dressed in immaculate black broadcloth and silk beaver hat, whom I supposed to be a young white man. By his side

stood a young colored man with good features and rather commanding presence. The first was introduced to me as Mrs. Craft and the other as her husband, two escaped slaves. They had traveled through on car and boat, paying and receiving first-class accommodations. Mrs. Craft, being fair, assumed the habit of young master coming north as an invalid, and as she had never learned to write, her arm was in a sling, thereby avoiding the usual signing of register on boat or at hotel, while her servant-husband was as obsequious in his attentions as the most humble of slaves. They settled in Boston, living very happily, until the passage of the fugitive slave law in 1850, when they were compelled to flee to England.

The civil war of 1861 and proclamation of freedom followed. In 1870, arriving in Savannah, Georgia, seeking accommodation, I was directed to a hotel, and surprised to find the host and hostess my whilom friends of underground railroad fame. They had returned to their old home after emancipation. The surprise was pleasant and recognition mutual.

One other, and I shall pass this feature of reminiscence. It was that of William Brown, distinguished afterward as William Box Brown, the intervening "Box" being a synonym of the manner of his escape. An agent of the underground railroad at Richmond, Virginia, had placed him in a box two feet wide and four feet long, ends hooped, with holes for air, and bread and water, and sent him through the express company to Philadelphia. On the arrival of the steamboat the box was roughly tumbled off as so

much dead freight on the wharf, but, unfortunately for Brown, on the end, with his feet up and head down. After remaining in such position for a time which seemed to him hours, he heard a man say to another, "Let's turn that box down and sit on it." It was done, and Brown found himself "right side up," if not "with care." I was called to the anti-slavery office, where the box was taken. It had been arranged that when he arrived at his destination, three slow and distinct knocks should be given, to which he was to respond. Fear that he was crippled or dead was depicted in the faces of Miller McKim, William Still and a few others that stood around the box in the office. Hence it was not without trepidation the agreed signal was given, and the response waited for. An "all right" was cheerily given; the lifting of suspense and the top of the box was almost simultaneous. Out sprang a man weighing near 200 pounds. Brown, though uneducated, it is needless to say, was imbued with the spirit of liberty, and with much natural ability, with his box he traveled and spoke of his experience in slavery, the novelty of his escape adding interest to his description. Many similar cases of heroism in manner of escape of men and women are recorded in William Still's "Underground Railroad."

CHAPTER II

The immortal bard has sung that "there's a destiny that shapes our ends." At eight years of age, as already stated, two events occurred which had much to do in giving direction to my after life. The one the death of my father, as formerly mentioned; the other the insurrection of Nat Turner, of South Hampton, Virginia, in August, 1831, which fell upon the startled sense of the slaveholding South like a meteor from a dear sky, causing widespread commotion. Nat Turner was a Baptist preacher, who with four others, in a lonely place in the woods, concocted plans for an uprising of the slaves to secure their liberty. Employed in the woods during the week, a prey to his broodings over the wrongs and cruelties, the branding and whipping to death of neighboring slaves, he would come out to meetings of his people on Sunday and preach, impressing much of his spirit of unrest. Finally he selected a large number of confederates, who were to secretly acquire arms of their masters. The attack concocted in February was not made until August 20, when the assault, dealing death and destruction, was made.

All that night they marched, carrying consternation and dread on account of the suddenness, determination and boldness of the attack. The whole State was aroused, and soldiers sent from every part. The blacks fought hand to hand with the whites, but were soon overpowered by numbers and superior implements

of warfare. Turner and a few of his followers took refuge in the "Dismal Swamp," almost impenetrable, where they remained two or three months, till hunger or despair compelled them to surrender. Chained together, they were taken to the South Hampton Court House and arraigned. Turner, it is recorded, without a tremor, pleaded not guilty, believing that he was justified in the attempt to liberate his people, however drastic the means. His act, which would have been heralded as the noblest heroism if perpetrated by a white man, was called religious fanaticism and fiendish brutality.

Turner called but few into his confidence, and foolhardy and unpromising as the attempt may have been, it had the ring of an heroic purpose that gave a Bossarius to Greece, and a Washington to America. A purpose "not born to die," but to live on in every age and clime, stimulating endeavors to attain the blessings of civil liberty.

It was an incident as unexpected in its advent as startling in its terrors. Slavery, ever the preponderance of force, had hitherto reveled in a luxury heightened by a sense of security. Now, in the moaning of the wind, the rustling of the leaves or the shadows of the moon, was heard or seen a liberator. Nor was this uneasiness confined to the South, for in the border free States there were many that in whole or in part owned plantations stocked with slaves.

In Philadelphia, so near the line, excitement ran high. The intense interest depicted in the face of my mother and her colored

neighbors; the guarded whisperings, the denunciations of slavery, the hope defeated of a successful revolution keenly affected my juvenile mind, and stamped my soul with hatred to slavery.

At 12 years of age I was employed at the residence of Sydney Fisher, a prominent Philadelphia lawyer, who was one of the class above mentioned, living north and owning a plantation in the State of Maryland. Over a good road of 30 miles one summer's day, he took me to his plantation. I had never before been that distance from home and had anticipated my long ride with childish interest and pleasure. After crossing the line and entering "the land of cotton and the corn," a new and strange panorama began to open, and continued to enfold the vast fields bedecked in the snowy whiteness of their fruitage. While over gangs of slaves in row and furrough were drivers with their scourging whip in hand. I looked upon the scene with curious wonder. Three score of years and more have passed, but I still see that sad and humbled throng, working close to the roadway, no head daring to uplift, no eye to enquiringly gaze. During all those miles of drive that bordered on plantations, as machines they acted, as machines they looked. My curiosity and youthful impulse ignoring that reticence becoming a servant, I said: "Mr. Fisher, who are these people?" He said, "They are slaves." I was startled but made no reply. I had not associated the exhilaration of the drive with a depressing view of slavery, but his reply caused a tumult of feeling in my youthful breast. The Turner episode of which I had heard so much, the narratives

of whippings received by fugitives, slaves that had come to my mother's house, the sundering of family ties on the auction block, were vividly presented to my mind. I remained silent as to speech, as to feelings belligerent. A few moments elapsed and Mr. Fisher broke the silence by saying, "Mifflin, how would you like to be a slave?" My answer was quick and conformed to feeling. "I would not be a slave! I would kill anybody that would make me a slave!" Fitly spoken. No grander declaration I have ever made. But from whom did it come – from almost childish lips with no power to execute. I little thought of or knew the magnitude of that utterance, nor did I notice then the effect of its force. Quickly and quite sternly came the reply: "You must not talk that way down here." I was kept during our stay in what was known during slavery as the "great house," the master's residence, and my meals were eaten at the table he had quit, slept in the same house, and had, if desired, little or no opportunity to talk or mingle with the slaves during the week's visit. I did not understand at that time the philosophy of espionage, but in after years it became quite apparent that from my youthful lips had came the "open sesame to the door of liberty," "resistance to oppression," the slogan that has ever heralded the advent of freedom.

As I passed to manhood the object lesson encountered on the Maryland plantation did much to intensify my hatred of slavery and to strengthen my resolution to ally myself with any effort for its abolition. The burning of Pennsylvania Hall by a mob in

Philadelphia, in 1838, built and used by anti-slavery people, the ravages of what was known as the "Moyamensing Killers," who burned down the churches and residences of the colored people and murdered their occupants, did much to increase the anti-slavery feeling.

Old Bethel Church, then the nursery of the present great A. M. E. Church, was guarded day and night by its devoted men and women worshipers. The cobble street pavement in front was dug up and the stones carried up and placed at the windows in the galley to hurl at the mob. This defense was sustained for several weeks at a time. Every American should be happy in the thought that a higher civilization is making such acts less and less frequent. It is not strange that our present generation enjoying a large measure of civil and political liberty can but faintly comprehend the condition fifty years ago, when they were persistently denied. The justice of participation seems so apparent, it is not easy to fully conceive, when all were refused, in quite all that were denominated free States.

When street cars were first established in Philadelphia "the brother in black" was refused accommodations. He nevertheless persisted in entering the cars. Sometimes he would be thrown out, at others, after being "sized up" the driver with his horses would leave his car standing on switch, while its objectionable occupant was "monarch of all he surveyed."

The "man and brother" finding his enemy impervious to direct attack, commenced a flank movement. As he was not allowed

to ride inside, he resolved to ride alongside; bought omnibuses and stock and established a line on the car route at reduced rates. The cars were not always on time, and many whites would avail themselves of its service. I remember one of this class accosting a driver: "What 'Bus is this?" The simple driver answered, "It is the colored peoples!" "I don't care whose in the – it is, does it go to the bridge? I am in a hurry to get there," and in he got. I thought then and still think what a useful moral the incident conveyed to my race. Labor to make yourself as indispensable as possible in all your relations with the dominant race and color will cut less and less figure in your upward grade. The line was kept up for some time, often holding what was called "omnibus meetings" in our halls, always largely attended, make reports, hear spirited speeches, and have a deal of fun narrating incidents of the line, receiving generous contributions when the horses or busses needed replenishing. But the most exciting times were those when there had been interference with the running of the "underground railroad," and the attempt to capture passengers in transit, or at the different way-stations, of which as previously stated, Philadelphia was the most prominent in forwarding its patrons to Canada.

Before the passage of the fugitive slave law, in 1850, if the fugitive was taken back it was done by stealth – kidnapped and spirited away by clandestine means. Sometimes by the treachery of his own color, but this was seldom and unhealthy. The agent of the owner was often caught in the act, and by argument more

emphatic than gentle, was soon conspicuous by his absence. At others local anti-slavery friends would appeal to the courts, and the agent would be arrested. Slavery in law being local before the passage of the "Act of 1850," making it national, we were generally successful in having the fugitives released. We were extremely fortunate in having for our chief counsel David Paul Brown, a leader of the Philadelphia bar, who, with other white friends, never failed to respond to our call; learned in Constitutional law, eloquent in expression, he did a yeoman's service in behalf of liberty.

