

# **THE SLAVE-AUCTION**

**BY DR. JOHN THEOPHILUS KRAMER**

## **Table of Contents**

PREFACE.

THE SLAVE-AUCTION.

THE CHRISTIAN SLAVE.

THE SLAVE MINGO'S POEM.

# THE SLAVE-AUCTION.

‘Blush ye not  
To boast your equal laws, your just restraints,  
Your rights defined, your liberties secured,  
Whilst, with an iron hand, ye crush to earth  
The helpless African, and bid him drink  
That cup of sorrow which yourselves have  
dashed,  
Indignant, from Oppression’s fainting grasp?’

## **PREFACE.**

THE Nineteenth Century is generally believed to be an enlightened one. Great discoveries have been made in the fields of science. Countries which were almost unknown a century ago are now competing in art and wealth with the mother countries. Civilization has made a decided step forward; but in some countries, civilization has made, in one respect, no progress; on the contrary, it has made a step backward.

There is an institution, which is called by many civilized men a 'lawful one,' but which is in reality an institution of ancient barbarity. It is the institution of slavery! If we take for truth, that civilization and Christianity go hand in hand, we are astonished to see a civilized and Christian people violating the laws of civilization and of Christianity, by adhering to and nursing said institution of barbarity. Christianity and barbarity will always oppose each other, and if a nation is trying to make a mixture of both, civilization as well as Christianity will suffer extensively.

The motive of my present writing is not a political one. I have been plainly trying to answer the question, 'Can slavery and Christianity go hand in hand together?' by giving a faithful picture of what I have seen with my own eyes, while residing in some of the slave States for more than ten years. If the glorious redemption through the crucified Nazarene shall be of equal blessing to every Christian, how can a white Christian treat a Christian of color like a beast? How can the former have a right

to sell his black or yellow brother or sister at public auction for money or approved paper?

I have no personal ill feeling against the owners of slaves in the slave States of this Union, but to their institution of slavery, and particularly to their slave-auctions and to their slave-markets, I am a decided enemy. As a man and a Christian, I am obliged to protest solemnly against an institution which is a burning shame to Christianity, which is a backsliding from civilization to barbarism, a destroyer of family-life, a crime against virtue, and a blasphemy to the cross of the Redeemer!

J. T. K.

## THE SLAVE-AUCTION.

*They were born as slaves, through the iniquity of men. They are redeemed to be free men, through Christ Jesus.*

There is a broad hall, situated in one of the most frequented streets of a large and well-known city in the South. You will be astonished when you shall find, in place of a lion's den or a man-trap, a nicely-fitted up refreshing-place. Nothing formidable is presented to your eyes. Several corpulent and richly dressed gentlemen are helping themselves to fine liquors and delicacies, profusely spread out before you, and placed upon an elegantly shaped bar. Beautiful pictures, ornamenting the walls, attract the eyes of some amateurs of art; while others, preferring nice lots and buildings, are studying the designs of several large maps, showing various city lots and splendid buildings, advertised 'for sale at auction.' In the vicinity of said maps is a platform, whereupon a table is placed, together with a writing-desk and a few chairs. Two colored waiters are busy placing several hundred commodious chairs, facing the platform. The doors of the hall open frequently, for there are many gentlemen entering, and soon is gathered a large assemblage, by whom the chairs are occupied. There you will see the elegantly dressed dandy, smoking his sweet-scented Havana, while examining, through his richly gilded eye-glass, the designs of building lots. Next to his chair you will perceive and admire the athletic form of a Kentucky trader, with his plain frock, and with his boots reaching over his knees. There you will also see the rich and proud planter from

Mississippi, reasoning with his fierce-looking, but now, before his employer, creeping overseer.

The doors are opened again. Four ladies, splendidly dressed in black silk and satin, and glittering with precious jewels, are entering the hall. Eight or ten gentlemen, who were already comfortably seated next to the platform, jump up from their chairs, and politely offer their seats to the fair guests.

But, you will ask, for what reason is all this going on? What are the ladies and gentlemen waiting for? Perhaps it is court-day, and the people are waiting for the Judge. It cannot be, for the court-house is opposite the Square. Is it perhaps a prayer-meeting? Pshaw! Prayer-meeting and liquor-bar—would that do?

