

**THE AMERICAN SLAVE  
TRADE: AN ACCOUNT  
OF ITS ORIGIN, GROWTH  
AND SUPPRESSION**

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The American Slave Trade: An Account of Its Origin, Growth and Suppression by John R. Spears

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KIDNAPPING BEN JOHNSON BECAME A SLAVE HIMSELF.


See page 54.

# THE AMERICAN SLAVE-TRADE

AN ACCOUNT OF  
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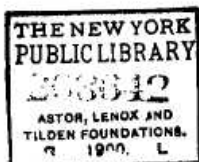
BY  
JOHN R. SPEARS

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ALL WHO SINCERELY  
STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY  
THE DIVINE COMMAND  
*THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF*

~~19/00~~ 19/00 p. 160



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## PREFACE

THIS history of the American slave-trade grew out of a study of the history of the American navy. The navy was in a way connected with the slave-trade, but the subject was so large that only the briefest mention of what the navy did on the slave coast could be made in "The History of Our Navy." The discovery that our naval ships, in forces ranging from a single schooner to a frigate squadron, had cruised on the coast of Africa at intervals during a period of nearly forty years for the proclaimed purpose of suppressing the slave-trade without accomplishing so much as a restriction of it, determined me to give the subject a separate consideration. What I have gathered I have set down here as well as I could.

As it seems to me, the facts form the most remarkable story known to the history of commercial enterprises. Consider, for instance, the origin of the trade. It was established because of the sincere pity of a tender-hearted and most praiseworthy priest for an outraged people. No other trade ever had such an exalted origin, and yet the cruelties and horrors of it far surpass those described in any other branch of history. The soldiers who have looted cities, the

pirates who have made passengers and sailors walk the plank, and the religious zealots who have burned their opponents at the stake, were more merciful than the slave-traders.

Further than that, no trade ever paid such large returns on the investments. More remarkable still, the trade at one time made some who followed it heroes, but at last degraded all who were connected with it beyond the power of words to describe.

But now that I have written out the facts, I am bound to say, here in advance, and to repeat further on, that the intrinsic evil in the slave-trade was not found in the slaughter of the helpless during the raids in Africa, or the horrors of the middle passage, or the brutality of planters who deliberately worked their slaves to death as a matter of business policy ; nor was it in all of these combined. I cannot say all that is in my thought, but it is a fact that the slave trade and the plantations *might* have been carried on profitably without any cruelty whatever to the slave. It is a matter of knowledge among people now living that many planters promoted the physical comforts and added to the mental pleasures of their slaves, while here and there a ship was found to make the middle passage without losing a life. The horrors of the trade that cried aloud to heaven for more than three hundred years were merely the grosser natural outgrowths of the root evil in it.

Nor is that all. If we look at the story with judicial mind (and it is necessary, though difficult, to do so) we shall find that the ills brought upon the domi-