

**THE BRANDED HAND. TRIAL AND  
IMPRISONMENT OF JONATHAN  
WALKER, AT PENSACOLA, FLORIDA,  
FOR AIDING SLAVES TO ESCAPE FROM  
BONDAGE. WITH AN APPENDIX,  
CONTAINING A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE**

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The branded hand. Trial and imprisonment of Jonathan Walker, at Pensacola, Florida, for aiding slaves to escape from bondage. With an appendix, containing a sketch of his life by Jonathan Walker

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"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them. For this is the law and the prophets."

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## P R E F A C E .

ON his return from Florida, after his release, Captain Walker called on me with the manuscript narrative of his trial and imprisonment. In common with very many of the members of the American Anti-Slavery Society, I had long known his character as a man of the strictest veracity and the highest conscientiousness; and his narrative seemed to me to cast so strong a light upon the religious, the moral, and the political condition of the United States, from the practical workings of their great organic law—the constitution—down to the minutest of the territorial usages and enactments which result from that law; and to exhibit in so clear a view the contrast between the principles and ideas which at present govern the public mind, and those which are beginning to struggle for the mastery, that I could not but warmly urge this publication.

There are those who doubt whether the North is as guilty as the South with respect to slavery; whether the system is degrading to the slave and disgraceful to the master; whether the slave is cruelly treated; whether the system is injurious to the reputation of this country, a reproach to its Christianity, and ruinous to the character of its people.

There are also those who, while they condemn slavery, at the same time assert that its extinction may be best promoted by studied silence, and by a quiet waiting for the gradual operations of a moral and religious system which declares that it is not in its nature sinful, and justifies it from the Scriptures; and of a political and governmental system which is a solemn guaranty in its favor.

There are those, too, who believe the abolitionists to be



instigated by a bitter, unkind, fanatical and insurrectionary spirit; hostile to law and order, sectional in their views, and possessed by one idea.

And there are others, who, honoring the holy cause, and respecting the disinterestedness of abolitionists, yet justify themselves in standing aloof from the movement, under the idea of being better able to befriend the cause by refusing to be numbered among its adherents, and suffering themselves to be counted in the ranks of the opponents.

It was for the sake of all these classes that I most earnestly urged Captain Walker to give to the public, whose great majority they compose, the manuscript which he had prepared for the satisfaction of his friends.

When they see, in its unstudied pages, the good, forgiving, self-denying spirit of the Christian, the indomitable determination of the Freeman, and the severe devotedness of the Puritan, all uniting in an unconscious exhibition of the uncompromising Abolitionist, I cannot but hope that their hearts will be touched by the excellence of the example.

It is to be lamented that many interesting and illustrative incidents must be suppressed, out of regard to the safety of individuals, whose liberties and lives their publication would endanger; yet what could, better than such a fact, illustrate the condition of slaves and freemen in the United States of North America; or better plead the cause of those few of the inhabitants who are pronounced by the rest to be over zealous, because they have been the first to perceive what all will soon be obliged to acknowledge,—that the liberties of our land are gone? It was a deep observation of facts that led Montesquieu to say, “A republic may lose its liberties in a day, and not find it out for a century.” The day that sunk ours, was that of the adoption of the Federal Constitution—the day when we perpetrated, as a nation, an eternal wrong for the sake of guilty prosperity and peace. But it now begins to be very plainly discerned, that between slavery and freedom there can be no covenant. The futile hope of

our fathers, in attempting such a one, was peace;—after the lapse of sixty years, their descendants hear from that guilty past,

“Ancestral voices, prophesying War!”

The narrative of Frederick Douglass gives a picture of the condition of a slave in the land that their folly and their fear betrayed. That of Jonathan Walker shows the condition of the freeman whose lot is cast in the same land, little more than half a century only after the perpetration of that treason to humanity.

The most ignominious tortures are now the lot of him who, in the United States of America, determines to be truly a freeman, nor lose his own liberties with the sinking ones of the republic; of him whose liberty it is to choose his part with the enslaved, and not with the slaveholder.

It may but prove, in the language of those old puritans whose blood yet floods a Massachusetts heart so strongly, “a greater liberty to suffer, a more freedom to die.” Yet whatever be the result, God grant, throughout the land, a continual outpouring of that free, devoted spirit to us and to our children! a spirit which, by the might of its good will, by the strength of its sense of duty, shall overcome tyranny, prejudice and cruelty; bigotry, avarice and knavery; and the whole array of sins of which slavery is at once the cause and the effect.

This is a painful tale for an American to read, and think, meanwhile, that it is circulating through the civilized world; but, if worthy of the name, he will find comfort in the thought that it is confirming the abolitionist and confuting the slaveholder, showing an example to both of the dutiful obedience to right, which is mighty to save a nation from utter reproach and destruction.

It will be a painful tale for all, to whom the carefully concealed features and inevitable consequences of the slave-system have never before been exhibited. Such are to be

found at the South as well as at the North ; and both will do well, in the intensity of their pain and disgust, to remember the words of GARRISON :

“ Let us not sentimentally shrink from such knowledge ; we *will* know what we have to do, that we may more surely do it. We go forth to take off chains ; and there is need that our virtue should be robust.”

Very consoling is the reflection that this uprising of the heart against wrong is not a sectional one, but felt at the south as well as at the north, by men of all parties and of all sects.

Very exalting is the idea that the virtual slaveholder of the north, not merely reproaching the planter, the overseer and the driver, has begun the work of self-sacrificing reform with his own heart, by refusing all political and ecclesiastical participation in their deed. The abolition of slavery is sure, since these most guilty and efficient slaveholders begin to make abolitionism not only an ethical statement, but a Christian life.

MARIA WESTON CHAPMAN.

Boston, August, 1845.