

ENSLAVEMENT OF A BRITISH SUBJECT.

FORTY-FIVE YEARS IN BONDAGE.

Remarkable and Interesting Narrative.

PERSEVERING STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

Singular Appropriation of a U. S. Prisoner of War.

The history of SOLOMON NORTHROP—a free citizen of New-York, who spent many years in Southern Slavery—is fresh in the memory of our readers. We yesterday heard narrated another slave history rivaling it in interest, though in many respects of a very different character. The subject of it is a venerable and intelligent native African, recently arrived here from Savannah, Georgia, where he was known as DEMOCK CHARLTON, and served more than forty years as the slave of various parties, while he claims to have been a British subject, and entitled to British protection. The man's face is an honest one, and his integrity and reliability are so well vouched for that it would be found difficult to doubt or discredit his story. Indeed, he tells it in so straightforward, frank and simple a manner as to carry conviction with it. Although utterly uneducated, unable even to read or write, he displays a degree of intelligence and an amount of sagacity, sound sense and native shrewdness which would do no discredit to his former masters, however great their opportunities for mental culture. We propose to give his history as received from his own lips, trusting that it will not only interest the reader, but that it may stimulate efforts among the philanthropic to crown with well deserved happiness the declining years of this dark-skinned hero, by restoring to freedom those of his family who are still held in servitude.

Our subject is now, as near as he can judge, 57 or 58 years of age, a native of Kissee, peopled by a tribe of the same name, settled on one of the great rivers in the interior of Africa—or, as he expresses it, "away up on the fresh water." His name was TALEN at that time. When about 12 years of age, war was declared against his tribe by the Mandinges, who captured Kissee, and took its inhabitants prisoners-of-war. TALEN, with six other boys of about the same age were a mile or so from the town at the time of the battle, but were pursued and taken prisoners. This, as well as he can calculate, was in 1811 or 1812. The prisoners of which there were a large number, were all sent down to the Coast, sold to a slave-dealer, and stowed away with hundreds of other unfortunates on board a Spanish slaver. The distance they traveled in reaching the seashore may be estimated from the fact that the journey occupied about four weeks.

The slaver put to sea with its human cargo, who began to suffer the horrors of the middle passage, many of them dying for want of fresh air and exercise during the three weeks they were stowed away in her suffocating "between decks." At the end of this time the slaver was chased and captured by an English war-brig, but TALEN does not remember the name of either of the vessels. The prize, and her cargo were taken to England, where the Africans generally were sent ashore until they could be properly disposed of. TALEN, however, who had meantime been christened "John Bull" on board the British vessel, was sent to the British brig *Peacock*, to serve as cabin-boy. Several of the captured Spanish sailors were also transferred to that vessel. At this time the war between the United States and Great Britain was in progress, and sometime afterward the *Peacock* was engaged in action by the little American schooner *Hornet*, commanded by the gallant Captain LAWRENCE, which, as will be remembered, speedily put her in a sinking condition, and forced her crew to surrender. This was on the 24th of February, 1813.

Subsequently our hero was sent to Savannah, Ga., in charge of Lieut. WM. HENRY HARRISON, from whence the latter was to take him to Washington. Judge CHARLTON, of Savannah, proposed to HARRISON to leave TALEN, or "John Bull," with him, promising that he would raise him for HARRISON. The latter declined, relating the particulars of his history, and saying that he must take the boy as a prisoner of war to Washington, and let Congress decide what should be done with him, adding, as his own supposition, that he would follow the fortunes of the other prisoners in all respects. Judge CHARLTON then proposed to keep the boy with him until he should be wanted at Washington, promising Lieut. HARRISON that he would send him on whenever he should write for him.

With this understanding, HARRISON left the boy with Judge CHARLTON. Two months afterwards, HARRISON sent for "John Bull," and CHARLTON replied that the boy had died—which of course ended the Lieutenant's interest in and care for him. The authority for this statement was Judge CHARLTON's waiting-man or body-servant, an old man named ISAAC, of whom John speaks in high terms. About the time this word was sent to Washington, CHARLTON called all his servants together and forbade them strictly ever to call TALEN "John Bull" again, but ordered them to call him DEMOCK CHARLTON, after himself—by which name he has since been known.

