

CAPTAINS DRAYTON AND SAYRES;
Or the way in which Americans are treated, for aiding
the cause of Liberty at Home.

This is an annotated edition of the original text of *Captains Drayton and Sayres; or the Way in Which American are Treated, for Aiding the Cause of Liberty at Home*, published in 1848 by the Eastern Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. No editor or author is listed or has been identified for this tract beyond those copied and identified in the text. Original spelling, punctuation and page citations have been retained; minor typographic errors have been corrected.

This electronic edition has been prepared for the Antislavery Literature Project, Arizona State University, a public education project working in cooperation with the English Server, Iowa State University. Digitization has been supported by a grant from the Institute for Humanities Research, Arizona State University.

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Text Introduction

This anonymously-authored tract published by Philadelphia abolitionists describes one of the best-known antebellum escapes, an effort that failed but caused national controversy. On the evening of February 17, 1848, the schooner *Pearl* left Washington, DC, with 77 fugitive slaves aboard.¹ The escape was organized with the assistance of Daniel Drayton, who had aided earlier escapes in the Chesapeake Bay and was now working with William Chaplin, an abolitionist and Underground Railroad agent. It was a mercenary venture with humanitarian sponsorship. Drayton served as the vessel's captain, Edwin Sayres as the vessel owner and co-captain, and Chester English as sailor and cook. Two local blacks, Thomas Duckett and Daniel Bell, organized fugitives for the escape. However, the vessel's departure was betrayed by Judson Diggs, a black drayman, and a steamboat was used to pursue and re-capture the fugitive slaves aboard the *Pearl*. The prisoners were paraded to jail in the city; many were later sold.

On the day of the re-capture, February 18, a white mob rioted in front of the anti-slavery Washington newspaper, the *National Era*, edited by Gamaliel Bailey. The case became a national issue, in part because of the public violence and in part because of the ensuing Congressional debates. Congressman Joshua Giddings of Ohio, a leading anti-slavery voice, together with others raised the case on the House and Senate floors. In *The Biglow Papers*, James Russell Lowell satirized the pro-slavery politicians in this debate.² Harriet Beecher Stowe incorporated details of the case into *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and provided a case history in *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.³ For abolitionists, the case illustrated the contradiction between welcoming the new republican spirit of Europe in 1848 and the absence of liberty under slavery in the United States.

Drayton was indicted on 41 charges of larceny and 71 misdemeanor charges,⁴ and Sayres faced similar charges. Charges against English were dropped on account of lack of prior knowledge. A Boston defense committee assembled with the participation of William Channing, abolitionist editor Samuel May, social reformer Samuel Gridley Howe, author and attorney Richard Hildreth, Samuel Sewall, and Robert Morris, Jr. Among the national political figures who volunteered to serve as defense counsel were Horace Mann, William Seward, and Salmon P. Chase. Drayton was found guilty and sentenced to twenty years in prison; the sentence was overturned on appeal for prosecutorial misconduct. He was sentenced to pay over \$10,000 in fines and remain in prison until payment. Sayres was initially acquitted, but was retried on separate charges and similarly fined. Both were released after a pardon from President Millard Fillmore over four years later. The escape that they attempted to organize was one of the largest mass escape attempts in the history of slavery in the United States.

Joe Lockard⁵

¹ A brief history of events surrounding the *Pearl* appears in Fergus Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005) 295-299. For another history of the case as it affected the Edmondson family, among the re-captured fugitives, see John H. Painter, "The Fugitives of the *Pearl*," *Journal of Negro History* (June 1916) vol. 1, no. 3, 243-264. Also see E. Bruce Kirkham, "A Note on Two Abolitionists and a Pearl," *Journal of Negro History* (April 1965) vol. 50, no. 2, 123-125.

² Lowell, "The Debate in the Sennit. Sot to a Nusry Rhyme," paper no. 5, 87-95 in *The Biglow Papers* (New York: Co-operative Publication Society, 1910).

