

reading on July 14, 2013
(day after Trayvon Martin/
Zimmerman verdict)

Frederick Douglass

1818–1895

this is one of the
larger bits in
the collection

Frederick Douglass was born a slave in 1818 on a farm in Maryland. His mother, an enslaved black woman named Harriet Bailey, was sent back to the fields soon after his birth, and he spent his early childhood with his grandmother Betsey Bailey. His father was a white man whose identity Douglass never learned; possibly he was Aaron Anthony, the plantation overseer who owned his mother, or Edward Lloyd, the landowner Anthony worked for.

At the age of six Frederick was taken from his grandmother to serve as a companion, first, to one of Lloyd's young sons, and then, in Baltimore, to the young son of Anthony's daughter's brother-in-law, Hugh Auld. Auld's wife Sophia, unaccustomed to managing slaves, treated Frederick very well at first and began to teach him to read, until her husband put a stop to it (see our first set of excerpts, from Douglass's first autobiography). Eager to learn, however, Frederick found ways to continue his education surreptitiously. He pored over an old copy of *The Columbian Orator*, a collection of speeches used to teach rhetoric. The ideals expressed in some of these speeches, as well as what he was learning about the abolition movement from secretly reading newspapers, began to convince Frederick that slavery was wrong and that he should resist it.

In 1833 he was sent back from Baltimore to the Maryland Eastern Shore, to Thomas Auld, Hugh's brother. Frederick quickly got in trouble for organizing a Sunday school for fellow slaves, at which he taught reading and writing. Auld decided to hire him out for the year of 1834 to the farmer Edward Covey, known as a "breaker" of rebellious slaves. After months of brutal treatment, Frederick finally attacked Covey, and after this battle was never whipped again. In 1835 Auld took him away from Covey and hired him to a more kindly employer. Frederick again organized clandestine literacy schooling for his fellow slaves. He also made his first attempt to flee slavery, in 1836, but the plan was discovered and Frederick and his four companions were jailed.

Although both lynching and sale to a deep-south plantation death trap were threatened, Thomas Auld decided to send Frederick back to his brother in Baltimore. Hugh Auld placed Frederick in a shipyard and trained him as a caulker. Frederick reestablished his ties with the Baltimore black community, again teaching reading and writing; he joined a debate club whose other members were free black men and became engaged to Anna Murray, a free black woman. His resolve to escape was still firm, and in September 1838, after a quarrel with Hugh Auld made him again fear being sold south, Frederick fled Baltimore using borrowed seaman's papers that falsely identified him as a free man. Anna Murray joined him in New York, where they were married, and they then went on to New Bedford, Massachusetts, a seaport town where Frederick hoped to find work as a caulker.

During his escape, Frederick used the surname Johnson rather than Bailey to help divert pursuit. Once arrived in New Bedford, however, he learned that Johnson was an exceedingly common name among local blacks, and his host Nathan

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Johnson, a black man active in abolition and assistance to fugitive slaves, suggested that he take the surname Douglas, after a heroic Scottish nobleman in Sir Walter Scott's poem "The Lady of the Lake." Douglass agreed, although spelling the name as a prominent Philadelphia black family spelled it.

The racist objections of white workers prevented Douglass from finding work as a caulker, so he supported his growing family (he and Anna had five children by 1849) with unskilled labor on the docks. Douglass lost no time in informing himself about the abolitionist movement and local activism for black rights. He subscribed to William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*, the leading abolitionist newspaper, and began to speak on abolition and other black civil rights issues at gatherings in African American churches in New Bedford. White abolitionist William Coffin heard him speak and invited him to attend a Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention held on Nantucket Island in August 1841. Here, at Coffin's urging, and with white abolitionists he much admired, preeminent among them William Lloyd Garrison, on the platform, Douglass gave his first speech against slavery that addressed a large, mixed audience: white and black men and women. His account of his own sufferings in slavery was so powerful that he was hired on the spot as a paid agent of the Society to speak against slavery around New England. He moved his family to Lynn, Massachusetts, and never worked on the docks again, making a living henceforth as an orator and later as a journalist.

Douglass's contact with the Boston-based abolition movement was intellectually formative for him. An especially strong influence was William Lloyd Garrison, whose thinking so dominated the group that they were all known as Garrisonian abolitionists. The chief tenets of Garrison's philosophy were that slavery was an un-Christian denial of the humanity of every person, that the United States Constitution and government were un-Christian and immoral for protecting slavery, and that slavery's opponents should have as little to do with this evil government as possible, instead attempting to abolish slavery by persuading its advocates that it was morally wrong. Garrison condemned not only violent resistance to slavery but also political approaches to containing it. Among Garrison's colleagues whom Douglass met in these years, and most of whom remained his lifelong friends, were free black leaders Charles Lenox Remond (Douglass would name a son after him) and William C. Nell, and white abolitionists Wendell Phillips, Parker Pillsbury, Abby Kelley (Foster), and Amy Post.

In the next several years, Douglass traveled all over the Northeast speaking against slavery, as far west as Indiana and as far south as New York City. He addressed over one hundred meetings a year, sometimes facing violent opposition (his right hand was broken in a brawl at a meeting in Indiana and never healed properly), and sometimes contending with internal quarrels in the abolition movement itself. Garrison, although a paternal mentor to Douglass, brooked no deviation from his own doctrines, and he and other white abolitionists apparently wanted little theorizing from Douglass. His role was to be the eloquent example, literally and figuratively displaying the scars of the lash to prepare audiences for white speakers who would lay out the abolition philosophy. But Douglass's brilliant and awakened in-

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tellect could not remain satisfied with this subordinate role (see our second set of excerpts, from Douglass's second autobiography). He wished to analyze slavery as well as to describe it, and to make use of the full range of rhetorical resources that he was discovering at his command.

On the speaker's platform Douglass was apparently deeply impressive. Against the advice of his white friends, who felt he was destroying his credibility as a witness against slavery, Douglass made no attempt to retain a plantation accent in his speech or a trace of the slave's servility in his manner. On the contrary, he worked hard to improve his diction and his command of Standard English—while at the same time salting his speeches with expert mimicry of a variety of speech styles, from African-inflected slave dialects to the hypercorrect and hypocritical accents of white southern proslavery preachers. He learned to use his voice, naturally deep and resonant, as a flexible instrument that could range from rafter-shaking thunder to tenderly moving, quiet tones.

From very early in his career, it seems, Douglass understood that he was crafting a platform persona that had never before been seen in the Western world. He paid careful attention to clothing himself with as much refinement as his white colleagues; his face betrayed that his father was a white man, yet he identified deeply with people of African descent, like his mother, and he dressed his hair in a way that emphasized its African texture. He dramatized the complexities of his own background in virtually every speech. He had been a slave, and now he appeared conspicuously as a free man and a leader in the public fight against slavery. He had received no formal education whatsoever—"All that I know I have stolen,"¹ he told a British audience—and now he commanded the full range of Western cultural archives in the allusions, arguments, and strategies of his masterful performances. By his very presence at the podium, Douglass increased the possibilities for rhetoric, and his autobiographical reflections on his speaking career suggest that he was well aware of this fact.