But what can it be? Who is that jolly round gentleman, placing a large book upon the writing-desk, and looking like a bird which has never seen a cage, but which has its three meals per diem in the middle of a ripe wheat field? Is it not a pleasure to take a glance at his face, radiant with contentment and plenty? If that man were a pastor, should we not like to pasture with his flock? See there! he hands now to the waiters a large package of bills. We shall soon learn what kind of a concern all this is. It will be, most probably, neither a session of a court, nor a prayer-meeting.

A SLAVE AUCTION! Great God in heaven! a SLAVE AUCTION! And that man upon the platform is the auctioneer!

What a noise is going on outside of the doors! There will, surely, enter a troop of men, women and children. How will they find

places amongst the spectators of the tragedy which will soon commence?—for every chair is occupied, and many men are leaning upon the bar. There is room in front of the table, and near to the walls of the hall.

A gentleman is entering. The auctioneer hastens to receive him with distinction, and conducts him to the chair behind the desk. The stranger is an American gentleman, and owner of the slaves who are now to be sold at auction. He owns a beautiful plantation, about forty miles from the city, near the railroad. He intends to run as a political candidate; he needs, therefore, money. He says he is 'truly sorry' to be obliged to sell his slaves at auction. Why sorry? Because his father raised most of them. They are 'family slaves,' and 'very likely indeed.' He is a young man of about thirty years. He has a high forehead, and an intelligent, upright face.

But why can he not take a glance at the assembled audience? What is the matter with him, that he always bends his face over the desk, and that he will not look up? Has he not a right to be proud, and shall not the multitude envy the happy owner of a gang of one hundred and forty-nine slaves? But we comprehend what is the matter with him. He pretends to be a good Christian, and he is acquainted with the gospel; he therefore knows what is right, and what is wrong. It is his conscience that troubles him. His inner man is well aware that he is doing a heinous crime to sell at auction one hundred and forty-nine fellow-beings, redeemed by his Savior upon the Cross!

While we were regarding the man behind the desk, we never perceived that the doors were re-opened, and that a large



number of people had entered the hall. There are men, women and children, and some babies upon their mothers' arms. Their color differs from that of the ladies and gentlemen sitting upon the chairs. Some are black as ebony, some brown, some yellow. There is also a beautiful young girl, nearly white, and you would readily infer that she is of Spanish or French blood. Not one among all of these poor creatures will raise his or her head and eyes, to take a glance at the sitting assemblage. Some poor girls are weeping audibly, and all are looking sad—sad—sad! Reader, if you should happen to be of a gentle nature, take a glance at the little babies upon the arms of their poor and distressed mothers! Can babies feel their misery? Yes, indeed, they can. Every mother will endorse my words. I shall never forget those looks of deep sorrow, which I perceived in the faces of all those poor little children upon the auction-stand. I know that they participated in the distress of their mothers; I believe that they were conscious of their horrible fate in that awful hour—to be sold for money to the highest bidder! You, who have human feelings—you, who are no figures of cold marble—contemplate each of these one hundred and forty-nine descendants of Africa's sons and daughters! Will you be still indifferent towards that 'institution' which degrades men to beasts, which is the deepest pit of barbarity?

But, you will say, are they not tolerably well dressed? And who would say that their bodies have been worn out by hard labor, or by the effect of hunger? No; it seems rather that their master had treated them kindly, that they have seen but little trouble, but few hard times. Why then are they looking grave and distressed, as if some heavy misfortune had befallen them?

Their knees tremble, as if they had the foreboding of some awful calamity!

Yes, indeed, they have cause to tremble—they will not do wrong if they cover their eyes (which are not their own)—they may bend down their heads in deep mourning; for—reader! these one hundred and forty-nine human souls shall be sold to-day as so many heads of cattle!

They have been taught the religion of freedom, the gospel of the only Master in heaven and upon earth. They know that they ought to be free, because they are Christians. They believe that the Son of God has abolished slavery by his death upon the accursed tree. They were told by their own master that they were made free through the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ, and that they have a right to claim their freedom for themselves and for their children.

Such are the teachings of the slaveholders in the slave States, but they must themselves surely believe in a very different gospel from the gospel of freedom, as given by the Nazarene!

To excuse themselves, they say that, through the curse of the patriarch Noah, a whole race of men were made slaves forever. They are deaf to the great truth, that, thousands of years after the death of Noah, the great Liberator, JESUS CHRIST, appeared, and that he broke, by his death upon the Cross, all chains of slavery forever!

Let us return to the table of barbarity, and we will follow the course of proceedings at the public auction sale of one hundred and forty-nine of our fellow-men.