The colored men of Pennsylvania, like their brethren in other Northern States, were not content in being disfranchised. As early as 1845 a committee of seven, consisting of Isaiah C. Wear, J. C. Bowers, and others, including the writer, were sent to the capitol at Harrisburg to lay a petition before the Legislature asking for enfranchisement and all rights granted to others of the commonwealth. The grant was tardy, but it came with the cannon's boom and musketry's iron hail, when the imperiled status of the nation made it imperative. Thus, as ever, with the immutable decrees of God, while battling for the freedom of the slave, we broadened our consciousness, not only as to the inalienable rights of human nature, but received larger conceptions of civil liberty, coupled with a spirit of determination to defend our homes and churches from infuriated mobs, and to contend for civil and political justice.

They were truly a spartan band, the colored men and women.

The naming of a few would be invidious to the many who were ever keenly alive to the proscription to which they were subject, and ever on the alert for measures to awaken the moral sense of the border States.

Meetings were nightly held for counsel, protests and assistance to the fugitive, who would sometimes be present to narrate the woes of slavery. Sometimes our meetings would be attended by pro-slavery lookers-on, usually unknown, until excoriation of the Northern abettors of slavery was too severe to allow them to remain incognito, when they would reply: It is a sad commentary on a phase of human nature that the oppressed often, when vaulted into authority or greater equality of condition, become the most vicious of oppressors. It has been said that Negro drivers were most cruel and unsparing to their race. The Irish, having fled from oppression in the land of their birth, for notoriety, gain, or elevation by comparison, were nearly all pro-slavery. At one of our meetings during the narration of incidents of his life by a fugitive, one of the latter class interrupted by saying, "Aren't you lying, my man? I have been on plantations. I guess your master did not lose much when you left." Now, it is a peculiarity of the uneducated, when, puzzled for the moment, by the tardiness of an idea, to scratch the head. Jacobs, the fugitive, did so, and out it came. "I dunno how much he lost, only what master said. I was the house boy, one day, and at dinner time he sent me to the well to get a cool pitcher of water. I let the silver pitcher drop in the well. Well, I knowed that pitcher had to be got out, so I straddled

down and fished it up. Master was mad, 'cause I staid so long, so I up and tells him. He fairly jumped and said "Did you go down that well? Why didn't you come and tell me and I would made Irish Mike, the ditcher, go down. If you had drowned I'd lost \$800. Don't you do that agin.""

It is needless to say that this "brought down the house," and shortly the exit of the son of the Emerald Isle. At another time the interrupter said: "Will you answer me a question or two? Did you not get enough to eat?" "Yes." "A place to sleep?" "Yes." "Was your master good or bad to you?" "Marster was pretty good, I must say." "Well, what else did you want? That is a good deal more than a good many white men get up here." The man stood for a moment busy with his fingers in a fruitless attempt to find the fugitive ends of a curl of his hair, temporarily nonplussed at his palliating concessions, half apologetically said: "Well, I think it a heap best to be free." Then suddenly and gallantly strengthening his defense; "but, look here, Mister, if you think it so nice down there, my place is still open." The questioner good naturedly joined in the general merriment.

Very frequently we were enthused and inspired by Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnett, Marten R. Delaney, and Charles L. Remond, an illustrious quartet of the hallowed band in the anti-slavery crusade, whose eloquence, devotion, and effectiveness stood unsurpassed.

There were few, if any, available halls for these meetings. The only resort was the colored churches. Those under the

auspices of white denominations had members who objected to their use for such a purpose. Craven and fawning, content with the crumbs that fell from these peace-loving Christians, who deprecated the discussion of slavery while they ignored the claim of outraged humanity, these churches were more interested in the physical excitement of a "revival" than in listening to appeals in behalf of God's poor and lonely. Their prototypes that "passed by on the other side" have been perpetuated in many climes, in those who believe that it is the formalities of contact with the building that blesses a people and not the Godliness and humanity of the worshippers that give glory and efficacy to the church. An antagonism thus created resulted in a crusade against such churches styled "Come-Outerism," and many left them on account of such apathy to carry on the warfare amid congenial association.

It has been said that citizenship was precipitated upon the Negro before he was fit for its exercise. Without discussing the incongruity of this, when applied to the ignorant native Negro and not to the ignorant alien emigrant, it may be conceded that keeping them in abject bondage with no opportunity to protest, made slavery anything but a preparatory school for the exercises of civic virtues, or the assumption of their responsibilities. It was not true, however, with the mass in the free, or many in the slave States. Always akin and adjunct are the yearnings indestructible in human nature for equal rights. And in every age and people the ratio of persistency and sacrifice have been the measure of their

fitness for its enjoyment. During 25 years preceding the abolition of slavery the colored people of the free States, though much proscribed, were active in their protests against enslavement, seizing every chance through press and forum "to pour the living coals of truth upon the nation's naked heart," setting forth in earnest contrast the theory upon which the government was founded with its administration as practiced.

In 1848 Philadelphia Square, whereon the old State House of historic fame still stands, was made resonant by the bell upon whose surface the fathers had inscribed "Proclaim liberty throughout the world and to all the inhabitants thereof," and was bedecked with garlands and every insignia of a joyful people in honor of the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth. Distinctive platforms had been erected for speakers whose fatherland was in many foreign lands. Upon each was an orator receiving the appreciation and plaudits of an audience whose hearts beat as one for success to the "Great Liberator." The "unwelcome guests," the colored men present, quickly embraced the opportunity, utilizing for a platform a dry goods box, upon which I was placed to give the Negro version of this climax of inconsistency and quintessence of hypocrisy. This was the unexpected. All the people, both native and foreign, had been invited and special places provided for all except the Negro, and on the native platform he was not allowed space. The novelty of the incident and curiosity to hear what the colored man had to say quickly drew a crowd equal to others of the occasion. Then, as now,

and perhaps forever, there was that incalculable number of non-committals whose moral sense is disturbed by popular wrong, but who are without courage of conviction, inert, waiting for a leader that they may be one of the two that take place behind him, or one of three or four, or ten, who follow in serried ranks, that constitute the wedge-like motor that splits asunder hoary wrong, proximity to the leader being in ratio to their moral fibre. Most of the audience listened to the utterance of sentiments that the allurements of trade, or the exactions of society, forbade them to disseminate.

The occasion was an excellent one to demonstrate the heartlessness of the projectors, who, while pretending to glorify liberty in the distance, were treating it with contumely at home, where 3,000,000 slaves were held in bondage, and feeling keenly the ostracism of the slave as beyond the pole of popular sympathy or national compassion, with words struggling for utterance, I spoke as best I could, receiving toleration, and a quiet measure of approbation, possibly on the supposition, realized in the fruition of time, that such discussion might eventuate in the liberation of white men from the octopus of subserviency to the dictum of slavery which permeated every ramification of American society. I heard Hon. Cassius M. Clay, of Kentucky, sometime in the forties, while making a speech in Philadelphia, say: "Gentlemen, the question is not alone whether the Negroes are to remain slaves, but whether we white men are to continue free." So bitter was the onslaught on all, and especially on white

men, politically and socially, who dared denounce slavery.

CHAPTER III

An event that came under my notice of startling character, attracting national attention, was the arrival of the schooner "Amistad" at Philadelphia in 1840. This vessel had been engaged in the slave trade. With a cargo of slaves from Africa was destined for one of the West India Islands. Cinguez, one of, and at the head of the captives, rebelled while at sea, killing a number of the crew and taking possession of the ship.

In the concluding scene of the foregoing drama, Mr. Douglass was an actor, I an observer. After the decision giving them their liberty, the anti-slavery society, who had been vigilant in its endeavors to have them liberated ever since their advent on American shores, held a monster meeting to receive them.

Frederick Douglass introduced "Cinguez" to the meeting. I cannot forget or fail to feel the inspiration of that scene. The two giants locked in each others embrace, looked the incarnation of heroism and dauntless purpose, equal to the achievement of great results. The one by indomitable will had shaken off his own shackles and was making slavery odious by his matchless and eloquent arraignment; the other, "a leader of men," had now written his protest with the blood of his captors. Cinguez, with unintelligible utterance in African dialect with emphatic gesture, his liberty loving soul on fire, while burning words strove for expression, described his action on the memorable night of his

emancipation, with such vividness, power, and pathos that the audience seemed to see every act of the drama and feel the pulsation of his great heart. Through an interpreter he afterwards narrated his manner of taking the vessel, and how it happened to reach American shores. How, after taking the ship, he stood by the tiller with drawn weapon and commanded the mate to steer back to Africa. During the day he complied, but at night took the opposite course. After sometime of circuitous wandering the vessel ran into Long Island Sound and was taken possession of by the United States authorities. Cinguez, as hero and patriot, ennobled African character.

When majority and the threshold of man's estate is attained, the transition from advanced youth to the entry of manhood is liable to casualties; not unlike a bark serenely leaving its home harbor to enter unfrequented waters, the crew exhilarated by fresh and invigorating breezes, charmed by a genial sky, it moves on "like a thing of beauty" with the hope of "joy forever." The chart and log of many predecessors may unheeded lie at hand, but the glorious present, cloudless and fascinating, rich in expectation, it sails on, fortunate if it escapes the rocks and shoals that ever lie in wait. It is unreasonable to expect a proper conception, and the happiest performance of life's duties at such a period, especially from those with easy and favorable environments, or who have been heedless of parental restraint, for even at an advanced stage in life, there have been many to exclaim with a poet:

"Ne'er tell me of evening serenely adorning
The close of a life richly mellowed by time,
Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning
Her smiles and her tears are worth evening's best light."