Ironically, as Douglass's friends had predicted, his success as a speaker led audiences to doubt that he had ever been a slave, or, contrariwise, to doubt that he spoke his own words—instead they accused him of having some white ghost writer prepare his speeches. Douglass attempted to counter both kinds of criticism by publishing, in 1845, the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Slave narratives were already an established American genre, promoted by white abolitionists to demonstrate slavery's horrors and consumed by readers not always above prurient interest in these horrors. The narratives were produced by writers who could thus not only strike a blow against slavery, but also make known their own humanity, literacy, and philosophical views on that brutal institution. This first version of Douglass's autobiography fits well within the genre, concentrating on his life in slavery and concluding with a brief mention of his first appearance on the speaker's platform. He depicts himself as an essentially isolated

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¹Frederick Douglass, "Message to the British," quoted in Benjamin Quarles, ed., *Frederick Douglass* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 34.

and heroic fighter for freedom, echoing his platform persona. A further irony of his frankness in discussing his early life was that he thus gave information to his former owners that might assist them in tracking him down.

The American Anti-Slavery Society, parent body of the Massachusetts group that employed him, had been planning to send Douglass on a speaking tour of the British Isles, from which came important financial and political support for abolition in the United States (Britain had abolished slavery everywhere in its empire in 1834). It seemed like an opportune time for him to leave the country, and accordingly, Douglass embarked in August of 1845, while his newly published *Narrative* was selling briskly. The speaking tour was a tremendous success. Douglass was met everywhere by enthusiastic crowds and suffered none of the racist heckling and discrimination that he had endured in the United States. Moreover, his new white British abolitionist friends clearly viewed him as an intellectual equal. While in Britain, Douglass truly came into his own intellectually and broke the Garrisonian leading strings that had already been frayed by his development as a speaker in the United States. Although he still opposed violent resistance to slavery, he now gave free rein to his own view that political action against slavery was desirable and that the Constitution, properly interpreted, did not defend the institution. He continued to support other social reform efforts that the Garrisonians favored, notably temperance and women's rights, but he gave more prominence to women's rights than many others did and attempted (without fully succeeding) to make common cause among enslaved black people, free but oppressed black people, and oppressed white working-class people.

By the time Douglass returned to the United States in 1847, he was determined to put his views before the American people independently of Garrisonian guidance. He was singularly free to do so, because British friends had purchased his freedom upon hearing that the Aulds had indeed identified him from the *Narrative* and were seeking to return him to slavery. British abolitionists also equipped him with funds to begin his own abolitionist newspaper. This he did, in spite of vigorous opposition from the Garrisonians, who feared the competition with *The Liberator*, the expression of heterodox abolition views, and, somewhat contradictorily, the potential loss of Douglass to the speakers' circuit. To escape Garrisonian surveillance and to lessen the appearance of competing with *The Liberator*, Douglass moved his family to Rochester, New York, where he had many abolitionist friends—notably Amy Post and her husband Isaac—and began to publish *The North Star*, assisted by William Nell and African American physician and journalist Martin Delany. Douglass was not lost to the podium, either; he could not be content with only one medium of activism, and he needed the money from speaking fees to supplement the meager income from his newspaper.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Douglass became increasingly involved in political attempts to institute social reforms, through both speaking and writing. He attended the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, and was instrumental in persuading the group to pass Elizabeth Cady Stanton's resolution for women's suffrage, which even convention co-organizer Lucretia Coffin Mott found too radical. He led protests against the 1850 Fugitive

Slave Law requiring the citizens of free states to assist in the capture of runaway slaves. He came out publicly for an antislavery interpretation of the Constitution, a move so distressing to Garrison that he removed the American Anti-Slavery Society's imprimatur from *The North Star*. Undaunted, Douglass accepted an offer from wealthy white abolition activist Gerrit Smith to merge his paper with Smith's *Liberty Party Paper*, which advocated political resistance to slavery, and in 1851 replaced *The North Star* with the new combination under the title *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, funded generously by Smith. The new title gives some indication of how well known Douglass now was as a social reform activist. He supported candidates for political office who expressed some opposition to slavery, even if they did not embrace his call for immediate abolition, and he eventually became a staunch supporter of the Republican party. In 1855, he published *My Bondage and My Freedom*, a revised and enlarged version of his autobiography that devotes more space to his life after escaping slavery, telling much more about his career as an orator. It sold very well. He continued to lecture all over the northern United States, and added to his antislavery repertoire speeches that addressed other topics such as the ethnography of the African race and the qualities of the American self-made man. Now the principal speaker wherever he appeared, rather than merely an opener, Douglass often talked for more than two hours yet held audiences spellbound, according to contemporary accounts.

Douglass had clearly become an independent force in the arena of American social reform. He had broken with Garrison completely, to the point that he entertained the possibility of violent resistance to slavery. He had earlier met John Brown, a New England farmer whose fervid devotion to abolition drove him to travel to Kansas territory and there lead murderous raids against pro-slavery voters, in an attempt to prevent the territory from entering the Union as a slave state. In 1859 Douglass became involved in Brown's plot to raid the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, to seize weapons that he would distribute to slaves in the surrounding area. Douglass almost accompanied Brown on the raid, but declined at the last minute. The raiders were all killed or captured, and Brown was hanged as a traitor. Douglass's part in the plot became known, and to avoid arrest he departed for a year of lecturing in Britain.

Douglass returned in 1860 to campaign for Abraham Lincoln's election as president. Once the Civil War began in 1861, Douglass staunchly supported the Union cause while emphasizing the war's significance for black people. He condemned Lincoln's suggestions that free and freed African Americans return to Africa and urged Lincoln to issue an emancipation proclamation, which he finally did early in 1863. Douglass also argued for the right of African American men to serve in the Union army, preferably at the same rate of pay and with the same opportunities for advancement as white soldiers. Even though these tokens of equality were not forthcoming, he recruited men for all-black, white-led units, including his three sons. In 1864 Lincoln consulted him about options for the freed slaves, and in 1865 Lincoln invited him to his second inaugural reception over white Republican opposition. Douglass eulogized the assassinated president in Rochester in April of that year.

After the Civil War, Douglass realized that his tasks had not ended with the abolition of slavery, as he explains in his third autobiography (see our third set of excerpts). Black civil rights were still in danger everywhere, and Douglass went to work, denouncing segregated schooling, labor unions that excluded blacks, and white-supremacist roll-backs of black civil rights in the former slave states. He tried unsuccessfully to keep the American Anti-Slavery Society in existence to fight for black rights, but Garrison, regarding its mission as completed, disbanded it. Douglass then expressed support for the new American Equal Rights Association, which initially intended to support civil rights for both white women and African American men and women. This new organization, however, and the long-standing alliance between workers for abolition and for women's rights, foundered amid post-Civil War political exigencies. A prime bone of contention was the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed the franchise to black men while failing to mention women's suffrage. Douglass, although deploring the exclusion of all women from this amendment, nevertheless felt that it should be supported. But many white women feminists argued for a more inclusive amendment. Douglass campaigned for the Fifteenth Amendment, and once it was passed, called for a campaign for another amendment to give the vote to women, but the damage was already done, and unified reform efforts virtually ceased in the postbellum United States.

Douglass, while still supporting women's rights, devoted most of his energies to black rights. Reflecting his increasing focus on achieving reform through political action, he moved his family to Washington, D.C., in 1872 after their Rochester home was destroyed by an arsonist. Through the 1870s and 1880s, he remained a staunch supporter of the Republican party, in spite of its less-than-perfect record on black rights, and promoted his own vision for the future of America even though it conflicted with that of some younger black leaders. The keynote of his thinking was the concept of equality before the law. He argued for giving African Americans an equal chance at all the rights and privileges the United States had to offer—equal schooling, equal work opportunities, equal voting rights, and more. African Americans should work to achieve these equal rights through political activism, promising their votes to those who would do the most for them. To this extent, then, Douglass advocated African Americans making common cause, but otherwise he tended to oppose separatist organizations. He exhorted African Americans to rise socially, economically, and politically by their own individual efforts, and he argued that, as their achievements accumulated, white racism would diminish. His ultimate goal was complete integration and even assimilation; he defended intermarriage as a way to make color differences disappear. Eventually, Douglass hoped, race itself would disappear as a significant category in American culture, and every individual would be judged according to his or her merits alone.

