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THE UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD.

A RECORD

OF

FACTS, AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES, LETTERS, &c.,
Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes, and Death Struggles

OF THE

Slaves in their Efforts for Freedom,

AS RELATED

BY THEMSELVES AND OTHERS, OR WITNESSED BY THE AUTHOR;

TOGETHER WITH

SKETCHES OF SOME OF THE LARGEST STOCKHOLDERS, AND
MOST LIBERAL AIDERS AND ADVISERS,
OF THE ROAD.

BY

WILLIAM STILL,

For many years connected with the Anti-Slavery Office in Philadelphia, and Chairman of the
Acting Vigilant Committee of the Philadelphia Branch of
the Underground Rail Road.

ILLUSTRATED WITH 70 FINE ENGRAVINGS BY BENSELL, SCHELL AND OTHERS,
AND PORTRAITS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS FROM LIFE.

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She darted into a hatter's shop and out through the back buildings, springing over a dye kettle in her way, and cleared a board fence at a bound. On her way to a place of safety she looked back to see, with keen enjoyment, "Mort Cunningham" falling backward from the fence she had leaped. Secure in a garret, she looked down into the streets below, to see his vacant, dazed look as he sought, unable to find her. Her rendering of the expression of his face at this time, was irresistibly ludicrous, as was that of his whole bearing while searching for her. "Mort Cunningham" did not get her, but whether or not she ever returned to the enjoyment of her happy home, in West Chester, we never knew, as this sudden flight was the last we ever heard of her. She was one of the most wide-awake of human beings, and the world certainly lost in the uneducated slave, an actor of great dramatic power.

FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER.

The narratives and labors of eminent colored men such as Banneker, Douglass, Brown, Garnet, and others, have been written and sketched very fully for the public, and doubtless with advantage to the cause of freedom. But there is not to be found in any written work portraying the Anti-Slavery struggle, (except in the form of narratives,) as we are aware of, a sketch of the labors of any eminent colored woman. We feel, therefore, not only glad of the opportunity to present a sketch not merely of the leading colored poet in the United States, but also of one of the most liberal contributors, as well as one of the ablest advocates of the Underground Rail Road and of the slave.

No extravagant praise of any kind,—only simple facts are needed to portray the noble deeds of this faithful worker.

The want of space forbids more than a brief reference to her early life.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (Watkins being her maiden name) was born in the City of Baltimore in 1825, not of slave parentage, but subjected of course to the oppressive influence which bond and free alike endured under slave laws. Since reaching her majority, in looking back, the following sentences from her own pen express the loneliness of her childhood days. "Have I yearned for a mother's love? The grave was my robber. Before three years had scattered their blight around my path, death had won my mother from me. Would the strong arm of a brother have been welcome? I was my mother's only child." Thus she fell into the hands of an aunt, who watched over her during these early helpless years. Rev. William Watkins, an uncle, taught a school in Baltimore for free colored children, to which she was sent until she was about thirteen years of age. After this period, she was put out to work to earn her own living.

She had many trials to endure which she would fain forget; but in the midst of them all she had an ardent thirst for knowledge and a remarkable talent for composition, as she evinced at the age of fourteen in an article which attracted the attention of the lady in whose family she was employed, and others. In this situation she was taught sewing, took care of the children, &c.; and at the same time, through the kindness of her employer, her greed for books was satisfied so far as was possible from occasional half-hours of leisure. She was noted for her industry, rarely trifling away time as most girls are wont to do in similar circumstances. Scarcely had she reached her majority ere she had written a number of prose and poetic pieces which were deemed of sufficient merit to publish in a small volume called "Forest Leaves." Some of her productions found their way into newspapers and attracted attention. The ability exhibited in some of her productions was so remarkable that some doubted and others denied their originality. Of this character we here copy an extract from one of her early prose productions:

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CHRISTIANITY.

"Christianity is a system claiming God for its author, and the welfare of man for its object. It is a system so uniform, exalted and pure, that the loftiest intellects have acknowledged its influence, and acquiesced in the justness of its claims. Genius has bent from his erratic course to gather fire from her altars, and pathos from the agony of Gethsemane and the sufferings of Calvary. Philosophy and science have paused amid their speculative researches and wondrous revelations to gain wisdom from her teachings and knowledge from her precepts. Poetry has culled her fairest flowers and wreathed her softest to bind her Author's 'bleeding brow.' Music has strung her sweetest lyres and breathed her noblest strains to celebrate his fame; whilst Learning has bent from her lofty heights to bow at the lowly cross. The constant friend of man, she has stood by him in his hour of greatest need. She has cheered the prisoner in his cell, and strengthened the martyr at the stake. She has nerved the frail and shrinking heart of woman for high and holy deeds. The worn and weary have rested their fainting heads upon her bosom, and gathered strength from her words and courage from her counsels. She has been the staff of decrepit age and the joy of manhood in its strength. She has bent over the form of lovely childhood, and suffered it to have a place in the Redeemer's arms. She has stood by the bed of the dying, and unveiled the glories of eternal life, gilding the darkness of the tomb with the glory of the resurrection."

Her mind being of a strictly religious caste, the effusions from her pen all savor of a highly moral and elevating tone.

About the year 1851 she left Baltimore to seek a home in a Free State, and for a short time resided in Ohio, where she was engaged in teaching. Contrary to her expectations, her adopted home and calling not proving satisfactory, she left that State and came to Pennsylvania as a last resort, and again engaged in teaching at Little York. Here she not only had to encounter the trouble of dealing with unruly children, she was sorely oppressed with the thought of the condition of her people in Maryland. Not unfrequently she gave utterance to such expressions as the following :

"Not that we have not a right to breathe the air as freely as anybody else here (in Baltimore), but we are treated worse than aliens among a people whose language we speak, whose religion we profess, and whose blood flows and mingles in our veins. * * * Homeless in the land of our birth and worse off than strangers in the home of our nativity." During her stay in York she had frequent opportunities of seeing passengers on the Underground Rail Road. In one of her letters she thus alluded to a traveller: "I saw a passenger *per* the Underground Rail Road yesterday; did he arrive safely? Notwithstanding that abomination of the nineteenth century—the Fugitive Slave Law—men still determine to be free. Notwithstanding all the darkness in which they keep the slaves, it seems that somehow light is dawning upon their minds. * * * These poor fugitives are a property that can walk. Just to think that from the rainbow-crowned Niagara to the swollen waters of the Mexican Gulf, from the restless murmur of the Atlantic to the ceaseless roar of the Pacific, the poor, half-starved, flying fugitive has no resting-place for the sole of his foot!"

Whilst hesitating whether or not it would be best to continue teaching, she wrote to a friend for advice as follows: "What would you do if you were in my place? Would you give up and go back and work at your trade (dress-making)? There are no people that need all the benefits resulting from a well-directed education more than we do. The condition of our people, the wants of our children, and the welfare of our race demand the aid of every helping hand, the God-speed of every Christian heart. It is a work of time, a labor of patience, to become an effective school teacher; and it should be a work of love in which they who engage should not abate heart or hope until it is done. And after all, it is one of woman's most sacred rights to have the privilege of forming the symmetry and rightly adjusting the mental balance of an immortal mind." "I have written a lecture on education, and I am also writing a small book."

Thus, whilst filling her vocation as a teacher in Little York, was she deeply engrossed in thought as to how she could best promote the welfare of her race. But as she was devoted to the work in hand, she soon found that fifty-three untrained little urchins overtaxed her naturally delicate physical powers; it also happened just about this time that she was further moved to enter the Anti-Slavery field as a lecturer substantially by the following circumstance: About the year 1853, Maryland, her native State, had enacted a law forbidding free people of color from the North from coming into the State on pain of being imprisoned and sold into slavery. A free man, who had unwittingly violated this infamous statute, had recently been sold to Georgia, and had escaped thence by secreting himself behind the wheel-house of a boat bound northward; but before he reached the desired haven, he was discovered and remanded to slavery. It was reported that he died soon after from the effects of exposure and suffering. In a letter to

a friend referring to this outrage, Mrs. Harper thus wrote: "Upon that grave I pledged myself to the Anti-Slavery cause."

Having thus decided, she wrote in a subsequent letter, "It may be that God himself has written upon both my heart and brain a commission to use time, talent and energy in the cause of freedom." In this abiding faith she came to Philadelphia, hoping that the way would open for usefulness, and to publish her little book (above referred to). She visited the Anti-Slavery Office and read Anti-Slavery documents with great avidity; in the mean time making her home at the station of the Underground Rail Road, where she frequently saw passengers and heard their melting tales of suffering and wrong, which intensely increased her sympathy in their behalf. Although anxious to enter the Anti-Slavery field as a worker, her modesty prevented her from pressing her claims; consequently as she was but little known, being a young and homeless maiden (an exile by law), no especial encouragement was tendered her by Anti-Slavery friends in Philadelphia.