³ Stowe, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London: Clarke, Beeton, 1853) 306-339.

⁴ See *Daniel Drayton v. United States*, 1 Hay. & Haz. 369; 1849 U.S. App. Lexis 472, and *Drayton v. United States*, 7 F. Cas. 1063, 1849 U.S. Appeal Lexis 410. For Drayton's own account, see *Personal Memoir of Daniel Drayton, for Four Years and Four Months a Prisoner (for Charity's Sake) in Washington Jail, including a Narrative of the Voyage and Capture of the Schooner Pearl* (Boston: Bela Marsh; New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1855; Library of Congress electronic edition available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.law/lst.008>).

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Three citizens of the Free States, two of whom are Pennsylvanians, are now lying in the prison of the District of Columbia. They are not charged with the violation of any law of their own state, or of the United States. The facts in the case are these: On the night of Saturday the 15th of April, seventy-seven human beings, who had all their lives worn the yoke of slavery, made a bold attempt to regain their Freedom. They were slaves in and near the city of Washington, and perchance had heard that he whose name the proud capital of the nation bore, had toiled and striven and fought through long years for freedom. They were near to Virginia, and it may be, had caught the sound of those brave words of Patrick Henry, "Give me Liberty or give me Death!"⁶ or had marked a lettered scroll hearing the strange motto, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God!"⁷ The love of liberty burned within their souls; they knew that it was their birthright, that they had been cruelly, basely, wronged in the loss of it. They knew it, as you, reader, would know it in your own case, if the kidnapper's hand should seize you to night, and consign you to chains and the auction block. They knew it by the instinct of human nature. They sought their inalienable rights of freedom, not as our forefathers sought theirs, by deadly battle with their oppressors, but by quietly fleeing from those who had usurped authority over them, who, day by day, had robbed and spoiled them, from their youth up. They dealt no blow of vengeance for the hoarded wrongs of years, ere they departed. They simply took their own, what their Creator gave them, at the hour of their birth, their Freedom, and went forth to seek a spot where they might enjoy it unmolested. They were quickly pursued by thirty armed citizens of Georgetown; they were captured as they lay at anchor in their little schooner near the mouth of the Potomac, taken back to Washington, and thrust into the prison of the District; the slave prison built and sustained, mainly by northern money and northern power. Their fate is well known. Quickly their bright vision of hope was turned into blackness of darkness; the one ray of sunlight which had peered through the chinks of their prison wall, vanished forever. Some of these, our brethren and sisters, are

⁶ Patrick Henry to Second Virginia Convention, Richmond, Virginia, March 23, 1775. There is no original text of the speech; the known text was assembled from the recollections of listeners, primarily Judge John Tyler and Judge St. George. See William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859) 261-266.

⁷ "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God!" was a popular theme of Garrisonian rhetoric. See William Lloyd Garrison, "John Brown and the Principle of Non-resistance," a speech delivered on December 2, 1859, the date of John Brown's execution; in *The Liberator* 29 (December 16, 1859) 50, 202. At the same time, Henry O. Wright used it as a title-page motto in his post-Harpers Ferry call to fight slavery, *The Natick Resolution; or, Resistance to Slaveholders the Right and Duty of Southern Slaves and Northern Freemen* (Boston, self-published, 1859). The slogan first appeared as a motto of American political discourse during the Continental Congress where Thomas Jefferson proposed it as a motto for a Moses-at-the-Red-Sea themed coat of arms on the national seal; this seal design was never adopted. See *Journals of the Continental Congress*, no. 23, folio 143, 690 (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1904-1937); J. Boyd et. al., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Fifth Series, VIII no. 3, 656 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-). The slogan also appeared on a Revolutionary War battle flag.

"Sold and gone,
To the rice swamp dank and lone,"

some still lie in their prison.

The following extract of a letter from John I. Slingerland, M.C.,⁸ graphically portrays the horrors of their fate.

Correspondence of the Albany Evening Journal.

