



A NARRATIVE OF EVENTS OF THE
LIFE OF J.H. BANKS, AN ESCAPED
SLAVE, FROM THE COTTON STATE,
ALABAMA, IN AMERICA

Jourden H. Banks

*I AM A WITNESS AGAINST AMERICAN SLAVERY AND ALL ITS
HORRORS.*

**A NARRATIVE OF EVENTS
OF THE
LIFE OF J. H. BANKS, AN ESCAPED SLAVE,
FROM THE COTTON STATE, ALABAMA, IN AMERICA.**

***"And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give
thee rest, from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from hard bondage
wherein thou wast made to serve."--ISAIAH XIV. 3.***

*WRITTEN, WITH INTRODUCTION,
BY*

**J. W. C. PENNINGTON, D.D.,
AUTHOR OF "A TEXT BOOK OF THE HISTORY OF THE COLOURED
RACE;"
"THE FUGITIVE BLACKSMITH;"
"A LECTURE UPON THE DESTINY OF THE COLOURED RACE IN
THE UNITED STATES," &c.**

PRICE, ONE SHILLING.

LIVERPOOL:
M. ROURKE, PRINTER, SOUTH JOHN STREET,
1861.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH.--PARENTAGE.--BOYHOOD.

As many of my escaped brethren have already written and published accounts of their lives in slavery, it may seem needless for me to do the same. Some may suppose that those which have appeared, such as Douglas's, Brown's, and Asher's, should suffice to tell the story of all. But it must be remembered that each escaped slave has something in his own history and experience which makes his testimony important, aside from others. One has had a harder bondage than another to escape from, and has had a longer and more difficult road to travel, more battles to fight in order to get through, and, in this respect, I feel that I may crave a hearing, in order to show that I have something to state which is of interest.

I was born in Rockingham County, Virginia, January 3rd, 1833. My mother, Mary Francis, was born in Henrico, Virginia. My father, commonly called NOVEL, was born in Rockingham County, Virginia. My mother and father belonged at the time of my birth to Charles L. Yancey. The said Yancey has deceased about five years since, but they still remain with his widow.

Yancey had on his estate, in all, about thirty slaves. A large number of those were the offspring of my mother and father, who raised sixteen children. He had about 400 acres of land, and raised the crops usual in Western Virginia, such as wheat, corn, rye, hemp, tobacco, flax, &c.

My first impressions of my condition as a slave were very unpleasant. They commenced when I was quite young. My master had a son of the name of Alexander, who was about one year older than myself, and he was able to whip me, which he did frequently, until I was about five years old, when I grew too strong for him, and began to pay him up for old scores. So whenever I whipped him he would go and complain to his father. One day after our fight, he went and complained to his father, who sent him to call me to him. I went, when the following conversation took place:--

Master.--"What did you strike your Master Alexander for?"-- Ans. "He struck me first."--Ques. "Dont you know better than to strike your Master Alexander, if he did strike first?" --Ans. "I dont know any better way to stop him from striking me, than to strike him again." He said, "Well, I will tell you how to stop him when he strikes you, let your hands fall, and say, please Master Alexander, do not do it any more. Do you think you can recollect that?"--Ans. "Yes, sir."

He then ordered Alexander to strike me on the cheek. He did so. But it raised my temper so high that I forgot in a moment, what he had told me to do, and, as usual with me, I said, "Boy, dont do that again!" My master asked me, "Is that what I told you to say?" --Ans.--"No, sir,"--Said he, "Well, come here, and I will learn you." So he gave me three or four severe slaps on the side of my cheek, and told his son again to do the same. I said, "Please Master Alexander, dont do it any more?" And he did not strike me again at that time.

In the meantime, I made up my mind to pay him off, when we should be to ourselves. Accordingly some time afterwards, he attempted to carry out his father's plan of striking me, expecting that I would do as he told me, let my hand fall, and say, "Please Master Alexander, dont do it any more?" But I punished him for his

attempt, and as I owed him some on the old score, I gave him a few more blows to make it up. He said to me, "I will tell my father, and have you whipped again." --Ans. "I do not care, I will not be whipped by both of you; it is enough for him to whip me." He did tell his father, who tried the same thing over as before, with the hope of cowing me down. He slapped me most severely, and made Alexander repeat it. And then he asked me, "Will you do so again?" To keep from being punished, I promised I would not. I told my father all about the matter, and he told me not to take a blow from Alexander, for the more I did take, the more I would have to take. The reader will here see what was the spirit of my father, and, having imbibed it, and being thus instructed, of course, it was more natural for me to obey my own father than to obey Alexander's father. So I carried out my father's plan, and punished Alexander more and more severely each time he attacked me. My master thus finding that I would not allow Alexander to whip me when he pleased, took and adopted the plan of sending him to school, and me he sent to watch the corn field, to keep the crows away. At this time, being about seven years of age, I began to feel very keenly the hardness of my treatment as a little slave. At my age, a boy would be likely, when alone, to need some amusement, or would suffer more or less from hunger and thirst, and might become weary and sleepy; but any thing that should draw off my attention from the corn field would give the crows a chance at the corn, and, of course, would expose me to blame and punishment. And so the dreary days my boyhood began in the field. I felt the effects of being thus confined; the livelong days I was constantly in dread of letting a crow light in any part of the field.

These birds are cunning, and swift on the wing; and when hungry they are determined, if possible, to find some corner or part where they can get down

among the tender corn; often it is so that it requires the report of a gun, once in awhile, to alarm them. It is easy therefore to see what a task it would be for a lone lad of my age to run from one part to another of such large fields as they have in that country to keep off these stealthy birds. In spite of my utmost vigilance it so happened that crows would get into the corn, and whenever such was the case, master would be for punishing me, for what he regarded as a neglect of my duty, in not keeping them away. It was thus I was punished for what I did to the boy Alexander. I had to attend to this duty of watching the corn during the season of its tender growth.

After this, I was handed over to the mistress to attend about the house.

Here, again, I found my lot a hard one, very. The most unkind treatment she could give me was too good. She seemed to be bent on avenging herself upon me on account of her son. I was indeed much more unhappy than when in the corn field, for there being alone I had no one to be constantly dogging me.

*My mistress was a very cruel woman; she was in the frequent habit of punishing all the young ones she had about the house; she would also flog such of the women as would submit, and allow her so to do. It was my lot to be overtaken, and to be driven beyond my strength, and to be **harrassed** with the fear of being complained of to master. I laboured under those disadvantages about ten months, when I resolved that I would rather be in the field than be under such tyranny.*

It is generally supposed at the North that house servants fare better than field hands, and although this may be generally the case, so far as regards food and clothing, yet there are exceptions. Sometimes house servants are put out on the field as a punishment, but this is almost always for the crime of being too high-spirited. They are then put out to mortify, or break them in; this I knew, and I made up my mind that in

order to get out of the hands of such a woman as my mistress, I would take my chance in the field, as I was not afraid of work. I changed my course. I had formerly been very particular to do all my work about the house in the neatest manner, and promptly, sweeping, dusting, cleaning knives and forks, and such like, were all done in the best way. But I found that the woman had no disposition to be pleased; so I became careless and negligent about my work, simply with the view to get them to put me out on the field. By this time also, I had now grown to be a good size for a farm boy, so that my master was quite inclined to exchange me for a smaller boy to be in the house. This I found by his manner, at times when my mistress would complain to him of me, as she frequently did. At this time, therefore, I was taken and placed on the field, to the great joy of my heart, and satisfaction of my mind, that I had got out of an unpleasant situation.

Now, it is well known that many who go South, come back with reports that they have seen the slaves so well dressed about the houses of their masters and mistresses. But let it be remembered, that those very slaves may have the most hateful tempered mistresses, who have it in their power to make their lives more miserable than the lives of field hands; and besides, those fine appearances of house slaves are often put on just for the present while company is in the house. Thus I took leave of the house service as a slave, as I never was afterwards placed in that service.

It will be noticed, that although there was only about one year's difference between my age and that of Master Alexander's, when we parted from our play or fighting ground, I was sent to a very different school from that to which he was sent; he was sent to his books, but I was sent to watch and scare the crows.

And this was the case with poor slave children generally. In the part of Virginia where I was born, there was no such thing known as a school for slave children.

No Sabbath school--no means or provisions made by the owners for teaching their slaves to read and write. On the other hand, they are opposed to having them learn. Any friendly white person who should be found teaching a slave to read or write, would be punished for it by a fine of 500 dollars or £100. In some cases, coloured persons manage to steal a little education, and teach others by night, but even that is a crime.

The slaveholders in the part where I was born make no arrangements for the religious instruction of their slaves. In the country the places of worship are very few and far between. In those houses of worship or chapels, which have galleries in them, the slaves can sometimes occupy them when there is room; but if there are whites enough to fill them, then the slaves have to stand outside.

In those cases where the slaveholders themselves are even connected with churches as members, they never concern themselves about slaves going to attend upon divine service. They build them no chapels, and they hire no seats for them in any. They leave them outside as heathens. And, about the large towns and cities, if the slaves go to worship with their free coloured brethren, as they sometimes do, there is a white man to be present and listen, so that nothing shall be preached but a slaveholder's doctrine; and any one may judge what that is. As the handle of a jug is only on one side, so the slaveholder's gospel is all on his own side. It begins with Abraham, and comes down to Paul. Abraham had slaves, and that gives him the right to have them. Paul told slaves to be obedient to their masters, and hence their slaves must be obedient. Paul sent Onesimus back to his master, and therefore it is very wicked for their slaves to run away. And hence all those at the North who will join and help to catch and send them back were regarded as friends to the South, and those who would not were regarded as enemies, and abused as abolitionists.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH.--LIFE ON THE FARM.--CHANGE OF OVERSEER, ETC.-- BREAKING UP OF OUR FAMILY, ETC.

As soon as I went on the farm, being about eight years of age, I was put to the plough. I found a difference in both the quality and quantity of the food I received on the farm, compared to that I had received in the house; yet still I was much better pleased with the coarse food and smaller quantity, with the relief, than I was with the superior house food, and the tyranny I was under withal.

At this time I should state that we had no overseer on our farm. My father was the head man on the farm, and this was one reason why I was pleased with my prospect of happiness in farm life.

But I was destined to be much disappointed in my fortune in this respect. All things went on well for about a year. My father had the confidence of the men, and managed them well by kind treatment: they worked well after him, and the farm went on to as good advantage as could be expected. My master took it in his mind that he had not land enough. He bought 150 acres of land. On this farm was an orchard and a distillery. He became much addicted to drink, and intemperate in his habits, so that he was much more difficult to please. He would generally spend his time at the distillery on the new farm, and when after being away through the day, he would come home at evening, and find much fault, saying that nothing had been done. This went on till at last he determined to get an overseer.

Now, the overseer system is one of the evils of slavery. The slaves dread overseers, because they are generally cruel, and hard-hearted men, who only aim to gain a name with the master, by driving the slaves so as to force a crop. Many of these men too are from the North, and seem to feel that they must show their zeal by being strict and severe with the slaves. They are like a man who has charge of a fine team of horses, but has no qualification as a driver, but to handle the whip. These two evils then come upon the farm hands almost together.

I need not tell my readers here that a drunken master is a curse to a slave, as well as a drunken husband is to a wife; but a drunken master is a sevenfold greater curse to a slave than a drunken husband can be to a wife, since he has the power of life, liberty, work, food, and clothing, without any remedy at law.

*No vice, therefore, that slaveholders has, involves a slave in more evil than drunkenness. I have ever since a deep **abhorrence** of the habit of drunkenness. If I see a man who is fond of drink, I make my mind up to have as little to do with him as possible. The overseers as a class are the most despised men of the South; the masters employ them for the mere purpose of watching and driving the slave; they do not respect them nor regard them as associates in any way; they will discharge them as quickly as they sell a slave for causes of displeasure; and, on the other hand, the slave feels a contempt for the overseer as "poor white trash," who would be somebody if he could.*

I have already stated that all went on well while my father was simply the leader of the hands. Every one aimed to do his duty. The very fact, therefore, that an overseer was introduced over us for the first time, was very disagreeable to us all. The overseer was not a bad man, but he was in a position where he had to drive all up. We had had a leader, but no driver. As to flogging, he did not attempt to strike any of the men;

but there were several young females on the farm, besides boys, and these he was severe upon, which goes to show the effect that slavery has upon some men, who are not so badly disposed. The overseer is under the eye of the master, and in turn he has under his eye the slaves; and it often happens that when he does not strike the men he storms and blusters at the females and boys, and seeks to drive others in that way. But is it not an evil to abuse the weaker party in order to use the stronger?

*At this rate things went on, and did not improve, but rather grew worse. My master soon found that he did not realise his object in the employment of overseers; his profits did not come up to his expectations; he sadly complained that it was the fault of the overseers, and he changed one after another; but every change seemed only for the worse. His **embarrassments** increased, and it soon became evident that, although he had the name of being a wealthy slaveowner, he was a poorer man, so far as money was concerned, than when he owned but three slaves, and worked side by side with him in the field. His habits of intemperance strengthened on him. He became more and more peevish and fretful. Here we slaves were called to share the evil effects of his intemperance and improvidence. We could see whither matters were tending. Sadness brooded over our prospects. We had seen around us large estates broken up, and slaves sold for debt, &c. Reasoning in this way, we could see in the near future the breaking up of our own circle, and the scattering of families.*

There is a great moral here in regard to slavery. Men who suppose that slavery enriches slaveholders are greatly mistaken. Stolen goods never permanently enrich the thief, inasmuch, as he is liable to lose fourfold the amount which he steals. Besides, he that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity,--so says

the Word of God. If a man takes my life, he forfeits his own. If he takes my fortune, he endangers his own. If he takes my liberty, he endangers his own. This is the law of consequences ordained of God, and firmly incorporated into his moral system; and, of all other men, the slaveholder and his children feel the effects of of this law.

Under these circumstances, master, in the space of between two and three years had no less than four different overseers. After this, he again changed his mind, and gave up employing overseers altogether, saying that it did not pay, and also became convinced that he did not get as much work done with the aid of salaried white men as he did under the leadership of my father.

But still his fortune had so far decayed that he felt necessary to resort to another plan to save himself; and, reader, what do you think that plan was? Having thus given up employing overseers, he acted as his own boss, and, whenever he found himself in pressing need of cash, he would sell off a slave. He turned off his last overseer in the spring, and in the next fall, he sold two of his slaves; one was my sister Charlotte, whom I loved most dearly. Reader, you may judge how I felt to see my sister leave me well and hearty, and to think I should never see her again!

My dear mother and father witnessed the same, and were most deeply moved at the sight. My mother, indeed, seemed to show all the symptoms of a distracted mind and a broken heart. And, what wonder--to see a beloved daughter separated from her embraces in her declining years, was almost too much for her reason, This sister was about nineteen years of age. She was one year older than myself. She was sold to the far South, and for no crime. We never heard from her, and cannot tell whether she is dead or alive, or if dead, where her bones lie.