Twenty-one years of age found me the possessor of a trade, an attainment, and a capital invaluable for a poor young man beginning the race of life. For whether seen smutted by the soot of the blacksmith shop, or whitened by the lime of the plasterer or bricklayer; whether bending beneath tool box of the carpenter or ensconced on the bench of the shoemaker, he has a moral strength, a consciousness of acquirement, giving him a dignity of manhood unpossessed by the menial and those engaged in unskilled labor. Let it never be forgotten that as high over in importance as the best interest of the race is to that of the individual, will be the uplifting influence of assiduously cultivating a desire to obtain trades. The crying want with us is a middle class. The chief component of our race today is laborers unskilled. We will not and cannot compete with other races who have a large and influential class of artisans and mechanics, and having received higher remuneration for labor, have paved the way for themselves or offsprings from the mechanic to the merchant or to the professional. These three factors, linked and interlinked, an ascending chain will be strong in its relation, as consistent in construction.

In 1849 Frederick Douglass, Charles Lenox Remond and

Julia Griffith, an English lady prominent in reform circles in England, attended the National Anti-slavery Convention held in Philadelphia, and presided over by that apostle of liberty, Wm. Lloyd Garrison. At its close Mr. Douglass invited me to accompany him to his home at Rochester, and then to join him in lecturing in the "Western Reserve."

Without salary, poor in purse, doubtful of useful ability, dependent for sustenance on a sentiment then prevailing, that for anti-slavery expression was as reserved as the "Reserve" was Western. I have often thought of my feelings of doubt and fear to go with Mr. Douglass, as an epoch in my life's history. The parting of the ways, the embarkation to a wider field of action, the close connection between obedience to an impulse of duty (however uninviting or uncertain the outcome), and the ever moral and often material benefit.

Rochester proved to be my pathway to California. Western New York, 50 years ago, then known as the "Western Reserve," was very unlike the present as to population, means of travel, material developments, schools of learning, and humanizing influences. Mr. Douglass, in the Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., a short time before his death, told how, in 1849, we there traveled together; that where now are stately cities and villages a sparsely settled wilderness existed; that while we there proclaimed abolition as the right of the slave, the chilling effect of those December days were not more cold and heartless than the reception we met when our mission as advocates for the

slave became known; churches and halls were closed against us. Stables and blacksmith shops would sometimes hold audiences more generous with epithets and elderly eggs than with manly decorum. God be thanked, Douglass, the grandest of "our grand old men," lived to see "the seeds of mighty truth have their silent undergrowth, and in the earth be wrought." A family, however poor, striving as best they may to give the rudiments of knowledge to their children, should have, if but few, books descriptive of the hopes and struggles of those no better situated, who have made impress on the age in which they lived. We seldom remember from whence we first received the idea which gave impulse to an honorable action; we received it, however, most probably from tongue or pen. For impressible youth such biography should be as easy of access as possible.

It has been said that "a man's noblest mistake is to be born before his time." This will not apply to Frederick Douglass. His "Life and Times" should be in the front rank of selection for blessing and inspiration. A blessing for the high moral of its teaching; an inspiration for the poorest boy; that he need not "beg the world's pardon for having been born," but by fostering courage and consecration of purpose "he may rank the peer of any man."

Frederick Douglass, born a slave, hampered by all the depressing influences of that institution; by indomitable energy and devotion; seizing with an avidity that knew no obstacle every opportunity, cultivated a mind and developed a character that

will be a bright page in the history of noble and beneficent achievements.

For the conditions that confronted him and the anti-slavery crusade, have been well and eloquently portrayed by the late George William Curtis. That how terribly earnest was the anti-slavery agitation this generation little knows. To understand is to recall the situation of the country. Slavery sat supreme in the White House and made laws at the capitol. Courts of Justice were its ministers, and legislators its lackeys. It silenced the preacher in the pulpit; it muzzled the editor at his desk, and the professor in his lecture-room. It sat a price on the heads of peaceful citizens; robbed the mails, and denounced the vital principles of the declaration of independence as treason. In the States where the law did not tolerate slavery, slavery ruled the club and drawing room, the factory and the office, swaggered at the dinner table, and scourged with scorn a cowardly society. It tore the golden rule from the school books, and from the prayer books the pictured benignity of Christ. It prohibited schools in the free States for the hated race; hunted women who taught children to read, and forbade a free people to communicate with their representatives.

It was under such conditions so pungently and truthfully stated that Douglass appeared as a small star on the horizon of a clouded firmament; rose in intellectual brilliancy, mental power and a noble generosity. For his devotion was not only to the freedom of the slave with which he was identified, but for liberty and

the betterment of humanity everywhere, regardless of sex or color. His page already luminous in history will continue to brighten, and when statuary, now and hereafter, erected to his memory, shall have crumbled "neath the beatings of time;" the good fame of his name, high purpose and unflinching integrity to the highest needs of humanity, will remain hallowed "foot prints in the sands of time." Eminently fit was the naming of an institution in Philadelphia "The Frederick Douglass Hospital and Freedman's School;" the assuaging of suffering and the giving of larger opportunity for technical instruction were cherished ideals with the sage of Anacostia; also the lives of Harriet Beacher Stowe, Lucretia Mott and Francis E. Harper, and the noble band of women of which they were the type, who bravely met social ostracism and insult for devotion to the slave, will ever have a proud place in our country's history. Of this illustrious band was Julia Griffith, hitherto referred to, a grand representative of those renowned women, who at home or abroad, did so much to hasten the downfall of slavery and encourage the weak and lowly to hope and effort. Thackery has said that, "Could you see every man's career, you would find a woman clogging him, or cheering him, or beckoning him on."

Having finished my intended tour with Mr. Douglass, and returned to Rochester, the outlook for my future, to me, was not promising. The opportunities for advancement were much, very much less than now. With me ambition and dejection contended for the mastery, the latter often in the ascendant. To her friendly

inquiry I gave reasons for my depression. I shall never forget the response; almost imperious in manner, you could already anticipate the magnitude of an idea that seemed to struggle for utterance. "What! discouraged? Go do some great thing." It was an inspiration, the result of which she may never have known. We are assured, however, that a kind act or helpful word is inseparably connected with a blessing for the giver. To earnest youth I would bequeath the excelsior of the "youth mid snow and ice," and the above injunction, "upward and onward;" "go do some great thing."

The war with Mexico, discovery of gold in California in 1848, the acquisition of new territory, and the developments of our hitherto undeveloped Western possessions, stimulated the financial pulse, and permeated every avenue of industry and speculative life. While in New York State I met several going and returning gold seekers, many giving dazzling accounts of immense deposits of gold in the new Eldorado; and others, as ever the case with adventurers, gave gloomy statements of peril and disaster. A judicious temperament, untiring energy, a lexicon of endeavor, in which there is no such word as "fail," is the only open sesame to hidden opportunities in a new country. Fortune, in precarious mood, may sometime smile on the inert, but she seldom fails to surrender to pluck, tenacity and perseverance. As the Oxford men say it is the one pull more of the oar that proves the "beefiness of the fellow;" it is the one march more that wins the campaign; the five minutes more

persistent courage that wins the fight.

I returned to Philadelphia, and with some friendly assistance, sailed, in 1850, from New York, as a steerage passenger for San Francisco. Arriving at Aspinwall, the point of debarkation, on the Atlantic side, boats and boatmen were engaged to transport passengers and baggage up the "Chagress," a small and shallow river. Crossing the Isthmus to Panama, on the Pacific side, I found Panama very cosmopolitan in appearance, for mingled with the sombrero-attired South American, could be seen denizens from every foreign clime. Its make up was a combination of peculiar attributes. It was dirty, but happy in having crows for its scavengers; sickly, but cheery; old, but with an youthful infusion. The virtues and vices were both shy and unblushing. A rich, dark foliage, ever blooming, and ever decaying; a humid atmosphere; a rotting vegetation under a tropical sun, while fever stalked on from conquest to conquest.

The sudden influx, the great travel from ocean to ocean, had given much impetus to business as well as to local amusements. For the latter, Sunday was the ideal day, when bull and cock fights secured the attendance of the elite, and the humble, the priest and the laity.

The church, preaching gentleness and peace in the morning, in the afternoon her minister, with sword spurred "bolosed" bantams under their arms, would appear on the scene eager for the fray.

After recovering from the Panama fever I took passage

on the steamship "Golden Gate" for San Francisco. Science, experience, and a greatly increased demand have done much during the intervening fifty years to lessen risk and increase the comfort of ocean travel. Yet it is not without a degree of restless anticipation that one finds himself and baggage finally domiciled on an ocean-going steamer. Curiosity and criticism, selfishness and graciousness each in turn assert themselves. Curiosity in espionage, criticism in observation, while selfishness and graciousness alternate. You find yourself in the midst of a miniature world, envired, but isolated from activities of the greater, an epitome of human proclivities. A possible peril, real, imaginary or remote; a common brotherhood tightens the chain of fellowship and gradually widens the exchange of amenities.

We had a stormy passage, making San Diego with the top of smoke stack encrusted with the salt of the waves, paddle wheel broken and otherwise disabled, finally arriving at San Francisco in September.

CHAPTER IV

Having made myself somewhat presentable upon leaving the steerage of the steamer, my trunk on a dray, I proceeded to an unprepossessing hotel kept by a colored man on Kearny street. The cursory view from the outside, and the further inspection on the inside, reminded me of the old lady's description of her watch, for she said, "it might look pretty hard on the outside, but the inside works were all right." And so thought its jolly patrons. Seated at tables, well supplied with piles of gold and silver, where numerous disciples of that ancient trickster Pharaoh, being dubious perhaps of the propriety of adopting the literal orthography of his name, and abbreviated it to Faro.

Getting something for nothing, or risking the smaller in hope of obtaining the greater, seems a passion inherent in human nature, requiring a calm survey of the probabilities, and oftentimes the baneful effects to attain a moral resistance. It is the "ignis fatuus" that has lured many promising ones and wrecked the future of many lives.