During her stay in Philadelphia she published some verses entitled, "Eliza Harris crossing the River on the Ice." It was deemed best to delay the issuing of the book.

After spending some weeks in Philadelphia, she concluded to visit Boston. Here she was treated with the kindness characteristic of the friends in the Anti-Slavery Office whom she visited, but only made a brief stay, after which she proceeded to New Bedford, the "hot-bed of the fugitives" in Massachusetts, where by invitation she addressed a public meeting on the subject of Education and the Elevation of the Colored Race.

The occasion and result of the commencement of her public career was thus given by her own pen in a letter dated August, 1854:

"Well, I am out lecturing. I have lectured every night this week; besides addressed a Sunday-school, and I shall speak, if nothing prevent, to-night. My lectures have met with success. Last night I lectured in a white church in Providence. Mr. Gardener was present, and made the estimate of about six hundred persons. Never, perhaps, was a speaker, old or young, favored with a more attentive audience. * * * My voice is not wanting in strength, as I am aware of, to reach pretty well over the house. The church was the Roger Williams; the pastor, a Mr. Furnell, who appeared to be a kind and Christian man. * * * My maiden lecture was Monday night in New Bedford on the Elevation and Education of our People. Perhaps as intellectual a place as any I was ever at of its size."

Having thus won her way to a favorable position as a lecturer, the following month she was engaged by the State Anti-Slavery Society of Maine, with what success appears from one of her letters bearing date—Buckstown Centre, Sept. 28, 1854:

"The agent of the State Anti-Slavery Society of Maine travels with me, and she is a pleasant, dear, sweet lady. I do like her so. We travel together, eat together, and sleep

together. (She is a white woman.) In fact I have not been in one colored person's house since I left Massachusetts; but I have a pleasant time. My life reminds me of a beautiful dream. What a difference between this and York! * * I have met with some of the kindest treatment up here that I have ever received. * * I have lectured three times this week. After I went from Limerick, I went to Springvale; there I spoke on Sunday night at an Anti-Slavery meeting. Some of the people are Anti-Slavery, Antirum and Anti-Catholic; and if you could see our Maine ladies,—some of them among the noblest types of womanhood you have ever seen! They are for putting men of Anti-Slavery principles in office, * * to cleanse the corrupt fountains of our government by sending men to Congress who will plead for our down-trodden and oppressed brethren, our crushed and helpless sisters, whose tears and blood bedew our soil, whose chains are clanking 'neath our proudest banners, whose cries and groans amid our loudest pæans rise."

Everywhere in this latitude doors opened before her, and her gifts were universally recognized as a valuable acquisition to the cause. In the letter above referred to she said: "I spoke in Boston on Monday night. * * * Well, I am but one, but can do something, and, God helping me, I will try. Mr. Brister from Lowell addressed the meeting; also Rev. —. Howe. We had a good demonstration."

Having read the narrative of Solomon Northrup (12 years a slave), she was led to embrace the Free Labor doctrine most thoroughly; and in a letter dated at Temple, Maine, Oct. 20, 1854, after expressing the interest she took in the annual meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society of that state, she remarked:

"I spoke on Free Produce, and now by the way I believe in that kind of Abolition. Oh, it does seem to strike at one of the principal roots of the matter. I have commenced since I read Solomon Northrup. Oh, if Mrs. Stowe has clothed American slavery in the graceful garb of fiction, Solomon Northrup comes up from the dark habitation of Southern cruelty where slavery fattens and feasts on human blood with such mournful revelations that one might almost wish for the sake of humanity that the tales of horror which he reveals were not so. Oh, how can we pamper our appetites upon luxuries drawn from reluctant fingers? Oh, could slavery exist long if it did not sit on a commercial throne? I have read somewhere, if I remember aright, of a Hindoo being loth to cut a tree because being a believer in the transmigration of souls, he thought the soul of his father had passed into it. * * * Oh, friend, beneath the most delicate preparations of the cane can you not see the stinging lash and clotted whip? I have reason to be thankful that I am able to give a little more for a Free Labor dress, if it is coarser. I can thank God that upon its warp and woof I see no stain of blood and tears; that to procure a little finer muslin for my limbs no crushed and broken heart went out in sighs, and that from the field where it was raised went up no wild and startling cry unto the throne of God to witness there in language deep and strong, that in demanding that cotton I was nerving oppression's hand for deeds of guilt and crime. If the liberation of the slave demanded it, I could consent to part with a portion of the blood from my own veins if that would do him any good."

After having thus alluded to free labor, she gave a short journal of the different places where she had recently lectured from the 5th of September to the 20th of October, which we mention here simply to show the per-

severance which characterized her as an advocate of her enslaved race, and at the same time show how doors everywhere opened to her: Portland, Monmouth Centre, North Berwick, Limerick (two meetings), Springvale, Portsmouth, Elliott, Waterborough (spoke four times), Lyman, Saccarappo, Moderation, Steep Falls (twice), North Buxton, Goram, Gardner, Litchfield, twice, Monmouth Ridge twice, Monmouth Centre three times, Litchfield second time, West Waterville twice, Livermore Temple. Her ability and labors were everywhere appreciated, and her meetings largely attended. In a subsequent letter referring to the manner that she was received, she wrote, "A short while ago when I was down this way I took breakfast with the then Governor of Maine."

For a year and a half she continued in the Eastern States, speaking in most or all of them with marked success; the papers meting out to her full commendation for her efforts. The following extract clipped from the Portland Daily Press, respecting a lecture that she was invited to deliver after the war by the Mayor (Mr. Washburne) and others, is a fair sample of notices from this source:

"She spoke for nearly an hour and a half, her subject being 'The Mission of the War, and the Demands of the Colored Race in the Work of Reconstruction;' and we have seldom seen an audience more attentive, better pleased, or more enthusiastic. Mrs. Harper has a splendid articulation, uses chaste, pure language, has a pleasant voice, and allows no one to tire of hearing her. We shall attempt no abstract of her address; none that we could make would do her justice. It was one of which any lecturer might feel proud, and her reception by a Portland audience was all that could be desired. We have seen no praises of her that were overdrawn. We have heard Miss Dickinson, and do not hesitate to award the palm to her darker colored sister."

In 1856, desiring to see the fugitives in Canada, she visited the Upper Province, and in a letter dated at Niagara Falls, Sept. 12th, she unfolded her mind in the following language:

"Well, I have gazed for the first time upon Free Land, and, would you believe it, tears sprang to my eyes, and I wept. Oh, it was a glorious sight to gaze for the first time on a land where a poor slave flying from our glorious land of liberty would in a moment find his fetters broken, his shackles loosed, and whatever he was in the land of Washington, beneath the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument or even Plymouth Rock, here he becomes a man and a brother. I have gazed on Harper's Ferry, or rather the rock at the Ferry; I have seen it towering up in simple grandeur, with the gentle Potomac gliding peacefully at its feet, and felt that that was God's masonry, and my soul had expanded in gazing on its sublimity. I have seen the ocean singing its wild chorus of sounding waves, and ecstasy has thrilled upon the living chords of my heart. I have since then seen the rainbow-crowned Niagara chanting the choral hymn of Omnipotence, girdled with grandeur, and robed with glory; but none of these things have melted me as the first sight of Free Land. Towering mountains lifting their hoary summits to catch the first faint flush of day when the sunbeams kiss the shadows from morning's drowsy face may expand and exalt your soul. The first view of the ocean may fill you with strange delight. Niagara—the great, the glorious Niagara—may hush your spirit with its ceaseless thunder; it may charm you

with its robe of crested spray and rainbow crown; but the land of Freedom was a lesson of deeper significance than foaming waves or towering mounts."

While in Toronto she lectured, and was listened to with great interest; but she made only a brief visit, thence returning to Philadelphia, her adopted home.