My father did not say much in this trial, but he

laboured under great distress. My master could see in his daily deportment that he was greatly troubled. So one day, he asked my father, what was the matter with him? He said--"I do not see any use in telling you what you know as well as I do myself." "Novel," said master, "is that the way to answer me?" "How am I to know your feelings?" Ans.-- "Why, master, if I should see one of your daughters sold away from you, and you did not ever expect to see her again in this life, I could give a pretty close guess how you felt; and now, if you can just place yourself in my stead, and think how you would feel at a separation such as I had to endure, and then my other children weeping around me, you can tell what the matter is with me." Ans.-- "Well, Novel," said he, "it is distressing, I have no doubt, but you know my situation. I owe some debts; they have got to be paid, and I cannot raise the money off the farm, and if I do not sell some of you, the sheriff will sell you for me." Ans.--"If you had the money you paid overseers to abuse your people, you would not have owed these debts. I knew sometime ago that you would find out your mistake when it was too late." Master--"I have been losing ever since I employed the overseers: I have been falling back every year."

At this my father went on to remind him how **faithfull** he had been to him all his days; how he had laboured for his benefit, and then to think that he would take his children and sell them before his face, was enough to break a heart of stone! Master--"Very true, you have been a faithful servant; but if I have to sell, and must sell, I have to sell to the best advantage." My sister, being therefore one of the most valuable, and bringing the heaviest price, she and another friend had to go first, this was what he meant. My father replied--"If you are going to be selling off my children, one after another in this way, I rather you would sell me at once, for I do not wish to witness the selling

of my children." My master said to him--"You and I have been raised together, and therefore, I do not wish to part with you, unless you do some heavy fault." My father answered him to this effect--"If you have no more regard for my children than to sell them off, I do not believe you have much regard for me. If I were now a young man, and more valuable on that account, and, like my daughter Charlotte, would bring a heavy price, I believe you would sell me as quickly as you would any of them, for you have just told me that you 'must sell to the best advantage,'--so I see it is not my advantage you are seeking, nor that of my family, but your own. It is of very little consolation to me that you now profess to feel such an attachment to me on account of our having been brought up together--that you are unwilling to sell me unless I commit some crime, when you take my children whom I have brought up, and who have committed no crime, and sell them from me; and, besides, as you have never known me to commit a crime, light or heavy, it is still a poorer consolation to tell me that you do not wish to sell me, where I cannot witness the selling of my children, unless I commit some heavy crime! Do you wish to tempt me to commit some crime?" This was a puzzler for master to answer.

*The reader will understand, and be fully assured, that I witnessed all that I have just stated--that it is all true to the very letter; for at this period of the history of our family, and that of master, not a daily **occurrence** passed without the most strict and painful notice of us all, as we were fully aware that we were passing through a crisis.*

The telegraph, which by the speed of lightning carries news from one end of this land to another, does not more certainly report news than the slaves do one to another. And, in our families, when one member suffers, all suffer with that member. So it was with us. All eyes were at first turned to that beloved sister,

who was bound in chains, and led away South. Then our mother's deep and painful grief; and then our father's silent, manly, but solemn sorrow, which commanded even the attention of the heartless wretch, who for gain had pocketed the proceeds of his daughter. Alas! what shall be said of American slavery, in the face of such facts as these?

And now to continue what passed between master and father.

Master said--"I do not see that there is any use in making any apologies to you, for you will not give in to what is right."

My father answered him by saying--"Sir, if you can show and convince me that anything I have said is wrong or unjust, I shall be willing to give in; but I believe that I have spoken just as you would have spoken if you were in my situation and I were in yours, and if you were pleading with me in behalf of your daughter."

It will be seen here, that my master was not speaking to my father on account of the sympathy he felt for him, but to quiet him for the time.

My master then seemed to be evidently displeased with what my father said to him, and broke off by saying--"Well, if you will not be pacified, you can talk as you please, and I will do as I like; and I can tell you that more of your children will be sold before you are aware of it, so that your talking will not save them from being sold."

My father answered him and said--"You will not be able to sell them before I am aware of it, for I am fully aware that the state of things is such that my own children, or some others, will be sold soon. You have said to me that you have debts which must be paid, and that you cannot raise the money off the farm, which means you cannot raise the money to pay your debts without selling slaves; and, when you speak of selling them to the best advantage, you must mean to

sell the most valuable first, or the young. It is useless for you to attempt to blind me about that." My master then came out plainly and said--"Yes, I will sell them, that I think will pay best." I then felt so strongly that I took up the question and continued to reply to him. I said--"Master, I think I will pay as well as any of your slaves, and, when you sell the next parcel I wish to be in the midst of them." He replied to me by saying--"You are about nineteen years of age, and the most valuable man I have on the farm, I cannot spare you, but I have more young women than I need. I must sell some of them." I said to him--[""]I do not doubt that you consider me the most valuable man you have, and that you would find it difficult to do without me; but, if you mean to sell my sisters and other friends and will not sell me, I shall leave you, for I do not mean to witness it."

My master said to me--"Ah! you will leave me, eh?"

My answer was--"Yes, sir, I will."

My master asked--"Where will you go to?"

My answer was--"I will go and live in the woods, if I cannot get any other place, before I will live in such trouble."

He said--"Well, you had better try that awhile, and see how you will like it."

Seeing that he seemed to think I could not get along without him, I said to him-- "Master, you have had a number of your men run away from you, and go into the woods, to be gone awhile, and when they became hungry and thirsty, they have come home, and have been whipped; but I can tell you, master, that if ever I move my foot off your farm, with the intention of running away, I shall never come back of my own accord, nor will I ever be brought back unless I am overpowered."

This answer seemed to have deep effect upon his mind, and he evidently reflected upon it a few moments.

My master then asked me--"Why do you wish to run away from me? I have always treated you well. You and your father are the only two men on the farm whom I have never whipped with the cowhide. Have I ever crossed you with the cowhide? If I have, tell me?"

I said to him--"I do say, that you never gave me, what is called a whipping with the cowhide since I have been a field hand, because I have always aimed to do my work, so that no fault could be found with me; but I remember you giving me a severe spanking on account of Master Alexander, because I would not let him impose upon me."

He then asked me--"If I did not know that I was bound to be under Master Alexander?" I told him--"I supposed that when we became of age I would have to be; but while children, I did think that one should not be allowed to impose upon another, for if they got in the habit of it, they would grow up in the same, and lead to worse consequences."

*He said--"Well, if I have not whipped you since that, and, I have thought a great deal of you, and **dont** want to sell you, I do not see why you should wish to give me trouble by running away from me."*

I said to him--"If you do not wish to have me give you trouble by running away from you, the only way you can prevent it is either to sell me, or stop selling any more of my sisters and friends."

He then came to the conclusion, that my father had spoiled me, by talking to me and making me believe that I was treated badly. This is very common in such cases. A slave mother or father is expected to impress upon their children the necessity of strict servility to the master, mistress, and their children, no matter what their suffering may be, otherwise they are blamed for any spirit or desire manifested by their children for relief.

I told him, however, that the blame need not be laid

on my father, but my own judgment, feeling, and observation convinced me that I had been treated wrongfully. I told him, moreover, that I did not need any one to tell me when I was treated badly; and, also, that I was old enough to speak for myself in regard to the matter. At this he became enraged, and said--"Then I shall not attempt to please any of you, but I will put you all in my pocket, where you will be no further trouble to me; this is what I ought to have done many days ago."

I said to him--"Even that, master, would be a relief. Let us all go at the same time, and those of us who do not go together will have the consolation of knowing that they will not again witness the selling of the others." That he did not like; but he did not seem disposed to pursue the conversation any further, for, with a significant shake of the head he walked away.

The reader has the termination of this protracted conversation between my father, master, and myself. Each party expressed himself with freedom and boldness, and separated, though not satisfied, yet better acquainted than before. Master, now knew that he had a man and his son who would speak of their wrongs, and we knew that we had nothing better to look for at his hands.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF FAMILY EVENTS.--THE SELLING OF MY SECOND SISTER, ETC.

AFTER what I have stated in the last chapter matters went on for about eight months quite well: with the exception of the recollection of my sister Charlotte, who had been sold away, nothing occurred to make any unpleasant impression upon us, and we began to think that our family would not again be invaded by the barbarous "soul driver," or the "Georgia man."

But while we were indulging in this hope the thing I much dreaded came upon me. I had a sister, named Martha, then about seventeen ears of age. As my sister Charlotte was next older than myself, so Martha was next younger. I loved my sister Charlotte, but Martha seemed still more dear to me, and hence I felt more severely her loss. And then, too, the disappointment! We were hoping for a change. But, above all, the mean way in which the thing was done by master. The parents of the other two girls both belonged to him. So he went to those parents and attempted to pacify them by telling them that he would get good places for their daughters where they could write and hear from them. He also came to my father and me and told us that he would get a good place for my sister, in Gardenville, a place on the Richmond, about sixty miles distant from us, so that when I went to Richmond, as I did once a year, to drive cattle to market, I could see her. This looked very plausible; but we doubted

it. However, there was no help. My dear sister Martha, and two other young female friends were taken away from us; not by death--not by the officer who punishes for crime, which they had not committed--but by the very man who told my father eight months prior that he would do as he liked, and sell to the best advantage. This was keeping his promise with a vengeance; so we felt it to be at the time, and so I feel at this moment.

Hitherto, I had been made to feel sad by a sense of my wrongs and oppression. I often dwelt upon the subject of my condition, until reason almost seemed to be lost in the reveries of the past, and the gloomy prospects of the future. But at this time my indignation was stirred to the deepest depth; my master often assuring me that he would get my sister a place in Gardenville, where I could see her once a year. He went with my sister and the other two girls, and after being gone about ten or twelve days, he came home and told me that he had sold my sister Martha to a man in Gardenville. He told me the name of the man, and the street he lived in; but I did not believe him, and, therefore, I determined to take the first chance to find out the truth about the case.

I knew a white man of the name of Kyte,--a friendly man, who was acquainted with our family and my master and all his slaves, and, of course, would know the girls that were sold by my master. He was also acquainted in Gardenville. As my friend Mr. Kyte was going to Gardenville, I asked him to make inquiries about my sister Martha, and whether she was in the place. On his return he informed me that my sister was not in Gardenville; that master had sold her to a man in that place who is a nigger trader, and who took her to Richmond and sold her to the highest bidder on the auction block; and said your master knew at the time he sold her that the man did not mean to retain her.

As soon after this as I got a chance, I said to him--"I know that my sister is not in Gardenville." He said--"Who told you so?" I told him--"Mr. Kyte told me so." He asked me--"Has he been to Gardenville?" I said--"Yes, sir." He asked me--"Did he go to the house of the man I sold her to?" I said--"He did; and he was told my sister had been sent to Richmond and sold." He said--"Well, Maherden told me he bought all the girls for his own house service."

*This Maherden was a notorious man as a negro trader, who kept a tavern for the accommodation of those of his class, and also what is called a trailer's gaol, for the purpose of securing their slaves while on their way to the Richmond market. He had no farm to work, and therefore had no need of any number of slaves for his own use. These facts put together satisfied me that what master said about Maherden purchasing my sister and the other two girls for his own domestic service was false. Hence I felt indignant at the thought that the man should add insult to injury. He had inflicted an irreparable injury upon me by selling first my sister Charlotte and then my only remaining and dearly beloved sister Martha. He did it all for his own gain and for his own advantage. He did it without regard to my known and expressed feelings; he did it with the full knowledge that it would be like sending a dagger to my heart; he did it knowing that my aged parents would feel the shock. This was injury enough surely? Why then add insult to injury, by telling a bare-faced lie? A useless, mean, unmanly lie, which he must have known would come to light. If a poor coloured man, under some powerful temptation, deviates from the truth it is put down as an evidence of the moral inferiority of the race, and no excuse is admitted in extenuation, But **Southren** white men may tell lies for the accommodation of their own pockets, and yet it is all well. The slave is his property, and he may deceive him as he*

likes; there is no law to punish him for defrauding or perjuring himself to his slave.

Will the Christian merchants of the world continue to uphold such a system through the medium of the cotton, sugar, or rice trade?

Some time after the last conversation related between master and myself, I met him and Mr. Kyte in company, and being, as I said, not satisfied that his statement was true, and wishing to prove to him what Mr. Kyte had told me, I took courage, though I knew at some hazard, and asked Mr. Kyte, in my master's presence, about the matter. I said--"Mr. Kyte, did you not tell me that my sister Martha was not in Gardenville?" Mr. Kyte said--"I did; I was in Maherden's house and he told me that he bought her, but had sold her in Richmond the next day." At this my master seemed much enraged, and ordered me off to my work, with the threat that he would have us all in Richmond before a great while.

Reader, you may form your own opinion how I felt at that moment. I shall not attempt to describe my feelings further than to say that this occurrence opened to me a new and astounding view of the man's character. Driven from one after another of his false pretences, when finding that I proved the like upon him, he comes out plainly as a tyrant, and, instead of acting the man by making some reparation, he stamps his foot and orders me away.

How was it possible for me to respect or even to fear such a being--I will not say man; but a being in the shape of a man? I could not--I could only despise him; and though I was in his power, yet I could not fear him; I should have felt my manhood degraded.

The history of Charles L. Yancey's career as a slaveholder is quite worthy of note, as going to show the working of the system in Virginia. By degrees his lands failed, because he did not cultivate with care. As the lands thus failed, he took to trading in the increase

*of his slaves. He did not buy slaves; but having six families of slaves, or six men and their wives, he sold their children as they grew old enough to bring the desired prices in the Southern market. In this way he made out and held his lands to keep his own family. But it cannot be said that he prospered; for there was no evidence of thrift about any of his affairs; but on the contrary there were increasing signs of decay. The neglected acres of land showed these signs. The unrepared building showed these signs; and in short the whole aspect of things gave proof that there was no real prosperity. The wealth of slaveholders is thus shown to be of a very uncertain character. They force their lands till they refuse to yield, because not properly supplied with nutriments, and then they seek to convert into **merchandise** the labourers who would cultivate the lands; thus there is a violent separation of the two great producing elements. Had Charles L. Yancey treated both his lands and his labourers differently, he might have enjoyed a better fortune. But it will be seen hereafter that he reaped the bitter fruits of his own folly.*

CHAPTER IV.

INCREASING TROUBLES AMONG US.--GENERAL FEELING OF UNEASINESS ON THE PLANTATION.--THE BRUTAL BEATING OF MY MOTHER BY MASTER.--HIS SICKNESS AND DEATH.

AT this time matters on the farm had reached a most deplorable state as regarded the mutual feeling of disaffection between master, his family, and all his slaves.

The selling of the girls had the effect to create a deep feeling of melancholy among all the slaves; we felt that we were all involved in the same dangers and miseries, and that not one of us was exempt from their fate.