The effervescent happiness of some of the worshipers at this shrine was conspicuous. The future to them seemed cloudless. It was not so with me. I had a secret not at all complacent, for it seemed anxious to get out, and while unhappy from its presence, I thought it wise to retain it.

When I approached the bar I asked for accommodation,

and my trunk was brought in. While awaiting this preparatory step to domicile, and gazing at the prints and pictures more or less "blaser" that adorned the bar, my eye caught a notice, prominently placed, in gilt letters. I see it now, "Board twelve dollars a week in advance." It was not the price, but the stipulation demanded that appalled me. Had I looked through a magnifying glass the letters could not have appeared larger. With the brilliancy of a search light they seemed to ask "Who are you and how are you fixed?" I responded by "staring fate in the face," and going up to the bar asked for a cigar. How much? Ten cents. I had sixty cents when I landed; had paid fifty for trunk drayage, and I was now a moneyless man – hence my secret.

Would there be strict enforcement of conditions mentioned in that ominous card. I was unacquainted with the Bohemian "song and dance" parlance in such extremities, and wondered would letting my secret come out let a dinner come in. Possibly, I may have often been deceived when appealed to, but that experience has often been fruitful to friendless hunger.

Finally the bell rang, and a polite invitation from the landlord placed me at the table. There is nothing so helpful to a disconsolate man as a good dinner. It dissipates melancholy and stimulates persistency. Never preach high moral rectitude or the possibilities of industry to a hungry man. First give him something to eat, then should there be a vulnerable spot to such admonition you will succeed. If not, he is an incorrigible.

After dinner I immediately went out, and after many attempts

to seek employment of any kind, I approached a house in course of construction and applied to the contractor for work. He replied he did not need help. I asked the price of wages. Ten dollars a day. I said you would much oblige me by giving me, if only a few days' work, as I have just arrived. After a few moments thought, during which mayhap charity and gain held conference, which succumbed, it is needless to premise, for we sometimes ascribe selfish motives to kindly acts, he said that if I choose to come for nine dollars a day I might. It is unnecessary for me to add that I chose to come.

When I got outside the building an appalling thought presented itself; whoever heard of a carpenter announcing himself ready for work without his tools. A minister may be without piety, a lawyer without clients, a politician impolitic, but a carpenter without tools, never! It would be prima facie evidence of an imposter. I went back and asked what tools I must bring upon the morrow; he told me and I left. But the tools, the tools, how was I to get them. My only acquaintance in the city was my landlord. But prospects were too bright to reveal to him my secret. I wended my way to a large tent having an assortment of hardware and was shown the tools needed. I then told the merchant that I had no money, and of the place I had to work the next morning. He said nothing for a moment, looked me over, and then said: "All right take them." I felt great relief when I paid the merchant and my landlord on the following Saturday.

Why do I detail to such length these items of endeavor;

experiences which have had similarity in many lives? For the reason that they seem to contain data for a moral, which if observed may be useful. Never disclose your poverty until the last gleam of hope has sunk beneath the horizon of your best effort, remembering that invincible determination holds the key to success, while advice and assistance hitherto laggard, now with hasty steps greets you within the door.

I was not allowed to long pursue carpentering. White employees finding me at work on the same building would "strike." On one occasion the contractor came to me and said, "I expect you will have to stop, for this house must be finished in the time specified; but, if you can get six or eight equally good workmen, I will let these fellows go. Not that I have any special liking for your people. I am giving these men all the wages they demand, and I am not willing to submit to the tyranny of their dictation if I can help it." This episode, the moral of which is as pertinent today as then, and more apparent, intensifies the necessity of greater desire upon the part of our young men and women to acquire knowledge in skilled handicraft, reference to which I have hitherto made. But my convictions are so pronounced that I cannot forbear the reiteration. For while it is ennobling to the individual, giving independence of character and more financial ability, the reflex influence is so helpful in giving the race a higher status in the industrial activities of a commonwealth. Ignorance of such activities compel our people mostly to engage in the lower and less remunerative pursuits. I

could not find the men he wanted or subsequent employment of that kind.

All classes of labor were highly remunerative, blacking boots not excepted.

I after engaged in this, and other like humble employments, part of which was for Hon. John C. Fremont, "the pathfinder overland to California."

Saving my earnings, I joined a firm already established in the clothing business. After a year or more so engaged, I became a partner in the firm of Lester & Gibbs, importers of fine boots and shoes. Just here a thought occurs which may be of advantage to ambitious but impecunious young men. Do not hesitate when you are without choice to accept the most humble and menial employment. It will be a source of pleasure, if by self-denial, saving your earnings, you keep a fixed intent to make it the stepping stone to something higher.

The genius of our institutions, and the noblest of mankind will estimate you by the ratio of distance from the humblest beginning to your present attainment; the greater the distance the greater the luster; the more fitting the meed of praise.

Our establishment on Clay street, known as the "Emporium for fine boots and shoes, imported from Philadelphia, London and Paris," having a reputation for keeping the best and finest in the State, was well patronized, our patrons extending to Oregon and lower California. The business, wholesale and retail, was profitable and maintained for a number of years. Mr. Lester, my

partner, being a practical bootmaker, his step to a merchant in that line was easy and lucrative.

Thanks to the evolution of events and march of liberal ideas the colored men in California have now a recognized citizenship, and equality before the law. It was not so at the period of which I write. With thrift and a wise circumspection financially, their opportunities were good; from every other point of view they were ostracised, assaulted without redress, disfranchised and denied their oath in a court of justice.

One occasion will be typical of the condition. One of two mutual friends (both our customers) came in looking over and admiring a display of newly arrived stock, tried on a pair of boots, was pleased with them, but said he did not think he needed them then; lay them aside and he would think about it. A short time after his friend came in, was shown the pair the former had admired; would he like such a pair? He tried on several and then asked to try on his friend's selection; they only suited, and he insisted on taking them; we objected, but he had them on, and said we need not have fear, he would clear us of blame, and walked out. Knowing they were close friends we were content. Possibly, in a humorous mood, he went straight to his friend, for shortly they both came back, the first asking for his boots; he would receive no explanation (while the cause of the trouble stood mute), and with vile epithets, using a heavy cane, again and again assaulted my partner, who was compelled tamely to submit, for had he raised his hand he would have been shot, and

no redress. I would not have been allowed to attest to "the deep damnation of his taking off."

The Magna Charter, granted by King John, at Runney Mead, to the Barons of England, in the twelfth century, followed by the Petition of Right by Charles I, has been rigidly preserved and consecrated as foundation for civil liberty. The Continental Congress led the van for the United States, who oftentimes tardy in its conservatism, is disposed to give audience to merit and finally justice to pertinacity of purpose.

In 1851, Jonas P. Townsend, W. H. Newby, and other colored men with myself, drew up and published in the "Alto California," the leading paper of the State, a preamble and resolutions protesting against being disfranchised and denied the right of oath, and our determination to use all moral means to secure legal claim to all the rights and privileges of American citizens.

It being the first pronouncement from the colored people of the State, who were supposed to be content with their status, the announcement caused much comment and discussion among the dominant class. For down deep in the heart of every man is a conception of right. He cannot extinguish it, or separate it from its comparative. What would I have others do to me? Pride, interest, adverse contact, all with specious argument may strive to dissipate the comparison, but the pulsations of a common humanity, keeping time with the verities of God never ceased to trouble, and thus the moral pebble thrown on the bosom of the hitherto placid sea of public opinion, like its physical

prototype, creating undulations which go on and on to beat against the rock and make sandy shores, so this our earnest but feeble protest contributed its humble share in the rebuilding of a commonwealth where "a man's a man for all that."

The committee above named, with G. W. Dennis and James Brown, the same year formed a company, established and published the "Mirror of the Times," the first periodical issued in the State for the advocacy of equal rights for all Americans. It has been followed by a score of kindred that have assiduously maintained and ably contended for the rights and privileges claimed by their zealous leader.

State conventions were held in 1854, '55 and '57, resolutions and petitions passed and presented to the Legislature of Sacramento. We had friends to offer them and foes to move they be thrown out the window. It is ever thus, "that men go to fierce extremes rather than rest upon the quiet flow of truths that soften hatred and temper strife." There was that unknown quantity, present in all legislative bodies, composed of good "little men" without courage of conviction, others of the Dickens' "devilish sly" type, who put out their plant-like tendrils for support; others "who bent the pliant servile knee that thrift may follow fawning" – all these the make-weight of a necessary constituent in representative government conservatism. The conservative majority laid our petition on the table, most likely with the tacit understanding that it was to be "taken up" by the janitor, and as such action on his part is not matter for record, we will in this

happier day with "charity to all," over this episode on memory's leaf, simply wrote "lost or stolen."

Among the occasions continually occurring demanding protests against injustice was the imposition of the "poll tax." It was demanded of our firm, and we refused to pay. A sufficient quantity of our goods to pay tax and costs were levied upon, and published for sale, and on what account.

I wrote with a fervor as cool as the circumstances would permit, and published a card from a disfranchised oath-denied standpoint, closing with the avowal that the great State of California might annually confiscate our goods, but we would never pay the voters tax. The card attracted attention, the injustice seemed glaring, the goods were offered. We learned that we had several friends at the sale, one in particular a Southern man. Now there was this peculiarity about the Southern white man, he would work a Negro for fifty years for his victuals and clothes, and shoot a white man for cheating the same Negro, as he considered the latter the height of meanness. This friend quietly and persistently moved through the crowd, telling them why our goods were there, and advising to give them a "terrible letting alone." The auctioneer stated on what account they were there, to be sold, asked for bidders, winked his eye and said "no bidders." Our goods were sent back to our store. This law, in the words of a distinguished Statesman, was then allowed to relapse "into innocuous desuetude." No further attempts to enforce it upon colored men were made.

