

VARIOUS

A CHILD'S ANTI-SLAVERY
BOOK

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A Child's Anti-Slavery Book

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Various A Child's Anti-Slavery Book / Containing a Few Words about American Slave Children and Stories / of Slave-Life

A FEW WORDS ABOUT AMERICAN SLAVE CHILDREN

Children, you are free and happy. Kind parents watch over you with loving eyes; patient teachers instruct you from the beautiful pages of the printed book; benign laws, protect you from violence, and prevent the strong arms of wicked people from hurting you; the blessed Bible is in your hands; when you become men and women you will have full liberty to earn your living, to go, to come, to seek pleasure or profit in any way that you may choose, so long as you do not meddle with the rights of other people; in one word, *you are free children!* Thank God! thank God! my children, for this precious gift. Count it dearer than life. Ask the great God who made you free to teach you to prefer death to the loss of liberty.

But are all the children in America free like you? No, no! I am sorry to tell you that hundreds of thousands of American children are *slaves*. Though born beneath the same sun and on the same soil, with the same natural right to freedom as yourselves, they are nevertheless SLAVES. Alas for them! Their parents cannot train them as they will, for they too have MASTERS. These masters say to them:

"Your children are OURS—OUR PROPERTY! They shall not be taught to read or write; they shall never go to school; they shall not be taught to read the Bible; they must submit to us and not to you; we shall whip them, sell them, and do what else we please with them. They shall never own themselves, never have the right to dispose of themselves, but shall obey us in all things as long as they live!"

"Why do their fathers let these masters have their children? My father wouldn't let anybody have me," I hear one of my little free-spirited readers ask.

Simply, my noble boy, because they can't help it. The masters have banded themselves together, and have made a set of wicked laws by which nearly four millions of men, women, and children are declared to be their personal chattels, or property. So that if one of these slave fathers should refuse to let his child be used as the property of his master, those wicked laws would help the master by inflicting cruel punishments on the parent. Hence the poor slave fathers and mothers are forced to silently witness the cruel wrongs which their helpless children are made to suffer. Violence has been framed into a law, and the poor slave is trodden beneath the feet of the powerful.

"But why did those slaves let their masters bring them into this state? Why didn't they fight as our forefathers did when they threw off the yoke of England's laws?" inquires a bright-eyed lad who has just risen from the reading of a history of our Revolution.

The slaves were not reduced to their present servile condition in large bodies. When our ancestors settled this country they felt the need of more laborers than they could hire. Then wicked men sailed from England and other parts of Europe to the coast of Africa. Sending their boats ashore filled with armed men, they fell upon the villages of the poor Africans, set fire to their huts, and, while they were filled with fright, seized, handcuffed, and dragged them to their boats, and then carried them aboard ship.

This piracy was repeated until the ship was crowded with negro men, women, and children. The poor things were packed like spoons below the deck. Then the ship set sail for the coast of America.

I cannot tell you how horribly the poor negroes suffered. Bad air, poor food, close confinement, and cruel treatment killed them off by scores. When they died their bodies were pitched into the sea, without pity or remorse.

After a wearisome voyage the survivors, on being carried into some port, were sold to the highest bidder. No regard was paid to their relationship. One man bought a husband, another a wife. The child was taken to one place, the mother to another. Thus they were scattered abroad over the colonies. Fresh loads arrived continually, and thus their numbers increased. Others were born on the soil, until now, after the lapse of some two centuries, there are nearly four millions of negro slaves in the country, besides large numbers of colored people who in various ways have been made free.

You can now see how easy it was for the masters to make the wicked laws by which the slaves are now held in bondage. They began when the slaves were few in number, when they spoke a foreign language, and when they were too few and feeble to offer any resistance to their oppressors, as their masters did to old England when she tried to oppress them.

I want you to remember one great truth regarding slavery, namely, that a slave is a human being, held and used as property by another human being, and that *it is always A SIN AGAINST GOD to thus hold and use a human being as property!*

You know it is not a sin to use an ox, a horse, a dog, a squirrel, a house, or an acre of land as property, if it be honestly obtained, because God made these and similar objects to be possessed as property by men. But God did not make *man to be the property of man*. He never gave any man the right to own his neighbor or his neighbor's child.