Yancey was aware of this, and tried to dissipate it by being more exacting and positive in his manner. He saw that every one wore a gloomy countenance, that betokened sadness or heart; and he made use of harsh language in giving orders. He complained that we were sullen; and he used every effort to drive us up to the mark. But there was no moving motive; and the more he scolded the slower we acted; for we got so that we did not care whether we did our work to please him or not. We had all been faithful; for though never contented with our condition as slaves, yet we made a point to do our tasks faithfully, as a matter of slavish pride. We considered it disgraceful to be driven. But Yancey having utterly failed to reciprocate our faithfulness, we felt that we were absolved from all obligations to yield cheerful and ready obedience to him.

This universal disaffection among us was the subject

of remark in his own family; and they very naturally sympathized with him in his stringent measures to subdue us.

I had another trying scene to witness after this. My mother was master's cook, and had been for years.

It was usual to have a butchering every year of the hogs that were raised on the farm. This year we had some fifty hogs to kill. The killing would commence about twelve o'clock at night, so as to get all done before sunrise in the morning, and to have the pork properly cooled and taken in by night. All the women were required to assist to strip the fat off the entrails as fast as they were taken out, my mother with the rest. About five o'clock in the morning, after being thus engaged, as I have said, from twelve o'clock, she went into the kitchen to attend to the duty of getting master's breakfast ready. But while engaged in kindling up the fire the mistress came out, and commenced by finding fault with her for not having breakfast earlier. My mother told her that she had been engaged in the hog killing yard since twelve o'clock, and that she had on former occasions continued till about the same time, and it would be nothing amiss on this occasion.

Her mistress charged her that it was a plan among us to neglect every thing, and make all the trouble we could, and still continued to censure my mother in the severest terms.

"Well, ["] said mother, "mistress, it is hard for me to please you, do what I may." "Who are you jawing at?" said her mistress. My mother said-- "I am not jawing you, mistress; I have only said I could not please you."

She then drove my mother out of the kitchen, and ordered her back to the hog killing yard; and after calling another woman to come and get the breakfast ready, she went out to the gate entering the yard, and called to master who was in the yard, and told him to give my mother a good cowhiding; that she had given

her the greatest jawing that a nigger ever gave to a white person.

Yancey hearing this, and being at the time quite under the influence of liquor, was prepared to obey his wife; and being governed by strong liquor and a bad tempered woman, what was my poor mother to expect at his hands?

Having a walking stick in his hand, he demanded of her to know what she had been jawing her mistress for. My mother attempted to explain that she only spoke to her respectfully. But not satisfied he aimed a blow at her person, which mother trying to fend off, caught the blow on her arm, which brought the arm powerless to her side. He continued the brutal assault by another blow, which he levelled at her defenceless head. This took effect and brought her to her knees. In this helpless state, she in a most piteous manner implored him to spare her further beating. But there was no abatement of the rage of the barbarous drunken wretch. He continued to ply the stick till my mother was completely prostrate upon the ground, and unable either to resist or to speak.

My father being a short distance off, and seeing what was passing, left off dressing the hog he was engaged upon, and came to rescue his wife from the merciless human hog.

This, of course, was offensive, and his master ordered him back to his work, with a threat that if he did not go at once he would get the cane also.

My father replied to him that he could not stand and see his wife knocked and beaten in that way, that he must help her up. He did so; and finding that she was seriously injured, he started to lead her away to her cabin. Yancey again interfered, and told my father to go to his work, or he would give him the same. My father said he did not care; he would rather take it himself than to see his wife beaten. He said to mother--"Go to your work." She told him that she

had no strength in her arm to do anything. He said it was nothing but deceit. She continued to assure him that she was disabled. He then stepped up and asked her where she was hurt, when on her arm he found a lump as large as a hen's egg, and also on her head several wounds which he inflicted with his stick.

Finding now that he had nearly killed her, he could do no other way than to allow my father to proceed with her to her cabin; which he did, and there she was confined from the effects of this barbarous beating for about six weeks before she recovered. There was nothing lacking now to fill up my cup of wretchedness and misery. My experience was perfectly terrible for one of my age. Many a man, fifty years old, had not seen and felt what I had before my twentieth year. I had seen my sisters sold away from me; my mother beaten in a shameful manner; and heard my father threatened with beating. Could there be anything more to add to the condition of woe, wretchedness, and misery, which is the lot of a slave?

Tell me not about the condition of the poor whites, in comparison with that of the slave. I have walked the streets of cities in America; I have sailed across the ocean in one of your emigrant steam-ships; I have walked the streets in this country, said to be teeming with sin, and I have seen sights and heard sounds that have surprised me. I have seen misery; I have heard complaints; but I have not seen or heard anything to compare with what I saw, heard, and felt on the plantation of Charles L Yancey, in Rockingham county, Virginia, in my early youth. I have not seen your daughters and sisters sold. I have not seen your mothers beaten with a walking cane by drunken men. I have not heard an affectionate husband threatened with a cowhiding for raising his stricken down wife from the ground. But all this I did witness on the plantation of Charles L. Yancey.

Immediately after the above distressing and disgraceful

occurrence, and even while my father had gone to conduct my dear, poor, beaten, wounded, and bleeding mother to her cabin, I went boldly to master, for I could not wait, and I asked him--"Master, what is the matter? and what is to become of us all? we cannot live in this way?" His answer was--"I **dont** want to hear any more jaw from any of you; I am master, and I will do as I please. Go to your work. I would rather be in hell than to be bothered with you as I am." Two or three days after this it was found that master began to linger about his house, and did not go out as usual. He gradually grew worse; and in a few days more a physician was called to attend him. Still he grew worse, until he was unable to leave his bed.

And now, reader, come to the sick and dying bedside of an impenitent slaveholder; or listen to me and I will tell you as a truthful man what I saw and heard in Charles L. Yancey's sick and dying room.

As he declined it became necessary for us slavemen to take our turns in watching with him at night. By day big lads performed the same duty. Being now numbered among the able-bodied men of the farm, I, of course, took my turn in watching by his sick bed.

I saw that he was a sick man, and that death was looking him in the face. I watched every symptom both of body and of mind to see how he was likely to end his days; and he seemed to be aware that I was watching his symptoms. At one time he would ask me--"How is your mother?" I said--"She is feeble." "What does your father think of my whipping your mother?" I said--"He thinks very hard of it." He said--"Well I never thought I would strike your mother in that way."

On another night when watching with him, he asked me--"If I would forgive him for selling my sisters?" I said to him--"I suppose I must forgive you." He said--"I know it was wrong; I regret I ever did sell them; and I shall make my will so that no more of you

shall be sold out of the family." "Well," said I, "that may be your will, but how long will it stand with your children?[""]

The last days of my master were truly mournful. He was not a member of any church. He sometimes attended the Methodist meetings; and about eight months after he was first taken sick, he sent me to call in the Methodist minister to see him. It was evident now he could not get well. But there did not seem to be any change in him for the better. Those who watched with him were charged with the duty of rousing him up every few minutes, as he was afraid of dying while asleep. He was constantly inclined to sleep. Slept with his eyes staring wide open. He had a pole or a stick by his bed, and whenever the watcher allowed him to sleep too long, he would as soon as he awoke up strike him with it. If the watcher retreated beyond the reach of his pole, he would threaten what he would do when he got well. After this he was constantly *dilirious*, and imagined often that he saw numbers of large dogs in his room, and would give orders for them to be driven out. In this way he ended his days on the 17th January, 1852. Such was his end. He died without being square with this world, or prepared for the next. And what impression his death left upon my mind, you, reader, may judge--knowing the man's life and deeds; his cruelties, injustice, and oppressions; and standing by his sick and dying bedside, night after night, hearing his words, and watching his decline. I saw him in life, and I saw in death; but he left me in chains. There was no "loosing the bond of wickedness"--no undoing "the heavy burdens"--no letting "the oppressed go free"--and no breaking "every yoke."

My master's will provided that my father and mother, and their two youngest children, together with other slaves and the old farm, should go to his widow; but all the other slaves were to be hired out till his debts were paid, and then to be divided among his children.

Between thirty and forty days therefore after master's death, the sale of one of his farms, and such of the stock and utensils as were not wanted took place, and the next day we were hired out until the 1st January, 1853, making some nine months from the time of the sale. Again we were hired out for a full year, or till the 1st of January, 1854, when Alexander the youngest child was of age and a permanent division of the slave property was made according to the will.

At this hiring, I was struck off to a Mr. Richard P. Fletcher, for the sum of 99 dollars and 25 cents for a year. I found Mr. F. to be a very fine man: I liked him much, and he was pleased with me. According to this arrangement we met at the old place on Christmas-day. Here we were allowed to keep our holiday. I having had so pleasant a place, was delighted to be able to relate to my parents and fellow-slaves how I had fared. Each one in turn did the same as their fortune had been.

On the day appointed for the sale, the appraiser proceeded to set us apart into five lots of equal value; and each name being written upon a card, the cards were placed in a hat, and each one of the children drew from the hat a card, and the names written on the card were theirs.

I shall now proceed to state how myself and the rest of our family were disposed of by this division.

Jourden, which was my name then, my sister Ellen, along with other slaves, came out of the hat on the card drawn by Mary Columbia, who had married Fountain Tollenber; my brothers Madison and Anderson, along with others, were drawn by Charles B. Yancey; my brother Thomas and sister Peggy, along with others, were drawn by Elizabeth, who married Wm. Hudson; my brother Thornton, and sisters Sarah and Elvinia, were drawn on Alexander Yancey's card; my brother Robert, and sisters Harriet and Eliza, came out on the card drawn by Ann Virginia, who married Thomas

Hansberger. My sister Hannah and brother Nathan remained by the will with mother and father, on the old place, to the widow. You have here a division of myself and thirteen brothers and sisters, making in all fourteen, and adding the two sisters who were sold, will be sixteen.

This division now being made seemed to give satisfaction to all. The children seemed pleased each with the lot of slaves, and the slaves all seemed pleased with their masters and mistresses, and there was a general anticipation that things would be pleasant.

We were all hired by our several owners, with the exception of those who belonged to William Hudson; he bought a farm, and worked it himself with slaves.

I was hired again to Mr. Fletcher, with whom I had lived the previous year, and with whom I was so well pleased, as I have already stated. Of the rest I have to say that some of them had good homes comparatively, and others had very bad homes. And, moreover, it was soon apparent that no regard would be paid to that part of Yancey's will which forbid the selling of any of us South. William Hudson led off. When the first payment became due on his farm, not having the money he sold one slave to raise it. The next was Tollerber, my owner. He kept a store in Magaggerville, Rockingham county, and used to go twice a year to Baltimore for goods, and failing to make his collections, he sold South my sister Ellen, to raise the funds he needed.

As soon as I heard of it I went to him, asked him whether it was true, and why he did it. He had, said he, sold her, and he did it because he needed money to get his supply; he had money standing out but could not collect it in in time for the season. I told him that he was taking the same track that my old master had, which made so much trouble in his day; but when he was on his sickbed he told me that he would have it in his will that no more should be sold, and that it seemed he

was not going according to the will. I told him, moreover, that as he had began I wanted him to sell me; I did not mean to live with him; that I wanted to get another owner; and that I would rather belong to a man that I could rely upon keeping me. He said--"He did not want to sell me; he thought he should go to farming before long, and then he should want me himself." I told him--"I supposed he did not want to sell me until he wanted the next supply of money, and then it would make very little difference to him who he sold." --"When I want the next supply of money," said he, "if I want to sell you I will let you know." I told him--"I wanted to live with some man upon whose word I can rely."--"Could you," said he, "not rely upon what I say?" I told him--"I could not"--"Why is it," said he, "that you cannot rely upon what I say?" Ans--"You promised me that you would fulfil old master's will; and you have not done it." "Circumstances," said he, "alter cases; and when I want money I must have it, even if I have a slave to sell to get it." I told him that I knew that would be the result in my case, I said to him--"You hire out now because you get more than the interest on the sum of money you can get for me; but whenever you want that in a lump you will sell me, that I am sure of; and therefore I want you to sell me now, and, if you will ask a reasonable price, I can get a master.[""] He then asked me if Mr. Fletcher wanted to buy me. I told him he would buy me at a reasonable price. He wished to know what Mr. F. would think a reasonable price. I said he thought about 1,000 dollars would be reasonable. He said--"Mr. F. will have to add 400 dollars to that before he can own you: I see the plan." And with this he intimated that Fletcher and I were acting together to get him to sell me, so that F. could buy me, but that he would not gratify either of us.

I gave him to understand that he could suit himself; but that if he did not embrace the present offer, he

would have to abide by the consequences. His reply was--"That is just what you will have to do--abide by the consequence." And he left me abruptly.

I was now fully aware that evil was determined. The tone in which Tollerber uttered the last words, and the air with which he left me, all indicated an evil intention; but I was not quite prepared to believe that they were the last words I should ever hear from him.

A few days after this he happened to be in Harrisburgh, where the courts are held. On court days slave traders are always in this town for the purpose of striking bargains with those who have slaves to sell; and, likewise, those who have slaves to sell are there on the look-out for traders. Every court day witnesses the sale of human beings in a clandestine way.

Tollerber met in Harrisburgh with a trader named Johnson, to whom he sold me. Fletcher was also in Harrisburgh that day; and although he was, as I have repeatedly said, a fine man, yet he must have been drawn into the plan that was fixed upon to overpower and get me tied, and to keep me ignorant of it, and to send me within their grasp.

It was on the 16th day of June, 1857, soon after I had gone to my work in the field, a message came to me from Fletcher to come to him. On going he ordered me take one of the horses to Weaver's smith-shop to be shod; and to go to Weaver's house and get three or four ears of seed corn. It struck me at once there was a conspiracy in operation, for it was unusual for Fletcher to send me upon such errands.

However, I went to do the errand. I had no other clothing than those I wore in the field, which consisted of shirt, pants, hat, and shoes[.]

When I got to the smith shop, I stated to Weaver my errand, and also stated that I was told to ask for the corn. He said--"Well, we will go down after a while and get it out of the crib.["] The meaning of the crib was to me most significant. It looked as if the object

was to get me into the crib and so confine me. But I had hardly a minute to think of this before in came Johnson, the trader, and Weaver's overseer, both of them able-bodied men. I had not a single breath to draw before the overseer seized me by the collar, and I only had time to ejaculate, "The plot is out," when Johnson, my new owner, seized me by the other side of my collar, and the two together began to pull me towards the shop door, as if they were leading a stubborn horse.

I asked them what they meant to do with me? Johnson said,--"Oh, come along; you are my meat now!" I said,--"I don't know you. I want to know something about the matter."--"Well (said Johnson) come along and I will let you know all about it."

