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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AN AMERICAN SLAVE ***

Narrative of the Life of FREDERICK DOUGLASS

AN
AMERICAN SLAVE.
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY OFFICE,
NO. 25 CORNHILL.
1845.

ENTERED, ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS,
IN THE YEAR 1845,
BY FRANCIS JACKSON,
IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT
OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Note from the original file: This electronic book is being released in the hope to honor the birthday of Frederick Douglass, February 14, 1817 (or perhaps February 12, 1818) and Black History Month.

Contents.

PREFACE
LETTER FROM WENDELL PHILLIPS, ESQ.
FREDERICK DOUGLASS.
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CONCLUSION.

PREFACE

In the month of August, 1841, I attended a Anti-Slavery Convention in Nantucket, at which it was my happiness to become acquainted with Frederick Douglass, the writer of the following Narrative. He was a stranger to nearly every person present, except those who had seen him at the place of his residence, which was not far from Nantucket. He was requested to relate to the meeting his history, and incidents in his adventurous career in the prosecution of which he had escaped from the house of bondage, and fled to the City of Refuge, leaving his master to ponder the question, whether he should ever see his property in human form again.

He responded to the call, and spoke for nearly an hour, to the entire satisfaction of the audience. Notwithstanding the disadvantages of his position, in consequence of the recent date of his escape and manifest timidity, he succeeded in exhibiting himself as a man, who had been, by the cruelty of his fellow-creatures, deprived of his birthright, and who was now, by his own exertions, endeavoring to secure the same blessing for his unfortunate brethren, who still groaned under the lash of the merciless slaveholder. The audience were at once convinced that he was a man, and that he had been a slave. They were also convinced that he was a man of uncommon intellect, and that he would become a powerful advocate of the principles of the Anti-Slavery Cause. I was then a young man, but I had been a student of human nature, and I could not be deceived in my conclusion of him. I knew he was a man, and a man of no common mind, and I was not deceived in my first impression of him. I knew he was a slave, and a slave in the most degrading sense of the word, and I was not deceived in that fact. I knew he was a fugitive from the land of bondage, and that he had come to Nantucket by the aid of the Underground Railroad; and I was not deceived in that fact. I knew he was a powerful speaker, and that he had a story to tell, which would make the heart of the listener bleed, and his own heart glow with indignation against the system which could make such a man as he was, a chattel. I was not deceived in any of these things. I was satisfied that I had found a treasure, and I felt that the friends of the cause would be delighted with the prospect of having such a chattel as Frederick Douglass proved himself to be.

I felt that the Anti-Slavery Cause was a cause which would not fail to produce excitement, but I felt that it was a cause which would not suffer from the agitation of the subject. I felt that the Cause of Human Rights could not be injured by the agitation of the question of human rights, and that the Cause of Bleeding Humanity could not be injured by the exposure of the cause of the bleeding slave. I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which should cause the light of truth to be thrown upon it. I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which should cause the public to inquire into the character of its advocates. I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which should cause the public to inquire into the character of its opponents. I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which should cause the public to inquire into the character of the laws which were made to protect the rights of property in human flesh, a chattel flesh-and-blood property.

I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which would tend to produce the conviction that slavery is the parent of ignorance, and that ignorance is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of poverty, and that poverty is the parent of crime; that slavery is the parent of prejudice, and that prejudice is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of pride, and that pride is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of cowardice, and that cowardice is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of hypocrisy, and that hypocrisy is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of religious bigotry, and that religious bigotry is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of political corruption, and that political corruption is the parent of slavery; that slavery is the parent of all the evils under the sun, and that slavery is the parent of all the good under the sun, and that the only way to destroy the evil fruit is to plant the root of the tree in the minds of the people, that it may be cut down and cast into the fire of public sentiment. I felt that the Cause could not be injured by any thing which would tend to the production of such results as these. Mindful of these convictions, I invited Mr. Douglass to take a seat upon the platform, and to address the meeting at their pleasure. He did so, and he spoke as he had never spoken before, so I was told by those who had heard him before. He spoke for himself. He was his own witness. He was his own champion. He was his own avenger. He was his own God. He spoke as a man should speak who had been a slave, who had felt the lash of the slave-driver, who had worn the chains of the slave, who had been hunted by the human bloodhounds of the South, who had been shot at by the cowardly slaveholders, who had been compelled to see his wife and children torn from his bosom by the merciless slave-traders, who had been robbed of the earnings of his toil, who had been robbed of his wife, who had been robbed of his children, who had been robbed of himself. He spoke as a man who had been all this, and who was now a free man, who was now his own property, who was now his own wife's husband, who was now his own children's father, who was now his own God's child, who was now his own country's citizen, who was now his own country's child. He spoke as a man who was now in a free country, and who was now in a country in which he was a man, and could be treated as a man by the laws of the land, and who was now in a country in which he was a man, and could be treated as a man by the people of the land. He spoke as a man who was now in a country in which he was a man, and could be treated as a man by the people of the land, because he was in a country in which he was not a chattel, but a man himself

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We asked the contributors to write a short, and not so short, story for Lost Souls. We asked them to write what they felt like writing, and we would see what happened. We did not give them any guidelines, we did not give them any rules, we did not give them any restrictions. Lost Souls 3 is what happened. We hope you like it.

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