On the contrary, he made all men to be free and equal, as saith our Declaration of Independence. Hence, every negro child that is born is as free before God as the white child, having precisely the same right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as the white child. The law which denies him that right does not destroy it. It may enable the man who claims him as a slave to deprive him of its exercise, but the right itself remains, for the wicked law under which he acts does not and cannot set aside the divine law, by which he is as free as any child that was ever born.

But if God made every man, woman, and child to be free, and not property, then he who uses a human being as property acts contrary to the will of God and SINS! Is it not so, my children?

Yet that is what every slaveholder does. *He uses his slaves as property*. He reckons them as worth so many dollars, just as your father sets a certain money value on his horse, farm, or merchandise. He sells him, gives him away, uses his labor without paying him wages, claims his children as so many more dollars added to his estate, and when he dies wills him to his heirs forever. And this is SIN, my children—a very great sin against God, a high crime against human nature.

Mark what I say! the sin of slavery does not lie merely in whipping, starving, or otherwise ill-treating a human being, but in using him as property; in saying of him as you do of your dog: "He is my property. He is worth so much money to me. I will do what I please with him. I will keep him, use him, sell him, give him away, and keep all he earns, just as I choose."

To say that of a man is sin. You might clothe the man in purple, feed him on manna from heaven, and keep him in a palace of ivory, still, if you used him as your property, you would commit sin!

Children, I want you to shrink from this sin as the Jews did from the fiery serpents. Hate it. Loathe it as you would the leprosy. Make a solemn vow before the Saviour, who loves the slave and slave children as truly as he does you, that you will never hold slaves, never apologize for those who do. As little Hannibal vowed eternal hatred to Rome at the altar of a false god, so do you vow eternal enmity to slavery at the altar of the true and living Jehovah. Let your purpose be, "I will rather beg my bread than live by the unpaid toil of a slave."

To assist you in carrying out that purpose, and to excite your sympathy for poor slave children, the following stories were written. The characters in them are all real, though their true names are not always given. The stories are therefore pictures of actual life, and are worthy of your belief.

D. W.

* * * * *

LITTLE LEWIS:

The Story of a Slave Boy.

BY JULIA COLMAN

"A, B, C," said little Lewis to himself, as he bent eagerly over a ragged primer. "Here's anoder A, an' there's anoder, an' there's anoder C, but I can't find anoder B. Missy Katy said I must find just so many as I can. Dear little Missy Katy! an' wont I be just so good as ever I can, an' learn to read, an' when I get to be a man I'll call myself white folks; for I'm a most as white as Massa Harry is now, when he runs out widout his hat; A, B, C." And so the little fellow ran on, thinking what a fine man he would be when he had learned to read.

Just then he heard a shrill laugh in the distance, and the cry, "Lew!

Lew! where's Lew?"

It was Katy's voice, and tucking his book in his bosom, he ran around the house toward her with light feet; for though she was often cross and willful, as only daughters sometimes are, she was the only one of the family that showed him even an occasional kindness. She was, withal, a frolicsome, romping witch, and as he turned the corner, she came scampering along right toward him with three or four white children at her heels, and all the little woolly heads of the establishment, numbering something less than a score.

"Here, Lew!" she said, as she came in sight, "you take the tag and run."

With a quick movement he touched her outstretched hand, and he would have made the others some trouble to catch him, for he was the smartest runner among the children; but as he turned he tripped on a stone, and lay sprawling. "Tag," cried Hal, Katy's cousin, as he placed his feet on the little fellow's back and jumped over him. It was cruel, but what did Hal care for the "little nigger." If he had been at home he would have had some little fear of breaking the child's back, for his father was more careful of his *property* than Uncle Stamford was.

Before Lewis could rise, two or three of the negro boys, who were always too ready to imitate the vices of their masters, had made the boy a stepping stone, and then Dick, his master's eldest son, came down upon him with both knees, and began to cuff him roundly.