With her newly acquired reputation as a lecturer, from 1856 to 1859 she continued her labors in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, &c. In the meantime she often came in contact with Underground Rail Road passengers, especially in Philadelphia. None sympathized with them more sincerely or showed a greater willingness to render them material aid. She contributed apparently with the same liberality as though they were her own near kin. Even when at a distance, so deep was her interest in the success of the Road, she frequently made it her business to forward donations, and carefully inquire into the state of the treasury. The Chairman of the Committee might publish a volume of interesting letters from her pen relating to the Underground Rail Road and kindred topics; but a few extracts must suffice. We here copy from a letter dated at Rushsylvania, Ohio, Dec. 15th: "I send you to-day two dollars for the Underground Rail Road. It is only a part of what I subscribed at your meeting. May God speed the flight of the slave as he speeds through our Republic to gain his liberty in a monarchical land. I am still in the lecturing field, though not very strong physically. * * * Send me word what I can do for the fugitive."

From Tiffin, Ohio, March 31st, touching the news of a rescue in Philadelphia, she thus wrote:

"I see by the Cincinnati papers that you have had an attempted rescue and a failure. That is sad! Can you not give me the particulars? and if there is anything that I can do for them in money or words, call upon me. This is a common cause; and if there is any burden to be borne in the Anti-Slavery cause—anything to be done to weaken our hateful chains or assert our manhood and womanhood, I have a right to do my share of the work. The humblest and feeblest of us can do something; and though I may be deficient in many of the conventionalisms of city life, and be considered as a person of good impulses, but unfinished, yet if there is common rough work to be done, call on me."

Mrs. Harper was not content to make speeches and receive plaudits, but was ever willing to do the rough work and to give material aid wherever needed.

From another letter dated Lewis Centre, Ohio, we copy the following characteristic extract:

"Yesterday I sent you thirty dollars. Take five of it for the rescuers (who were in prison), and the rest pay away on the books. My offering is not large; but if you need more, send me word. Also how comes on the Underground Rail Road? Do you need anything for that? You have probably heard of the shameful outrage of a colored man or boy named Wagner, who was kidnapped in Ohio and carried across the river and sold

for a slave. * * * Ohio has become a kind of a negro hunting ground, a new Congo's coast and Guinea's shore. A man was kidnapped almost under the shadow of our capital. Oh, was it not dreadful? * * * Oh, may the living God prepare me for an earnest and faithful advocacy of the cause of justice and right!"

In those days the blows struck by the hero, John Brown, were agitating the nation. Scarcely was it possible for a living soul to be more deeply affected than this female advocate. Nor did her sympathies end in mere words. She tendered material aid as well as heartfelt commiseration.

To John Brown's wife * she sent through the writer the following letter:

LETTER TO JOHN BROWN'S WIFE.

FARMER CENTRE, OHIO, Nov. 14th.

MY DEAR MADAM:—In an hour like this the common words of sympathy may seem like idle words, and yet I want to say something to you, the noble wife of the hero of the nineteenth century. Belonging to the race your dear husband reached forth his hand to assist, I need not tell you that my sympathies are with you. I thank you for the brave words you have spoken. A republic that produces such a wife and mother may hope for better days. Our heart may grow more hopeful for humanity when it sees the sublime sacrifice it is about to receive from his hands. Not in vain has your dear husband periled all, if the martyrdom of one hero is worth more than the life of a million cowards. From the prison comes forth a shout of triumph over that power whose ethics are robbery of the feeble and oppression of the weak, the trophies of whose chivalry are a plundered cradle and a scourged and bleeding woman. Dear sister, I thank you for the brave and noble words that you have spoken. Enclosed I send you a few dollars as a token of my gratitude, reverence and love.

Yours respectfully,

FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS.

Post Office address: care of William Still, 107 Fifth St., Philadelphia, Penn.

May God, our own God, sustain you in the hour of trial. If there is one thing on earth I can do for you or yours, let me be apprized. I am at your service.

Not forgetting Brown's comrades, who were then lying in prison under sentence of death, true to the best impulses of her generous heart, she thus wrote relative to these ill-fated prisoners, from Montpelier, Dec. 12th:

"I thank you for complying with my request. (She had previously ordered a box of things to be forwarded to them.) And also that you wrote to them. You see Brown towered up so bravely that these doomed and fated men may have been almost overlooked, and just think that I am able to send one ray through the night around them. And as their letters came too late to answer in time, I am better satisfied that you wrote. I hope the things will reach them. Poor doomed and fated men! Why did you not send them more things? Please send me the bill of expense. * * Send me word what I can do for the fugitives. Do you need any money? Do I not owe you on the old bill (pledge)? Look carefully and see if I have paid all. Along with this letter I send you one for Mr. Stephens (one of Brown's men), and would ask you to send him a box of nice things every week till he dies or is acquitted. I understand the balls have not been extracted from him. Has not this suffering been overshadowed by the glory that gathered around the brave old

* Mrs. Harper passed two weeks with Mrs. Brown at the house of the writer while she was awaiting the execution of her husband, and sympathized with her most deeply.

man? * * * Spare no expense to make the last hours of his (Stephens') life as bright as possible with sympathy. * * * Now, my friend, fulfil this to the letter. Oh, is it not a privilege, if you are sisterless and lonely, to be a sister to the human race, and to place your heart where it may throb close to down-trodden humanity?"

On another occasion in writing from the lecturing field hundreds of miles away from Philadelphia, the sympathy she felt for the fugitives found expression in the following language:

"How fared the girl who came robed in male attire? Do write me every time you write how many come to your house; and, my dear friend, if you have that much in hand of mine from my books, will you please pay the Vigilance Committee two or three dollars for me to help carry on the glorious enterprise. Now, please do not write back that you are not going to do any such thing. Let me explain a few matters to you. In the first place, I am able to give something. In the second place, I am willing to do so. * * * Oh, life is fading away, and we have but an hour of time! Should we not, therefore, endeavor to let its history gladden the earth? The nearer we ally ourselves to the wants and woes of humanity in the spirit of Christ, the closer we get to the great heart of God; the nearer we stand by the beating of the pulse of universal love."

Doubtless it has not often been found necessary for persons desirous of contributing to benevolent causes to first have to remove anticipated objections. Nevertheless in some cases it would seem necessary to admonish her not to be quite so liberal; to husband with a little more care her hard-earned income for a "rainy day," as her health was not strong.

"My health," she wrote at that time, "is not very strong, and I may have to give up before long. I may have to yield on account of my voice, which I think, has become somewhat affected. I might be so glad if it was only so that I could go home among my own kindred and people, but slavery comes up like a dark shadow between me and the home of my childhood. Well, perhaps it is my lot to die from home and be buried among strangers; and yet I do not regret that I have espoused this cause; perhaps I have been of some service to the cause of human rights, and I hope the consciousness that I have not lived in vain, will be a halo of peace around my dying bed; a heavenly sunshine lighting up the dark valley and shadow of death."

Notwithstanding this yearning for home, she was far from desiring at her death, a burial in a Slave State, as the following clearly expressed views show:

"I have lived in the midst of oppression and wrong, and I am saddened by every captured fugitive in the North; a blow has been struck at my freedom, in every hunted and down-trodden slave in the South; North and South have both been guilty, and they that sin must suffer."

Also, in harmony with the above sentiments, came a number of verses appropriate to her desires in this respect, one of which we here give as a sample:

"Make me a grave where'er you will,
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill,
Make it among earth's humblest graves,
But not in a land where men are slaves."

In the State of Maine the papers brought to her notice the capture of Margaret Garner, and the tragic and bloody deed connected therewith. And she writes :

"Rome had her altars where the trembling criminal, and the worn and weary slave might fly for an asylum—Judea her cities of refuge; but Ohio, with her Bibles and churches, her baptisms and prayers, had not one temple so dedicated to human rights, one altar so consecrated to human liberty, that trampled upon and down-trodden innocence knew that it could find protection for a night, or shelter for a day."

In the fall of 1860, in the city of Cincinnati, Mrs. Harper was married to Fenton Harper, a widower, and resident of Ohio. It seemed obvious that this change would necessarily take her from the sphere of her former usefulness. The means she had saved from the sale of her books and from her lectures, she invested in a small farm near Columbus, and in a short time after her marriage she entered upon house-keeping.

Notwithstanding her family cares, consequent upon married life, she only ceased from her literary and anti-slavery labors, when compelled to do so by other duties.

On the 23d of May, 1864, death deprived her of her husband.

Whilst she could not give so much attention to writing as she could have desired in her household days, she, nevertheless, did then produce some of her best productions. Take the following for a sample, on the return from Cleveland, Ohio, of a poor, ill-fated slave-girl, (under the Fugitive Slave Law):

TO THE UNION SAVERS OF CLEVELAND.

Men of Cleveland, had a vulture
Sought a timid dove for prey,
Would you not, with human pity,
Drive the gory bird away?

Had you seen a feeble lambkin,
Shrinking from a wolf so bold,
Would ye not to shield the trembler,
In your arms have made its fold?