CHAPTER V

A rush to newly discovered gold fields bring in view every trait of human character. The more vicious standing out in bold relief, and stamping their impress upon the locality. This phase and most primitive situation can be accounted for partly by the cupidity of mankind, but mainly that the first arrivals are chiefly adventurers. Single men, untrammelled by family cares, traders, saloonists, gamblers, and that unknown quantity of indefinite quality, ever present, content to allow others to fix a status of society, provided they do not touch on their own special interests, and that other, the unscrupulous but active professional politician, having been dishonored at home, still astute and determined, seeks new fields for booty, obtain positions of trust and then consummate speculation and outrage under the forms of law. But the necessity for the honest administration of the law eventually asserts itself for the enforcement of order.

It was quaintly said by a governor of Arkansas, that he believed that a public official should be "reasonably honest." Even should that limited standard of official integrity be invaded the people with an honest ballot need not be long in rectifying the evil by legal means. But cannot something be said in palliation of summary punishment by illegal means, when it is notorious and indisputable that all machinery for the execution of the law and the maintenance of order, the judges, prosecuting attorneys,

sheriff and drawers of jurors, and every other of court of law are in the hands of a despotic cabal who excessively tax, and whose courts convict all those who oppose them, and exonerate by trial the most farcical, the vilest criminal, rob and murder in broad day light, often at the bidding of their protectors. Such a status for a people claiming to be civilized seems difficult to conceive, yet the above was not an hypothesis of condition, but the actual one that existed in California and San Francisco, especially from 1849 to 1855. Gamblers and dishonest politicians from other States held the government, and there was no legal redress. Every attempt of the friends of law and order to elect honest men to office was met at the polls by vituperation and assault.

One of the means for thinning out the ranks of their opponents at the polls they found very efficient. It was to scatter their "thugs" along the line of waiting voters and known opposers, and quickly and covertly inject the metal part of a shoemaker's awl in the rear but most fleshy part of his adversary's anatomy, making sitting unpleasant for a time. There was usually uncertainty as to the point of compass from which the hint came to leave, but none as to the fact of its arrival. Hence the reformer did not stand on the order of his going, but generally left the line. These votes, of course, were not thrown out, for the reason they never got in. It diminished, but did not abolish the necessity of stuffing ballot boxes. In the West I once knew an old magistrate named Scott, noted for his impartiality, but only called Judge Scott by non-patrons of his court, who had never came within

the purview of his administration, to others he was known as "old Necessity," for it was said he knew no law. Revolutions, the beneficial results of which will ever live in the history of mankind, founded as they were on the rights of human nature and desire for the establishment and conservation of just government, have ever been the outgrowth of necessity.

Patient in protest of misgovernment, men are prone to "bear the ill they have" until, like the accumulation of rills on mountain side, indignation leaps the bounds of legal form and prostrate law to find their essence and purpose in reconstruction. At the time of which I write, there seemed nothing left for the friends of law, bereft as they were of all statutory means for its enforcement, but making a virtue of this necessity by organizing a "vigilance committee" to wrench by physical strength that unobtainable by moral right. There had been no flourish of trumpets, no herald of the impending storm, but the pent up forces of revolution in inertion, now fierce for action, discarded restraint. Stern, but quiet had been the preparation for a revolution which had come, as come it ever will, with such inviting environments. It was not that normal status, the usual frailties of human nature described by Hooker as "stains and blemishes that will remain till the end of the world, what form of government, soever, may take place, they grow out of man's nature." But in this event the stains and blemishes were effaced by a common atrocity.

Sitting at the back of my store on Clay street a beautiful Sunday morning, one of those mornings peculiar to San

Francisco, with its balmy breezes and Italian skies, there seemed an unusual stillness, such a quiet as precedes the cyclone in tropical climes, only broken occasionally by silvery peals of the church bells. When suddenly I heard the plank street resound with the tramp of a multitude. No voice or other sound was heard but the tramp of soldiery, whose rhythm of sound and motion is ever a proclamation that thrills by its intensity, whether conquest or conservation be its mission. I hastened to the door and was appalled at the sight. In marching column, six or eight abreast, five thousand men carrying arms with head erect, a resolute determination born of conviction depicted in linament of feature and expression.

Hastily improvised barracks in large storehouses east of Montgomery street, fortified by hundreds of gunny sacks filled with sand, designated "Fort Gunney," was the quarters for committee and soldiers. The committee immediately dispatched deputies to arrest and bring to the Fort the leaders of this cabal of misgovernment. The effort to do so gave striking evidence of the cowardice of assassins. Men whose very name had inspired terror, and whose appearance in the corridors of hotels or barrooms hushed into silence the free or merry expression of their patrons, now fled and hid away "like damned ghosts at the smell of day" from the popular uprising of the people. The event which precipitated the movement – the last and crowning act of this oligarchy – was the shooting of James King, of William, a banker and publisher of a paper dedicated to the

exposure and denunciation of this ring of dishonest officials and assassins. It was done in broad daylight on Montgomery Street, the main thoroughfare of the city. Mr. King, of William County, Maryland, was a terse writer, a gentleman highly esteemed for integrity and devotion to the best interests of his adopted State. Many of the gang who had time and opportunity hid on steamers and sailing vessels to facilitate escape, but quite a number were arrested and taken to Fort Gunny for trial. One or two of the most prominent took refuge in the jail – a strong and well-appointed brick building – where, under the protection of their own hirelings in fancied security considered themselves safe. A deputation of the committee from the fort placed a cannon at proper distance from the entrance to the jail. With a watch in his hand, the captain of the squad gave the keepers ten minutes to open the doors and deliver the culprits. I well remember the excitement that increased in intensity as the allotted period diminished; the fuse lighted, and two minutes to spare; the door opened; the delivery was made, and the march to Fort Gunny began. A trial court had been organized at which the testimony was taken, verdict rendered, and judgment passed. From a beam projecting over an upper story window, used for hoisting merchandise, the convicted criminals were executed.

The means resorted to for the purification of the municipality were drastic, but the ensuing feeling of personal safety and confidence in a new administration appeared to be ample justification. Much has been said and written in defense and in

condemnation of revolutionary methods for the reformation of government. It cannot but be apparent that when it is impossible to execute the virtuous purposes of government, the machinery having passed to notorious violators, who use it solely for vicious purpose, there seems nothing left for the votaries of order than to seize the reins with strong right arm and restore a status of justice that should be the pride and glory of all civilized people.

But what a paradox is presented in the disregard for law and life today in our common country, including much in our Southland! It is a sad commentary on the weakness and inconsistencies of human nature and often starts the inquiry in many honest minds, as a remedial agency, is a republican form of government the most conducive in securing the blessings of liberty of which protection to human life is the chief?

For the actual reverse of conditions that existed in California in those early days are present in others of our States today. All the machinery and ability for the just administration of the law are in the hands of those appointed mainly by the ballot of the intelligence and virtue of these States, who, if not participants, are quite as censurable for their "masterly inactivity" in having allowed thousands of the most defenceless to be lynched by hanging or burning at the stake. That there have been cases of assault on women by Negroes for which they have been lynched, it is needless to deny. That they have been lynched for threatening to do bodily harm to white men for actual assaults on the Negro wife and daughter is equally true. The first should be denounced

and arrested (escape being impossible) and by forms of law suffer its extreme penalty. The other for the cause they were murdered should have the highest admiration and the most sincere plaudits from every honest man. Is it true that "he is a slave most base whose love of right is for himself and not for all the race," and that the measure you mete out to others – the same shall be your portion. All human history verifies these aphorisms; and that the perpetrators and silent abettors of this barbarism have sowed to the winds a dire penalty, already being reaped, is evidenced by disregard of race or color of the victim when mob law is in the ascendant. And further, as a salvo for their own acts, white men are allowing bad Negroes to lynch others of their kind without enforcing the law.

The Negro, apish in his affinity to his prototype in a "lynching bee," is beneath contempt.

CHAPTER VI

Early in the year 1858 gold was discovered on Fraser River, in the Hudson Bay Company's territory in the Northwest. This territory a few months later was organized as the Colony of British Columbia and absorbed; is now the western outlook of the Dominion of Canada. The discovery caused an immense rush of gold seekers, traders, and speculators from all parts of the world. In June of that year, with a large invoice of miners' outfits, consisting of flour, bacon, blankets, pick, shovels, etc., I took passage on steamship Republic for Victoria. The social atmosphere on steamers whose patrons are chiefly gold seekers is unlike that on its fellow, where many have jollity moderated by business cares, others reserved in lofty consciousness that they are on foreign pleasure bent. With the gold seeker, especially the "tenderfoot," there is an incessant social hilarity, a communion of feeling, an ardent anticipation that cannot be dormant, continually bubbling over. We had on board upward of seven hundred, comprising a variety of tongues and nations. The bustle and turmoil incident to getting off and being properly domiciled; the confusion of tongues and peculiarity of temperament resembled the Babel of old. Here the mercurial Son of France in search of a case of red wine, hot and impulsive, belching forth "sacres" with a velocity well sustained. The phlegmatic German stirred to excitability in quest of a "small

cask of lager and large box of cheese;" John Chinaman "Hi yah'd" for one "bag lice all samee hab one Melican man," while a chivalric but seedy-looking Southerner, who seemed to have "seen better days," wished he "might be – if he didn't lay a peyor of boots thar whar that blanket whar." Not to be lost in the shuffle was a tall canting specimen of Yankee-dom perched on a water cask that "reckoned ther is right smart chance of folks on this 'ere ship," and "kalkerlate that that boat swinging thar war a good place to stow my fixin's in." The next day thorough system and efficiency was brought out of chaos and good humor prevailed.