WASHINGTON, April 22.

HORRORS OF SLAVERY. — *Friend Weed*,⁹ — Last evening, in passing the Railroad Depot, I saw quite a number of colored persons gathered round one of the cars, and from manifestations of grief among some of them, I was induced to draw near and ascertain the cause. I found in the car toward which they were so eagerly gazing, *fifty colored persons*, some of whom were nearly as white as myself. A large majority of the number were those who attempted to gain their liberty last week, in the schooner Pearl. About half of them were females, a few of whom had but a slight tinge of African blood in their veins; they were finely formed and beautiful.

The men were ironed together, and the whole group looked sad and dejected. At each end of the car stood a ruffian-looking guard, with large canes in their hands. In the middle of the car stood the notorious slave-dealer of Baltimore, who is a member of the Methodist Church, in good and regular standing. He had purchased the men and women around him, and was taking his departure for Georgia. While observing this old gray-headed dealer in the bodies and souls of men, the Chaplain of the Senate—a Methodist brother—entered the car, and took his brother Methodist by the hand, chatted with him for a short time, and seemed to view the heart-rending scene before him with as little concern as we would look upon cattle! I know not whether he came with a view to sanctify the act, or pronounce the parting blessing; this I do know that he justifies slavery.

A Presbyterian Minister, who owned one of the fugitives, was the first to strike a bargain with the Slave Dealer, and make merchandize of God's image. Some of the colored people outside, as well as in the car, were weeping most bitterly. I learned that many families were separated. Wives were there to take leave of their husbands, and husbands of their wives; children of their parents, and parents of their children. Friends parting with friends, and the tenderest ties of humanity severed at a single word of the inhuman Slave Broker before them. A husband, in the meridian of life, begged to see the partner of his bosom. He protested that she

⁸ JOHN I. SLINGERLAND [1804-1861] Congressional representative from New York for the Whig Party in the 30th Congress (1847-1849); refused re-nomination. Attended local public schools; worked as farmer; served in New York state legislature in 1843-1844, and again in 1860-1861.

⁹ THURLOW WEED [1797-1862] 'Boss Weed,' a New York State politician and newspaper publisher. Born in Greene County in western New York; had little formal schooling; elected to state legislature in 1824; edited the *Rochester Telegraph*, 1825-1828; established the *Albany Evening Journal* in 1829; became dominant force in the Whig Party in New York; his support was instrumental for presidential candidates from 1840-1856; in 1853 joined the new Republican Party; was a strong abolitionist from the 1830s, but opposed the Emancipation Proclamation as a gradualist.

was free—that she had free papers, and was torn away from him and shut up in the jail. He clambered up to one of the windows of the car to see his wife, and, as she was reaching forward her hand to him, the black-hearted Slave Dealer ordered him down. He did not obey.

The husband and wife, with tears streaming down their cheeks, besought him to let them speak to each other. But no; he was knocked down from the car, and ordered away! The bystanders could hardly refrain laying violent hands upon the brute. This is but a faint description of the scene which took place within a few rods of the Capitol, and under enactments recognized by Congress. Oh, what a revolting scene to a feeling heart, and what a retribution awaits the actors. Will not their wailings of anguish reach the Most High? “Vengeance is mine—I will repay, saith the Lord.”¹⁰

You have already heard of the fugitive case, and mob here. A very exciting discussion has been going on in the House for the last two days growing out of these riots. The galleries [indistinct text copy – *ed.*]

¹⁰ Romans 12:19-21.