But when she, a hunted sister,
Stretched her hands that ye might save,
Colder far than Zembla's regions
Was the answer that ye gave.

On the Union's bloody altar,
Was your hapless victim laid;
Mercy, truth and justice shuddered,
But your hands would give no aid.

And ye sent her back to torture,
Robbed of freedom and of right.
Thrust the wretched, captive stranger.
Back to slavery's gloomy night.

Back where brutal men may trample,
 On her honor and her fame ;
 And unto her lips so dusky,
 Press the cup of woe and shame.

There is blood upon your city,
 Dark and dismal is the stain ;
 And your hands would fail to cleanse it,
 Though Lake Erie ye should drain.

There's a curse upon your Union,
 Fearful sounds are in the air ;
 As if thunderbolts were framing,
 Answers to the bondsman's prayer.

Ye may offer human victims,
 Like the heathen priests of old ;
 And may barter manly honor
 For the Union and for gold.

But ye can not stay the whirlwind,
 When the storm begins to break ;
 And our God doth rise in judgment,
 For the poor and needy's sake.

And, your sin-cursed, guilty Union,
 Shall be shaken to its base,
 Till ye learn that simple justice,
 Is the right of every race.

Mrs. Harper took the deepest interest in the war, and looked with extreme anxiety for the results ; and she never lost an opportunity to write, speak, or serve the cause in any way that she thought would best promote the freedom of the slave. On the proclamation of General Fremont, the passages from her pen are worthy to be long remembered :

" Well, what think you of the war ? To me one of the most interesting features is Fremont's Proclamation freeing the slaves of the rebels. Is there no ray of hope in that ? I should not wonder if Edward M. Davis breathed that into his ear. His proclamation looks like real earnestness ; no mincing the matter with the rebels. Death to the traitors and confiscation of their slaves is no child's play. I hope that the boldness of his stand will inspire others to look the real cause of the war in the face and inspire the government with uncompromising earnestness to remove the festering curse. And yet I am not uneasy about the result of this war. We may look upon it as God's controversy with the nation ; His arising to plead by fire and blood the cause of His poor and needy people. Some time since Breckinridge, in writing to Sumner, asks, if I rightly remember, What is the fate of a few negroes to me or mine ? Bound up in one great bundle of humanity our fates seem linked together, our destiny entwined with theirs, and our rights are interwoven together."

Finally when the long-looked-for Emancipation Proclamation came, although Mrs. Harper was not at that time very well, she accepted an invita-

tion to address a public meeting in Columbus, Ohio, an allusion to which we find in a letter dated at Grove City, O., which we copy with the feeling that many who may read this volume will sympathize with every word uttered relative to the Proclamation :

"I spoke in Columbus on the President's Proclamation. * * But was not such an event worthy the awakening of every power—the congratulation of every faculty? What hath God wrought! We may well exclaim how event after event has paved the way for freedom. In the crucible of disaster and defeat God has stirred the nation, and permitted no permanent victory to crown her banners while she kept her hand upon the trembling slave and held him back from freedom. And even now the scale may still seem to oscillate between the contending parties, and some may say, Why does not God give us full and quick victory? My friend, do not despair if even deeper shadows gather around the fate of the nation, that truth will not ultimately triumph, and the right be established and vindicated; but the deadly gangrene has taken such deep and almost fatal hold upon the nation that the very centres of its life seem to be involved in its eradication. Just look, after all the trials deep and fiery through which the nation has waded, how mournfully suggestive was the response the proclamation received from the democratic triumphs which followed so close upon its footsteps. Well, thank God that the President did not fail us, that the fierce rumbling of democratic thunder did not shake from his hand the bolt he leveled against slavery. Oh, it would have been so sad if, after all the desolation and carnage that have dyed our plains with blood and crimsoned our borders with warfare, the pale young corpses trodden down by the hoofs of war, the dim eyes that have looked their last upon the loved and lost, had the arm of Executive power failed us in the nation's fearful crisis! For how mournful it is when the unrighted wrongs and fearful agonies of ages reach their culminating point, and events solemn, terrible and sublime marshal themselves in dread array to mould the destiny of nations, the hands appointed to hold the helm of affairs, instead of grasping the mighty occasions and stamping them with the great seals of duty and right, permit them to float along the current of circumstances without comprehending the hour of visitation or the momentous day of opportunity. Yes, we may thank God that in the hour when the nation's life was convulsed, and fearful gloom had shed its shadows over the land, the President reached out his hand through the darkness to break the chains on which the rust of centuries had gathered. Well, did you ever expect to see this day? I know that all is not accomplished; but we may rejoice in what has been already wrought,—the wondrous change in so short a time. Just a little while since the American flag to the flying bondman was an ensign of bondage; now it has become a symbol of protection and freedom. Once the slave was a despised and trampled on pariah; now he has become a useful ally to the American government. From the crimson soda of war springs the white flower of freedom, and songs of deliverance mingle with the crash and roar of war. The shadow of the American army becomes a covert for the slave, and beneath the American Eagle he grasps the key of knowledge and is lifted to a higher destiny."

This letter we had intended should complete the sketch of Mrs. Harper's Anti-Slavery labors; but in turning to another epistle dated Boston, April 19th, on the Assassination of the President, we feel that a part of it is too interesting to omit :

"Sorrow treads on the footsteps of the nation's joy. A few days since the telegraph thrilled and throbbled with a nation's joy. To-day a nation sits down beneath the shadow

of its mournful grief. Oh, what a terrible lesson does this event read to us! A few years since slavery tortured, burned, hung and outraged us, and the nation passed by and said, they had nothing to do with slavery where it was, slavery would have something to do with them where they were. Oh, how fearfully the judgments of Ichabod have pressed upon the nation's life! Well, it may be in the providence of God this blow was needed to intensify the nation's hatred of slavery, to show the utter fallacy of basing national reconstruction upon the votes of returned rebels, and rejecting loyal black men; making (after all the blood poured out like water, and wealth scattered like chaff) a return to the old idea that a white rebel is better or of more account in the body politic than a loyal black man. * * Moses, the meekest man on earth, led the children of Israel over the Red Sea, but was not permitted to see them settled in Canaan. Mr. Lincoln has led up through another Red Sea to the table land of triumphant victory, and God has seen fit to summon for the new era another man. It is ours then to bow to the Chastener and let our honored and loved chieftain go. Surely the everlasting arms that have hushed him so strangely to sleep are able to guide the nation through its untrod future; but in vain should be this fearful baptism of blood if from the dark bosom of slavery springs such terrible crimes. Let the whole nation resolve that the whole virus shall be eliminated from its body; that in the future slavery shall only be remembered as a thing of the past that shall never have the faintest hope of a resurrection."

Up to this point, we have spoken of Mrs. Harper as a laborer, battling for freedom under slavery and the war. She is equally earnest in laboring for Equality before the law—education, and a higher manhood, especially in the South, among the Freedmen.

For the best part of several years, since the war, she has traveled very extensively through the Southern States, going on the plantations and amongst the lowly, as well as to the cities and towns, addressing schools, Churches, meetings in Court Houses, Legislative Halls, &c., and, sometimes, under the most trying and hazardous circumstances; influenced in her labor of love, wholly by the noble impulses of her own heart, working her way along unsustained by any Society. In this mission, she has come in contact with all classes—the original slaveholders and the Freedmen, before and since the Fifteenth Amendment bill was enacted. Excepting two of the Southern States (Texas and Arkansas), she has traveled largely over all the others, and in no instance has she permitted herself, through fear, to disappoint an audience, when engagements had been made for her to speak, although frequently admonished that it would be dangerous to venture in so doing.