The very next day after this occurrence, CHARLTON sold him to a French tailor of Savannah, named JOHN P. SETZ, who is still living at Augusta, Ga. He was sent down to SETZ's house in the morning, and staid there all day, but at night expressed his intention of "going home." SETZ told him no,—to stay where he was, that he belonged to him now. DEMOCK, as we shall now call him, replied, asserting that he was a free man and could not be sold. SETZ, in answer, said that CHARLTON bought clothes of him, and gave DEMOCK in payment, and again ordered him to stay where he was and go to work. The boy attempted to run away, but SETZ caught and brought him back. Being sent down into the kitchen, he slipped out of the back door, went to CHARLTON's, and asked if he had sold him. The Judge replied in the negative. Just then SETZ, in pursuit, came into the house, and seized the boy to drag him off. CHARLTON interfered, took SETZ one side, had a short talk with him, and then told DEMOCK that he wanted him to go and learn the tailor's trade with the Frenchman. Having become alarmed at the proceedings, he positively refused to stir a step, unless dragged away by force.

CHARLTON then told SETZ that he had better take the boy away from the city. This information also was derived from the waiting-man, ISAAC. As the Frenchman had a store in Augusta, he took DEMOCK there. Thirteen months later he sold him to Captain DUBOIS, who was commander of the *Palaski* at the time of her wreck. At that time he commanded the steamer *Samuel Howard*, but was building the *General Washington*, to run between Savannah and Augusta, and bought DEMOCK to go on board of her as steward. After living with Captain DUBOIS two years, the latter sold him to Captain DAVIDSON, of Savannah, who, in turn, sold him to one WM. ROBINSON, of the same city. DEMOCK's superior intelligence showed him that by hiring his time of his master, and working for himself, he could save money to purchase back the freedom of which he had been robbed. He formed his plans accordingly, and put them in execution, finding employment as a superintending stevedore, and earning liberal wages in loading cotton for export, at which

he seems to have been very successful. He arranged with ROBINSON to purchase himself at the price of \$800. This he soon saved by hard work and economy, paid the entire sum in cash, and was then immediately sent to jail and kept there until his cruel master had found a purchaser to take him off his hands.

His next master proved to be JAMES CARR, then and now employed in the Planters' Bank of Savannah. DEMOCK ventured to express to CARR the hope that he would not serve him as ROBINSON had, and related how villainously he had been used by him. CARR replied that ROBINSON was a d—d scoundrel, but that he would deal justly with him. Thus encouraged, DEMOCK again hired his time, and proceeded to toil once more for liberty, agreeing with CARR that he should have the privilege of purchasing himself at the price which was paid to ROBINSON, which he supposed was \$700. At the time of his purchase by ROBINSON, he carried the latter \$300, and four months later gave him \$400 more. Subsequently, he ascertained from ROBINSON that all CARR paid him was \$150. Thus was the poor fellow again swindled out of the gold for which he had toiled so faithfully.

In the meantime he had married a slave woman, by whom he had two daughters. These all belonged to Mr. PRATT, of Savannah, of whom DEMOCK speaks very gratefully. PRATT finding that he would be compelled to sell his servants, told DEMOCK, and said he would sell them reasonably to enable him to get some one to buy them who would not send them off. Not having yet learned that his master had deceived him, DEMOCK went to CARR, told him the case, and solicited his aid to buy his wife and children, telling him that he had some little money,—that it would probably cost \$2,000 to make the purchase, and that he would soon give him the balance. At this time he had \$1,500, earned in stevedoring, hid away dollar by dollar in a tin case buried in the earth. This sum he carried to CARR, who purchased the family.