But among the brave band which crowded the deck of this little "Mayflower," were three white men, two of whom had chosen to peril their own freedom, ay, and their lives also, for the sake of giving freedom to their fellow men. In so doing they followed the example of Huger and Bollman, who went from South Carolina to Austria, to steel away the illustrious La Fayette from the prison of Olmutz.¹¹ Had they done that deed on the coast of Algiers for Anglo Saxon captives, their names would have been canonized among men; this nation would have risen up to do them homage. Because they did it on the coast of America, for the victims of American cupidity, they are ignominiously branded as felons, and consigned to a felon's prison. Their names, names which shall go down with honor to posterity, are Edward Sayres and Daniel Drayton. Freemen of the North! These men lie in *your prison*, awaiting a trial; and for what? With what are they charged? With having aided the escape of slaves. What a charge to be brought against a man, before a court of the *freest republic on earth!* He helped to give innocent men their inalienable right of Freedom! Tell it not in Paris, publish it not in the streets of Vienna, lest the new republic discern our hollowness, and Meternich take courage!¹²

This is a deed which concerns every American citizen, for it is being done, not on a South Carolina plantation, not under the laws of Virginia, but in the nation's Capital, on that ten miles square, which belongs to every citizen of the United States; with the money of Northern freemen as well as Southern slave-holders; and the voters of Pennsylvania are as truly responsible for it as are those of Maryland or Virginia. The attention of Congress has been called to the subject, and, during several days, the Senate and the House were violently agitated with the debates which it elicited. On the 18th of April, Mr. Giddings¹³ presented to

¹¹ Refers to a famous rescue attempt by Eric Bollman and Francis Kinlock Huger, in behalf of the Marquis de Lafayette, who had been imprisoned by Austrian authorities in the Moravian city of Olumutz (current Czech Republic, then within the Austro-Hungarian empire). For details of the failed rescue, see Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, *Memoirs of General Lafayette, with an Account of his Visit to America, and of his Reception by the People of the United States* (New York: Saunders and Otley, 1837) One of the would-be rescuers, ERIC BOLLMAN [1769-1821], was born in Germany; studied medicine at Gtingen, and practiced in Carlsruhe and in Paris. In 1792, having fled from the French Revolution to London, he was persuaded to rescue Lafayette from Austrian captivity and obtained assistance from Francis Huger, a visiting Virginian. After the failed rescue (Lafayette escaped but rode in the wrong direction), Bollman was imprisoned. He was released after a year to the United States, where he settled but eventually became implicated in Aaron Burr's conspiracy in 1806. Bollman returned to Europe in 1814 where he published extensively on economic theory.

¹² "New republic" refers to the establishment of the Second Republic in France in 1848. PRINCE KLEMENS WENZEL VON METTERNICH [1773-1858] was the conservative Austrian foreign minister and statesman who lost power as a result of the Revolution of 1848.

¹³ JOSHUA REED GIDDINGS [1795-1864] Congressional representative from Ohio for the Whig Party in the 25th-30th Congresses, for the Free-Soil Party in the 31st-33rd Congresses, and for the Republican Party in the 34th-35th Congresses. Born in Tioga Point, Bradford County, Pennsylvania; moved as an infant to Canandaigua, New York; again moved with his parents to Ashtabula County, Ohio, in 1806; served in the War of 1812; taught school; studied law, admitted to the bar in 1821, and commenced practice in Jefferson, Ohio; member of the State house of representatives in 1826. In 1842, resigned from the US House after a vote of censure was passed upon him in response to his motion in defense of the slave mutineers in the *Creole* case, and was subsequently re-elected to fill

the House, the following resolutions:

Whereas, More than eighty men, women and children, are said to be confined in the prison of the District of Columbia, without being charged with crime, or any impropriety, than an attempt to enjoy the liberty for which our fathers encountered toil, suffering, and death itself, and for which the people of many European Governments are now struggling:¹⁴ And whereas said prison was erected, and is now sustained, by funds contributed by the people of the free as well as of slave States, and is under the control of the laws and officers of the United States: And whereas such conduct is derogatory to our national character, incompatible with the duty of a civilized and Christian people, and unworthy of being sustained by an American Congress — therefore,

Be it resolved, That a Select Committee, of five members of this body, be appointed to inquire into and report to this House by what authority said prison is used for the purpose of confining persons who have attempted to escape from Slavery — with leave to report what legislation is proper in regard to said practice.