By this time we had got outside the shop door, and I concluded to give them the slip anyhow. Johnson was about my size and the overseer was quite as stout, though not quite so tall. We were on the brink of a bank of the **Shanandoah** river. The ground was quite dusty in front of the shop, and the reader may be assured there were some very dusty doings there for a few minutes; so much so that it would have been difficult for you to have distinguished my white antagonists from myself. We stood up as long as we could and then we got down and rolled in the dust, which you know is made of the blacksmith's coal; and over and over we rolled until away we went down the hill into the river. The bully mastiffs when in deadly combat will let go if you throw a bucket of cold water upon them. So soon as we three got into the water we got apart. But still our sinful propensity to fight was not washed away. I stood waist deep in the water as full of fight as ever. I got the better of both Johnson, the trader, and Thomas, the overseer, by getting them separate. Whenever one of them came within my reach, I sent him plunging under water. This battle in the water raged at a most fearful rate for some time.

I had the full intention of drowning one or both of them, if I could not get away without doing so.

By degrees the battle turned on my side, for they being by this time aware of my determination, and pretty well exhausted by repeated duckings, retreated towards the shore again, as if they preferred to be on safer ground. Taking advantage of their retreat, I started to swim across the river, which was about 150 yards wide at that point. Here, however, new parties came into the action. Hitherto, Weaver himself had taken no part in the conflict; and, Bateman his blacksmith, whom I had once flogged, and who I knew would be glad to take a hand in it when called upon, had been looking on. Seeing from the banks that I had started for the opposite shore, Weaver and Bateman came in a reinforcement to Johnson and Thomas. There lay a small row boat at hand into which they quickly jumped, and taking a circuitous course headed me from the shore to which I was swimming[.] I had reason to believe that they had well armed the boat with sticks, so that I stood no chance of capsizing the boat before I should be overpowered. I could swim pretty well, but I could not expect to swim and fight two men in a boat; so I fell back towards the shore I had left; and here of course Johnson and Thomas awaited me. As I returned, therefore, here were Weaver and Bateman in the boat forcing up my rear, while the other two were in my front. By this time, what with fighting, rolling down the hill, and swimming, I had become much exhausted; and there being no chance for me to succeed, I surrendered as a prisoner to superior force. I gave them evidence that they had a man to deal with, and I determined now to see how they would treat a man as a prisoner.

The reader has now to contemplate me as a prisoner, taken captive by four violent men, who were still in great fear lest I should again give them battle. So

Johnson and Thomas, as before, each as soon as I stepped out of the water, seized me by the collar, while Weaver and Bateman stepping from the boat, each with a large club as much as he could wield, followed after, as the others dragged me. Had I been a mad man, or some wild animal, there could not have been a greater ado made over me. The excitement was intense; it extended as far as any one could be reached in the place.

CHAPTER V.

PROCEEDINGS AT THE CORN CRIB.--TALK WITH WEAVER.-- ATTEMPT OF JOHNSON TO MAKE ME TELL MY AGE.--JOURNEY TO RICHMOND, ETC.

AND now, reader, follow me to the crib, where I was to get the seed corn. Follow me: remember I do not go there to get the corn; but follow me, and I will show you a sight, even I myself was not prepared to see, but which only goes to show how rascally this plan was laid to rob myself and others of liberty.

On arriving at the crib, I found one of Weaver's own men, a slave, hand-cuffed and chained, and awaiting me to accompany him as a companion in chains. Ah, said I to myself the plot is now out. I am betrayed. I now know what Tollerber meant when he said I must abide by the consequences. And I said to Weaver that I now believed that the whole plan was arranged between himself, Fletcher, Johnson, Thomas, and Tollerber, to get me to the smith-shop so as to take me. "Yes," said he, "we know how to set traps for all such fellows as you be." I told him that the day was not far distant

when such trappers will be trapped. You may go on now, but your day will come. He said--"If you had belonged to me I would have sold you years ago." I asked him--"What would you have sold me for?" He said-- "Because you are a mean saucy nigger." I asked him--"Whom did you ever know me to sauce? or what bad act did you ever know me to commit?" He said--"I understand that you always speak what you think to your masters, and express your opinion about their management, which a nigger has no business to do.[""] I said to him that I always spoke with a view to obtain justice when I knew I was wronged. I never spoke with the intention of insulting any one; but I always spoke respectfully to obtain my rights, and in such a way as I thought no reasonable man could take offence. He said-- "Well, you will go now where you cannot do that." I said--"Well, if I cannot do that, I will do something else." He said--"Look at the condition you have put Mr. Johnson and Mr. Thomas, and even yourself in: your clothes torn to rags, and wet from head to foot; and your bodies all scarred and bruised up; and you might have been all drowned." I said--"I do not care for that; they had no right to come and seize me in the manner they did, without giving any notice, or informing me of the authority by which they acted." He said--"If you do not quit that way, you will have somebody to kill you yet." I told him-- "I do not care; I am flesh and blood as well as you; and I hate a coward's name."

By this time I was securely handcuffed and chained to my fellow-man, to whom I referred as finding him in the corn crib when I went there.

Johnson then spoke to me in the following terms--"I have bought and sold some hundreds of niggers but I have never had to deal with one so unruly as you are." I said--"That is the reason why you love the trade so well, and why you follow it: you can make your money without risk, not meeting with resistance

and trouble." He said--"If you give me another word of your jaw, I will give you fifty lashes well laid on." I told him he had me at his mercy, and he could do just as he thought proper.

I thought if his conscience would allow him to do such an act, I should not use any means to appease him. I knew too, I had this advantage, that as he was expecting to sell me at a premium, it would not be to his interest to take me to the auction block with a raw back.

He then asked--"Do you not fear me?" I said--"I do not fear you."--"Then," said he, "I will make you fear me." And at this he picked up a piece of a board, and told me that if I did not stop talking back to him he would take my life. I said--"I do not care; I have lost all the pleasures of life; I am now suffering the loss of all that makes a man desire life; I do not see that I have anything left to live for, and might as well be dead as alive; for if there is no better lot for me than this, I shall be a miserable man, and lead a most wretched life."

It was now about the hour he expected Tollerber, my master, to meet him there, as I found, according to the arrangement, to complete the sale. Tollerber lived about three miles distant from this scene of action, in a town called Magaggerville.

He then somewhat changed his tone, and said he liked to see a brave boy, &c. I knew that his object was now before he consummated the bargain with Tollerber to get certain information from me as to my age, and soundness of limb and body. So I said to him I did not pretend to be very brave, but I liked to tell a man what I thought. He asked me--"How old are you." I said-- "Tollerber can tell you."--"Are you sound and healthy," he asked. I said--"I have never had much sickness, but you had better ask Tollerber, he can tell you all about it; he could tell you every thing else, and how to fix plans to catch me; he can

tell." He even promised a new suit and money; but to no effect. He then concluded that I was a hard case.

I felt as if I should like to get a chance to speak to Tollerber, and I therefore said to him--"If you will get Tollerber to come here, what he cannot tell you, I will."--"I will," said he, "see Tollerber, and tell him to come and see you."

He went and soon returned, and said he had seen Tollerber; that he was engaged doing some writing, but that he would come directly. "And now," said he, "I want you to tell me before he comes, how old you are, and whether you are sound, so that I may know if he tells me the truth." "Oh," said I, "it will be time enough when he comes." But he insisted upon my telling him; and, finding that I still refused, he complained that I was sullen, and left, being obliged to finish his bargain without my testimony as to my age and soundness. I thought, so far as I was concerned, I had given pretty good evidence of my soundness of body and limbs in the little affair at the battle of the old *Shanandoah*, where he and Thomas and myself had those dusty and watery doings. After this, if he had any doubts about my soundness, I did not feel called upon to give him any other proof at present.

The bargain being thus closed with Tollerber for me at 1,200 dollars, myself and the other man were placed in a waggon, both being handcuffed, and then made fast to the waggon with strong ropes. In this way he started with us for Harrisburgh, a distance of twelve miles. Thomas went with him to help him to guard us. We arrived in Harrisburgh about noon, where we remained till five o'clock in the afternoon, waiting for the stage. In the meantime, Johnson brought into the room where we were locked up, another man, thus making our number three in all. I had many acquaintances and friends in this place, both white and coloured. They all expressed much surprise at seeing me on my

way to the Richmond auction block; and they felt much sympathy in my case. The fact of my being sold was as yet unknown to my parents and friends. I was glad to embrace this chance, to send my last farewell to them, and to request that they would remember me.

Leaving Harrisburgh, we proceeded by stage to Stanton, where we arrived at eleven o'clock at night, and lodged during that night, and also next day and night.

On the morning of the following day, we took the cars for Richmond. Arriving in Richmond between eleven and twelve o'clock, we were again lodged in gaol. I should have stated that at Stanton, Johnson added another victim to our number in the person of a young female, who appeared some seventeen or eighteen years of age. I have no knowledge where she was sold from; but her lonely and dejected appearance reminded me of my sisters.

MY FATE IN RICHMOND.--THE AUCTION BLOCK, ETC.

THIS gaol in which I was placed is called the Trader's Gaol. There is a tavern connected with it; or it is connected with a sort of hotel, for the accommodation of that class of persons.

In describing this gaol, I must ask the reader to notice that it is one of the most gloomy places I ever had been in before. It was a place having a wall some twelve feet high, enclosing a space of considerable extent as a yard where the slaves can walk around; adjoining are lock-up places where they sleep during the night.

This tavern was frequented by no travellers, no boarders, except those who were engaged in the nefarious slave trade. Even planters who come to the yard to purchase slaves do not stop there; but only come at

certain hours to pass into the yard, and look at the supply of slaves.

During the time I was there, I saw things I never wish to see again. This establishment was so constructed, I should think, as to hold some two or three hundred. There are no beds, or comfortable means of lodging either men, women, or children. They have to lie or sit by night on boards. The food is of the coarsest kind. Sales take place every day. And oh, the scenes I have witnessed! Husbands sold, and their wives and children left for another day's auction; or wives sold one way, and husbands and fathers another, at the same auction. The distresses I saw made a deep impression upon my mind, My attention was diverted from myself by sympathy with others.

I must here relate the case of a poor man, who was entrapped by his master. He was sent into town, I believe, with a load of wood, without the slightest knowledge that his master had any intention of selling him. When he got near the gaol, if I mistake not, as he was passing it, he was stopped, walked in, and sold to the traders. He left his family in the morning, expecting to be back at night. If his wife and children had all lain before him upon the cooling board, he could not have felt worse than he did. He had been completely deceived. I talked with him, and he told me that he had no knowledge of what his master had sold him for.

These traders are a class of men who are despised by all on account of the roughness of their manners and the coarseness of their feelings. The slaves say that they are men without conscience. When we say of a man that he has no conscience, he is characterised as classed with the lowest grade of humanity.

On the morning of the 19th of June those of us belonging to Johnson, consisting of three men and one woman, were brought out to the auction-block. I was asked by different planters if I would live with

them as a head man. To all whom I replied that I did not wish to act in that capacity. Then came to me S. S. M'Kalpin, and asked me if I would live with him if he bought me. I told him I did not know whether I would or not, as I did not know anything about him. I asked where he lived? He informed me that he lived in Green county, Alabama. He enquired of me if I ever ran away? I replied that I had not ran away from any master; yet I did not know what I might do if I could not do any better. He said that he did not wish to buy any one who would run away from him, and that none of his men had ever ran away from him. He did not ask me, as others had, whether I would be his head man. He asked me what work I could do? I told him, and further said that I would be willing to go with him if he treated me well.

When I was placed on the block he bid me up to 1484 dollars, when I was struck off to him. He also bought another of Johnson's men who was in company with me. The men were then taken to another gaol. where we remained till the 24th of the month. In the meantime he bought eight more slaves who made up his number. This said man had in the March previous bought twenty-eight slaves in the market[.] He had purchased a new farm, and had taken a contract to finish three miles of railroad, and his intention was to make use of us upon the road till it was finished, and afterwards to place us on the new cotton farm. The twenty-eight slaves he bought in March had put in a crop of corn as their first work, and his plan was that when this crop came off the ground he would be ready for the cotton crop. All this he told me, and he was also careful to tell me that the twenty-eight Virginians liked their homes very much.

On the 24th of the month we left Richmond for Alabama. He had two daughters at school in Station, whom he was going to visit; he intended also to spend some time at the White Sulphur Spring, as he did not

contemplate going directly home. We were placed in charge of a nephew of his named Bell. He gave me instructions to see that every thing went on strait, and that anything we wanted the young man would see that we had it, which promised well for the first. Leaving Richmond, Virginia, our course lay through North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, into Alabama, all by rail, till we got to Montgomery, which now has the bad eminence of being the seat of Government of the Confederate States. At this place we took a steamer and went 110 miles to a small place which I do not recollect. From this we went by land some thirty miles to M'Kalpin's old farm, where we met as new comers with all his old hands.

*As a reflection, I must now say that the nearer I got home the harder the aspect of things looked for coloured people. As I passed through Alabama, **where-ever** I saw coloured people they looked desolate in the extreme. They were poorly clad, and had the appearance of being poorly fed. It is a dense cotton region, and in the hoeing season.*

At M'Kalpin's farm we arrived on the Sabbath. I had a full view of his slaves, young and old; he had about 100; and some young men who were not more than nineteen or twenty looked like men forty or fifty years old. Be it remembered that this farm is in the midst of the cotton paradise. Let it be remembered that in this region a generation of slaves is completely used up in eight years.

The same day we were sent on to the other plantation. The overseer whose name was Mable, ordered one of his boys to show us the way. There we were handed over to an overseer named Hickman; and thus ended my journey from old Virginia to Alabama. In another chapter I will relate how I fared while there, and how I got away.

CHAPTER VI.

MY STAY IN ALABAMA.--WORK.--TREATMENT.--HOW I GOT AWAY.--HOW MANY TIMES I WAS CAPTURED.

MY first impressions of my new home were extremely unpleasant. I had not formed as yet any idea of what awaited me. As I passed along, I saw things that betokened desolation of the most frightful character. But I hoped that the man who would come twelve or fifteen hundred miles to buy me, and make such fair promises to treat me well, would have provided some better place for my reception.

Now, reader, you know that when you travel, and get to a stopping place, you always like to know first of all the kind of place you are to lodge in; and if you find you are provided with a good lodging, your impressions are pleasant, but otherwise, your impressions are sad.

We arrived on the Sabbath, as I have said before, after six or seven days hard travelling. When we got to the farm, overseer Hickman showed me the cabin where myself and five others were to sleep. Do you wish to know what sort of a place it was? What sort of beds we had? Whether we had any sheets and pillow cases? Just come and see for yourself. Here you have it--a log cabin with the cracks wide open. No chinking or daubing. The wind can blow through and through. For bedsteads there were boards put like shelves. No bedding of any kind. You must go to the barn-yard and get shucks to lie on, without sheet or blanket. Here you can lie on your board and count

the stars between the boards that are over your head as a mockery for a roof. Your floor is the naked ground. The carpenter left a hole in one side, but he neglected to leave the sign of anything to close it.

I was perfectly confounded at the sight. I asked the overseer whether there was no other provisions for us, as we had no bed and blanket. He said there was not, and that M'Kalpin had left him no orders about any other accommodation; and also that the other boys have the same, but he expected to have them fixed up better by and bye, or words to that effect.

I came then to the conclusion at once that I had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire, and that I should not rest contented in this lot.