We first quote from a letter dated Darlington, S. C., May 13, 1867 :

"You will see by this that I am in the sunny South. * * * I here read and see human nature under new lights and phases. I meet with a people eager to hear, ready to listen, as if they felt that the slumber of the ages had been broken, and that they were to sleep no more. * * * I am glad that the colored man gets his freedom and suffrage together; that he is not forced to go through the same condition of things here, that has inclined him so much to apathy, isolation, and indifference, in the North. You, perhaps, wonder why I have been so slow in writing to you, but if you knew how busy I am, just working up to or past the limit of my strength. Traveling, conversing, addressing day and Sunday-schools (picking up scraps of information, takes up a large portion of my time),

besides what I give to reading. For my audiences I have both white and colored. On the cars, some find out that I am a lecturer, and then, again, I am drawn into conversation. 'What are you lecturing about?' the question comes up, and if I say, among other topics politics, then I may look for an onset. There is a sensitiveness on this subject, a dread, it may be, that some one will 'put the devil in the nigger's head,' or exert some influence inimical to them; still, I get along somewhat pleasantly. Last week I had a small congregation of listeners in the cars, where I sat. I got in conversation with a former slave dealer, and we had rather an exciting time. I was traveling alone, but it is not worth while to show any signs of fear. * * * Last Saturday I spoke in Sumter; a number of white persons were present, and I had been invited to speak there by the Mayor and editor of the paper. There had been some violence in the district, and some of my friends did not wish me to go, but I had promised, and, of course, I went. * * * I am in Darlington, and spoke yesterday, but my congregation was so large, that I stood near the door of the church, so that I might be heard both inside and out, for a large portion, perhaps nearly half my congregation were on the outside; and this, in Darlington, where, about two years ago, a girl was hung for making a childish and indiscreet speech. Victory was perched on our banners. Our army had been through, and this poor, ill-fated girl, almost a child in years, about seventeen years of age, rejoiced over the event, and said that she was going to marry a Yankee and set up housekeeping. She was reported as having made an incendiary speech and arrested, cruelly scourged, and then brutally hung. Poor child! she had been a faithful servant—her master tried to save her, but the tide of fury swept away his efforts. * * * Oh, friend, perhaps, sometimes your heart would ache, if you were only here and heard of the wrongs and abuses to which these people have been subjected. * * * Things, I believe, are a little more hopeful; at least, I believe, some of the colored people are getting better contracts, and, I understand, that there's less murdering. While I am writing, a colored man stands here, with a tale of wrong—he has worked a whole year, year before last, and now he has been put off with fifteen bushels of corn and his food; yesterday he went to see about getting his money, and the person to whom he went, threatened to kick him off, and accused him of stealing. I don't know how the colored man will vote, but perhaps many of them will be intimidated at the polls."

From a letter dated Cheraw, June 17th, 1867, the following remarks are taken :

"Well, Carolina is an interesting place. There is not a state in the Union I prefer to Carolina. Kinder, more hospitable, warmer-hearted people perhaps you will not find anywhere. I have been to Georgia; but Carolina is my preference. * * The South is to be a great theatre for the colored man's development and progress. There is brain-power here. If any doubt it, let him come into our schools, or even converse with some of our Freedmen either in their homes or by the way-side."

A few days later she gave an account of a visit she had just made in Florence, where our poor soldiers had been prisoners; saw some of the huts where they were exposed to rain and heat and cold with only the temporary shelter they made for themselves, which was a sad sight. Then she visited the grave-yards of some thousands of Union soldiers. Here in "eastern South Carolina" she was in "one of the worst parts of the State" in the days of Slavery; but under the new order of things, instead of the lash, she saw school books, and over the ruins of slavery, education and free speech springing up, at which she was moved to exclaim, "Thank God for the wonderful

change! I have lectured several nights this week, and the weather is quite warm; but I do like South Carolina. No state in the Union as far as colored people are concerned, do I like better—the land of warm welcomes and friendly hearts. God bless her and give her great peace!”

At a later period she visited Charleston and Columbia, and was well received in both places. She spoke a number of times in the different Freedmen schools and the colored churches in Charleston, once in the Legislative Hall, and also in one of the colored churches in Columbia. She received special encouragement and kindness from Hon. H. Cadoza, Secretary of State, and his family, and regarded him as a wise and upright leader of his race in that state.

The following are some stirring lines which she wrote upon the Fifteenth Amendment:

FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT.

Beneath the burden of our joy
Tremble, O wires, from East to West!
Fashion with words your tongues of fire,
To tell the nation's high behest.

Outstrip the winds, and leave behind
The murmur of the restless waves;
Nor tarry with your glorious news,
Amid the ocean's coral caves.

Ring out! ring out! your sweetest chimes,
Ye bells, that call to praise;
Let every heart with gladness thrill,
And songs of joyful triumph raise.

Shake off the dust, O rising race!
Crowned as a brother and a man;
Justice to-day asserts her claim,
And from thy brow fades out the ban.

With freedom's chrim upon thy head,
Her precious ensign in thy hand,
Go place thy once despised name
Amid the noblest of the land.

O ransomed race! give God the praise,
Who led thee through a crimson sea,
And 'mid the storm of fire and blood,
Turned out the war-cloud's light to thee.

Mrs. Harper, in writing from Kingstree, S. C., July 11th, 1867, in midsummer (laboring almost without any pecuniary reward), gave an account of a fearful catastrophe which had just occurred there in the burning of the jail with a number of colored prisoners in it. “It was a very sad affair. There was only one white prisoner and he got out. I believe

there was some effort made to release some of the prisoners; but the smoke was such that the effort proved ineffectual. Well, for the credit of our common human nature we may hope that it was so. * * * Last night I had some of the 'rebs' to hear me (part of the time some of the white folks come out). Our meetings are just as quiet and as orderly on the whole in Carolina as one might desire. * * I like General Sickles as a Military Governor. 'Massa Daniel, he King of the Carolinas.' I like his Mastership. Under him we ride in the City Cars, and get first-class passage on the railroad." At this place a colored man was in prison under sentence of death for "participating in a riot;" and the next day (after the date of her letter) was fixed for his execution. With some others, Mrs. Harper called at General Sickles' Head Quarters, hoping to elicit his sympathies whereby the poor fellow's life might be saved; but he was not in. Hence they were not able to do anything.

"Next week," continued Mrs. Harper, "I am to speak in a place where one of our teachers was struck and a colored man shot, who, I believe, gave offence by some words spoken at a public meeting. I do not feel any particular fear."

Her Philadelphia correspondent had jestingly suggested to her in one of his letters, that she should be careful not to allow herself to be "bought by the rebels." To which she replied:

"Now, in reference to being bought by rebels and becoming a Johnsonite I hold that between the white people and the colored there is a community of interests, and the sooner they find it out, the better it will be for both parties; but that community of interests does not consist in increasing the privileges of one class and curtailing the rights of the other, but in getting every citizen interested in the welfare, progress and durability of the state. I do not in lecturing confine myself to the political side of the question. While I am in favor of Universal suffrage, yet I know that the colored man needs something more than a vote in his hand: he needs to know the value of a home life; to rightly appreciate and value the marriage relation; to know how and to be incited to leave behind him the old shards and shells of slavery and to rise in the scale of character, wealth and influence. Like the Nautilus outgrowing his home to build for himself more 'stately temples' of social condition. A man landless, ignorant and poor may use the vote against his interests; but with intelligence and land he holds in his hand the basis of power and elements of strength."

While contemplating the great demand for laborers, in a letter from Athens, February 1st, 1870, after referring to some who had been "discouraged from the field," she wisely added that it was "no time to be discouraged."

* * If those who can benefit our people will hang around places where they are not needed, they may expect to be discouraged. * * Here is ignorance to be instructed; a race who needs to be helped up to higher planes of thought and action; and whether we are hindered or helped, we should try to be true to the commission God has written upon our souls. As far as the colored people are concerned, they are beginning to get homes for themselves and depositing money in Bank. They have hundreds of homes in Kentucky. There is progress in Tennessee, and even in this State while a number have been leaving, some who stay seem to be getting along prosperously. In Augusta colored persons are in the Revenue Office and Post Office. I have just been having some good meetings there. Some of my meet-

ings pay me poorly; but I have a chance to instruct and visit among the people and talk to their Sunday-schools and day-schools also. Of course I do not pretend that all are saving money or getting homes. I rather think from what I hear that the interest of the grown-up people in getting education has somewhat subsided, owing, perhaps, in a measure, to the novelty having worn off and the absorption or rather direction of the mind to other matters. Still I don't think that I have visited scarcely a place since last August where there was no desire for a teacher; and Mr. Fidler, who is a Captain or Colonel, thought some time since that there were more colored than white who were learning or had learned to read. There has been quite an amount of violence and trouble in the State; but we have the military here, and if they can keep Georgia out of the Union about a year or two longer, and the colored people continue to live as they have been doing, from what I hear, perhaps these rebels will learn a little more sense. I have been in Atlanta for some time, but did not stay until the Legislature was organized; but I was there when colored members returned and took their seats. It was rather a stormy time in the House; but no blood was shed. Since then there has been some 'sticking;' but I don't think any of the colored ones were in it."