Resolved, further, That said Committee be authorized to send for persons and papers. What is there in such a preamble and resolutions to offend the Legislature of a Freedom-loving nation? Yet they were rejected in anger. During the debates which this subject excited, the members of our "free" government, the representatives of a "free" people, stood up in their places of power, and defended the institution of slavery from the assaults of the few men who dared to denounce it with the spirit of men; so thoroughly has the evil genius which has turned our nation's Capital into a slave mart, corrupted our government.

And while these dark deeds were being enacted at Washington, Congress was exulting over the triumphs of Freedom in France; congratulating the men who there had burst their long-worn bonds, and stood up, in the might of manhood, to demand the rights of man! With one breath, shouting peans to Liberty in France; with the next, anathematizing those who had caught her spirit, on the shores of America! What a spectacle to the nations of the earth, does our government present at this moment! These persecuted men are confessors of Freedom, and if a martyr's fate await there, they will die for Liberty; sacrificed in the inner court of a temple dedicated to her worship. Of the character of these men, we have only to say, that, judging from what has transpired, we have no reason to question the benevolence of the motives which urged them to this noble deed of daring. The following extract of a letter understood to be written by Dr. Howe, of Boston,¹⁵

his own vacancy. Appointed consul general to the British North American Provinces in 1861, and served until his death. See James Brewer Stewart, *Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970).

¹⁴ This tract was published in mid-1848, when the revolutions of that year were in progress. The terms of the appeal for liberty in these resolutions framed by Giddings reflect the influence of news of European developments.

¹⁵ SAMUEL GRIDLEY HOWE [1801-1876] Educational and social reformer. Howe was a leading US figure in special education, supporting educational work with the blind, deaf, mentally ill and retarded. Born in Boston; graduated Brown and Harvard Medical School; went to Greece in 1824 to organize medical services for the Greek army in the War of Independence, and spent six years in Greece; in 1831 he visited French institutions for the blind and was imprisoned briefly in Prussia for supporting the Polish revolution; returned to the United States to establish the New England Asylum for the Blind, which he directed for 44 years. In 1843, married anti-slavery activist Julia

who has recently visited them in their prison, will introduce one of them to the acquaintance of the reader, and also reveal to him something of the nature of that odious institution which the people of the North sanction and support. Dr. Howe is well known to the community as the Principal of the Institution of the Blind, in South Boston. He was among those lovers of Greece, who did battle for Freedom in her behalf, and his love of Liberty is not so spurious as that which inflames the breasts of many American heroes. He visited Washington on behalf of a committee who were appointed to make arrangements for the trial of Capt. Drayton, Capt. Sayres and their companion. He thus writes from that city:

“In this gathering place of the knowing men and great rogues of the land, there was one person whom I was most desirous of seeing and tendering honor to, and whom I first sought. And where do you think I sought him? In the White House — in the Senate — in the Speaker's chair? No! But in the Prison, — locked up alone in a gloomy dungeon, that had no window, or chair, or bed, that offered him only its stone walls to lean against when weary, and its stone floor to lie down upon when he sought sleep.

It was only with much trouble and difficulty, and with the aid of men who are held in fear by the “powers that be,” that I was allowed to visit him. I stood at the door of his cell, into the darkness of which the eye could not see clearly; and when he came forward, I thrust my hand through the grating and grasped his, with more heartiness and warmth than I could bear,

Ward, later author of ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’. Howe was active in anti-slavery societies and was a founder of the Free-Soil Party. Between 1851-1853, Howe and Julia Ward Howe edited the anti-slavery journal, *Commonwealth*; he was a supporter of John Brown, which caused him to flee the United States for Canada for several weeks after the Harper’s Ferry raid. For further, see Laura Richards, *Samuel Gridley Howe, by his Daughter* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935); Harold Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe, Social Reformer, 1801-1876* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); and Milton Meltzer, *Light in the Dark: The Life of Samuel Gridley Howe* (New York, 1964). For recent treatments of Howe’s well-known work with Laura Bridgman, see Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Elisabeth Gitter, *The Imprisoned Guest: Samuel Howe and Laura Bridgman* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

fearful as was his future, I should rather have done the deed that gained for him his present place, than some of those which gained for them theirs.