*I was retained several weeks here to assist with the corn crop, during which time I had the **opportuniy** to see the working of things under the rule of Hickman. Scarcely a day passed without a flogging match. The modes of flogging are various. Sometimes the hands are tied with one end of a rope, while the other being thrown over a beam or a branch of a tree, the man is drawn up as high as he can stretch. In this way the bare back being exposed to the lash, that bloody instrument is applied. Another mode is to stake them out, as they call it. The hands are tied together, as are also the feet, a stake is then driven between the feet and another between the hands, the body being prostrate at full length, with the back exposed to the lash. Other modes are also in practice, which if inflicted upon a horse in this country, would cause the arrest of the party so offending. My testimony may be doubted on the ground that it is not reasonable to believe that men will destroy their own slave property; but the case is this: you offer a premium on cotton, and just by so doing will the life of the slave be sunk in value, so far as his comforts are concerned. As to the food I had in common with others it was the coarsest of its kind. The bread was made of Indian corn not really ground,*

but bruised in a sort of an old horse mill, and in this way baked up into ash cakes, without being screened. The meat was the common pork, parcelled out at 2 1/2 lbs. to a man per week. We did not eat but one meal a day at our quarters, and that was at night. The breakfast and dinner would be brought to the field to us, and no matter what part of the row we might be in when the women came, we must there and then sit down in the hot sun and eat it.

After the corn crop was finished, we were sent to work on the railroad, about forty miles distant, and here again things were no better.

Being now out of the hands of those cruel men, I have no motive for making them worse than they are; I know that I have a Judge before whom I must stand, and so far as I understand His law I have no more right to tell a lie on a slaveholder than I have upon any other man, and before Him I speak nothing but the truth in this matter.

Here the cabins in which we were to sleep were of the same kind, and no better furnished than those we left on the farm.

We found an overseer on the road named Stewart, a Mass. man. I made inquiries of him about bedding, as I had of Hickman on the farm, and received a similar answer, with this additional remark that I must try and get used to sleeping without bed and clothing.

However, in about three weeks, M'Kalpin came home, and made a visit to the road where we were at work. He came to me after speaking to several others, and asked me how I was. I replied--"Pretty well, considering." He wished to know how I got along. I said--"Pretty roughly, for I have not had a bed to sleep on."--"Oh," he said, "that must be attended to." So he got each man a blanket, and a tin vessel to carry his mess in; and he said we would be comfortable.

Stewart, the overseer, was a driver; but he was in favour of what he considered liberal feeding. He gave

the men 3 1/2 lbs. of meat a week, with bread and peas in proportion; but he would drive the men up to their full strength, and would also flog whenever he pleased. Severe, however, as he was, he was not harsh enough for M'Kalpin's use in driving this contract through. He therefore discharged him, and got another overseer named Hardin, who was one of your regular nigger killers. He was hard-handed, hard-hearted, a hasty and terrible man, and soon became the dread of all. He cut down the rations and forced more work. He would at a word or a look take a man by the collar as he would a boy and take him away to be flogged; and in case of resistance, he would call on other slaves to assist him. I have seen him drive men until they fell exhausted from the effects of heat and labour upon the ground, and then manifest not the slightest feelings of regard for their condition. He would simply order others to take a man in that state and lay him under the shade of a tree until he recovered.

There were several slaves in the gang of whom Harden was afraid. M'Kalpin, therefore, made arrangements to remain at the road about a week or so, in order to assist him in breaking them in. On the 3rd of September, which was Saturday, Harden came to me apart from the rest of the slaves, when the following conversation took place between us:--

*"Jourden," said he, "how would you like to be my assistant?" I said-- "I **dont** know what you mean, sir." "Well," said he, "when I am not here I want you to look after the other boys, and see that they do their work." I said--"I do not think I should like that business."--"Why?" said he, "you cannot do better; you need not work any yourself, but only see that the others do." I said--"Sir, I would not like to have a coloured man over me, and I do not wish to be over coloured men myself, because it will only gain me their ill-will; and then I should have no happiness*

because I should have the ill-will of both the whites and my own colour; it is quite enough for me to have the ill-will of the whites."--"Oh, well," said he, "you need not mind what the boys think of you so as you have the good-will of your master and me your overseer." I said to him--"I do not wish to be employed in that way; I mean to do my own work well, and that is all I want to be accountable for."--"You cannot do better: it is the best chance you will ever have again," said he. These last words were spoken in a decidedly threatening tone and manner. It was Saturday afternoon, and we ceased to talk more upon the subject at that time, as the job of work he had designed called me away to do was completed.

Soon we retired to our cabin, and after our coarse supper, I lay down upon my rough board with my scanty blanket over so many of my weary limbs as it would cover; and thoughts like these came into my aching head: I am a miserable man-- I am scantily fed--I am overworked; for at this rate I cannot live five years: I am miserable even when I thus lay me down. This hard board and this scanty blanket will witness that there is no rest between them for this my poor body. But I have been tempted to-day. I have been offered what seems to be a better lot. I have been offered the situation of second or assistant overseer, which will secure me more if not better food, next to no work; and a far better bed than this. Shall I then accept of a position, and allow myself to be used for the abuse of my poor fellows in bonds, merely to better, comparatively, my own condition? I know full well why this insulting offer has been made to me. God has given me an able body, and it is expected that I can be made good use of in case of any resistance on the part of the other slaves. But shall I allow myself to be thus used? No; I will not. That is decided, once for all--**THAT IS MY RESOLUTION--COME WHAT MAY.**

The next day was the 4th of September, and it was the Sabbath. After we had all got our breakfasts, a summons was sent for us to repair to the cabin where our master, M'Kalpin, kept his head-quarters. We went, not knowing what the object was. I thought too myself, can it be that he is going to have a meeting for us? Is he going to read the Bible to us? What can he mean? Is it possible now that Harden has told him what passed between him and me yesterday? When we arrived at his cabin, he met us in the yard, and ordered us to form in a line like soldiers; and he ordered me to take a stand in front of the rest. Thus formed he held a paper in his hand which he called his rules and regulations, to be observed and obeyed by us all. This paper looked like the sermon which a minister holds in his hand when he is going to preach; and, indeed, M'Kalpin tried to look and act just as solemn and as dignified as a minister when he is about to preach a sermon to a congregation of sinners about the salvation of their souls, so much so that I really began to feel a sort of forced veneration for him; but I thought I would wait and hear what he had to say.

He commenced by informing us--"Boys, my object in having you all to come up this morning is to read to you my rules and regulations, so that when I am gone you will know what is required of you." He then began to read front the written paper in his hand to the effect that we were required to obey Mr. Harden in all matters just as we would obey him; and he read to us very emphatically, that in case Mr. Harden was resisted by one of the men, any one of the rest whom he called upon must go to his assistance to tie and whip the delinquent; and he read to us that none of us should resist the overseer.

After reading his rules, he said to me--"Jourden, aint that right?["] I answered--"I dont know, sir," He asked me--"What do you think about it?" I said-- "It may be right, but I think it is hard."

"Well," he went on to say, "these are my rules, and they must be obeyed. We white people have laws which we must obey, or suffer the consequences. And these are my rules by which you must abide, or else you must and shall be punished, and that severely." When he had concluded his long speech, Mr. Harden gave the motion, and we all had to make a bow to him, and as we were about to retire, he gave the last words of application to the subject, by saying--"Now, I want you all to reflect upon what I have said."

MEETING IN THE CABIN.

HAVING been dismissed we assembled in our cabin, where the subject came up for discussion; and all were anxious to know what I intended to do. The question was--"Jourden, are you going to give in to that?" I said--"No." And I gave them my opinion that no man ought to give in to it. I told them in plain terms that I not only did not mean to assist in overpowering others, but that I did not expect others to assist in overpowering me. I told the men that I would suffer anything before I would lay hands on any one of them; and I warned them of what they I might it expect if one of them laid hands on me at the bidding of the overseer; and I said if I should lay my hands on one of you, you may do to me the same. Our discussion lasted till late in the day; and thus we closed the day.

At night I had another reflection. I could see now the whole bearing of Harden's movement with me on Saturday. It was understood between him and M'Kalpin that he should make the offer to me of assistant overseer, and having heard my reply, it was made up that we should all be called up to hear the law read, so that I might know that the matter was not to end there. I had then to think the whole subject

over again; but I returned to the same resolve as before.

The pomp and form with which the thing was done made the matter a serious one. It was the Sabbath, the day appointed for rest, and worship of Almighty God. What was I to think of the man who would call me before him and lay down rules and regulations about working and flogging men? What must be his religious and moral principles? Bad as old Virginia is I had met with nothing of the sort there.

Now I happened to have been told by Stewart, the previous overseer, that the object of all this driving on the railroad was to get us at work on the next cotton crop, which would begin in March. M'Kalpin had said himself, emphatically, that the road must be finished by the 1st of March. I retired to my hard and uncomfortable bed and board that night, Sunday, 4th September, with a very heavy heart. I felt that there was trouble in the land. I saw that M'Kalpin and Harden were determined men. I was determined. What was now to be expected? I have the confidence and goodwill of my fellow-slaves. I am now narrowed down. Only these two men seem bent upon a quarrel with me. But believing that I was right, I could not yield. What! assist a mean beggarly white in driving and whipping men of my own colour? No, no, never, never! I will die on the rack first.

Before I pass, let me state here that the Sabbath was assigned to us to wash our clothing. There was no provision made for either washing or mending for us. As to the articles of clothing they give one suit of rough cotton cloth a season, and one pair of coarse shoes in the winter season. A slave is not allowed to leave his master's plantation without a written permit from him or the overseer; and that pass or permit states the length of time he is to be absent; if it is till nine o'clock at night, and he is found out off his master's plantation at a later hour, any white man can

give him as many lashes as he thinks proper, and when he goes home he may get as many more. This is Southern liberty for coloured men! Such is meted out to them by white men who are now in rebellion against the Government of the United States for what they call their rights.

Monday, September 5th, 1857, we all rose, and at the usual time. With picks, spades, and other tools in hand we repaired to our work on the road. We were aroused as soon as it was clearly light, and called to move to work. The first call always came from the overseer to the teamsters, and from them it was extended to the other hands. After we got to work, breakfast would be served to us by one of our number to whom that duty was assigned. When called by him all haste must be made, as the time allowed was very short. It often so happened that one and another would have to take his last crust in his hand and run to his work.

THE GREAT FIGHT AND THE HARD-WON VICTORY.

IT was just after breakfast, and all were industriously at work; but in spite of ourselves we all felt that the overseer was bent upon bringing about a crisis. All his movements this morning taken in connection with the affair of the previous day indicated that intent. But there seemed to be no handle he could take hold of to begin. At last a tall man called "Ben," was singled out and spoken to by the overseer, evidently for the very purpose of making a fuss.

I had seen things which stirred my blood. I had noticed that two of the old hands from the cotton farm were brought to work on the road, evidently to show us how easily they could be managed. These men were so completely cowed, that they did not need to be

...tied at all when flogged. The overseer would just take one of them by the back of the neck, bring him down upon his knees, and with the other hand ply the lash to his back. I have often been tempted to go and knock the wretch off his victim.

Ben was more than a match for Harden and another man if he choosed to fight. But he was a good-natured man, and not inclined to fight. He was a good working hand, and at the time he was spoken to by the overseer he was as busily at work as any of us. He was wheeling his barrow, when Harden called out to him--"Ben, can't you move along faster than that?" Ben said nothing, but looked at him and smiled. Bell smiled, because in the simplicity of his nature he saw that Harden was only seeking a special quarrel for a special object, to get up a special fight, so as to test the law, which was promulgated Sunday, September 4th, 1857.

*I heard Harden say--"Who are you laughing at?" Next I heard him say--"Come along, and I will learn you how to laugh at me." I looked up (I was using my pick at the time) and I saw him pulling Ben by the collar, but he could not move him an inch. Ben attempted to reason with him, and said to Harden--"What do you want with me? I **aint** done anything bad; I wasn't laughing at you." But it was all to no purpose, come he must. But come **were**? Just down yonder into the woods. What for? To get thirty-nine lashes on the bare back! And why these lashes, pray? For smiling in the face of an angry white man! Nine and thirty lashes on the bare back for a smile, the first thing after breakfast on Monday morning! This was too much for Ben's good-nature, and hence he simply declined to go to the tree[.] Enraged by this Harden called out aloud for help. And, reader, whom do you suppose he called on the first? He called on me. "Jourden," said he, "come here and help me." I looked up, but I stirred not. Had I stirred, I certainly should have been more likely to have taken sides with*

Ben. But this enraged Harden, and he called again upon my name, so that all the echoes of the surrounding woods reechoed. "Jourden, **dont** you hear me? Come here![""] Seeing I did not move, he called on others. They went, but they merely put out their hands, and took hold of Ben, so as to clear the law. Ben would neither stir, nor cross his hands to be tied, although there were three or four together with the overseer having hold of him.

In this situation Ben said--"I wish my master was here." Harden said--"What do you want with him?" Ben said--"I want him to give me my rights, as he promised me when he bought me that I should not be whipped for no fault."--"Well," said Harden, "I will send for him." And so he did. M'Kalpin enters. Harden tells his story: a base lie it was. "I spoke to Ben," said he, "and ordered him to hurry, and he laughed at me, sir; and when I ordered him to come and take his flogging he resisted me." M'Kalpin said to Ben--"Didn't you hear my law that I read to you all yesterday?" --"Yes, sir; but master told me when he bought me that he would use me well; that I should not be whipped for nothing."--"I told you yesterday that none of you should resist Mr. Harden; and now as you have been the first one, Ben, you must be punished; so now cross your hands." Ben spoke not. But those huge muscular hands were not crossed. "I tell you to cross your hands," M'Kalpin said again to him. Ben moved not a muscle, but stood like a statue, the very personification of sorrowful desperation--of noble manhood in a crisis. M'Kalpin, with his large stick, then gives him a severe rap on the head, and repeats--"Cross your hands." Ben did not obey. Again, M'Kalpin, in a **tremenduous** rage, and with blows thick and fast over the head, shouted aloud--"Cross your hands!" Ben, poor Ben, cowed; he crossed his hands. They were tied. He was led away and tied to a tree. On his bare back he received I

know not how many lashes. He was made to promise that he would not resist the overseer again.

M'Kalpin was then cruel enough to order the overseer to give Ben a whipping for him, because he did not cross his hands at the first command he gave him. This gave me another view of the man M'Kalpin. I saw in him the falsifier and the despot.

As he was about to leave and return to his cabin, Harden said to him--"Mr. Kalpin, there are some more of them here that will **haveto** be attended to."--"Well," said M'Kalpin, "bring every one of them up to the mark." Thus he spake and left.

Harden was not satisfied. The man was possessed. He walked about. He looked at this one and then at that one. Every man of us was hard at work. We all felt that we had had trouble and fuss enough for one morning. No one spoke a word, and if hard work would keep peace, and keep the lash off men's backs, we were determined to work.