"So, you black scamp, you thought you'd run away with the tag, did you!" Just then he perceived the primer that was peeping out of Lewis's shirt bosom. "Ha! what's here?" said he; "a primer, as I live! And what are you doing with this, I'd like to know?"

"Missy Katy give it to me, and she is teaching me my letters out of it. Please, massa, let me have it again," said he, beseechingly, as Dick made a motion as if to throw it away. "I would like to learn how to read."

"You would, would you!" said Dick. "You'd like to read to Tom and Sam, down on a Louisiana plantation, in sugar time, when you'd nothing else to do, I suppose. Ha, ha, ha!" and the young tyrant, giving the boy a vigorous kick or two as he rose, stuffed the book into his own pocket, and walked off.

Poor Lewis! He very well knew the meaning of that taunt, and he did not open his mouth. No threat of a dark closet ever frightened a free child so much as the threat of being sold to a Southern plantation terrifies the slave-child of Kentucky.

Lewis walked slowly toward the kitchen, to see Aunt Sally. It was to her he used to go with all his troubles, and sometimes she scolded, and sometimes she listened. She was very busy dressing the vegetables for dinner, and she looked cross; so the little fellow crept into the chimney corner and said nothing; but he thought all the more, and as he thought, the sad tears rolled down his tawny cheeks.

"What is the matter now, little baby?" was Aunt Sally's tender inquiry.

Lewis commenced his pitiful tale; but as soon as Aunt Sally heard that it was about learning to read, she shut him up with "Good enough for you! What do you want of a book? Readin' isn't for the likes of you; and the less you know of it the better."

This was poor sympathy, and the little fellow, with a half-spiteful feeling, scrambled upon a bench near by, and tumbled out of the window. He alighted on an ash-heap, not a very nice place to be sure, but it was a retired corner, and he often hid away there when he felt sad and wanted to be alone. Here he sat down, and leaning his head against the side of the house, he groaned out, "My mother, O my mother! If you ain't dead, why don't you come to me?"

By degrees he calmed down, and half asleep there in the sunshine, he dreamed of the home that he once had. His mother was a noble woman, so he thought. Nobody else ever looked so kindly into his face; he was sure nobody else ever loved him as she did, and he remembered when she was gay and cheerful, and would go all day singing about her work. And his father, he could just remember him as a very pleasant man that he used to run to meet, sometimes, when he saw him coming home away down the road; but that was long ago. He had not seen him now for years, and he had heard his mother say that his father's master had moved away out of the state and taken him with him, and maybe he would never return. Then Lewis's mother grew sad, and stopped her singing, though she worked as hard as ever, and kept her children all neat and clean.

And those dear brothers and sisters, what had become of them? There was Tom, the eldest, the very best fellow in the world, so Lewis thought. He would sit by the half hour making tops, and whistles, and all sorts of pretty playthings. And Sam, too! he was always so full of fun and singing songs. What a singer he was! and it was right cheerful when Sam would borrow some neighbor's banjo and play to them. But they were all gone; and his sad, sweet-faced, lady-like sister Nelly, too, they were all taken off in one day by one of the ugliest negro-drivers that ever scared a little slave-boy's dreams. And it was while his mother was away from home too. How she did cry and take on when she came back and found them all gone, and she hadn't even the chance to bid them good-by! She said she knew her master sent her off that morning because he was going to sell her children.

Lewis shuddered as he thought of that dreadful night. It was hardly two years ago, and the fearful things he heard then burned into his soul with terrible distinctness. It seemed as if their little cabin was deserted after that, for Tom, and Sam, and Nelly were almost grown up, and the rest were all little ones. The next winter his other sister, Fanny, died; but that wasn't half so sad. She was about twelve years old, and a blithesome, cheerful creature, just as her mother had been. He remembered how his master came to their cabin to comfort them, as he said; but his mother told him plainly that she did not want any such comfort. She wished Nelly was dead too. She wished she had never had any children to grow up and suffer what she had. It was in vain her master tried to soothe her. He talked like a minister, as he was; but she had grown almost raving, and she talked to him as she never dared to do before. She wanted to know why he didn't come to console her when she lost her other children; "three all at once" she said, "and they're ten times worse than dead. You never consoled me then at all. Religion? Pooh! I don't want none of *your* religion."

