

# "The 'Running of Slaves' - The Extraordinary Escape of Henry Box Brown" Article, June 23, 1849

## THE "RUNNING OF SLAVES."

### The Extraordinary Escape of Henry Box Brown.

At the anniversary meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society of Boston, on Wednesday, Brown, the fugitive slave, whose extraordinary escape from servitude in Richmond, and almost miraculous arrival at Philadelphia, created such a sensation about two weeks since, was introduced to the audience. He was transported three hundred miles through a slave-holding country, and by public thoroughfares, in a box, by measurement, exactly *three feet one inch long, two feet wide, and two feet six inches deep*. The following abstract of his story we find in the Traveller: of last evening.

While at Richmond, though the box was legibly and distinctly marked "this side up with care," it was placed on end, with his head downwards. He felt strange pains, and was preparing himself to die, preferring liberty or death to slavery, and he gave no sign. He was, however, relieved from this painful position, and encountered no other danger than the rough handling of the box, until it arrived in Washington. When the porters who had charge of it reached the depot there, they threw or dropped it with violence to the ground, and it rolled down a small hill, turning over two or three times.

This he thought was bad enough but the words he heard filled him with anguish, and brought with them the blackness of despair. They were that the box was so heavy it could not be forwarded on that night, but of must lay over twenty-four hours. In the language of the fugitive, "My heart swelled in my throat; I could scarcely breathe; great sweats came over me; I gave up all hope. But it was put into my remembrance that the preacher had said, it is good to pray at all times.

So I tried to pray. 'Lord Jesus, put it into the hearts of these men to find a way to send this box forward. While I was yet praying, a man came in and said, 'that box must go on: it's the express mail.' Oh, what relief I felt. It was taken into the depot, and I was placed head downwards again for the space of half an hour. My eyes were swollen almost out of my head, and I was fast becoming insensible, when the position was changed."

He arrived in Philadelphia after many hair-breadth 'scapes, and the box was taken to the house to which it was directed. The panting inmate heard voices whispering; afterwards more men came in. They were doubtful or fearful about opening the box. He lay still, not knowing who the people were. Finally, one of them knocked on the box, and, 'Is all right here!' "All right," echoed from the box. The finale of this simple tale was received with deafening shouts. In corroboration of it, Rev. S. J. May said he was in Philadelphia in the midst of the excitement caused by this wonderful adventure. He said that, for obvious reasons, he could not give the name of the gentleman to whom the box was consigned, but he knew him as a warm-hearted friend of humanity.

That gentleman had told him, Mr. M., that when the box arrived at this house, he was overcome with agitation. The man might be dead. He hoped, yet feared. It might be necessary to call a Coroner. He finally assembled several true friends and then tremblingly asked, "Is all right here?" The voice came up, as if from the grave "All right." The reaction of his feelings was so great as to stop his breath; but when he could speak, he wildly exclaimed, "You are the greatest man in America."