But at last this mischievous man, Harden, the overseer, made his way to me, and spoke to me as follows--"Jourden, why didn't you come when I called you to help me with Ben?" Ans.--"Because I had nothing to do with the matter between you." Harden--"Well, now mind I tell you, next time I call you and you **dont** come, I will whip you." I said--"Maybe you will." Harden said to me--"Do you know who you are talking to?" I said-- "There is no one here but you and myself, and of course I must be talking to you." Harden said to me--"If you speak to me in that way again, I will tie you and give you 150 lashes." By this time my spirit was fully aroused, and I was not only going to speak my mind, but to act on my own convictions. I answered and said to him--"If you do it it will be the first and the last time." The case seemed now to have assumed the dignity of a serious crisis, and he at once sent a man to call M'Kalpin, who soon came. Harden again laid his grievous complaints, and this

time they were against me. He related to M'Kalpin all that he said to me, and likewise also what I said to him in reply. M'Kalpin then said to me-- "Why did you not help the overseer when he called you?" I said--"I had nothing to do with it." He said to me--"Did you not know my rules? And did I not tell you that if you did not obey them you should be punished severely?[""] I said--"Yes, sir." He then said--"Take him and give him a good whipping," speaking to Harden. At these words every attribute of my manhood was nerved up for the conflict. My words had given offence, and it was evidently their intention to make an example of me, and to bring the whole curse of the broken law upon my head. I knew well that they would not spare me if I surrendered.

The overseer made his move towards me and said--"Lay down that pick, and cross your hands." I said--"I have done nothing, and I do not mean to let you whip me for nothing." He then called to the other men to come and assist him. The men gathered around me, but they all remembered what I had said the day before, that I would kill any man of them who should assist in overpowering me, and they were very shy. The overseer, however, shouted them on, and yet they did not take hold of me. Vexed at this, Harden himself laid the first hand on me; I stretched out my hand, and he went down to get a bite of the dust. At this M'Kalpin spoke, and ordered me to give up. Harden came up, and I sent him back to get another bite of the dust. While he was down, M'Kalpin came with his large bully stick, which he levelled at my head, expecting to serve me as he did Ben but an hour before; but he missed his man; he missed his aim; I seized hold of his club as he struck at my head, and as quick as thought snatched it from his grasp, and sent him down to the dust along with Harden. By this time the boys all began to leave and retire to the wood in dismay. They seemed to think that death would certainly be the portion of the

master and overseer the way matters then stood, for I had it all my own way; and the boys seemed to think that they neither wanted to share nor witness their fate.

And now, reader, I can, and must truly and freely confess to you that I was a desperate man. I was in a desperate condition. Thirty men were around me. They had attacked one man, whipped him, and now only waited for my back. After what I had seen him suffer, and after what I had dared to say to master and the overseer, I knew that I had nothing to expect but a portion equal to death itself; nay, a portion worse than death. I had but a breath of time to decide; and that decision was to strike. I did strike. I knew that the first blow I gave the overseer would seal my doom if I was overpowered. So with the stick I had in my hand, I commenced the work. I gave it to both master and the overseer. I kept them both on the ground. I did not know but some other white men might come to their help, and what force might be brought against me, so resolved not only to fly from the place, but to leave them in such a condition that they could not immediately pursue me. I did beat them well. My blows were laid on heavily on the back of the head, across the back, the ham-strings, and the hips, and shins, until they both begged as pitiously as poor Ben did under the lash. And while I was thus punishing them, a thought struck me: Jourden, you have now made two white men beg, you had better leave and look for a better country: you are in the land of cotton and bloodhounds: fly, for your life and liberty. So I left my master M'Kalpin and his overseer Harden literally crawling about on the ground like a pair of ricketty boys. As I passed, I paused a moment, and spoke a few words to the other men or fellow slaves. I said-- "Farewell, men. I have done my work. I am going to leave. Look out for yourselves. If you undertake to do anything, do it like men. If I am brought back, it will be when I am dead."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLIGHT[.]--THE CANE BREAK.--THE TRAVEL.--THE BREAKING OF THREE GAOLS.--FINAL ARRIVAL IN ILLINOIS.

THE first point I made for was what was called the cane break swamp. This was a very extensive tract or land, mostly under water and also overgrown by the common reeds of which canes are made.

On my way to this break, I took my way into what is called a branch, that is a small stream of water. This stream varied from four to twelve inches in depth. This would be the means of defeating the bloodhounds, as they cannot scent in the water. About two or three o'clock in the afternoon, I heard the sound of the horns, and the yelping of the hounds; but from the sound I knew they were not on my track, so I took encouragement for the night. When the night came on I took again to the road; and having remembered the direction in which I heard the running of the cars, and watching the north star, I set out for my journey the first night. The next day I took to a bamboo brier thicket. In this place a man cannot be seen at the distance of ten or twelve feet, but it is a most dismal place. When a man is so situated that a snake can come and look him in the face, jerk out his tongue, but he dare not make noise enough to kill him, you may judge of his case. Such was my condition in the bamboo thicket the day after I left off working on the railroad.

By this time, I began to feel in need of food, but I knew not where to look for it. In a dense bamboo

region where there were no fruit trees, and not daring to come out, or even to stir, I began to realise what it was to be hungry. Oh, what I would have given for a crust of bread, or anything in the shape of food, that would just reach that hungry place-- something upon which that keen tooth of hunger might bite instead of upon my tender and exhausted vitals. But there was no relief for me that day, so far as food was concerned.

That night I sallied out cautiously upon the road again, and resumed my *flight*. But I kept mainly in and out of the branch. This branch crossed the road at several points; and my object was to keep my course, and yet to be so much of the way in the water as to bother the dogs which I knew was now my principal danger. My master had no dogs himself, but others had them, and they make it a common cause to use them in such cases; indeed they have men who keep them, and know how to hunt with them[.] It is their business to train those dogs, and to know how to set them on the trail of the slave who has escaped from his master's plantation. In those cases the old leader of the pack is sometimes taken to the escaped slave's cabin where he has lodged, or a piece of his clothing is found that he may smell it, so as to give a start on the right scent. There are other means used by the escaping to break the scent of the bloodhounds, such as putting saltpetre and pepper in the bottoms of their shoes, and rubbing the outside of the shoe soles with pine tops. I was two days and a night without a mouthful of food, with the exception of breakfast on Monday morning before I left. This would bring me to Tuesday night.

At this time I came to an apple orchard, where I procured some of that fruit. I eat as many as I could; and I also took as many with me as I could carry in my pockets, as I did not know when I should meet with any more. I travelled all that night keeping my direction.

The next day, Wednesday, dawned upon me where the wood was very thin; so much so that I could not find a hiding place, without going a great distance; for I well knew that if any white man saw me, I would either have to be taken a prisoner, or else fight to the death. I finally took my seat by the side of a very large tree. Here I had not a chance to rest much, for I had to watch, expecting that in the event of seeing any one approaching, I could move to the other side of the tree. As I could see quite a distance myself, I imagined that others would be likely to see me very easily if they should pass. The day was therefore spent uncomfortably. It was a day of fear, and without rest, which I felt the need of much after the hard travel of the previous night.

In this way I travelled till the 10th of the month, when I came to the extent of the distance to which the Ohio and Mississippi railroad was finished at that time. Here new and unforeseen hardships presented themselves in my way. The road was laid out. In some places the trees were cut down simply; in others they were only marked so as to show the course of the road. Over this unbeaten track now I had to continue my travel[.] At one time I had to walk for miles in the water and marshy earth up to my ankles. At other times I had to cross little streams on logs of wood; and still at other times I came to streams so large that I was obliged to go along the banks a long distance out my course to find a place to cross. But by good fortune I always accomplished my object. At this day, however, it makes me feel chilly all over when I think of the wet and cold days and nights I spent on that part of the road. I had the advantage of a straight line, but in the morning after a night's travel, I felt the dew and the dampness of the night about my clothes. The reader may judge how I was situated. On cloudy days my clothes did not dry on my back from one day to another. On shiny days my clothes would dry in the

heat, when I was so situated that I could sit in the sun. Even this was most unpleasant. Think of it: a man exposed all night to the dampness and the heavy morning dew, and then to be exposed to the hot sun, without food or change of clothing, you will be able to form an opinion of my situation.

My journey lay through a very large track of the cotton country. Many a day I lay in the hot broiling sun watching the movements of the cotton gangs at work[.] And here I will mention that I often saw cotton farms that were being worked by whites; and they seemed to stand it as well as the slaves, only they had more rest. I noticed that they worked in the morning and the after part of the day, so as to avoid the intense heat of the sun. There seemed to be a different spirit among them; they were more cheerful and happy; you could tell that they were free men by the way in which they worked.

One day I was lying in a large cotton field, and after being there awhile, I looked up and saw a gang of about forty cotton pickers under their overseer, coming in the direction where I was; and such was my location, that had I remained still, they would have come right upon me, so I had to crawl crosswise the rows of cotton so as to clear them. The cotton is drilled in rows about three or four feet apart. The stalks are not over ten inches apart in the rows. The pickers go abreast like mowers; and some of them take one and others two rows each. In going crosswise of these rows I could not stand on my feet, as they would see my head; and in crawling on my hands and knees, I could not help making a track by breaking down the cotton, and thus tracking them after me. It was a critical moment for me. I recalled to mind the Monday morning when the overseer Harden ordered his men to assist in flogging me. Now thought I if I should attract the attention of this man, and he should call on these men they would not hesitate, as I am not acquainted

with them. I had a stick in my hand which I knew would not fail to do full execution whenever used; but I thought it wisdom to get out of their way. When the gang came up, I was all of a tremble, expecting every moment to hear the overseer say --"Who has been in this cotton, breaking it down in this way?" To add to my dismay, the gang was just as still as a funeral procession. Not a word was spoken by any one to his fellow next to him on either hand. There were no merry whistlers or songsters; but there was a deathlike silence which betokened servility[.] How different from the cheerfulness which prevailed in the fields where the white cotton pickers were at work. Another thing I may here state, that this stillness was often broken at night; up to the late hours of ten and eleven o'clock I could hear as I was passing along the mournful cry of those who had been short of their tasks, and who were receiving so many lashes on the bare back for that fault. These cryings sounding in my ears in the stillness of the night conveyed to me a melancholy impression. As the rude lash falls heavily on the back of the writhing victim, cries may be heard of "Oh, pray, sir." "Do, pray, sir." &c.

Think of this, ye cotton lords of England; think of it, ye cotton spinners and weavers: think of this, ye cotton speculators, that many an Alabama slave in the cotton plantations lies down at night not only with an overworked frame, but with a hungry belly and a sore back[.] Could you without the knowledge of the masters, overseers, or slaves, go about those plantations and see how slaves are managed and worked, you would surely see there presented to your minds the strongest motives for using your utmost influence to bring into use your own cotton lands and labour, of which there is no lack, either of quality or quantity. So far as the slaves know anything about England, and know that the cotton, sugar, and rice which they raise is consumed so extensively in the British market, they

almost believe that England will eventually have something to do with setting them free. They hear it said that although England was the first to introduce slavery into America, she has abolished it in the West Indies; they, therefore, look upon her as the friend of the coloured race. It is a common opinion among the slaves that slavery will be terminated by a war between England and the United States.

On the 15th of the month an event of some interest happened. While lying in ambush in a thickly shaded place, I espied a coloured man passing near to me. I gave a whistle; he halted instantly, and raised his head, as you would see a buck, and his eyes flashed with excitement. He was ready to run, but he was not certain whence the sound came to him. I repeated the whistle; he then advanced towards the spot where I was, and came within twenty feet of me, yet still he did not see me. I then relieved him. I said--"Come along, I will not hurt you." He then came into my bushy chamber. He seemed much delighted; and, I can assure you, I was much pleased to see and speak with a human being after ten days loneliness and solitude. We exchange our salutations. I learned from him that he came from the Mississippi: that he had been out three days[.] He said that the times there were as bad as they could be. The immediate cause of his escape was an attempt of the overseer to flog him, because he got home rather late on Monday morning. When he went to his work, the overseer drew a rope from his pocket to tie and flog him, but he took to his heels, the overseer pursuing a short distance, but did not overtake him.

I told him I thought it unsafe to travel in the day time, as one is apt to meet with white men gunning or doing something in the woods. He remained with me that day and night, and we travelled together. The next day we encamped in a place where we found a great many hazel nuts; of these we eat freely, and also

filled our pockets[.] But by this time such kind of food became of little account to me; it did not nourish me; and I **fouud** my strength failing me daily. We started out early that night with a determination that we would stop at some farm house and ask for food. The first place we came to that seemed to offer us a chance of success was that of a man whom I afterwards found was a contractor named--

The sequel will prove that we were very unfortunate in our selection. My friend went first quietly up and looked about the cabins. He returned and reported to me that he saw no one but two coloured women. I then went myself: but before I got to the cabin door I met an Irishman, whom I asked for a piece of bread. He told me to go into the cabin, and the women would give me bread. I went in; and while they were getting the bread, I found the cabin door blocked up by some twenty or thirty men, some of whom were only half-dressed. The principal man came up to me with a pistol, which he presented at my breast, and ordered me to surrender on pain of death. I was taken and put in irons; a blacksmith was called to fasten them on my limbs; and as soon as this was done, I was asked who I had with me; and as I did not choose to tell, they sent a man off to a neighbouring plantation for the hounds to set on the track of my friend: but on his way he fell in with my friend, and took him prisoner. My friend and I got as much as we could eat, and in that respect we obtained our end. We were required to tell from whom we had escaped, and all about ourselves. Both of us were locked up in a room and watched that night, and the next morning we were placed in a gaol to await the requisitions of our owners. Here we were to be kept twelve days.

MY GAOL BREAKING.

I began now to think about learning to break gaols. Our treatment in this old gaol was not good. Our food was very indifferent, and the beds were no better; and the idea of being taken back to M'Kalpin's was terrible, for I knew that I would have to suffer a punishment equivalent to death itself. I surveyed our cell day after day; and on the tenth day of our incarceration I fixed my eye on a spot over the door which was hung upon old-fashioned hinges. With the use of a large spike nail I removed a piece of board from over the top of the door, so that it could be lifted off the hinges.

On the night of the eleventh day of our imprisonment, all things being ready, and there being six others with me in the same cell, I gave directions to each man to take his shoes in his hand and follow me. The order was to creep barefooted down the steps. The gaoler lived below, and he had a watch of several men in the back yard, so that the thing had to be done very stealthily. I then lifted the old door off the hinges, and softly slewed it around, opening it from the hinges, there being a large padlock on the outside. I led the way down to the entry. I looked out and saw the watches sitting on a pile of wood; and, just as we were about to descend the stairs an Irishman, who was in the next cell, gave the alarm upon us. "Mr. Johnson," said he, "the negroes are getting out of the gaol!" At this alarm our movements became very precipitate on all hands. The watches made a rush for the front, and we had to make good our exit before we were headed off by them. My impression is that one of our number was caught, as I heard a voice say--"Go right back." There was one slowish man among us, and I expect it was him they were speaking to. At any rate I saw him no more. We ran scattering for about half a mile, till

we got to a small wood on the road, when we came together. This was about nine o'clock at night. We had decidedly ran a hard race. We could hear our enemies hallowing about the town after we left; but the sound of their hideous voices soon died away in the distance; for we did not trifle with our feet, I can assure you[.] About midnight we made the railroad again, and laid our course once more to the north. Out of the whole number there were now four of us in one party.