You know, of course, whom I mean, — DRAYTON, the chief actor in the late noble and daring attempt to free four-score human beings from Slavery and degradation. He seems made for a soldier in such a cause: a hold, stern, determined man, ready to do battle unto the death in the cause of right. He has in him much of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and he will, I trust, bear unflinchingly to the end, all the moral and bodily suffering which he is doomed to endure. He is in the fullness of manhood, — a tall, stalwart fellow, whose strongly-marked features and steady eye denote character and courage, and whose open and ingenuous countenance inspires confidence and respect. He will have need, I fear, of all his vigor of body, and all his strength of mind, to hear up against the cruel treatment which has already begun, and which may last until his frame, now so vigorous and erect, is bowed down with age, and his eye, now so clear and stern, is dimmed with the shadows of death.

He is aware of his position and his danger: indeed, he was well aware of the risk he run, and counted the cost before he set out upon his enterprise, and provided for his family in case of his capture. He is now in the iron grip of the law, made by slave-holders themselves to protect what they call their *property* in the bodies and souls of human beings, and made as sharp and as strong as the wit of wicked men could make it. The law, too, is administered with a cruelty that is revolting.

The man has been kept, till now, *all secret*, as it is called by the few European Governments which still preserve this relic of inquisitorial treatment. He is considered guilty — he is virtually refused hail—he is cut off from communion or correspondence with his friends—he is put to the tortures of solitude and suspense—he is treated in short, worse than would be a felon or murderer. And all this cruelty — where and for what? Why, in the Capital and under the flag of that people, whose shibboleth is "*liberty*," whose creed is the right of every man to the pursuit of happiness; and for the crime of helping to pronounce that shibboleth and live by that creed!

The excitement among the slave-holders is still intense, — their wrath is still hot, and they mean to make Drayton drag out a life of misery, and be a living beacon to deter others attempting to knock off the shackles of their slaves. The punishment for *stealing* a slave, with a view of selling him, is imprisonment for from seven to twenty years, at hard labour; for taking him with a VIEW OF SETTING HIM AT LIBERTY, it is payment of his *market value*, a fine of two hundred dollars, and imprisonment in the jail.

With a refinement of cruelty, they mean to try to convict Drayton of the crime of stealing slaves for his own gain; and, lest he might live twenty years, and then go

out a gray-headed Man from his prison, they mean to bring an indictment for each slave whom he tried to carry off.

Failing in the attempt to convict him of the first offense, they mean to convict him of the second; and in the one way or the other, to glut their vengeance upon him.

He is aware of his position and his danger; but he quails not, and he said to me, in hearing of his turnkey, and in a firm but quiet tone. — "I know I have broken the laws which men have enacted for this particular spot of earth, but I have transgressed none of the laws which God made for all places and all times:" to which I said, with all the earnestness I could give it, — "Hold on to that thought, my friend, and it shall be to you an anchor both sure and steadfast in the fiercest storm that can ever sweep over you."

It is useless to tell you what were the feelings which swelled in my bosom as I looked upon the walls and bars of this prison; how I choked with the effort to put them down; and how hard it was to remember a resolution that, though force and violence could right the wrong, it should never again be resorted to! But courage and hope! A better day is coming; already it dawns; and, should Drayton be condemned, he will not be an old man ere it reaches its meridian splendor; and before its light his prison doors shall open as did those of the apostle before the messenger of God! Let us *labor and wait!*" H.¹⁶

E. S. Hamlin, Esq.,¹⁷ one of the counsel in the case, thus writes upon the subject.

"As an evidence of the manner in which justice is administered here, I would state that the three prisoners who were bound over to appear at court and answer to the charge of aiding in the escape of the negroes, are each required to give bail in the sum of \$76,000! This is a country where the Constitution requires that *excessive* bail shall not be demanded. One of the men, as I have already stated in a previous letter, was proved to be innocent on the examination. Still he was bound over, and bail required

¹⁶ I.e., Samuel Gridley Howe.