Douglass hoped for political office as a result of his faithful labor for the Republican party. Nomination to elective office was not out of the question, given the emergence of black legislators in the former slave states, but Douglass never achieved this. Appointed office seemed to be closer to his grasp, but it also produced disappointments. After holding several minor bureaucratic appointments in

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Washington, in 1889 Douglass accepted the post of minister to Haiti. Although not the Cabinet position he had wished for, this diplomatic appointment came close to conferring the dignity he desired because Haiti was especially significant in the African American community. It was one of only three independent black nations in the world and had won its freedom from French colonial rule almost a hundred years earlier under the leadership of former slave Toussaint L'Ouverture, a great hero to African Americans. Unfortunately, as minister, Douglass became entangled in a scheme to extort land from Haiti for an American naval base. He attempted to respect Haitian sovereignty while carrying out his directions to negotiate for the base, which was difficult to do while American naval ships postured in the harbor. Although Haiti resisted the pressure and the scheme came to nothing, Douglass was blamed for its failure. He resigned, but published a well-received article in which he defended his actions as minister, and in 1893 he was asked by Haiti to serve as its chief representative at the Columbian Exposition, a world's fair held in Chicago.

Family concerns also occupied Douglass in the last decades of his life. He finally felt able to return to Maryland, to scenes he had known as a slave child, and he renewed acquaintance with the descendants of his former owners and also with his own brothers and sisters, whom he had scarcely known in slavery. He provided generous financial support to some of them and to his own children, who—due as much to persistent racism as to overshadowing by their famous father—had perpetual difficulties in supporting themselves and their children. His wife Anna, still illiterate in spite of his efforts to tutor her and never a full participant in his activist life, though a faithful companion and mother to their children, died in 1882, and Douglass suffered a period of deep depression. Later, in 1884, he remarried to a white woman, Helen Pitts, who lived next door to the Douglasses. This union aroused a storm of protest from his own family and from many friends, both black and white; among his few supporters was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Nevertheless, Douglass and his new wife appeared to be very happy together and took an extended tour of Europe in 1886–1887. She accompanied him to Haiti.

In 1881 Douglass published the third version of his autobiography, now entitled *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, bringing its account up through the busy postwar years. Unlike the two earlier biographies, this one, and its enlarged 1892 edition, sold poorly, implying that the story of the slave who rose to public prominence was no longer of much interest to the public. Nevertheless, Douglass did not give up his activism. He supported the antilynching crusade of the young African American reformer Ida B. Wells, raising money for her, arranging speaking engagements, and coauthoring a protest pamphlet. He also continued to address women's rights meetings and African American conventions. He was escorted to the podium of the 1895 National Council of Women's meeting by long-time friend Susan B. Anthony. Returning home, he was telling his wife about the meeting when he collapsed and died of a heart attack.

If Douglass had been somewhat neglected by the public shortly before his death, people turned out by the thousands to view his body in Washington, and many dignitaries attended the memorial service there before he was taken to Rochester for burial. In 1908, African American sociologist Kelly Miller called him “the one

commanding historic character of the colored race in America."² Although Douglass arguably no longer holds such a position alone, the assessment gives some idea of his impact on nineteenth-century American life, and contemporary African American historian Waldo E. Martin agrees: "Frederick Douglass remains the prototypical black American hero: a peerless self-made man and symbol of success; a fearless and tireless spokesman; a thoroughgoing humanist . . . not only did he succeed, but he did so in terms signifying mythic greatness."³

Douglass had little explicit training in rhetoric, but no doubt he studied not only the model speeches by Cicero, William Pitt, George Washington, and others in *The Columbian Orator* (1797), but also the introductory essay, "General Directions for Speaking," by the anthologist Caleb Bingham. John W. Blassingame, a modern editor of Douglass, points out that naturalness of gesture and expression, flexible use of the voice for emphasis, and imitation of different manners of speech for humorous or otherwise illustrative effect, all emphasized by Bingham, were all noted by contemporary observers as key features in the success of Douglass's oratory. Blassingame detects direct quotes and paraphrases of *Columbian Orator* material in Douglass's early speeches, as well as the influence of contemporary speakers he admired, among them Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, and Daniel Webster, and of his favorite reading, which included the Bible, Shakespeare, Dickens, Longfellow, Whittier, and the Afro-French novelist Alexandre Dumas. Blassingame also surveys reviews of contemporary orators written by Douglass and finds that Douglass reserves his highest praise for speakers who are clear and direct, avoiding the ponderous allusions and flowery ornament favored by many nineteenth-century speakers, and who have the courage to push for needed social reforms: all traits that Douglass himself exhibited.

Learning to read, write, and orate almost simultaneously, as Douglass did, prepared him well for his future career as an abolitionist agitator. Not only did oratory play a major role in the movement, but as historian of rhetoric Ernest G. Borman has indicated, the line between written and spoken rhetoric was indistinct—speeches were often carefully composed before being delivered, and they were edited again before being published; antislavery tracts might furnish material for speeches. Douglass worked hard to master the written and spoken media and, as noted earlier, to develop a culturally syncretic persona. While employing Standard English and European cultural references, for the most part, he expressed an African American point of view and gave a uniquely African American twist to European American cultural elements.

African American Studies scholar Wilson Jeremiah Moses has coined the term *black jeremiad* to characterize how Douglass and other African American orators transformed a European American genre. The Puritan jeremiad focused on the moral and political destiny of Anglo-Americans; in African American hands, this genre took on a dual meaning. Instead of Anglo-Americans, African Americans be-

²Kelly Miller, "Frederick Douglass," in *Radicals and Conservatives and Other Essays* (1908, 1968), quoted in Waldo E. Martin Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 253.

³Martin, p. 253.

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came the preeminent “chosen people” whose future was scrutinized and whose moral reform was invoked to ensure divine salvation from slavery and racist oppression. However, the United States as a multiracial whole was also seen as “chosen” for the task of disseminating democracy throughout the world, a task the country could accomplish only after repenting of the sins of slavery and white supremacist racism.

The dual perspective of this genre made it inherently ironic, continually inviting an examination of its own idealistic terminology. It is this critically ironic view of American life, which added a new dimension to public rhetoric, that speech communication scholar John Louis Lucaites sees as Douglass’s unique contribution:

The ironic construction of equality that emerged from Douglass’s Fifth of July oration underscored the importance of adding the voice of African-Americans to what we have come to call the dialogue of American public address. The immediate impact of that construction was of course limited, but it was to be repeated over and again [sic] by Douglass and others in the ensuing years leading to the Civil War and beyond, and eventually it contributed to the usages of “equality” that emerged in the wake of the reconstructed [post-slavery] Constitution. Those usages emphasized the *differences* between white and black Americans as a prelude to the cultural necessity for “equality under the law.” (emphasis in original)⁴

After a long period of neglect in the first half of the twentieth century, Frederick Douglass’s autobiographies have attracted considerable attention from literary critics. As Lucaites has noted, however, his contributions as a rhetorician have been little studied. Scholars are only now beginning to realize the extent to which Douglass’s complex rhetorical stance opened new possibilities for rhetoric in the Western cultural tradition.

Selected Bibliography

The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, My Bondage and My Freedom*, and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1892 edition) are available in a single volume, *Autobiographies*, with helpful notes by Henry Louis Gates Jr., and a detailed chronology of Douglass’s life (1994). This is the source of our excerpts. Douglass’s speeches and newspaper writings are collected in *Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip Foner (five volumes, 1950–1975), and *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, ed. John W. Blassingame (five volumes, 1979–1992); volume 1 of the latter collection includes a helpful note on editorial methods that highlights the difficulties inherent in studying oral texts.