THE SOLEMN COVENANT.

WE made a solemn covenant or engagement to the following effect:--
1st We will pursue our journey until we find a land where we can be free.
2nd, Each man of us will adopt a new name. I took the name of J. H. Banks. 3rd, No man of us was to tell the real name of his master. 4th, In case of attack, each man was solemnly pledged to fight to the death rather than be taken, if he could not escape by running. Thus covenanted and leagued together as a band of liberty-hunting pilgrims, we continued our journey, travelling by night, and in the day time hiding in the most obscure and dismal places[.] Having learned by past experience the danger of venturing to any house in search of food, we relied upon out-door food, as Providence might bring it in our way.

To give an idea of the kind of road we had to travel, I will state a case in point. One night about one o'clock, we came to a place where a sullen stream of water crossed the road. There was neither bridge nor boat to be found[.] We walked first one way and then the other along the banks, and could see no signs of a wading place. The water was so still that we could tell nothing about its depth. In the vicinity we could hear no mortal or animal voice but wild cats, *rackoons*,

and the like, whose varied voices, and apparently quarrelling tones, gave an awfully dismal aspect to the night, which was densely dark. However, we came at last to an old trunk of a tree, which had been lying on one side so long that it was quite rotten. This I turned over, and with our sticks we poked out the rotten part, so that it made a boat. I then got a long pole, with which to feel the bottom and push across[.] But when I got the boat launched, I found to my surprise that my men were unwilling to ship for the voyage. So to assure them I made a trip over myself alone and back. They then cautiously, very cautiously indeed, got in with me and sat down, while I used the pole. I had, of course, to stand up and place the end of the pole against the bottom and push. They, fearful of turning over, were continually moving and catching one way or the other. When we got about half-way over our boat capsized! I being the tallest, my feet found the bottom, with my head above water, and knowing that I could swim pretty well I set myself at work to help my men, who were now really in peril. They were holding on to the boat, and likely to keep it upside down, but I succeeded in turning it right side up with care. The men all got safely in, and soon we made the other shore, which we were glad to reach. But after arriving there we found it no better travelling than that we had left behind us[.] There was an abundance of mud, mire, and stagnant water. There were no signs or sounds of human habitation. We could not hear the crowing of a cock, the barking of a dog, or the lowing of an ox.

However, after a long and tedious ramble, we found our way back again to the line of the road, and we realised great relief so far. We had to hide ourselves the next day the best way we could; but we were cheered because we believed ourselves to be nearing the Ohio river. At night we came out from our hiding place

quite early, partly because we were hungry, and partly because we felt that the way was not so dangerous. One of the first things we did was to look about for something to eat. Seeing an orchard near the road, I sent the men to seek for apples. I remained on watch at the road, and the sign to be given them was, that if I whistled all should be still, as it would indicate the approach of a stranger. They had not been gone long, before I heard the sound of a person walking. I gave the signal, and secreted myself in some bushes close to the road, so as to see whether the person was white or black. I soon discovered that it was a black man wearing light clothes. He was going in our direction. After he had passed, I called my men together, and informed them that it was a coloured man that passed us, and we agreed to set out and overtake him. After walking some two miles he held up, and let us come in company with him. We soon learned from him that he was a slave in the neighbourhood; that he was going four miles further on that road to visit his wife, who belonged to a different master from his. We gained valuable information from him in regard to our whereabouts, and the proper way to conduct ourselves. He informed us that we were about forty miles from the river; and if we crossed at the point where the road would strike, we would find ourselves in Missouri. He directed us to what he called the iron bank road, which he said would bring us to a place called Padauka. He also warned us that when we got into Illinois we would be as much in danger of being taken, nearly as much as in the Slave States. He stated that he himself had once escaped from his master, and after being in Illinois three days he was arrested and taken back.

Having received such kind attentions from our stranger friend we thanked him at our parting, and continued our journey. But unfortunately for us we missed the iron bank road; however, we kept the direction,

and on the third night after we came to the town quite early.

I have often been amused at the thought of my own audacity on that night. The town was alive with both coloured and white people. I led my men right through as if half the town belonged to us, and went down to the

river. But when we arrived at the river-side, it was a puzzle to us how to get across, as all the boats were locked. After the affair of the old log-boat upsetting and my saving the men they confided in me, and often said that I had saved their lives, and they believed I would bring them out to a free country; so I had to keep up my reputation as a leader. The proud Ohio rolled her sullen waters along in nature's own majestic style; but I said to myself, my precious treasure must be conveyed to the other side this night. I placed the men in a position where they would not be easily seen, and with my heavy stick I went some distance up the shore, where I found a boat locked in a quiet place. With the use of my stick I loosed the boat. Returning quietly back, I assured my men that I was ready to take them over. There was but a moment elapsed ere we were all seated securely in the boat, and I was acting as oarsman. This was my delight; having been reared on the banks of the old Shanandoah river, I was at home in a small boat, and a pair of oars in my hands. While passing over, a new thought struck me: the necessity of hiding the boat, for if it was left in sight it would be inferred that slaves had crossed over, and pursuit would be made; so I ran it into an obscure place on the Illinois side. After landing, however, we had a miserable time for a considerable distance.

OUR THANKSGIVING.

As soon as we got fairly out of the mire, we gave vent to our joy and rejoicing. We congratulated each other. We shook each other by the hands; and we thanked God that we had struck free soil! We really almost got to shouting, but then when we remembered what our friend told us of the dangers in Illinois we checked ourselves and proceeded cautiously as usual.

We travelled on for three days and nights, and nothing of importance occurred with us until the following Friday. By this time we thought we had got far enough into Illinois to use a part of the daylight in the thinly-populated district. But we received a timely check. In passing a skirt of a wood we noticed six white men chopping wood. They did not hail us, but after we had passed there was a movement among them. Soon after this we saw the whole number of them coming after us. We set off and ran, and they ran after us. When we had ran about half a mile, I stopped, and ordered my men to halt and prepare for battle. They did so very promptly. The two little armies stood face to face in battle array. The leader of the opposite forces ordered me to surrender. I declined, and ordered him to retire. He returned for answer that if I did not come back and surrender he would shoot me. He had a gun which I did not believe was loaded. The rest of his men were armed indifferently. I told him to shoot, but to make sure work, if he did not I would shoot him. I gave my men a sign, and we all changed our clubs into the left hands, and began with the right hands to feel in the left breast pocket, as if we had pistols. I said--"Men, there can only one of us fall before that gun; let every other man who is left shoot a man." I saw that the leader with the gun began to step backward and look around for his men. I raised a shout and said--"Come on,

men, we can whip them if they have six to our four." The enemy broke and fled in great haste and confusion. Our pursuit was feigned, of course, and but for a short distance.

When we left off the chase, we felt great satisfaction in the fact that we made the enemy run. We consulted together, and agreed to adhere to the plan of fighting our way through.

The part of Illinois we were in is inhabited a good deal by Kentuckians and Tennesseans, or settlers from those States, who watch for and catch escaping slaves, mainly to get the rewards offered for them; and knowing that the men who had attempted to take us were likely to get a reinforcement and renew their pursuit, we used the following **stragem**: we made a rapid start in the direction we were going at the time we were interrupted, and then shortly we left the road or course we were on, and taking a circuitous and retrograde course, fell back some distance from the point where we had been, and, watching the movements of the enemy, we found that he soon rallied in force, having increased his number to over twenty, armed with guns, old swords, and sticks. Some were on horseback, others on foot, going in pursuit of us, while we lay in ambush quietly in their rear watching them. They returned after being gone sometime. We heard their shouting and yelling, but kept still until it was safe for us to move on our way. Coming out of our hiding place we took the road and proceeded on our journey. The next day was Saturday, the 14th day of October, another fatal day in the history of our journey.

THE BLACK TRAITOR.

FEELING very much the need of food, and coming to a house which we found to be occupied by a free-coloured

man, we made application to him for food. He welcomed us in with the greatest apparent cordiality, and he said he knew our condition and sympathised with us. He ordered his wife to get us something to eat, and he went out, saying he was going to get some whiskey for us, that we must be cold and in need of it. After being gone awhile he came back and said he could not get the whiskey, as they had shut up. Supper being ready we sat down and were eating when there came a knock at the door. Our host spoke like a bully--"Who is there?" The answer outside was--"One." He replied--"We **dont** want you here." "If you **dont** open the door, I will break it open." In a minute more the door was pushed open, and, behold, a gang of enemies stood before us. The number I could not be certain about, but it was large, and they were all armed with guns, for they had been to a shooting match in the place that day. The leading man stepped in and said--"Who have you got here?" The black man said--"Oh, some boys that come from a little way to see us."-- "No," said the other, "they are runaways; we will take care of them." He stepped up to me and said--"Surrender." I looked at the place where we had set our sticks, and to my great disappointment they had disappeared. I knew at once that we had been betrayed by our black host. The villainy of the man may be seen by his cruelty and hypocrisy. While treating us with great pretended hospitality he disarmed us, and brought upon us a band of armed enemies. No white man had as yet played upon us a more diabolical trick. Oh, if I could have had that fellow to myself one minute! The leader of the gang came closer up to me and said--"What are you looking for?" I said--"Nothing that belongs to you."--"Come, come," said he, "just surrender, and let us know whom you ran away from, and we call take you home and make it all right for you." And with this he drew a rope from his pocket. One

man standing outside of the door had his gun placed about breast high across the door, and others stood on each side of him. I spoke to the man who had the rope in his hand, and said to him--"Stop, till I have some talk with you; I do not think you have any right to interfere with us; we have not troubled you." "Oh," said he, "it is against the laws of the country; we do not allow slaves to run away and pass through here." At that moment there were guns pointed at me, as if the assailants knew that I was the leader. My men seemed to be only waiting my motion. I made rapid movement towards the door, and catching with both hands the gun which was placed across the door I pushed down the man who held it and a number of others. My men followed me, but as I started to run I went head first against a rail fence in the dark and knocked myself senseless. When I came to consciousness I found myself literally bound up in ropes. I was alone in the hands of the enemy, for my men supposing, of course, that I would get away, had all fled. I was kept under watch that night and the next day, Sunday. On Monday, they went out and caught two of my men, and on Tuesday they went in search of the third, and failing to find him they concluded on Wednesday to take us to gaol over in Kentucky. Their reason for taking us into Kentucky to gaol was this:--in Illinois they could only keep us in gaol so many days, and if we were not claimed *in in* that time we would be let out; but in Kentucky we could be kept nine months in gaol, and then if not claimed be sold to the highest bidder for gaol fees. And thus men who are born free may be reduced to slavery for life.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVEN MONTHS IN SMITHLAND GAOL.--THE BREAKING OF THE SAME.--REACHES ILLINOIS SIDE AGAIN.--THE BREAKING OF SHELVED GAOL, ETC.

I have to inform my readers that we were confined in the Smithland gaol, in Kentucky, seven months and two days. This was on the banks of the Ohio, where there were not many slaves. Some of the pious slaves would come on Sundays and pray with and exhort us to trust in God. No white persons ever came, except to watch and listen to what was done and said. They were allowed also to bring tobacco for the use of those who wished it, but they had to hand it to the gaoler. There was a man in the gaol who also came from Alabama, and who was a speaker or exhorter. One thing occurred while we were there in regard to this man, which I may state here to show the vicissitudes of such a gaol life. An advertisement of a fugitive slave appeared which described this man, with a single exception. It was said in the advertisement that the fugitive had a goatee; but this man had no more hair on his face than a lad not yet in his teens. The gaoler, however, wrote to the advertisers, who came; but it seemed that under all the circumstances they could not identify him by their own advertisement. In fact, it seemed that they did not know their own man; for he belonged to a family of orphans, and was hired out from year to year. But they were evidently desirous to claim him. So they suggested that he might have pulled out the beard by its roots. He was questioned in regard to his knowledge of the names of

the owners they represented, but he acknowledged them not. Being afraid to make an affidavit, they left him.

The life in this gaol was more like a place of punishment than a place of detention, for it seemed to them that the worse we were treated the more likely we would be to tell where we came from. Our seat was the floor. Our bed was one blanket each and the floor. The sanitary condition of the gaol was bad, and its moral condition may be judged of when I tell you that we had for company two white men, one of whom was there on the charge of murder and the other for making counterfeit money. But I shall have more to say about these at another time.

When we entered the Smithland gaol our only hope was in strict secrecy in regard to our owners, not to tell their real names or place of abode. We might just as well turn and go back home ourselves, and better, because it would save the masters expense and would be likely to save us severer punishment.

This gaol was evidently a trap, for scarcely a week passed during the time we were there without slaves passing out. In many cases these would after being in awhile tell who their owners were.

There was one case of a young man who was far gone in consumption. The physician who attended him was very kind, and got from him whom he belonged to, letting him know that he would write to his master and buy him for his own use. In this way he got his confidence, and induced him to disclose the name of his master, who being written to, came to the gaol, but he refused to sell him. He was told by the physician that he would not survive the journey, but his reply was that he did not care about the value of his life, he would rather take him home dead, as a caution to his other slaves, than not get him at all.

This was a case that shows with what a spirit of revenge the owners pursue the slaves who escape. Here

is a man offered more than the poor skeleton of his slave is worth, but the malicious gratification of getting him home dead or alive was so sweet that he would not receive the price of his pound of flesh.

The case of Robert and his fate left a deep impression upon my mind. Being from the same state I was from, and thinking it was quite as likely that my master might hear of me being in that goal and come for me, or as I had seen Robert sinking with consumption and confined in a damp cold cell, where I, a robust man, suffered intensely, I took his case to myself, and reasoned in this way:--if I were taken sick and had a physician attending me who should tell me that I could not get well unless I had different and better care than was afforded there, and should induce me to believe that he would purchase me for his own use, and take me to his own house where I could have proper attention, I might, as Robert was, be tempted to let my secret out; and then again knowing my master's spirit and temper, I knew what I might expect. A desire to make an example of me would furnish him a powerful motive to act just as Robert's master; or, what would be more to his liking, take me home alive and well, that he might present me before those of my fellow-slaves who had seen me punish himself and his overseer. It would be a great event to him to be able to punish me in their presence, as a caution to them as to what they might expect in similar circumstances. Nay, it would be greatly worse for me than Robert, had he got me home alive, for he had only ran away, but I had severely beaten two white men. The idea of being sold out of the Smithland gaol terrified me, because I knew that no one would purchase me about that neighbourhood, and that I would be most likely purchased by traders who would take me back to the far South, and thus my chance of getting to the free States would be for ever gone.

