

Anti-Slavery Bugle Article - "William and Ellen Craft," February 23, 1849

William and Ellen Craft.

The singular and romantic story of the escape of these two persons from Slavery was told at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society at Boston, week before last, by Wm. W. Brown, and the Crafts themselves appeared before the audience exciting, of course, a most lively interest by their appearance. The facts of their escape were stated by Mr. Brown in a letter to the Liberator a few weeks since, and are briefly as follows:

"William and Ellen Craft, man and wife, lived with different masters in the State of Georgia. Ellen is so near white, that she can pass without suspicion for a white woman. Her husband is much darker. He is a mechanic, and by working nights and Sundays, he laid up money enough to bring himself and his wife out of Slavery. Their plan was without precedent; and though novel, was the means of getting them their freedom.

Ellen dressed in man's clothing, and passed as the *master*, while her husband passed as the *servant*. In this way, they travelled from Georgia to Philadelphia. They are now out of the reach of the blood hounds of the South. On their journey, they put up at the best hotels where they stopped. Neither of them can read or write. And Ellen, knowing that she would be called upon to write her name at the hotels, &c., tied her right hand up as though it was lame, which proved of some service to her, as she was called upon several times at hotels to "register" her name. – In Charleston, S. C, they put up at the hotel which Governor McDuffy and John C. Calhoun generally make their home, yet these distinguished advocates of the "peculiar institution" say that the slaves cannot take care of themselves. They arrived in Philadelphia in four days from the time they started. Their history, especially that of their escape, is replete with interest. They will be at the meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, in Boston, in the latter part of this month, where I know the history of their escape will be listened to with great interest. They are very intelligent. They are young, Ellen 22, and Wm. 21 years of age. Ellen is truly a heroine."

At the meeting in Boston Mr. Brown read an article from a Newark paper, (the Daily Mercury) which we copy as a most interesting part of the story. It is as follows:

An Incident At The South.

One bright starlight night, in the month of December last, I found myself in the cabin of the steamer General Clinch, then lying in the port of Savanagh, and bound for Charleston. I had gone early on board, in order to select a good berth, and having got tires of reading the papers, amused myself with watching the appearance of the passengers as they dropped in one after another, and I bring a believer in physiognomy, forming my own opinion of their characters.

The second bell rang, and as I yawningly returned my watch to my pocket, my attention was attracted by the appearance of a young man who entered the cabin, supported by his servant, a strapping negro.

The man was bundled up in a capacious overcoat: his face was bandaged with a white handkerchief, and its expression entirely hid by a pair of enormous green spectacles. There was something so mysterious and unusual, about the young man as he sat restlessly in the corner, that curiosity led me to observe him more closely.

He appeared anxious to avoid notice, and before the steamer had fairly left the wharf, requested in a low womanly voice to be shown to its berth, as he was an invalid and must retire early – his name he gave as Mr.

Johnson. His servant was called and he was put quietly to bed. I paced the deck until Tyhee light grew dim in the distance and then went to my berth.

I awoke in the morning with the sun shining in my face – we were then just passing St. Helena, and soon after were out at sea. It was a mild, beautiful morning and most of the passengers were on deck enjoying the freshness of the air and stimulating their appetites for breakfast. Mr. Johnson soon made his appearance, arrayed the same as on the night before, and took his seat quietly on the guard of the boat.

From the better opportunity afforded by day-light, I found that he was a slight built, apparently handsome young man, with black hair and eyes, and of a darkness of complexion that betokened Spanish extraction. Any notice from others seemed painful to him, so to satisfy my curiosity I questioned his servant who was standing near, and gained the following information.

His master was an invalid – he had suffered a long time with a complication of diseases that had baffled the skill of the best physicians in Georgia – he was now suffering principally with the “rheumatism,” and was scarcely able to walk or help himself in any way. He came from Atlanta, Georgia, and was now on his way to Philadelphia, at which place resided his uncle, a celebrated physician, through whose means he hoped to be restored to perfect health.

This information communicated in a bold of-hand manner, enlisted my sympathies for the sufferer, although it occurred to me that he walked rather too gingerly for a person inflicted with so many ailments.

We arrived in Charleston, and I there lost sight of Mr. Johnson, an acquaintance at my elbow remarking that he was either a “wumun or a genius.”

This morning I cut from the New York Herald the accompanying extract, and there is no doubt in my mind but that William and Ellen Craft are no other than my travelling companions, Mr. Johnson and servant.

A.

Here follows Brown’s letter just published in the Liberator. The Crafts are still in Massachusetts and have appeared in several places, at public meetings. Their notoriety perhaps will be their best safeguard, as it would be difficult to carry off persons so well known by stealth, and quite impossible to get them out of Eastern Massachusetts openly; nevertheless a careful watch may save trouble. – A.S. Standard.