Victoria, then the capital of British Columbia, is situated on the southern point of Vancouver's Island. On account of the salubrity of its climate and proximity to the spacious land-locked harbor of Esquimault it is delightful as a place of residence and well adapted to great mercantile and industrial possibilities. It was the headquarters of the Hudson Bay Company, a very old, wealthy, and influential English trading company. Outside the company's fort, enclosing immense storehouses, there were but few houses. The nucleus of a town in the shape of a few blocks laid out, and chiefly on paper maps, was most that gave promise of the populous city of Victoria of the present. On my arrival my goods were sold at great advance on cost, an order for more sent by returning steamer. I had learned prior to starting that city lots could be bought for one hundred dollars each, and had come prepared to buy two or three at that price. A few days before my

arrival what the authorities had designated as the "land office" had been subjected to a "Yankee rush," which had not only taken, and paid for all the lots mapped out, but came near appropriating books, benches, and window sashes; hence the office had to close down and haul off for repairs, and surveyed lots, and would not be open for business for ten days. Meanwhile those that were in at the first sale were still in, having real estate matters their own way. Steamers and sailing craft were constantly arriving, discharging their human freight, that needed food, houses, and outfits for the mines, giving an impetus to property of all kinds that was amazing for its rapidity. The next afternoon after the day of my arrival I had signed an agreement and paid one hundred dollars on account for a lot and one-story house for \$3,000 – \$1,400 more in fifteen days, and the balance in six months. Upon the arrival of my goods ten days later I paid the second installment and took possession. Well, how came I to take a responsibility so far beyond my first intended investment? Just here I rise to remark: For effective purposes one must not be unduly sensitive or overmodest in writing autobiography – for, being the events and memoirs of his life, written by himself, the ever-present pronoun "I" dances in such lively attendance and in such profusion on the pages that whatever pride he may have in the events they chronicle is somewhat abashed at its repetition.

Addison truly says: "There is no passion which steals into the heart more imperceptible and covers itself under more disguises than pride." Still, if in such memoirs there be found landmarks

of precept or example that will smooth the ruggedness of Youth's pathway, the success of its mission should disarm invidious criticism. For the great merit of history or biography is not alone the events they chronicle, but the value of the thought they inspire. Previous to purchasing the property I had calculated the costs of alteration and estimated the income. In twenty days, after an expenditure of \$200 for improvements, I found myself receiving a rental of \$500 per month from the property, besides a store for the firm. Anyone without mechanical knowledge with time and opportunity to seek information from others may have done the same, but in this case there was neither time nor opportunity; it required quick perception and prompt action. The trade my mother insisted I should learn enabled me to do this. Get a trade, boys, if you have to live on bread and apples while attaining it. It is a good foundation to build higher. Don't crowd the waiters. If they are content, give them a chance. We received a warm welcome from the Governor and other officials of the colony, which was cheering. We had no complaint as to business patronage in the State of California, but there was ever present that spectre of oath denial and disfranchisement; the disheartening consciousness that while our existence was tolerated, we were powerless to appeal to law for the protection of life or property when assailed. British Columbia offered and gave protection to both, and equality of political privileges. I cannot describe with what joy we hailed the opportunity to enjoy that liberty under the "British lion" denied us beneath the

pinions of the American Eagle. Three or four hundred colored men from California and other States, with their families, settled in Victoria, drawn thither by the two-fold inducement – gold discovery and the assurance of enjoying impartially the benefits of constitutional liberty. They built or bought homes and other property, and by industry and character vastly improved their condition and were the recipients of respect and esteem from the community.

An important step in a man's life is his marriage. It being the merging of dual lives, it is only by mutual self-abnegation that it can be made a source of contentment and happiness. In 1859, in consummation of promise and purpose, I returned to the United States and was married to Miss Maria A. Alexander, of Kentucky, educated at Oberlin College, Ohio. After visits to friends in Buffalo and my friend Frederick Douglass at Rochester, N. Y., thence to Philadelphia and New York City, where we took steamship for our long journey of 4,000 miles to our intended home at Victoria, Vancouver Island. I have had a model wife in all that the term implies, and she has had a husband migratory and uncertain. We have been blessed with five children, four of whom are living – Donald F., Horace E., Ida A., and Hattie A. Gibbs; Donald a machinist, Horace a printer by trade. Ida graduated as an A. B. from Oberlin College and is now teacher of English in the High School at Washington, D. C.; Hattie a graduate from the Conservatory of Music at Oberlin, Ohio, and was professor of music at

the Eckstein-Norton University at Cave Springs, Ky., and now musical director of public schools of Washington, D. C.

In passing through the States in 1859 an unrest was everywhere observable. The pulse-beat of the great national heart quickened at impending danger. The Supreme Court had made public the Dred Scott decision; John Brown had organized an insurrection; Stephen A. Douglass and Abraham Lincoln at the time were in exciting debate; William H. Seward was proclaiming the "irrepressible conflict." With other signs portentous, culminating in secession and events re-enacting history – for that the causes and events of which history is the record are being continuously re-enacted from a moral standpoint is of easy observation. History, as the narration of the actions of men, with attendant results, is but a repetition. Different minds and other hands may be the instruments, but the effects from any given course involving fundamental principles are the same. This was taught by philosophers 2,000 years ago, some insisting that not only was this repetition observable in the moral world, but that the physical world was repeated in detail – that every person, every blade of grass, all nature, animate and inanimate, reappeared upon the earth, engaged in the same pursuits, and fulfilling the same ends formerly accomplished.

However skeptical we may be as to this theory of the ancients, the student of modern history has accomplished little if he fails to be impressed with the important truth standing out on every page in letters of living light – that this great world of ours is

governed by a system of moral and physical laws that are as unerring in the bestowal of rewards as certain in the infliction of penalties. The history of our own country is one that will ever be an exemplification of this pre-eminent truth. The protests of the victims of oppression in the old world resulted in a moral upheaval and the establishment by force of arms of a Republic in America. The Revolutionary Congress, of which, in adopting the Federal Constitution, closed with this solemn injunction: "Let it be remembered that it has been the pride and boast of America that the rights for which she contended were the rights of human nature." And it was reserved for the founders of this nation to establish in the words of an illustrious benefactor, "a Government of the people, for the people, and by the people" – a Government deriving all its powers from the consent of the governed, where freedom of opinion, whether relating to Church or State, was to have the widest scope and fullest expression consistent with private rights and public good – where the largest individuality could be developed and the patrician and plebeian meet on a common level and aspire to the highest honor within the gift of the people.

This was its character, this its mission. How it has sustained the character, how fulfilled the mission upon which it entered, the impartial historian has indited, every page of which is redolent with precept and example that point a moral.

With the inauguration of republican government in America the angel of freedom and the demon of slavery wrestled for the

mastery. Tallyrand has beautifully and forcibly said: "The Lily and Thistle may grow together in harmonious proximity, but liberty and slavery delight in the separation." The pronounced policy of the best minds at the adoption of the Federal Constitution was to repress it as an institution inhuman in its character and fraught with mischief. Foretelling with accuracy of divine inspiration, Jefferson "trembled for his country" when he remembered that God was just and that "His justice would not sleep forever." Patrick Henry said "that a serious view of this subject gives a gloomy prospect to future times." So Mason and other patriots wrote and felt, fully impressed that the high, solid ground of right and justice had been left for the bogs and mire of expediency.

They died, leaving this heritage growing stronger and bolder in its assumption of power and permeating every artery of society. The cotton gin was invented and the demand for cotton vaulted into the van of the commerce of the country. Men, lured by the gains of slavery and corrupted by its contact, sought by infamous reasoning and vicious legislation to avert the criticism of men and the judgment of God. In the words of our immortal Douglass, "To bolster up and make tolerable what was intolerable; to make human what was inhuman; to make divine what was infernal." To make this giant wrong acceptable to the moral sense it was averred and enacted that slavery was right; that God himself had so predetermined in His wisdom; that the slave could be branded and sold on the auction block; that the babe could be ruthlessly

taken from its mother and given away; that a family could be scattered by sale, to meet no more; that to teach a slave to read was punishable with death to the teacher. But why rehearse this dead past – this terrible night of suffering and gloom? Why not let its remembrance be effaced and forgotten in the glorious light of a happier day? I answer, Why?

All measure of value, all estimates of greatness, of joy or sorrow, of health or suffering, are relative; we judge by comparison, and if in recalling these former depths we temper unreasonable criticism of waning friendships, accelerate effort as we pass the mile-stones of achievement, and stimulate appreciation of liberty in the younger generation, the mention will not be fruitless.

But to the resume of this rapid statement of momentous events: Meanwhile, the slave, patient in his longings, prayed for deliverance. Truly has it been said by Elihu Burrit that "you may take a man and yoke him to your labor as you yoke the ox that worketh to live, and liveth to work; you may surround him with ignorance and cloud him over with artificial night. You may do this and all else that will degrade him as a man, without injuring his value as a slave; yet the idea that he was born to be free will survive it all. 'Tis allied to his hope of immortality – the ethereal part of his nature which oppression cannot reach. 'Tis the torch lit up in his soul by the omnipotent hand of Deity Himself." The true and tried hosts of freedom, represented and led by Garrison, Douglass, Lovejoy, Phillips, Garnet, Harriet

Beecher Stowe, and Frances Ellen Harper, and others – few compared to the indifferent and avowed defenders of slavery, welcoming outrage and ostracism, by pen and on forum, from hilltop and valley, proclaimed emancipation as the right of the slave and the duty of the master. The many heroic efforts of the anti-slavery phalanx were not without effect, and determined resistance was made to the admission of more slave territory which was in accordance with the "Proviso" prohibiting slavery in the Northwest. Slavery controlled the Government from its commencement, hence its supporters looked with alarm upon an increasing determination to stay its progress.