A good biography is William S. McFeely’s *Frederick Douglass* (1991). A brief account that focuses on Douglass’s knowledge of rhetoric, his rhetorical theory, and assessments of his speaking by contemporary audiences is John W. Blassingame’s “Introduction to Series One” (in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volume 1: 1841–46*, 1979). Another brief biographical account that analyzes several of

⁴John Louis Lucaites, “The Irony of ‘Equality’ in Black Abolitionist Discourse: The Case of Frederick Douglass’s ‘What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?’” in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), pp. 63–64.

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Douglass's speeches in detail and surveys scholarship on him as a master ironist is Gerald Fulkerson's "Frederick Douglass" (in *African-American Orators: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Richard W. Leeman, 1996). For a more detailed exploration of Douglass's thinking on abolition, other social reform issues, and American national identity generally, see *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* by Waldo E. Martin Jr. (1984). Assessments of Douglass's oratory from his own time are collected in *Frederick Douglass*, ed. Benjamin Quarles (1968). Providing information on Douglass's context of contemporary abolitionists are both the collection of abolitionist speeches and the introductory essay in Ernest G. Borman's *Forerunners of Black Power: The Rhetoric of Abolition* (1971).

On the concept of black jeremiad that characterizes much of Douglass's oratory, see Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (1982), and David Howard-Pitney, *The Afro-American Jeremiad: Appeals for Justice in America* (1990). John Louis Lucaites discusses Douglass's unique contribution toward the irony inherent in this genre in "The Irony of 'Equality' in Black Abolitionist Discourse: The Case of Frederick Douglass's 'What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?'" (in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Thomas W. Benson, 1997). Jacqueline Bacon also discusses Douglass's uses of irony, comparing him with other African American abolitionists, in "'Do You Understand Your Own Language?' Revolutionary *Topoi* in the Rhetoric of African-American Abolitionists" (*Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 28 [spring 1998]: 55-75). On Douglass's transformations of traditional American discourse, see Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Carla L. Peterson, "'We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident': The Rhetoric of Frederick Douglass's Journalism" (in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Eric Sundquist, 1990).

For a sampling of literary critical work on Douglass that concentrates on his autobiographies, see the Sundquist volume just cited, and *Critical Essays on Frederick Douglass*, ed. William Andrews (1991); the latter volume includes critical responses to Douglass from his own day to the present, and Andrews surveys Douglass's critical reception as a writer in his introductory essay.

From Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

CHAPTER VI

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly aston-

ished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none

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left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning

without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity of his non-slaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave. Few are willing to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master; and above all things, they would not be known as not giving a slave enough to eat. Every city slaveholder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat. There are, however, some painful exceptions to this rule. Directly opposite to us, on Philpot Street, lived Mr. Thomas Hamilton. He owned two slaves. Their names were Henrietta and Mary. Henrietta was about twenty-two years of age, Mary was about fourteen; and of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so. His heart must be harder than stone, that

this scene is fascinating

could look upon these unmoved. The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores, caused by the lash of her cruel mistress. I do not know that her master ever whipped her, but I have been an eye-witness to the cruelty of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to be in Mr. Hamilton's house nearly every day. Mrs. Hamilton used to sit in a large chair in the middle of the room, with a heavy cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves. The girls seldom passed her without her saying, "Move faster, you *black gip!*" at the same time giving them a blow with the cowskin over the head or shoulders, often drawing the blood. She would then say, "Take that, you *black gip!*"—continuing, "If you don't move faster, I'll move you!" Added to the cruel lashings to which these slaves were subjected, they were kept nearly half-starved. They seldom knew what it was to eat a full meal. I have seen Mary contending with the pigs for the offal thrown into the street. So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that she was oftener called "*pecked*" than by her name.

CHAPTER VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of

her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamb-like disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was

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sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life!* Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being *a slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I

heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of *abolition*. Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words *abolition* and *abolitionist*, and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be in-

terested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time, my

little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meeting-house every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of

the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

From *My Bondage and My Freedom*

In four or five months after reaching New Bedford, there came a young man to me, with a copy of the "Liberator," the paper edited by WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON, and published by ISAAC KNAPP, and asked me to subscribe for it. I told him I had but just escaped from slavery, and was of course very poor, and remarked further, that I was unable to pay for it then; the agent, however, very willingly took me as a subscriber, and appeared to be much pleased with securing my name to his list. From this time I was brought in contact with the mind of William Lloyd Garrison. His paper took its place with me next to the bible.

The Liberator was a paper after my own heart. It detested slavery—exposed hypocrisy and wickedness in high places—made no truce with the traffickers in the bodies and souls of men; it preached human brotherhood, denounced oppression, and, with all the solemnity of God's word, demanded the complete emancipation of my race. I not only liked—I *loved* this paper, and its editor. He seemed a match for all the opponents of emancipation, whether they spoke in the name of the law, or the gospel. His words were few, full of holy fire, and straight to the point. Learning to love him, through his paper I was prepared to be pleased with his presence. Something of a hero worshiper, by nature, here was one, on first sight, to excite my love and reverence.

Seventeen years ago, few men possessed a more heavenly countenance than William Lloyd Garrison, and few men evinced a more genuine or a more exalted piety. The bible was his text book—held sacred, as the word of the Eternal

Father—sinless perfection—complete submission to insults and injuries—literal obedience to the injunction, if smitten on one side to turn the other also. Not only was Sunday a Sabbath, but all days were Sabbaths, and to be kept holy. All sectarianism false and mischievous—the regenerated, throughout the world, members of one body, and the HEAD Christ Jesus. Prejudice against color was rebellion against God. Of all men beneath the sky, the slaves, because most neglected and despised, were nearest and dearest to his great heart. Those ministers who defended slavery from the bible, were of their "father the devil;" and those churches which fellowshipped slaveholders as christians, were synagogues of Satan, and our nation was a nation of liars. Never loud or noisy—calm and serene as a summer sky, and as pure. "You are the man, the Moses, raised up by God, to deliver his modern Israel from bondage," was the spontaneous feeling of my heart, as I sat away back in the hall and listened to his mighty words; mighty in truth—mighty in their simple earnestness.

I had not long been a reader of the Liberator, and listener to its editor, before I got a clear apprehension of the principles of the anti-slavery movement. I had already the spirit of the movement, and only needed to understand its principles and measures. These I got from the Liberator, and from those who believed in that paper. My acquaintance with the movement increased my hope for the ultimate freedom of my race, and I united with it from a sense of delight, as well as duty.

Every week the Liberator came, and every

"It was
enough
for me
to listen"

week I made myself master of its contents. All the anti-slavery meetings held in New Bedford I promptly attended, my heart burning at every true utterance against the slave system, and every rebuke of its friends and supporters. Thus passed the first three years of my residence in New Bedford. I had not then dreamed of the possibility of my becoming a public advocate of the cause so deeply imbedded in my heart. It was enough for me to listen—to receive and applaud the great words of others, and only whisper in private, among the white laborers on the wharves, and elsewhere, the truths which burned in my breast.

CHAPTER XXIII

Introduced to the Abolitionists

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First speech at Nantucket—much sensation—extraordinary speech of Mr. Garrison—author becomes a public lecturer—fourteen years' experience—youthful enthusiasm—a brand new fact—matter of the author's speech—he could not follow the programme—his fugitive slaveship doubted—to settle all doubt he writes his experience of slavery—danger of recapture increased.