In the neighborhood of Eufaula, Ala., in December, 1870, Mrs. Harper did a good work, as may be seen from the following extract taken from a letter, dated December 9th:

Last evening I visited one of the plantations, and had an interesting time. Oh, how warm was the welcome! I went out near dark, and between that time and attending my lecture, I was out to supper in two homes. The people are living in the old cabins of slavery; some of them have no windows, at all, that I see; in fact, I don't remember of having seen a pane of window-glass in the settlement. But, humble as their homes were, I was kindly treated, and well received; and what a chance one has for observation among these people, if one takes with her a manner that unlocks other hearts. I had quite a little gathering, after less, perhaps, than a day's notice; the minister did not know that I was coming, till he met me in the afternoon. There was no fire in the church, and so they lit fires outside, and we gathered, or at least a number of us, around the fire. To-night I am going over to Georgia to lecture. In consequence of the low price of cotton, the people may not be able to pay much, and I am giving all my lectures free. You speak of things looking dark in the South; there is no trouble here that I know of—cotton is low, but the people do not seem to be particularly depressed about it; this emigration question has been on the carpet, and I do not wonder if some of them, with their limited knowledge, lose hope in seeing full justice done to them, among their life-long oppressors; Congress has been agitating the St. Domingo question; a legitimate theme for discussion, and one that comes nearer home, is how they can give more security and strength to the government which we have established in the South—for there has been a miserable weakness in the security to human life. The man with whom I stopped, had a son who married a white woman, or girl, and was shot down, and there was, as I understand, no investigation by the jury; and a number of cases have occurred of murders, for which the punishment has been very lax, or not at all, and, it may be, never will be; however, I rather think things are somewhat quieter. A few days ago a shameful outrage occurred at this place—some men had been out fox hunting, and came to the door of a colored woman and demanded entrance, making out they wanted fire; she replied that she had none, and refused to open the door; the miserable cowards broke open the door, and shamefully beat her. I am going to see her this afternoon. It is remarkable, however, in spite of circumstances, how some of these people are getting along. Here is a woman who, with her husband, at the surrender, had a single dollar; and now they have a home of their own, and several acres attached—five altogether; but, as that was rather small, her husband has contracted for two hundred and forty acres more, and has now gone out and commenced operations."

From *Columbiana*, February 20th, she wrote concerning her work, and presented the "lights and shades" of affairs as they came under her notice.

"I am almost constantly either traveling or speaking. I do not think that I have missed more than one Sunday that I have not addressed some Sunday-school, and I have not missed many day-schools either. And as I am giving all my lectures free the proceeds of the collections are not often very large; still as ignorant as part of the people are perhaps a number of them would not hear at all, and may be prejudice others if I charged even ten cents, and so perhaps in the long run, even if my work is wearing, I may be of some real benefit to my race. * * I don't know but that you would laugh if you were to hear some of the remarks which my lectures call forth: 'She is a man,' again 'She is not colored, she is painted.' Both white and colored come out to hear me, and I have very fine meetings; and then part of the time I am talking in between times, and how tired I am some of the time. Still I am standing with my race on the threshold of a new era, and though some be far past me in the learning of the schools, yet to-day, with my limited and fragmentary knowledge, I may help the race forward a little. Some of our people remind me of sheep without a shepherd."

PRIVATE LECTURES TO FREEDWOMEN.

Desiring to speak to women who have been the objects of so much wrong and abuse under Slavery, and even since Emancipation, in a state of ignorance, not accessible always to those who would or could urge the proper kind of education respecting their morals and general improvement, Mrs. Harper has made it her business not to overlook this all important duty to her poor sisters.

The following extract taken from a letter dated "Greenville, Georgia, March 29th," will show what she was doing in this direction:

"But really my hands are almost constantly full of work; sometimes I speak twice a day. Part of my lectures are given privately to women, and for them I never make any charge, or take up any collection. But this part of the country reminds me of heathen ground, and though my work may not be recognized as part of it used to be in the North, yet never perhaps were my services more needed; and according to their intelligence and means perhaps never better appreciated than here among these lowly people. I am now going to have a private meeting with the women of this place if they will come out. I am going to talk with them about their daughters, and about things connected with the welfare of the race. Now is the time for our women to begin to try to lift up their heads and plant the roots of progress under the hearthstone. Last night I spoke in a school-house, where there was not, to my knowledge, a single window glass; to-day I write to you in a lowly cabin, where the windows in the room are formed by two apertures in the wall. There is a wide-spread and almost universal appearance of poverty in this State where I have been, but thus far I have seen no, or scarcely any, pauperism. I am not sure that I have seen any. The climate is so fine, so little cold that poor people can live off of less than they can in the North. Last night my table was adorned with roses, although I did not get one cent for my lecture. * * *"

"The political heavens are getting somewhat overcast. Some of this old rebel element, I think, are in favor of taking away the colored man's vote, and if he loses it now it may be generations before he gets it again. Well, after all perhaps the colored man generally is not really developed enough to value his vote and equality with other races, so he gets enough to eat and drink, and be comfortable, perhaps the loss of his vote would

not be a serious grievance to many; but his children differently educated and trained by circumstances might feel political inferiority rather a bitter cup."

"After all whether they encourage or discourage me, I belong to this race, and when it is down I belong to a down race; when it is up I belong to a risen race."

She writes thus from Montgomery, December 29th, 1870:

"Did you ever read a little poem commencing, I think, with these words:

A mother cried, Oh, give me joy,
For I have born a darling boy!
A darling boy! why the world is full
Of the men who play at push and pull.

Well, as full as the room was of beds and tenants, on the morning of the twenty-second, there arose a wail upon the air, and this mundane sphere had another inhabitant, and my room another occupant. I left after that, and when I came back the house was fuller than it was before, and my hostess gave me to understand that she would rather I should be somewhere else, and I left again. How did I fare? Well, I had been stopping with one of our teachers and went back; but the room in which I stopped was one of those southern shells through which both light and cold enter at the same time; it had one window and perhaps more than half or one half the panes gone. I don't know that I was ever more conquered by the cold than I had been at that house, and I have lived parts of winter after winter amid the snows of New England; but if it was cold out of doors, there was warmth and light within doors; but here, if you opened the door for light, the cold would also enter, and so part of the time I sat by the fire, and that and the crevices in the house supplied me with light in one room, and we had the deficient window-sash, or perhaps it never had had any lights in it. You could put your finger through some of the apertures in the house; at least I could mine, and the water froze down to the bottom of the tumbler. From another such domicile may kind fate save me. And then the man asked me four dollars and a half a week board.

One of the nights there was no fire in the stove, and the next time we had fires, one stove might have been a second-hand chamber stove. Now perhaps you think these people very poor, but the man with whom I stopped has no family that I saw, but himself and wife, and he would make two dollars and a half a day, and she worked out and kept a boarder. And yet, except the beds and bed clothing, I wouldn't have given fifteen dollars for all their house furniture. I should think that this has been one of the lowest down States in the South, as far as civilization has been concerned. In the future, until these people are educated, look out for Democratic victories, for here are two materials with which Democracy can work, ignorance and poverty. Men talk about missionary work among the heathen, but if any lover of Christ wants a field for civilizing work, here is a field. Part of the time I am preaching against men ill-treating their wives. I have heard though, that often during the war men hired out their wives and drew their pay.

* * * * *

"And then there is another trouble, some of our Northern men have been down this way and by some means they have not made the best impression on every mind here. One woman here has been expressing her mind very freely to me about some of our Northerners, and we are not all considered here as saints and angels, and of course in their minds I get associated with some or all the humbugs that have been before me. But I am not discouraged, my race needs me, if I will only be faithful, and in spite of suspicion and distrust, I will work on; the deeper our degradation, the louder our call for redemption. If they have little or no faith in goodness and earnestness, that is only one reason why we should be more faithful and earnest, and so I shall probably stay here in the South all winter. I am not making much money, and perhaps will hardly clear ex-

penses this winter; but after all what matters it when I am in my grave whether I have been rich or poor, loved or hated, despised or respected, if Christ will only own me to His Father, and I be permitted a place in one of the mansions of rest."