¹⁷ EDWARD STOWE HAMLIN [1808-1894] Congressional representative from Ohio for the Whig Party in the 28th Congress (1844-1845). Born in Hillsdale, New York; studied law; admitted to the bar in 1831 and began practice in Elyria, Ohio; prosecuting attorney of Lorain County, 1833-1835; did not stand for Congressional re-election in 1845; established *The True Democrat* (now the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*) in 1846; member of the Free-Soil Convention at Buffalo in 1848; pursued business interests in railroads and land-holding in later life. Hamlin was best-known during his brief congressional career for opposition to the admission of Texas to the Union as a slave state. See *Speech of E.S. Hamlin on the Annexation of Texas* (Washington: Gideon, 1845).

to the amount of \$76,000. He did think some of applying for a *habeas corpus*, for the purpose of having the amount reduced by Judge Cranch.¹⁸ He could give bail in the sum of \$5000. But we were given to understand that if released, he would not leave the city alive. The jail is constantly watched by men who have nothing to do with it, but who are determined that no one of the prisoners shall ever go acquitted. The jailor has strict orders not to permit any one to have any conversation with them, except in his presence — *not even their counsel*. The prisoners are confined in cold cells, with brick floors, and nothing to sleep on, except a single blanket. As yet, they have not disclosed the names of any persons who were engaged in the enterprise with them, and they assured me that they never would do it.

¹⁸ WILLIAM CRANCH [1769-1855] Nephew of First Lady Abigail Adams, was appointed the District of Columbia circuit court's chief judge in 1806, where he remained until 1855. Cranch was the Supreme Court reporter during 1801-1815 and remains best known for a case report series under his name. See Susan Low Bloch and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *Symposium: The Bicentennial Celebration of the Courts of the District of Columbia Circuit: Celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the Federal Courts of the District of Columbia*, 90 *Geo. L.J.* (March 2002) 549, at 551, fn. 6.

— By what authority are they there? The jail is the property of the people of the United States, erected by their money, for the purpose of receiving and keeping safe those charged or convicted of crimes committed in the District. By what authority, then, is it used for the keeping of the negroes? The Marshal of this District is appointed by the President; he is paid out of the public treasury. Is he thus appointed and paid to be employed in the capture and safe-keeping of runaway negroes? *Do the people of the United States pay him for this purpose?* And who pays for the keeping of these negroes in jail, their food, &c.? The Marshal of this District has applied to Congress to pay him the sum of \$5,361.44, for keeping runaway slaves prior to these, and probably he will soon present another bill for keeping these. And what is worse, he has not only applied, but the Judiciary Committee has sanctioned the application, and Mr. Taylor of Ohio,¹⁹ one of that committee, has reported in favor of allowing the claim."

Of the companion of Captains Drayton and Sayres, we know but little, and therefore leave the future to reveal what has been his agency in this work of heroic benevolence.

It is not as individual sufferers that these men have a claim upon the attention of the nation. It is because they stand before us as martyrs to Freedom, because they are threatened by the government of this professedly free nation, with punishment, for an attempt to give, by peaceful means, freedom to innocent and oppressed men. This fact should startle the nation. It should rouse the North to inquire into the nature of the system which requires such a guardianship, and which it is pledged to support. Freemen of the North, shall we permit such deeds to be done before our eyes, in our own Capital, by our own servants, without a loud and earnest protest against them? Shall we stand by quietly, silently, and see our own sons and brothers seized by a jailor, and thrust into a felon's prison, and treated as criminals, because, fired with a love of freedom, such as burned in the breast of our fathers, they seek to restore to their oppressed fellow-men their inalienable rights? Shall we any longer give our support to a system which requires such outrages? Shall we still permit our money to be used for the erection of slave prisons; shall we continue to swear allegiance, either directly or by proxy, to the Federal Constitution, which requires us to return the fugitive slave to his master; to aid in the suppression of slave insurrections, if called upon; and which by its infamous

