

# MASTERS OF FREEDOM

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES IN SOCIAL PROGRESS

BY

SHERWOOD EDDY

AND

KIRBY PAGE

*"With a great price obtained I this freedom."*

NEW



YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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## FOREWORD

*"With a great price obtained I this freedom,"* said the Roman officer to the apostle Paul. And all of us must likewise admit that the liberty which we now enjoy was purchased at stupendous cost. Primitive man was everywhere in fetters. Throughout his whole history man has been enslaved—by the uncontrolled elements of nature and disease, by hunger and poverty, by ignorance and superstition, by custom and tradition, by tyranny and mob violence, and by his own appetites and passions. The record of man's struggle for freedom is a story of sweat and tears, of bloodshed and boundless sacrifice. In no realm has liberty of thought or action been achieved without the toil and suffering of the pioneer. We owe an incalculable debt to these prophetic and heroic men and women who patiently endured pain and persecution for the sake of liberty. With a great price indeed have we secured our freedom!

Biography is perhaps the best medium through which to reveal the cost of that measure of freedom which is now our common heritage. The present volume is an attempt briefly to interpret the lives of eight men and women who well deserve the title "Makers of Freedom." Our choice of characters does not, of course, include all the great leaders in reform movements. The reader will at once detect conspicuous omissions, some of whom were not included because their lives are already so well known. In our treatment of each character portrayed, we have sought light upon six questions: (1) What kind of world did he live in? (2) What did he do? (3) What did he say? (4) What happened to him? (5) What kind of man was he? (6) What were the results of his life?

It is obvious that the age-long effort to achieve liberty has not yet been fully achieved. We have, therefore, included a section on "The Present Struggle for Freedom," in which we have sought to analyze some prevailing attitudes, practices and institutions which are now enslaving mankind, and have faced the question as to what an individual can do to make more effective the present crusade for the complete emancipation of the human spirit.

SHERWOOD EDDY  
KIRBY PAGE ·



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# MAKERS OF FREEDOM



## CHAPTER 1

# FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY

William Lloyd Garrison

### 1. WHAT KIND OF A WORLD DID GARRISON LIVE IN?

William Lloyd Garrison was born at an hour when human slavery was still regarded as a divine institution by millions of his countrymen. At the time of his death it had been banished as a legalized institution from the civilized world. The story of its abolition is one of the most dramatic and significant in the whole history of social progress.

Traffic in human flesh is older than the written records of man. Everywhere in ancient times captives in war were killed or enslaved. Indeed, as has often been pointed out, slavery was more merciful than slaughter. Civilization began with the crack of the whip. The glories of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome rested upon slave labor. Single individuals owned from 5,000 to 10,000 slaves. Slavery did not die out in Europe during the middle ages, although in many places it took the milder form of serfdom.

The modern slave traffic has been confined chiefly to Negroes. As early as 1434 a Portuguese captain landed on the Guinea Coast and carried away some Negro boys. In 1562 Queen Elizabeth legalized the purchase of black slaves by English subjects. In 1620 Dutch traders landed black slaves at Jamestown in Virginia. By the end of the century the slave traffic was a well-established and highly profitable business. Between 1680 and 1786 more than 2,000,000 Africans were imported into America and the West Indies. The Peace of Utrecht, which was signed in 1713, gave England a practical monopoly in the slave trade from West Africa to America. This treaty was celebrated in St. Paul's

Cathedral in London by the singing of a *Te Deum* specially composed by Handel for the occasion.

There is no blacker page in modern history than that containing the record of the European slavers during this period. With insatiable greed and terrible cruelty they raided the jungles of Africa and carried into captivity multitudes of these helpless peoples. Language is inadequate to describe the horrors of the passage to America. Shackled with heavy irons, chained together, crowded like animals into vile quarters, with foul air, indescribable filth and loathsome disease, they were subjected to a degree of torture which has rarely been equaled in the whole history of man's cruelty to man.

Concerning the question as to how slaves were treated by their masters, it is not safe to generalize. The slave code was constantly changing and was never uniform throughout the country. Some states went much further than others in protecting slaves. Moreover, many owners treated their slaves far better than was required by law. *It would be grossly untrue to say that all slaves were in practice denied the fundamental rights of human beings.* There was a basis in fact for the vivid picture contained in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," but this was by no means the whole story of slavery. There is no doubt but that on the better plantations the slaves were well fed and clothed, were not overworked, and on the whole were contented and happy. But at best slavery was highly paternalistic and depended upon the good pleasure of the master. At its worst it was hideous cruelty and barbarous inhumanity.

### *Grounds on Which Slavery Was Defended*

Slavery could never have been so thoroughly incorporated into the law of the land if it had not rested upon a well-defined philosophy which was widely accepted. Included in this philosophy of slavery were the following elements:

1. *African slaves are an inferior race and are therefore doomed to servitude.* The doctrine of inferior peoples is of ancient origin. Aristotle believed that "nature endeavors to

make the bodies of freemen and slaves different; the latter strong for necessary use, the former erect and useless for such operations, but useful for political life. . . It is evident, then, that by nature some men are free, others slaves, and that in the case of the latter, slavery is both beneficial and just." On this point Chancellor William Harper said: "It is as much in the order of nature that men should enslave each other, as that other animals should prey upon each other. . . The Creator did not intend that every individual human being should be highly cultivated, morally and intellectually, for, as we have seen, he has imposed conditions on society which would render this impossible."