The auctioneer stands upon the platform: he is ready to sell any of these to the highest bidder for gold, silver, or approved paper. He calls himself a Christian. He seems to have no idea that he is going to perform an act which is the greatest blasphemy towards his Lord and Master. Is not any man, pretending to be a Christian, and selling his Christian brothers like horses, mules or dogs, a hypocrite? And is any man, calling himself a disciple of Christ, but favoring and seconding slave auctions, any better?

We will listen to the reading of the auctioneer, who is holding a paper in his right hand:—‘I am authorized,’ he begins, ‘to sell at auction, one hundred and forty-nine plantation negroes, comprising carpenters, bricklayers, blacksmiths, coopers, drivers, house and field-hands. Families will be sold in block. These slave have been raised, and the larger portion of them were born on the estate of Minor R., Esq., who is retiring from the plantation interest on the Beau-Bosquet Place. The slaves are considered as one of the most valuable and healthy gangs in the South. They will be guaranteed only in title. Terms of sale, one-third cash, balance at one and two years’ credit, with interest of six per cent. per annum, until final payment. If the terms of sale are not completed within four days from date of sale, the slaves will be resold, for account and risk of former purchasers, after two days’ advertisement in two of the city papers, without further notice of legal default.’

No. 1. Harvey, field hand, about twenty years old. ‘Come up here, my boy! There you are—bon! A capital boy! Ladies and gentlemen, look here at this healthy child! Can any darkey upon God’s beautiful earth beat him? Wouldn’t he whip

Hercules, if that personage should happen to be present? What a splendid fellow he is! The gentleman who will buy Harvey will draw a lucky number. Who is going to bid? Go ahead, gentlemen! Here is a capital opportunity.'

'Eight hundred dollars.'

'Pshaw! Eight hundred dollars? Why, twice as much shall never buy him; he is fully worth two thousand dollars. Who will bid more?'

'Nine hundred.'

'Nine hundred dollars is no money for such a fellow, and if you will pay every picayune twice, you can't get him! Nine hundred for Harvey? Gentlemen, you have had, probably, bad news to-day; or is the news confirmed, and has the California steamer foundered? They say so, but do not believe a word of it. I say it is safe! Nine hundred dollars for Harvey!'

'And fifty.'

'Nine hundred and fifty dollars for Harvey, the most likely boy in the noble and fair State of Louisiana! Ain't it too bad? Who bids more?'

'One thousand!'

'Well, a little better! Go on, gentlemen, if you please. One thousand—one thousand—one thousand dollars.'

'And fifty.'

'And fifty! My dear sir, do me a favor, and say at once two thousand. And fifty—and fifty! Ten hundred and fifty dollars!'

‘Eleven hundred.’

‘Eleven hundred! Too little yet.’

‘Twenty dollars more.’

‘Sir? Twenty dol——. Pardon, excuse me, if I am truly astonished to hear a gentleman bid twenty dollars for Harvey, the American Hercules! Twenty hundred I would like it better.’

‘Twelve hundred and fifty.’

‘There is a generous gentleman! Sir, take my best wishes for your welfare! Twelve hundred and fifty dollars——’

‘And fifty.’

‘Still better! And fifty! One thousand three hundred dollars!’

‘Fourteen hundred.’

‘Fourteen—thank you, sir, thank you! Fourteen hundred dollars! Fourteen hundred! Fourteen—— Gentlemen, bid more, if you please! Fourteen hundred dollars for Harvey are nothing. Fourteen——’

‘And fifty.’

‘Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars for a boy who is worth two thousand! Gentlemen, here is a good chance to improve property! Whoever will buy Harvey, shall own a fortune. Who is going to bid more? Fourteen—fourteen hundred and fifty dollars—going? One thousand four hundred and fifty dollars—dollars—dollars! Who will bid more? Nobody? Nobody more? Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars for the negro boy Harvey,

the best field hand and the most gentle boy amongst all the darkeys in the United States! Going—for the first—second—who will say more? Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars—going—going—going—gone!’

‘Go off, Harvey! Hurry yourself! Don’t believe your bones are made of sugar and eggs.’

No. 2. Joseph, field hand, aged about seventeen.

‘Gentlemen, there is a young blood, and a capital one! He is a great boy, a hand for almost every thing. Besides, he is the best dancer in the whole lot, and he knows also how to pray—oh! so beautifully, you would believe he was made to be a minister! How much will you bid for him?’