In the summer of 1841, a grand anti-slavery convention was held in Nantucket, under the auspices of Mr. Garrison and his friends. Until now, I had taken no holiday since my escape from slavery. Having worked very hard that spring and summer, in Richmond's brass foundry—sometimes working all night as well as all day—and needing a day or two of rest, I attended this convention, never supposing that I should take part in the proceedings. Indeed, I was not aware that any one connected with the convention even so much as knew my name. I was, however, quite mistaken. Mr. William C. Coffin, a prominent abolitionist in those days of trial, had heard me speaking to my colored friends, in the little school-house on Second street, New Bedford, where we worshiped. He sought me out in the crowd, and invited me to say a few words to the convention. Thus sought out, and thus invited, I was induced to speak out the feelings inspired by the occasion, and the fresh recollection of the scenes through which I had passed as a slave. My speech on this occasion is about the only one I

ever made, of which I do not remember a single connected sentence. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could stand erect, or that I could command and articulate two words without hesitation and stammering. I trembled in every limb. I am not sure that my embarrassment was not the most effective part of my speech, if speech it could be called. At any rate, this is about the only part of my performance that I now distinctly remember. But excited and convulsed as I was, the audience, though remarkably quiet before, became as much excited as myself. Mr. Garrison followed me, taking me as his text; and now, whether I had made an eloquent speech in behalf of freedom or not, his was one never to be forgotten by those who heard it. Those who had heard Mr. Garrison oftenest, and had known him longest, were astonished. It was an effort of unequalled power, sweeping down, like a very tornado, every opposing barrier, whether of sentiment or opinion. For a moment, he possessed that almost fabulous inspiration, often referred to but seldom attained, in which a public meeting is transformed, as it were, into a single individuality—the orator wielding a thousand heads and hearts at once, and by the simple majesty of his all controlling thought, converting his hearers into the express image of his own soul. That night there were at least one thousand Garrisonians in Nantucket! At the close of this great meeting, I was duly waited on by Mr. John A. Collins—then the general agent of the Massachusetts anti-slavery society—and urgently solicited by him to become an agent of that society, and to publicly advocate to anti-slavery principles. I was reluctant to take the proffered position. I had not been quite three years from slavery—was honestly distrustful of my ability—wished to be excused; publicity exposed me to discovery and arrest by my master; and other objections came up, but Mr. Collins was not to be put off, and I finally consented to go out for three months, for I supposed that I should have got to the end of my story and my usefulness, in that length of time.

Here opened upon me a new life—a life for which I had had no preparation. I was a "graduate from the peculiar institution," Mr. Collins used to say, when introducing me, "with my diploma written on my back!" The three years of

a "brand new fact"
(a whole other kind
of proposition)

my freedom had been spent in the hard school of adversity. My hands had been furnished by nature with something like a sordid leather coating, and I had bravely marked out for myself a life of rough labor, suited to the hardness of my hands, as a means of supporting myself and rearing my children.

Now what shall I say of this fourteen years' experience as a public advocate of the cause of my enslaved brothers and sisters? The time is but as a speck, yet large enough to justify a pause for retrospection—and a pause it must only be.

Young, ardent, and hopeful, I entered upon this new life in the full gush of unsuspecting enthusiasm. The cause was good; the men engaged in it were good; the means to attain its triumph, good; Heaven's blessing must attend all, and freedom must soon be given to the pining millions under a ruthless bondage. My whole heart went with the holy cause, and my most fervent prayer to the Almighty Disposer of the hearts of men, were continually offered for its early triumph. "Who or what," thought I, "can withstand a cause so good, so holy, so indescribably glorious. The God of Israel is with us. The might of the Eternal is on our side. Now let but the truth be spoken, and a nation will start forth at the sound!" In this enthusiastic spirit, I dropped into the ranks of freedom's friends, and went forth to the battle. For a time I was made to forget that my skin was dark and my hair crisped. For a time I regretted that I could not have shared the hardships and dangers endured by the earlier workers for the slave's release. I soon, however, found that my enthusiasm had been extravagant; that hardships and dangers were not yet passed; and that the life now before me, had shadows as well as sunbeams.

Among the first duties assigned me, on entering the ranks, was to travel, in company with Mr. George Foster, to secure subscribers to the "Anti-slavery Standard" and the "Liberator." With him I traveled and lectured through the eastern counties of Massachusetts. Much interest was awakened—large meetings assembled. Many came, no doubt, from curiosity to hear what a negro could say in his own cause. I was generally introduced as a "chattel"—a "thing"—a piece of southern "property"—the chairman assuring the

audience that *it* could speak. Fugitive slaves, at that time, were not so plentiful as now; and as a fugitive slave lecturer, I had the advantage of being a "brand new fact"—the first one out. Up to that time, a colored man was deemed a fool who confessed himself a runaway slave, not only because of the danger to which he exposed himself of being retaken, but because it was a confession of a very *low* origin! Some of my colored friends in New Bedford thought very badly of my wisdom for thus exposing and degrading myself. The only precaution I took, at the beginning, to prevent Master Thomas from knowing where I was, and what I was about, was the withholding my former name, my master's name, and the name of the state and county from which I came. During the first three or four months, my speeches were almost exclusively made up of narrations of my own personal experience as a slave. "Let us have the facts," said the people. So also said Friend George Foster, who always wished to pin me down to my simple narrative. "Give us the facts," said Collins, "we will take care of the philosophy." Just here arose some embarrassment. It was impossible for me to repeat the same old story month after month, and to keep up my interest in it. It was new to the people, it is true, but it was an old story to me; and to go through with it night after night, was a task altogether too mechanical for my nature. "Tell your story, Frederick," would whisper my then revered friend, William Lloyd Garrison, as I stepped upon the platform. I could not always obey, for I was now reading and thinking. New views of the subject were presented to my mind. It did not entirely satisfy me to *narrate* wrongs; I felt like *denouncing* them. I could not always curb my moral indignation for the perpetrators of slaveholding villainy, long enough for a circumstantial statement of the facts which I felt almost everybody must know. Besides, I was growing; and needed room. "People won't believe you ever was a slave, Frederick, if you keep on this way," said Friend Foster. "Be yourself," said Collins, "and tell your story." It was said to me, "Better have a *little* of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned." These excellent friends were actuated by the best of motives, and were not altogether wrong in their advice; and

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still I must speak just the word that seemed to *me* the word to be spoken *by* me.

At last the apprehended trouble came. People doubted if I had ever been a slave. They said I did not talk like a slave, look like a slave, nor act like a slave, and that they believed I had never been south of Mason and Dixon's line. "He don't tell us where he came from—what his master's name was—how he got away—nor the story of his experience. Besides, he is educated, and is, in this, a contradiction of all the facts we have concerning the ignorance of the slaves." Thus, I was in a pretty fair way to be denounced as an impostor. The committee of the Massachusetts anti-slavery society knew all the facts in my case, and agreed with me in the prudence of keeping them private. They, therefore, never doubted my being a genuine fugitive; but going down the aisles of the churches in which I spoke, and hearing the free spoken Yankees saying, repeatedly, "*He's never been a slave, I'll warrant ye,*" I resolved to dispel all doubt, at no distant day, by such a revelation of facts as could not be made by an other than a genuine fugitive.

In a little less than four years, therefore, after becoming a public lecturer, I was induced to write out the leading facts connected with my experience in slavery, giving names of persons, places, and dates—thus putting it in the power of any who doubted, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my story of being a fugitive slave. This statement soon became known in Maryland, and I had reason to believe that an effort would be made to recapture me.

