

BACKGROUND: Francis Fedric was born in Fauquier County, Virginia, sometime around 1805. When he was fourteen years old his enslaver moved to Mason County, Kentucky.

Denied permission to attend a prayer meeting, in an act of resistance, Fedric defied his enslaver and attended the meeting. He was caught and severely whipped. After he healed, he ran away and managed to remain free for nine weeks by hiding in a nearby swamp. Hungry and defeated, he returned to his enslaver who severely whipped him again—this time inflicting 107 lashes on Fedric’s bare back.

Several years later, at the age of fifty, Fedric, more determined than ever, again sought freedom. This time he enlisted the help of a neighbor who maintained abolitionist sympathies. In 1855, traveling via the Underground Railroad, Fedric made his way north to Canada. After successfully arriving in Toronto, he changed his name to Francis Fedric, discarding his slave surname of Parker.

In Toronto, he met and married an Englishwoman. In 1857, they traveled to Great Britain where he joined dozens of people, many formerly enslaved, lecturing on behalf of the abolitionist movement.

In 1859, he published a short (12-page) account of his escape from slavery. His second autobiography, published in 1863, provided a much more detailed account of his life in slavery. The following excerpts are directly from this second autobiography.

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I was standing by, one Sunday, and heard a woman say to her, “Selling is worse than flogging. My husband was sold six years ago. My heart has bled ever since, and is not well yet. I have been flogged many times, since he was torn from me, but my back has healed in time.”

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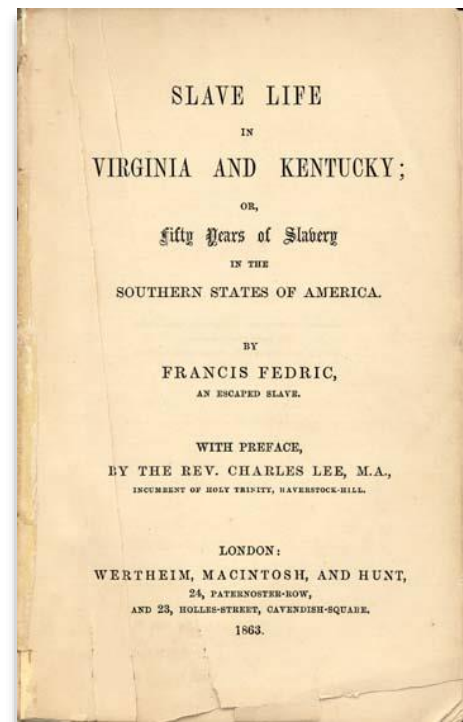
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Slaves Sold to pay my Master’s Gambling Debts.

The slaves are in general the first property parted with, a dozen likely n----- bringing in a tolerably

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round sum. Aunt Aggy was the first slave sold; she had a little boy eight or nine years of age, and when she was driven to the chained gang on the road he ran after her, crying, “Mother--mother; oh my mother.” My master ordered one of the slaves to fetch him the waggon whip. He took it and lashed the poor little fellow, round the neck and legs until he fell down, then he flogged him until he got up again, and still my master cut at him until the boy shrieked out dreadfully, writhing in agony, the blood streaming down his little legs. His mother was driven off with the gang, and her little boy never saw her more. In three or four weeks after this, a “trader” was seen talking to my master. The slaves were in a state of consternation, saying, “Is it me? Is it me? Who’ll go next?” One of the slaves said, “See, they are selling the pigs to go to Virginia. They don’t seem to care, but we can’t be like pigs, we can’t help thinking about our wives and children.”



The slaves were all taking their dinners in their cabins about two o'clock. My master, the "trader," and three other white men walked up to the cabins, and entered one of them. My master pointed first to one, and then to another, and three were immediately handcuffed, and made to stand out in the yard. One of the slaves sold had a wife and five children on another plantation; another slave had a wife and three children; and the other had a wife and one child. My master, the dealer, and

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the others then went into another large cabin, where there were eight or nine women feeding the children with Indian-meal-broth. My master said, "Take your pick of the women." The poor things were ready to drop down. The "trader" said, "I'll give you 800 dollars for that one." My master said, "I'll take it." The "trader," touching her with a long cane he had in his hand, said, "Walk yourself out here, and stand with those men." She jumped up and laid her child out of her arms in an old board-cradle, and walked to the chained men. My master said, "Take your pick of the rest." The "trader" looked round and said, "I'll give you 750 dollars for that one." "I'll not take it," my master replied. "What will you take?" said the "trader;" "what is the least you'll take?" My master answered, "Not a dollar less than I took for the other." The "trader" paused a minute or two, surveying her, and then said, "I'll give it." Then, holding his cane out, said, sternly, "Walk out of this, and stand with those men." She laid her child in one of the women's arms, and speaking low, said, "Take care of my child, if you please." The women were so terrified that they dared not say a word, for three or four weeks before this time this very "trader" had given 1,000 dollars for a slave to a Mr. W., a neighbouring planter. The slave had said it was hard for him to be carried away from his wife and children, the "trader" instantly beat him so unmercifully, that Mr. W. thought