‘One thousand dollars.’

‘Good—but that is not half the price he is really worth. Gentlemen, if you will bid two thousand at once, it may not suffice to buy him. One thousand dollars for a boy, who will be worth in three years fully twenty-five hundred dollars cash down. Who is going to bid two thousand?’

‘Twelve hundred dollars.’

‘Twelve hundred dollars! Sir, I did say, he would soon bring two thousand. I am always pretty near certain of what I say. Twelve hundred for Joseph! Splendid fellow that! Eleven hundred and eighty dollars more than for his namesake of old in the land of Egypt. Twelve hundred dollars! Gentlemen, bid more!’

‘Twelve hundred and fifty dollars.’

‘One thousand two hundred and fifty dollars! All right; but more! more! more!’

‘And fifty.’

‘And fifty—and fifty—and fifty for Joseph—not the Hebrew.’

‘Thirteen hundred.’

‘Thirteen hundred—a bad number, gentlemen—don’t let him rest at thirteen hundred.’

‘And fifty.’

‘Thirteen hundred and fifty is said to be a lucky number in lotteries. I don’t know as it is true, but I do know that thirteen hundred and fifty dollars will not buy Joseph.’

‘Fourteen hundred.’

‘Well, no ticket of any lottery will cost that much; but Joseph must bring more. Fourteen hundred dollars!’

‘And fifty.’

‘One thousand four hundred and fifty dollars. It looks like rain; for cash will not out, and I am unable to procure a magnet which will draw gold for value received. Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars! Too small an amount for Joseph. Seventeen years only—a strong, healthy, fine-looking, intelligent boy. Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars! Gentlemen, Joseph is worth more than Harvey—upon my word! One thousand, four hundred and fifty—going! Fourteen hundred and fifty for the first—second—going? Fourteen hundred and fifty dollars—going!

going! going! and last—gone! He is sold to you, sir! Please state your name.'

No. 3. John Dowson, a carpenter, thirty-five years old, (afflicted with slight hernia,) an intelligent-looking man, stands upon the platform.

But as the reader would get tired of listening to every word that the auctioneer of human souls says, we will stay with some of the poor creatures, merely giving the names, age, and the price of sale of the rest. The above named John Dowson was sold for \$1200.

No. 4. Alfred, cooper, (injured in left leg,) 19 years of age, a strong and very honest-looking boy, brings \$1550; a very small price for a first-rate cooper, but surely the price of blood for a man and a Christian!

No. 5. George Bedford, field hand, 30 years, sold

No. 6. Jim Ludlow, field hand, 30 years old, brings \$1400.

No. 7. Chap, field hand, 34 years, brings the round sum of \$1000.

No. 8. Henry Wood, 23 years old, for \$1375.

No. 9. Charles Longback, plowman and harness maker, age 35, value received, \$1300.

No. 10. March, field hand, 26 years old, fine-looking fellow, splendid eyes, teeth white like ivory. That dandy there, who is lighting his cigar with a fashionable Parisian silver-match, would be glad to give his gold watch with chain, and his



diamond breastpin in the bargain, for March's beautiful set of spotless teeth. But how can we see them? Is March so much pleased as to show all his teeth? No, reader! he is very, very far from laughing. His eyes are cast down; they are fixed upon the floor of the hall. But tell me why March shows his teeth? Out of rage? Yes, indeed, out of rage. Why?

There is a poor young woman at his side; they call her Caroline. A Christian minister gave her that name when she was christened. She is bitterly crying; she casts a look of extreme sorrow upon her husband. Why?

Caroline is the lawful wife, (lawful, indeed? lawful in a Slave State?) of March, and the 'gentleman' who bought him for \$1250 will not buy Caroline. She is twenty-two years of age, and the auctioneer calls her a splendid washer and ironer, a very likely girl. She has always conducted herself well; she is a member of the Methodist Church; she is one of the most gentle persons in the South; she calls March her husband, and she loves him dearly. And now, gentle reader, tell me why Caroline shall be torn from her husband? Why shall she belong to a tyrant? Because that man has money—because he bought her for \$1100.

Friends of humanity! take another glance at No. 10½. There stands Caroline, crying for her husband in a manner to move a heart of stone; but she is not crying loud enough to move pretended 'Christians,' who are going to church every Sunday, there to adore the Redeemer of mankind, the Savior upon the Cross!

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