These thoughts and feelings worked so strongly upon

my mind that I came to the conclusion that my only hope was to get out of the gaol, and that as soon as possible. So I set about examining every part of our cell with this view.

Now, patient reader, my remaining statement must be short. In the first two attempts I made to escape from Smithland gaol I failed. In the third I succeeded. The mode of attempt in each case was the same. The sun at a certain hour of the day shone into the gaol, at which time I could survey every part; and I saw only one place that could be operated upon with effect, and the only means to be used was fire.

*The structure of the gaol was a log cabin interspiked, and the whole inclosed by a brick wall, some eighteen inches in thickness. The plan was first to burn through the log a space large enough to admit of the egress of a man's body, and then to make use of the spikes in working through the brick wall. After I had my plan matured in my own mind, and had my own men fully prepared, a serious difficulty presented itself. There were two white men in the cell adjoining ours. They were separated from us by a log partition, through which we could talk and see each other's movements. They had to be made acquainted with the plan, and to be induced to come into the conspiracy by the offer that they too should be let out. This was essential to perfect success; because human nature is such that they would not have been likely to keep quiet and let us pass out and leave them without giving alarm. We had some experience of that on a previous occasion. I had, therefore, to burn through two logs, besides digging through the brick wall, so that the white men could pass from their cell into ours, and then all pass from thence out of the gaol. In the first attempt, I got fire from a pipe used by one of the men who was allowed to smoke. All **went went** on well till the second day. The way had been made through the log, and with a spike I was at work on the brick wall,*

hoping to be ready that night. But unfortunately the children playing in the yard heard a noise of my scraping, and informing their father, the gaoler, he came in and caught me at my work. The only punishment he could inflict was to put us all in irons, and make us fast by chains to the centre of the floor. He demanded of me to know why I set the goal on fire. I said--"I did it because I want to get out." He asked me--"**Dont** you know you ought not to fire the gaol?" "Well," I said, "I suppose you wish to keep me here if you can, but I have committed no crime, and I believe I have a right to get out if I can." So the matter rested, and we remained in irons for some time. But after being allowed the liberty of the cell, I renewed the proposal to the parties, who agreed to a second effort. But an additional difficulty now elected. There was no more smoking permitted in the cell, and thus there would be no way to get fire. While this difficulty stood in the way, Christmas came; and as the amusements were going on, the gaoler came up and gave us a view of the burning of a Roman candle, which he fired off into our cell. I preserved some of the burning particles by gently kindling them in a portion of cotton I took from an old coat I had. In this way I got my fire going nicely a second time in the same spot. The others had been sitting in a piece of the log, but strange to say, had not filled up the cavity in the brick wall. The next thing after I had set the fire, the gaoler, as if he suspected that I might have saved fire from the Roman candle, came into the cell and found it even so, and again we were all ironed. I began now to fear that there was no hope of success, and it seemed as if I had made my own case and that of others worse. We all felt the gloom, but still I did not despair. I had set my mind upon getting out of that gaol, and the cherishing of a determination to accomplish that object afforded my feelings the only relief I had in my sad state.

The door leading from our cell into the entry had a grated window in it some ten or twelve inches square, so that we could see when a light was in the entry by night. One night it seems the gaoler was out electioneering. His office being elective, he desired a new term. His son, who was in charge, left a candle burning in the entry at the head of the stairs. We had a pole in the cell used for cleaning a certain vent; attaching a piece of cotton to the end of this, and extending it through the door to the candle, I got fire a third time, and I now felt more confident than ever of success. I insisted upon having more absolutely the control of the matter than I had in previous attempts. To this all consented. The same plan was not only agreed to, but it was left entirely to me to work it out. We were, of course, allowed water in the gaol, and in burning through the logs I could manage to keep the fire in bounds by occasionally applying water just where I wanted to restrict its progress. To prevent it blazing up, or smoking too much, I would let the ashes accumulate so as to suppress both smoke and blaze, something after the manner of burning charred or pit coal. I waited that night till all was still, and the family in bed, and I set my fire agoing, which burned under the regulations I have spoken of the remainder of that night, the next day and night, and on the third night, about eleven o'clock, in a pouring rain, we came out of Smithland gaol, leaving the gaoler and his family sound asleep. Not a word of alarm was heard, and as we left no fire burning, it is not likely that anything was known of our movements till daylight. I never heard anything of the matter since. The night, and all things considered, could not have been better for our purpose; it was intensely dark, and as I have said the rain poured in torrents. Being near Ohio river, after looking along the shore for sometime, we found a boat in which we crossed to the Illinois side. I should

say that after leaving the gaol, I never saw anything more of the two white men. We got somewhat bewildered after getting into Illinois, and had a difficulty in striking the right course of the Illinois central railroad.

On the third day, I ventured to ask a white man, as we passed his house, the proper direction. He properly directed us. But I had strong suspicions that he intended to raise a force and pursue us; and he did so. We had followed his directions, and travelled on till nightfall. The moon shone brightly. At a certain point where he knew we must pass, he had a large number of men hid behind the fences, who suddenly came out, presenting guns and other weapons, and commanded us to surrender. I gave the word that there would be no surrender. I was threatened with a shot. I said--"Shoot away, I can shoot too." Finding that they were in force enough to surround us, I deemed a retreat the more prudent course than a bloody fight. So we ran in order, retracing our course. The enemy pursued us. One gun was fired, from which a shot passed through my pants and boot leg, and made a slight impression upon my skin. We escaped the pursuers by wading into a very large pond of water, overgrown mostly by brush and small trees, and there standing while they passed around it, supposing that we had done the same. After the enemy was thus outwitted by us, and had given up the chase and dispersed, we sallied out and went forward, and about twelve that night came to the Illinois central railroad.

Past experience made us quite cautious, for fear that we should again be deceived. We travelled on for three nights, and only such portions of the day as the state of the districts rendered prudent[.] Some parts of Illinois is very thinly settled, so that in places we could travel for good part of a day without coming to a village. A few days after, however, we again ventured to deviate from our rule, and not to attempt to pass

through a town or village by day; and it being the Sabbath, we thought surely we should not be interrupted. But we were mistaken. The sanctity of the holy Sabbath failed to protect us from the keen-eyed Kentuckians and Tennesseans of the Town of Ashly, through which our road led. Entering the town, we were quietly passing a public-house, where there was gathered a considerable force; one fellow had passed us on the road just before we reached the town, and from the manner in which he looked at us I cautioned the men that he would be likely to report our approach. We were hailed and asked where we were going. I said--"To Chicago."--"What are you going there for?" I said--"To work."--"You are runaways, *aint* you?" I said--"No, we are free men."--"Well, come in and give an account of yourselves, and if it is all right, you can go on." I insisted that we had a right to proceed, but I had no hearing; and as we stood in the street, I saw by the distribution of the enemy's forces that he was preparing to front and rear me if I made any attempt to retreat, and as to a fight his number was so much greater that I deemed a surrender best. We were taken and secured. Partly for shame, and partly from fear that an attempt would be made to release us, they retained us in a room till night, when we being tied with new ropes and placed in a waggon, started for a gaol. By this time I began to feel a great dread of gaol, and coming to a point in the road where the waggon had to descend a hill, I slipped my rope which I had previously loosened, and quickly alighted from the waggon, left as fast as my legs could carry me; so before the waggon got to the bottom of the hill, I was at a safe distance from the enemy. I saw no more of my friends. My journey was continued alone. Serious thoughts passed through my mind. I started alone, and after having companions in my perilous travels and imprisonments for a time, it appeared now to be the order of

Divine Providence that I should end my journey to a free country alone.

Nothing else of any importance occurred till the next Sabbath morning, when I was molested by a party of armed men on the road, who again ordered me to surrender to them as a fugitive slave. I refused to do so. They surrounded me in large numbers, and being confident I was a runaway slave they seemed eager for a reward. I consented to go with them, but I would not allow a man to lay his hand upon my person. This party detained me over night, keeping me under close watch, and the next day took me to a place called Shelville, where to my great regret I was lodged in gaol again, for I thought I had broken gaols enough to entitle me to my freedom. I was confined in this gaol for three or four weeks. The gaoler was a kind man, and as I represented myself to be a free man, my case excited his sympathy. He did not confine me in the felon's cell. I worked sometimes about the yard, and sometimes went a-fishing with him. Taking advantage of this, and finding that the lock could be easily taken off the door of the outer room I was placed in at night, with the use of an old screw driver I found in the yard, I took it off one day and oiled the screws while the gaoler was away, so that it could be taken off the more quietly. The night came. I removed the lock and walked out, leaving the door open, and seven days after this I arrived at the town of Peotone, in Will county, State of Illinois, making in all, from the time I was sold from Virginia, a period of time a little short of thirteen months.

I found ready employment among the farmers of that country, and I deem it my duty here to state, as an act of gratitude, that I found a genuine friend in the person of Mr. J. P. Dean of that place; but owing to the existence of the fugitive law and my liability under it I never informed him of any part of this history. I felt as if I should rather be in a country

where I should be free from the liability of arrest and where I should be justly treated. With that intention I came to the city of New York, to take passage to Australia, but failing to get a steamer I set out for Liverpool with the same view. While on my way I resolved to have my history published, and to spend the winter here improving my education, and to proceed to Australia at a future time.

I left New York by the steamship "Edinburgh," October 12th, and arrived at Liverpool, the 24th day of the same month, 1861.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING now given a plain account of the manner in which I escaped from slavery, I can say that from beginning to end I have been actuated by an earnest desire to get away from slavery, because I consider it an unmitigated evil; and in this remark, I speak the sentiments of the slaves as a body. It is their belief universally, that they are justly entitled to their freedom, immediately. They do not believe that they have done any crime to forfeit their right to freedom, or that they are made any better by remaining in the condition of slaves. They look upon slavery as a system of injustice and robbery, and slaveholders as their worst enemies, because they are guilty of that robbery and injustice. I have seen and spoken with a great many slaves in and from different States, and with those who have had comparatively good treatment, so far as concerns food, clothing, and work, but I have never heard one say that he or she ought to be a slave. I know it is said that

cases exist where slaves decline their freedom when proffered to them. There may in the South be cases of that class picked up: but what of that? In the first place, the fact that ten men out of the whole population of Liverpool would rather be serfs in Russia than to be free subjects of Her Majesty Queen Victoria does not prove that all the rest of the citizens of Liverpool should be consigned to the same condition. And, besides, what does it say for slavery as a degrading power? If slavery has power to divest a man of his self-respect and natural aspirations to such an extent that he can really prefer it to his own God given freedom, why, then surely it is to be dreaded and to be avoided as one would the touch of the torpedo. The slaves, of course, cannot take any part in public opinion about slavery, but they have their private opinion, which is as I have stated, that they are of right entitled to be set free immediately.

Attempts are often made by slaveholders and their religious teachers to induce slaves to believe that slavery is in accordance with the will of God, and the sanction of his Holy Word. But they do not succeed in doing so; and the fact that slaves in many cases worship God under the same forms with their masters is not to be taken as evidence that they have confidence in the piety of those masters or their teachers, for they have not. Many of the slaves do not wish to be associated with their masters in worship at all, and those who are associated with them in the forms of worship, seek a different character of personal religion, as they do not believe that the religion possessed by the masters will either console them here or save them hereafter. In a word, they do not believe that a slaveholder can be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven unless he first put away the sin of slaveholding. The slaves, moreover, not only desire, but they look confidently for the day of their emancipation. Nor do they expect when free to spend their time in idleness. They all

know they will have to work, but like other men they wish to have the benefit of the labour of their hands. Those aspirations which lead white men to spend their time, rise their talents, and exert their energies for the acquirement of property and the amassing of wealth are strongly developed amongst the slaves, and that those aspirations will lead many from the cotton fields and the rice swamps to other avocations is certain, but it will not follow that such "are lazy and will not work." The fear that the slaves will not work when freed is a very convenient excuse to avoid meeting the very question of emancipation upon its merits; but the reading public may be assured that if the planters came into the plan of emancipation in a proper spirit and temper there would be no difficulty in the way of getting their work done on the free-labour plan. Treat the labourers kindly, as men whom they have wronged, pay them fairly and not grudgingly, and all will go well.

*The slaves hear their masters, when in the heat of political excitement, say a great deal in favour of free democratic institutions, and against kings, queens, lords, and dukes. In listening and overhearing what their **master's** say they learn that democracy is a government of the people, wherein all have a voice, but the majority rules. On this principle they do not see how it can be right to require from one hundred to five thousand of them to labour for the sole benefit of one white man, and why should not the opinion of 4,000,000 of people be of weight against the practice of 350,000 slaveholders? While the restless and proud State of South Carolina now occupies the bad eminence of being the originators of the present rebellion in America, she exhibits the curious fact that her so called free population is in the minority compared with the slaves. The census of 1860 (the eighth U.S.) gives South Carolina a free population of 301,271; slaves, 402,541; majority for the slaves, 101,270; and be it remembered that in this census the*

free blacks, who are numerous in the state, are placed in the column with the whites, under the head of "Free." Now, who can doubt that in a fair democratic vote which way the slaves would cast their suffrage, and decide by their majority, if the question was fairly put whether they should be free? Mr. Aikin, the largest slaveowner in America, lives in South Carolina; his number is 5000! How would his vote stand think you against 5000 slaves?

Take Mississippi, another important state in the present rebellion. Here we find the free population, including the blacks who bear that name, to be 354,699, slaves 436,690, leaving the latter a clear majority of 81,997. In Louisiana the parties stand--free population, 376,913; slaves, 332,520; giving the free a majority of 44,493; but if we deduct 50,000 for the free blacks, the slaves will have a majority over the whites of 5000. A very similar result will be reached by looking at the census of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama.

These facts, applying as they do to the principal States of the Confederates, are suggestive. The slaves are certain to be dragged in as a party to this fearful contest before it is brought to a close. It is utterly impossible to prevent it. Whatever else France and England may do, they cannot keep the slaves out of the contest. It would be quite out of character for either of those powers at this stage of civilisation to use any influence to bind the chains of the American slaves after freeing their own, and we must not believe that it will be done. Let us put that question aside, and look at the case as it stands. 4,000,000 slaves! created in the likeness of God, but held, adjudged, and treated as chattels personal by professedly Christian States. This, alas! is the cause of America's present troubles. She will never be herself again until she puts away this national crime of slavery. The conscience of the nation now begins to feel it keenly. The South as a country will be freed for free men, whether white or black, to live in, and by free labour to acquire and enjoy

wealth and comfort. The slaves are quite ripe for this as soon as the Government extends it call to them. 300,000 or 400,000 slaves will respond, in view of getting their freedom. Let the United States Government do this, and it will make a powerful friend of the slaves by freeing them, end the war in the shortest time with least bloodshed, and put itself in a position to deal magnanimously with the rebels.

THE END.

M. ROURKE, PRINTER, SOUTH JOHN STREET, LIVERPOOL.