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the poor slave would be killed, and said, "You are not going to throw away your money in that way, are you?" "I don't care," said the "trader," "I have bought him, he is mine, and for one cent. I would kill him. I never allow a slave to talk back to me after I have bought him." He had beaten the poor fellow so severely that he could not walk. The "trader" said to Mr. W. he should be passing that way again in about a month, and if they would take care of the slave and cure him, he would pay the damage, and either call or send for him. The three men and two women were driven out to the gang on the highway, and chained together, two and two. We never heard of them again. One of the wives left behind was nearly driven mad, she took it so to heart. No doubt those sent away were quickly used up in the sugar plantations and rice swamps of the South. But the masters soon replace the dead ones with others. There is an abundant supply in the markets of the breeding States, of all kinds, field and house hands, some bringing long prices, so that a slaveowner finds the sale of them the readiest mode of extricating himself from any pecuniary difficulty.

Slaveholders' own Children Sold to Infamy.

Even his own child, by a black woman or a mulatto, when the child is called a quadroon, and is very often as white as any English child, is frequently

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sold to degradation. I knew a ---- S----, Esq., he sold his own daughter, a quadroon, to a gentleman of New Orleans for 1,500 dollars, who said "he only wanted her to be housekeeper for him, and to be mistress over the other n-----, and to do just as he wanted her, for he had no wife." This startled the poor girl, who said she would not have cared if she had been going to marry him. She took it very much to heart, and so did her unhappy mother, especially when she heard her child say, "Oh, mother, I hope there will come a day

when those left behind will not be forced as I shall be." And surely that day is being heralded in now, amidst the flaming homesteads and the slaughter of the sons and dishonour of the daughters of these heartless oppressors of their fellow-man, aye, of their own flesh and blood. There are thousands upon thousands of mulattoes and quadroons, all children of slaveholders, in a state of slavery. Slavery is bad enough for the black, but it is worse, if worse can be, for the mulatto or the quadroon to be subjected to the utmost degradation and hardship, and to know that it is their own fathers who are treating them as brutes, especially when they contrast their usage with the pampered luxury in which they see his lawful children revel, who are not whiter, and very often not so good-looking as the quadroon.

I remember, one bright moonlight night, a fine young man, a quadroon, stripping his shirt off, and

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showing me his lacerated back. He cried, and I cried too, to see him in such a state. He said the next time his father attempted to flog him, he would run a dirk-knife through him. He produced the dirk, and said he had bought it on purpose. I begged of him not to think of such a thing. He swore he would; and the next time his master was going to whip him, he pulled out the dirk, and ran through the house. His father sold him soon after this. I saw him afterwards. He had been sold to a hatter, and a smarter or more gentlemanly-looking young fellow I have rarely seen. He said, "Oh, Francis, I am so glad that you persuaded me not to kill my master. I have got a good master now, and, if not sold, I shall be happy." That which in my own case weighed most heavily upon my mind was the thought that all my work was for another; and that even the flesh and blood, the bone and sinew, which God had given me, I could not call my own. I never had parted with them, but another called them his. Heaven will, no doubt, in its own good time, redress this shameless, cruel, infamous wrong.

SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES.— We have pleasure in directing attention to the announcement that Francis Fedric, who some time ago made his escape from slavery in the United States, will deliver a lecture on Tuesday evening, in the Council Hall. On the following evening, he will deliver another lecture in the School-room of St. Stephen's Church. Fedric comes fully recommended by a number of gentlemen, whose attestations are of the most satisfactory kind.

Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England), November 3, 1860.

LECTURE BY A FUGITIVE SLAVE.— On Saturday evening, Mr Francis Fedric, a fugitive slave, delivered an address on slavery and teetotalism, in the Union Hall, Nethergate. Ex-Provost Rough occupied the chair, and the hall was well filled. Mr Fedric, who is apparently about fifty years of age, gave a thrilling account of the horrors of that bondage from which he escaped about five years ago, and urged that the extension of teetotalism would aid in putting down the curse of slavery.

The Courier and Argus (Dundee, Tayside, Scotland), March 11, 1861.