It is not probable that any open attempt to secure me as a slave could have succeeded, further

than the obtainment, by my master, of the money value of my bones and sinews. Fortunately for me, in the four years of my labors in the abolition cause, I had gained many friends, who would have suffered themselves to be taxed to almost any extent to save me from slavery. It was felt that I had committed the double offense of running away, and exposing the secrets and crimes of slavery and slaveholders. There was a double motive for seeking my reenslavement—avarice and vengeance; and while, as I have said, there was little probability of successful recapture, if attempted openly, I was constantly in danger of being spirited away, at a moment when my friends could render me no assistance. In traveling about from place to place—often alone—I was much exposed to this sort of attack. Any one cherishing the design to betray me, could easily do so, by simply tracing my whereabouts through the anti-slavery journals, for my meetings and movements were promptly made known in advance. My true friends, Mr. Garrison and Mr. Phillips, had no faith in the power of Massachusetts to protect me in my right to liberty. Public sentiment and the law, in their opinion, would hand me over to the tormentors. Mr. Phillips, especially, considered me in danger, and said, when I showed him the manuscript of my story, if in my place, he would throw it into the fire. Thus the reader will observe, the settling of one difficulty only opened the way for another; and that though I had reached a free state, and had attained a position for public usefulness, I was still tormented with the liability of losing my liberty. How this liability was dispelled, will be related, with other incidents, in the next chapter.

an effort to satisfy white audiences
of his authenticity as an escaped
slave he had to risk being
returned to slavery: now, that's
the true ubiquity of racism

we attend to the campaign and not just
the speech: the material conditions of rhetoric
is now^a less than isolated event (*)

books/
notes

From *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

CHAPTER V

One Hundred Conventions

*Anti-slavery conventions held in parts of New England
and in some of the middle and western states—
mobs—incidents, etc.*

The year 1843 was one of remarkable anti-slavery activity. The New England Anti-Slavery Society, at its annual meeting held in the spring of that year, resolved, under the auspices of Mr. Garrison and his friends, to hold a series of one hundred conventions. The territory embraced in this plan for creating anti-slavery sentiment included New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. I had the honor to be chosen one of the agents to assist in these proposed conventions, and I never entered upon any work with more heart and hope. All that the American people needed, I thought, was light. Could they know slavery as I knew it, they would hasten to the work of its extinction. The corps of speakers who were to be associated with me in carrying on these conventions was Messrs. George Bradburn, John A. Collins, James Monroe, William A. White, Charles L. Remond, and Sydney Howard Gay. They were all masters of the subject, and some of them able and eloquent orators. It was a piece of great good fortune to me, only a few years from slavery as I was, to be brought into contact with such men. It was a real campaign, and required nearly six months for its accomplishment.

Those who only know the State of Vermont as it is to-day can hardly understand, and must wonder that there was forty years ago need for anti-slavery effort within its borders. Our first convention was held in Middlebury, its chief seat of learning and the home of William Slade, who was for years the co-worker with John Quincy Adams in Congress; and yet in this town the opposition to our anti-slavery convention was intense bitter and violent. The only man of note in the town whom I now remember as giving us sympathy or welcome was Mr. Edward Barber, who was a man of

courage as well as ability, and did his best to make our convention a success. In advance of our arrival the college students had very industriously and mischievously placarded the town with violent aspersions of our characters and the grossest misrepresentations of our principles, measures, and objects. I was described as an escaped convict from the State prison, and the other speakers were assailed not less slanderously. Few people attended our meeting, and apparently little was accomplished by it. In the neighboring town of Ferrisburgh the case was different and more favorable. The way had been prepared for us by such stalwart anti-slavery workers as Orson S. Murray, Charles C. Burleigh, Rowland T. Robinson, and others. Upon the whole, however, the several towns visited showed that Vermont was surprisingly under the influence of the slave power. Her proud boast that within her borders no slave had ever been delivered up to his master, did not hinder her hatred to *anti-slavery*. What was in this respect true of the Green Mountain State was most discouragingly true of New York, the State next visited. All along the Erie canal, from Albany to Buffalo, there was evinced apathy, indifference, aversion, and sometimes a mobocratic spirit. Even Syracuse, afterward the home of the humane Samuel J. May and the scene of the "Jerry rescue;" where Gerrit Smith, Beriah Greene, William Goodell, Alvin Stewart, and other able men taught their noblest lessons, would not at that time furnish us with church, market, house, or hall in which to hold our meetings. Discovering this state of things, some of our number were disposed to turn our backs upon the town and to shake its dust from our feet, but of these, I am glad to say, I was not one. I had somewhere read of a command to go into the hedges and highways and compel men to come in. Mr. Stephen Smith, under whose hospitable roof we were made at home, thought as I did. It would be easy to silence anti-slavery agitation if refusing its agents the use of halls and churches could affect that result. The house of our friend Smith stood on the southwest corner of the park, which was well covered with young trees too small to furnish

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shade or shelter, but better than none. Taking my stand under a small tree in the southeast corner of this park I began to speak in the morning to an audience of five persons, and before the close of my afternoon meeting I had before me not less than five hundred. In the evening I was waited upon by officers of the Congregational church and tendered the use of an old wooden building which they had deserted for a better, but still owned, and here our convention was continued during three days. I believe there has been no trouble to find places in Syracuse in which to hold anti-slavery meetings since. I never go there without endeavoring to see that tree, which, like the cause it sheltered, has grown large and strong and imposing.

I believe my first offense against our Anti-Slavery Israel was committed during these Syracuse meetings. It was on this wise: Our general agent, John A. Collins, had recently returned from England full of communistic ideas, which ideas would do away with individual property, and have all things in common. He had arranged a corps of speakers of his communistic persuasion, consisting of John O. Wattles, Nathaniel Whiting, and John Orvis, to follow our anti-slavery conventions, and, while our meeting was in progress in Syracuse, a meeting, as the reader will observe, obtained under much difficulty, Mr. Collins came in with his new friends and doctrines and proposed to adjourn our anti-slavery discussions and take up the subject of communism. To this I ventured to object. I held that it was imposing an additional burden of unpopularity on our cause, and an act of bad faith with the people, who paid the salary of Mr. Collins, and were responsible for these hundred conventions. Strange to say, my course in this matter did not meet the approval of Mrs. M. W. Chapman, an influential member of the board of managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, and called out a sharp reprimand from her, for insubordination to my superiors. This was a strange and distressing revelation to me, and one of which I was not soon relieved. I thought I had only done my duty, and I think so still. The chief reason for the reprimand was the use which the liberty party-papers would make of my seeming rebellion against the commanders of our anti-slavery army.

In the growing city of Rochester we had in every way a better reception. Abolitionists of all

shades of opinion were broad enough to give the Garrisonians (for such we were) a hearing. Samuel D. Porter and the Avery family, though they belonged to the Gerrit Smith, Myron Holly, and William Goodell school, were not so narrow as to refuse us the use of their church for the convention. They heard our moral suasion arguments, and in a manly way met us in debate. We were opposed to carrying the anti-slavery cause to the ballot-box, and they believed in carrying it there. They looked at slavery as a creature of law; we regarded it as a creature of public opinion. It is surprising how small the difference appears as I look back to it, over the space of forty years; yet at the time of it this difference was immense.

During our stay at Rochester we were hospitably entertained by Isaac and Amy Post, two people of all-abounding benevolence, the truest and best of Long Island and Elias Hicks Quakers. They were not more amiable than brave, for they never seemed to ask, What will the world say? but walked straight forward in what seemed to them the line of duty, please or offend whomsoever it might. Many a poor fugitive slave found shelter under their roof when such shelter was hard to find elsewhere, and I mention them here in the warmth and fullness of earnest gratitude.