And now she, too, was gone. She had been gone more than a year. It was said that she was hired out to work in another family; but it wasn't so. They only told her that story to get her away from the children peaceably. She was sold quite a distance away to a very bad man, who used her cruelly.

Ned, who was some two years younger than Lewis, and the only brother he had left, was a wild, careless boy, who raced about among the other children, and did not seem to think much about anything. Lewis often wished he could have somebody to talk with, and he wondered if his mother would ever come back again.

Had he been a poet he might have put his wishes into verses like the following, in which Mrs. Follen has given beautiful expression to the wishes of such a slave boy as Lewis:

THE SLAVE BOY'S WISH

I wish I was that little bird,
Up in the bright blue sky,
That sings and flies just where he will,
And no one asks him why.

I wish I was that little brook,
That runs so swift along,
Through pretty flowers and shining stones,
Singing a merry song.

I wish I was that butterfly,
Without a thought or care,
Sporting my pretty, brilliant wings,
Like a flower in the air.

I wish I was that wild, wild deer,
I saw the other day,
Who swifter than an arrow flew,
Through the forest far away.

I wish I was that little cloud,
By the gentle south wind driven,
Floating along so free and bright,
Far, far up into heaven.

I'd rather be a cunning fox,
And hide me in a cave;
I'd rather be a savage wolf,
Than what I am—a slave.

My mother calls me her good boy,
My father calls me brave;
What wicked action have I done,
That I should be a slave?

I saw my little sister sold,
So will they do to me;
My heavenly Father, let me die,
For then I shall be free.

So talking to himself he fell into a doze, and dreamed about his mother. He thought her large serious eyes were looking into his, and her long black hair falling over his face. His mother was part Indian and part white, with only just enough of the black to make her hair a little curly. It don't make much difference what color people are in the slave states. If the mothers are slaves the children are slaves too, even if they are nine-tenths white.

From this pleasant dream Lewis was roused by a splash of cold water, and Aunt Sally, with her head out of the window, was calling, "Here you lazy nigger! come here and grind this coffee for me." And the little boy awoke to find himself a friendless orphan, in a cold world with a cruel master.

The next morning Lewis was playing about the yard with as good a will as any of the young negroes. Children's troubles don't last long, and to see him turning somersets, singing Jim Crow, and kicking up a row generally, you would suppose he had forgotten all about the lost primer and his mother too.

He was in the greatest possible glee in the afternoon, at being sent with another boy, Jim, to carry a package to Mr. Pond's. Then he was trusted, so he put himself on his dignity, and did not turn more than twenty somersets on the way. In coming back, as they had no package to carry, they took it into their heads to cut across lots, though it was no nearer than the road. Still it made them plenty of exercise in climbing fences and walking log bridges across the brooks. While doing this they came in sight of some white pond-lilies, and all at once it occurred to Lewis that it would be right nice to get some of them for Miss Katy, to buy up her good-will, for he was afraid she would be very angry when she found that he had lost the primer. So he waded and paddled about till he had collected quite a handful of them, in spite of Jim's hurrying up, and telling him that he would get his head broke, for missus had told them to be quick.

When he had gathered a large handful he started on the run for home, stopping only once or twice to admire the fragrant, lovely flowers; and he felt their beauty quite as much, I dare say, as Miss Katy would.

When they were passing the quarters, as the place is called where the huts of the slaves are built, Aunt Sally put her head out of the cabin door, and seeing him, she called out, "Here, Lew, here's your mother."

The boy forgot his lilies, dropped them, and running to the door, he saw within a strange woman sitting on a bench. Was *that* his mother? She turned her large dark eyes for a moment upon him, and then she sprang to meet him. His little heart was ready to overflow with tears of joy, and he expected to be overwhelmed with caresses, just as you would if you should meet your mother after being separated from her more than a year.