¹⁹ JOHN LAMPKIN TAYLOR (1805-1870) Congressional representative from Ohio for the Whig Party, elected to the 30th and three succeeding congresses (1847-1855). Born in Stafford County, Virginia; studied law in Washington, D.C.; admitted to the bar in 1828 and commenced practice in Ross County, Ohio, in 1829; major general in the state militia; after his Congressional career, served as a clerk in the Interior Department until his death.

three fifths clause, allows the slave-holder to represent property, instead of freemen, on the floor of Congress. It is Slavery which has thrust our fellow citizens into prison, for no crime; it is Slavery, which, not content with three millions of victims in the South, is fast plundering the North of her rights, and fitting its yoke on our necks! This is no longer to be endured. The North has slumbered long, but she is awaiting, and her voice will be heard. This is no time for compromises, no time for half-way measures. The entire eradication of the system, or the dissolution of the union between the North and South, which pledges the former to sustain the latter in her tyranny, is the only alternative left for our remedy. Motives of self-respect, of justice, of benevolence urge us to immediate and energetic action. The spirit breathed in the following language, is the only one which can exorcise the demon which has taken possession of our fair temple, built for Freedom. It is the language of the American Anti-Slavery Society, uttered at its recent Annual Meeting. As we read and ponder it, and our better natures respond to its lofty sentiments, let us resolve that henceforth we will be of those who are actively, zealously, devoted to the work of abolishing American Slavery.

Whereas, An attempt was made in the District of Columbia, by a large body of slaves, to obtain their freedom by flight, but unsuccessfully; and whereas, they were aided; in this design to secure liberty for themselves and their children, by Capt. Sayres and his crew, of the schooner Pearl, of Philadelphia, who are now lying in prison in the city of Washington to be tried as felons;²⁰ and whereas, this occurrence has caused great excitement in the District aforesaid, and led to a fierce debate in the Halls of Congress, on the part of the Southern Senators and Representatives, in which the conduct of Captain Sayres and his associates has been stigmatized as felonious and piratical, and every one who sympathizes with those martyrs branded as accessory to robbery and outrage: Therefore,

Resolved, That this attempt by the slaves above alluded to, receives the cordial approbation of the American Anti-Slavery Society, as it must of every one who is not a traitor to his race, and excites the joyful hope that these are but drops of a coming shower, which shall cover the whole surface of the Southern country.

Resolved, That it is the right of the slave to escape from his prison house whenever a favourable opportunity is presented, and it is the duty of all to hide the outcast, and betray not him that wandereth, whatever may be the consequences.²¹

Resolved, That most deeply do we sympathize with the recaptured, in view of the direful sufferings to which they will be subjected by their merciless oppressors; but our sorrow is greatly assuaged by the firm conviction, that though for the time being, they may have riveted more closely their own chains, the effect of their laudable example upon the millions of their brethren in bondage, will be to inspire them with a

²⁰ The anonymous author of this tract, not yet informed of the relationship between Drayton as initiator and Sayres as the vessel-owner who agreed to support the escape scheme, assigns responsibility to Sayres.

²¹ Isaiah 16:3-4.

determination to be free, and to hasten the day of their deliverance.

Resolved, That Captain Sayres and his association, by endeavouring to secure for these slaves a safe and peaceful mode of escape on board the schooner Pearl, that they might stand in the enjoyment of freedom under the British flag, in Canada, and not crouch as beasts under the star spangled banner, performed a noble and Christian act, which is worthy of constant imitation, under favorable circumstances, and that they deserve, and will receive, the blessings of those who are ready to perish, and the plaudits of the friends of Freedom universally.

Published by the Eastern Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, at the Anti-Slavery Office