Pleased with our success in Rochester, we—that is, Mr. Bradburn and myself—made our way to Buffalo, then a rising city of steamboats, bustle, and business. Buffalo was too busy to attend to such matters as we had in hand. Our friend, Mr. Marsh, had been able to secure for our convention only an old dilapidated and deserted room, formerly used as a post-office. We went at the time appointed, and found seated a few cabmen in their coarse, everyday clothes, whips in hand, while their teams were standing on the street waiting for a job. Friend Bradburn looked around upon this unpromising audience, and turned upon his heel, saying he would not speak to “such a set of ragamuffins,” and took the first steamer to Cleveland, the home of his brother Charles, and left me to “do” Buffalo alone. For nearly a week I spoke every day in this old post-office to audiences constantly increasing in numbers and respectability, till the Baptist church was thrown open to me; and when this became too small I went on Sunday into the open Park and addressed an assembly of four or five thousand persons. After this my colored friends, Charles L. Remond, Henry

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broken hand, Austin might ask?

Highland Garnett, Theodore S. Wright, Amos G. Beam, Charles M. Ray, and other well-known colored men held a convention here, and then Remond and myself left for our next meeting in Clinton county, Ohio. This was held under a great shed, built for this special purpose by the abolitionists, of whom Dr. Abram Brook and Valentine Nicholson were the most noted. Thousands gathered here and were addressed by Bradburn, White, Monroe, Remond, Gay, and myself. The influence of this meeting was deep and wide-spread. It would be tedious to tell of all, or a small part of all that was interesting and illustrative of the difficulties encountered by the early advocates of anti-slavery in connection with this campaign, and hence I leave this part of it at once.

From Ohio we divided our forces and went into Indiana. At our first meeting we were mobbed, and some of us had our good clothes spoiled by evil-smelling eggs. This was at Richmond, where Henry Clay had been recently invited to the high seat of the Quaker meeting-house just after his gross abuse of Mr. Mendenhall, because of the latter presenting to him a respectful petition, asking him to emancipate his slaves. At Pendleton this mobocratic spirit was even more pronounced. It was found impossible to obtain a building in which to hold our convention, and our friends, Dr. Fussell and others, erected a platform in the woods, where quite a large audience assembled. Mr. Bradburn, Mr. White and myself were in attendance. As soon as we began to speak a mob of about sixty of the roughest characters I ever looked upon ordered us, through its leaders, to "be silent," threatening us, if we were not, with violence. We attempted to dissuade them, but they had not come to parley but to fight, and were well armed. They tore down the platform on which we stood, assaulted Mr. White and knocked out several of his teeth, dealt a heavy blow on William A. White, striking him on the back part of the head, badly cutting his scalp and felling him to the ground. Undertaking to fight my way through the crowd with a stick which I caught up in the mêlée, I attracted the fury of the mob, which laid me prostrate on the ground under a torrent of blows. Leaving me thus, with my right hand broken, and in a state of unconsciousness, the mobocrats hastily mounted their

horses and rode to Andersonville, where most of them resided. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

Vast Changes

Satisfaction and anxiety—new fields of labor opening—lyceums and colleges soliciting addresses—literary attractions—pecuniary gain—still pleading for human rights—President Andy Johnson—colored delegation—their reply to him—National Loyalist Convention, 1866, and its procession—not wanted—meeting with an old friend—joy and surprise—the old master's welcome, and Miss Amanda's friendship—emancipation discussed—its accomplishment—the negro a citizen.

When the war for the Union was substantially ended, and peace had dawned upon the land, as was the case almost immediately after the tragic death of President Lincoln; when the gigantic system of American slavery which had defied the march of time and resisted all the appeals and arguments of the abolitionists and the humane testimonies of good men of every generation during two hundred and fifty years, was finally abolished and forever prohibited by the organic law of the land, a strange and, perhaps, perverse feeling came over me. My great and exceeding joy over these stupendous achievements, especially over the abolition of slavery (which had been the deepest desire and the great labor of my life), was slightly tinged with a feeling of sadness.

I felt that I had reached the end of the noblest and best part of my life; my school was broken up, my church disbanded, and the beloved congregation dispersed, never to come together again. The anti-slavery platform had performed its work, and my voice was no longer needed. "Othello's occupation was gone." The great happiness of meeting with my fellow-workers was now to be among the things of memory. Then, too, some thought of my personal future came in. Like Daniel Webster, when asked by his friends to leave John Tyler's cabinet, I naturally inquired: "Where shall I go?" I was still in the midst of my years, and had something of life before me, and as the minister (urged to my old friend George Bradburn to preach anti-slavery, when to do so was unpopular) said, "It is necessary for ministers to live," I felt it was necessary

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for me to live, and to live honestly. But where should I go, and what should I do? I could not now take hold of life as I did when I first landed in New Bedford, twenty-five years before; I could not go to the wharf of either Gideon or George Howland, to Richmond's brass foundry, or Richetson's candle and oil works, load and unload vessels, or even ask Governor Clifford for a place as a servant. Rolling oil-casks and shoveling coal were all well enough when I was younger, immediately after getting out of slavery. Doing this was a step up, rather than a step down; but all these avocations had had their day for me, and I had had my day for them. My public life and labors had unfitted me for the pursuits of my earlier years, and yet had not prepared me for more congenial and higher employment. Outside the question of slavery my thoughts had not been much directed, and I could hardly hope to make myself useful in any cause than that to which I had given the best twenty-five years of my life. A man in the situation in which I found myself has not only to divest himself of the old, which is never easily done, but to adjust himself to the new, which is still more difficult. Delivering lectures under various names, John B. Gough says, "Whatever may be the title, my lecture is always on Temperance"; and such is apt to be the case with any man who has devoted his time and thoughts to one subject for any considerable length of time. But what should I do, was the question. I had a few thousand dollars (a great convenience, and one not generally so highly prized by my people as it ought to be) saved from the sale of "My Bondage and My Freedom," and the proceeds of my lectures at home and abroad, and with this sum I thought of following the noble example of my old friends Stephen and Abby Kelley Foster, purchase a little farm and settle myself down to earn an honest living by tilling the soil. My children were grown and ought to be able to take care of themselves. This question, however, was soon decided for me. I had after all acquired (a very unusual thing) a little more knowledge and aptitude fitting me for the new condition of things than I knew, and had a deeper hold upon public attention than I had supposed. Invitations began to pour in upon me from colleges, lyceums, and literary societies, of-

fering me one hundred, and even two hundred dollars for a single lecture.