Imagine his terror, then, as she seized him rudely by the wrists and exclaimed, "It's you, is it? a little slave boy! I'll fix you so they'll never get you!"

Then she picked him up in her arms and started to run with him, as if she would throw him into the well. The little fellow screamed with fright. Aunt Sally ran after her, crying at the top of her voice, "Nancy, O Nancy! don't now!" And then a big negro darted out of the stables, crying "Stop her there! catch her!"

All this hubbub roused the people at the house, and Master Stamford forthwith appeared on the verandah, with a crowd of servants of all sizes. Amid the orders, and cries, and general confusion that followed, Nancy was caught, Lewis was taken away, and she was carried back to the cabin, while the big negro was preparing to tie her. As she entered the cabin, her eye caught sight of a knife that lay there, and snatching it up, she gave herself a bad wound with it. Poor woman, she was tired of her miserable life. I don't wonder that she wanted to die.

Was it right, you ask, for her to take her own life? Certainly not. But let us see what led to this attempt.

For a long time she had been separated from Lewis and Ned, the last of her children that remained to her. To be sure, the other three were probably living somewhere, and so was her husband. But she only knew that they had gone into hopeless servitude, where she knew not. Indeed, she did not know but that they were already dead, and she did not expect ever to hear, for slaves are seldom able to write, and often not permitted to when they can. If there had only been hope of hearing from them at some time or other she could have endured it. But between her and those loved ones there rested a thick cloud of utter darkness; beyond that they might be toiling, groaning, bleeding, starving, dying

beneath the oppressor's lash in the deadly swamp, or in the teeth of the cruel hounds, and she could not have the privilege of ministering to the least of their wants, of soothing one of their sorrows, or even dropping a silent tear beside them. If she could have heard only *one* fact about them it would have been some relief. But she could not enjoy even this poor privilege. And then came the dead, heavy stillness of despair creeping over her spirits.

Do you wonder that she became perfectly wild, and beside herself at times? How would you feel if all you loved best were carried off by a cruel slave-driver, and you had *no hope* of hearing from them again in this world?

During these dreadful fits of insanity she would bewail the living as worse than dead, and pray God to take them away. Then she would curse herself for being the mother of slave children, declaring that it would be far better to see them die in their childhood, than to see them grow up to suffer as she had suffered.

She lived only a few miles from her old home; but her new master was an uncommonly hard man, and would not permit her to go and see her children. He said it would only make her worse, and his slaves should learn that they were not to put on airs and have whims. It was their business to live for him. Didn't he pay enough for them, and see that they were well fed and clothed, and what more did they want? This he called kind treatment. Very kind, indeed, not to allow a mother to go and see her own children! But when she was taken with those insane spells, and would go on so about her children that she was not fit to work, indeed could not be made to work, it was finally suggested to him that a visit to her children would do her good.

This was the occasion of her present visit, and it was because she was insane that she attempted to take her own life. The wound, however, was not very deep, and Nancy did not die at this time. After the doctor had been there and dressed her wound, and affairs had become quiet, Lewis stole to the door of the cabin. He was afraid to go in. He hardly knew, any of the time, whether that strange wild woman could be his mother, only they told him she was. There was blood spattered here and there on the bare earth that served as a floor to the cabin, and on a straw mattress at one side lay the strange woman. Her eyes were shut, and now that she was more composed, he saw in the lineaments of that pale face the features of his mother; But her once glossy black hair had turned almost white since she had been away, and altogether there was such a wild expression that he was afraid, and crept quietly away again.

He then went to find his brother, who, of course, did not remember so much about her. But it was touching to see the two little lone brothers stand peeping in wonderingly at their own mother, who was so changed that they hardly knew her. Then they went off behind the kitchen to talk about it, and cry over it.

The strange big negro was Jerry, who belonged to the same master with Nancy, and he had come to bring her down. He was afraid that his master would be very angry if he should go back without her; but the doctor said the woman must not be moved for a week, and he wrote a letter for Jerry to carry borne to his master, while Nancy remained.