2. *Slavery is necessary and is the cornerstone of civilization.* In 1835 Governor McDuffie sent an official message to the Legislature of South Carolina, which contained the following sentiment: "Domestic slavery, therefore, instead of being a political evil, is the cornerstone of our republican edifice." One writer said: "Destroy our Slavery and you put a stop to all progress, all improvement at the South: you throw it back to its primitive state, in which it is only fit for the residence of beasts of prey. Abolish slavery and you throw back society into a state of barbarism—you dry up its resources—the means of its prosperity—and check civilization for centuries to come."

3. *Slavery is a blessing for the slaves themselves.* In going through the literature on this subject one is impressed with the frequency with which this argument occurs. Hundreds of quotations along this line could easily be gathered together. The following utterances are typical of many others: "Negroes in a state of slavery are comfortable and prosperous beyond any peasantry in the world, and even beyond the most opulent serfs of Europe; but emancipate them and you irretrievably consign them to barbarism." The spiritual contribution of slavery to the African is frequently emphasized: "Slavery has tamed, civilized, Christianized, if you please, the brutal negroes brought to our shores by New England kidnappers; it has elevated them physically, mentally, morally, and therefore is a proven

blessing to them and ought to be perpetuated. Really, the only way to civilize and Christianize Africa is to annex that vast continent to the United States, and let our people reduce them to slavery, set them to work, and thus develop the resources of Africa." The fourth point in a sermon on slavery by a Richmond minister in 1856 was that "the institution of slavery is full of mercy. . . In their bondage here on earth, they have been much better provided for, and great multitudes of them have been made the freemen of the Lord Jesus Christ, and left this world rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God."

4. *Slavery is a divine institution.* Literally hundreds of books were written to prove this point. Professor Taylor, of Yale College, said that "if Jesus Christ were now on earth, he would under certain circumstances become a slaveholder." Governor Hammond said: "I firmly believe that American slavery is not only not a sin, but especially commanded by God through Moses, and approved by Christ through his apostles." Governor McDuffie expressed the opinion that "no human institution is more manifestly consistent with the will of God than domestic slavery, and no one of his ordinances is written in more legible characters than that which consigns the African race to this condition."

On Thanksgiving Day in 1860 the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans preached a sermon entitled: "Slavery a Divine Trust—the Duty of the South to Preserve and Perpetuate the Institution as It Now Exists." In this sermon Dr. Palmer said: "In this great struggle we defend the cause of God and religion. The abolition spirit is undeniably atheistic." The fourfold argument of his sermon "establishes the nature and solemnity of our present trust to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right, unchanged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it. The position of the South is at this moment sublime. If she has grace given her to know her hour, she will save herself, the country, and the world."

*Slavery Upheld by Leading Citizens*

On such grounds as these slavery was defended by most Southern people and many who lived in the North, including many of the most prominent, best educated and most religious men of the nation. In 1857 Hinton Rowan Helper pointed out that the Presidency of the United States had been held for forty-eight years by slaveholders, as against twenty years by non-slaveholders. George Washington, Patrick Henry and many other fathers of the Constitution owned slaves. Numerous governors of states were advocates of the institution. A majority of the members of the United States Supreme Court at the time of the famous Dred Scott decision were slaveholders. Many college presidents and professors in educational institutions were numbered with the defenders of slavery.

A large proportion of the several hundred books in defence of slavery now in the New York Public Library were written by ministers and theological professors. The great evangelist Whitefield said: "As to the lawfulness of keeping slaves I have no doubt." In 1855 Dr. N. L. Rice, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, said: "God has permitted slavery for wise reasons in order to the accomplishment of some great and important ends."

A clergyman by the name of Spring expressed the conviction that "if by one prayer I could liberate every slave in the land, I would not dare to offer it." In 1840 the Rev. James Smylie wrote: "If the buying, selling and holding of a slave for the sake of gain is a heinous sin and scandal, then verily three-fourths of all the Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians in eleven States of the Union are of the devil. They hold, if they do not buy and sell slaves."

In the *Mercier Luminary*, J. Cable wrote: "Those who know anything about slavery, know that the worst kind is jobbing slavery—that is, the hiring out of slaves from year to year. What shocked me more than anything else was that the church engaged in this jobbing of slaves. The college



church which I attended, and which was attended by all the students of Hamden Sydney College and Union Theological Seminary (Virginia) held slaves enough to pay their pastor, Mr. Stanton, one thousand dollars a year. The slaves, who had been left to the Church by some pious mother in Israel, had increased so as to be a large and still increasing fund. They were hired out on Christmas day of each year, the day in which they celebrate the birth of our blessed Saviour, to the highest bidder. There were four other churches near the college church that supported the pastor, in whole or in part, in the same way."

## 2. WHAT DID GARRISON DO ABOUT SLAVERY?

For thirty-five years Garrison was editor of the *Liberator* and through its columns thundered his message of immediate emancipation of the slaves. The crusading spirit of the man is revealed in the following memorable words taken from the first issue, January 1, 1831: "I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard."

Garrison was only twenty-six when he wrote these ringing words. He was born on December 10, 1805, in Newburyport, Massachusetts, next door to the parsonage in which Whitefield, the great evangelist, died. His father was a sea captain. When William Lloyd was not quite three years old his father deserted his family and never returned. One of his brothers followed the father in the pathway of drunkenness and debauchery. His mother, thus compelled to provide for herself and the three children, turned to the occupation of nursing. During the period of bitter poverty in his boyhood, Garrison learned the lesson of self-denial