California had been admitted as a free State, after a struggle the most severe. Its admission John C. Calhoun, the very able leader of the slave power, regarded as the death-knell of slavery, if the institution remained within the union and counseled secession. Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, in despair at the growth of slavery; Calhoun at that of freedom. But how could this march of moral progress and national greatness be arrested? Congress had, in 1787, enacted that all the territory not then States should forever be reserved to freedom. The slave power saw the "handwriting on the wall" surround it with a cordon of free States; increase their representatives in Congress advocating freedom, and slavery is doomed. The line cherished by the founders, the Gibraltar against which slavery had dashed its angry billows, must be blotted out, and over every rod of virgin soil it was to be admitted without let or hindrance.

Then came the dark days of compromise, the era of Northern fear of secession, and, finally, opinion crystallizing into legislation non-committal, viz: That States applying for admission should be admitted as free or slave States, as a majority of their inhabitants might determine. Then came the struggle for Kansas. Emigration societies were fitted out in the New England and Northern States to send free State men to locate who would vote to bring in Kansas as a free State. Similar organizations existed in the slave States for the opposite purpose.

It is not pleasant to dwell nor fitly portray the terrible ordeal through which the friends of freedom passed. In 1859 they succeeded; right and justice were triumphant, the beneficial results of which will reach remotest time. It was in this conflict that the heroism of John Brown developed. It was there he saw his kindred and his friends murdered, and there registered his vow to avenge their blood in the disenthralment of the slave. The compeers of this "grand old man" or people of the nation could have scarcely supposed that this man, hitherto obscure, was to be the instrument of retributive justice, to inaugurate a rebellion which was to culminate in the freedom of 4,000,000 slaves. John Brown, at the head of a few devoted men, at Harper's Ferry, struck the blow that echoed and re-echoed in booming gun and flashing sabre until, dying away in whispered cadence, was hushed in the joyousness of a free nation. John Brown was great because he was good, and good because he was great, with the bravery of a warrior and the tenderness of a child, loving

liberty as a mother her first born, he scorned to compromise with slavery. Virginia demanded his blood and he gave it, making the spot on which he fell sacred for all time, upon which posterity will see a monument in commemoration of an effort, grand in its magnanimity, to which the devotees of liberty from every clime can repair to breathe anew an inspiration from its shrine —

"For whether on the gallows high
Or in the battle's van,
The noblest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man."

The slave power, defeated in Kansas, fearful of the result of the vote in other territories to determine their future status, found aid and comfort from Judge Taney, a Supreme Judge of the United States. Bancroft, the historian, has said: "In a great Republic an attempt to overthrow a State owes its strength to and from some branch of the Government." 'Tis said that this Chief Justice, without necessity or occasion, volunteered to come to the rescue of slavery, and, being the highest court known to the law, the edict was final, and no appeal could lie, save to the bar of humanity and history. Against the memory of the nation, against decisions and enactments, he announced that, slaves being property, owners could claim constitutional protection in the territories; that the Constitution upheld slavery against any act of a State Legislature, and even against Congress. Slavery, previous to 1850, was regulated by municipal law; the

slave was held by virtue of the laws of the State of his location or of kindred slave States. When he escaped that jurisdiction he was free. By the decision of Judge Taney, instead of slavery being local, it was national and freedom outlawed; the slave could not only be reclaimed in any State, but slavery could be established wherever it sought habitation.

Black laws had been passed in Northern States and United States Commissioners appointed in these States searched for fugitives, where they had, in fancied security, resided for years, built homes, and reared families, seizing and remanding them back into slavery, causing an era of terror, family dismemberment, and flight, only to be remembered with sadness and horror. For had not the heartless dictum come from a Chief Justice of the United States – the "Jeffrey of American jurisprudence," that it had been ruled that black men had no rights a white man was bound to respect?

The slave power, fortified with this declaration, resolved that if at the approaching election they did not *succeed* they would *secede*. Lincoln was elected, and the South, true to its resolve, prepared for the secession of its States. Pennsylvania is credited with having then made the last and meanest gift to the Presidency in the person of James Buchanan. History tells of a Nero who fiddled while Rome burned. The valedictory of this public functionary breathing aid and comfort to secession, was immediately followed by South Carolina firing on Fort Sumter, and Southern Senators advised their constituents to seize the

arsenals and ports of the nation. Rebellion was a fact.

CHAPTER VII

Abraham Lincoln, the President-elect, was the legitimate outgrowth of American institutions; in him was presented choice fruit, the product of republican government. Born in a log cabin, of poor, uneducated parents, his only aids untiring industry, determination, and lofty purpose. Hewing out his steps on the rugged rocks of poverty, climbing the mountains of difficulty, and attaining the highest honor within the gift of the nation – "truly a self-made man, the Declaration of Independence," says a writer, "being his daily compendium of wisdom, the life of Washington his daily study, with something of Jefferson, Madison, and Clay." For the rest, from day to day, he lived the life of the American people; "walked in its light; reasoned with its reason; thought with its powers of thought, and felt the beatings of its mighty heart." In 1858 he came prominently forward as the rival of Stephen A. Douglass, and, with wealth of argument, terseness of logic, and enunciation of just principles, took front rank among sturdy Republicans, battling against the extension of human slavery, declaring that "the nation could not endure half free and half slave."

On the 4th of March, 1861, he took the oath of office and commenced his Administration. With confidence and doubt alternating, our interest as a race became intensified. We knew the South had rebelled; we were familiar with the pagan proverb

"Those whom the gods would destroy they first made mad." We had watched the steady growth of Republicanism, when a tinge on the political horizon "no bigger than a man's hand," increase in magnitude and power and place its standard-bearer in the White House. But former Presidents had professed to hate slavery. President Fillmore had, yet signed the fugitive slave law; Pierce and Buchanan had both wielded the administrative arm in favor of slavery. We had seen Daniel Webster, Massachusetts' ablest jurist, and the most learned constitutional expounder – the man of whom it was said that "when he speaks God's own thunder can be seen pent up in his brow and God's own lightning flash from his eye" – a man sent by the best cultured of New England to represent the most advanced civilization of the century – we had seen this brilliant star of anti-slavery Massachusetts "pale his ineffectual fires" before the steady glare, the intolerance, blandishment, and corrupting influences of the slave power – and tell the nation they must compromise with slavery.

When Daniel O'Connell, Ireland's statesman and philanthropist, was approached in Parliament by West India planters with promises of support for measures for the relief of Ireland if he would vote in the interest of slavery in British colonies, he said: "'Tis true, gentlemen, that I represent a poor constituency – God only knows how poor; but may calamity and affliction overtake me if ever I, to help Ireland, vote to enslave the Negro." A noble utterance! Unlike the Northern representatives sent to Congress, who "bent the pliant, servile knee that thrift

might follow fawning." What wonder our race was keenly alive to the situation? The hour had arrived – was the man there?

For Abraham Lincoln impartial history will answer "Nor memory lose, nor time impair" his nobility of character for humanity and patriotism that will ever ennoble and inspire. Mr. Lincoln was slow to believe that the rebellion would assume the proportions that it did, but he placed himself squarely on the issue in his inaugural address: "That he should, to the extent of his ability, take care that the laws of the nation be faithfully executed in all the States; that in doing it there would be no bloodshed unless it was forced upon the national authority." His patriotism and goodness welling up as he said: "We are not enemies, but friends, though we may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and hearthstone, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched by the better angels of our nature."

"But the die was cast;

Ruthless rapine righteous hope defied."

The necessity for calling the nation to arms was imminent on the 15th of April, 1861; the call for 75,000 men rang like a trumpet blast, startling the most apathetic. The response from the Northern and portions of the Southern States was hearty and prompt. The battle at Bull Run dispelled the President's idea that the war was to be of short duration. Defeat followed defeat of the national forces; weeping and wailing went up from many

firesides for husbands and sons who had laid down on Southern battlefields to rest. The great North, looking up for succor, saw the "national banner drooping from the flagstaff, heavy with blood," and typical of the stripes of the slave. For 200 years the incense of his prayers and tears had ascended. Now from every booming gun there seemed the voice of God, "Let my people go" —

"They see Him in watch fires
Of a hundred circling camps;
They read His righteous sentence
By the dim and flaring lamps."

The nation had come slowly but firmly up to the duty and necessity of emancipation. Mr. Lincoln, who was now in accord with Garrison, Phillips, Douglass, and their adherents, had counseled them to continue urging the people to this demand, now pressing as a military necessity. The 1st of January, 1863, being the maturity of the proclamation, lifted 4,000,000 of human beings from chattels to freemen, a grateful, praying people. Throughout the North and wherever possible in the South the colored people, on the night of December 31, assembled in their churches for thanksgiving. On their knees in silence — a silence intense with suppressed emotion — they awaited the stroke of the clock. It came, the thrice-welcomed harbinger of freedom, and as it tolled on, and on, the knell of slavery, pent-up joy could no longer be restrained. "Praise God, from

whom all blessings flow," from a million voices, floated upward on midnight air. While some shouted "Hallelujah," others, with folded arms, stood mute and fixed as statuary, while "Tears of joy like summer raindrops pierced by sunbeams" fell.

When Robespierre and Danton disenthralled France, we learn that the guillotine bathed in blood was the emblem of their transition state, from serfs to freemen. With the Negro were the antithesis of anger, revenge, or despair, that of joy, gratitude, and hope, has been memory's most choice trio.

This master stroke of policy and justice came with telling effect upon the consciousness of the people. It was now in deed and in truth a war for the Union coeval with freedom; every patriot heart beat a responsive echo, and was stirred by a new inspiration to deeds of heroism. Now success followed success; Port Hudson, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Gettysburg, and the Mississippi bowed in submission to the national power. The record of history affirms subsequent events that during the ensuing twelve months war measures more gigantic than had been witnessed in modern times were inaugurated; how the will of the people to subdue the rebellion crystallized as iron; that General Grant, planting himself before Richmond, said he would "fight it out on that line if it took all summer," and General Sherman's memorable march fifty thousand strong from Atlanta to the sea. General Grant's campaign ended in the surrender of General Lee, and Peace, with its golden pinions, alighted on our national staff.

