

**NARRATIVE OF SOJOURNER TRUTH; A  
BONDSWOMAN OF OLDEN TIME,  
EMANCIPATED BY THE NEW YORK  
LEGISLATURE IN THE EARLY PART OF THE  
PRESENT CENTURY; WITH A HISTORY OF HER  
LABORS AND CORRESPONDENCE, DRAWN  
FROM HER "BOOK OF LIFE"**

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Narrative of Sojourner Truth; A Bondswoman of Olden Time, Emancipated by the New York Legislature in the Early Part of the Present Century; With a History of Her Labors and Correspondence, Drawn from Her "Book of Life" by Olive Gilbert & Wm. Lloyd Garrison

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**OLIVE GILBERT & WM. LLOYD GARRISON**

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*SOJOURNER TRUTH,*  
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

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## PREFACE.

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THE following is the unpretending narrative of the life of a remarkable and meritorious woman—a life which has been checkered by strange vicissitudes, severe hardships, and singular adventures. Born a slave, and held in that brutal condition until the entire abolition of slavery in the State of New York in 1827, she has known what it is to drink to the dregs the bitterest cup of human degradation. That one thus placed on a level with cattle and swine, and for so many years subjected to the most demoralizing influences, should have retained her moral integrity to such an extent, and cherished so successfully the religious sentiment in her soul, shows a mind of no common order, while it heightens the detestation that is felt in every humane bosom, of that system of oppression which seeks to cripple the intellect, impair the understanding, and deprave the hearts of its victims—a system which has subjected to its own foul purposes, in the United States, all that is wealthy, talented, influential, and reputedly pious, in an overwhelming measure!

O the 'fantastic tricks' which the American people are

'playing before high Heaven!' O their profane use of the sacred name of Liberty! O their impious appeals to the God of the oppressed, for his divine benediction, while they are making merchandise of his image! Do they not blush? Nay, they glory in their shame! Once a year they take special pains to exhibit themselves to the world, in all their republican deformity and Christian barbarity, insanely supposing that they thus excite the envy, admiration and applause of mankind. The nations are looking at the dreadful spectacle with disgust and amazement. However sunken and degraded they may be, they are too elevated, too virtuous, too humane to be guilty of such conduct. Their voice is heard, saying—'Americans! we hear your boasts of liberty, your shouts of independence, your declarations of hostility to every form of tyranny, your assertions that all men are created free and equal, and endowed by their Creator with an inalienable right to liberty, the merry peal of your bells, and the deafening roar of your artillery; but, mingling with all these, and rising above them all, we also hear the clanking of chains! the shrieks and wailings of millions of your own countrymen, whom you wickedly hold in a state of slavery as much more frightful than the oppression which your fathers resisted unto blood, as the tortures of the Inquisition surpass the stings of an insect! We see your banner floating proudly in the breeze from every flag-staff and mast-head in the land; but its blood-red stripes are emblematical of your own



slave-driving cruelty, as you apply the lash to the flesh of your guiltless victim, even the flesh of a wife and mother, shrieking for the restoration of the babe of her bosom, sold to the remorseless slave speculator! We catch the gleam of your illuminated hills, everywhere blazing with bonfires; we mark your gay processions; we note the number of your orators; we listen to the recital of your revolutionary achievements: we see you kneeling at the shrine of Freedom, as her best, her truest, her sincerest worshippers! Hypocrites! liars! adulterers! tyrants! men-stealers! atheists! Professing to believe in the natural equality of the human race—yet dooming a sixth portion of your immense population to beastly servitude, and ranking them among your goods and chattels! Professing to believe in the existence of a God—yet trading in his image, and selling those in the shambles for whose redemption the Son of God laid down his life! Professing to be Christians—yet withholding the Bible, the means of religious instruction, even the knowledge of the alphabet, from a benighted multitude, under terrible penalties! Boasting of your democracy—yet determining the rights of men by the texture of their hair and the color of their skin! Assuming to be 'the land of the free and the home of the brave,' yet keeping in chains more slaves than any other nation, not excepting slave-cursed Brazil! Prating of your morality and honesty—yet denying the rites of marriage to three millions of human beings, and plun-

dering them of all their hard earnings! Affecting to be horror-struck in view of the foreign slave-trade—yet eagerly pursuing a domestic traffic equally cruel and unnatural, and reducing to slavery not less than seventy thousand new victims annually! Vaunting of your freedom of speech and of the press—your matchless Constitution and your glorious Union—yet denouncing as traitors, and treating as outlaws, those who have the courage and fidelity to plead for immediate, untrammelled, universal emancipation! Monsters that ye are! how can ye expect to escape the scorn of the world, and the wrath of Heaven? Emancipate your slaves, if you would redeem your tarnished character—if you would obtain forgiveness here, and salvation hereafter! Until you do so, “there will be a stain upon your national escutcheon, which all the waters of the Atlantic cannot wash out!”’

It is thus that, as a people, we are justly subjected to the reproach, the execration, the derision of mankind, and are made a proverb and a hissing among the nations. We cannot plead not guilty; every accusation that is registered against us is true; the act of violence is in our hands; the stolen property is in our possession; our fingers are stained with blood; the cup of our iniquity is full.

‘Just God! and shall we calmly rest,  
The Christian’s scorn—the Heathen’s mirth—  
Content to live the lingering jest  
And by-word of a mocking earth?’

Shall our own glorious land retain  
That curse which Europe scorns to bear?  
Shall our own brethren drag the chain,  
Which not even Russia's menials wear?

It is useless, it is dreadful, it is impious for this nation longer to contend with the Almighty. All his attributes are against us, and on the side of the oppressed. Is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God? Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth as 'a swift witness against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right?' Woe to this bloody land! it is all full of lies and robbery—the prey departeth not, and the sound of a whip is heard continually. 'Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil, *maketh himself a prey.*' The Lord sees it, and is displeased that there is no judgment; and he hath put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and is clad with zeal as a cloak,—and, unless we repent by immediately undoing the heavy burdens and letting the oppressed go free, according to our deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies. 'The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.' 'O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his