

**AN
AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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An Autobiography by Ebenezer Beriah Kelly

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NORWICH.

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1856.

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PREFACE.

A life devoted to the service of its country is as much hers in its history as in its action, and woe befall that realm, which having used the patriots' labors in her hour of peril, casts them and their memory from her, when the danger and the tempest have passed by.

Ours is not such an one. The memorials of heroes and heroic deeds, scattered throughout our land, bespeak the veneration with which are enshrined in every heart the names dear to America and Freedom ; nor while art or eloquence endure shall be forgotten the achievements of the generation now nearly gathered to its rest. One by one they pass away, and one by one we garner up their precious ashes into " history's golden urn," that our children and our children's children may be worthy of our sires.

Herewith the urn historic receives another relic of that sacred past. It matters not that it be but a sand-grain from the shore of that time-darkened sea—it matters not that it come unheralded by martial pomp or unadorned by martial glory—it belongs to an age when all was mighty and when all was

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glorious—an age which made America a name of honor, and her sons, from the least unto the greatest, the noblemen of earth.

May the blood that reeked upon the hills of Massachusetts and the plains of Yorktown, that stained the bosom of Champlain and the surge of the Atlantic, flowing ever unsullied in our veins, preserve in us, unweakened, the unity and the patriotism of the centuries gone by.

Norwich, Aug. 1856.

W. C. R.

CHAPTER I.

I was born in the city of Norwich, Conn., in the year 1783. My father, whose name was Beriah, was a native of that part of Norwich now called Bozrah, and at the time of my birth was the only Methodist minister in that city. His wife, my mother, was named Elizabeth Bragg, and bore him ten children, of whom I was the youngest.

At the age of six years I was bound by the town to a Mr. U——. F——, of Canterbury, who was engaged to give me, when I had served my time out, a score of sheep, a horse, a saddle, a bridle, two suits of clothes, and a Bible. Mr. F. was a very cruel man, and, being nearly always drunk, so treated me, that, had it not been for the kindness of neighbors, I should certainly have starved. I ran away from him several times on account of his cruelty, but he always pursued me and carried me back. At one time he tied me to the tail of an old mare, as a punishment for running home, and drove two miles with me thus tied, until, stopping at a tavern for drink, in his ab-

sence several gentlemen passed by, and having inquired the reason and the cause of my running away, loosed me, and then cut the hair from the horse's tail. They also gave me twelve coppers, at that time called "Bungtown coppers," which taking, I bid farewell to horse and tavern and ran home. Here I related my story to my mother, who immediately repaired to the selectmen of Norwich, and, bringing them to the house, showed them the marks of the frequent floggings I had received from Mr. F——, who used to tie me by my two thumbs and thus whip me severely. They wrote to Mr. F—— for his presence in Norwich, with my indentures.

I never returned to Canterbury, but after remaining a while at home, I went to live with a brother in Oxford. I was then in my thirteenth year. My brother was rather cross, and as I was tired of being treated unkindly, I soon returned home to my mother. I left her shortly, however, and went to Mr. B——, of Norwich, to learn the tailor's trade, but instead of learning a trade, I was kept scouring pots and kettles and mahogany, so that of all the time I was with him I worked but one day in the shop.

Once I saw Mr. B. place some pictures in a desk, and the next day, while digging in a part of the garden which had never been dug up before, I found a key which I thought

might fit the desk. I determined to try, and if it did, to possess myself of one of the pictures. The ensuing Sabbath, when all had gone to church, I tried the key. It fitted. I opened it, took one of the pictures, and to find what was on it—for I could not read—I showed it to one of the boys, who told me it was a dollar bill, and by carrying it to the bank I could get money for it. I took it to the bank, (then in "Kinney's tavern,") and having received for it eight York shillings, secreted the money at home under a stone. The day after, while on an errand for Mrs. B——, I stepped into my father's house, when my mother informed me that I was accused by Mr. B—— of stealing his money. As soon as possible I removed it from under the stone, threw the key into the river, and now, at the age of thirteen years and five months, commenced my pilgrim life, and with one dollar in my pocket as my only property, I made haste to leave Norwich.

The next day, while on my journey, I helped myself to a gun, and desiring to use it, I obtained powder and ball at Franklin—but the gun would not go off. I then returned to the store, where I met a man who asked me to exchange it for a double barreled one, and though I ought and meant to have returned it to its owner, the Evil One was too

strong for me, and I made the exchange. My father was in Franklin, staying there for his health, and I was with him that night. In the morning, arising early, I went out to shoot, and met a brother coming. He asked me what I had done with the gun I borrowed. I told him it was at the store. He told our father of my conduct, and soon we all started for Norwich. When about half way to the store, and near the woods, I requested leave to get over the fence a minute, and taking advantage of a turn in the road which hid me from their view, I ran through the woods as fast as my feet could carry me. They speedily missed me, and from the woods I could see my brother go back along the road, and heard him call me, but I traveled on without heeding them. When tired I would lie by the wayside to rest, and thus ignorant of where I was or whither I was going, I walked two days till I reached a house, where I spent a night, and in the morning, having learned the direction of the Connecticut River, I went on. On the road I met a man, to whom I sold my gun for two Spanish dollars. I arrived at the river and crossed over to Middletown, where were lying a number of vessels, at the wharves and in the stream. While strolling around a man came out of a grog shop and accosted me, asking if I wished to go to sea. I replied "Yes," and