Abraham Lincoln was again elected President, the people seeming impressed with the wisdom of his quaint phrase that "it was best not to swap horses while crossing a stream." Through all the vicissitudes of his first term he justified the unbounded confidence of the nation, supporting with no laggard hand, cheering and inspiring the citizen soldier with noble example and kindly word. The reconstruction acts, legislation for the enrollment of the colored soldier, and every other measure of enfranchisement received his hearty approval, remarking at one time, with much feeling, that "I hope peace will come to stay, and there will be some black men that can remember that they helped mankind to this great consummation."

Did the colored troops redeem the promise made by their friends when their enlistment was determined? History records exhibitions of bravery and endurance which gave their survivors and descendants a claim as imperishable as eternal justice. Go back to the swamps of the Carolinas, the Savannahs of Florida, the jungles of Arkansas; or on the dark bosom of the Mississippi. Look where you may, the record of their rugged pathway still blossoms with deeds of noble daring, self-abnegation and a holy devotion to the central ideas of the war – the freedom of the slave, a necessity for the salvation of free government.

The reading of commanders' reports bring no blush of shame. At the terrific assault on Fort Hudson, General Banks reported they answered "every expectation; no troops could have been more daring." General Butler tells of his transformation from

a war Democrat to a radical. Riding out at early morn to view the battlefield, where a few hours before shot and shell flew thick and fast, skillfully guiding his horse, that hoofs should not profane the sacred dead, he there saw in sad confusion where lay the white and black soldier, who had gone down together. The appeal, though mute, was irresistible. Stopping his horse and raising his hand in the cold, grey light to heaven, said: "May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and my right hand forget its cunning if I ever cease to insist upon equal justice to the colored man." It was at the unequal fight at Milliken's Bend; it was at Forts Wagner and Pillow, at Petersburg and Richmond, the colored troops asked to be assigned the posts of danger, and there before the iron hail of the enemy's musketry "they fell forward as fits a man." In our memory and affections they deserve a fitting place "as those long loved, and but for a season gone."

Slavery, shorn of its power, nurtured revenge. On the 14th day of April, 1865, while sitting with his family at a public exhibition, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and the nation was in tears. Never was lamentation so widespread, nor grief so deep; the cabin of the lowly, the lordly mansion of wealth, the byways and highways, gave evidence of a people's sorrow. "Men moved about with clinched teeth and bowed-down heads; women bathed in tears and found relief, while little children asked their mothers why all the people looked so mournful," and we, as we came up out of Egypt, lifted up our voices and wept. Our friend was no more, but intrenched in the hearts of his countrymen as one who

did much "to keep the jewel of liberty in the family of nations."

Since that eventful period the Negro has had a checkered career, passing through the reconstruction period, with its many lights and shadows, despite the assaults of prejudice and prescription by exclusion from most of the remunerative callings and avocations, partiality in sentencing him to the horrors of the chain-gang, lynching, and burning at the stake. Despite all these he has made progress – a progress often unfairly judged by the dominant race. Douglass has pithily said: "Judge us not from the heights on which you stand, but from the depths from whence we sprung." So, with a faith and hope undaunted, we scan our country horizon for the silver lining propitious of a happier day.

Regarding that crime of crimes, lynching by hanging and burning human beings, a barbarity unknown in the civilized world save in our country, it is cheering to observe an awakening of the moral sense evidenced by noble and manly utterance of leading journals, notably those of Arkansas; the Governor of Georgia, and other Southern Governors and statesmen, have spoken in derogation of this giant crime.

When others of like standing and State influence shall so pronounce, this hideous blot upon the national escutcheon will disappear. It is manly and necessary to protest when wronged. But a subject class or race does but little for their amelioration when content with its denouncement. Injustice can be more effectually arraigned by others than the victim; his mere proclamation, however distinct and unanswerable, will be slow of

fruition. A measure of relief comes from the humane sympathies of the philanthropist, but the inherent attraction of forces (less sympathetic, perhaps, though indispensable) for his real uplifting and protection will be in the ratio of his morality, learning, and wealth. For vice is ever destructive; ignorance ever a victim, and poverty ever defenceless. Morality should be ever in the foreground of all effort, for mere learning or even wealth will not make a class of brave, honest men and useful citizens; there must be ever an intensity of purpose based upon convictions of truth, and "the inevitable oneness of physical and moral strength." St. Pierre de Couberton, an eminent French writer on education and training, has pertinently said: "Remember that from the cradle to the grave struggle is the essence of life, as it is the unavoidable aim, the real life bringer of all the sons of men. Existence is a fight, and has to be fought out; self-defence is a noble art, and must be practiced. Never seek a quarrel, but never shun one, and if it seeks you, be sure and fight to the last, as long as strength is given you to stand, guard your honesty of purpose, your good faith; beware of all false seeming, of all pretence, cultivate arduous tasks, aspire to what is difficult, and do persistently what is uncomfortable and unpleasant; love effort passionately, for without effort there can be no manliness; therefore acquire the habit of self-restraint, the habit of painful effort, physical pain, is a useful one." With such purpose the Negro should have neither servility, bitterness, nor regret, but "instinct with the life of the present rise with the impulse of the

age."

CHAPTER VIII

My election to the Common Council of the City of Victoria, Vancouver Island, in 1866, was my first entry to political life, followed by re-election for succeeding term.

The exercise of the franchise at the polls was by "viva voce," the voter proclaiming his vote by stating the name of the candidate for whom he voted in a distinct voice, which was audited on the rolls by clerks of both parties.

Alike all human contrivances, this mode of obtaining the popular will has its merits and demerits. For the former it has the impossibility of ballot-stuffing, for the by-stander can keep accurate tally; also the opportunity for the voter to display the courage of his conviction, which is ever manly and the purpose of a representative Commonwealth. On the other hand, it may fail to register the desire of the voter whose financial or other obligation may make it impolitic to thus openly antagonize the candidate he otherwise would with a secret ballot, "that falls as silently as snow-flakes fall upon the sod" and (should) "execute a freeman's will as lightning doth the will of God." This is its mission, the faithful execution of its fiat, the palladium of liberty for all the people. Opposition to the exercise of this right in a representative government is disintegrating by contention and suicidal in success. It has been, and still is, the cause of bitter struggle in our own country. Disregard of the ultimatum

of constitutional majorities, the foundation of our system of government, as the cause of the civil war, the past and ever-occurring political corruption in the Northern and the chief factor in the race troubles in the Southern States, where the leaders in this disregard and unlawful action allow the honors and emoluments of office to shut out from their view the constitutional rights of others; and by the criminality of their conduct and subterfuge strive to make selfish might honest right.

That slavery was a poor school to fit men to assume the obligations and duties of an enlightened citizenship should be readily admitted; that its subjects in the Elysium of their joy and thankfulness to their deliverers from servitude to freedom, and in ignorance of the polity of government, should have been easy prey to the unscrupulous is within reason. Still the impartial historian will indite that, for all that dark and bloody night of reconstruction through which they passed, the record of their crime and peculation will "pale its ineffectual rays" before the blistering blasts of official corruption, murder, and lynching that has appalled Christendom since the government of these Southern States has been assumed by their wealth and intelligence. The abnormal conditions that prevailed during reconstruction naturally produced hostility to all who supported Federal authority, among whom the Negro, through force of circumstances, was prominent and most vulnerable for attack, suffered the most physically, and subsequently became easy prey for those who would profit by his disfranchisement.

The attempt to justify this and condone this refusal to allow the colored American exercise of civil and constitutional rights is based on caste, hatred, and alleged ignorance – conditions that are world-wide – and the measure of a people's Christianity and the efficiency of republican institutions can be accurately determined by the humanity and zeal displayed in their amelioration, not in the denial of the right, but zealous tuition for its proper exercise.

During the civil war the national conscience, hitherto sluggish, was awakened and great desire prevailed to award the race the full meed of civil and political rights, both as a measure of justice and recognition of their fealty and bravery in support of the national arm.

The Freedman's Bureau, Christian and other benevolent agencies were inaugurated to fit the freedman for the new obligations. Handicapped as he has been in many endeavors, his record has been inspiring. Four-fifths of the race for generations legally and persistently forbidden to learn to read or write; with labor unrequited, a conservative estimate, in 1898, little more than three decades from slavery, finds 340,000 of their children attending 26,300 schools and their property valuation \$750,000,000, while in learned professions, journalism, and mercantile pursuits their ability and efficiency command the respect and praise of the potential race.

When the amendments were being considered, opinion differed as to the bestowal of the franchise; many favored only

those who could read and write. The popularity of this phase of opinion was voiced in the following interview with Hon. Schuyler Colfax, afterward Vice President, who was at that time Speaker of the lower house of Congress, and was said to have the "Presidential bee in his bonnet." While "swinging around the circle" he touched at Victoria, and the British Colonist of July 29, 1865, made the following mention: "A committee consisting of Abner Francis and M. W. Gibbs called on Hon. Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States, yesterday morning. On being introduced by the American Consul, Mr. Gibbs proceeded to say that they were happy to meet him and tender him on behalf of the colored residents of Victoria their esteem and regard. They were not unacquainted with the noble course he had pursued during the great struggle in behalf of human liberty in the land of their nativity. They had watched with intense interest the progress of the rebellion and rejoiced in the Federal success and sorrowed in its adversity. Now that victory had perched on the national standard – a standard we believe henceforth and forever consecrated to impartial liberty – they were filled with joy unspeakable. And he would allow them to say that it had afforded them the greatest pleasure to observe the alacrity with which the colored men of the nation offered and embraced the opportunity to manifest their devotion and bravery in support of the national cause.

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