I had, some time before, prepared a lecture on "Self-made Men," and also one upon Ethnology, with special reference to Africa. The latter had cost me much labor, though, as I now look back upon it, it was a very defective production. I wrote it at the instance of my friend Doctor M. B. Anderson, President of Rochester University, himself a distinguished ethnologist, a deep thinker and scholar. I had been invited by one of the literary societies of Western Reserve College (then at Hudson, but recently removed to Cleveland, Ohio), to address it on Commencement day; and never having spoken on such an occasion, never, indeed, having been myself inside of a school-house for the purpose of an education, I hesitated about accepting the invitation, and finally called upon Prof. Henry Wayland, son of the great Doctor Wayland of Brown University, and on Doctor Anderson, and asked their advice whether I ought to accept. Both gentlemen advised me to do so. They knew me, and evidently thought well of my ability. But the puzzling question now was, what shall I say if I do go there? It won't do to give them an old-fashioned anti-slavery discourse. (I learned afterwards that such a discourse was precisely what they needed, though not what they wished; for the faculty, including the President, was in great distress because I, a colored man, had been invited, and because of the reproach this circumstance might bring upon the College.) But what shall I talk about? became the difficult question. I finally hit upon the one before mentioned. I had read, with great interest, when in England a few years before, parts of Doctor Pritchard's "Natural History of Man," a large volume marvelously calm and philosophical in its discussion of the science of the origin of the races, and was thus in the line of my then convictions. I at once sought in our bookstores for this valuable book, but could not obtain it anywhere in this country. I sent to England, where I paid the sum of seven and a half dollars for it. In addition to this valuable work President Anderson kindly gave me a little book entitled "Man and His Migrations," by Dr. R. G. Latham, and loaned me the large work of Dr. Morton, the famous archæologist, and that of

Messrs. Nott and Glidden, the latter written evidently to degrade the Negro and support the then-prevalent Calhoun doctrine of the rightfulness of slavery. With these books and occasional suggestions from Dr. Anderson and Prof. Wayland I set about preparing my commencement address. For many days and nights I toiled, and succeeded at last in getting something together in due form. Written orations had not been in my line. I had usually depended upon my unsystematized knowledge and the inspiration of the hour and the occasion, but I had now got the "scholar bee in my bonnet," and supposed that inasmuch as I was to speak to college professors and students I must at least make a show of some familiarity with letters. It proved, as to its immediate effect, a great mistake, for my carefully-studied and written address, full of learned quotations, fell dead at my feet, while a few remarks I made extemporaneously at collation were enthusiastically received. Nevertheless, the reading and labor expended were of much value to me. They were needed steps preparatory to the work upon which I was about to enter. If they failed at the beginning, they helped to success in the end. My lecture on "The Races of Men" was seldom called for, but that on "Self-made Men" was in great demand, especially through the West. I found that the success of a lecturer depends more upon the quality of his stock in store than the amount. My friend Wendell Phillips (for such I esteem him), who has said more cheering words to me and in vindication of my race than any man now living, has delivered his famous lecture on the "Lost Arts" during the last forty years; and I doubt if among all his lectures, and he has many, there is one in such requisition as this. When Daniel O'Connell was asked why he did not make a new speech he playfully replied that "it would take Ireland twenty years to learn his old ones." Upon some such consideration as this I adhered pretty closely to my old lecture on "Self-made Men," retouching and shading it a little from time to time as occasion seemed to require.

Here, then, was a new vocation before me, full of advantages mentally and pecuniarily. When in the employment of the American Anti-Slavery Society my salary was about four hundred and fifty dollars a year, and I felt I was well paid for

my services; but I could now make from fifty to a hundred dollars a night, and have the satisfaction, too, that I was in some small measure helping to lift my race into consideration, for no man who lives at all lives unto himself—he either helps or hinders all who are in any wise connected with him. I never rise to speak before an American audience without something of the feeling that my failure or success will bring blame or benefit to my whole race. But my activities were not now confined entirely to lectures before lyceums. Though slavery was abolished, the wrongs of my people were not ended. Though they were not slaves, they were not yet quite free. No man can be truly free whose liberty is dependent upon the thought, feeling, and action of others, and who has himself no means in his own hands for guarding, protecting, defending, and maintaining that liberty. Yet the Negro, after his emancipation, was precisely in this state of destitution. The law on the side of freedom is of great advantage only where there is power to make that law respected. I know no class of my fellow-men, however just, enlightened, and humane, which can be wisely and safely trusted absolutely with the liberties of any other class. Protestants are excellent people, but it would not be wise for Catholics to depend entirely upon them to look after their rights and interests. Catholics are a pretty good sort of people (though there is a soul-shuddering history behind them), yet no enlightened Protestants would commit their liberty to their care and keeping. And yet the government had left the freedmen in a worse condition than either of these. It felt that it had done enough for him. It had made him free, and henceforth he must make his own way in the world. Yet he had none of the conditions for self-preservation or self-protection. He was free from the individual master, but the slave of society. He had neither money, property, nor friends. He was free from the old plantation, but he had nothing but the dusty road under his feet. He was free from the old quarter that once gave him shelter, but a slave to the rains of summer and to the frosts of winter. He was, in a word, literally turned loose, naked, hungry, and destitute, to the open sky. The first feeling toward him by the old master classes was full of bitterness and wrath. They resented his emancipation as an act

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of hostility toward them, and, since they could not punish the emancipator, they felt like punishing the object which that act had emancipated. Hence they drove him off the old plantation, and told him he was no longer wanted there. They not only hated him because he had been freed as a punishment to them, but because they felt that they had been robbed of his labor. An element of greater bitterness still came into their hearts; the freedman had been the friend of the government, and many of his class had borne arms against them during the war. The thought of paying cash for labor that they could formerly extort by the lash did not in any wise improve their disposition to the emancipated slave, or improve his own condition. Now, since poverty has, and can have, no chance against wealth, the landless against the landowner, the ignorant against the intelligent, the freedman was powerless. He had nothing left him with which to fight the battle of life, but a slavery-distorted and diseased body and lame and twisted limbs. I therefore soon found that the Negro had still a cause, and that he needed my voice and pen with others to plead for it. The American Anti-Slavery Society under the lead of Mr. Garrison had disbanded, its newspapers were discontinued, its agents were withdrawn from the field, and all systematic efforts by abolitionists were abandoned. Many of the society, Mr. Phillips and myself amongst the number, differed from Mr. Garrison as to the wisdom of this course. I felt that the work of the society was not done and that it had not fulfilled its mission, which was, not merely to emancipate, but to elevate the enslaved class. But against Mr. Garrison's leadership, and the surprise and joy occasioned by the emancipation, it was impossible to keep the association alive, and the cause of the freedmen was left mainly to individual effort and to hastily-extemporized societies of an ephemeral character; brought together under benevolent impulse, but having no history behind them, and, being new to the work, they were not as effective for good as the old society would have been had it followed up its work and kept its old instrumentalities in operation.

From the first I saw no chance of bettering the condition of the freedman until he should cease to

be merely a freedman and should become a citizen. I insisted that there was no safety for him or for anybody else in America outside the American government; that to guard, protect, and maintain his liberty the freedman should have the ballot; that the liberties of the American people were dependent upon the ballotbox, the jury-box, and the cartridge-box; that without these no class of people could live and flourish in this country; and this was now the word for the hour with me, and the word to which the people of the North willingly listened when I spoke. Hence, regarding as I did the elective franchise as the one great power by which all civil rights are obtained, enjoyed, and maintained under our form of government, and the one without which freedom to any class is delusive if not impossible, I set myself to work with whatever force and energy I possessed to secure this power for the recently-emancipated millions.

The demand for the ballot was such a vast advance upon the former objects proclaimed by the friends of the colored race, that it startled and struck men as preposterous and wholly inadmissible. Anti-slavery men themselves were not united as to the wisdom of such demand. Mr. Garrison himself, though foremost for the abolition of slavery, was not yet quite ready to join this advanced movement. In this respect he was in the rear of Mr. Phillips, who saw not only the justice, but the wisdom and necessity of the measure. To his credit it may be said, that he gave the full strength of his character and eloquence to its adoption. While Mr. Garrison thought it too much to ask, Mr. Phillips thought it too little. While the one thought it might be postponed to the future, the other thought it ought to be done at once. But Mr. Garrison was not a man to lag far in the rear of truth and right, and he soon came to see with the rest of us that the ballot was essential to the freedom of the freedman. A man's head will not long remain wrong, when his heart is right. The applause awarded to Mr. Garrison by the conservatives, for his moderation both in respect of his views on this question, and the disbandment of the American Anti-Slavery Society must have disturbed him. He was at any rate soon found on the right side of the suffrage question.

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