Col. J. W. Forney, editor of "The Press," published July 12, 1871, with the brief editorial heading by his own hand, the document appended:

The following letter, written by Mrs. F. E. W. Harper, the well-known colored orator, to a friend, Mr. Wm. Still, of Philadelphia, will be read with surprise and pleasure by all classes; especially supplemented as it is by an article from the Mobile (Alabama) *Register*, referring to one of her addresses in that city. The *Register* is the organ of the fire-eaters of the South, conducted by John Forsyth, heretofore one of the most intolerant of that school. Mrs. Harper describes the manner in which the old plantation of Jefferson Davis in Mississippi was cultivated by his brother's former slave, having been a guest in the Davis mansion, now occupied by Mr. Montgomery, the aforesaid slave. She also draws a graphic picture of her own marvellous advancement from utter obscurity to the platform of a public lecturer, honored by her own race and applauded by their oppressors. While we regret, as she says, that her experience and that of Mr. Montgomery is exceptional, it is easy to anticipate the harvest of such a sowing. The same culture—the same courage on the part of the men and women who undertake to advocate Republican doctrines in the South—the same perseverance and intelligence on the part of those who are earning their bread by the cultivation of the soil, will be crowned with the same success. Violence, bloodshed, and murder cannot rule long in communities where these resistless elements are allowed to work. No scene in the unparalleled tragedy of the rebellion, or in the drama which succeeded that tragedy, can be compared to the picture outlined by Mrs. Harper herself, and filled in by the ready pen of the rebel editor of the Mobile *Register*:

MOBILE, July 5, 1871.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—It is said that truth is stranger than fiction; and if ten years since some one had entered my humble log house and seen me kneading bread and making butter, and said that in less than ten years you will be in the lecture field, you will be a welcome guest under the roof of the President of the Confederacy, though not by special invitation from him, that you will see his brother's former slave a man of business and influence, that hundreds of colored men will congregate on the old baronial possessions, that a school will spring up there like a well in the desert dust, that this former slave will be a magistrate upon that plantation, that labor will be organized upon a new basis, and that under the sole auspices and moulding hands of this man and his sons will be developed a business whose transactions will be numbered in hundreds of thousands of dollars, would you not have smiled incredulously? And I have lived to see the day when the plantation has passed into new hands, and these hands once wore the fetters of slavery. Mr. Montgomery, the present proprietor by contract of between five and six thousand acres of land, has one of the most interesting families that I have ever seen in the South. They are building up a future which if exceptional now I hope will become more general hereafter. Every hand of his family is adding its quota to the success of this experiment of a colored man both trading and farming on an extensive scale. Last year his wife took on her hands about 130 acres of land, and with her force she raised about 107 bales of cotton. She has a number of orphan children employed, and not only does she supervise their labor, but she works herself. One daughter, an intelligent young lady, is postmistress and I believe assistant book-keeper. One son attends to the planting interest, and another daughter attends to one of the stores. The business of this firm of Montgomery & Sons has amounted, I understand, to between three and four hundred thousand dollars in a year. I stayed on the place several days and was hospitably entertained and kindly

treated. When I come, if nothing prevents, I will tell you more about them. Now for the next strange truth. Enclosed I send you a notice from one of the leading and representative papers of rebellion. The editor has been, or is considered, one of the representative men of the South. I have given a lecture since this notice, which brought out some of the most noted rebels, among whom was Admiral Semmes. In my speech I referred to the Alabama sweeping away our commerce, and his son sat near him and seemed to receive it with much good humor. I don't know what the papers will say to-day; perhaps they will think that I dwelt upon the past too much. Oh, if you had seen the rebels I had out last night, perhaps you would have felt a little nervous for me. However, I lived through it, and gave them more gospel truth than perhaps some of them have heard for some time.

A LECTURE.

We received a polite invitation from the trustees of the State-street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to attend a lecture in that edifice on Thursday evening. Being told that the discourse would be delivered by a female colored lecturer from Maryland, curiosity, as well as an interest to see how the colored citizens were managing their own institutions, led us at once to accept the invitation. We found a very spacious church, gas-light, and the balustrades of the galleries copiously hung with wreaths and festoons of flowers, and a large audience of both sexes, which, both in appearance and behaviour, was respectable and decorously observant of the proprieties of the place. The services were opened, as usual, with prayer and a hymn, the latter inspired by powerful lungs, and in which the musical ear at once caught the negro talent for melody. The lecturer was then introduced as Mrs. F. E. W. Harper, from Maryland. Without a moment's hesitation she started off in the flow of her discourse, which rolled smoothly and uninterruptedly on for nearly two hours. It was very apparent that it was not a cut and dried speech, for she was as fluent and as felicitous in her allusions to circumstances immediately around her as she was when she rose to a more exalted pitch of laudation of the "Union," or of execration of the old slavery system. Her voice was remarkable—as sweet as any woman's voice we ever heard, and so clear and distinct as to pass every syllable to the most distant ear in the house.

Without any effort at attentive listening we followed the speaker to the end, not discerning a single grammatical inaccuracy of speech, or the slightest violation of good taste in manner or matter. At times the current of thoughts flowed in eloquent and poetic expression, and often her quaint humor would expose the ivory in half a thousand mouths. We confess that we began to wonder, and we asked a fine-looking man before us, "What is her color? Is she dark or light?" He answered, "She is mulatto; what they call a red mulatto." The 'red' was new to us. Our neighbor asked, "How do you like her?" We replied, "She is giving your people the best kind and the very wisest of advice." He rejoined, "I wish I had her education." To which we added, "That's just what she tells you is your great duty and your need, and if you are too old to get it yourself, you must give it to your children."

The speaker left the impression on our mind that she was not only intelligent and educated, but—the great end of education—she was enlightened. She comprehends perfectly the situation of her people, to whose interests she seems ardently devoted. The main theme of her discourse, the one string to the harmony of which all the others were attuned, was the grand opportunity that emancipation had afforded to the black race to lift itself to the level of the duties and responsibilities enjoined by it. "You have muscle power and brain power," she said; "you must utilize them, or be content to remain forever the inferior race. Get land, every one that can, and as fast as you can. A landless people must be dependent upon the landed people. A few acres to till for food and a roof, however humble, over your head, are the castle of your independence, and when you have

it you are fortified to act and vote independently whenever your interests are at stake." That part of her lecture (and there was much of it) that dwelt on the moral duties and domestic relations of the colored people was pitched on the highest key of sound morality. She urged the cultivation of the "home life," the sanctity of the marriage state (a happy contrast to her strong-minded, free-love, white sisters of the North), and the duties of mothers to their daughters. "Why," said she in a voice of much surprise, "I have actually heard since I have been South that sometimes colored husbands positively beat their wives! I do not mean to insinuate for a moment that such things can possibly happen in Mobile. The very appearance of this congregation forbids it; but I did hear of one terrible husband defending himself for the unmanly practice with "Well, I have got to whip her or leave her."

There were parts of the lecturer's discourse that grated a little on a white Southern ear, but it was lost and forgiven in the genuine earnestness and profound good sense with which the woman spoke to her kind in words of sound advice.

On the whole, we are very glad we accepted the Zion's invitation. It gave us much food for new thought. It reminded us, perhaps, of neglected duties to these people, and it impressed strongly on our minds that these people are getting along, getting onward, and progress was a star becoming familiar to their gaze and their desires. Whatever the negroes have done in the path of advancement, they have done largely without white aid. But politics and white pride have kept the white people aloof from offering that earnest and moral assistance which would be so useful to a people just starting from infancy into a life of self-dependence.

In writing from Columbiana and Demopolis, Alabama, about the first of March, 1871, Mrs. Harper painted the state of affairs in her usually graphic manner, and diligently was she endeavoring to inspire the people with hope and encouragement.

"Oh, what a field there is here in this region! Let me give you a short account of this week's work. Sunday I addressed a Sunday-school in Taladega; on Monday afternoon a day-school. On Monday I rode several miles to a meeting; addressed it, and came back the same night. Got back about or after twelve o'clock. The next day I had a meeting of women and addressed them, and then lectured in the evening in the Court-House to both colored and white. Last night I spoke again, about ten miles from where I am now stopping, and returned the same night, and to-morrow evening probably I shall speak again. I grow quite tired part of the time. * * * And now let me give you an anecdote or two of some of our new citizens. While in Taladega I was entertained and well entertained, at the house of one of our new citizens. He is living in the house of his former master. He is a brick-maker by trade, and I rather think mason also. He was worth to his owner, it was reckoned, fifteen hundred or about that a year. He worked with him seven years; and in that seven years he remembers receiving from him fifty cents. Now mark the contrast! That man is now free, owns the home of his former master, has I think more than sixty acres of land, and his master is in the poor-house. I heard of another such case not long since: A woman was cruelly treated once, or more than once. She escaped and ran naked into town. The villain in whose clutch she found herself was trying to drag her downward to his own low level of impurity, and at last she fell. She was poorly fed, so that she was tempted to sell her person. Even scraps thrown to the dog she was hunger-bitten enough to aim for. Poor thing, was there anything in the future for her? Had not hunger and cruelty and prostitution done their work, and left her an entire wreck for life? It seems not. Freedom came, and with it dawned a new era upon that poor, overshadowed, and sin-darkened life. Freedom brought oppor-

tunity for work and wages combined. She went to work, and got ten dollars a month. She has contrived to get some education, and has since been teaching school. While her former mistress has been to her for help.