When he met Mr. PRATT afterwards, DEMOCK learned that he had sold the woman and children for \$600 only, and had received that sum from CARR and no more, supposing that he was giving the difference between it and their actual value, to the husband and father. Upon his asking CARR what he had done with the \$900 balance, the latter laughed, told DEMOCK that he had the money in Bank for him, and to say nothing to anybody, that he and his family were all free now, but to keep it to themselves, and live quietly with him. Thinking they were in reality free, and could not be sent off again among strangers at any man's will, which was what they most dreaded, DEMOCK and his wife remained under, CARR's "protection," quite contented for many years. Finally, by representations made to his wife, CARR caused a separation between the parties, and then sold the father to Mr. HUDSON, of Savannah, the wife to Mr. CUMMINGS, and the children,—of whom there were now several,—each to a different purchaser, thus almost hopelessly breaking up the family.

To this time DEMOCK had carefully concealed from his masters his claim to liberty as a British subject. He foresaw that if it became known to them, they would be likely to sell him off into the interior somewhere, and that then he might bid farewell to all thought of ever regaining his liberty. So long as he could keep in a seaport like Savannah, he knew he could earn and save money, and then his chance of making good his claim to British protection would always be better than if upon an interior plantation isolated from the busy world. But when he found his family broken up, and all of them again in slavery, his heart was crushed, and he became reckless. He had repeatedly sought the protection of the British Consul at Savannah, Mr. MOLYNEAUX, but that functionary refused to interfere in his behalf, apparently fearing to do so, and probably looking upon Slavery as a very satisfactory condition for a man with a black skin—a theory which he illustrated by himself holding slaves. When HUDSON bought him, DEMOCK asserted his right to freedom, and told him his story. HUDSON evidently was satisfied with the truth of his statement, and consequently that he was very insecure property to hold; so he sent him to a trader for sale. Mr. DAVIDSON, a liquor-dealer near the market in Savannah, became his purchaser. He lived with him two years, when DAVIDSON came to him one day, told him he had heard that he claimed to be a British subject, and asked him what were the facts. He, too, was convinced of the truth of the singular history, and immediately sent him again to a slave-dealer, for sale at purchaser's risk. Mr. BENJAMIN GARMAN bought him for \$550, in order to give DEMOCK another opportunity to purchase himself. This was little more than a year ago, since which time the poor fellow has returned the purchase-money, and a few days since came on here in the steamer *Alabama*, lest some new device should be found to deprive him of the liberty he has been forty-five years in pursuit of.

Among the Spanish sailors captured on board the *Peacock*, with DEMOCK, was one named MINGO. Between these two, a lasting friendship sprang up, and they have managed to work together during all their many years residence in Savannah. A year ago, by advice of a friend, DEMOCK took MINGO before a lawyer, who prepared the necessary affidavits setting forth the facts of his capture and his title to recognition as a British subject. To this MINGO made oath in due form. A day or two afterwards, he was arrested upon the charge of drunkenness, and thrown into prison, where he died very suddenly and mysteriously. The proofs, however, are deemed ample to establish DEMOCK's claim; and his purpose is, if possible, to bring suit to recover damages of CARR and others for his long detention in Slavery. Whatever means he can realize from this source, or from the donations of the charitable, he desires to appropriate to the release from Slavery of his wife and children and grandchildren. His oldest child, VIRGENIA, is in Savannah with three children. The next, CHRISTIANA, has one child. The third, ELIZABETH, has two. Besides these, he has a son who belongs to lawyer O'BYRNE, of Savannah, who has befriended DEMOCK in his recent undertakings.

Since his arrival here, DEMOCK has called upon the Acting-British Consul to make good his title to protection as a British subject, with a view to prosecuting his oppressors. That official sent him to his counsel, Mr. EDWARDS, who discourages him from attempting to do anything because the case has laid so long. If there is a statute of limitations which deprives a subject of redress for wrong, when he has been prevented by force from calling for it sooner, the British Government will probably announce the fact when this case is brought fairly before them. That DEMOCK CHARLTON is entitled to redress from some quarter is certain—and the question remains for practical decision who is responsible for it. Either the Government of the United States or that of Great Britain is bound by every consideration of humanity and justice to see that he receives some compensation for his life of oppression and cruel wrong.