The next day, as they gained a little more courage, the brothers crept inside of the cabin. Their mother saw them, and beckoned them to her bed-side. She could scarcely speak a word distinctly, but taking first one and then the other by the hand, she said inquiringly: "Lewis?" "Lewis?" "Ned?"

They sat there at the bed-side by the hour that day. Sometimes she would hold their hands lovingly in hers; then again she would lay her hand gently on the heads of one and the other, and her eyes would wander lovingly over their faces, and then fill with tears.

After a day or two little restless, fun-loving Ned grew tired of this, and ran out to play; but Lewis stayed by his mother, and she was soon able to talk with him.

She showed him her wrists where they had been worn by the irons, and her back scarred by the whip, and she told him of cruelties that we may not repeat here. She talked with him as if he were a man, and not a child; and as he listened his heart and mind seemed to reach forward, and he

became almost a man in thought. He seemed to live whole years in those few days that he talked with his mother. It was here that the fearful fact dawned upon him as it never had before. *He was a slave!* He had no control over his own person or actions, but he belonged soul and body to another man, who had power to control him in everything. And this would not have been so irksome had it been a person that he loved, but Master Stamford he hated. He never met him but to be called by some foul epithet, or booted out of the way. He had no choice whom he would serve, and there would be no end to the thankless servitude but death.

"Mother," said the boy, "what have we done that we should be treated so much worse than other people?"

"Nothing, my child, nothing. They say there is a God who has ordered all this, but I don't know about that." She stopped; her mother's heart forbade her to teach her child infidel principles, and she went on in a better strain of reasoning. "Perhaps he allows all this, to try if we will be good whether or no; but I am sure he cannot be pleased with the white folk's cruelty toward us, and they'll all have to suffer for it some day."

Then there was a long pause, when both mother and son seemed to be thinking sad, sad thoughts. Finally the mother broke the silence by saying: "Well, here we are, and the great question is how to make the best of it, if there is any best about it."

"I know what I'll do, mother," said Lewis earnestly, "I'll run away when I'm old enough."

"I hope you may get out of this terrible bondage, my child," said the mother; "but you had better keep that matter to yourself at present. It will be a long time before you are old enough. There is one thing about it, if you're going to be a free man, you'll want to know how to read."

Lewis's heart was full again, and he told his mother the whole story of the primer.

"And did Missy Katy never ask about it afterward?" inquired the mother.

"No, she never has said a word about it."

"O well, she don't care. There are some young missies with tender hearts that do take a good deal of pains to teach poor slaves to read; but she isn't so, nor any of massa's family, if he is a minister. He don't care any more about us than he does about his horses. You musn't wait for any of them; but there's Sam Tyler down to Massa Pond's, he can read, and if you can get him to show you some, without letting massa know it, that'll help you, and then you must try by yourself as hard as you can."

Thus did the poor slave mother talk with her child, trying to implant in his heart an early love for knowledge.

But the time soon came when Nancy was well enough to go back to her cruel servitude. This visit had proved a great good to little Lewis. The entire spirit of his thoughts was changed. He was still very often silent and thoughtful, but he was seldom sad. He had a fixed purpose within, which was helping him to work out his destiny.

His first effort was to see Sam Tyler. This old man was a very intelligent mulatto belonging to Mr. Pond. For some great service formerly rendered to his master, he was allowed to have his cabin, and quite a large patch of ground, separated from the other negroes, and all his time to himself, except ten hours a day for his master. His master had also given him a pass, with which he could go and come on business, and the very feeling that he was trusted kept him from using it to run away with.

Mr. Pond was very kind to all his servants, as he called them, and a more cheerful group could not be found in the state. It would have been well if the Rev. Robert Stamford and many of his congregation had imitated Mr. Pond in this respect, for his servants worked more faithfully, and were more trustworthy than any others in the vicinity. There was one thing more that he should have done; he should have made out free papers for them, and let them go when they pleased.

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