"Do not the mills of God grind exceedingly fine? And she has helped that mistress, and so has the colored man given money, from what I heard, to his former master. After all, friend, do we not belong to one of the best branches of the human race? And yet, how have our people been murdered in the South, and their bones scattered at the grave's mouth! Oh, when will we have a government strong enough to make human life safe? Only yesterday I heard of a murder committed on a man for an old grudge of several years' standing. I had visited the place, but had just got away. Last summer a Mr. Luke was hung, and several other men also, I heard."

While surrounded with this state of affairs, an appeal reached her through the columns of the *National Standard*, setting forth a state of very great suffering and want, especially on the part of the old, blind and decrepit Freedmen of the District of Columbia. After expressing deep pity for these unfortunates, she added: "Please send ten dollars to Josephine Griffing for me for the suffering poor of the District of Columbia. Just send it by mail, and charge to my account."

Many more letters written by Mrs. Harper are before us, containing highly interesting information from Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Maryland, and even poor little Delaware. Through all these States she has traveled and labored extensively, as has been already stated; but our space in this volume will admit of only one more letter:

"I have been traveling the best part of the day. * * Can you spare a little time from your book to just take a peep at some of our Alabama people? If you would see some instances of apparent poverty and ignorance that I have seen perhaps you would not wonder very much at the conservative voting in the State. A few days since I was about to pay a woman a dollar and a quarter for some washing in ten cent (currency) notes, when she informed me that she could not count it; she must trust to my honesty—she could count forty cents. Since I left Eufaula I have seen something of plantation life. The first plantation I visited was about five or six miles from Eufaula, and I should think that the improvement in some of the cabins was not very much in advance of what it was in Slavery. The cabins are made with doors, but not, to my recollection, a single window pane or speck of plastering; and yet even in some of those lowly homes I met with hospitality. A room to myself is a luxury that I do not always enjoy. Still I live through it, and find life rather interesting. The people have much to learn. The condition of the women is not very enviable in some cases. They have had some of them a terribly hard time in Slavery, and their subjection has not ceased in freedom. * * One man said of some women, that a man must leave them or whip them. * * Let me introduce you to another scene: here is a gathering; a large fire is burning out of doors, and here are one or two boys with hats on. Here is a little girl with her bonnet on, and there a little boy moves off and commences to climb a tree. Do you know what the gathering means? It is a school, and the teacher, I believe, is paid from the school fund. He says he is from New Hampshire. That may be. But to look at him and to hear him teach, you would perhaps think him not very lately from the North; at least I do not think he is a model teacher. They have a church; but somehow they have burnt a hole, I understand, in the top, and so I lectured inside, and they gathered around the fire outside. Here is

another—what shall I call it?—meeting-place. It is a brush arbor. And what pray is that? Shall I call it an edifice or an improvised meeting-house? Well, it is called a brush arbor. It is a kind of brush house with seats, and a kind of covering made partly, I rather think, of branches of trees, and an humble place for pulpit. I lectured in a place where they seemed to have no other church; but I spoke at a house. In Glenville, a little out-of-the-way place, I spent part of a week. There they have two unfinished churches. One has not a single pane of glass, and the same aperture that admits the light also gives ingress to the air; and the other one, I rather think, is less finished than that. I spoke in one, and then the white people gave me a hall, and quite a number attended. * * * I am now at Union Springs, where I shall probably room with three women. But amid all this roughing it in the bush, I find a field of work where kindness and hospitality have thrown their sunshine around my way. And Oh what a field of work is here! How much one needs the Spirit of our dear Master to make one's life a living, loving force to help men to higher planes of thought and action. I am giving all my lectures with free admission; but still I get along, and the way has been opening for me almost ever since I have been South. Oh, if some more of our young women would only consecrate their lives to the work of upbuilding the race! Oh, if I could only see our young men and women aiming to build up a future for themselves which would grandly contrast with the past—with its pain, ignorance and low social condition."

It may be well to add that Mrs. Harper's letters from which we have copied were simply private, never intended for publication; and while they bear obvious marks of truthfulness, discrimination and impartiality, it becomes us to say that a more strictly conscientious woman we have never known.

Returning to Philadelphia after many months of hard labor in the South, Mrs. Harper, instead of seeking needed rest and recreation, scarcely allows a day to pass without seeking to aid in the reformation of the outcast and degraded. The earnest advice which she gives on the subject of temperance and moral reforms generally causes some to reflect, even among adults, and induces a number of poor children to attend day and Sabbath-schools. The condition of this class, she feels, appeals loudly for a remedy to respectable and intelligent colored citizens; and whilst not discouraged, she is often quite saddened at the supineness of the better class. During the past summer when it was too warm to labor in the South she spent several months in this field without a farthing's reward. She assisted in organizing a Sabbath-school, and accepted the office of Assistant Superintendent under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Mrs. Harper reads the best magazines and ablest weeklies, as well as more elaborate works, not excepting such authors as De Tocqueville, Mill, Ruskin, Buckle, Guizot, &c. In espousing the cause of the oppressed as a poet and lecturer, had she neglected to fortify her mind in the manner she did, she would have been weighed and found wanting long since. Before friends and foes, the learned and the unlearned, North and South, Mrs. Harper has pleaded the cause of her race in a manner that has commanded the greatest respect; indeed, it is hardly too much to say, that during

seventeen years of public labor she has made thousands of speeches without doing herself or people discredit in a single instance, but has accomplished a great deal in the way of removing prejudice. May we not hope that the rising generation at least will take encouragement by her example and find an argument of rare force in favor of mental and moral equality, and above all be awakened to see how prejudices and difficulties may be surmounted by continual struggles, intelligence and a virtuous character?

Fifty thousand copies at least of her four small books have been sold to those who have listened to her eloquent lectures. One of those productions entitled "Moses" has been used to entertain audiences with evening readings in various parts of the country. With what effect may be seen from the two brief notices as follows:

"Mrs. F. E. W. Harper delivered a poem upon 'Moses' in Wilbraham to a large and delighted audience. She is a woman of high moral tone, with superior native powers highly cultivated, and a captivating eloquence that hold her audience in rapt attention from the beginning to the close. She will delight any intelligent audience, and those who wish first-class lecturers cannot do better than to secure her services."—*Zion's Herald, Boston.*

"Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper read her poem of 'Moses' last evening at Rev. Mr. Harrison's church to a good audience. It deals with the story of the Hebrew Moses from his finding in the wicker basket on the Nile to his death on Mount Nebo and his burial in an unknown grave; following closely the Scripture account. It contains about 700 lines, beginning with blank verse of the common measure, and changing to other measures, but always without rhyme; and is a pathetic and well-sustained piece. Mrs. Harper recited it with good effect, and it was well received. She is a lady of much talent, and always speaks well, particularly when her subject relates to the condition of her own people, in whose welfare, before and since the war, she has taken the deepest interest. As a lecturer Mrs. Harper is more effective than most of those who come before our lyceums; with a natural eloquence that is very moving."—*Galesburgh Register, Ill.*

Grace Greenwood, in the Independent in noticing a Course of Lectures in which Mrs. Harper spoke (in Philadelphia) pays this tribute to her:

"Next on the course was Mrs. Harper, a colored woman; about as colored as some of the Cuban belles I have met with at Saratoga. She has a noble head, this bronze muse; a strong face, with a shadowed glow upon it, indicative of thoughtful fervor, and of a nature most femininely sensitive, but not in the least morbid. Her form is delicate, her hands daintily small. She stands quietly beside her desk, and speaks without notes, with gestures few and fitting. Her manner is marked by dignity and composure. She is never assuming, never theatrical. In the first part of her lecture she was most impressive in her pleading for the race with whom her lot is cast. There was something touching in her attitude as their representative. The woe of two hundred years sighed through her tones. Every glance of her sad eyes was a mournful remonstrance against injustice and wrong. Feeling on her soul, as she must have felt it, the chilling weight of caste, she seemed to say:

'I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn.'

* * * As I listened to her, there swept over me, in a chill wave of horror, the reali-

zation that this noble woman had she not been rescued from her mother's condition, might have been sold on the auction-block, to the highest bidder—her intellect, fancy, eloquence, the flashing wit, that might make the delight of a Parisian saloon, and her pure, Christian character all thrown in—the recollection that women like her could be dragged out of public conveyances in our own city, or frowned out of fashionable churches by Anglo-Saxon saints."

THE END.